

Familiar Language Based Instruction Versus Unfamiliar Language for the Teaching of Reading and Writing Literacy Skills: A Focus on Zambian Languages and English at Two Primary School in Lusaka

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Abstract

The article is a product of a research conducted to establish the educational value associated with mother tongue based instruction that is familiar to learners versus other languages such as English and local languages that are not familiar to learners as medium of instruction in the teaching of reading and writing literacy skills to grade one at primary level. This was a case study under qualitative research design of post-positivism knowledge generation paradigm. Data was collected from 67 respondents from two primary schools where at one school they used Cinyanja as medium of instruction while at another school they used English language. The specific methods used to collect data were donethrough interviews, focus group discussions and observation of lessons. Some documents were also reviewed on the study related to the topic at hand. The study revealed that both Zambian languages (Cinyanja) and English language played a significant role in literacy education as they both facilitated learning to some pupils and they were also a hindrance to some pupils. However, it was noted that learners couldnot actively participate in the lessons offered in English language and they were more active in a Cinyanja lesson. Furthermore, learners could actively participate in answering teacher's questions by using

common Cinyanja spoken in towns and cities when playing and not the chewa taught in schools. It was recommended that teachers at primary school level teaching grade ones should use multiple languages by translating statements, words and phrases from one language to the others which are spoken by pupils in class. This would easily help pupils to understand teaching concepts easily and are likely to break into reading and writing skills faster.

Background

The Zambian education system recognizes a four-tier kind of hierarchy: Pre-school, Primary, Secondary and ends at Tertiary level. It is characterized by what Banda (2008) called a broad base type of education starting with formal primary level with a broad base surface and high levels of enrolments and ending with higher education levels with a sharp apex where there are few people completing tertiary levels of education. The dropping out starting from primary school to senior secondary school is caused by several factors. These factors include huge numbers of pupils enrolled at primary level which cannot have adequate attention from the teachers on one to one basis every time they are in class. The methods and strategies used to teach these learners on how to read and write might equally be faulty. Limited teaching and learning materials are all contributing to low literacy levels and massive dropout. Ill trained teachers can also be a major factor in the education system and finally the language of initial literacy teaching might be another major factor. This is because if pupils are taught in a language (Zambian language or English) that they do not understand, it will always be a challenge for that learner to quickly learn how to read and write and eventually they might dropout from school. The factors stated above would partly hinder learners to break through to reading and writing skills in most primary schools in Zambia.

Despite the factors stated above, less attention has been given to language and methodology used to teach multilingual classes. Many scholars in applied linguistics and teacher education have been discussing and debating on the language of instruction that is more appropriate for initial literacy education. For instance, Dakin (1968) contended that it does not really matter whether the child receives education through the medium of foreign language or his mother tongue. Scholars with this line of thought argued that if a foreign language attains the status of a second language and is given much power, it would be used as medium of instruction in education and the role it would play would be as good as the child's mother tongue (Nkossa, 1995). These views were further supported by Groebel (1980) who conducted a study to establish if the level of reading comprehension in student's mother tongue was the same or correlated with the level of reading comprehension in English language using a sample of first year university students who spoke Hebrew as their mother tongue. The findings of this study were that a significant positive correlation did exist between a student's level of reading comprehension in his mother tongue and his level of reading comprehension in a foreign language, English in this case. It is, therefore, doubtful whether such evidence can be used to support the use of English language as medium of instruction to a grade one pupil in Zambian schools.

In reaction to Dakin and Groebel's assertions, Benzies (1940), one of the earliest scholars who wrote in defence of the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in Education, had this to say:

It is a universally acknowledged principle in modern education that a child should receive instruction both in and through his mother tongue and this privilege should not be withheld from the African child (Benzies, 1940 as quoted by Nkossa 1995:13).

