The benefits of a shared language among informal cross-border traders at Chirundu one-stop border post between Zambia and Zimbabwe

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Abstract:- **Trade is identified as one of the main drivers of economic growth. It sets the basis for economic, political and social growth. In order for Informal Cross Border Trade to be achieved, language plays a pivotal role in negotiating trade transactions. Language is used to mitigate trade forms such as transportation costs, currency costs, customs costs, information acquisition and communication costs. Therefore, it is crucial to have a shared language in executing informal cross border trade. A shared culture is also identified as a communication tool since culture is engraved in language. The paper's primary objective was to investigate the benefits of a shared language in Informal Cross border trade at Chirundu one stop border post located between Zimbabwe and Zambia. The border is located in the Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe and the Siavonga region in the Southern part of Zambia. The study employed two primary research methods, namely interviews and questionnaires. Secondary sources were also used to substantiate the findings. Findings revealed that a shared language has many benefits that include; increased bilateral transactions costs as it becomes easy to convey transaction costs; reduced communication barriers; and increases the accessibility of product information. Cultural heritage is also communicated through shared language. It was concluded that the border lacks a shared language, and because of that, Informal Cross Border Traders are experiencing challenges such as communication barriers, miscommunication of business transactions, fraud, a decrease in sales rates, inaccessibility of product information, and difficulties in advertising products.**

Keywords: **Informal Cross Border Trade, Shared language, communication barriers, Chirundu one-stop border post.**

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Trade is considered one of the primary drivers of economic growth. It presents several benefits, economically, politically, and socially. Trade is either formal or informal and language is a fundamental trade component that can expand both forms of trade. It plays a part in mitigating trade costs such as transportation costs, currency conversion, customs costs, information acquisition, and communication costs. When trade is involved, one of the critical issues informal cross-border traders have to deal with is language. Language barriers are believed to hinder trade, whilst language similarities can effectively facilitate trade due to the weight of communication costs.

A commonly shared language, much similar to the effect of sharing the same currency explored by Rose (2000), can decrease trading costs and thus influence export destination choice. For example, Portugal shares the same language as Brazil; this translates into less communication related trading costs between them. It is also noteworthy that Portuguese cross-border migration and trade flows mirror this choice until the 1970s, when Portuguese traders moved to France and Luxembourg (taking advantage of the similarity between Portuguese and French). According to Ferro and Ribeiro (2016), Portuguese is a pluricentric language, and therefore associated with various standard versions and is currently spoken by over two hundred million people worldwide. For instance, it is the official language in nine countries, including Mozambique, Portugal, Brazil, Sao Tome and Principe, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. Accordingly, trade among these countries is facilitated with less cost due to positive linguistic distance (Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc, 2009).

Language barrier could act as a significant limiting factor to trade between countries. Indeed, most studies that examine trade account for common official languages between countries invariably conclude that sharing a common language translates into greater trade intensity (Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc, 2009). Cross-border trade among Asian economies, with considerable market size, is also impeded by a lack of commonality in language. China has diverted away from a centrally planned economy to a market-based economy since 1978, which has caused an increase in informal traders crossing the border selling different goods to Africa. However, the level of trade has been adversely affected by the language barrier.

Also, in Europe, The average probability of having two randomly selected individuals from two different EU countries to communicate in English is 22%, explaining why intra-EU trade is the highest globally, estimated at around 68%. In contrast, intra-African trade is estimated at a paltry 16%, with language being one of the limiting factors (Brenton and Gamberoni, 2013).Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) is essential, and it contributes substantially to the economies of many African countries (Brenton and Gamberoni, 2013).

A study by the African Development Bank (2009) estimated that ICBT serves as the primary source of livelihood for about 43 per cent of the African population which explains why it widely practised in the continent (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012; OECD, 2003) and in SADC, ICBT is estimated to be contributing between 30 to 40 per cent of intra-SADC trade with 70 to 80 per cent of ICBT being undertaken by women (UN Women, 2010). ICBT's proportion of total trade in Southern Africa is valued at $20 billion a year (Intracen, 2014). Therefore, it appears that ICBT is growing at a very increasing rate among African countries. However, the current level of ICBT could be overly underestimated if the language barrier is addressed.

