HOW TO WRITE IF YOU CANNOT WRITE: COLLABORATIVE LITERACY IN A GAMBIAN VILLAGE[1]

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1 *Literacy as a social phenomenon in rural Gambia*

According to the Department of State for Education of Africa's smallest mainland country, 'The Gambia has a low literacy rate, estimated at 46% overall and only 28% for women' (DoSE 2006: 44). In this paper, I attempt to reveal certain aspects of the social, cultural and economic complexity behind these numbers by presenting an ethnographic analysis of a small telephone booklet in use by a low-literate rural young man, named L. I want to problematise the binary distinction between literates and illiterates, and argue that 'illiterates' like L often meaningfully engage in literacy practices in their daily lives.

In The Gambia, there is a strong equation of literacy with English and Arabic, as local languages are officially bypassed as languages of literacy and media of instruction (Juffermans & McGlynn, forthcoming). The national education policy indeed provides the objective to

> Introduce the teaching of the five most commonly used languages – Wollof, Pulaar, Mandinka, Jola and Sarahule to be taught at the basic, senior secondary, tertiary and higher education levels as subjects (DoSE, 2004: 4.2.xiii),

and stipulates that

> During the first three years of basic education (grades 1-3), the medium of instruction will be in the predominant Gambian language of the area in which the child lives. English will be taught as a subject from grade one and will be used as a medium of instruction from grade 4. Gambian

languages will be taught as subjects from grade 4 (DoSE, 2004: 11.1.6).[2]

In practice, however, Gambian schools use English as the medium of instruction throughout, especially when it concerns literacy. McGlynn & Martin observe that 'two of the indigenous languages (referred to as vernaculars in The Gambia), Mandinka and Wolof, are also used on occasions alongside English during lessons' (2009: 137). This 'flexible bilingualism' in the classroom, as Creese (2008) would call it, rarely if ever involves written language. When speaking, teachers and students smoothly switch in and out of languages and display great creativity mixing them, both in and outside the classroom. There is no sign of this fluidity and permeability between languages, in school literacy practices, e.g., on the blackboard, in exercise books, in text books, etc., nor is there in the linguistic landscape surrounding schools (cf. Beckman & Kurvers, this volume). On the level of written language, multilingualism is fixed and compartmentalised with English and Arabic occupying strong hegemonic positions in the linguistic market as preferred languages of literacy.

Notwithstanding these constraints and societal 'guidelines' on the use of language and literacy, people make use of this resource in various ways and for various reasons, and manage to 'do literacy' even if they self-declare being illiterate.

2   Theoretical foundations: ethnographies of literacy

My comments here on the use of literacy in one modern, multi-ethnic village in southwest Gambia, are done from an ethnographic perspective. Following Blommaert, I consider ethnography a method-cum-theory of enquiry into social reality, that 'tries to describe and analyze the complexity of social events comprehensively' (2007: 682). In Lillis' (2008) terms, I use ethnography in studying language and literacy not merely as 'method', but rather as 'methodology' and 'deep theorising'.

Drawing on a rich body of literature under the label of *new literacy studies* (e.g., Street, 1995; Gee, 1996; Barton & Hamilton, 1998), I assume that literacy is a situated practice that derives its social significance from the locality in which it is practiced. I further assume that reading and writing occupy rather diverse functions in various communities and that literacy stands in a unique relation to local ideologies and power relations. I also assume that in any society literacy is an unequally distributed resource that people can access through a more or less formal and institutionalised learning process. Unlike language(s), that is/are generally acquired spontaneously and naturally in interaction with one's parents, siblings, neighbours and peers, literacy normally requires prolonged exposure to deliberate instruction in some kind of educational institution. Significantly, literacy is always tied to a particular language. There is no such thing as *languageless* reading and writing, even though different scripts instantiate different relations between the visual, meaning, and sound components of a language.