Furthermore, using a language that is not known to a child as medium of instruction in school cripples and destroys his productive powers

and it also holds back his mental and cognitive processes. In most multilingual states in post-colonial nations in the early years of their independence, the government's resolve to pick a second language such as English as the case was for Zambia, Kenya and Malawi. Simwiinga (2003:5) noted that "the reasons for selecting English as a medium of instruction and for official use was for political expediency and not a sociolinguistic one". This view was further stated by Ohannessian and Kashoki (1978) who noted that:

After independence, there was a new emphasis on English language. The reasons behind all these were partly political and partly practical. On one hand, politicians striving for national unit, for suppression of tribalism, for rapid industrialisation and accelerated economic development. On the other hand, the vast majority of the people wanted to enter quickly into material civilisation...

The preference for English language was common because some people thought and "felt that rapid development could effectively be achieved through the English language" (Nkossa, 1995: 10). This was not the case as no nation actively developed using the medium of instruction of another nation. For instance, China, America, Germany, England and other developed nations did not expand using a foreign language. In support of this statement, Simwiinga (2003) noted that although African countries have embraced imported languages as tools for economic development and national unity, the languages have not effectively served the purpose because of the limited number of nationals who are able to use them. On the other hand, when commenting on local languages, the people that detested the use of local languages as medium of instruction in Zambia stated in the policy that, it would be too costly to produce materials in so many local languages and that while learners may be conversant with local languages in class, teachers may not be and therefore, would not be comfortable to teach in them, (Ministry of

Education, 1977). The policy of using English language as medium of instruction in Zambian schools was pronounced in 1966 and it was to be used as an official language in government workplaces and education from grade one to tertiary levels and Zambian languages were to be taken as subjects where local languages were allowed to be used. This was a common trend among post-colonial states as noted by Simwiinga (2003:7) who explained that:

It is safe to state that overall, the state of European languages in the post-colonial period in Zambia was favoured by the need to foster economic development and national unity on the premise that too many languages would create chaos.

This decision on language choice was common among post-colonial states as noted by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:94) who in support of the above statement observed that:

African governments predominantly use the imported languages of their former colonial powers and these are the languages that therefore prevail in national administration, in secondary and higher education, in modern literature...

This adoption of English in Zambia was a similar trend in most African countries. Few years later, after the declaration of English as medium of instruction, there was massive drop out in literacy levels countrywide and more courses were introduced in Zambia's education system such as Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) of 1967, Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC), Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) and others. These courses were launched to help improve literacy levels in the country.

Recently, in many parts of the world, the issue of initial reading literacy for learners has always attracted much attention from

governments, civil society organizations, the public and private sector. This issue is well stated by Trudell (2013:1), who stated that:

Literacy in the early primary grades is receiving a great deal of attention among national and international education organizations in Africa. Assessment initiatives, such as those done by UWEZO in East Africa and those using the early grade reading assessment (EGRA) tool across the continent are raising serious questions about the effectiveness of literacy provision in the formal education system.

Furthermore, learner's scores in reading were proving to be lower than had been expected; the UWEZO Kenya report in 2011 noted that only 28 percent of the learners in standard three could read a standard two level story (Mugoetal 2010:2). The UWEZO Tanzania 2010 report noted that 20 percent of primary school leavers in Tanzania could not read grade two level Swahili (UWEZO Tanzania, 2010: 2).

These statistics as reported by scholars and organisations from the neighbouring countries were not very different from the Zambia's situation in the period from 1960s to 2015. The concerns about low literacy levels among primary school learners were very high. Poor reading culture was noted in most Zambian learners including some secondary and tertiary students (Luangala, 2004).

The low reading and writing levels were noted by many researchers both Zambians and international ones including some government committees. For instance, a research study done by Eddie Williams who compared reading levels of lower grade learners in Malawi and Zambia noted that literacy levels were very low among Zambian learners as compared to the Malawian counterparts. He associated this low in literacy levels to the Language of instruction used to teach initial literacy. He reported that Malawian learners did better in reading because they learnt in a language familiar to

them in class (Williams, 1993). Other studies by the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality [(SACMEQ), 1995], National Reading Committee (1997) and even later, National Assessment (2003) all showed very low reading levels among primary school learners in Zambia. How low were these reading levels one would wonder? The studies cited above did indicate to what extent the reading levels were low and others expressed them in percentage form.

