Citation: Banda, Felix & Mwanza, David Sani (2017). Language-in-education policy and linguistic diversity in Zambia: An alternative explanation to low reading levels among primary school pupils. In Banja, Madalitso Khulupirika (ed.). Selected readings in education, 109-132. Lusaka: University of Zambia Press.

CHAPTER 8

Language-In-Education Policy and Linguistic Diversity in Zambia: An Alternative Explanation to Low Reading Levels among Primary School Pupils

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Abstract

The chapter is motivated by the recent interest shown in the pedagogical benefits of multilingual discourse in classroom practices in multilingual and multicultural contexts; and the dissatisfaction with monolingual/ monoglot one-language-a-time discourse practices that still pervade language education (Williams, 1994; Baker, 2003, 2011; Garcia, 2009; Banda, 2010; Hornberger and Links, 2012). The chapter should be seen as contributing to the shifting paradigm in learning and teaching in multilingual and multicultural contexts, in which pupils' linguistic repertoires and related cultural heritage are seen as central rather than peripheral to classroom practice (See Garcia 2009; Banda 2010; Hornberger and Links 2012, for similar arguments). This entails a move away from typical Western education models, premised on the One Nation, One Language, or and in the case of Zambia, One Province, One Language monoglot/monolingual approach, to models that draw on pupils' multicultural and multilingual heritage as a way to bridge home/community and school-based literacy practices. For initial literacy development in multilingual contexts of Zambia, this might entail use of more than one language, including hybrid forms, to ensure pupil involvement in classroom practices, and hence a learner-driven and centred pedagogy (Williams, 1994; Baker, 2003, 2011; Garcia, 2009; Banda, 2010; Hornberger and Links, 2012).

Keywords: Learning assistants; Malawi; women; rural schools; teachers; distance learning

Introduction

Most studies on language education planning and policy in Africa, have focused on the role of colonial languages in undermining the use of African languages in classroom practice. The chapter problematises the use of zonal or regional standard African languages at the expense of other (African) language varieties for initial literacy development as a continuation of colonial monoglot/monolingual model. In this regard, this chapter identifies three phases in the introduction and subsequent entrenchment of English as a language of education, commerce and official government business; as points of departure to analyse why attempts to use the mother tongue or what is called a familiar African language for initial literacy development have not been very successful so far. In turn, we use Haugen's model of language standardisation (Haugen, 1966a, 1966b, 1972, 1987) to background Bourdieu's notions of symbolic violence and misrecognition of the standard language as the sole legitimate language of official business and education (Bourdieu, 1990, 1991), to discuss how outdated orthographies and use of regional language have impaired initial literacy development in multilingual contexts of Zambia. Here we focus on the monoglot/monolingual ideology pervading institutionalised language planning and policy and models of classroom practice as impediments to initial literacy development as pupils' multicultural heritage and multilingual repertoire are sacrificed at the altar of a zonal language, which is not necessarily familiar enough to be useful to a child's learning needs. Thereafter, we argue for multilingual models of education and classroom practices which take advantage of the child's multilingual heritage. We briefly discuss a new approach called translanguaging (Garcia, 2009; Hornberger and Links, 2012) as offering pedagogical possibilities for multi-literacy development and to counter the monolingual ideologies and policies in place and the hegemonic negative effects of the valorisation of the misrecognised standard varieties of Zambian languages as the legitimate languages of initial literacy development (see Banda, 2010 for similar arguments on alternative models of bilingual education). We conclude by arguing for language education models and classroom practices in which Zambian languages, English and other language varieties are used as equal partners in initial literacy development. Such models should be designed in such a way as to bridge home/community and school-based literacy practices.

Historical Background of Language-in-Education Policy in Zambia

There have been twists and turns in the formulation and implementation of language in education policy in Zambia. This dates back to the time the missionaries came to settle in Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia) and started their mission of evangelism and in the process, established schools. By definition, Trask (1997) refers to language policy as an official government policy which regulates the form, teaching or use of one or more languages within the area controlled by that government. Language policy can also be explained as a set of interventions pronounced and implemented by states which are supported or enforced by law. Evidently, for language policy to work, it needs to be accompanied by effective status and corpus planning initiatives to formalise the use of a particular language in education as well as to create and ensure that sufficient vocabulary is available for use by learners and teachers.

Following Banda (2009), an identification of three phases in the introduction of English as a language of education in Zambia is required. The first phase started with the partition of Africa in 1888 until 1924. The British South Africa Company (BSA) ruled what was to become Zambia from around 1890 to 1924 on behalf of Britain. The British government took direct control thereafter until 1964 when the new African government, under Kenneth David Kaunda took the reins. The British South Africa Company's interest was to exploit the country's mineral wealth. Thus, it was not surprising that during their reign, they only built one school; the Barotse National School (Mwanakatwe, 1968).

Whereas the missionaries who had arrived before the 1800s to set up mission posts and schools depended on local languages for their work, the British South Africa Company came with English mother tongue settlers and hunters; and as Banda (2009) notes, the company and settlers relied on mission schools to provide Africans who worked as artisans and general labourers in homes and farms, and also worked as administrative staff, for example, clerks and support staff to Europeans. Thus, knowledge of some English slowly but surely started to matter most to Africans.