In his seminal paper, Basso (1974) argues in favour of an ethnographic study of literacy that 'focuses upon writing as a form of communicative activity' and pays attention to 'the social patterning of this activity or the contributions it makes to the

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[2] Note that Arabic is not mentioned in the education policy. Islamic education (*daara* and *madrassah*) is largely beyond control of the state and its policy apparatus.

maintenance of social systems' (1974: 426, 431). Questions deemed important for such an enterprise are the following: 'What kinds of information are considered appropriate for transmission through written channels, and how, if at all, does this information differ from that which is passed through alternate channels such as speech?', or more generally, 'What position does writing occupy in the total communicative economy of the society under study and what is the range of its cultural meanings?' (Basso, 1974: 431, 432).

In another seminal publication concerned with literacy and schooling in the United States, Szwed recognises that 'we do not fully know what literacy is' and that

> We need to look at reading and writing as activities having consequences in (and being affected by) family life, work patterns, economic conditions, patterns of leisure, and a complex of other factors. Unlike those who often attempt to understand a class of people by a content analysis of the literature written for them by outsiders, we must take account of the readers' activities in transvaluing and reinterpreting such material (Szwed, 1981: 21).

In an introduction to a special journal issue on ethnographies of literacy, Baynham (2004) looks back at two decades of ethnographic studies of literacy and identifies the developments in American linguistic anthropology in the 1960s and 70s known as the ethnography of speaking (Bauman & Sherzer, 1975; Hymes, 1986) as a 'clear intellectual antecedent of the ethnography of literacy approach [even though this] has not been an explicit influence in the New Literacy Studies more generally' (Baynham, 2004: 286). He goes on to argue that Hymes' focus on the communicative event, reframed in the ethnographic studies as the literacy event is, however, crucial in a reconsideration of the relationship between speech and writing as two interacting modalities' (2004: 286).

Tributary to the ethnography of speaking, work in linguistic ethnography and New Literacy Studies has never been removed from the concerns of discourse analysis (e.g., Gee, 1996; Blommaert, 2005). The obvious division of labour between discourse analysis and ethnography is that discourse analysts occupy themselves with the *products* of communication (spoken or written texts) and ethnographers with the process or *practice* of speaking (speech acts, encounters). Ethnographers of literacy then can be expected to deal with moments of speaking or writing, with literacy events and practices, while discourse analysts are more concerned with artefacts of communication, with literacy products, with the things we usually call texts. However, there are fruitful ways of blurring these distinctions, of analysing discourse ethnographically and of engaging with texts within a broader ethnographic project (Blommaert, 2008; Mbodj-Pouye, 2008). In this paper I attempt to offer such an 'ethnography of text' by analysing a literacy document I encountered during my fieldwork.

3   Context: L and his village

The text I analyse in this paper is a small booklet that was used and maintained by L, a young man who lives in a modern multi-ethnic village in southwest Gambia. I call his

village a modern village because people have lived there for only three to four generations and because it is built around the structures of the modern state, i.e. the village stretches out on each side of a T-junction that is formed by the main road on the south bank and a secondary road going to a riverine village further north. To the south there is only farmland and bush before the border with the Casamance region of southern Senegal. The east-west axis is an important orientation, as people face east when they pray and head west when they travel to the city.

The village is a multi-ethnic and multilingual village because no ethnic group forms an absolute majority here even though it is situated in historically Jola dominated area and 'owned' by Jolas, i.e. the *alkaloship* of the village is inherited by male descendants in the Jola lineage who founded the village.[3] Yet, Jola is not the most widely spoken language here. In an ethnolinguistic survey a colleague and I carried out among 248 villagers of all ages, including long-term guests, 33% responded to be Jola, 31.5% Mandinka, 17.5% Fula, 9% Manjago and 6.5% Wolof. Further, 10.5% of interviewees declared to be born out of an ethnically mixed marriage and 8.5% of married respondents reported to be married to someone from a different ethnic group. With regard to the language resources available to this rural population, there are the languages of these five and other ethnic groups, but also international languages such as English, French, Arabic and Portuguese Creole. The lingua franca in this village clearly is Mandinka, witness the 95% of respondents who declared to be speakers of Mandinka. Multilingualism is the rule here, however, as Jola and Wolof are also spoken by more than half of the questioned population (59 and 57% respectively), and Fula by over a third of the villagers (35%) (see Juffermans, 2006, chapter 4).