A research by Luangala (2011) reported that learners were reading at three grade levels below their own level. In other words, a grade five pupil in class would prefer to read a grade two book and a grade six pupil would prefer to read a grade three text book. Furthermore, the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality reported that only 3% of learners in grade six were reading at desirable level, meaning reading at their grade level. The national reading committee (NRC) stated that about 70% of grade 7s were leaving school unable to read and write.

The lower rates in reading and writing levels amongst primary school going learners in most cases is triggered by many factors such as lack of appropriate learning and teaching materials, improper teaching strategies and the diverse nature of these classrooms. The issues of inappropriate language of instruction and fault teaching strategies could be one of the major causes of poor literacy skills in Zambia are rarely thought about yet, they are key factors in literacy development.

Following the results from a series of studies cited above, the Zambian government established two major literacy programmes that used local languages to help improve literacy levels and these were the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) launched in 1999 but started running in 2000 and the Primary Literacy Programme (PLP) of 2013. As noted earlier, there were other courses and programmes that were established much earlier which used English language as medium of instruction such as ZPC, ZIBEC and ZATEC.

The Primary Reading Programme was one of the prominent initiatives established to help improve literacy levels in Zambia. This programme contained four courses as follows: New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL), Step into English (SITE), Pathway to English (PWTE) and Read on Course (ROC). The PRP package is illustrated in figure 1 below.

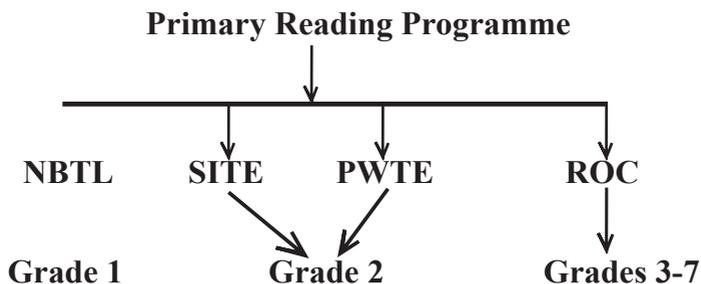


Figure 1: PRP Courses

Five to ten years after PRP started, there were a few challenges that the programme started facing such as lack of teaching and learning materials and the teachers that were not trained to teach PRP started increasing in primary schools. These challenges later compelled the government to start another programme and by 2013, a new programme was launched by the government tagged the Primary Literacy Programme (PLP).

The Primary Literacy Programme was equally aimed at improving literacy levels in the country. The programme started running in 2013 and partly focused certain key competency skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, oral language and and writing. It is not clear how the programme would perform because already, there were challenges noted at its inception such as lack of teaching and learning materials and some teachers were not trained on how to teach on the programme.

In the last two programmes PRP and PLP, there was a shift in language of literacy instruction policy. In PRP, a familiar regional

language was used in grade one only to teach reading and writing skills while in PLP, the policy as stated in the National Literacy Framework (2013:13-14) is as follows:

to support early literacy and later, English literacy instruction, Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) will introduce instruction in a familiar language so as to build learners' arsenal for learning to read in other languages as well as learning content subjects.

Furthermore, the following table depicts the proposed language of instruction strategy in Zambia:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Content Subjects and Literacy</i>	<i>Language of instruction</i>
1	All learning areas	Local languages
2	All learning areas	Local Languages
	Content subjects and Literacy in ZL	Local Languages
	English Language and Oral Literacy	English Language
3	Content subjects and Literacy in ZL	Local Language
	English Language and Literacy	English Language
4	Content subjects and Literacy in ZL	Local Language
	English Language and Literacy	English language
5 - 7	Content subjects	English Language
	English	English Language
	Zambian Languages	Local Languages

This table suggest that there is a major shift in terms of language in education policy as the medium of instruction in this policy is that from Grade 1 to 4, learners learn a local language that is familiar to them.