In Africa, it is generally accepted that women's constraints, such as limited access to finance, traditional values, gender roles, violence, health issues, and in a particular language, have in the past hindered them from seizing opportunities provided by the expansion of trade. Informal cross-border trade has been a significant feature of African economic and social fibre dating back to the colonial era. While it is difficult to precisely assess such trade's magnitude due to a lack of consistent measurement tools and accurate data, estimates suggest that it continues to play a large role in Africa. Informal Cross Border Trade in Southern African Development Community (SADC) is estimated to amount to about US$17.6 billion per year, accounting for about 30 to 40 per cent of total sub-regional trade. In West Africa, informal cross-border trade accounts for 20 per cent of the GDP in Nigeria and 75 per cent of Benin's GDP (UNCTAD 2013a; Koroma et al. 2017). ICBT in Eastern Africa is relatively more visible when compared to other parts of the continent. Countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Somalia are generally recognised as sources of non-processed tradable goods consumed in Kenya and South Sudan. Kenya is a significant source of manufactured goods sold informally into the region. All the countries in the region except South Sudan trade-in re-exports (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012). However, despite the importance of cross border trade, a language that facilitates this trade remains a more significant problem.

Languages facilitate communication and ease transactions among the informal cross-border traders. When two people who talk the same language can communicate and trade with each other directly, those without enough knowledge of a common language must often depend on intermediaries or employ a translator. The additional complexity inherent in such an intermediary relationship, the potential for costly errors, and its augmented cost may be large enough to prevent the occurrence of mutually beneficial transactions from occurring (Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc 2008). Therefore, speaking foreign languages should have a positive economic payoff to the traders for negotiating and charging the prices. Most people in countries like Zimbabwe and Zambia have depended highly on informal trade, and language has remained a significant obstacle.

However, Cross-border traders have defied nation-state-centric language controls and exhibit multiple poly-communication strategies that have sustained their business activities' survival and success at the border sites. Among the multiple communication and negotiating means identified, KISS (Keep It Simply Short) strategy, linguistic detours, semiotic and paralinguistic practices, inter-lingual agents, visual media techniques, mental language corpora/reservoirs, and polyphonic translanguaging strategies were also identified (Charmes, 2006). This has helped most of the ICBTs and this has contributed largely to the growth of the informal sector which is estimated to be equivalent to the formal sector. It is estimated to represent an average of 43 per cent of the official GDP and has shown the significant key role of ICBT in the African economy (Schneider, 2006, and OECD, 2007).

Informal cross-border trade has been ongoing for years and is one of the opportunities for livelihood sustenance in a continent where formal employment opportunities are minimal and shrinking (FAO 2017). It appears to play a vital role in alleviating poverty and promoting women and youth economic empowerment in Zimbabwe. However, it is facing linguistic problems that slow down its processes (Chen et al., 2006).

II. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Transborder languages

Cross-border languages or local languages are languages commonly spoken by two or more countries within a region. They demonstrate the various ethnic and cultural ties between states within a region in indigenous linguistic affiliations. (Chimhundu, 1997). According to the African Academy of Languages, trans-border languages are common to two or more states and domains spanning various usages (Amali, 2016). These languages exist because many African borders were haphazardly and arbitrarily demarcated, and people speaking the same languages, sometimes with tiny nuances, were found on both sides of the border. Therefore, these people adopt their common languages in cross-border activities. Plonski*et al.* (2013) assert that it is apparent that most of these activities contribute positively to the commercial life of their countries and are mostly considered informal in the African countries. Limits and edges of human experience, power, and control have been expressed in language from the earliest writing and likely before then in the spoken words of ordering and bordering space and territory among people.

Furthermore, the use of transborder languages promotes the culture of each party. Mina *et al.* (2018) argue that transborder languages create a sentiment of belonging that enhances any relationship built between the parties because there is less hindrance to communication. Cross-border languages are pivotal facilitators for cross-border business and cultural integration. It is established in the literature that cross-border language plays the role of facilitating cross-border economic activities, opening avenues for access to alternative centres of political power, trans-border political mobilisation, and strategic cooperation by communities across national borders (Feyissa&Hoehne, 2008; Metondi, 2015).

Africa is a continent with a legacy of many things that have happened in the past. When issues to do with language are being discussed, we are often faced with many realities. In the past, Africa was been, and it still is, a continent characterised by a rich linguistic heritage and the prominent role that the languages of the former colonial powers, namely English, French and Portuguese, still play is huge. Important in our language environment is the role that the transborder languages can play to help integrate Africa's people and improve the continent's education and skills development (Maraise, 2014). The current study conceptualises transborder languages as driving force in the achievement of Informal Cross Border trade activities.