So far the wider sociolinguistic and sociocultural context of L's village that was acquainted in the process of several ethnographic fieldwork trips by observations, informal interviews and the survey considered above. In order for the analysis to be ethnographic, however, we need to move beyond this mere 'backgrounding of context' and consider 'three forgotten contexts' of the document under scrutiny: the material and communicative resources at L's disposal, the text trajectory or discursive history of the booklet, and the history of the discourse as *data* (Blommaert, 2005, chapter 3).

To start with the first context, L is a young man in his late twenties, is a Mandinka and a Muslim, has paternal family in Jarra further east but grew up with his mother in Foni. L did not attend English medium public schooling but Arabic medium *madrassah* instead, however for a few years only. L is described as a 'farmer' under profession on his ID card, but also works as baker (of *tapalapa* 'bread') when there is flour and when the oven in the village is not broken. In his leisure time, L likes to listen to *R&B*, *raggae* and *mbalax*[4] records. Each of these categories of identity – being of a particular age, being of a certain ethnicity, practicing a particular religion, having gone through a certain type of schooling, etc. – have consequences for L's *language repertoire*, which is the lapidary composition of linguistic and semiotic-communicative resources at his disposal. Verbally, L is very articulate and highly multilingual. Although it is difficult, not to say irrelevant, to assess L's language proficiency in such terms of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, it would seem that L is 'effectively

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[3] *Alkalo* (pl. -lu) is a Mandinka term also used in other local languages and Gambian English, and can be translated as 'village chief' or 'mayor'.
[4] *Mbalax*: dance (or simply background) music with Wolof lyrics that is immensely popular in Senegal and Gambia, and made world-famous by the Senegalese musician Youssou N'Dour.

proficient' in, or in fact 'masters' several languages (Mandinka, Fula, Wolof) and can draw on resources from a variety of other languages in which he has a 'basic-level' or 'threshold' competence (Jola, English, Arabic) as well as from languages he would not recognise any proficiency in (Manjago, Portuguese Creole). The problem with the European Framework is its heavy reliance on literate proficiency and its assumption of multilingualism as multiple monolingualisms (see also Janssen-van Dieten, 2006). L's language repertoire consists of bits and pieces of all the languages in his immediate surroundings, and is a typical example of what Dyers (2008), following Blommaert *et al.* (2005: 199), calls 'truncated multilingualism': topic and domain specific competence in multiple language varieties. Although L is highly multilingual in speaking, interacting and listening, as a result of his short-lived educational career, he is low-literate in Arabic and practically illiterate in all other languages of his repertoire. L has acquired only the very basic bottom-up alphabetic decoding skills in Arabic that are necessary to recognise and copy Koranic verses and other religious formulae. Arabic is hardly the language of his literacy, rather just the script of his literacy.

Materially, L lives a poor and simple life. He occupies a room and parlour in his uncle's house which he shares with me when I am around. L has decorated his room with empty packs of the cigarettes he smokes, a poster of hiphop artists like 50 Cents, and pages from a UK magazine on the wall showing the marriage of Welsh rugby star, a reportage of celebrities with their mums, the Beckhams before David's transfer to Real Madrid, sexy film stars in tiny swimsuits, and more glitter and glamour. He further possesses two or three pieces of furniture, a box with clothes and a two deck radio cassette player powered by a car battery.