The policy does not state which local languages will be used as medium of instruction in schools but it is implied by the number of languages in which they have produced teaching and learning materials in. They have only selected the seven regional languages (Ichibemba, Kikaonde, Chilunda, Silozi, Luvale, Cinyanja and

Chitonga). These are not the only local languages, familiar languages and mother tongues per se. Anyway, this is not the focus of this paper and the discussion is reserved for another paper.

Nielsen and Barbara (2013) observed that many times learners from multilingual classes face several challenges in grasping the content. The teachers find it hard to establish wide-range on-going student engagement activities and often fail to help students progress beyond simple pragmatic language use due to barriers in language of instruction and the choice of appropriate literacy teaching methods as the case of Zambia.

Statement of the Problem

It was not clear whether pupils would perform better if they were taught in a mother tongue which was familiar to them as compared to English as a second language which was not familiar as medium of instruction in class. In other words, the study wanted to establish if the use of Zambian Language such as Cinyanja as language of instruction in grade 1 would enable pupils to perform better than they would do if a second language such as English was used and vice versa.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to establish if the use of Zambian Language such as Cinyanja as language of instruction in grade one would enable pupils perform better than they would do if a second language such as English was used and vice versa.

Research Objectives

This study aimed at addressing the following objectives:

- (a) to determine the nature of the classes in the two schools
- (b) to establish if the language of instruction at the two schools facilitated learning.

- (c) to ascertain the level of class participation on the part of pupils in class in the two schools.
- (d) to examine the attitude of pupils, parents and teachers towards the use of the chosen medium of instruction in the two schools.

Research questions

The study sought to respond to the following questions:

- (i) What was the nature of the classes in the two schools?
- (ii) To what extent did the medium of instruction at the two schools facilitated learning?
- (iii) What was the level of class participation on the part of pupils in class in the two schools?
- (iv) What was the attitude of pupils, parents and teachers towards the use of the chosen medium of instruction in schools?

Research Methodology

Research Design

Sim and Wright (2000) define a research design as an overall plan and structure of a piece of research. This study used qualitative research approach particularly a case study design. It was a case study because it focused on one district of Lusaka where two schools were studied. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) indicated that “qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. They further indicated that it involves mainly interactive techniques such as interviews, observation and discussions.

Population

Best and Kahn (2006:13) defined population as “any group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common and that are of interest to the researcher”. These researchers suggested that a target population is a specific group of entities necessary for a particular project. In this study, the target population was all the pupils and teachers at the two target schools in Lusaka Zambia.

Sample Size

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:100) noted that “a sample size of 30 is held by many to be a minimum number of cases especially if researchers plan to use some form of statistical analysis on their data ...” In this study, no statistics were used and data was collected from 67 respondents from two primary schools where at one school they used Cinyanja as a medium of instruction while at another school they used English language. The justification for having such a sample size was that firstly, it is scientifically supported by many scholars to be enough for statistical analysis. Second, the sample was representative enough for the population at the two schools and finally, in qualitative studies, numbers do not matter much but quality and depth of the information collected.

Data Collection Techniques Used

Field data was collected in a space of two weeks using the following techniques:

Observation

This study employed the observation technique so as to establish which languages were used in class, how pupils were participating in the lessons and how they were responding to the tasks given.

Coolican (2009: 123) indicated that “observational method involves watching and being with the people. Disclosed observation is where people know exactly what the observer is doing”.

Interviews

Coolican (2009:150) indicated that “the interview method involves asking people direct questions”. This study conducted face to face interviews with the sampled group of the population where the researcher asked specific questions to the subjects about the study.

Focus Group Discussions

This study conducted four focus group discussions two for pupils, one for parents and one for teachers. Wimmer and Dominic (1987:151) explained that:

Focus groups or group interviewing is a research strategy for understanding audience/consumer attitudes and behavior. From 6 to 12 people are interviewed simultaneously with the moderator leading the respondents in a relatively free discussion about the focal topic.