Informal cross border trade

The evolution of ICBT in Africa can be traced back to the pre-colonial era. Although the demarcation of borders is attributed to the colonial era, our forefathers had their demarcations identified as kingdoms, and they interacted and traded with one another. According to Tekere (2001), ICBT commenced in the pre-colonial period when the communities interacted and traded without formal registration of such trade. These communities engaged in what is known as barter exchange, where they exchanged different kinds of items. The pre-colonial era comprised socially complex societies supported by an economy reliant upon agricultural and pastoral practices, from which urbanism, regional, and interregional trade emerged (Mitchelle, 2002).

Globalisation has contributed mainly to the evolution of ICBT in Africa. Globalisation is a process of integration and interconnectedness of trans-regional contacts. Often, these contacts result in an exchange of items, information, and ideas. Long-distance trade, industrialisation, and mass consumption have their roots in early interactions. These interactions were often local and regional in scope, increasing complexity and scale (Kusimba*et al*., 2017). In Europe, the first countries to industrialise began exporting their commodities to other countries and states that had not yet industrialised. The trade that existed between those states was informal since there were no official checkpoints that recorded these activities.

In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, on the international trade, it is said that leaders of the Mutapa state relied on tax levied on exports and imports. As the years progressed, through the emergence of colonial borders, the informal cross-border trade rate declined because governments began to impose trade tariffs, border laws, and regulations that conditioned trade activities. However, informal cross-border trade (ICBT) is pervasive. It has a long history given the continent's artificial and often porous borders, a long history of intraregional trade, weak border enforcement, corruption, and, perhaps most importantly, lack of coordination of economic policies among neighbouring countries. ICBT has continued even under these strict conditions. It remains the backbone of most African economies with an estimated contribution of 43% of official Gross Domestic Product (GDP); thus, it is almost equivalent to the formal sector (Lesser and Moisé-Leeman, 2009). Perbedy*et al*. (2015) also state that informal cross-border trade represents a significant feature of regional trade flows in Southern Africa.

The informal economy is defined by Abbas (2019) as all economic activities by workers or economic units in law or practice not covered or sufficiently covered by formal arrangements. These include legitimately-produced commodities and services that do not follow formal processes, standard regulations, business registration, or operational licenses. Others have referred to this form of trade as a 'survival economy' or 'parallel trade' (FAO, 2017). Informal cross-border trade is usually called informal as it involves small entrepreneurs who do not have access to preferential tariff agreements. It also involves traders who may buy, or more often sell, in informal sector markets; and traders who do not always pass through the formal import and export channels for all or part of their goods (FAO, 2017). ICBT may also allude to trade in goods and services that may be lawfully imported or exported on another side of the border and unlawfully on the other and vice-versa. This is because they have not been captured in the official trade statistics or susceptible to border legislation and regulations such as customs clearance (Fundira 2018).

Furthermore, ICBT is a form of trade that constitutes small-scale traders who buy and sell goods across national boundaries. This trade is believed to be informal because it involves small entrepreneurs and the goods bought are generally bought and sold in the informal market, and the traders, for the most part, generally escape from formal import and export channels (Peberdy, 2002). Although ICBT constitutes informal transactions, it also makes up a significant proportion of trade in the SADC region. It contributes significantly towards food security, and it is an essential income-earning activity within the sub-region. It provides employment opportunities, thereby reducing poverty and unemployment. The definition of ICBT is somewhat weak, essentially because of its nature of practices. The definition is meant to capture trade outside the formal channels, such as customs authorities. It could be trading in raw or processed commodities, and entry, exit, or both may be illegal. In other words, the commodities could legally leave the source country and enter the target country unlawfully. Ogalo (2010) defines ICBT as imports and exports of legitimately produced goods and services that are escaped directly or indirectly from the government regulatory frameworks of taxation and often go unrecorded or even incorrectly recorded into the official national statistics. Several researchers have attempted to estimate the magnitude of ICBT flows. One study by Nshimbe and Moyo (2017) estimated that ICBT amounted to 30-40% of total intra-regional trade in the SADC region and 40% in the COMESA region. The volume of ICBT flows varies by country.

