

**EFFECTS OF ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF
INSTRUCTION ON PUPILS' ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN MALAWI**

By

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Abstract

The current language policy in education in Malawi allows pupils to be taught through local languages from Standard 1 to 4 and through English from Standard 5 upwards. However, classroom observation suggests that teachers use Chichewa as the language of learning even in areas where Chichewa is not the home language of the majority of pupils. Surveys indicate that generally parents feel that their children would be learning better if they started learning through English earlier than in Standard 5.

This study was conducted with a view to finding out whether English is the most appropriate language of learning for senior primary school children in Malawi. The study specifically addressed the question of whether or not the use of English as the language of learning in Social Studies resulted in better academic performance among Standard 7 pupils in Malawi. The study also addressed the question of whether the use of English as the language of learning increased pupil participation in the learning process and whether the use of Chichewa as the language of learning favoured Chichewa home language pupils more than Chiyao home language pupils.

The findings suggest that primary school children in Malawi are not linguistically prepared for instruction through the medium of English.

Standard 7 pupils, the target of the study, found it difficult to learn Social Studies through English although they had had three years of English as the language of learning. Their participation in academic work was hampered by their limited mastery of the language.

Pre-test and post-test results show that Standard 7 pupils receiving instruction through Chichewa obtained higher scores than those who were taught in English. When Yao and Chewa children were taught together through the Chichewa medium, the Yao children scored as well as their counterparts whose home language was Chichewa. Thus the study suggests that the use of Chichewa benefited both groups while the use of English seemed to retard their performance. These results imply that the language policy in Malawi and the way teachers are currently trained to teach English in primary schools need to be re-examined and reviewed.

Key terms: academic performance; attainment levels; pupil performance; education; bilingual education; language of education; medium of instruction; English as medium of instruction; learning through English; language of learning; language of instruction; English vs local languages; second language learning; school language; language of the textbook.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP	Cognitive /Academic Language Proficiency
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CLS	Centre for Language Studies
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DEO	District Education Officer
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FIAC	Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories
FPE	Free Primary Education
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
IIEP	International Institute of Education Planning
KELTS	Key English Language Teachers
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LEA	Local Education Authority
MASTEP	Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
ND	No Date of Publication
NSO	National Statistical Office

PB	Pupil's Book
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TG	Teacher's Guide
TL	Target Language
TT	Target Text
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UTT	Untrained Temporary Teachers

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Chapter 1

Background

Malawi is a small land locked country in Southern Africa and it has a population of 9.2 million (National Statistical Office, 2000). The population is predominantly rural. Ninety percent of the population live in rural areas and the remaining 10% are concentrated in the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, the municipality of Zomba and in the so-called bomas (National Statistical Office, 1991). Bomas are normally semi-urban areas that are mainly district administration centres.

1.1 Illiteracy Rate

The illiteracy rate among Malawians is one of the highest in Southern Africa. The 1998 Population and Housing Census (National Statistical Office, 2000) report indicates that only 58% of the population are literate. The report acknowledges that there is a marked variation in literacy rates between rural and urban populations in the country:

In the urban areas 79 percent of the population aged 5 years and over were literate as opposed to only 54 percent in rural areas, while 83 and 75 percent of male and female populations aged 5 or more respectively in urban areas were literate. The corresponding literacy rates in rural areas were 61 percent for males and 47 percent for females (National Statistical Office, 2000:xiv).

The difference between urban and rural literacy rates is 25%. In rural areas the difference between male and female literacy rates is 14%, while in urban areas the difference is only 8%. These percentages have some

implications on the level of support that parents are likely to provide to their children in terms of schooling. Normally literate parents would like their children to get a better education than they themselves got. Therefore, they would provide every possible educational support to their children in order for them to succeed at school. On the other hand, illiterate parents may be convinced about the value of schooling and they may send their children to school like the literate parents do. However these parents may not provide other educational support to their children. For example, because they are illiterate they cannot check their children's exercise books, or help them with their homework.