Documents Reviewed

Tesch (1990) observed that document review is a good method of collecting secondary data when answering research questions. It provides a useful check on information that is in existence already relating to the study. For this study, documents were reviewed to strengthen the study and for triangulation purposes.

These techniques listed above entails that triangulation data collection strategy was employed which is used to validate the collected data. This view is also supported by Patton (1990) who

indicated that using the triangulation method of data collection entails that multiple sources of information are sought and used because there is no single source of information that can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective of the information collected on a particular research project.

Data analysis

Ader (2008: 333) described research data analysis as “a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making”. These views were further supported by Lewis and Michael (1995) who observed that data analysis is done in a variety of ways depending on the instruments used to collect data and how the researcher want the information to be presented.in this study, data was analysed using thematic analysis where similar themes were discussed under similar headings with respect to the questions.

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion of the study have been presented with respect to research objectives and questions. Some themes that emanated from data analysis have also been utilized. It is also important to note that the research objectives and questions have been framed as themes for purposes of data presentation in this section.

Participants

Twelve teachers were involved in the study, two head teachers and one deputy head teacher. Forty-two pupils were involved in the study and ten selected parents to the learners in the two target schools. Table 1 below summarizes the nature of the study participants.

Table 1: Nature of Participants

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	Research participant	Total Number
1	School managers or Head teachers/Deputy	3
2	Parents to the children in two schools	10
3	Teachers involved	12
4	Pupils that took part	42
	Total Research participants	67

It is important to note that the number of pupils was more than the one stated above as most pupils were observed outside the two schools playing using their natural languages when speaking. For purposes of this study, a few notable ones discussing outside were remotely counted to establish this number plus a few involved in the two focus group discussions. In terms of gender, figure 2 below reflect the nature of participants in this study.

Figure 2: Gender of Participants

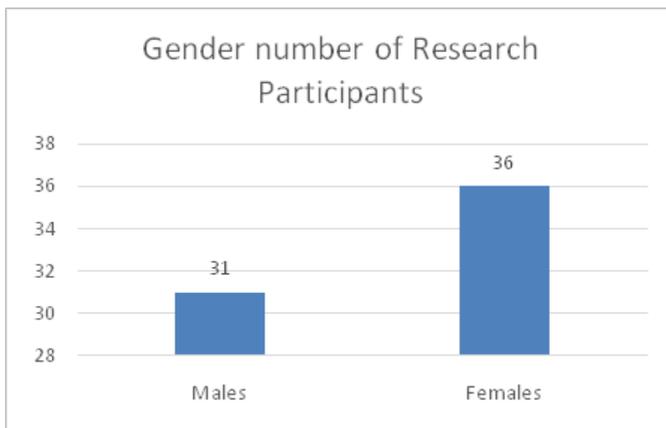


Figure 1: Gender of Participants

Nature of the classes in the two target schools

The classes in the two target schools contained several students with different language backgrounds. For instance, at a private school, there were 28 pupils in class. Out of these, eighteen (18) spoke five different Zambian languages as their first languages or mother tongue and they mostly used Cinyanja and a little bit of English and Bemba languages when playing outside the school set up and ten (10) spoke English as their first language. On the other hand, in a government school, there were seventy-nine (79) pupils in class. There were eight languages spoken in class and most of the learners spoke Cinyanja in class and when playing outside the school. One of the respondent during the interview had this to say *“in this class learners speak different languages and some of them I do not even understand them but Cinyanja is the main one”*. This multilingual nature of these classes agrees with Mkandawire (2015:190) who noted that:

Zambia like many other African countries is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society in the sense that there are many languages and dialects that are spoken within the borders of the country.

This view also agrees with Simwiinga (2003) who noted that there are seventy-three languages and dialects spoken within Zambia and each of these languages are important as they are used for communication.

