

# An Analysis of Classroom Language Practices among First Graders upon Entry into Grade One in a Cosmopolitan Chongwe Urban District

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## ABSTRACT

Zambia is considered as a multilingual country with all the classrooms being multilingual. While the National Literacy Framework (2013) policy currently states that the official regional languages of instruction be used in all schools from grade one to grade four, with English taking over from grade five onwards. The aim of this study was to analyse the classroom language practices of the early graders upon entry into grade one in Chongwe urban district. Purposive sampling was used in this study to come up with 270 participants of which 20 were grade one teachers and 250 were grade one learners. Data was collected using interviews and classroom lesson observations. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically according to research objectives. The findings of the study are that the grade one classrooms of Chongwe District were multilingual as teachers and learners were able to speak more than one language. The study also found that the commonly spoken languages in the schools were Cinyanja, Soli, Bemba and English. The study showed that tranlanguaging was mainly used to engender epistemic access. The study concluded that since learners entered grade one without adequate proficiency in the regional language, teachers used tranlanguaging to bridge the gap between home and school literacies. The study has also demonstrated that while the curriculum has made provisions for transition at grade 5, there is need for policy directive on how the transition from home into the school is supposed to be managed linguistically speaking.

**Key words:** Multilingual, Triangulation, Tranlanguaging, Dual-language/ Dynamic Bilingual, Transition, Classroom language practices.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Zambia is a multi-ethnic and a multilingual country. It is multi-ethnic in the sense that there are 73 ethnic groupings and multilingual because of the 73 ethnic groups that are widely claimed as languages spoken in Zambia (Kashoki, 1978). However, the exact number of languages and dialects spoken in the country is contested on many fronts. Kashoki's (1978) view that the 73 tribes are widely claimed as languages spoken in Zambia is shared by Africa (1980: 127-128) who argued that "if the term tribe is seen as being coterminous with the notion of language or dialect, then the frequently articulated claim that Zambia has 73 languages and dialects is understandable." In trying to estimate the number of languages in Zambia, UNESCO (1964) gave the range of 50 to 100 vernacular languages whereas Grotperter (1979) stated that there are 30 distinct languages in Zambia. Mwanza (2016: 39) clarified the number of languages and dialects present in the country when he stated that "Zambia has 73 dialects which can be collapsed into between 25 and 40 mutually intelligible languages.". Despite the disparities in the number of languages

spoken in Zambia, the multilingual state of the country remains undisputed.

According to the Zambia Curriculum Framework, the language of instruction from Grade one (1) to Grade four (4) in all the learning areas is one of the seven (7) zonal official regional languages or familiar languages of play, while English is the official language of instruction from Grade five (5) upwards, (MOE, 2013). The policy gives room for multiple language practices in the lower primary school when it stated that “the seven (7) zone languages, as well as the widely used community languages in specific school catchment areas will be used for this purpose” (ibid). But in the upper primary, the policy states that “English will still remain as the official medium of instruction beginning at Grade 5 up to tertiary” (ibid). Therefore, classroom language practices for grade ones is the familiar local language found in their zone.

Children in Zambia enter grade one with variety of languages yet are supposed to learn in one regional language which may not be so familiar to some of them. Thus, it is clear that some learners will need time to learn the Zambian regional language before they can use the language both receptively and productively. Banda and Mwanza (2017) argued that the regionalization of language in Zambia is on the premise that everyone in a particular region speaks the same language which is monoglossic and does not reflect the real sociolinguistic situation of Zambia. Thus, this study’s interest in analyzing the classroom language practices in grade one classes upon entry into grade one to see which language or languages were used and how teachers scaffold those to whom the regional language is not their familiar language.

Linguistic diversity has been identified as one of the factors contributing to low reading achievements in Zambia (Tambulukani & Bus, 2011; Mwanza, 2012, Mkandawire, 2022). This was emphasized by Nyimbili & Mwanza (2020) who claimed that the reason Zambia’s literacy levels have remained low is because the country’s language policy places a strong emphasis on one language of instruction while simultaneously presenting other languages in the region as a problem. The idea of using regional languages to instruct learners has been questioned in several studies (Banda and Mwanza, 2020; Nyimbili and Mwanza, 2020; Mashinja and Mwanza, 2020; Mwanza, 2020; Mubita and Mwanza, 2020; Banda and Mwanza, 2020; Mwanza and Bwalya, 2019) in that the regional languages do not accurately reflect the language of play and community languages used in the various communities in Zambia.

