

**EFFECTS OF USING BEMBA AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION ON THE READING  
LEVELS OF GRADE TWO PUPILS IN A PREDOMINANTLY NAMWANGA  
SPEAKING AREA OF NAKONDE DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning.

The University of Zambia

Lusaka

2016



## **DECLARATION**

I Mable Chinyama Makumba declare that this dissertation is my own original work, and that all the work of other sources of information and literature on related works used in the production of this dissertation have been duly acknowledged by the author and that it has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other university.

Student's signature ----- Date -----



## **CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

The dissertation by Makumba Mable Chinyama is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning of the University of Zambia.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this piece of work to my mother, my sisters and my brothers for their love, encouragement and moral support.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I want to thank my academic supervisor Dr J. Simwinga for his guidance and I also want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr D. Banda for his guidance and encouragement throughout the process of the study. I would also like to express a word of appreciation to my course mates for their encouragement.



## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study was to establish the effect of using Bemba as Medium of Instruction (MoI) on the reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District.

The research design was a case study. Qualitative methodology was used to collect and analyze data. The methods used were interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document analysis. Grade two pupils were only observed and are not part of the sample as there was no direct information that was required from them. Simple random and purposive sampling were used to come up with a sample consisting of four primary schools, four head teachers six grade two teachers and eighteen parents. The data was analyzed qualitatively and grouped into identified themes generated from the research objectives.

The findings revealed that learners were facing phonological, morphological and semantic challenges. Pupils had problems in understanding what the teacher said in Bemba due to lack of proficiency in Bemba. On the other hand, some teachers whose mother tongue is not Bemba had some challenges when communicating to the learners during literacy lessons because of language barrier. The differences between Bemba and Namwanga vocabulary contributed to the learning difficulties among Namwanga children. Parents found it very difficult to help their children with homework in reading because of high levels of illiteracy among them.

It was concluded that the challenges pupils, teachers and parents were facing because of using Bemba as medium of instruction contributed to the low reading levels of grade two pupils in Nakonde District. Pupils were denied of the parental involvement in their education due to high levels of illiteracy among parents. Bemba was not fit for use as MoI because it was not a familiar language in most of the schools in Nakonde District. It was recommended that head teachers in Nakonde District should allocate grade two classes to teachers who are conversant with Bemba, the language of instruction, and Namwanga, the pupils' familiar language, so that literacy lessons can be effective. The Ministry of General Education would do well to introduce Namwanga as medium of instruction because it is the language that is commonly used in Nakonde. In addition, the district education office should orient new teachers in the Medium of Instruction of the district.



## **ACRONYMNS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>LoI:</b>	Language of Instruction
<b>L1:</b>	First language
<b>L2:</b>	Second language
<b>MoGE:</b>	Ministry of General Education
<b>MoI:</b>	Medium of Instruction
<b>ROL:</b>	Regional Official Language
<b>ZL:</b>	Zonal Language



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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **1.0 Overview**

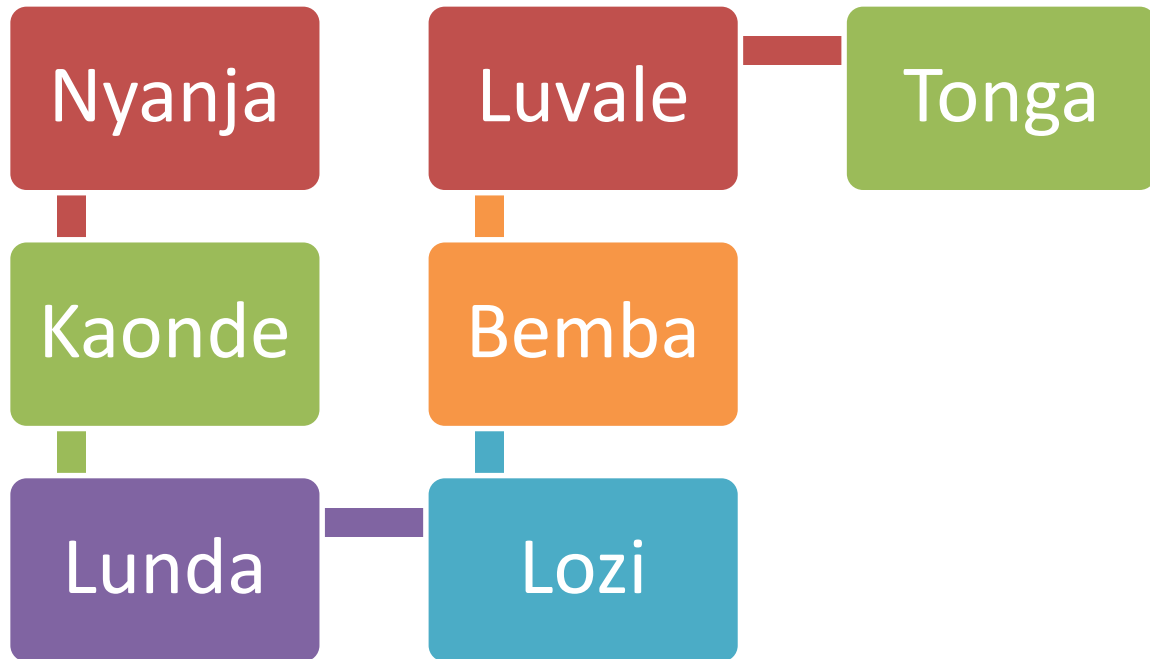
This study looks at the effect of using Bemba as a medium of instruction on the reading levels of Grade Two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District. The other areas that are being discussed in this section are the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions and significance of the study. Operational definitions will also be given in this section so that the study is easily understood. The background of the study gives a summary or overview of the research as a whole.

### **1.1 Background**

Zambia is a multilingual nation just like many other nations around the world. It has about seventy three languages and dialects (Ohannessian and Kashoki, 1978). One of the most important factors in education is language of instruction. A medium of instruction, according to MOE (2000:22) “is a pedagogical tool for explaining, communicating, asking and responding, understanding and activating the learning process.” It is not easy to come up with a language that is acceptable to everyone, especially in a multilingual nation like Zambia. However, each ministry in charge of education in each nation around the world has to come up with a medium of instruction. The Zambian Ministry of Education has been trying to make appropriate changes in terms of language policy since independence in 1964

A significant change in language policy in education took place in the year 2013. This is when “...the policy on education recognized the use of familiar Zambian languages as the official languages of instruction in the pre-schools and early grades (grades 1-4)” (MESVEE 2013:19). This policy implied that all teaching and learning in all subjects were to be conducted in a zonal Zambian language. The policy was actually implemented in the year 2014. Use of familiar language for initial literacy has been recommended worldwide. In Zambia, there are seven officially recognized regional languages which are also used for classroom instruction and these are:





There are books which have been written in these seven official regional languages. There are some languages which have not been officially recognized as regional languages even though they are widely spoken in particular regions. Examples of such languages are Namwanga in Nakonde, Lamba in Copper belt rural, Tumbuka in Lundazi and Soli in Chongwe.

The speakers of these languages have been disadvantaged and some have tried to take a step further. The Lamba chiefs of the Copperbelt Province which is a Lamba land, rejected the use of Bemba as a medium of instruction from Grade one to four as stated in the Daily Nation of 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 “All fifteen (15) Lamba chiefs of the Copperbelt Province have resolved to out rightly reject the newly introduced government policy to teach Bemba in copperbelt rural schools”. Though the policy is advocating for use of familiar languages, what are being used currently in Zambia are regional official languages which may not be familiar to other learners.

This study aimed at finding out the effect of using Bemba as MoI on reading levels of grade 2 pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District. The argument put across by those supporting the use of only seven zonal Zambian languages as MoI is that these languages have a similar orthography and therefore can easily be learnt by both learners and



teachers. Such arguments find support in views such as those of Mwanakatwe (2013:205) who says that,

True, several of the local languages and dialects are similar as practically all of them belong to the group of Bantu-speaking language group. Therefore, it is not unusual for native speakers of one local language to learn with minimum effort to speak another local language with a remarkable degree of fluency.

One linguistic group can easily understand another group's language if the languages are mutually intelligible. Ohannessian and kashoki (1978) say that it is common for linguists to group languages, basing on certain properties like phonology, morphology and the degree of vocabulary the languages have in common. The choice of using Bemba as MoI in a predominantly Namwanga speaking district is on the same assumption that Namwanga has similar orthography with Bemba. As to whether or not this is working to the advantage of pupils in Nakonde is what this study intends to find out and the unit of analysis is the reading levels of grade two pupils who will have been learning reading and all other subjects for at least two years.

However, it is important to note that while all so-called dialects of the seven zonal languages have been grouped, Namwanga has not been grouped together with Bemba in the language grouping which shows that the two languages do not have much in common. Ohannessian and Kashoki (1978:18) state that:

Those languages which have more grammatical and vocabulary characteristics in common have been grouped together. For instance, Bemba, Aushi, Bisa, Lala and Lamba have been placed in group 'A' but not Mambwe, Lungu and Inamwanga

Simwinga (2006:35) also consolidates this assertion by saying that:

Namwanga, Mambwe and Lungu are not mutually intelligible with Bemba and therefore, cannot be said to be adequately catered for by Bemba in the current language zoning system.

This implies that there could be challenges which learners may be facing and this research needed to find out the effect of this policy on reading levels of grade two pupils who will have followed the policy from grade 1 and at a time when the policy would have been in operational for over four years.



## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The Ministry of Education in Zambia revised the language policy in the year 2013 and it stipulates that children from pre-school to grade four will have to use a local familiar language as a Medium of Instruction ( MoI ). According to the way language zoning has been done, Bemba is the MoI in Nakonde District because it is one of the officially recognized regional local languages among the seven regional local languages recognized country wide. The new language policy requires that all other subjects in school including initial literacy should be taught using Bemba language. It is not known what effect the language policy has on reading levels of Grade 2 learners of Nakonde District which is a predominantly Namwanga speaking area.

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of using Bemba as a medium of instruction on the reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District.

## **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The main objectives of this study were:

1. To assess the effect of using Bemba as Medium of Instruction on reading levels of grade 2 learners in Nakonde District.
2. To identify the challenges, if any, teachers could be facing when teaching reading using Bemba as medium of instruction in Grade 2 in Nakonde District.
3. To establish the perspectives of parents on the use of Bemba as MoI in primary schools of Nakonde District.
4. To establish the measures to address the challenges that learners may be encountering when Bemba is used as Medium of Instruction for initial literacy.



## 1.5 Research questions

The objectives were addressed by answering the following questions:

1. What are the effects of using Bemba as Medium of Instruction on reading levels of Grade 2 learners in Nakonde District?
2. Which challenges, if any, could teachers be facing when teaching reading using Bemba as medium of instruction in Grade 2 in Nakonde District?
3. How do parents perceive the use of Bemba as MoI in primary schools of Nakonde District?
4. What measures can be taken to address the challenges that learners may be encountering when Bemba is used as Medium of Instruction for initial literacy?

## 1.6 Significance of the study

This study is important because it may help the language planners in the Ministry of General Education by providing them with empirical evidence of the current language situation in Nakonde District and in-depth information on the effects of using Bemba on reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde. The ministry may also be able to make informed decisions concerning language policy in order to avoid indiscriminate use of regional official languages as media of instruction. In addition, it is hoped that the findings of this study may contribute to the body of knowledge in medium of instruction in initial literacy.