Language of classroom instruction and learning.

There were two situations that arose from the two schools. The first one was that, at a private school, the teacher was very consistent in using English as medium of instruction in class without making any reference to any other language. The second situation was that in a government school, the teacher used three languages when teach-

ing. Cinyanja was the official language for literacy instruction at that school but the teacher could also switch to Bemba and English language occasionally to help pupils that spoke other languages as their familiar languages to understand. Some of the respondents said that:

Much of the time we use Cinyanja as this is the official language and it is the language that is understood by most learners in class. They also use it when playing outside the school set up. However, occasionally, we switch to other languages such as Bemba, English and Tonga which some of us know already to help pupils understand the lesson or what we are teaching.

In other words, the languages used as medium of instruction in the two target schools are English language for a private school and Cinyanja language for the government school. Occasionally, teachers could code switch to other languages that pupils spoke in class to help them understand at a public school.

On whether English language or Cinyanja was a barrier to learning on the part of pupils, one of the respondents noted that:

I think that Cinyanja is a very good medium of instruction as most pupils at this school literary use Cinyanjawhen playing and when answering questions in class. Most pupils follow what is taught in class in Cinyanja however, there are a few pupils who speak other languages who have challenges in understanding Cinyanja. Furthermore, for some pupils who speak town or common Cinyanja which is diluted, they find it difficult to follow some Cinyanja words and phrases that are used in class because it is unfamiliar to them.

This means that both English and local languages (Cinyanja) in this case can be a barrier to learning as they can be unfamiliar languages to the pupils that do not speak them. In other words, local languages which are unfamiliar to some pupils are a barrier to learning. In this case, they play the same role as English language except that more pupils in that English class spoke local languages.

Pupils level of participation in class

In comparing the English class to the Cinyanja class from the two schools, there were two interesting observations noted: The first one was based on what happened at a private school where English language was used as medium of instruction while the second one was at a school where Cinyanja was a medium of instruction.

On one hand, the situation at a private school was that whenever the teacher asked a question in English language, there were three to five pupils who were rightly responding to the questions. They were the same pupils who kept on responding to the questions from the teacher. When the teacher pointed at other pupils, the pupils could either keep quiet or give a wrong response. The majority of the pupils could respond mainly to common and straight forward questions such as ‘have you understood?’. Furthermore, some pupils in class especially those who sat at the back where I sat were talking using Cinyanja, Ichibemba and a few in English language to ask their friends for something. When the teacher showed them a picture from a book for pupils to state what it was, some pupils gave responses in local languages. Pupils here successfully imitated the teacher using several drills.

On the other hand, the situation at a public school where Cinyanja was used as medium of instruction was that whenever the teacher asked a question in Cinyanja language, there were several hands of pupils who wanted to respond to the teacher’s questions.

Sometimes the pupils could respond to the teachers' questions in chorusing at the same time just after the question. They could describe the images they saw on a chart displayed to them in class by the teacher in Cinyanja while a few others could state them in other local languages. Pupils in this situation could quickly describe the sounds made for example by a snake and other objects like situation one above. They could also imitate the teacher successfully.

There are several implications of these findings regarding medium of instruction in class. The situation learnt from the two classes is a replication of what happens at national level when debates about the constitution, homosexuality and other social themes erupts. Very few Zambians actively take part in the debates and discussions that take place in English language.

Attitude of parents and teachers towards the use of the chosen medium of instruction at the two schools

In an interview with a primary school teacher, she indicated that there was no problem in using Cinyanja as it was a language which pupils used when playing in class as well as outside the classroom. Furthermore, she explained that:

When I teach them in Cinyanja they actively take part in the lesson and they answer questions quickly, do their tasks on time. Most of them easily follow what I teach them and this is grade one term two, some pupils have known how to read already.