A study done by Kadzamira and Chibwana (2000) reports that in rural Malawi, many children said that their parents never helped them with homework. Thus, pupils from families with illiterate parents are at a disadvantage in respect of home support although the Kadzamira and Chibwana study reports that some older siblings who were in higher classes assisted their brothers and sisters in doing their homework. This lack of support from parents puts more pupils from rural areas at a disadvantage than their counterparts in urban areas in Malawi.

Children from illiterate families also find it difficult to get extra reading materials in their homes. In a study of reading habits of primary school graduates, Mchazime (1994) reports that his subjects said that they had

no reading materials in their homes and that those who had relatives in town sometimes got newspapers from the relatives whenever they came home. This absence of extra reading materials puts pupils in urban areas at a further advantage in that what they may not have at home is compensated for by the rich environment of incidental reading materials such as posters, sign-posts, advertisements and several other forms of printed materials. As the largest illiterate population and the majority of pupils (90%) are in the rural areas, it can be argued that more pupils in the rural areas are educationally disadvantaged than their counterparts in urban areas in Malawi.

1.2. Primary Education

Primary education in Malawi lasts eight years and the official age for children to enter Standard 1 is six. There is no formal pre-school system in the country although there are some privately owned pre-schools in urban centres. These pre-schools are often expensive for parents whose income is low. However, many parents send their children to these pre-schools because pre-schools start off their children in English. Parents say that pre-schools lay a good foundation for their children by teaching them in English and by exposing them to pre-reading and pre-writing skills. In contrast, children in rural areas go straight to Standard 1 without any pre-school experiences. Most of them come to school with almost no knowledge of English and no preparatory skills in reading or

writing. Seen from this standpoint, it can be argued that urban and rural children in Malawi probably start primary education at different levels of academic experience. This difference is compounded by the fact that a print-rich environment in rural areas is less tenable than it is in urban areas.

Prior to 1994, access to primary education in Malawi was poor so that during the 1993/94 school year the net enrolment ratio was only 60%. Besides this low net enrolment ratio, there were wide variations in access to primary education between districts. The variations ranged from 92% to 49% (Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, 1996). Rumphi district in the north of the country had the highest net enrolment ratio while Nsanje in the South had the lowest.

In 1994, the government declared primary education to be free. The public responded to this policy initiative quickly and the number of children enrolled at primary school level dramatically increased from 1.9 to 3.2 million almost overnight. Although this was a very welcome development, it put too much pressure on the already precarious infrastructure and the teaching force. To accommodate this large number of new entrants, the government needed to construct about 38 000 new classrooms and to recruit 22 000 new teachers. Twenty-two thousand secondary school graduates were recruited and given an

orientation of two weeks. After this training, they were given schools and pupils to teach. Consequently, about 43% of primary school teachers in the country were either unqualified or under-qualified. Most of these teachers were posted to rural schools where there was the largest shortfall. In 1996 the ministry of education directed that all the untrained teachers recruited in the year should be sent to rural schools thereby increasing the number of untrained teachers in the rural schools. For example, in Machinga district, the number of untrained teachers far out-numbered the number of qualified teachers while the Municipality of Zomba, which is less than 25 kilometres away, had teachers who were all qualified (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 1997).

Although common sense suggests that some unqualified teachers can teach or make pupils learn better than some qualified teachers, a study by Kunje and Stuart (1996) indicates that most of the unqualified teachers experienced a lot of difficulties in their teaching. They say that some of the untrained teachers (UTT)

either finished the lesson before the end of the period or they took more time than necessary to finish their lessons. In some cases, the UTTs could not follow the sequence of their plans and therefore conducted confused lessons (1996:40).

Some of them started conversations with their pupils on matters not related to the lesson at hand. Kunje and Stuart also report that some of

them had difficulties with the language of instruction. It was sometimes pitched too high for children to understand. Thus, the concentration of unqualified teachers in rural schools most likely affected pupils' learning in rural Malawi.