If there are bilingual and multilingual learners in classrooms, if teachers do not support their multilingualism, it will be difficult for these learners to learn effectively. Learning multiple languages is best enhanced when learners are encouraged to become aware of and use their pre-existing linguistic and language learning knowledge and therefore, in the school setting, the language teacher is the key facilitator of learners’ multilingualism (Muzeya, 2023). If teachers are not very supportive of learners’ multilingualism, multilingualism does not automatically enhance further language learning. In other words, if learners cannot use the resources they bring to class, particularly their command and proficiency of their native tongue, the academic success will suffer.

While teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms has been found to be difficult, translanguaging has been found to be useful in promoting learning to all learners regardless of their language background. Translanguaging can be defined as the act of creating meaning, reshaping experiences and learning using two or more languages, Baker (2011). According to this viewpoint, concept development may require the usage of two languages, (first language and second language). Furthermore, according to Garcia (2009:140), translanguaging is “the technique used by bilinguals to access distinct linguistic aspects or various modes of what are referred to as autonomous languages in order to enhance communication potential”. According to Garcia, translanguaging enables learners reach their full potential when learning a new language by utilizing their pre-existing linguistic skills. In light of this, translanguaging is a significant pedagogical idea in modern educational practices.

Teachers can engage in a variety of activities that deliberately encourage translanguaging, ranging from

providing vocabulary in multiple languages to collaborative translation opportunities. The goal is to get learners translanguaging as a practice that can be leveraged towards supporting literacy outcomes and engagement, as well as other academic endeavors. For example, two learners from the same classroom can be assigned to read a particular word, among the two, one would read with less or no difficulty while, the other one might be stuck on the same word in English. The two learners can then use an equivalent word in their home language to make sense of what this particular word is asking of them. Or in group activities, learners can be prompted to share with the rest of the class how something taught in English would make sense in Bemba by highlighting similar and different grammatical structures between the two languages.

The sociolinguistic profile of Chongwe is that it is multilingual. There is a variety of languages spoken, among them are Soli, Cinyanja, Bemba, English, Cikunda and Lenje. This is due to the fact that Chongwe is fast developing into a big town. However, Chongwe uses Cinyanja as a medium of instruction in a predominantly Soli, Cinyanja, Bemba and English-speaking area which falls under the Cinyanja language Zone. It is in this context that this study was conducted to analyze the language practices in grade one classes upon entry into grade one.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The language in education policy in Zambia is that Zambian languages are used as media of instruction from pre-school to grade 4 while English is the medium of classroom instruction from grade 5 onwards. Since languages of instruction in the primary school are designated on the basis of zone, it is the case that some learners are not familiar with the official medium of instruction even if such a language is Zambian. According to Banda and Mwanza (2017), this situation calls for multilingual language practices in order to ensure that all learners access learning. This is in a context where the language policy is premised on a monolingual/monoglot language in education policies (Mwanza, 2020). Therefore, the research problem stated in question form was that: what language practices were grade one teachers using when teaching Grade One learners upon first graders' entry into grade one.

## **STUDY OBJECTIVE**

To analyze grade one teachers and learners' classroom language practices in the first month of schooling.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