The argument that Cinyanja was a language of play for pupils in Lusaka was also reported by Mwanza (2012) who noted that Cinyanja was a major language of play for most pupils in a cosmopolitan city of Lusaka. Furthermore, another teacher noted that both pupils and teachers enjoyed lessons offered in Cinyanja because they knew and

understood what they were doing in class. It helped pupils to learn the teaching point faster.

In an interview with a school headteacher, she noted that:

Local languages like Cinyanja help most pupils to quickly break through to reading and writing skill as they easily understand what they learn in class. Some parents in these homes tell their children stories and cultural matters in local languages.

This view was also supported by Nkosha (1996) as noted in the background that mother tongue based instruction help pupils quickly learn how to read and write. It is also supported by Mkandawire (2015) who reported that local languages gives children a sense of belonging and cultural heritage as they would later feel proud of their languages and culture.

On a contrary view, a focus group discussion with some parents revealed that some parents did not want their learners to learn in any Zambian language as they just wanted their learners to be associated with English language. One of the respondent argued that:

These local languages may help some learners feel like they are in Zambia but apart from that, what will my child gain by learning in Cinyanja? Everywhere you go they employ people with English language, this is why I got my son from that school to here so that we do not talk about Cinyanja again.

This parent was supported by another one who had this to say “*we were just transferred from North-western to here and my child only speak Lunda and English, if he is given Cinyanja class it will be worse*”. This is not all, another respondent in an interview indicated the same concern and explained that:

These people want our learners to learn in Cinyanja upto grade 4, how will the learners write the examination in grade seven in English if they cannot speak it or write it well. This will confuse our learners as two years of English before they write grade seven examination is too short to pass the exam.

These statements from parents suggested that the current language policy for initial literacy education has not been welcomed well by some Zambians. These parents criticised the government for allowing pupils to learn in local languages from grades 1-4 as outlined in the 2013 national literacy framework policy.

It is important to realise that the restless debates on whether or not Zambian languages are needed for teaching reading and writing skills in primary schools of Zambia as noted by some parents are merely a parental attitude cancer. This cancer is still a serious disease that has masked the faces of minority urban communities in towns and cities especially families of the crossroads. The mask does not distinguish what is good and bad for the innocent child but it is there because one is a parent. Being a parent is one thing and deciding what is good for a child is another issue. Combining the two should always work to the advantage of the child and not vice versa. This situation in Zambia is a serious oxymoron when it comes to issues of political will because much literature about multilingual states such as those by Whiteley (1971), Ellis and Tomlinson (1980), Wilkins (1972), Ohannesian and Kashoki (1978) reported that most multilingual states in Africa takes on a European language as medium of instruction from early grades to university due to political reasons and other factors.

The alleged blame on government for introducing a new language policy in Zambia is totally misplaced. The current literacy policy is not new at all. It started as early as 1880s when

the missionaries were teaching in local languages in the earliest schools which were established (Manchishi, 2004). For instance, In 1927 to 1928, the Advisory Board of Native Education of Northern Rhodesia made a decision and recommended four local languages to be used as medium of instruction in schools from grade one to four. These were; Sikololo (lozi) in Barotse Land, Chitonga-Chila in North western Rhodesia, Chibemba in north eastern Rhodesia west of Luangwa and ChiCinyanja in North Eastern Rhodesia east of Luangwa (Ohennessiaan & Kashoki 1978:287). These languages were further increased after independence to seven and later awarded the regional official language status in Zambia. This development so far is a good sign for Zambia as it is moving towards sustainable future through multilingual education.

Summary of the Findings

The study noted that the nature of the classes in the two schools were generally multilingual and the language used as medium of instruction was English for a private school and Cinyanja plus other languages for a public school. It was noted that the attitude of some parents was not good towards local languages and the policy. It was also noted that in classes where local languages such as Cinyanja was used, most pupils were very active in class as compared to those in English language class. In other words, the findings of the study on the significance of mother tongue based instruction verse English language revealed the following in summary:

- (i) Using unfamiliar language such as English for literacy education cripples and destroy the child's productive and mental processes in education. This view was supported by Benzies (1940) who further noted that using an unknown language for early education as medium of instruction de-

stroys his productive powers and holds his mental abilities. On the other hand, using mother tongue based instruction as a familiar language to a child empowers the child to think, act and process information faster.