## 1.7 Operational definitions

**Challenges:** new or difficulty tasks that tests a person's ability and skill which require great effort and determination to overcome.

**Effect:** the change that one thing causes on the other.

**Familiar language:** a language that is well known and is commonly used by an individual.

**Initial literacy:** the official start of learning how to read and write.

**Medium of instruction:** a language chosen for official use in teaching and learning.

**Predominant language:** a language commonly used and influential to a particular society.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Overview**

The present chapter gives the theoretical framework that has guided this study which is the socio-cultural theory propounded by Vygotsky. This section also reviews relevant literature on different policies on medium of instruction and their impact on learners' learning outcomes. The review has been sub divided into three parts: world view, African studies and studies done in Zambia or Zambian studies. The world view includes studies that have been done outside African continent while the African studies are those studies conducted within the African continent only. The final part looked at the studies that were conducted in Zambia.

### **2.1 Theoretical framework**

This study was guided by the socio-cultural theory. The socio-cultural theory is associated with Levy Vygotsky, Russian psychologist who believed that children learn through social and cultural interaction. Kosulin et al (2003) say that "At the heart of Vygotsky's theory lies the understanding of human cognition and learning as social and cultural rather than individual phenomena." Socio-cultural forces are key in a child's development and learning and a child is also an active participant in the learning process. The child's intellectual development is mainly dependent on his/her interactions with surrounding culture and other members of the community. In order for this interaction to be effective, symbolic tools, as Vygotsky calls them, have to be used and one of the most important tools is language. It is because of the fact that language is an important tool that there should be very minimal challenges in the language being used by a child and the community for communication. Language is used by people to think and communicate their thoughts to others. Learning, as Saljo (1992) in Shifidi (2014) put it, is a communicative process that takes place in a dialogue between the teacher and the learner and among learners themselves. Dysthe in Shifidi (2014:21) also says that:

Learning is a relationship between people through participating between them and through the language and communication in which language and communication are central aspects in learning.

When a child is assisted by a person who is more knowledgeable and using a language familiar to the child, the intellectual performance of that child improves. Vygotsky (1978:86) explains the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as



The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Learners are able to achieve more with the help from teachers, peers, parents and other people who are more knowledgeable than the learners themselves. The assistance that a child receives is called scaffolding. Scaffolding is help rendered to learners only when they need it and it is withdrawn when learners are able to stand on their own (they are able to read or carry out any task assigned to them without any help). During initial literacy learning, learners need scaffolding so that they can acquire literacy skills which in turn, help them to read and write fluently on their own. McIntyre et al (2011), argue that there is a relationship between a child's difficulties or successes in learning to read and write and with the environment in which that child is and the language used in the teaching of the initial literacy in a given language. The use of a language that a learner is familiar with as the MoI may support the scaffolding aspect, implying that when a foreign language to a learner is used as the MoI the learners may meet challenges. This study would like to establish the effect of using Bemba in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area as the MoI on reading levels of grade 2 pupils who will have followed the new language policy for 2 years.

Socio-cultural theory is related to this study in that it brings out the importance of language as a tool to intellectual development and that the environment in which a child is plays an important part in learning. Socio-cultural theory is important in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. This study was looking at initial literacy which involves reading. Matafwali (2010) defines reading as the ability to acquire meaning from print. Printed material is expressed in a language and a reader will only be able to decode meaning if he/she is familiar with the language in which the material is printed. Children in initial grades such as Grade 2, need to be assisted by a more knowledgeable person in order to acquire the literacy skills which are needed for someone to be able to read and write. Though other members of the society may provide assistance to a learner, the teacher is the most important in providing this assistance especially in a classroom situation.

In this study, the researcher is looking at a pupil who needs to learn how to read and write through the medium of a language and the teacher as the more knowledgeable person who



needs to provide assistance to the pupil. Language is the tool in which pupils acquire initial literacy skills, literacy being the ability to read and write, and language is the tool a teacher uses to facilitate that learning this study looked at effects of using Bemba as MoI on reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde.

## **2.2 World view**

Coming up with a language of instruction is one of the most important decisions that has to be made by any Ministry of Education around the world. It is for this reason that language may be regarded as a problem, a resource or a right. It has been a source of conflict in some nations like Rwanda. Language in Education is very important especially in the early stages of a child's Education. Since 1953, UNESCO has encouraged mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary Education. Kosonen, (2005) in Ball (2011) says that children are more likely to enter school and succeed if they are taught in their mother tongue.

Many children speak a home language that differs from the language of instruction in education. Ball (2011:6) says that "research confirms that children learn best in their mother tongue as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education." If a child is taught in a language that is familiar, learning will be made easier because concepts will be easily understood. Benson (2002) in Ball (2011:24) states that "Children's L1 has been established as the most efficient language for early literacy and content instruction". The Kangel first Language first education program in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea is an example of children who are taught in their first language and are performing well but before this program, the children used to perform poorly in the English only education system. The program has been maintained for more than 20 years because it has yielded good results (UNESCO, 2007) in (Ball 2011). In Zambia, English, which is a second language, has always been the language of instruction until recently when a significant change was seen in terms of language of instruction. The use of English has not yielded any positive results hence, the introduction of local languages with the hope of improving reading levels.

All these studies are emphasizing the advantages of using familiar language for initial literacy. Despite all these advantages and recommendations on the use of familiar language in initial literacy there seems to be a conflict between policy and practice. What is being implemented in



schools is different from what policy is stating. Little is mentioned on challenges that learners face because of using unfamiliar languages in early education more so if that unfamiliar language is one of the local languages in the country but a language which may not be the mother tongue or even a familiar language to the majority of learners in a particular location such as Nakonde District, a predominantly Namwanga speaking area, but uses Bemba as the MoI. This is why this study wanted to establish the effect of Bemba as the MoI on reading levels of grade 2 learners as the predominant language in the district is Namwanga.

Whorf (1961) in Mwanza (2012) discourages the use of unfamiliar languages because he believes that they inhibit cognitive and perception abilities in learners. When these two abilities are inhibited, a learner will most likely achieve very little especially in education. <http://www.adeanet.org>. States that

When curriculum content is presented in an unfamiliar language, an enormous amount of time must be spent first teaching children to understand, speak, read and write L2 or a foreign language, something that is extremely difficult and wastes valuable years in the early grades that could be spent learning to read and learning academic concepts in L1.

Use of mother tongue, which is a familiar language to the learner, improves the learner's access to education. It also supports local, culture and parental involvement in the education of children. Pride (1981:159) says that, "Since effective education involves effective communication, the language used must be one that is understood by the pupils". Learners who are in the rural areas are the ones who are mostly hit by the use of languages that are not familiar to them. Schroeder (2004) agreed to the fact that languages that are not native to the learners are not fully understood or spoken because they are not known to the learners. Many nations around the world are in favor of using mother tongue or first language for education purposes and Zambia has not been left out. The studies reviewed so far did not look at the actual types of challenges which learners in specific rural districts face due to use of unfamiliar language or second language for initial literacy, hence this study. This study is trying to establish the effect of using Bemba as the MoI in a Namwanga predominantly speaking area on Grade 2 pupils' reading levels.



### **2.3 Studies within Africa**

Most of the countries in Africa are heterogenous states. Each nation has at least more than two languages and this makes it difficult to come up with a Lingua Franca though some nations like Tanzania have managed to come up with a lingua franca which is not without challenges. A study on language policy in Malawi was conducted by Ngalande and Chigeda (2012) and it revealed that Malawi has 16 languages and dialects. Chewa is used as a medium of instruction from grade one up to the upper grades, against the policy which required use of mother tongue only in lower grades. Other sections of the Malawian community were not happy with the use of Chewa as it was not their first language. The cardinal point is that, Malawians believe in the use of mother tongue as the best language for initial education but, there is conflict between policy and practice. The study by Ngalande and Chigeda does not bring out the types of challenges which learners face when being taught in an unfamiliar language in early education.

Robenoro (2009) conducted a study in Malagasy where there are only two languages recognized for official use and these are Malagasy which is viewed as a set of varieties and French which is a second language inherited from the colonizers. In the first two years of primary education, Malagasy is the official language to be used in teaching. However, the research showed that teachers used the local variety of Malagasy to teach instead of the official Malagasy French. Official instruction, therefore, does not match with reality. The study further discovered that pupils whose mother tongue was not standard Malagasy, had difficulties in understanding the teacher. This is a problem because it hinders learners from learning effectively. Familiar languages to the learners should be used so that the learners can benefit and learn well. If a person is not familiar with a language, learning as a whole is disturbed and retarded. Robenoro's study was conducted outside Zambia and the situation in Zambia, particularly Nakonde is yet to be established.

In South Africa, a study was done by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and UNESCO's Institute for Education (UIE 2006). The aim of the study was to find out the difference in reading performance between the learners who were taught in their first language and those who were taught in a language that was not their first language. Grade six language achievement was compared province by province and the study revealed that the learners who learned through the medium of their first language (L1) performed far much



better than the learners who were taught through the medium of their second language (L2). This shows the importance of using mother tongue or L1 as the medium of instruction but it does not account for causes of poor or low performance in L2. Learners achieve more when taught through the medium of a familiar language as compared to using other languages which are not first languages of the learners. Second language is not only English but it can even be a local language that a child is not very familiar with. Namwanga is predominantly used in Nakonde District where, according to the new policy, Bemba is the MoI. Hence, the focus of this study to establish the effect of this policy on the reading levels of Grade 2 learners.

## **2.4 Studies within Zambia**

In Zambia, language can be viewed as a problem. Serpell (1978:144) says that “Language is a controversial topic in Zambia with special significance for educational policy.” It is considered a problem because Zambia is a multilingual nation as a result it has not been possible to satisfy all the stake holders or language users. Multilingualism is a situation where people use many languages in a community. Miti et al (2009) in their study, wanted to find out how the teachers were prepared in colleges to teach Zambian languages and to use them as languages of instruction. The study revealed that teachers had difficulties teaching using Zambian languages because of multilingualism. It is either teachers were not familiar with the language where they were sent to work or pupils were not familiar with the language of instruction. Multilingualism is also a contributing factor to problems relating to language policy.

Before independence, the first missionaries who came to present day Zambia, found a variety of local languages and the first thing they did was to learn some of these languages so that they could communicate well with the people. They even started teaching people in vernacular. The missionaries encouraged the use of local languages. Carmody (2004:106) says

The general practice in the school system of Northern Rhodesia during the colonial period was that in the early years of an African child’s schooling, instruction should be in the vernacular.

The colonial government recognized four vernaculars namely Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga and Lozi. The missionaries participated in preparing vernacular text books. It was only when a child had reached fifth grade, that he/she was introduced to English as a medium of instruction. The 1966 Education Reforms recommended that English was going to be the medium of



instruction from Grade one to tertiary level of education. The reforms also allowed the use of the seven official languages where it was necessary in order to make instruction easier. This was allowed because it was a known fact that not everyone would comfortably learn English more especially with those children living in rural and peri-urban areas where English is hardly used.