A qualitative research design was used. The qualitative design was adopted because the aim was to get in-depth understanding (see also Milingo, 1999; Milingo, 2004; Milingo, Changwe and Hara-Zulu, 2021) on the grade one teachers and learners classroom language practices. The researcher also wanted to get their views on these language practices. This was only possible through one-on-one interviews. Observations were also used because the researcher wanted to observe in a real classroom situation how teachers actually are implementing the classroom language practices which they said they were using during the interviews. The sample consisted of nineteen (19) teachers, one teacher per school was interviewed and observed out of the five (5) selected schools respectively while fourteen (14) were only interviewed giving a total sample of nineteen (19) teachers and two hundred and fifty (250) grade one learners were participants in the classroom observations. The breakdown for the schools is as follows: School A= 49 Pupils, One (1) classroom observation and three (3) teachers interviewed, School B = 50 Pupils, One (1) classroom observation and three (3) teachers interviewed, School C = 56 and One (1) classroom observation and two (2) teachers interviewed, School D = 44 Pupils, One (1) classroom observation and three (3) teachers interviewed and School E = 51 Pupils, One (1) classroom observation and three (3) teachers interviewed. Unstructured homogeneous Purposive sampling was used in this study as it involves identifying and selecting individuals

or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable, availability, and experienced with a phenomenon of interest, (Creswell & Plano Clark, (2007). Thus, the five (5) schools, nineteen (19) teachers and two hundred and fifty (250) learners were all sampled purposively. This was done in order to come up with the best suited respondents for the study. These particular schools were selected considering their different locations and they were accessible. The five particular teachers who were both interviewed and had their lessons observed were also purposively chosen. Among them some were the longest serving grade one teacher at that particular school while the other one was teaching the grade ones for the first time, respectively. The other fourteen (14) were only interviewed. The data that was be collected was analyzed thematically in line with the respective objectives of the study.

## PRESENTATION OF DATA

The sought to analyze teachers' and learners' language practices in selected grade one classrooms upon entry into school. It was meant to generate data on the language practices in multilingual classrooms and whether such practices were appropriate for multilingual cases or not. Presented in this section is the qualitative data on the classroom language practices of the teachers and pupils.

### 5.1 Classroom Language Practices: Interview Data

The first interview question was regarding the medium of instruction in the respective schools/ classrooms. Teachers were asked to state what language(s) they used when teaching the grade one pupils upon entry into school. The findings showed that almost all the teachers mentioned that they use the local language. Only a few of them stated that they mixed English and local languages.

The findings revealed that many teachers said that the language they used allowed the learners to interact with the teachers freely and it also enabled the learners to express themselves fully. Below are some of their responses:

*I use the local language because the learners are familiar with it as it is their mother tongue. (Teacher 1)*

*The main reason I use the local language is that apart from it being the policy from the Government is that it helps the learners to understand fully what they are learning in the local language. (Teacher 2)*

*I teach in the local language because it is appropriate, most of the times sometimes learners understand somethings easily. (Teacher 3)*

Other teachers added as follows:

*I use the local language to avoid confusing the learners because if I use a different language from the one they use at home the learners will be completely lost. ( Teacher 4)*

*I find it easy as a teacher to communicate with the learners for that is the language they use at home. It also helps me to create a good rapport between the learners and the teachers. (Teacher 5)*

*It is their first language as a result, it makes the learner to easily adapt to the system as they are just starting their formal learning. (Teacher 6)*

*Because it is 'known to unknown' meaning that, it is the language pupils know and understand well. (Teacher 7)*

Some teachers stated that they used both English and local languages in order to accommodate all the learners, some of their responses were as follows:

*I prefer to use both English and the local language because I have noticed that some of my pupils do not understand the local language. (Teacher 2)*

*I am not very comfortable with using Cinyanja because I recently relocated, therefore, I try to use English and the other local languages that am able to speak, and my learners respond accordingly therefore, I don't have any problem when teaching. (Teacher 1)*

*Sometimes I use both the local language and English just to make sure that my learners have understood what am talking about. (Teacher 5)*

*I use both English and the local languages especially when I want to stress an important point. (Teacher 3)*

*I use Cinyanja because most of the pupils speak Cinyanja here. (Teacher 2)*

*For the sake of the pupils and to make them understand, I sometimes choose to use Bemba. (Teacher 10)*

*I use Bemba and Cinyanja because, it is the language pupils understand well. (Teacher 17)*

*I sometimes use a bit of Soli because some learners speak Soli and it is their language of play. (Teacher 5)*

The teachers were also asked to explain if they were proficient in the language of instruction. Below are some of their responses:

*Yes, I am very comfortable with the language I use because I know it and understand it well. (Teacher 4)*