Additionally, ICBT operates in goods and services that trade across the border and has no official export/import license or permit within a defined threshold and frequency (SADC, 2010). ICBT is described as a form of trade unrecorded in official statistics and is carried out by small businesses or traders in the region. ICBT characteristically involves bypassing border posts, concealment of goods, under-reporting, false classification, under-invoicing, and other similar tricks (Njiwa, 2013). The informal economy is defined here as the market-based production of legal goods and services deliberately concealed from public authorities and escape detection in official gross domestic product (GDP) statistics (Schneider, 2006).

ICBTs are treated as significant players in intra-regional trade. In SADC, ICBT ranges from 50% to 70% of total intra-regional trade, indicating the extent of ICBT in the SADC region (Fundira, 2018). ICBT is essential not only as a source of employment and supplementary to family income in the wake of shrinking formal employment opportunities in the region but also in eradicating poverty and contributing immensely to food security and economic growth. ICBT is thus an attractive option for many traders. If appropriately organised to engage with the government, it can have positive macro-economic and socio-economic benefits to grow our striving economies in Africa.

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW: BENEFITS OF A SHARED LANGUAGE

Language Similarity and Profit Maximisation

All people on earth act as economic drivers who always wish to maximise profits. Like any other person in any form of business, informal cross-border traders also wish to maximise their skills. Language has been seen as a tool to make sure that informal cross-border traders maximise their profits. Speaking the same language can facilitate communication in trade transactions, making transactions more comfortable and transparent and can result in more profits being obtained by the traders. It shows the significance of Linder's Country Similarity theory which states that countries sharing common characteristics are characterised by ease of doing business when it comes to trade. In any situation, especially in cross-border trade, any ICBT's ability to speak a foreign language should translate into positive individual economic payoffs. People in different countries' ability to speak the same language causes them to communicate efficiently, and trade between them becomes cheaper and more comfortable (FidrmucandFidrmuc, 2009). The gravity model (Linder 1961; Linnemann 1966; Anderson and Van Wincoop 2003; Helpman*et al*., 2009) relates to trade between two countries to their aggregate supply and demand, transport, and transaction cost specific bilateral factors such as free trade agreements between them.

Models based on gravity relation have been used to assess the impact of trade liberalisation and economic integration in discussing the so-called 'home bias' in trade (McCallum, 1995) and estimate the effects of currency unions on trade (Rose, 2000). Frankel and Rose (1998) found that two countries that share the same official language appear to have a 1.8 times higher trade than two otherwise similar countries that do not have a common language. This effect is similar in magnitude to having a common border. Melitz and Toubal (2014) also confirm this by stating that trade theory with heterogeneous firms shedslight on the role of linguistic costs in trade. Helpman*et al*. (2009) distinguish between the extensive and intensive margins of trade. Their empirical findings suggest that common languages are an essential part of fixed costs related to market entry, thus influencing the extensive trade margin. In particular, the common language between the two countries or individuals increases the probability of bilateral trade by 10%. Thus, showing the importance of language in leading to higher profits by the people trading.

Many studies have proven that language mastering results in high profits among traders, for example, those of Hutchinson (2002), Melitz (2008), Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc (2009), and Melitz and Toubal (2014). According to Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc (2016), English is considered in several countries'trade relations, including the USA. They further go beyond official languages to consider all the established or indigenous languages spoken by approximately 4% of the population, in addition to official languages. They find that both categories of languages, which they label as 'open-circuit and 'direct communication' languages, increase bilateral trade. Similarly, Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc (2016); and Melitz and Toubal (2014) Argue that the effect of common official languages is positive but less than the effect of commonly spoken language. Historical ties and linguistic similarities between countries and individuals are positively correlated hence increasing the trade profits. The exact mechanisms through which language affects international trade and financial flows are still under dispute. It is unclear whether linguistic differences act as a simpletransaction cost (Melitz *et al*., 2008) or as a proxy for ethnic similarity and trust (Alesina*et al.,* 2003).