In 1992, Focus on Learning, an education policy, acknowledged the negative impact of using English as the medium of instruction especially for initial literacy acquisition but took no action to resolve the problem. MOE (1992:28), states that

Too early an emphasis on learning through English means that the majority of children form hazy indistinct concepts in language, mathematics, sciences and social studies.

It further confirms that ‘A number of studies in Zambia have confirmed that children’s subsequent learning has been impaired by this policy’. The justification given for the continued use of English is that it facilitates the posting of teachers, transfer of public services and it emphasized the need for an early stage of competency in the official language of commerce and public life.

In 1996 Educating Our Future, another education policy had similar concerns as those observed in the 1992 education policy. The policy observed that English had contributed to the backwardness in reading. It also promotes rote learning because the language being used is not very familiar to the learners. MOE (1996:39) states that

....there is strong evidence that children learn literacy skills more easily and successfully in their mother tongue and subsequently they are able to transfer these skills quickly and with ease to English or another language.

Teachers were allowed to use local languages when teaching initial basic skills while maintaining English as the official medium of instruction.

The Basic school Curriculum Framework document of 2000 made some changes to the language policy. When the Primary Reading Program (PRP) was introduced, a local familiar language was to be used during the literacy hour only as a language of instruction while English continued to be the medium of instruction in all other areas. MOE (2000:23) states that



At all levels and in all subjects teachers are encouraged whenever necessary and relevant, to use the familiar language for explanations, clarifications, questions and answers

PRP had three components namely New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL), Step into English (SITE) and Read on Course (ROC).

During the colonial period, a child was required to use the mother tongue for the first two years of primary school education followed by a dominant vernacular up to standard 5. Thereafter, English was used (Lineham 2004). From 1966, English has been the official medium or language of instruction from grade one up to the end of tertiary education. Research has shown that, children learn quickly through the medium of their mother tongue, which may also be a familiar language, than a completely strange language. MOE (1977:33) states, “It is generally accepted by educationists that learning is best done in the mother tongue”. The language of instruction was English but teachers were encouraged to explain concepts in local languages. Children’s learning, as confirmed by studies conducted, has been impeded by the continued use of English instead of mother tongue.

MOE (1996) agrees that children should experience initial literacy using local languages because research has shown that using English for initial literacy had contributed to the backwardness in reading. MOE (2000) introduced the use of local familiar language for initial literacy only. Teachers were still advised, when necessary and relevant, to use familiar language for explanations, clarification, questions and answers. Kelly (1991:111) also states that, “learning is best done in the mother tongue”.

Recently in 2013, MESVTEE introduced the use of local languages as media of instruction from grade one to four. This implied that other subjects were to be taught in local language. Other studies done in Zambia on language and initial literacy include those done by Nkosha (1999) who looked at parent’s attitudes towards use of dominant language in different regions as medium of instruction from grade one to four and he also wanted to determine factors which influence parent’s choice of a language of instruction; Zimba in 2007 wanted to find out the effects of using Cinyanja as a language of initial literacy in a predominantly Tumbuka-speaking area in Lundazi rural schools. Findings showed that many Tumbuka-speaking pupils faced problems in understanding Nyanja. Pupils made a lot of errors whenever they tried to



speak, read or write Nyanja; Kumwenda in 2010 looked at initial reading performance in Chichewa in multi-ethnic classes in selected schools in Chipata urban; Mwanza in 2012 looked at the language of initial literacy in a cosmopolitan environment in Cinyanja in Lusaka. He wanted to find out if Cinyanja was appropriate for use as a language of initial literacy in Lusaka considering the fact that Lusaka was a cosmopolitan environment. The study revealed that Cinyanja was a language of play in high and medium density areas and the dominant language of play in the low density area was English. There were also a lot of differences between Cinyanja spoken during play and Cinyanja officially recognized in schools. Both teachers and pupils were not proficient in standard Nyanja. It was therefore, not appropriate as sole language of initial literacy in Lusaka District; and Mubanga also in 2012 carried out a research on effects of the use of Cinyanja to teach initial literacy in a predominantly Soli speaking area of Lwimba in Chongwe district. The study revealed that there was a significant difference in reading performance between Nyanja and Soli speaking pupils. It was concluded that Nyanja was not appropriate for use as language of initial literacy in Lwimba. All these studies were conducted in areas where Cinyanja was spoken and they do not talk about the reading levels of the grade 2 pupils in the areas mentioned.

A study was conducted in Nakonde district by Mwape (2002) as discussed in Simwinga (2006) which investigated the language used in the border towns and the risk of the local familiar language being over taken by the second and other languages. The study discovered that Namwanga was not under any immediate threat of being replaced by Swahili or Bemba. Mwape's study was not looking at language in educational use but nothing much has been studied on challenges faced by learners in Nakonde who use icibemba in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area. Simwinga (2006) also looked at the impact of language policy on the use of minority languages in Zambia with special reference to Tumbuka and Nkoya. The findings in these studies promote the use of familiar language. Learners seem to perform better with the use of their first language than using the second language. Kalindi 2006 in his study of poor readers in Northern Province suggested that one of the reasons why pupils were poor in reading was because Bemba was not their familiar language. So they struggle to learn to read and write. World Bank (1995) also condemns teaching pupils using an unfamiliar language because it promotes inequalities and marginalization to rural learners. This study aims at



establishing the effect of Bemba as MoI on reading levels in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District.

According to Nkosha (1999: 58-59), “Zambia has no Lingua Franca although it uses seven (7) regional languages which are widely understood and used in the regions”. Is it true that these regional languages are widely understood and used? To what extent is the mutual intelligibility of these regional languages within native languages? Tambulukani and Bus (2009) say that most of the children, according to their research, were not familiar with the regional languages which were used for initial literacy. In eight out of twelve schools, the Zambian language of teaching was not the language which children were best acquainted. Tambulukani (2015) concluded that reading proficiency is improved when there is a close link between a child’s home language and the language used as medium of instruction.

Some of the rural population in Zambia is monolingual. This means that they use one language and there is a possibility that that language is not the language being used as a medium of instruction. According to the literature reviewed, emphasis has been placed on promoting use of first languages in initial literacy acquisition without looking at the challenges of such policies on the minority language groups who are monolingual. This study will focus on the learners in Nakonde district of Muchinga Province who are predominantly Namwanga speakers but use icibemba as medium of instruction.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the theoretical framework that is guiding this study which is the socio-cultural theory. It also presented the literature review. The message that was coming out of the review is that the use of mother tongue for initial literacy produces good results as evidenced by those countries that have tried it. In Nakonde, the MoI is Bemba while the children’s familiar language is Namwanga. Therefore, the study sought to establish the effect of such a language policy on reading levels of grade 2 children.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 OVERVIEW**

This chapter describes the methodology of the study which includes research design, target population, sample and sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection procedures and analysis.

#### **3.1 Research design**

This study followed a case study design. A case study design is an in-depth study of a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, one program and many other such arrangements. The main aim is to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the entity (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Ideas will be understood more clearly because a case study can provide a real life situation. In this study, a case study research design was chosen because of its suitability and ability to investigate specific aspects. In this study, such specifics could be types of challenges learners could be facing and how such challenges could be affecting the reading levels of Grade 2 learners in Nakonde District. The assumption was that such research design involving teachers and school heads who monitor school activities could bring out what really goes on in a classroom situation as these are implementers of the language policy.

#### **3.2 Target population**

Dominik and Malaila (2013:36) say that, “population refers to a complete set of elements (persons or objects) that possess some common characteristics defined by the sampling criteria established by the researcher.” Target population, according to Best and Khan (2009) consists of the specific group with common characteristics to whom the researcher plans to generalize their findings. The population of this study included all head teachers, teachers, parents to grade two learners and grade two learners in Nakonde District. This is the group for which results were generalized.



### **3.3 Sample size**

A sample is a small group of people or objects that is intended to be used in the study. This study had a total of twenty eight (28) participants and the distribution is as follows: four head teachers, six Grade two teachers and eighteen parents. Four schools were sampled from Nakonde District. All the four head teachers from the four schools were interviewed including all the Grade two teachers. Grade 2 pupils were observed but are not included in the sample size because there was no direct information that was required from them for this study. Grade 2 pupils were too young to be interviewed and so observation was the appropriate method of getting information. This is supported by [www.sjuc.ac.tz/policies&forms](http://www.sjuc.ac.tz/policies&forms) which state that:

Observation can be used where it is not possible to collect data using interviews or questionnaires, such as when study participants are animals, babies, and young children, persons who do not share a common language or persons with some forms of disability.

The sample is representative of the population since the whole population cannot be covered for data collection due to time limitation and non-availability of financial resources.

### **3.4 Sampling procedure**

Simple random sampling was used to select the four schools which automatically included the head teachers of the four schools. This was done by writing down the 22 names of primary schools and picking up four papers randomly. Ngandu (2013:38) says that, “This method involves the random selection of participants from a list of the total population or sampling frame.” This kind of sampling does not have any complications as it is simple and straight forward. Every member of the population has an equal opportunity of being part of the sample. Grade two teachers and parents to the grade two learners were purposively selected because they are the ones with the information that was needed for the study. As Ngandu (2013:41) puts it, “the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting cases with rich information for in-depth analysis related to the focal issue being studied.”

### **3.5 Research instruments**

Taking into account that this study was purely qualitative, the data was collected using qualitative instruments and these were:



### **3.5.1 Interview guides**

Interview guides were used to collect data on types of challenges faced by teachers and learners and how these challenges affected the reading levels of grade two pupils because of using Bemba as a medium of instruction in Nakonde District. Semi-structured interviews were used because according to Ng'andu (2013), they are flexible while comprising of open and closed ended questions. The data was collected from teachers and head teachers. Interviews were recorded using a common recorder and later transcribed as verbatim transcript. In addition, the researcher was also taking notes as the interview was going on. Pre-written interview questions were asked to avoid straying away from the main focus of the study.

### **3.5.2 Focus group discussion guide**

Parents to grade two learners were gathered in groups consisting of six members in three schools out of the four sampled schools. All the parents selected had children who were in grade two at the sampled schools. The selection of parents was done with the help of the class teacher who knew the parents well. Ten parents were invited but only six managed to attend the focus group discussion in the three schools. The guide had pre-written discussion questions in order to avoid straying from the main focus of the discussion. Kombo and Tromp (2006) say that focus groups produce a lot of information in a quick way. This is mainly because of the number of participants who can be more than six. Beliefs, ideas and opinions in a community can easily be identified.

### **3.5.3 Observation checklist**

The researcher physically went into the classroom and observed a lesson while checking for specific aspects which were on the checklist. During structured observation, according to Kombo and Tromp (2006), the focus is on a small number of specific behavioral patterns. Only those appearing on the checklist were recorded. Learners were also observed when they were at the playground so as to find out how language was being used without any restrictions from the teacher. During observation the researcher was just looking and recording what was going on without interfering with the learners' activities.



### **3.6 Data collection**

Data collection is the act of gathering specific information so that it can be used to prove or refute some facts (Ngandu 3013). There was primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through having interviews with class teachers and head teachers, having focus group discussions with parents and physically observing learners in a classroom during a lesson. Secondary data was obtained by going through different documents such as test results and pupils' text books and note books; and through introspection.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis varies according to research design and it refers to the manipulation of the data collected so that conclusions can be drawn. Data analysis is defined by Sidhu (2006:279) as, "studying the tabulated material in order to determine inherent facts or meanings". Analysis of data involves examining it, making deductions and inferences (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Since this study is qualitative, data was analyzed descriptively through the identification of themes which were in line with the research questions. For the sake of authenticity, the researcher made direct quotations from the responses that were given.