Figure 1:   L's Nescafé telephone booklet, back and front cover

4   L's Nescafé telephone booklet

There are two approaches to analyse a chunk of discourse like L's Nescafé telephone booklet ethnographically. The first is to attend to form and content of textual detail, whereby the design as well as the use of the booklet should be analysed. A second approach is to observe, interrogate, and describe the use of the booklet in action (cf. Norris & Jones, 2005; Scollon & Scollon, 2007). The former allows us to reconstruct a part of the discursive history of the booklet (the second 'forgotten context', Blommaert, 2005) and the latter invites us to reflect on the textual material as data, as well as the relation between researcher and researched (the third ethnographic context). In this section, I first discuss the booklet's design and attempt to reconstruct its trajectory from the designer (Nescafé) to the user (L), I then attempt to reconstruct how the booklet was used by L (and his collaborators) on the basis of the existing entries, and I will finally offer some insights on how the booklet is (collaboratively) inscribed on the basis of observations in which I participated myself.

4.1   The booklet's design and trajectory

The booklet was a free gift with a family pack of Nescafé and was designed by Nescafé Senegal, witnessing the slogan in French *Goûte la vie côté café* 'Taste the coffee side of life' which still features on the Senegalese Nescafé website (www.nescafe.senegal.com), and only there. Thus, the booklet has travelled from neighbouring Senegal to The Gambia, most likely together with the pack of Nescafé which was offered for whole-sale on the Gambian market in the urban centre in the west of the country. It was subsequently given to L by a friend, as he recalled. L left the booklet on the cupboard in his room when he went out to work, but often carried it with him when hanging around with friends in the afternoon and at night. He also took it with him on a recent trip to his relatives in Jarra.

When I inspected and photographed the booklet in July 2008, it had twenty pages and was in the same old, cracked and used condition as most other written material I had seen in this part of the world. The images on the cover pages were considerably bleached by the sun and faded by the many times moist hands had opened and folded it (see Figure 1). The images were still visible and showed a good-looking and well-dressed young urban couple talking on the telephone (front) and four equally fashionable young men and women in conversation while eating bread and drinking hot drinks from four different cups (back). These persons represent the urban elite youth lifestyle that I suspect L aspires to live himself, like many young men in his village. However, many of the activities pictured on the cover, like talking on the phone, eating bread and drinking Nescafé, are luxuries L has not been able to enjoy on a daily basis.

Besides these images, the front and back cover have the bold white NESCAFÉ logo with the final leg of the initial 'N' bending and reaching towards the *accent aigu* of the final 'É' printed vertically from bottom to top. On the bottom of the front page, there is the slogan *Goûte la vie côté café*, and on the top there is the genre indication *Répertoire Téléphonique* 'telephone index'. The verso sides of the front and back cover (pages 2 and 19 of the booklet as shown in the overview in Table 1) provide a calendar of 2003 with the names of the months and the first letter of the days of the week in French. January to June can be found on page 2, and July to December on page 19. The logical ordering of the booklet suggests a reading path from left to right, i.e. from page 1 to page 20 in

Table 1, although booklets like this are of course not meant to be read from cover to cover, but to store and retrieve information.

The inner pages of the booklet, which are made of a lighter material than the cover, are organised alphabetically following the Roman alphabet (from a, b, c to x, y, z) to enable storing and retrieving information. Some of the letters have been grouped together to win space, e.g. 'GH' and 'IJK'. Several letters in the alphabet are missing, however, which is an indication that entire pages have been torn out and thrown away or used for other purposes. It is thus possible to reconstruct that four double-sided pages have been removed, plausibly 'AB', 'EF', 'TUV', and 'WXYZ', bringing the original number of pages to 28. Further, also parts of pages 3/4 ('C') and 7/8 ('GH') were torn out. Every inner page of the booklet provides five entry points with four lines to fill in surname and first name, address, and three telephone numbers: a house line (DOM: *domicile*), an office line (BUR: *bureau*) and a mobile phone number (*GSM*) (see Figure 2).