Influence of language on informal cross border trade

Various scholars such as (Guiso*et al.*, 2006; Tabellini, 2010; Desmet*et al*., 2011) have subscribed to the fact that communication through language positively influences business by cross-border traders. Many avenues through which language affects economic outcomes have been identified by various scholars, which clarifies that the informal cross-border traders face language problems. Language is used to measure trust and ethnic ties between linguistic populations and as a transaction cost and barrier to trade (Melitz, 2008). Therefore, it translates that poor communication due to language problems is a cost to the traders especially cross-border traders. The Country Similarity Theory by Linder has proved this, which says that there have to be similarities in terms of languages between the trading individuals for trade to be viable. Nardo*et al*. (2014) have found that the effects of language on trade are underestimated.

Melitz and Toubal (2014) use five different linguistic similarity measures to explore the mechanisms of language. These measures describe the commonalities between the language populations in two countries, and they discuss how each identifies a different avenue of communication. The five measures are common official language (COL), commonly spoken language (CSL), common native language (CNL), linguistic similarity based on the Ethnologue, and Fearon and Laitin measures (Prox1), and linguistic similarity (Prox2) based on the Automated Similarity Judgment Program (ASJP) (Melitz &Toubal, 2014). The value of using multiple linguistic measures lies in identifying mechanisms through which language is used and by using COL and CSL to capture the transaction cost or ease of communication mechanism of language. CNL, Prox1, and Prox2 to capture the historical ties mechanism of language, Melitz and Toubal provide a unique way to analyse language's relationship with economic outcomes.

According to Ferro and Ribeiro (2016), trade, particularly informal cross-border trade, is highly dependent on the interaction among individuals. As such, ICBT is influenced by the ease of communication between the traders and customers,which relies not only on technological factors but also, and much more importantly, on the sharing of a language in that they can communicate. Melitz (2008) describes Common Official Language (COL) as a means to measurean overhead cost to communication. If two countries share an official language, there is no additional communication cost to the transaction, such as translation and interpretation services. People in these countries are already capable of sharing messages without incurring any additional private costs. Common Official Language (COL) can measure the transaction costs mechanism of shared language (Melitz, 2008). Melitz and Toubal (2014) posit that Common Spoken Language (CSL) measures the direct ease of communication while Common Native Language (CNL) isolates the ethnicity and trust mechanisms of language since native language measures the language taught at birth and, thus, the parents' language. The linguistic proximity measures, Prox1 and Prox2, further explore the ethnic or historical ties inherent in language development by looking at the differences in the native languages themselves and isolating the various language mechanisms. These measures provide an exciting way to understand how differences between populations affect economic outcomes (Melitz &Toubal, 2014).

Melitz &Toubal (2014) argue that "to trade, two persons from different countriescan follow one of five language strategies : (i) they can share the same language and use it to communicate; (ii) they can each speak in their language and be understood by the other (this phenomenon is known as intercommunication and very widespread, for example, in Scandinavian countries); (iii) they can choose one of their two languages provided that one of them speaks their counterpart's language; (iv) they can choose a foreign language that both of them can speak; (v) they can hire the services of an in-between, such as a translator or an interpreter." These solutions range from the least costly to the costliest in terms of the transaction, since sharing the same language will entail no costs whatsoever, while hiring the services of a third party can not only be costly but also introduce noise into the communication process (Melitz &Toubal, 2014). Communication costs have significantly decreased since the last quarter of the 20th century with new information technologies. For example, in particular, the Internet has brought together potential trading partners who would have been too geographically distanced in the past even to be aware of each other's existence (Melitz &Toubal, 2014). A commonly shared language, similar to sharing the same currency explored by Rose (2000), can decrease trade's fixed costs and influence export location choice.

While the precise way to measure language is still debated, the relationship between language and trade has become accepted. It is now common to control language in bilateral trade analyses (Melitz &Toubal, 2012). Although the geography of financial flows themselves can differ significantly from trade flow patterns (Nardo*et al*., 2014), a language may have similar international trade and informal cross-border trade effects. Furthermore, cultural institutes that promote familiarity with cultures and languages have positive economic effects on trade and Foreign Direct Investment through increasing trust and reducing transaction costs (Lien & Lo, 2017). Therefore, Linder's 1961 country similarity theory best describes the analysis of how linguistic problems may affect ICBT. It advances the notion that countries with similar qualities are most likely to trade with each other, thereby increasing economic growth.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The area under study is Chriundu border post situated on the Zambezi River banks. It is a one-stop border post located in the Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe and the Siavonga region in the Southern part of Zambia. The border welcomes traders, ICBTs, truck drivers, and travellers travelling to different parts of the COMESA and the SADC region. Chirundu border post welcomes people who speak different languages, such as French from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kiswahili from Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, and Portuguese from Angola and Mozambique and English from South Africa, Zimbabwe and other English speaking countries in the region. It is a border connecting travellers from South Africa and Zimbabwe to Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Tanzania. Chirundu is also well known for vending activities where vendors sell cooked and uncooked food to truck drivers and other travellers at the border. It is Zimbabwe's central border post where most regional integration activities are carried out.