In addition to the shortage of teachers, facilities and instructional materials did not match the large influx of children into the schools. Castro – Leal shows the gravity of the situation by providing a few quality indicators for the year 1994/95. She says that during this period there were 131 pupils for every qualified teacher, 1 textbook was shared among 7 pupils and one permanent classroom would be used by 422 pupils (Castro – Leal, 1996:17).

However, although the provision of infrastructure still remains a big challenge for the government, the supply of textbooks has been steadily improving. For example, in 1999 the textbook pupil ratio for English, Mathematics and Chichewa was generally 1:2. In spite of the improvements, teacher's guides and textbooks for others subjects were still in short supply particularly in rural schools.

The shortage of qualified teachers and instructional materials and the inadequate infrastructure may also have contributed to the low internal efficiency of the primary education sub-sector in the country. In the

1994/95 academic year, 21% of the pupils were repeaters and 12% dropped out of the system. The majority of those who dropped out were those who were in the first 4 years of schooling. There are indications that the situation still persists. For example, of the 260 086 pupils who dropped out in the 1995/96 school year, 83% were from Standards 1 to 4. Similarly, of the 434 827 pupils who repeated in the 1995/96 school year, 83% were in Standards 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 1996:10 – 11). While the repetition rate was reduced to 15% in 1997, the drop-out rate increased from 15% to 17% and only 20% of the pupils completed Standard 8 (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2000:11). Because of the high incidence of repetition, Malawian children take more time to complete primary education than would otherwise be the case. In addition, the majority of those who drop out do so at the most critical time when reading and writing skills are just beginning to develop. Most of the pupils who drop out from school are from rural schools. Similarly, the majority of those who repeat a class are from rural areas.

The description provided above suggests that primary education in Malawi is characterised by large class sizes, inadequate supply of instructional materials, an insufficient number of qualified teachers and a marked low internal efficiency. These challenges seem to affect pupils in rural schools more than they affect pupils in urban schools. This

situation together with lack of or a weak supportive literate environment and the shortage of qualified teachers in the rural schools led the researcher to choose pupils in rural schools for the study. The researcher was interested in finding out what effect English as medium of instruction might have on the pupils.

1.3. Language in Education

Chichewa is the most widely spoken language in the country. The 1966 population census (National Statistical Office, 1966) reports that 71.7% of the population understood the language while only 4.9% of this percentage understood English as well. Less than 1% claimed that they used English in their homes. Stubbs points out that at that time 50.2% of the population aged five and over used Chichewa as their home language. However, he raises the percentage of those who understood it to 76.6% and then adds "These numbers have increased very considerably since the census date, so that Chichewa has become the undisputed national language for most persons who previously used other languages in their homes" (1972:72).

The claim by Stubbs is not far fetched. Two years after the census, Chichewa was elevated to the position of a national language while English was recognised as an official language (Malawi Congress Party, 1983). Following this development, structures to promote the language

were put in place. Chichewa was made compulsory in both primary and secondary schools as well as in primary teacher training colleges. A Chichewa Board with its own secretariat was set up and a Chichewa and Linguistics Department was established at Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi. The Chichewa orthography was revised (Chichewa Board, 1980, 1990) and textbooks as well as grammar books were written and used in schools. Such a set-up ensured that all the graduates of the primary and secondary school system were not only able to speak the language, but also to read and write in it.

Serpell also acknowledges that Chichewa is an indigenous language of wider communication in Southern Africa (1993:29-31). Serpell observes that by 1990, Chichewa was spoken by almost 10 million people in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe together. It is also spoken by some people in South Africa because of the labour migrations from Malawi to South Africa since the beginning of the 20th century.