### **3.8 Limitations of the study**

The findings of this study will be confined to the study area only which is Nakonde District. The findings of this study may not be generalized to other districts because the sample will not be representative of the whole province due to time and financial limitations.

### **3.9 Delimitation of the study**

The research site is Nakonde District. The study was only confined to four schools in Nakonde District. In the four schools, only head teachers, Grade Two learners and their teachers were included in the study. Parents to some of the learners were also included in the study.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

Consent from relevant authorities was sought before carrying out the research. Anonymity was accorded to all participants and those who wished to withdraw from the research were allowed as it was their right. Participants who were not willing were not forced to participate in the study.



### **3.11 Conclusion**

Chapter three has presented the methodology that was used for the study. A case study design was used to investigate the phenomenon in detail. The chapter has also discussed the instruments used to collect and analyze data. Data was analyzed descriptively through the identification of themes which were in line with the research questions.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.0 Overview**

The aim of this chapter is to report on findings pertaining to the effects of using Bemba as a medium of instruction on reading levels of Grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District. Classroom observation, interviews, focus group discussions and document review were used to collect data. The findings were based on the data collected from four primary schools in Nakonde District where head teachers and Grade two teachers were interviewed, learners in Grade 2 were observed during classroom instruction and week 10 literacy assessment results and other literature were reviewed. Focus group discussions with parents to some of the Grade two learners were conducted.

This study brought out a number of challenges that learners were facing when using Bemba as a medium of instruction and how these challenges affected the reading levels of grade two pupils in Nakonde. The data is presented in accordance with the research questions which are as follows:

- i. What are the effects of using Bemba as MoI on reading levels of grade 2 learners in Nakonde District?
- ii. Which challenges, if any, could teachers be facing when teaching reading using Bemba as medium of instruction in grade 2 in Nakonde District?
- iii. How do parents perceive the use of Bemba as MoI in primary schools of Nakonde District?
- iv. What measures can be taken to address the challenges that the learners may be encountering when Bemba is used as MoI for initial literacy?

### **4.1 What are the effects of using Bemba as Medium of Instruction on reading levels of Grade 2 pupils in Nakonde District?**

#### **4.1.1 Lack of understanding (Semantic challenge)**

The study found out that learners did not understand Bemba because they were coming from homes which were using Namwanga for all manner of communication. The teacher would say something in Bemba but the learners would not respond according to the teacher's expectation



because they did not understand Bemba. At one school, the teacher called a learner in front but that learner did not go and was just looking at the teacher until another learner told her in Namwanga that the teacher was calling her. In order for learners to get something from the lesson, the teacher had to translate from Bemba to Namwanga and from Namwanga to Bemba. Teachers complained that translation consumed a lot of learning time. Learning time was reduced and wasted on trying to communicate as explained by one teacher:

We have to translate from Bemba to Namwanga all the time and this is time consuming. There are moments when you speak in Bemba and all of the pupils are looking at you and you do not know what to do. A 40 minutes period is reduced to 20 minutes as the other half of the period is spent on translating. What is interesting is that sometimes a wrong translation is done and a pupil who knows Bemba better than you has to intervene and explain to the amusement of the rest of the class.

The study established that those learners were just repeating what the teacher was saying without really understanding. The literacy lesson that was observed in one of the participating school started with the teacher telling a story to the learners. Thereafter, questions were asked by the teacher. Very few learners were able to answer the questions showing that they had not understood. Most of the learners would put up their hands when a question was asked but when pointed at to give an answer, they just kept quiet and smiled. Others would just say something in Namwanga which was not in connection with the lesson and the teacher could not understand.

#### **4.1.2 Mispronunciation of Bemba words**

The study revealed that the learners mispronounced Bemba words because of the interference of Namwanga which is the language they have been using from childhood. For example, the learners were saying '*ecipuna*' instead of saying '*icipuna*'. Learners were replacing phonemes and syllables in Bemba words with those syllables and phonemes which are commonly used in Namwanga language. Table 1 below shows some of the words which were commonly mispronounced due to Namwanga interference as they were captured by the researcher during observation in the classroom and outside the classroom. These words were compiled after observing learners in all the four schools in this study.



TABLE 1: Bemba words frequently mispronounced by Namwanga children

WORD IN BEMBA	WORD IN NAMWANGA	WORD IN ENGLISH
batata	watata	father
umukashana	emukazyana	girl
abana	awana	children
umulilo	umoto	fire
bakafundisha	wakafundisha	teacher
icipuna	ecipuna	chair
amenshi	aminzi	water

Children tend to pronounce these Bemba words as if they were Namwanga words. The initial letter sound /i/ and /u/ were usually replaced by /e/.

In order to show respect to people, Bemba language uses ‘ba’ while Namwanga language uses ‘wa’ but learners were always replacing ‘ba’ with ‘wa’. Instead of saying

*Bamayo*

*Batata*

*Bayama*

*Bashikulu*

*Bakafundisha*

Learners were saying:

*Wamayo*

*Watata*

*Wayama*

*Washikulu*



*wakafundisha.*

During interviews with teachers, it was revealed that there are syllables which are common in Bemba and not in Namwanga while others are common in Namwanga and not in Bemba. For example /ba/ is common in Bemba while /wa/ is common in Namwanga. As a result Namwanga speaking learners found it difficult to pronounce /ba/ and ended up replacing it with /wa/ which is commonly used in their language. There are sounds which interviewees said were used by Bemba speakers which Namwanga speakers found difficult to use and there were sounds used by Namwanga speakers which interfered with Bemba pronunciation of words. Some of the sounds that are not used in Bemba language are /v/, /z/, /vw/, and /zy/ but children use the same sounds to pronounce Bemba words.

#### **4.1.3 Learners not knowing the language of instruction**

Most of the Learners claimed that they did not know the language of instruction which led to lack of understanding. School became a strange place for the children. Outside the classroom environment, children were free to express themselves in Namwanga as it was their language of play in the area. The literacy assessment results obtained from the participating schools show week ten (10) results. The learners were given to read six sounds, six syllables and eight words in Ibibemba which made up a total of twenty items in the assessment. The table below shows the distribution of marks obtained according to the three levels:

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>SCORE</b>	<b>RATING</b>
Red	0-7	poor
Yellow	8-12	average
Green	13-20	good

Learners who got correct items of the test from 0 to 7 were placed in the Red level, 8 to 12 were in yellow level and those who got from 13 to 20 were placed in green level. The following are the summary of the assessment results for week ten for the four schools in the study. These results were obtained from class teachers and school in-service coordinators.



## RESULTS FOR SCHOOL A

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEARNERS	LEARNERS ASSESSED	GREEN LEVEL	YELLOW LEVEL	RED LEVEL	LEARNERS NOT ASSESSED
B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL
21 16 37	20 14 34	5 8 13	1 2 3	14 4 18	1 2 3
18 16 34	13 13 26	7 7 14	0 3 3	6 3 9	5 3 8
39 32 71	33 27 60	12 15 27	1 5 6	20 7 27	6 5 11

(Source: class teacher)

School A had two classes which were combined into one class and being taught by one teacher. Out of the 60 learners who were assessed in literacy, 27 were able to read while 6 were struggling to read. The other 27 in the red level were unable to read.

## RESULTS FOR SCHOOL B

TOTAL NO OF LEARNERS	LEARNERS ASSESSED	GREEN LEVEL	YELLOW LEVEL	RED LEVEL	LEARNERS NOT ASSESSED
B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL
27 21 48	22 17 39	9 4 13	0 1 1	13 12 25	5 4 9

(Source: class teacher)

School B had 39 learners who were assessed. 13 were able to read, 1 was in the yellow level which means she was trying while 25 were lagging behind in the red level. These were learners from one class.



## RESULTS FOR SCHOOL C

TOTAL NO OF LEARNERS	LEARNERS ASSESSED	GREEN LEVEL	YELLOW LEVEL	RED LEVEL	LEARNERS NOT ASSESSED
B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL
85 104 189	76 94 170	10 12 22	31 46 77	35 36 71	9 10 19

(Source: senior teacher)

School C had a total of two classes and each class had its own teacher. The table contains results of the two classes combined by the school in-service coordinator. 22 learners out of the 170 assessed were able to read. 71 learners were not able to read while 77 were struggling.

## RESULTS FOR SCHOOL D

TOTAL NO OF LEARNERS	LEARNERS ASSESSED	GREEN LEVEL	YELLOW LEVEL	RED LEVEL	LEARNERS NOT ASSESSED
B G TOAL	B G TOAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL	B G TOTAL
225 258 483	196 219 415	30 33 63	96 93 189	92 106 198	32 36 68

(Source: school in-service coordinator)

School D had a total of six classes being taught by various teachers. The table consists of the total results of the six grade two classes in the school as combined by the school in-service coordinator. From the total of 415 learners, only 63 were able to read more than fifteen items while 198 were below the required standards. 189 were struggling to read in the yellow level.

### **4.1.4 Similar words in Bemba and Namwanga but having different meanings (homonyms)**

The study revealed that there were some words in Bemba which were similar to Namwanga words but the meanings of those words were different. Some of these words had short vowel sounds and others long vowel sounds according to the language. Table 2 below shows some examples of such words as given by class teachers during interviews.



TABLE 2: Bemba and Namwanga homonyms

WORD	MEANING IN BEMBA	MEANING IN NAMWANGA
<i>makasa</i>	feet	hands
<i>amanama</i>	meat	feet
<i>icilimba</i>	radio	chair
<i>impasa</i>	Reed mat	axe

The similar words with different meanings brought a lot of misunderstanding between the teacher and the learner. When the teacher said ‘*amakasa*’ referring to ‘feet’, the Namwanga speaking child interpreted it as ‘hands’. One teacher gave a practical example of what happened in her class. She was telling the learners to clean their feet on the door mat before entering the classroom so that they do not make the floor dirty. She said the following words in Bemba:

*Mwebana! Mulewamya amakasa yenu pali door mat elyo tamulaingila mu class.*

*Ninani uwingatulanga efyo bakumuna amakasa pali door mat?*

In a class of forty eight learners, three quarters of the learners put up their hands to demonstrate how to clean their feet on the door mat. The first three learners who were chosen cleaned their hands on the door mat – an action which surprised the teacher. Later the teacher discovered that ‘*amakasa*’ in Namwanga means ‘hands’. This is when the teacher understood why the learners behaved in that manner. The mention of the word ‘*amakasa*’ confused the Namwanga speaking learners who were the majority in class.

Another example is when a teacher was teaching about the dangers of sharp objects. The teacher asked learners to mention some of the sharp objects which they know. One learner mentioned ‘*impaasa*’. The teacher was confused because she knew that *impasa* was a reed mat used for sitting on. Some learners in class who knew both Bemba and Namwanga explained to the teacher that ‘*impaasa*’ is the same as ‘*akasembe*’ which in English is ‘axe’.