This research's target population includes 20 informal cross-border traders, 4 customs officers, 4 immigration officers, and 4 representatives from the Zimbabwe Cross Border Traders Association. The study used triangulation as a data collection strategy which included a mixture ofinterviews, questionnaires, and document review. Data were analysed using qualitative and quantitative analysis. Qualitative data were analysed through content analysis, whereas quantitative data was analysed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SSPS) analysis tool to obtain descriptive data.

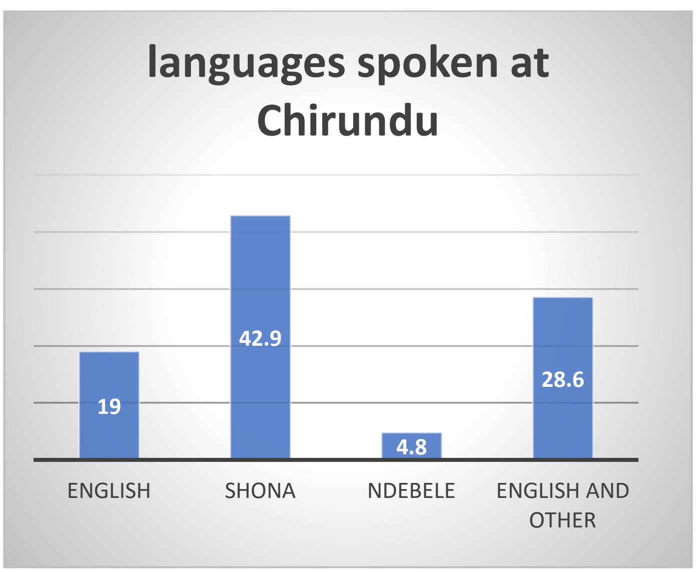
The researcher acknowledges that ethics play an essential role in research. Before the commencement of data collection, written permission was sought from the responsible authorities. As a result, the researcher ensured that no one was physically, emotionally or economically disadvantaged whatsoever by how the data was gathered, presented or published.

V. BENEFITS OF A SHARED LANGUAGE AT CHIRUNDU BORDER POST

Geolinguistic, linguistic landscape and linguistic diglossia of Chirundu border post

The Chirundu border post's linguistic landscape has Shona language as a widely spoken language recorded at 42.9%, which is most likely to hinder non-Shona speakers' perception of the communicated information. English and other languages follow it and recorded 28.6% of speakers, and English alone were at 19% whilst Ndebele with 4,8%. Subsequently, it means the Chirundu border area is multilingual. As demonstrated in the graph below, questionnaires administered to ICBTs revealed that several languages are spoken at the Chirundu border post.

Figure 8 reveals the number of languages spoken by ICBTs trading at the Chirundu border post. The findings are interpreted below.



Source: Field survey, 2020. Values are based on the author's calculations using SPSS 21.

The Zimbabwe Cross Border Traders Association and the Chirundu Immigration officials highlighted the low levels of documentation and lack of standardised terminologies and grammars of languages spoken by ICBTs trading along the Chirundu border post. Ogalo (2010) laments the same fate by stating that many languages, especially minority languages, are not documented. Such a shortfall hinders officials and authorities from using those languages for business transactions. These languages are not used in business transactions. Even in non-business conversations, the officials are reluctant to learn the languages or use them if they are conversant in some of those languages. However, it is prudent to note that the officials' reluctance to use and speak languages spoken by ICBTs defeats what Nshimbe (2017) highlighted that a language could only be developed and standardised if and only if that language is extensively in use. Usage of a language emboldens, encourages, and motivates political authorities to consider a budget for developing and standardising pertinent languages.