Nonetheless, the elevation of Chichewa to a national language was a political move. Other Malawian languages were no longer to be offered in school and by 1989 the Malawi government declared that Chichewa should be the medium of instruction in Standards 1 to 4. As was stated earlier on, 50.2 % of the population aged over five in 1966 used

Chichewa as their home language. This means that 49.8% of the population spoke other local languages. Fourteen and half percent of these spoke Chilomwe, 13.8% Chiyao and 9.1% Chitumbuka. The remaining 12.5% was shared among other minority languages. The policy was therefore seen as something that neglected children of the other language groups.

Chisala (1996) reports that there were protests and an outcry from both ministers and parliamentarians when the policy proposal was being discussed. Those who objected to it said that it was a deliberate move to stifle the development of other vernaculars in Malawi. On the other hand, those in favour of the policy cited the potentially unifying nature of the language policy. The final decision meant that the argument in favour of unification of the country through a common language gained the upper hand.

The decision to make Chichewa a national language was also the consequence of the colonial history of the country. As far back as 1918 some colonial administrators had already proposed to the Governor of Nyasaland (Malawi) that Chinyanja (Chichewa) should be made official and that it should be taught in all the schools in the country. Sir George Smith, the Governor at that time, turned down the proposal. However, his action was not based on linguistic principles but rather on politics.

Smith was afraid that the introduction of an indigenous language as an official language would unite the people of Nyasaland faster than he had wished. He therefore advised his subordinates that the individual tribes had to be kept separated as the surest measure against a combined rising against the colonial rule by the people of Nyasaland (Kishindo, 1990). The separation could be achieved by encouraging the existing linguistic divisions in the country. His fear of an uprising was augmented by the fact that just three years before, the colonial government had suppressed the Chilembwe uprising in Chiradzulu district.

Successive governors such as Sir Shenton Thomas and Sir Harold Kittermaster did not uphold Smith's decision. In subsequent years the government encouraged Chinyanja to become the *lingua franca* of Nyasaland. Mission schools that were in areas where Chinyanja was not the mother tongue were asked to introduce it as a subject in Grade 3. It was made known to proprietors of these schools that after 1934, the teaching of Chinyanja would be one of the conditions to be fulfilled by schools before government grants would be given to them (National Archives file S1/449/32). By 1936, the government had made strong moves to make Chinyanja the medium of instruction in both government and grant-aided schools.

These steady strides towards making Chinyanja a *lingua franca* were, however, frustrated by strong opposition from the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Region of the country. The missionaries saw the move as the beginning of the marginalisation of Chitumbuka at a time when the Tumbuka people had just lost a war against the incoming war-like Ngoni tribe from Zululand in South Africa. They appealed to the Colonial Office in London and their appeal succeeded. The plan was therefore, subsequently shelved for many years. It was against this historical background that Chinyanja (re-named Chichewa in 1968) finally became the national language of Malawi in 1968.

Two years after the first democratic elections the new government announced that, with immediate effect, pupils would be learning in their mother tongue or in another vernacular from Standard 1 to 4. The use of vernaculars as announced by the government drew a lot of criticism both from the public and the press (Kazembe, 1996; Matemba, 1996; Namwera, 1996; and Nyirenda, 1996). Some critics saw this move as retrogression, not only in terms of policy but also in frustrating the work of nursery schools where instruction was in English (Chisala, 1996). Others saw it from the point of teachers' qualifications and noted the logistical problems that the decision would create (Muula, 1996).

Despite the announcement in 1996, Chichewa is still the medium of instruction from Standard 1 to Standard 4. A longitudinal study done by the Malawi Institute of Education with the support of American Institute for Research (AIR) in 65 schools in the predominantly Yao districts of Mangochi and Balaka confirms that teachers use Chichewa when teaching. The study targeted over 1 250 pupils in Standards 2, 3 and 4. It is interesting to note in passing that Yao speaking children in these classes performed better in Chichewa tests than their Chichewa speaking counterparts (Chilora, 2000). Since the pupils continue learning the language as a subject after Standard 4, it can safely be assumed that by the time pupils are in Standard 7, they have sufficient knowledge of Chichewa and can follow lessons in that language reasonably well.