#### 4.1.5 Differences in vocabulary between Bemba and Namwanga

The study found out that most of the vocabulary items used in Bemba were different from those used in Namwanga. As a result, it caused a lot of challenges for the learners. A teacher would be saying one thing and the learner would interpret it in another way. Table 3 below shows some of the vocabulary differences that exist between Bemba and Namwanga which were mentioned by teachers as examples.

Table 3: Vocabulary differences between Bemba and Namwanga

BEMBA	NAMWANGA	ENGLISH
<i>akoni</i>	<i>akanyunyi</i>	bird
<i>kafundisha</i>	<i>musambilizya</i>	teacher
<i>iciibi</i>	<i>cisakati</i>	door
<i>umunani</i>	<i>nyaanyi</i>	relish
<i>mailo</i>	<i>umutondo</i>	tomorrow
<i>isabi</i>	<i>inswi</i>	fish
<i>cimo</i>	<i>weenga</i>	one
<i>kabiye</i>	<i>piita</i>	go
<i>ifingi</i>	<i>ivivuule</i>	many
<i>kwindi</i>	<i>ekuza</i>	rat
<i>amataba</i>	<i>ivisaaka</i>	maize

Apart from the vocabulary given by teachers, the researcher also got a story from a grade two icibemba literacy book so as to identify words which were similar to Namwanga words. The story reads as follows:

*Bushe mwalishiba uko amasanso yafuma? Ifipe tubomfya kuti fyakucena nga tatufibomfeshe bwino. Ifipe ifili nga umwele, isembe nafimbipo fiisuma ukufikwata. Lelo fibi nga cakuti tatulefibomfya bwino. Umulilo, macisa na fimbi fisuma kabili fiibi.*



(Do you know where accidents come from? The utensils we use can hurt you if you do not use them properly. Utensils like knife, axe and many more which are good to have. However, they are bad if we do not use them properly. Fire, matches and many others are good to have but can also be bad).

(Source: Icibemba 2014 Gileadi 2:7)

There is no Bemba word which is similar to Namwanga word in the passage.

The researcher went further to extract a story from a Namwanga book so that the words in Namwanga which were similar to the Bemba words could be underlined as follows:

*Awaana wakatuuka umutondotondo.*

*Wasaamba pamiinso.*

*Waseenda amabuuku yaawo.*

*Wakatuuka waya kusukuulu.*

*Munziila wasunkaanya awawuuye.*

*Musyani wawalamuuka ati, "Mwaziwuuka."*

*Awawuuye awatolelela awati*

*"Eyaa mukwayi mwaziwuuka."*

*Pasukuulu wazaana umusambiliizya.*

*Walamuuka awaana ati, "Mwaziwuuka wayaaya."*

*Awaana awati, "Eyaa mukwayi.*

*Mwaziwuuka wuuli musambiliizya"*

*Impiindi yakwinuuka yafiika.*

*Awaana wataliika ukunyoceela ku mwaawo.*

*Walaya umusambiliizya awati, "Tukaate, tulilolaana mutoondo."*

*Umusambiliizya nawe ati, "Mufiike wayaaya, mupite iceete."*

(Source: Chinamwanga Amatampulo 2- 2007)

(Children wake up early in the morning. They wash their faces. They carry their books. They start off going to school. While on their way to school, they



meet their friends. Musyani greets them, “Good morning?” The friends responded, “Good morning to you too.”

Upon reaching school, they find a teacher. A teacher greets the children, “Good morning friends.” Children respond, “Good morning, how are you teacher?”

It is time to knock off. Children begin going back home. The children bid farewell to their teacher, “Good bye, we shall see you tomorrow.” The teacher responds, “Go well my friends.”)

There are four words which have been underlined as being similar to Bemba.

The differences in vocabulary made learning very difficult for the children.

The study also found that there were some vocabulary which were similar with differences in vowel sounds (long and short vowel) and intonation. Table 4 below shows some examples of words that teachers gave which are similar in Bemba and Namwanga and whose meaning is similar.



TABLE 4: Bemba and Namwanga which are similar in meaning and pronunciation

BEMBA	NAMWANGA	ENGLISH
<i>tata</i>	<i>tata</i>	father
<i>ibuku</i>	<i>ibuuku</i>	book
<i>imbale</i>	<i>imbale</i>	plate
<i>Ing'anda</i>	<i>Ing'anda</i>	house
<i>supuni</i>	<i>supuuni</i>	spoon
<i>sopo</i>	<i>soopo</i>	soap
<i>cisakulo</i>	<i>cisakuulo</i>	comb
<i>sukulu</i>	<i>sukuulu</i>	school
<i>senda</i>	<i>seenda</i>	get
<i>umucele</i>	<i>umuceele</i>	salt
<i>pensulo</i>	<i>pensuulo</i>	pencil
<i>imbwa</i>	<i>imbwa</i>	dog

According to findings from the interviewees, the teacher would not distinguish Bemba and Namwanga words spoken orally because they sounded almost the same with same meaning. The only difference was the intonation.

The study also revealed that the same vowels (a,e,i,o,u) and consonants (except a few like x,v,z,w,q,h) are used in Bemba and Namwanga. Therefore, it is not very difficult for learners to come up with Bemba words even when Namwanga is their first language.

#### 4.1.6 Differences in morphology

There are some syllables which are commonly prefixed in Bemba words and Namwanga words. These syllables usually confuse learners. The learners end up replacing Bemba prefixes with Namwanga prefixes. For example, /ba/ is usually replaced with *wa* in '*batata*' where a child says '*watata*'. The following are some of the syllables which learners usually replace.

*Ba* with *wa*

*Fi* with *vi*

*Sha* with *zya*



*Si* with *zi*

*Fya* with *vya*

*Na* with *nya*

The knowledge of Namwanga causes learners to make the replacements mentioned.

The following words are examples of words where learners usually replaced some syllables from those of Bemba words to those of Namwanga words.

Table 5: Bemba words frequently mispronounced by Namwanga learners

WORD IN BEMBA	WORD REPLACED WITH NAMWANGA SYLLABLE	WORD IN ENGLISH
<i>batata</i>	<i>watata</i>	father
<i>ifyakucita</i>	<i>ivyakucita</i>	What to do
<i>umukashana</i>	<i>umukazyana</i>	girl
<i>amabula</i>	<i>amawula</i>	flowers
<i>bakafundisha</i>	<i>wakafundisha</i>	teacher
<i>iciibi</i>	<i>iciwi</i>	door

Bemba and Namwanga have similar morphological make up though the words are different.

For example, the following words have similar morphological structure.

*Abana* (a/ba/na) – *awana* (a/wa/na)

*Abakashana* (a/ba/ka/sha/na) – *awakazyana* (a/wa/ka/zya/na)

*Abalumendo* (a/ba/lu/me/ndo) – *awalumeendo* (a/wa/lu/mee/ndo)

However, some words have differences in morphological structure such as:

*Akoni* (a/ko/ni) – *akanyunyi* (a/ka/nyu/nyi)

*Bwino* (bwi/no) – *iceete* (i/cee/te)

*Naya* (na/ya) – *napiita* (na/pii/ta)



Bemba words have fewer syllables compared to Namwanga words which have more syllables though the meaning of the words is the same.

#### **4.2 Which challenges, if any, could teachers be encounter when teaching reading using Bemba as Medium of Instruction in Grade two in Nakonde?**

Regarding the second research question, interviews with teachers were conducted and classroom instruction observation was done which revealed the challenges which teachers were facing.

##### **4.2.1 Inability to know the learners' language**

Teachers complained that not knowing the language spoken by learners was a source of misunderstanding. Of all the grade two teachers in the participating schools, none of them was Namwanga by tribe. Some of them knew a bit of Namwanga because they had stayed in the area for some years. The teacher had to be very attentive in order to get what the learner was saying or make out what the learner was saying. Having the knowledge of the learners' language was of great importance in the teaching and learning process as it made communication easier. The researcher observed that during lessons the teacher used Bemba throughout the lesson while most of the learners would respond to the teacher's questions in Namwanga. There was a barrier in communication between the teacher and the learner. Some of the things that learners were saying in class during lesson observations were as follows:

*Musambiliizya, wee asakuleemba* (teacher, this one is not writing).

*Musambiliizya, nkuloonda ukuya ku cimbuusu* (teacher, I want to go to the toilet).

*Musambiliizya, wee akuciita ulombwa* (teacher, this one is fighting).

*Musambiliizya, akupaanga icoongo* (teacher, this one is making noise).

*Nkukuuma* (I will beat you).

Some grade 2 teachers could not understand what the learners were saying until other learners or teachers interpreted the phrases.

All the teachers interviewed said that children entered pre-school and grade one without any knowledge of Bemba. By the time the children were reaching Grade two, some of them were



still struggling with learning Bemba. This means that all the lessons conducted in Bemba were not understood by the child and learning had not taken place. After learning Bemba that is when the child starts understanding the content in all the subjects. At one school half of the learners in class were made to sit on the floor in class even when desks were available. When the teacher was asked why the children were made to sit on the floor she said that it was because they were doing Grade one work as they did not break through (they were unable to read or write).

All the teachers interviewed in the four participating schools said that lack of knowledge of the learners' language made teaching quite difficult as communication was not effective. One teacher said that

Even when English was the medium of instruction, explaining new concepts was done in the learners' familiar language because it made understanding very easy. But agony is when the teacher does not know the learners' language to make things clearer.

At one of the schools, the researcher found out that one Grade two teacher did not know the familiar language of the learners which is Namwanga and did not know Bemba which was the medium of instruction. The teacher was at a loss because she had no confidence as she could not express herself in the medium of instruction. The school had only three teachers apart from the head teacher and deputy head teacher who also had classes to teach. They could not find a teacher who knew the familiar language of the learners. Among the three teachers, there was one who knew Bemba very well and she also knew a bit of the children's familiar language (Namwanga). That teacher was given a Grade one class as it also needed a teacher who knew Bemba and Namwanga because learners had not yet been exposed to Bemba.

The Grade Two teacher complained that the progress for the learners was slow because language affected communication between the teacher and the learner. Teachers said that they had to consult for them to teach effectively using Bemba and they had to consult in order to understand what the learner was saying in Namwanga. Sometimes this consultation had to be done in the course of the lesson which meant that the teacher had to leave the learners in class to go and consult from another person who understood better. Learning was mostly done through translation and interpretation. In addition, teachers complained that translation and interpretation consumed a lot of learning time because most of the activities needed



clarification. Learners ended up lagging behind all the time. The learners were always a year or two behind the normal grade level.

A Grade two teacher at another school admitted that she uses English when she fails to find suitable words in Bemba. She went on to condemn the language policy of using local language for instruction from pre-school to Grade four. The interviewee said that

This familiar language medium of instruction is a waste of time and resources. A child comes from home with Namwanga, at school the child learns Bemba, then later on in Grade five the child changes to English. At the end of the three years of learning in English in Grade seven, a child has to write an examination in English in all the subjects except the local language in the area. This is torturing children who can straight away learn through the medium of English so that at Grade seven the children will be very competent in English.

The teacher went further to say that

If English was the medium of instruction from Grade one to tertiary learners would be very competent and teachers would not complain of being posted to places where they do not understand the language of instruction as English is understood by every teacher in Zambia. As the policy is currently, it would be better to post teachers to places they have chosen to avoid problems with language though posting teachers anywhere is good for national unity. It takes some years for some people to learn a new language while others are too rigid to learn other people's languages.