In the alphabetical ordering and the lay-out of the pages in five four-line entries, the booklet's designers have provided several textual resources for users to organise their contacts in a structured way, but it is left to actual users to make use of these resources in the suggested way. This structuring and implicit directions for use assume a certain level of literacy and a particular personal profile from the booklet's users. The booklet is designed for people that are literate, for people that have friends with addresses and colleagues with an office, house *and* mobile telephone number.

Table 1:   Overview of the booklet (columns represent pages; Xs represent entries)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
front	calendar	C	C	D	D	GH	GH	IJK	IJK	LM	LM	N	N	OPQ	OPQ	RS	RS	calendar	back
Répertoire Téléphonique JANVIER – JUIN **Goûte la vie côté café**				X							X							JUILLET – DÉCEMBRE	
				X			X					X	X	X	X	X	X		
				X			X				X	X	X	X	X	X			
													X	X	X	X	X		
				X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
			X	X							X			X	X		X		
				X										X	X				

NOM-PRENOM : _____

ADRESSE : _____

_____

TEL. DOM : _____ BUR : _____ GSM : _____

Figure 2:   Designed entry space

   In its design, the booklet is not meant in the first place for people like L. L's literacy skills are below the level that is needed to handle this booklet. L also lives in an environment where people do not have two-line addresses[5] and it is unlikely that L knows many persons with anything else than a mobile telephone number. Inevitably, L uses the booklet in an alternative, appropriated way.

4.2   The booklet as used by L

In terms of the Common European Framework, L's demonstrated proficiency in writing is below the A1-level (in any language). As he lacks these basic skills, L has to resort to his friends and other members of his community to help him keep this telephone booklet. The point of this paper is that illiterate or low-literate people like L can still do literate things when they make use of human resources in their community. The booklet reflects a trajectory of collaboratively established entries. There is no consistent use of colour (alternately blue, black, grey, green), nor of writing materials (sometimes pen, sometimes pencil, sometimes fibre-tip) or handwriting styles (different letter sizes, different styles of writing between the lines). On the 16 pages and 41 entries, approximately 13 different handwritings can be distinguished, which indicates that many different persons on different occasions were involved in filling out L's booklet. Nonetheless, I would like to argue that L remains in charge as the main user of the book, and that there are traces of his own personal history of learning in the way the booklet was inscribed.

   L ignores the alphabetical order possibilities and presents the book to his helpers from right to left, thus opening page 18 first, thereby following an Arabographic logic. Pages 18 to 13 are filled out most systematically, with isolated entries on pages 8, 5 and 3 (see Table 1). In general, pages have been filled out from top to bottom, which is a convention that is shared by both Roman and Arabic script traditions. Except for one or two, all entries (both names and numbers) appear in Roman script. On page 5 ('D'), there is an entry that is entered upside down as well as a name without phone number in Arabic (عاشة كمر, *ajami* for perhaps Isatou Camara). Also on page 5, the beginning of a name has been struck through, and on page 13 ('N'), an entire entry has been crossed out, to be replaced by the same name with a different number a few lines below. Largely beyond L's control are the use of the lines and the suggested organisation of personal details. There are no addresses in the entire booklet. Also the suggestion to enter names with the surname first (*nom-prénom*) has been ignored. Of the 32 names, 28 are first names conventionally followed with a surname; the remaining four are first names only or initials. Of the 48 entered telephone numbers, 47 are mobile numbers, recognisable by the first digit (6, 7 or 9). The phone numbers are not entered on the positions where they are designed to be entered, i.e. on every fourth line between 'TEL. DOM :', 'BUR :' and 'GSM :'. In contrary, this line is generally avoided as the 'BUR :' and 'GSM :' are indeed awkward obstacles standing in the way of a blank line.

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[5] In rural Gambia, like many other parts of Africa, streets are unnamed and houses unnumbered and there is no postal code system. When used at all, mailing addresses are often given under care of (c/o) a nearby institution or an urban relative with a post office box.