*Yes, I am because I can easily relate with the learners. (Teacher 12)*

*I feel comfortable because my learners respond positively. (Teacher 8)*

*Yes, I am comfortable because learners come out freely in terms of expressing themselves. (Teacher 11)*

*Yes, because it is my language so I am very comfortable. (Teacher 9)*

*Yes, because it is well known and it is easy to communicate and give instructions as it is my mother tongue. (Teacher 3)*

*Yes am comfortable because it helps me to bring out the objectives of the lesson with less difficulty. (Teacher 16)*

On the other, hand some teachers interviewed had a different response to this question. Some of the responses were as stated below:

*I am not comfortable with the language and it not being my mother tongue, I find it difficult to express myself and teach effectively. I think it confuses the learners because of the different use of languages in different homes and moreover it is not among the local official languages. (Teacher 21)*

*I am not comfortable because some things and words are very difficult for me to pronounce and comprehend, I usually have to ask from other teachers for me to understand. (Teacher 23)*

## **5.2 Classroom Language Practices: Classroom Observation Data**

After the interview data was collected, the lesson observations were conducted in a few selected classrooms.

The idea was to see how teachers practically taught and interacted with their learners and to see these classroom language practices in the actual classroom; in a way to ascertain their views indicated during the interviews where they stated that they used more than one language in their classroom. What is presented under lesson observations data are excerpts from the transcribed lesson verbatims and not the whole lesson verbatim.

**Excerpt 1:** Social Studies lesson observation. **Topic:** Bungwe

**Teacher:** .... Ukayangana pacipikica uonapo cani?(Cinyanja) ...Look at what am pointing at ( English). Mukaziyangana kuno (Cinyanja).....

**Pupils:** .... (chorsing answers) ... sukulu, school, church, shopu....

**Teacher:** .... Kushopu mumaenda kucita cani?

**Pupils:** .... Timagulako ma giggies (cookies), ba bisketi, fish (Teacher: fish ninsomba mucinyanja mwanvela?)

**Teacher:** ...Raise your hands when you want to say something. (English)... mukazinyamula manja poyanka mwanvela... (Cinyanja) .... Mwaishibafye ama switi, kushopu balashitishako umunani Bemba) or kapena nikambe ati ndiyo (Cinyanja), sopo, umusalu- ma vegetables, rape, cabbage, ma oranges....

**Teacher:** Bungwe nichani? ( Cinyanja), sit properly and pay attention... ( English). Lelo tipunzila pali ‘ Nyumba yanga’ . Nyumba ndimalo yamene banja imankala. Banja muiziba?

**Pupil:** eyeee!, yes....

**Teacher:** Mucizungu ati nicani?

**Pupils:** Family....

**Teacher:** Yes! Nikakamba ati banja langa ninshi nikamba ati family yanga mwamene muli bana banga, ma sisters banga, bamene tinkala nabo panyumba....

The second class observation below was a lesson in Mathematics at another school and the Topic of the lesson was: Counting Numbers.

**Excerpt 2:** Mathematics lesson on “ Counting Numbers”

**Teacher:** ..... Nindani azibakupenda anyamule kwanja? ( Cinyanja) (The teacher write the numbers 1- 10 on the board). Ninambala cani iyi yamene nalemba pa board?

**Pupils:** .... 1, 2.....10, ( shouting at random and chorsing)

**Teacher:** Nakamba kuti (Cinyanja), you should be raising your hands (English) ngati ufuna kuyanka.... (Cinyanja)

The third lesson observation was in Literacy. The following verbatim consists of the teacher’s instructions as the pupils were about to start working on their individual work.

**Excerpt 3:** ( Teacher giving instructions to the pupils on the type of book to use for Literacy:

**Teacher:** .... Mucose mabuku yali natumilaini noti yama box... mwanvela? (Cinyanja). .... You are supposed to write in each line, do not skip any line. ( English). Nagati ulina buku yatunilaini tung'ono maningi, ukazijumpilapo cabe ( Cinyanja) one line (English)

**Pupil:** ... madam, nshikwete ibuku lyamilaini. (Bemba)

**Teacher:** Okay, you can write in your mathematics book just for today (English), mailo ukase nebukulya Literacy, waunfwa? ( Bemba).