The missionaries continued to set up churches, hospitals and schools but under the jurisdiction of the British South Africa Company which was the overseer of the territory. Since they had realised from the outset that the best way to publicise their message was through the Africans' own languages, the missionaries almost entirely used local languages to teach reading, writing and numeracy. Commenting on the missionaries' use of local languages, (Manchishi, 2004: 1) notes:

> …the drive for evangelism proved extremely successful because the missionaries used local languages. The Bible and other Christian literature were translated into local languages. People chanted hymns in the language they understood best i.e. their own local languages, and even in the schools, the medium of instruction was in their own local languages at least up to the fourth grade.

Thus, even with the best of intentions, English was to be used in some form after Grade Four. At the very least, it is reviewed that missionaries instigated the beginning of a more or less formalised language policy in education involving the use of both English and local languages as medium of classroom instruction. With the monoglot/monolingual ideology in place, local languages were taught using the local language concerned, while the rest of the subjects were supposed to be taught in English.

However, we need to note that, albeit in the mother tongue, the missionary curriculum, if we can call it that, had very little in terms of content because education was designed for few Africans to read and understand the scriptures themselves so that they could become passionate Christians able to convert other Africans. This is apparent in the letter by the Secretary of the London Missionary Society to a young missionary who arrived in Zambia in 1900 which reads in part:

> It is most important that the converts should learn to read in order that they attain a fuller knowledge of the Scriptures, when the Scriptures can be provided to them, but I think it is even more important that they should learn to live self-respecting, progressive Christian lives. The mission that turns out good carpenters and blacksmiths does more among such people... than that which turns out good readers and writers (Mwanakatwe, 1968: 12).

As explained above the teaching was not designed to make Africans 'good readers and writers' and, thus, be able to produce their own reading and teaching materials from their own sources and social contexts. This meant Africans were taught a little technical terminology in English, just enough to make them understand few of such terms in the verses and scriptures during the transcription of the Bible into pamphlets and other reading material for use during evangelisation missions in the communities.

In short, there was very little in terms of quality language teaching of both African languages and English, as well as in the content of the curriculum. Rotberg (1965: 45-46), captures the situation succinctly when he quotes a Father Guilleme who described the work of White Fathers at the turn of the twentieth century as follows:

> ... to teach the natives in the knowledge of Christian doctrine and morality, to instruct the more intelligent among the children and the young people to serve, when time requires, as assistants, to teach them all to work in the fields, and to train the more possible of them as carpenters, masons, sawyers, etc., according to the wants of the country. So, in every station, we have the Christian doctrine teaching for all, old and young people, about 20 minutes a day (Rotberg, 1965: 45-46).

It was manifest that Africans hardly acquired any English skills because the first four years of education were in one of the four official local languages -Cewa/

Nyanja [Henceforth Nyanja], Bemba, Lozi and Tonga. Luvale, Kaonde and Lunda were made official after Zambia's independence in 1964. Although the use of English was limited as described above, English was often introduced as a subject only from the fifth year. Moreover, missionary societies were mostly averse to teaching English or academic education. The London Missionary Society (Anglicans) and the Free Church of Scotland (Presbyterians) were among the few mission societies that taught English and offered anything resembling academic education (Gadsden, 1992; Siegel, 1999). For the few Africans that went to school, their education ended by grade 3 or 4 as most schools ended their education in the fourth grade anyway. The majority of mission societies were content on offering the barest minimum of schooling in indigenous languages, and with a very limited curriculum in terms of content.

Therefore, in this phase of missionary direct control of schools, education was generally ineffectual and unsatisfactory, and as far as English was concerned; it did not feature prominently in the curriculum. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the British colonial office took over, one of the first things they did was to reign in mission schools, and 'forced' them to improve the quality of education (Banda, 2009). However, with the increase in British involvement in the running of mission schools, more English was introduced in the curriculum of these schools. At this time, the copper mines were increasing, and administrative outposts called *Bomas*, through which the British government ruled Northern Rhodesia through District Commissioners, were also burgeoning (Banda, 2009). Banda (2009), argues that the establishment of administrative positions in the mines and the civil bureaucracies in the *Bomas* necessitated the need for an educated civil service. He further notes that even though English did not feature much in the curriculum, the irony of the education system was that the few Africans that could speak rudimentary English found themselves 'lucrative' jobs as *kalaliki* ('clerks'), *kapitao* ('captains) in the civil service, the farms and the mines, or as district *kapaso* (messenger) to work alongside white civil servants and District Commissioners, who collected taxes on behalf of the Queen of England. These positions obviously gave these few Africans a lot of power over fellow Africans and their status was only second to that of the white colonialists and missionaries. Thus, even before the direct British rule was instituted, the first ingredients of English hegemony had been planted because those with little knowledge of English were rewarded with different roles and high status in society.

The second phase started in 1924 by the British colonial office who took direct control of the administration of Northern Rhodesia from the British

South Africa Company (Banda, 2009). Further, the poor education offered to Africans by mission societies prompted the British colonial office to set up the Phelps-Stokes Commission which was charged with formulating recommendations for the effective development of African education.