4.3   The booklet's use observed

When I showed interest in L's booklet and asked him if I could photograph the pages with my digital camera, L laughed as he usually did when I asked weird questions on the most banal things of his sociolinguistic life, but kindly gave me the booklet, and waited until I was done inspecting it. Then he asked me if I could enter my number in his book. I replied asking him whether he would be able to do that himself and handed the booklet back to him. I dictated my number to him, 6222606 (first in Mandinka, then in English), which he wrote down in a shaky, unstable handwriting, from right to left and with the twos in mirror-image (line 2 in Figure 3). He was all but done when his younger sister,[6] Jaineba, interrupted him laughingly and took over. L also laughed, uncomfortably as I interpreted it, while Jaineba asked me to repeat my number. 'Six triple two,' I said, which she entered (from left to right) as 633. She soon realised she had written *double-three* instead of *triple-two*, and started over, writing my name first.[7] She then wrote the correct number in the double space between the fourth line of the third entry and the first line of the fourth entry. When she was done, she was pleased with the result and gave the book back to me. I looked at it, and turned to L again. I reminded him about telling me that he had attended *madrassah* and knew some Arabic, and I asked him if he would be able to write my name and phone number in Arabic. He took the booklet and pencil out of my hands again and started copying the digits I dictated to him one by one (in English). He did so in (Eastern) Arabic numerals, from right to left: ٦٥٦٢٢٢٦ (line 6 in Figure 3). Under that, he wrote my name complete with diacritics and vowel markers: كيو ميلصهُ (line 7 in Figure 3).

   Both the phone number and the name as written by L are fairly problematic. Arabic numerals, when they are used to transcribe telephone numbers, are usually written from left to right and not from right to left. This is a convention L is not aware of. The sixes are written in mirror-image with the horizontal stroke of ٦ placed to the right of the vertical stroke instead to the left of it (visible in Figure 3, not in the transcription above). Further, the zero is indicated with a circular form (٥) like in Roman numerals (0) instead of with a floating dot (٠); the form L has used for zero (٥) is confusingly the character for the number five in Arabic. A proficient reader of Arabic may thus not be able to dial my telephone number on the basis of L's inscription. But that is not the point here. What matters is that even though his proficiency in Arabic is far from flawless (less than A1 in the Common European Framework), L demonstrates, on my request, elementary independent literacy skills in Arabic that are (almost) good enough to enter names and numbers in a personal record. Yet, for whatever reason (insecurity?), he does not put these skills into practice. Instead, he ignores these skills, self-declares to be illiterate and prefers to be helped by friends and (younger) family members with more advanced literacy skills, preferably in English. L's booklet should thus be seen as a collaborative text product that is mediated by a network of diverse users of literacy, and a social regime of language that favours English and Arabic as languages of literacy and disqualifies local languages for literate activity.

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[6] In Western kinship terms, Jaineba would be L's cousin.

[7] Malang Sonko is my 'Gambian name.' It is customary in this part of the world to give local names to long-staying or returning strangers, including ethnographers. Many persons in L's village only know me as Malang and not by my exotic European name.
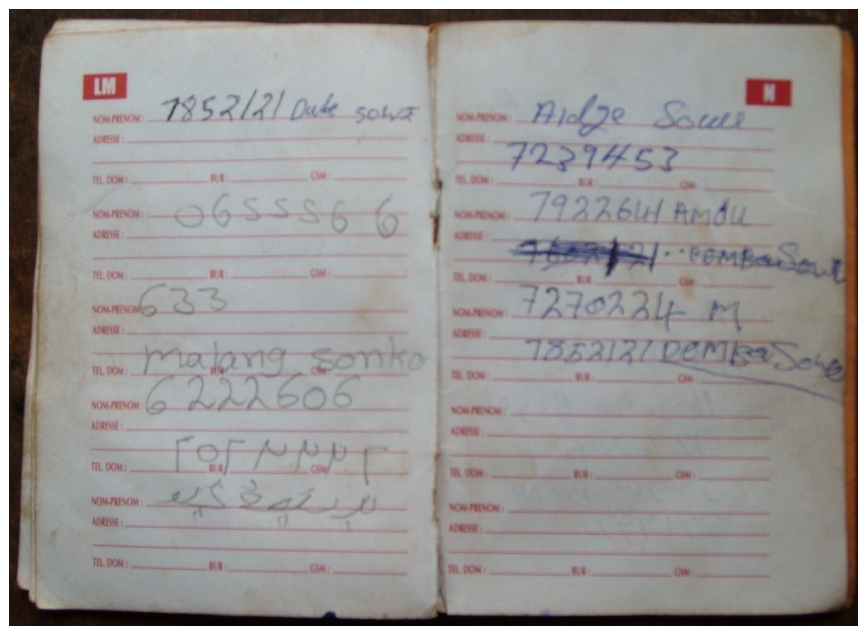
Figure 3:   L's Nescafé telephone booklet, pages 12 and 13: entering my number (left)