**Teacher:** .... Bonse mukazilemba, ngati siuza lemba.... (Cinyanja) No break for you ( English)

The fourth lesson that was observed was also in Literacy on Vowels. The lesson was observed at a school located on the outskirts of Chongwe district business center. The following is an excerpt of the lesson:

Note: The teacher introduced the lesson with a Literacy song on vowels.

**Excerpt 4: Teacher:** ..... (singing a song) ... Ana inu uyunindani?

**Pupils:** ... Uyu ni /a/

**Teacher:** .... Ana inu uyunindani?

**Pupils:** ..... uyu ni /e/ ( some pupils said, e – as in letter e, not the sound but the teacher corrected them)

**Teacher:** .... Ana inu uyunindani?

**Pupils:** ..... uyu ni /i/

**Teacher:** .... Ana inu uyunindani?

**Pupils:** .... Uyu ni /O/

**Teacher:** .... Ana inu uyunindani?

**Pupils:** .... Uyu ni /U/

**Teacher:** .... Yonse pamodzi..

**Pupils:** .... Ndise ma vawelo!

**Teacher:** Ninvekelo bwanji iyi? ( while raising a flash card with vowel /a/)

**Pupils:** ..... /a/

**Teacher:** .... Bonse pamodzi ... yankani

**Pupils:** .... /a/

**Teacher:** Nanga iyi ninvekelo bwanji? ( raising flash card with vowel /e/)

**Pupil:** .... /e/

**Teacher:** .... Nindani anganuize mau yamene yamayambilila na nvekelo /e/

**Pupils:** .... Inswa, Imbwa, Ing'ombe.....

**Excerpt 5:** This lesson was in Social Studies conducted in Palabana at one of the schools and the following is part of the classroom observation verbatim.

**Teacher:** Bungwe ciinshii? (Lenje)

**Teacher:** Sit properly (amukale kabotu)

**Teacher:** Kushopu muma enda kucita cani? ( Cinyanja) , Kushopu muya mukucitanshi? ( Lenje)

**Pupil 1:** Kushopu tuya mukuula..... (Lenje)

**Pupii 2:** Tulaya mukushita ubunga..... ( Bemba)

**Teacher:** Raise your hands when you want to say something ( English) muno nyamuna mansa mwanymfwa? ( Lenje)

The researcher also took some time to transcribe some observations made that reflected what was prevailing in the classroom in relation to the observation guide tool. Below are some of the observations made in line with the questions in the attached observation guide:

## DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of the study was to analyze grade 1 teachers' and learners' classroom language practices in the first month. The findings have revealed that Zambia is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country (Kashoki, 1978), that all Zambia's classrooms are inherently multilingual, which is in conformity with Mwanza, (2017) and that most Zambians are polyglots who are able to speak more than one language (Banda, 1995). On the other hand, the contradictions were characterized by the mismatch between the monolingual language in Education policy of using only the local familiar language and the actual multilingual composition of the classroom.

From the findings, the study revealed that most of the interviewed teachers in reference to code switching, stated that they used more than one language when teaching. In the classes that were observed, the findings were that most of the teachers alternated between Cinyanja and Bemba as shown in the lesson observations taught by teacher 2, 11, 7, 12 and 18. They used the informal familiar languages to the learners to help them to learn and participate in the classroom activities. This study is also in conformity with studies by Setati and Adler (2002) and Simachenya (2017) who revealed that, translanguaging is through alternation in the local languages. It also enables learners' active participation in the lessons in terms of answering questions, and that learners were able to connect their classroom experience to their experience during play time as the languages used by the teachers correlated to their languages of play. In essences, teachers recognized the importance of translanguaging in engendering multilingualism and multilingual language practices. In this case, languages were viewed as resources (Ruiz,1984) and were utilized as such to enable pupils to access knowledge regardless of their linguistic differences. The teachers who translanguaged through alternating between Cinyanja, Soli, Bemba, Lenje and English also recognized and implemented the linguistic rights of learners to learn in their mother tongue and in the language of wider communication as stated by UNESCO (2003). These practices mean that the five classrooms had the linguistic freedom through the language choices and practices of the teachers.