Thereafter, the Commission recommended that the colonial government should increase its budget on education which should take the form of grants-in-aid to the mission societies, and predicted that such an investment would eventually 'be reflected in better health, increased productivity and a more contented people' (Phelps-Stokes, 1924: 265). And as far as the language of instruction was concerned, the commission recognised the complementary roles that English and local languages could play in personal and national development. As a result, it recommended that English be used as the official language in education and government business while local languages were to be used for the preservation of African cultural values and ethnic identities. As a result of the recommendations, the government formally recognised four main local languages; Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga and Lozi as regional official languages to be used as media of instruction in the African government schools for the first four years of primary education. This policy declaration was a major development in language policy formulation for Northern Rhodesia with regard to medium of classroom instruction and, by extension, to the language of wider communication by zone. It was argued that even though the declaration gave legal status and appeared to acknowledge the importance of local languages in education, it inadvertently promoted English above indigenous languages by pronouncing it as the official language of government and business, and education generally, especially after grade 4.

A special note is that the Commission understood that the colonial government did not have the capacity to go it alone in providing effective education for Africans. Thus, it urged each mission society to establish a central training institution where qualified trainers could instruct necessary knowledge to future African teachers.

It is argued that the zoning of languages was arbitrary in the sense that it did not reflect the multilingual contexts in different geographical locations. Thus, the implementation of language policy in 1953, created the problem of a three tier language policy. It was not uncommon for a pupil to be taught in a less dominant mother tongue for the first two years of primary education. Thereafter, the pupil would be taught in a more dominant regional official language for another two years and then in English from the fifth year onwards (Chanda, 1998: 63; Kashoki, 1978: 26). Clearly observed was the beginning of a situation where African languages were relegated to early literacies before learners could be channelled to English medium, giving the ideological basis that the languages could not cope with advanced and specialist content. Thus, 'instruction through a local language was invariably seen as a transitional phase prior to instruction in English' (Ansre, 1979: 12).

Associating higher grades with English also added to perceptions that African languages were only good for lower level education. The third phase coincided with Zambia's attainment of independence. Its highlight was the proclamation, of English as the sole official language in 1966 at national level and as a language of classroom instruction from grade one to the highest level of education.

At independence in 1964, the majority of Zambian primary and secondary schools were still being run by missionaries. It became apparent to the new black government that the envisaged improvement and expansion in education establishments would not succeed without the involvement of missionaries. According to Mwanakatwe (1968), the new Zambian government planned to expand the education sector while government financed the extension work up to 75 per cent of the total cost incurred by mission owners of secondary schools, and up to 75 per cent of new mission secondary schools. However, this was a forced arrangement as the government was interested in taking control of the education sector, as Banda (2009) notes that participation of missionary societies in the education sector depended on the latter acquiescing to what the government dictated. Consider the following statement from John Mwanakatwe, the first Zambian Minister of Education:

> …the Ministry of Education has continued to welcome the participation of voluntary agencies, whether churches, mines, industry, or other recognised groups more particularly in the post-primary field where the need to supplement Government's effort is considerable. But the basis for continued participation of voluntary agencies in education development must depend upon their willingness to comply with school regulations issued by the Ministry from time to time. (Mwanakatwe 1968: 130).

However the case may seem, Roman Catholic agencies, to some extent, resisted some of the regulations because they had their own funds to continue to build and extend existing structures without calling on the government to help. Other missionary societies succumbed to government pressure and 'voluntarily' handed over their schools to government. However, the argument here was that, with the adoption of English as the medium of instruction in Zambian schools in 1966 in urban areas in particular, it was the missionary-run schools, that would bear most of the burden of delivering the policy.

In essence, the legacy of marginalisation of African languages continued, but it was this time perpetuated by emergent African leaders. As in colonial times, mission schools were expected to carry out government mandates and in particular the policy after 1965 of using English medium of instruction in all schools. And, the Zambian government expected the mission schools to play a critical role in the New Peak Approach, a chosen teaching approach which was conceived around English as a medium of instruction.

Ohannessian (1978b), argued that even if there was to be commitment to have universal education in mother tongues especially after Zambia's independence in 1964 it would not have worked because missionary education was desperately inadequate, and did not prepare Zambians for expert teaching in various content subjects using indigenous languages in primary and secondary schools. In fact after 1964, a study of the teaching of Zambian languages in schools and colleges revealed that teachers and lecturers had little or no linguistic knowledge of the languages they were teaching, and more alarming was the discovery of the 'extreme meagreness of linguistic content in courses as regards material in and about these languages'. (Ohannessian 1978b: 319). This appeared to force teachers to teach Zambian languages in English.

In spite of ushering in of African majority rule, Zambia still relied on mission schools and expatriate staff who taught in English. The government introduced the New Primary Approach (NPA) to teaching with the onset of the English medium of instruction in 1965-66. Banda (2009), observed that the NPA, modelled on Kenya's New Peak course, was touted as a new approach designed to discourage the mechanistic grammar translation and the audio-lingual approaches to the ubiquitous language teaching/learning during colonial times. The NPA was supposed to enhance English communication skills in learners by emphasising situations and contexts in teaching. It emphasised group work among learners rather than the teacher being at the centre of the lesson. Banda (2009), further argued that the teaching approach promoted the 'Zambianisation' of English as learners developed their own accents often quite different from their (white) teachers. He further noted that after 1975, the teaching of English increasingly came into the hands of Zambians.