The teacher was very bitter about the language situation in Zambia. She accused the language planners of not being realistic and fair in the decisions they were making.

#### **4.2.2 Difficulties in introducing new phonemes**

The study established that another problem that teachers faced was when they wanted to introduce the new phoneme for the day. A teacher could introduce the new phoneme by asking learners to identify a picture and from the name given, a phoneme could be introduced. The teacher's expectation is that the children would name the picture or object in Bemba because it is the medium of instruction. At one particular school, the teacher narrated what happened one day when she wanted to introduce the phoneme /y/. She displayed a picture of a mango and asked learners to mention the name of the object they were seeing in picture. All the learners who were pointed at said they were seeing '*inyembe*' which is the Namwanga name for mango. The teacher was expecting learners to say '*yembe*' which is the Bemba name for mango. The



teacher felt that her efforts were not yielding good results. Interaction between the teacher and the learner was not very effective. The teacher said that she always ended up using lecture method to avoid the confusion because of differences in vocabulary. The teacher would just give the information to learners who in turn just parroted without properly understanding. Eliciting the desired words from learners proved to be difficult because there are so many instances when a teacher wanted learners to mention a particular object in Bemba but they ended up mentioning it in Namwanga. This in turn disturbed the flow of the lesson as the teacher was diverted to start explaining terms in Bemba and Namwanga.

#### **4.2.3 Lack of teaching material**

All the teachers teaching Grade 2 in the four participating schools strongly brought out the issue of lack of text books for teaching in Bemba. One teacher said that as a teacher, teaching is not a problem when all the necessary material is available. She explained that the school has enough literacy books but other subjects such as science, mathematics, social studies and technology studies do not have a single book in stock. It is up to the teacher to translate information from old books and come up with work that is in line with the new curriculum. If books were available, the teacher could easily learn Bemba which is the language of instruction in Nakonde District. This in turn could make teaching easier for teachers. The teacher further said that early exposure to books can help teachers and learners to learn Bemba faster since it is the medium of instruction.

### **4.3 How do parents perceive the use of Bemba as MoI in primary schools of Nakonde District?**

#### **4.3.1 Parents' perception on the use of Bemba as MoI**

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with parents revealed that most of the parents were not in favor of using Bemba as MoI because they had different expectations from the Ministry of General Education. One parent said that:

I will only feel that my child is educated when he starts speaking English fluently. The idea of using Bemba is not welcome here in Nakonde. It is even better to use Namwanga than Bemba.

Most of the parents shared the same view that English was the best MoI in Nakonde. Another parent said that:



When our children start learning English in Grade 1, they will be very fluent and will speak like a white man. This will make us happy because we will know that our children are learning.

It was the consensus of most of the parents that the use of Bemba as MoI has made children to lose interest in school because they feel that school was no longer interesting.

One parent with a different view said that:

Teachers and people from the government are experts who know what is good for our children. If they say that using Bemba as MoI is the best way for them to learn, then we just have to follow because they have experience and reasons for their decisions. Our duty as parents is to support them and encourage our children to go to school. It is only unfortunate that we cannot assist them with reading in Bemba because it is not our language.

One other parent aired her views when she said that:

Most of the activities in the community are carried out in Namwanga. People in church use Namwanga for preaching and they also have Bibles and hymn books written in Namwanga which they are able to read very well. At the market and other places, Namwanga is used when communicating to one another. Community meetings are addressed in Namwanga. It is only at school that children are required to use Bemba. The government should look into this because it is a problem.

The views of parents towards the use of Bemba as MoI were mostly negative. Namwanga was being recommended as the best MoI in Nakonde District.

#### **4.3.2 Difficulties faced by parents in helping their children with homework in literacy such as reading**

Focus group discussions with parents revealed that parents were facing a lot of challenges in helping their children with homework. Most of the parents who participated in the discussion said that they were not able to help with homework at all due to various reasons and some of them being that they did not know enough Bemba for them to help with homework. One parent said that he could read Namwanga and if the homework was in Namwanga, he could easily help. Reading and understanding Bemba was a challenge.

Another parent who expressed himself in Namwanga said



*Anchito ya musambiliizya ukuwavwa awaana, aco tuka watwaliila kusukuulu. Inchito itu nga akwasi akukaala amauniform nama buuku ya waana witu nukulipila indalaama zya kusukuulu*

(It is the duty of the teacher to help children. That is why we take them to school. Our duty as parents is buy school uniforms for them and to pay school fees).

Teachers were experts in teaching and so they should not push back their work to parents who did not know anything. Let teachers do the work they were trained and employed for.

Some other parents said that they were busy looking for food for the family and by the time they were reaching home they were exhausted and could not help with homework.

One parent said that children were suffering at school because they went home with a lot of complaints. This parent said the exact words that a child used when he went home one day after school

*Sakwivwa vyo umusambiliizya ukulaanda, aco nsakulonda ukuya kusukuulu. Naziina lekani mbombe kuvyalo. Umusambiliizya akaonvya iciwemba co nsakwinvwa. Nte kweleengaanya ukusambilila icizuungu kusukuulu. Uzye iciwemba ncilintwala kwi?*

(I don't understand what the teacher says and so I don't want to go to school. Please just let me work at the farm. The teacher always uses Bemba which I don't understand. I thought I was going to learn English at school. Where will Bemba take me?)

The parent said that he had to force the child to go to school every day because the child did not seem to have interest in school because of the language that the teacher was using which the child did not know.

One parent who was also a teacher was the only one who agreed that he was helping with homework without any difficulties. He had no problem with the language of instruction, he was actually very happy and he commended the Ministry for the language policy. Other parents said that they helped in mathematics homework because it did not have a lot of words but figures and signs which they could easily understand and interpret.

Some parents further indicated that their children were learning quite alright but most of them had to be forced to continue going to school claiming that they were not getting what the



teacher was teaching. They said that the teacher was using Bemba for teaching all the subjects which the children did not understand well. Some children complained to their parent that they felt like strangers when they were at school because the language was strange. Parents wanted their children to learn English when they went to school instead of introducing them to another local language. Five parents out of six who participated in a focus group indicated that they wanted their children to learn in English instead of Bemba. They went further to say that English was the main reason their children were going to school.

#### **4.4 What measures can be taken to address the challenges that learners may be encountering when Bemba is used as MoI for initial literacy?**

Findings reveal that there are a number of measures that can be taken in order to address the challenges being faced by learners, teachers and parents. One teacher explained that,

The Ministry of Education should carry out a survey and allocate languages of instruction accordingly so that they meet the language needs of specific areas. Where there are Bemba speaking people, Bemba should be adopted as Medium of Instruction and where there are Namwanga speaking people, Namwanga should be adopted as Medium of Instruction.

The respondents also said that teachers should be trained in different regional languages so that they should even be posted to their areas of specialization. This would reduce the issue of misunderstanding between the teacher and the learner. On the other hand, one respondent said that,

We are ‘One Zambia and One Nation’. Children should be encouraged to learn other languages just the way they learn English. This will bring unity in our country. As parents, it is our duty to encourage our children to be open minded.

The other issue that was brought up by most parents had to do with illiteracy. Parents requested for adult classes so that they could learn and be able to assist their children with homework and other school work. They said that it was embarrassing to see young children read while the elderly people cannot read.



## **4.5 Conclusion**

The findings presented in chapter four show that the use of Bemba as MoI in Nakonde has effects on the reading levels of grade 2 learners. This is seen in the week 10 assessment results and classroom lesson observation. It is not only the learners who are faced with challenges but the teachers and parents too. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.0 Overview**

This chapter discusses the findings on the effect on their read levelsof Grade 2 learners when Bemba is used as medium of instruction in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District. The findings are discussed in accordance with the research questions that guided the study and the themes that were generated from the questions. The research questions were as follows:

- I. What are the effects of using Bemba as MoI on reading levels of grade 2 learners in Nakonde District?
- II. Which challenges, if any, could teachers be facing when teaching reading using Bemba as MoI in grade 2 in Nakonde District?
- III. How do parents perceive the use of Bemba as MoI in primary schools of Nakonde District?
- IV. What measures can be taken to address the challenges that learners could be encountering when Bemba is used as MoI for initial literacy?

### **5.1 What are the effects of using Bemba as MoI on reading levels of Grade 2 learners in Nakonde District?**

#### **5.1.1 Lack of understanding/ comprehension**

The study found out that learners had difficulties in understanding when Bemba was used as medium of instruction. This was because most of the learners were coming from Namwanga speaking homes. All manner of communication was done in Namwanga. Namwanga was the first language the children were exposed to when they were born. It is their mother tongue. The children only encountered Bemba when they entered school in pre-school or grade one at the age of six to nine years. Learners found it very difficult to understand Bemba because Bemba and Namwanga were not mutually intelligible which meant that there were very few similarities between the Bemba and Namwanga vocabulary. When learners did not understand Bemba, learning was not taking place effectively as this was seen from the week 10 assessment results and the class observations conducted. Bemba was a second language to the learners may be to some extent, as good as English. Learning through the medium of a second language puts



learners at a disadvantage as they will not get anything from the lessons taught. It delays the whole process of learning. Benson (2002) is quoted in Ball (2011:24) saying that “Children’s L1 has been established as the most efficient language for early literacy and content instruction”. It is better when there is continuity from the language used at home with the language used at school. Duroyaiye (1970) in Zimba (2007) says that the home language must continue in grade one to enable teachers extend the listening and speaking skills of the first language. This should be done simultaneously with the teaching of initial literacy skills.

The learners also found it difficult to acquire the initial literacy because of not being able to understand Bemba. Initial literacy skills are learnt once and as such, pride (1995) advises that they should be learnt in a known language so that the skills are carefully mastered. Learners fail to understand languages which are not native to them and this agrees with Schroeder (2004) in Mubanga (2012) who says that were the languages are not native to pupils, many of them fail to speak or fully understand them. Schroeder goes on to say that the quality at Education that exists in linguistically diverse rural areas at a developing nation is low. Rural areas are the most hit in terms of using second languages which they do not know because most rural areas are mono lingual. Nakonde rural schools are full of learners who came from a mono lingual background of Namwanga speakers.

Socio – cultural theory states that language is a tool used for intellectual development and the environment in which a child is, plays an important part in learning. If an environment where a child is, is not considered in the learning process, then an important part in a child’s learning has been left out. The prevailing situation does not agree with the socio-culture theory because the child’s environment has been side lined and ignored by making learners to use a second language (Bemba) which is not their mother tongue or familiar languages. Mother tongue based Education is a basic need as well as a human right. There are rights which are needed even by school going children. Mwape (2002:84) talks about “the need for rights of individuals to identify with their mother tongue and to receive Education and other services in the medium of it”. Denying the children their rights has far reaching consequences. It was found that children easily stopped school as it was meaningless to them because they could not participate actively during lessons. Zimba 2007:106 says,



It is not just in-depth understanding of concepts and skills that is important, but also looking at the effects that long ages have on mental nourishment, culture attachment, socio-psychological effects and the value that language adds to pupils lives and these should begin from their homes where traditional norms have to be maintained to the outer world where culture may be mixed to the school, where now skills and knowledge must be introduced to pupils.

Language gives an individual a sense of belonging and a cultural attachment and school through a familiar language of instruction may help in promoting that sense of belonging.