5   Collaborative grassroots literacy

In conclusion, I would like to draw a few provisional generalisations on the nature of literacy in rural Gambia on the basis of the observations in L's telephone booklet. The first remark concerns the hetero-graphic nature of writing, and the second is concerned with the collaborative construction of literacy.

L's Nescafé telephone booklet is a typical document of 'grassroots literacy', i.e. a form of 'writing performed by people who are not fully inserted into elite economies of information, language and literacy' (Blommaert, 2008: 7). Many of the characteristics Blommaert describes as features of grassroots literacy (non-standardness, draftliness, distant genres, rootedness in orality, etc.) are also pertinent here. I want to elaborate on one characteristic here, i.e. the hetero-normativity of orthographic conventions. The 'text' reflects several orthographic traditions, i.e. more or less powerful conventions prescribing how to *write right*. On a macro scale, the text manifests itself as a contact point between two of the most important script traditions in this part of the world, Anglo-Franco and Arabic-Koranic text traditions. All but two of the entries are in Roman script but the book as a whole follows an Arabic from-right-to-left reading path. On a smaller scale, the first names and surnames in the book follow Anglo-Gambian and not Franco-Senegalese or a vernacular spelling, e.g. it reads *Jobe*, *Colley*, *Bah* instead of *Diop*, *Coly*, *Bâ* (Franco-Senegalese), and *Fatou* instead of *Faatu* (vernacular). In Anglo-Gambian spelling, surnames of local people, composed with the

syllabic regularity of local languages, are interpreted through the lens of twentieth-century English orthographic rules, and likewise for borrowed Koranic (originally Arabic, but vernacularised) first names (e.g., *Ebrima*). What seems to be the case here is not an absence of standards – there are indeed double, imported, standards operating at the same time – but the absence of a locally developed uniform monographic standard. Instead, literacy as practiced and produced by L, is heterographic (Blommaert, 2008).

L is a very low-literate young man living in a local economy of literacy that is characterised by the co-existence of Arabic and Anglo-Franco orthographies as well as by scarcity of all sorts of literacy resources, including literate expertise itself. L has enjoyed a very transient educational career, the results of which have given him only a very thin basis to deal with the bureaucratic requirements of the modern nation-state. As far as filling in forms, written correspondence and other more demanding literacy events are concerned, L is pretty much functionally illiterate when literacy is regarded as 'a complex set of skills defined in terms of the print demands of occupational, civic, community and personal needs' (Verhoeven, 1997: 128). Given the material and educational constraints in rural Gambia, a commercial free gift like L's thin Nescafé telephone booklet, becomes a valuable object. Entering the numbers of his friends and relatives in a private booklet empowers L in the sense that the booklet enables him to manipulate his own social network at times that are important to him. Yet, L apparently feels not capable of entering the names and numbers in his booklet independently. To compensate for his own low-proficient writing skills, L appeals to people in his environment to produce the entries in his booklet (Kalman, 2001). With the help of these different persons at various situations, it becomes possible for L to do literate things in his life, and in fact to 'be literate' in a very restricted sense of the word.

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