In terms of classroom practice, the first year of English learning the NPA course focused on oral communication. In essence what happened was that teachers were asked to teach minimal pairs, for example, in situational or situated contexts instead of mechanical 'minimal pair' drills. An approach described as multi-modality was encouraged because teachers were encouraged to add pictorial displays and/or role-play to their teaching (Banda, 2009). However, reading and writing were taught later at the end of term one of the three-term calendar year. The situation/contexts during year one of schooling were the home, the classroom and the school. In year two, the situation/contexts of interest shifted to the neighbourhood, the general shop, the game park, the farm and the town. The centres of interest became increasingly complex up to Grade 7 in the third term. Evidently, if 'literacy' is defined as the ability to 'read and write,' the delay did not make sense as it is feasible to have both the oral/aural component as well as reading and writing.

The Ministry of General Education instituted the Primary Centre in 1965 with the mandate to produce primary school materials. Initially, there were five languages and accompanying teaching specialists at the centre, two of whom were made available by the British Council. The personnel at the centre were charged with the responsibility of writing learning; and teaching materials, and in the training of administrators and teachers in the use of the new materials. The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), took over the functions of the Primary Centre. Banda (2009), ironically notes that the CDC was set up in part because the mission societies and the British colonial government did not provide relevant and sufficient materials in both Zambian languages and English. Yet, after independence, the emergent leaders were still dependent on mission societies and British agencies to provide the expertise, manpower, and training skills required for effective teaching, as well as the production of learning materials.

It is not clear what happened to the NPA programme, but the CDC has continued to produce materials for primary and secondary schools in Zambia. The other statement is whether the NPA was successful in developing English competence. One criticism often levelled against the NPA is that it was too focused on communication and ignored the essential grammatical aspects of the language, which were equally important. Another criticism was that it often produced learners who could speak some English but were unable to write it. Since examination tested written competence, such learners still failed the examinations. In any case, the various education reforms that have been taking place since the 1970s are testimony of the dissatisfaction in the NPA, and teaching increasingly language education in English.

Education Reforms

The 1977, education reforms recommended continued use of English as a language of education while making provisions for the utilisation of the seven official local languages. This was despite having acknowledged the weaknesses of using English as a sole language of classroom instruction. Simwinga (2006), observes that by 1992, it had become increasingly clear that the use of English as a language of instruction was not working well particularly at lower primary school level. In 1992, the Ministry of Education revisited and reappraised the language in education policy. It was found out that the policy had weaknesses which included: downgrading of local languages, isolation of the school from the community, alienation of the learner from tradition and impairment of children's future learning. With these weaknesses in consideration, the

1992 policy document recommended that the Ministry of Education should institute a review of the primary school curriculum in order to establish the main local languages as the basic languages of instruction from grades one to four. The 1992 recommendation provided the teacher with a greater freedom to determine 'the main local language' to be used as the language of instruction.

In another reform initiative, the 1996 policy document (*Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education*) also retained the use of English as the official language of classroom instruction and, in addition, recommended the employment of familiar languages to teach initial literacy in grade one. The policy stated:

> …all pupils will be given an opportunity to learn initial basic skills of reading and writing in a local language... officially, English will be used as a language of instruction but the language used for initial literacy learning in grade one will be one that seems best suited to promote meaningful learning by children (Ministry of Education, 1996: 27).

In 1998, there was another turn; the New Break Through to Literacy programme (NBTL) was unveiled as a pilot study in Mungwi and Kasama districts of Northern province. The study involved an experiment of using a familiar language as a medium of instruction to teach literacy in Grade1. The results showed that pupils were able to read by the end of grade one and that, the level of reading for grade two pupils was to be equivalent to grade four pupils who had undergone the English medium. As a result, the project was scaled up to all schools in Zambia under the programme titled, 'Primary Reading Programme (PRP)' (Manchishi and Chishiba, 2014). The notion of learning through a familiar language was interesting in that it was conceivable that such a language was not one of the seven official languages or the one earmarked for that zone. Since familiar languages in communities were not necessarily 'standardised' there was also an interesting prospect that the languages were not necessarily the formalised ones. As a result, the use of a familiar local language as a language of initial literacy went on up to 2013.

At the beginning of 2014, another language education policy shift occurred. The government announced that the language of instruction from Grade 1 to 4 would be one of the zoned seven official Zambian languages. From Grade 5 onwards, English would be the language of instruction up to the University. It must be mentioned that the 2014 policy framework was not a new policy. And, the use of a Zambian language up to the fourth grade had existed during the time of the missionaries and in Government schools during the 1950s up to 1965. Thus, the current policy recommendation could be viewed as a revitalisation of the missionaries' policy. However, there is need to distinguish using a ‘Zoned’ official Zambian language and a local language, which may not necessarily be a ‘Zoned’ language or standard Zambian language.

Reading and Writing Abilities among Zambian Pupils in Early Grades

Our discussion of standard language is framed in Haugen’s model. A comparative approach to language standardisation is taken, which ‘describes not only (synchronic) similarities in the form and function of standard languages, but also… relates these to language history and development’ (Deumert and Vandenbussche, 2003: 4). In this regard, the approach to the discussion on language standardisation is based on Haugen’s (1966a, 1966b) and later elaborations (Haugen, 1972 and 1987), 4-step model: (1) norm selection, (2) norm codification, (3) norm implementation, and (4) norm elaboration.