During lessons, it was also observed that as teachers alternated between the languages of play, some teachers, due to lack proficiency in the local language of the area used their mother tongue and not the language of the learners. For example, the lesson that was observed in Zone A close to Palabana where Soli and Lenje is predominant, the teacher used Bemba and Cinyanja when teaching. When asked why she used Bemba in the area where Soli and Lenje is the predominant language of play, the response was that she was in the process of learning Cinyanja, Lenje and Soli. This is in line with the responses that some teachers stated that they were not fluent in the local language of the area where they taught. Even though some learners were able to participate in the lesson, the actual language practice in this instance was translanguaging according to the familiar language of the teachers and not necessarily the familiar language of the learners. The implication of this is that teachers should make effort to learn the familiar language of the learners where they work or that government should deploy teachers according to their language abilities.

### **Semi-Translanguaging**

It is important to state that the translanguaging practice by teachers was narrow in nature; teachers' and learner's language practices in the classroom did not constitute fully translanguaging as a whole for some reasons. To begin with, Garcia (2009) argued that translanguaging constitutes the multiple use of languages for meaning making and suggested that translanguaging may involve the reading of a text in several languages and talk about it in different languages. In contrast, the findings showed that all the textbooks in all the observed classes were in Cinyanja and that all the readings were done in one language. Secondly, contrary to the suggestion by Garcia (ibid) that a lesson can be given in one language and the exercises in another language, all the exercises that teachers gave to learners were in Cinyanja. Thirdly, while Garcia (ibid) added that learners can have the lesson in the regional official language and take notes in their own languages, for the grade ones it is too early because at this stage most of them are just learning how to write and what makes it worse is that all the writings on the board and in the exercise books of learners that were checked were in one language-Cinyanja. It must be mentioned here that all the documents reviewed or checked such as lesson plans were written in English, textbooks for both learners and teachers were in language-Cinyanja, meaning there is a contradiction going on. Lastly, translanguaging involves both learners and teachers using all the languages at their disposal for meaning making (ibid). Contrary to the view, the study revealed that some teachers translanguaged but did not allow learners to use local languages. As Ruiz (1984) observed, these teachers viewed local languages as problems as they clearly stated that using unofficial laziness among learners. The translanguaging that this study revealed is therefore here referred to as "semi-translanguaging" as it existed in spoken form and not in written form.

The findings from the schools in this study were that the languages of play were Cinyanja, Soli, Bemba, Lenje and English according to the interviewed teachers. In terms of linguistic composition of the classrooms as represented by speakers of the languages. The findings showed that 5 languages were represented in the classrooms of Chongwe district. There were Cinyanja, Soli, Bemba, Lenje and English. This confirms the assertions that Zambia is a multilingual country and the argument that all the classrooms in Zambian schools and particularly in the case of Chongwe district, are Multilingual and multiethnic. The findings also revealed that almost all the teachers and grade one pupils of Chongwe district spoke either one, two or more languages confirming the claim that Zambians are polyglots. Therefore, and as Simwinda (2006) stated that multilingualism refers to the presence and the use of many languages in a given community, the classrooms of Chongwe district were inherently multilingual.

Among the 5 languages revealed in this study, the dominant ones were Cinyanja as their first language followed by Soli, Lenje, Bemba and lastly English respectively. The findings concerning the learners' first language revealed that Cinyanja was dominant, followed by Soli, Lenje, Bemba and then English. The interesting issue is that in terms relatedness of languages, Soli, Lenje and Bemba are not mutually intelligible to Cinyanja, which is the official regional language of Chongwe district.

The implication of the findings is that the monolingual ideology of language zoning is weak, as it does not really reflect the languages spoken in the area and in the classroom. The zoning of languages turns to assume that languages are static and that the linguistic situation of an area is static. These results show that languages are in constant mobility and their use and existence cannot be restricted to any particular area. Languages are resources, which humans use to communicate, and as people move, languages equally move. Thus, the assumption that the language is familiar to most of the people of Chongwe district in Cinyanja is a fallacy as the said language accounts for only few of the sampled size from the 5 primary schools in Chongwe.