- (ii) Zambian languages such as Cinyanja empowers pupils in class and the local people in general for mass mobilisation and active participation in the democratic and development of the country (Wakumelo, 2011). In other words, local languages empower citizens to participate effectively in economic, cultural, social and political matters of the country as they will be free to express themselves. At classroom level, local languages help a learner express himself freely.
- (iii) A country is nothing without its culture and local indigenous languages are a vehicle for transmission of this culture. Families tell their learners different stories in local languages. Those stories constitute proverbs, riddles, myths, taboos and narratives of social conduct, morals and great heroes of their tradition. The languages they use in their homes, let them be used in education to empower learners and value their cultural heritage. Teaching in English language is as good as teaching English culture which differs in some way with Zambian culture. For instance, a woman can marry in English but she cannot in Cinyanja or local languages.
- (iv) Teaching in local languages promote an educational principle of moving from known to unknown so that a child can link the old with the new knowledge. Local languages promote and develop a sense of belong among citizens as there will be a feeling of closeness with one language, one tongue and one country. Tembo (1975) said it promotes quick learning on the part of learners.

- (v) Teaching a child in unknown language burdens the child with two unknown things: The language itself and the subject matter to be learnt. For instance, this study has shown that, pupils actively participated in class than their counterparts who were learning in English. In other words, the pupils learning in English were burdened with two unknowns.
- (vi) Local languages facilitate easy access to information for all Zambians not only in class as noted in this study but also the fact that people can defend themselves in courts where language is a major factor.
- (vii) Promoting local languages alongside English at national level will provide an opportunity for generations to learn Zambian local languages and see the value attached to local languages. The pupils contribution in a public school where local languages were used helps them realise this value.
- (viii) Promotion of local languages will equally help raise some critical consciousness in pupils and eventually allow Zambians to make informed decisions on the different circumstances that they face on daily basis. This is because using a language that someone knows better helps them express themselves freely as the case was for pupils at a public school in the study.
- (ix) Local languages breaks class silence as noted in this study and the linguistic classes among Zambians and promote unity as more learners in schools will become more literate to reason out issues at different levels.
- (x) Promoting local languages will promote more employment or jobs for Zambians because more books will need to be written in local languages and media stations will need more people to translate various information. There is more

market for local language literature.

- (xi) Allowing pupils to learn in the languages they use when playing allow them to actively participate in class rather than having passive ones as the case was for English class in this study.
- (xii) Multilingualism should not be seen as a problem but as an asset as it helps people to look at a problem or issues from different perspectives. Teachers in grade one code switch languages to help learners learn.
- (xiii) In *education*, Teachers cannot teach confidently in a language they do not fully understand because they are very competent and comfortable in teaching a language they understand better especially at primary level.
- (xiv) Local languages can contribute to national development as they are a source of communication for the masses. This is why Politicians campaign using the same local languages promising and urging communities what they should do to aid development. Local languages empower the masses to take part in many ventures at national level. They unlock thinking abilities in learners in schools and they are a source of cooperation and gives members of the community a sense of unit and identity.

Recommendations

The researcher made the following recommendation:

- (a) The government should consider multilingual type of education system so that teachers should be free to translate and interpret information from one language to another in the same classroom. This means increasing the number of languages to be used as medium of instruction for teaching initial literacy in schools.

- (b) The government should introduce training programmes where teachers learn a variety of languages so that they can work anywhere in the country. This will make them fit in the bilingual, trilingual or multilingual language set up.
- (c) The government should allow learners write grade seven exams in local languages as the two years to learn English language is too short to warrant one to write an exam.
- (d) The government should encourage language in complementation kind of policy which is already working in Zambia today informally so that where English fails, Zambian languages can take over and vice versa.

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