What is important is that language standardisation entails reducing language varieties, and since the process includes norm selection and codification, it means there is an artificial attempt to ‘stabilise’ language. The argument is that the first two and fourth processes were done by missionaries and colonial agents. Note here recent attempts to elaborate standard African languages, for example, through harmonised orthographies which are often resisted (Banda, forthcoming) so that attempts to improve reading through orthographic reforms are thwarted. And, because someone else selects and codifies language to provide the norms, the standard language does not always reflect the varieties of the languages as spoken by ordinary people. At this juncture, it is essential to reflect on Haugen’s (1972: 246) observation that, ‘it is a significant and probably crucial requirement for a standard language that it be written.’ Thus, the written form allows for a model on which rules are prescribed and fixed and eventually, ‘[s] poken standard norms [are] established on the basis of the written model’ (cf. Scaglione, 1984: 13–14).

The standard language is, therefore, best described as reflecting the written language rather than one readily spoken in the communities. This conceptualisation is critical in understanding why attempts to use regional standard languages, to promote initial literacy in Zambia, have proved difficult as shown in the various studies reviewed in this chapter. In practice, the ‘zonal’ or regional official Zambian language, which is the standard variety, also creates a hegemonic existence of language varieties and speakers (Blackledge, 2005). This represents what Bourdieu (1990) calls *symbolic violence* in which the standard variety is legitimised through institutionalised discourses of education; the courts, media, politics, economics and so on, while the rest of varieties become illegitimate codes or unofficial languages of communication. Through national and education language policies, the state can be said to be involved in creating the framework on which hegemonic language ideologies are founded in ‘the production and reproduction of social difference, constructing some languages and varieties as of greater worth than other languages and varieties' (Blackledge, 2005: 33). This misrecognition of the standard variety as the legitimate code becomes a reality because the dominated and dominant social groups are complicit in the 'institutionalised circle of collective misrecognition' (Bourdeu 1991: cited in Blackledge 2005: 33).

The misrecognition of the regional standard language as the legitimate language of initial literacy in multilingual contexts of Zambia is implicated in a number of studies reviewed below. Most of the studies have reported that pupils have not been able to read and write at desirable levels in both languages as a result of choices in the language of initial literacy. When a familiar language was used during the first year of schooling, the expectation was that the child would be able to transfer the skills learnt in the familiar as a stepping stone to learning the mechanics of reading and writing in English. However, many studies have blamed the 'short' one year period as not adequate as pupils moved into grade two before they could read and write. Hence, they did not build enough cognitive knowledge for learning reading and writing in the Zambian language and English. Our argument is that there is urgent need to address anomalies and contradictions in the orthographies, and recognition that the official standard language of education is not necessarily a familiar language to pupils and teachers alike.

Mulenga (2012), conducted a study in which he wanted to establish Grade three (3) pupils' preparedness to read and write in Bemba and English. In Grade 3, pupils were not able to read and write at the desirable level, including some that had supposedly broken through by the end of Grade 2. Pupils faced difficulties in spelling English and iCiBemba words especially when words were raised from simple one-syllable to three-syllable words. Pupils could not write simple sentences that were deemed to be at their grade level. The study concluded those pupils that had not broken through faced most challenges as they had little or nothing at all to transfer from iCiBemba as a first language into English as a second language by the third grade.

A study by Mwambazi (2011), set out to establish the factors and the nature of low reading achievement among grade two pupils in selected schools in Mpika and Mbala Districts. Grade two pupils in the targeted schools were not able to read Zambian languages and English according to their grade level. Some of the factors that led to low reading levels included; absenteeism, shortage of suitable teaching/learning materials, shortage of teachers particularly those trained in PRP methodologies, large classes, poor family and educational back ground, poor and inadequate infrastructure, pupils not breaking through in grade one, inadequate time allocated for literacy/reading lessons, and unfamiliar language of instruction.

Phiri's (2012) study on teachers' perception on factors which prevent some grade one learners from breaking through to initial literacy, showed that language of instruction to a larger extent was a barrier both to learners and teachers. The situation was more pronounced in urban and in peri-urban schools because of the factor of multilingualism which made it impracticable to use a regional standard language (Kaonde) as a medium of instruction in New Breakthrough to Literacy. In rural schools on the other hand, language did not pose a threat to the learners because the language of instruction was almost the same as the regional ethnic language. This is why it is important to distinguish 'mother tongue' from familiar language and regional local language of education.

The above point is made poignant in a study by Kumwenda (2011), who sought to establish the initial reading performance in Nyanja in multi-ethnic/multilingual Chipata urban areas. Specifically, this research sought to find out the reading performance of pupils for whom Nyanja, the regional language of education, is not their first language in comparison with those to whom it is their first language. Findings showed that pupils for whom Nyanja was their first language performed better than those for whom it was not their first language. The analysis of the quantitative data revealed that the difference in performance in reading between the pupils for whom Nyanja was not their first language and those for whom Nyanja was their first language was significant. The finding is echoed in three other studies: Mwanza (2012), Matafwali (2010) and Kalindi (2005). Let us look at these three studies.