Some Zimbabwe Cross Border Traders Association officials admitted that there is no shared language at the Chirundu border post, and this could be because Africa is a multilingual society. English characterises Zimbabwe's linguistic diglossia, Ndebele, Shona, Tonga, Chibarwe are among the sixteen officially recognised languages as enunciated in its supreme law, the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013. Across the border, Zambia hosts more than 60 languages, with Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Lunda, Kaonde, and Luvale topping the diglossic hierarchy of the nation. It is then this scenario that gives birth to a lack of common language.

The Zimbabwe Cross Border Traders Association further admitted that English language is spoken at the Chirundu border post and is used as its official language. However, they denied that a reasonable percentage of the population of users of the border are conversant in English. English is Zimbabwe's official language; it is a language used as a medium of instruction in education and is a language of record. The same applies to Zambia. However, as revealed by Zimbabwe Cross Traders Association and substantiated by both ICBTs and Immigration Officials of the border, not a reasonable percentage can effectively use the English language.

Benefits of a shared language

Table 7 *The benefits of a shared language.*

Benefits		Per cent
	Increased bilateral transactions costs	4.8
	Easy to convey transaction costs	19.0
	Reduce communication barriers	52.4
	Increases accessibility of product information	19.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2020. Values are based on the author's calculations using SPSS 21

Table 7 shows the representation of the benefits of a shared language, as presented in the questionnaires. Respondents were asked to select at least one benefit of a shared language according to their experience in ICBT. The most selected benefit stated that shared language reduces communication barriers, with 52.4% selectionabove average. It is noted that where there is trade, there is the use of language, and if both parties cannot understand each other, there is an occurrence of a communication barrier. Followed by two language benefits with 19% as chosen by some of the ICBTs, shared language increases accessibility of product information, and it also makes it easy to convey transaction costs. Lastly, a shared language is beneficial in promoting increased bilateral transaction costs.

As indicated before, some disadvantages come with multilingualism, where a shared language does not exist. A shared language is just but a remedy to those disadvantages. Upon interviews with the informants, a question was asked investigating the benefits of a shared language. In an interview with ICBTs, one of the respondents highlighted the following:

> *Having a shared language will assist us in explaining and bargaining the prices with suppliers, and it will also allow us to advertise our products, thereby facilitating our trade activities.*

Respondent 2 stated that:

A shared language will benefit us in carrying out our transactions and understanding border documents, and creating trust between us, the traders, the suppliers, and customers.

Border officials were also interviewed on this matter, and they also highlighted the benefits that come with a shared language. In an interview with Customs officers, a respondent noted that:

> *A shared language has benefits because it will create uniformity; it will reduce translation and interpretation costs for traders and border officials.*

Data from the respondents shows that business is more comfortable where they meet a person who speaks their language. Furthermore, trade costs are reduced since some costs are incurred in translating documents in all languages that are there present. It also reduces interpretation costs to be incurred by ICBTs when communicating with the customers and suppliers. Some costs are incurred again when traders lose customers and suppliers since they would notcommunicate with them. The communication barrier is reduced when there is a shared language because it facilitates mutual intelligibility; thus, simplifying communication. A trader who intends to advertise his/her product can do so in a shared language and makes it easier to reach many clients.The results in Melitz and Toubal (2014) suggest that, across a wide range of countries, communication proficiency appears to be relatively more important than cultural heritage for stimulating cross-border trade transactions.

VI. CONCLUSION

As it was found that there are many languages at the border, it was further notified that a shared language was absent at the same border. A multiplicity of languages is bound to bring language barriers (Meagher 2003). As a result, a shared language is needed. In this regard, interviews and questionnaires were designed to determine the benefits should a shared language be chosen and applied at the border. The following were the benefits as shown by the data from interviews and questionnaires; It increases bilateral transactions costs; it makes it easy to convey transaction costs, reduces communication barriers, and increases the accessibility of product information.

Since it was a grounded assertion that the border has no commonly shared language, the researcher explored if any notable challenges emanated from a shared language's unavailability. Indeed, ICBTs confirmed the existence of such challenges. The identified challenges arecommunication barrier, miscommunication of business transactions, fraud, a decrease in sales rates, inaccessibility of product information and difficulties in advertising products. These challenges seem to be affecting the ICBTs directly and indirectly, the progress of Informal Cross Border Trade. The same fate was discussed by Melitz (2008) as he pointed out that when citizens' interaction is hindered on the ground, the cooperation and integration of the two states in question become halted.

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