The findings on learners' language of play showed Cinyanja as the most dominant language followed by Soli, Lenje and Bemba while English was the least spoken. These findings even presents more interesting results in the case of classroom language practices in that when it is assumed by policy makers that the dominant language and the language of play in Chongwe district is only Cinyanja, the results showed that in fact, there is Soli and Lenje were used as a language of play amongst many pupils, then Bemba and English were also part of the languages that learners used as their language of play. The official regional language and the alleged language of play in Chongwe only accounts for a small number.

The above information shows that the language zoning on which Government continues to base current policy formation and education practices is not only weak but outdated. Even if one combined Cinyanja and Soli, the prominent number of the different languages of play for the children in the schools who spoke or were familiar to other languages remains higher than the one thought to be the dominant languages.

Another important observation from the findings is the number of the learners who used English either as a first language or as the language of play. English is the first language for some pupils, and it remains their language of play. What the above findings suggest, as stated earlier, are the contradictions between the language policy and the actual linguistic composition of the classrooms. The contradiction here is that the language stipulates the use of the regional official language whereas the findings showed that these areas have a number of other familiar languages, which are the languages of play for most of the learners. It is in this context that Hugen (2009) argued that education policies are normally characterized by contradictions and not by progression or retrogression, contradictions in the sense that there is a mismatch between the Government's stipulated language of instruction and the actual linguistic composition of the classrooms.

The above contradiction whereby the dominant language policy or the familiar languages of most pupils is one which is not the designated official language is not peculiar to Chongwe district. In Lundazi, Zimba (2007) also argued that while the government sanctioned Cinyanja as the official medium of classroom instruction, the familiar language and the language of play in Lundazi was Tumbuka which is not even mutually intelligible to Cinyanja. In another study done in Chongwe by Mubanga (2012) he established those children in Lwimba area had remarkable problems breaking through to literacy because while Cinyanja was viewed as the familiar language and therefore medium of instruction, children were familiar to Soli which like Tumbuka in Lundazi, was not mutually intelligible to Cinyanja. Kalamata's (2016:38) study in the lower primary schools also found that the Kikaonde used in the area was not familiar language as "fourteen out of the fifteen respondents (93.3 percent) said that there were some learners who did not understand the medium of instruction (Kikaonde) used in the area".

The scenario and its related language policy partly explain why the literacy agenda in Zambia is problematic. This is so because literacy policy recommendations, especially on language of instruction is based on speculations and the eventual victims are the learners. This is the reason why Banda and Mwanza (2017) argued that even learning to read and write in the designated regional official language is not easy because pupils must learn to speak the language before they can learn to speak the language before they can learn how to read and write.

Based on what is stated above Bwalya (2019) recommends that, there is need to relook at language zoning and avoid the arbitrary association of one language to a wider locality without being sensitive to the language reality and practices of the people of the same area. Thus, the Zambian language in education policy needs to be revisited, amended and recommend classroom language practices which resonate with the language situation in schools.

In brief, the findings revealed some aspects of translanguaging implying that teachers' language practices did not constitute translanguaging as a whole. This is because all the books, all the writings, all exercises given, all the notes written were in one language Cinyanja. Moreover, some teachers who translanguaged did not give much time to their learners to translanguaged and some teachers neither used the official local language because they were not familiar.

## CONCLUSION

Firstly, the study revealed and confirmed that multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Chongwe district is a reality. This means that the classrooms of Chongwe district are inherently multilingual with Cinyanja, Soli, Lenje, Bemba and English being the dominant languages of play. Contrary to the linguistic composition of the classrooms of Chongwe district, the officially recognized regional language is Cinyanja leaving out the other dominant languages that are in this language zone which are effective in the classroom language practices and facilitate learning. This has shown that language zoning in Zambia is problematic. The language in education policy that stipulates that use of Cinyanja in lower primary contradicts the linguistic composition of the languages most learners use when at play.

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