Matafwali (2010), observed that even if the use of an official regional language as the initial language of instruction was introduced in 2000, the reading levels of the majority of Zambian children were still low by 2005, especially in Lusaka province. Specifically, she wanted to know how the lack of proficiency in the language of instruction explains difficulties in becoming a conventional reader in a Zambian language and English. Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia is even more multi-ethnic and multilingual than Chipata, the site of Kumwenda's (2011) study. Nyanja as the proclaimed regional language of education and local administration, is described in the literature as the 'mother tongue' or familiar language for the majority of pupils in Lusaka. This is misleading because many languages are spoken in the area. Moreover, the Nyanja used for academic purposes is not exactly the same as the one spoken by the majority of Lusaka residents. It is in this context that Matafwali's (2010) findings demonstrated that lack of proficiency in the initial language of instruction, was the hallmark for poor reading and writing skills observed in the majority of Zambian children. Evidently, the regional language or 'mother tongue' was in reality not so familiar. Thus Matafwali (2010) concludes that when deficits in oral language converge with deficits in cognitive skills, children are at a substantial risk of developing reading difficulties. The argument is that since children in Lusaka District were not proficient in the standard Nyanja recognised in schools, they experienced problems in initial literacy acquisition.

Similarly, Mwanza (2012), conducted a study whose aim was to establish whether the use of standard Nyanja as a sole language of instruction was appropriate in a cosmopolitan and multilingual environment of Lusaka. Among other findings, the study established that many pupils were not familiar with standard Nyanja and they struggled to learn. Similarly, some teachers although teaching grade one classes, were not familiar with the standard language of instruction. There was a mismatch between the language of play in Lusaka, that is, the urban Nyanja lingua franca, which is the familiar language and the language of instruction, the standard Nyanja. This was compounded further by the fact that teaching materials (books) were written in Cewa as spoken in Malawi or rural parts of Eastern Zambia, which most teachers and pupils could not understand. It was clear that having a 'one jacket fit all' language policy was not suitable for a multilingual and multicultural country like Zambia. It would have been sound to have more than one language of instruction including the local variety of Nyanja in cosmopolitan cities such as Lusaka.

Kalindi (2005), studied reading problems in Bemba of 60 Grade 2 poor readers (identified by teachers) from selected basic schools in Kasama and Mpika urban, Northern province. According to the study, only 13 per cent could read two-syllable words, and only 8 per cent could identify 20 letters of the alphabet. The study showed that even with excellent and intensive instructions in place, some children still failed to make satisfactory progress in reading. It turned out the exclusive use of standard Bemba was a barrier to initial literacy. The variety of Bemba used in multi-ethnic/multilingual classes was not the mother tongue or familiar language to a good number of pupils, and hence they struggled to learn to read and write it.

There is a sense that the misrecognition of the standard language aside, the imposition of zonal languages as official languages of education has negative effects on initial literacy development in communities that speak a different local language from the one officially sanctioned. In this regard, Zimba (2007), set out to establish whether the use of Nyanja was effective as a medium of initial literacy in communities that were predominantly Tumbuka-speaking in Lumezi District. Lumezi District is in the Eastern Province of Zambia in which Nyanja is the zonal/local official language of administration and education. The study revealed that pupils in Lumezi consistently performed below expectation in literacy skills because they could not understand Nyanja which was used to perform classroom tasks. The assumed mutual intelligibility between Tumbuka and Nyanja appeared to have very little impact, if at all, in mediating initial literacy development in Nyanja.

Similarly, Mubanga (2012), who wanted to establish the effect of using Nyanja as a medium of instruction in a predominately Soli speaking area of Lwimba in Chongwe District which falls under the Nyanja language zone, reports that children learnt literacy skills with great difficulties in Nyanja.

Mubanga (2012), concludes that since the pupils in Lwimba area mostly speak Soli they have problems with Nyanja which is the language of initial literacy for the region.

The negative effects of the institutionalised collective misrecognition of the standard official language as described above, are in part a consequence and are compounded by outdated orthographies in use. Banda (2008, unpublished), has lamented the fact that opaque orthographic systems in Zambia and other African countries have also contributed to poor literacy levels in African languages. He gives examples in which familiar sounds and words are made unfamiliar due to faulty writing systems or spelling rules that make children's knowledge of particular languages 'invalid.' The use of familiar language as a medium of instruction in early grades has produced very encouraging results in many countries, especially in Europe. In Finland, for example, the Finnish National Board of Education (2000), conducted a study to find out the factors which contributed to good literacy performance of the Finnish youth. The study established that the 'shallow orthography' of the Finnish language ('what you say is what you write'), gave extra advantage in the initial phase of learning to read (Finnish National Board of Education, 2000: 3). This finding should be good news for Zambia because Zambian languages have a one-to-one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. This means that once used as a medium of instruction for four years, they would provide the learner with an extra advantage in reading and writing abilities. However, the official Zambian orthography (Ministry of Education, 1977) still contains symbols that are not found in ordinary print, such as newspapers. Banda (2008), blames the orthographies for advocating rules of writing and often times alphabetical symbols that make it unnecessarily difficult for speakers to write in the languages they speak very well. For example, as indicated above, the Nyanja orthography has <l> and <r> as symbols representing distinct sounds or phonemes. Mother tongue speakers mostly use <l> in all situations and a few use the flapped <r> throughout, or in borrowed words. The fact that the standard form distinguishes <l> and <r> means that pupils have to learn new rules in order to write in the language they might know very well.