### **5.1.2 Mispronunciation of Bemba words**

The study revealed that learners mispronounced some Bemba words. They mispronounced Bemba words mainly due to the interference of Namwanga which they have grown up with. Examples of mispronunciations have already been given in chapter (4.1.2). Children spoke Bemba as if they were speaking Namwanga and sometimes it confused the teacher. Pronunciation plays an important role in human speech and communication. Correct pronunciation of words is the only condition that can bring out meaningful speech. In order to convey the actual meaning and message of the delivered speech, it must be sounded and articulated correctly (Ahamed, 2013). Pronunciation should not be taken lightly as it has great impact on meaning. The communication between the learners and the teachers was not effective due to lack of proficiency. Some learners ended up using Namwanga when they could not speak Bemba. It was found that the teacher did not know Namwanga, so there was communication breakdown. Language was a barrier to effective communication which turn affected the flow of lessons. During lessons, the teacher would be teaching in Bemba while learners would respond in Bemba which was not clear and sometimes use Namwanga.

Children in Nakonde could be fluent speakers if they could maintain one language which they have grown up with than making an abrupt change. The culture at school does not support proper learning because of the change in language. The children speak Namwanga at home and when they start school they suddenly switch to Bemba which they are not familiar with. It is in contradiction with socio-cultural practices which support continuity from what the child knows.



### **5.1.3 Learners not knowing the language of instruction**

Learners did not know the language of instruction because their mother tongue was Namwanga and the language of play in the area was also Namwanga. The number of learners who lacked proficiency in Bemba was very high. Three quarters of the learners in class were not proficient in Bemba and it was difficult for the learners to understand the teacher. That is why there were situations where the teacher said that learners should clean their feet on the door mat but most of them cleaned their hands on the door mat. Most of the learners did not understand the instructions given in Bemba. To make the matters worse, the teacher did not understand Namwanga which was being used by the learners. Learners understood and spoke Namwanga very well and fluently. Lack of proficiency in the medium of instruction makes learning very difficult and retrogressive as Matafwali (2010) revealed that lack of proficiency in the medium of instruction negatively impacted their literacy development. This was in a study where Matafwali wanted to determine how lack of proficiency in the language of instruction explains difficulties in learning to read. Reading levels have also been affected as they are low.

The reading levels for the grade two learners in Nakonde were very low as could be seen in the assessment for week ten of term one. The results of the learners shown in chapter four clearly show that those learners who understood Bemba performed far much better than those who did not understand. The teachers said that most of the learners who were Namwanga by tribe and had no exposure to Bemba before entering grade one had difficulties with Bemba. Learners ended up performing very poorly in their reading. Ball (2011:25) agrees that:

Children who begin school in an unfamiliar language face dual challenges of acquiring the new language while learning the curriculum in that new language.

Ball seems to support the socio-cultural theory where the child's intellectual development is dependent on the interactions the child has with his/her surrounding and the community at large. Most of the learners in Nakonde schools visited by the researcher were in red level. Those who knew Bemba are the ones who were in green level which is the level of high achievers who read more sounds, syllables and words. The learners in green level were able to score fifteen points and more out of the total twenty points allocated in the assessment.



According to the results from schools on reading levels, school A was performing far much better than the other schools because it is the one which had the largest number of readers in green level compared to the total number of learners assessed.

When we look at the results for school B, they show that the learners either knew how to read or they did not know at all because the learners were on the two extremes of good readers or poor readers. Only one learner was in the group of average readers. The yellow level implies that learners are progressing towards knowing how to read but the results showed that there was a problem. It is at school B where learners were found sitting on the floor doing grade one work when the learners were in grade two. The performance of the learners was below their grade level.

The performance of pupils in school C and D was as bad as that of school B because many learners as seen from the information in chapter four, could not speak and read Bemba. The number of learners who could not read was too high which made me to conclude that Bemba had a negative effect on reading levels in Nakonde District for the Grade 2 learners.

#### **5.1.4 Similar words in Bemba and Namwanga but having different meanings (homonyms)**

There are words which were found to be similar in Bemba and Namwanga but the meaning was different. Though the words were similar, Namwanga words have long vowel sounds while Bemba words have short vowel sounds. In Bemba, a read mat is *impasa*, while in Namwanga an axe is *impaasa*, Radio in Bemba is *icilimba* while chair in Namwanga is *iciliimba*. These words brought a lot of confusion between Bemba speakers and Namwanga speakers and also between learners and the teacher. The teacher would mention a word in Bemba but learners look at it as a Namwanga word and misinterpreted the whole sentence. This brought arguments between the learners and the teacher since each one was sure of what he or she was saying. The learner was sure of what the word meant in his/her own language while the teacher was also sure of what she was saying. It was very frustrating on the part of the teacher because it retarded progress as the teacher had to explain that she wanted the meaning in Bemba.



The Namwanga speaking learners' linguistic performance was not good. According to Simwinga (2006:173) "Linguistic performance involves one's ability to use a given language appropriately in line with social norms governing language use in a given speech community." The learners were not able to use Bemba appropriately due to different understandings of words though the words were similar. It is important that the children learn initial literacy in their mother tongue so that they can freely express themselves. Kelly (1999) supports the idea that mother tongues assist pupils to learn literacy lessons without difficulties and learners are able to express themselves eloquently, candidly and precisely. Learners are able to explain and describe things easily and confidently. Basic literacy skills taught in a familiar language will be easily and quickly understood by learners.

Socio-cultural theory is in support of the idea that learners should be scaffolded on what they already know so that they can perform well especially on the use of language, unlike the idea of bringing a new language which is not familiar to the learner.

#### **5.1.5 Differences in vocabulary between Bemba and Namwanga**

Differences in vocabulary between Bemba and Namwanga language was another challenge that learners faced when Bemba was used as medium of instruction. Bemba as it was confirmed in the study has more differences in vocabulary than similarities with Namwanga. Namwanga originated from East Africa while Bemba originated from Southern Zaire (Kola) and this could be the reason why these two languages do not share vocabulary items (Simwinga 2006). It is unfortunate that learners have to use Bemba in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde. Though the MoGE acknowledges the use of familiar Zambian languages as official languages of instruction, Tambulukani (2015) says that Zambian learners at primary school level are not benefitting educationally from this policy because many children are not familiar with the local language being used as language of instruction in their area as is the case in Nakonde. Learners do not know Bemba which is designated as the language of instruction because their familiar language is Namwanga. Most of the places in Nakonde are rural and Namwanga is widely and predominantly spoken. Learning was negatively affected such that learners were unable to breakthrough to literacy at an early stage. Reading levels have continued to decline and one of the contributing factors may be that there is no accurate, reliable information on the language situation in Nakonde.



The two stories in Bemba and Namwanga confirm that there is no mutual intelligibility between Bemba and Namwanga. The Bemba story does not have any word which is similar to a Namwanga one. The Namwanga passage has only two words which are repeated to make them four. This clearly confirms that there is a problem in terms of language of instruction in Nakonde. It is possible to carry out a conversation in Bemba without coming across a Namwanga word in the Bemba vocabulary and vice-versa. This simply shows how a teacher can lose the learners especially Namwanga learners, during a lesson. The teacher may be teaching but a pupil may not understand anything at all.

#### **5.1.6 Differences in morphological make up of words**

The study found that learners were replacing prefixes for Bemba words with prefixes for Namwanga words especially in words which had similar roots in Bemba and Namwanga. Learners would say ‘watata’ instead of ‘batata’. This was happening mainly because the learners were more familiar with Namwanga than Bemba. Namwanga was always interfering in their speech. There was lack of linguistic competence in the language of instruction (Bemba). Linguistic competence, according to Simwinga (2006:173) refers to “One’s knowledge of the formal or grammatical rules of a given language”. The learners were not following the grammatical rules in Bemba which made the children’s spoken Bemba to sound more like Namwanga. Teachers resorted to submerging learners into Bemba language such that learning was no longer meaningful. Learners were just parroting Bemba words without really understanding. Gacheche (2010) quotes Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:105) saying “A system where instruction is carried out in a language children do not speak is referred to as submersion, as it is comparable to forcibly holding a child under water”. Effective learning should take place in a conducive atmosphere where learners will speak and express themselves freely. It should not be a forcing matter.

### **5.2 Which challenges, if any, could teachers be encountering when teaching reading using Bemba as MoI in Grade 2 in Nakonde District?**

#### **5.2.1 Teachers’ lack of proficiency in Bemba**

The study shows that teachers were not fluent in Bemba as a result there was code switching from Bemba to English and vice versa. At one of the study schools, the teachers always greeted the learners in English and the learners also responded in English despite Bemba being the



medium of instruction from pre-school to grade four. For learners to respond in English, it simply shows that it was a daily routine and learners had become accustomed to it. Whenever learners put up their hands to answer questions asked by the teacher, learners would also shout 'me teacher! Me teacher! Me teacher!' It was clear during lesson observation that the teacher had difficulties with Bemba which was the medium of instruction that is why there was a mixture of Bemba and English, the teacher struggled to use as much Bemba as possible throughout the lesson but the pronunciation of words and intonation was different. The learners who knew Bemba could clearly see the teacher's inadequacies and this made the teacher not to have confidence in herself. This behavior affected the learners as well because they did not receive the necessary Education. Pronunciation of words correctly at grade two is very important to the learners. When a teacher fails to distinguish between Bemba and Namwanga words spoken orally because of the same sounds, it will be easy for the teacher to mislead the learners. On the other hand, the similarities can be used to the teachers' advantage without learners realizing that the teacher has not understood.

Miti and Monaka (2009) reported that when teachers were recruited, they were taken to places where the medium of instruction was not their mother tongue and so they failed to teach initial literacy in the recommended Zambian language. It is important for the government to consider the language that the teacher is familiar with when posting them because the learners end up losing out due to the teacher's inadequacies. It can take a teacher two or three years to learn a new language and learners will be expected to endure for all those years. This will translate into not progressing at the normal pace.

The teacher was learning Bemba as she was teaching making the process a teaching and learning process at the same time. This was not good for the learners as it derailed their progress. That is why the Ministry of General Education should not take lightly the posting of teachers. If teachers are posted anywhere, the ministry should also take up the responsibility and come up with a deliberate policy where teacher should receive serious intensive language training for a minimum of six months so that teachers can become competent in the medium of instruction of a particular area. For Nakonde, teachers will be more effective when they learn Bemba as well as Namwanga. Bemba is the medium of instruction while Namwanga is the learners' familiar language. This will reduce on the loss of learning time. If the situation is left



the way it is, it means that the first two to three years of school will be used to learn the language of instruction (Bemba) and the learners' familiar language (Namwanga) before actual learning commences. This implies that learners will start learning properly in Grade three or four which will be too late because they will soon be in Grade five where the medium of instruction will change to English.

The teachers found it difficult to correct the mistakes and errors made by learners because the teacher was also making mistakes and errors in Bemba due to lack of proficiency in Bemba. This made learners to go on with errors and mistakes without correction to other grades.