For Bemba, the orthography stipulates that the velar nasal should be written as <ŋ>. One never finds this symbol in newspapers or official government documentation as <ng'> is the preferred grapheme. In addition, for Bemba, the other problematic area in terms of writing is whether some forms should be written disjunctively or conjunctively ('fused'), and whether the vowels that have been coalesced should be doubled or written as one vowel. Consider the following examples:

> *umwana uyu* > *umwanoyu or umwanooyu* (child this one; this child)
> *umwanakashi na umwana* > *umwanakashi no mwana or umwanakashi nomwana/umwanakashi noomwana* (a woman and a child)

imyaka iyi > *imyakeyi/imyakeeyi* (years these ones; these years)

umwanakashi na ifipe > *umwanakashi ne fipe* or *nefipe/neefipe* (a woman and luggage)

(Examples from Miti 2012)

The official *Bemba orthography* (Ministry of Education, 1977) states that fused 'word' boundaries, a common feature in the language, in which adjacent 'word-ending' and 'word-beginning' vowels fuse, should be written disjunctively. The problem is that the forms that should be 'fused' in line with the morpho-phonological disposition of agglutinative Bantu languages are prescribed to be written 'unfused.' The orthography appears to confuse what a word is in English, for example, to a word in Bemba. The agglutinative nature of Bantu languages means that what is a word in Bemba may be two or more words in English. Consider the following examples:

Column A: **Unfused**	*Column B*: **Fused Forms (as pronounced by native speakers)**	
Leeta insalu	*Leetensalu*	bring a cloth
Leeta umufwi	*leetomufwi*	bring an arrow
Imbwa iyo	*imbweyo*	there is a dog
Kumya uyu	*kumyoyu*	touch this one
Ukuloba isabi	*ukulobesabi*	to fish with hooks

Adapted from *Zambia (1977: 57)*

Prescribing that the written form should be unfused as in the first column goes against what children already know about the language. In all likelihood, because of the de-familiarisation of knowledge, learners would read the first column as it is. In terms of early literacies, it would be much easier to teach reading and writing as in the second set. To make it even easier, and following the fact that Bantu languages are agglutinative in nature, it would make sense that the forms be written conjunctively.

In short, our argument is that unlike in the Finnish situation described above, the orthographies impede early literacy development because, often 'what you say is not what you write.'

From the preceding sections, it is clear that the language in education policy as premised on a monoglot/monolingual pupil who speaks one particular standard or familiar language, is proving problematic in as far as initial literacy development is concerned. This kind of monogolot/monolingual perspective is pervasive in the language education literature, but it is inconsistent with the multilingual and hybrid linguistic repertoires available on the ground. Our argument is that there is need to look at the multilingual language practices on the ground, rather than depend on programmes framed in a monolingual/monocultural ideology.

In this regard, we want to argue that Zambia is a multilingual country and linguistic diversity should be at the centre of any policy implementation as well as reading abilities among learners in schools. This entails challenging the status quo and the institutionalised hegemonic existence of language varieties in which local varieties are displaced by zonal languages. The liberalisation of the classroom, especially in as far as initial literacy development is concerned means finding ways of using local languages Therefore, experimentation with urban Nyanja and urban Bemba in Lusaka urban area and parts of the Copperbelt province respectively as a language of initial literacy needs to be encouraged. Such a move would also help counter the language ideology behind the institutionalised collective misrecognition of the standard language, and hence mitigate its negative hegemonic effects, particularly in disadvantaging pupils who have little exposure or no access to the sanctioned language of initial literacy. This entails recognition of local languages in place and/or pupils' multilingual repertoires as legitimate languages and resources in initial literacy development. It might be necessary to describe and document such varieties so that learning and teaching materials could be produced, and teachers trained to use these urban varieties in class.

Translanguaging as Classroom Practices in Multilingual Contexts

There is need to consider using multiple languages including hybrid forms in classroom practice. This could involve what is called *translanguaging,* which in its original conceptualisation is defined as, 'the purposeful pedagogical alternation of languages in spoken and written, receptive and productive modes' (Hornberger and Link, 2012: 262, see also Baker, 2003, 2011; Williams, 1994). The basic tenet of translanguaging as a classroom practice is to engender multilingual and multimodal literacies. As Garcia (2009: 44) notes, translanguaging is about 'engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices [and] not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable'. Whereas standard Nyanja or Bemba may, for example, work in some homogeneous groups in some remote areas of Katete and Chadiza or Kasama, Mansa and Samfya, in most parts of urbanised Zambia where heterogeneity and multilingualism and multiculturalism is the norm, the notion of home language or familiar language, in the singular, becomes fuzzy and inoperable as children use home languages or familiar languages. This means, proclamations which champion home language or familiar language, are misplaced for not accounting for pupils' multilingual linguistic behaviour. This may in part explain why initial literacy development initiatives through a singular mother tongue or familiar language have not yielded the desired results. It is time to consider alternative models, especially those which focus on production and consumption multilingual discourses in the classroom. In the translanguaging model, for example, the teacher may teach in standard Nyanja and/or English, while pupils may respond or do their discussions in different language varieties. This would enable the learners to participate fully in the classroom and at the same time get exposed to the different language varieties including the standard ones (Banda, 2010).

One question that comes to mind is whether translanguaging is not a different reincarnation of code-switching. In justifying why translanguaging should be seen as a new approach, Hornberger and Link (2012: 263), contend that research on code-switching 'tended to focus on issues of language interference, transfer or borrowing' while 'translanguaging 'shifts the lens from cross-linguistic influence' to how multilinguals 'intermingle linguistic features that have hereto been administratively or linguistically assigned to a particular language or language variety' (Garcia, 2009: 51).' In addition, translanguaging is multimodal and, thus, widens the research possibilities in that it transcends verbal communication (both spoken and written language) to other mediated and mediatised modes and related literacies pupils bring to the classroom. Zambian children, in both urban and rural areas, have been exposed or are incrementally being introduced to new technologies such as cell phones and other computerised gadgetry. In viewing linguistic and other social semiotic knowledge Zambian pupils bring to the classroom, 'how researchers and educators alike might better understand the language and literacy practices of those they study and teach' (Hornberger and Link, 2012: 263-4). Banda (2010) and Blackledge and Creese (2010), argue that alternative bilingual models of classroom practice such as translanguaging can help the pupils, families and educators alike, to mitigate and counteract the negative effects of monolingual language ideologies and policies as well as bridge home and school multilingual literacy practices and identities.

Conclusion

The paper has examined not only the genesis of language education policy that favours English, but has also analysed a plethora of issues that have connived to impede progress in literacy development, especially reading and writing among Zambian learners.

Three phases have been identified in the introduction and subsequent entrenchment of English as a language of education, and also of commerce and official government business. First, there were the missionary societies which taught using African languages, but also taught some English to the very few 'gifted' Africans to help mostly in the translation and transcription of English verses and scriptures into local languages which were used in evangelical work. The second phase came with the British South Africa Company (BSAC), who ruled on behalf of the British government, British farmers, hunters, miners and other fortune seekers. The poor education offered by missionaries using Africans led to demands by these groups for better education for Africans to cater for the growing demand for clerical and other administration jobs in the private sector, government and the mines. These positions required contact with the majority who did not speak African languages, hence the need for Africans who spoke some English. Thus, pressure was put on mission schools to include more English in their curriculum, especially after initial literacy in the mother tongue. Since formal education for Africans ended after 2 or 3 years, the few Africans that endured more than 3 years of education had the added bonus of some English education, enabling some of them to qualify for 'lucrative' jobs as translators/interpreters and hence mediators between the white 'boss' and the African majority. There is no doubt that their knowledge of English, however little, enabled them to claim and acquire a different and higher status in their communities.

The third phase came with the onset of the emergent new African nation-state, Zambia. The emergent Zambian leaders went further than the colonial government and its agents, and proclaimed English the *de facto* language of official business and of education starting from Grade 1. The various subsequent education reforms have often endorsed the position of English directly or indirectly. As already discussed above, the recent directive in which Zambian languages are supposed to be used for four years of initial literacies and thereafter switch to English, does not help the cause of Zambian languages. Since it is a transitional model, it only postpones the problem and, in fact, helps to whet the appetite for English. Second, those children whose parents have the means will go to private schools or home-schooling in English. This group of elite children will have a head start when the transition to English occurs for the majority of Zambian children. These elite children will also not experience the academic trauma of switching medium of instruction from one language to another. Hence, our earlier argument for multilingual models of language education which takes into account both the demand for English education by parents generally and the need for Zambian languages should also be at the centre of a Zambian child's education and cultural heritage (cf. Banda, 2010 for similar arguments). This means, for a language education policy, which accounts for local languages such as Soli and Tumbuka in Chongwe and Lumezi respectively, for example, in addition to the regional language Nyanja and English. In addition to enhancing chances of literacy development, this would provide greater opportunities for the democratisation of the classroom, observation of language rights and inclusiveness as well as facilitation of individual and societal multilingualism, and hence socio-economic mobility of Zambian society at large in an increasingly globalised world.

Haugen's model of language standardisation has been to background Bourdieu's notions of *symbolic violence* and misrecognition of the standard language as the sole legitimate language of official business and education, to discuss how outdated orthographies and use of regional language have impaired initial literacy development in the multilingual contexts of Zambia. In turn, a discussion ensued to show how Zambia's multilingual and multicultural heritage could be enhanced through multilingual approaches to classroom practice. In the process, it was noted that translanguaging, with its focus on the multilingual discourse practices in classrooms, offers pedagogical possibilities to counter the monolingual ideologies and policies in place and hegemonic negative effects of the valorisation of the misrecognised standard varieties of Zambian languages as the legitimate languages of initial literacy development.

It can, therefore, be said that given the multilingual contexts as described in this chapter, Zambia requires a different model to the one handed down from the colonial era in which one language is used for teaching and learning at a time. There is need to think of models in which Zambian languages and English are used side-by-side as equal partners in the teaching and learning of content right from Grade 1. In this regard, both the mother tongue only and the English only language education policies are misplaced in the multilingual contexts of Zambia.

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