### **5.2.2 Inability to know the learners' language**

It is important that a teacher should know the learners' language especially in situations like the one prevailing in Nakonde where Namwanga is the predominant language in Nakonde. The study found that most of the grade two teachers did not know Namwanga which is the learners' familiar language. This created a lot of misunderstanding between the teacher and the learner. Teachers were no longer effective in their teaching because of communication which was not effective. Lack of knowledge of the learners' language brought about misunderstanding when introducing new concepts to learners. Whenever the teacher gave instructions in Bemba, learners responded in Namwanga making communication difficult for the teacher who did not know Namwanga.

Involving learners when introducing new concepts proved to be time wasting because the teacher had to finalize the lesson by giving the learners the facts as they were even when learners did not understand. The kind of learning where learners were not involved encouraged memorization and rote learning. Learners only memorized without understanding. They could recite syllables and words. Teaching and learning without proper interaction between the learner and the teacher is not effective.

### **5.2.3 Lack of teaching material**

The study revealed that grade two learners had literacy books in the medium of instruction but there were no books in other subjects written in the medium of instruction. Teachers had to use their initiatives for them to teach other subjects like mathematics and social studies using Bemba. They had to translate old English books to Bemba. There are some words which



teachers found difficult to translate, teachers mentioned them in English. Teachers looked at the issue of books with great importance as it was cardinal to have books especially during planning. Early exposure to different kinds of books helps learners to improve their usage of language and their reading skills. The letters and words which they identify in different books will be used to improve on their vocabulary. The beauty about books is that they can be able to carry them home where they will receive help from their parents or other more knowledgeable members of the family. This will in turn lessen the work of the teacher. This will also encourage continuity and interaction between home and school.

### **5.3 How do parents perceive the use of Bemba as MoI in primary schools in Nakonde District?**

Parents have a negative view on the use of Bemba as MoI in Grade 2 in Nakonde District. Bemba is seen as a draw back in the education children. Parents are of the view that English is the only language which proves that a person has been to school. My argument is that children can learn using a familiar language as MoI and be able to produce good citizens. The problem is that Bemba is not the familiar language in Nakonde and that is why it has received negative views from parents who are mostly native Namwanga speakers. Each tribal group would like to maintain its culture and this is usually done through language. From the sentiments of many parents in Nakonde, Zambia can be counted among the many African countries who have failed to invest in mother tongue. UNESCO (2008) says that African countries who have depended on strong lingua franca, like the case of Tanzania which uses Swahili for schooling, have not invested in mother tongue as the language being used is not familiar to children.

#### **5.3 .2 Difficulties faced by parents in helping their children with homework in literacy such as reading**

Parents were unable to help their children with homework mostly because of not knowing Bemba especially in its written form. Parental involvement was lacking because parents were not able to assist the children due to reasons such as being busy, not being trained to teach their children and that they had already entrusted their children to teachers who should do their work instead of burdening the parents with work they cannot do. The researcher concluded that the main reason parents were not able to assist children with homework was illiteracy. Most of the parents who participated in the focus group discussion were not able to read and write Bemba



though some said that they could read Namwanga Bible and sing hymns written in Namwanga. The levels of illiteracy among parents in Nakonde were quite high.

The children in Nakonde rural schools lacked parental involvement in their education. According to Tom and Chan (2009), parental involvement in homework instills a positive attitude regarding homework and school learning. Learners tend to develop good work habits and are able to regulate themselves in terms of school work. Parental involvement promotes learning but it is lacking in Namwanga parents, thereby, disadvantaging the children. Kernan (2012) also agrees that there is robust evidence which links the home learning environment, including parenting behavior and attitudes, to children's learning outcomes. It is important to encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning and this can be done by making the language of instruction user friendly (use familiar language). This will greatly promote parental involvement in homework.

The socio-cultural theory requires the involvement of parents and other more knowledgeable people to be involved in the learning process for positive results. Parents and other caregivers are tools which help children internalize what they learn.

#### **5.4 What measures can be taken to address the challenges that learners may be encountering when Bemba is used as MoI for initial literacy?**

Regarding measures that can be taken to address the challenges that learners may be encountering when Bemba is used as MoI, the researcher is in agreement with most of the views aired out by the respondents. When parents are literate, it is easier for them to encourage and motivate their children to go to school and to provide them with school requirements without complaining. It will also be easy for parents to help with homework effectively. Interactions between parents and children will be very constructive.

Language is an important tool in learning to read and write. Social interactions are conducted using language. The idea of teaching specific languages in colleges of education would help though it may be looked at as duplication of work.



## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study. Some of the issues that have been brought out are that lack of knowledge of the learners' language by the teacher negatively contributed to the low reading levels of the learners it is therefore important for the teacher to make an effort to learn the learners' language. Consented effort by the policy makers, teachers and parents is required in order to improve the reading levels of learners in Nakonde District.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **6.0 Overview**

This research was set out to establish the effects of using Bemba as Medium of instruction on the reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area of Nakonde District. This chapter sums up the entire study. It begins by giving a recap of the research questions and then the conclusion follows. Lastly, it gives the recommendations of the study based on the major findings.

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The research questions of this study were:

1. What are the effects of using Bemba as MoI on reading levels of grade 2 learners in Nakonde District?
2. Which challenges, if any, could teachers be facing when teaching reading using Bemba as MoI in grade 2 in Nakonde District?
3. How do parents perceive the use of Bemba as MoI in primary schools of Nakonde District?
4. What measures can be taken to address the challenges that learners may be encountering when Bemba is used as MoI for initial literacy

This study has attempted to answer the research questions using a case study design within the qualitative approach. The study used interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document analysis for data collection. It has been shown in this study that learners, teachers and parents faced different types of challenges because of the use of Bemba as MOI in grade two in Nakonde which is a predominantly Namwanga speaking area. The types of challenges that were being faced were phonological, morphological and semantic. The challenges encountered caused learners to mispronounce Bemba words and misinterpret Bemba words which were similar to Namwanga words. Learners also failed to understand explanations given by teachers in Bemba. Pupils lacked proficiency in the MoI while teachers lacked proficiency in the learner's language and in some cases in the MoI.



The study also confirmed that there was no mutual intelligibility between Bemba and Namwanga mainly because of the different places of origin. As a result, there was a big difference between Bemba and Namwanga vocabulary. Namwanga speaking learners found it very difficult to learn in Bemba. Learners did not participate actively during lessons due to lack of competence in the language of instruction. Some teachers also lacked competence in the language of instruction as well as the learners' language which made teaching very challenging. Teachers ended up using lecture method when teaching in order to avoid misunderstanding with learners. Learner involvement in lessons was very minimal. Parents failed to help their children with homework because of not being competent with the medium of instruction and also because of high levels of illiteracy among the parents. Children did not have a role model.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- The head teachers in Nakonde District should allocate Grade One to Four classes to teachers who are familiar with Bemba which is the medium of instruction and Namwanga which is the learners' familiar language in Nakonde so that communication between teachers and learners will be effective.
- The District Education Office should come with a deliberate policy where newly deployed teachers should be taught the medium of instruction (Bemba) and the children's familiar language (Namwanga) for a period of at least six months.
- The Ministry of General Education should increase on the number of official recognized regional languages by adopting Namwanga to be used as medium of instruction in Nakonde District.
- School head teachers should sensitize parents in the community on the benefits of their involvement in the education of their children. Parents should assist their children with homework as homework is a policy requirement by the Ministry of General Education. Adult literacy classes should be introduced so that parents can understand the importance of education in general.



### **6.3 Recommendation for future research**

- This study was limited to Nakonde District of Muchinga Province of Zambia. Studies should be carried out in other districts of Muchinga Province in order to find out the types of challenges learners and teachers are facing.



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[www.sjut.ac.tz/policies& forms/observation checklist.pdf](http://www.sjut.ac.tz/policies&forms/observation%20checklist.pdf)



## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Interview guide for teachers and head teachers**

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

Title of Research

Effects of using Bemba as medium of instruction on reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District, Zambia

1. What are the languages spoken by children in this school / area?
2. What language do you normally use during lessons in this school?
3. Do you think Bemba and Namwanga are related in any way?
4. If they are related, what are some of the similarities?
5. What do you think are some of the differences between Bemba and Namwanga? Kindly mention them.
6. What do you think are some of the errors children make as a result of the differences between Bemba and Namwanga?
7. How else does Bemba as a medium of instruction affect the reading levels of grade two pupils?
8. In your opinion, what do you think are the types of challenges teachers face when using Bemba as a medium of instruction to grade two pupils?
9. How do you think the performance of Bemba and Namwanga speaking learners is?



Thank you for your time and cooperation.

### **Appendix B: Observation checklist**

The researcher to observe the following during the lesson:

The language used by teachers and learners when:

#### Teacher Bemba Namwanga

- Introducing the lesson
- Explaining difficult terms
- Defining new concepts
- Assigning tasks

#### learners

- Asking for permission
- Group discussion
- Asking questions
- Talking to their friends
- Reporting other learners
- Playing outside the classroom with friends
- Talking to the teacher outside the classroom



## **Appendix C: Focus group discussion guide**

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

Title of Research

Effects of using Bemba as medium of instruction on reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area in Nakonde District, Zambia

1. What language is commonly used in your area?
2. Do you help your children with homework?
3. What do you think are the challenges children face because of using Bemba as medium of instruction?
4. What challenges do you face as a parent when you are helping your children with homework?
5. How do you feel when your child is using Bemba which he/she has learnt at school?
6. What are your final words?



**Appendix D: Consent form for participants**  
**Consent Form**

I am **Mable Chinyama Makumba** a Postgraduate student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Literacy and Learning. I am conducting a research entitled 'Effects of using Bemba as Medium of instruction on the reading levels of grade two pupils in a predominantly Namwanga speaking area of Nakonde District.' I need to get your earnest opinion in order for me to accurately write on the topic. The Ministry of Education has given me the permission to conduct the study. I am assuring you that the information you are going to give will be kept confidential. If you are willing to take part in this study, please write your name in the spaces provided below. Should you fill at any point of the study, like during a discussion, interview or answering a questionnaire that you cannot continue, you are free to withdraw.

Participant .....

Name .....

Signature .....



**Appendix E: Week 10 assessment for school A**  
**SUBJECT: CIBEMBA**

**GRADE: TWO (2)**

**SECTION A: IFIUNDA (SOUNDS)**

1. /nsh/
2. /fw/
3. /nk/
4. /nd/
5. /nt/
6. /kw/

**SECTION B: IFILUNDWA (SYLLABLES)**

1. /mbe/
2. /lwe/
3. /mpu/
4. /nge/
5. /fyu/
6. /ya/

**SECTION C: AMASHIWI (WORDS)**

1. Akatabo
2. Imyaka
3. Ndume
4. Amatwi
5. Ukulolesha
6. Bakafundisha
7. Balekweba
8. Ukwikata



## **Appendix F: Week 10 assessment for school B**

SUBJECT: CIBEMBA

GRADE: TWO (2)

### SECTION A: IFIUNDA (SOUNDS)

1. /nsh/
2. /p/
3. /m/
4. /nd/
5. /mb/
6. /ng/

### SECTION B: IFIUNDA (SYLLABLES)

1. /ya/
2. /ndu/
3. /wi/
4. /she/
5. /mbe/
6. /nge/

### SECTION C: AMASHIWI (WORDS)

1. Akanya
2. Ndume
3. Chanda
4. Akatabo
5. Imisango
6. Ukulolesha
7. Insele
8. Bakafundisha