Most pupils in rural schools come from the same linguistic areas. This is so because there are fewer migrations into rural areas than there are into urban areas. Consequently, it is easier to use a particular local language as a language of learning in rural schools than in urban schools. This linguistic homogeneity also encouraged the researcher to target rural schools for the comparative study.

In Malawi English enjoys the status of an official language and it is firmly rooted in the constitution of Malawi (Malawi Government, 1995, Section 51 (1)). It is taught as a subject from Standard 1 up to university and it

takes the largest share of the teaching time on the timetable in primary schools, particularly from Standards 4 to 8. In these classes it accounts for 18% of the teaching time per week, while the rest of the time is shared among ten other subjects. From Standard 5 onwards it takes over from Chichewa as the medium of instruction. Because of the large percentage of the teaching time devoted to English and the reinforcement it receives from other subject areas, one assumes that by the time primary school children are in Standard 7, they have reached a reasonable level of competence in English. Therefore, following lessons through English in other subjects ought not to be a problem for them. This assumption can also be made for Chichewa as medium of instruction. Therefore, it was thought that using the two languages as languages of learning in the study was an appropriate choice.

1.4. The Problem

English is introduced as a subject in Standard 1 in Malawi. During the first 4 years of schooling the medium of instruction for everyone is Chichewa, despite the fact that the government expects the pupils to be learning in their mother tongue. English becomes the medium of instruction from Standard 5 onwards. Although English is the medium of instruction, it is not yet known whether the use of English as a vehicular language in primary school facilitates the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that the primary school curriculum sets

out for the pupils to acquire. Preliminary investigations seem to suggest that English as the medium of instruction may prove to be a barrier to more meaningful learning for the majority of primary school children in the country. For this reason, it is necessary to investigate this seeming problem systematically.

1.5. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of using English as the medium of instruction on the academic performance of primary school children in Social Studies in Malawi. The study also investigates whether or not the use of Chichewa as medium of instruction favours pupils whose home language is Chichewa more than pupils whose home language is not Chichewa but another Malawian language.

1.6. Justification

Schooling is about putting into play three factors namely, the learner, the teacher and instructional materials. The fourth factor, which seems to be taken for granted at times, is the language of learning. The language of learning is important because it is in this language that classroom discourse between the teacher and the learner is created. It is in the discourse that education essentially takes place. However, in order that meaningful learning takes place, the language of learning must not only be familiar to both the learner and the teacher, but also it

should be the language in which textbooks and other teaching and learning materials are written.

Teachers of course play a central role in letting education take place. Mitchell brings home this critical role of teachers by drawing from her study of classroom process in her elementary French class in an L2 setting by arguing that:

No functional syllabus, 'authentic' materials or microcomputer programme can replace the capacity of the live, fluent speaker to hit upon the follow-up topics of interest to particular individuals, continually adjust his/her speech to appropriate level of difficulty and solve unpredictable communication difficulties from moment to moment. In all this the teacher and his/her interactive skills are decisive (Mitchell, 1988:166).

Although Mitchell's argument is about the teacher's role, there is an implicit acknowledgement about the importance of language in the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the classroom. Firstly, Mitchell seems to recognise the fact that for teachers to play their role meaningfully they should be fluent in the language of instruction so that they can help learners when there are communication difficulties during teaching. Secondly, she seems to imply that for communication to take place in the classroom, the language used should be at the appropriate level for the learners. Finally, Mitchell seems to suggest that interaction between teachers and learners is facilitated by a language known well enough by both of them. Without the common language it would be difficult for teachers to engage their learners meaningfully.

If this assertion is true, then it raises the question of whether learning in a second language (L2) at primary school level facilitates learning and consequently whether or not it leads to higher academic performance. Since Malawi uses an L2 (English) as the language of learning the question is of particular interest to educators and planners in the country. Hence, the relevance of this study to the education system is apparent.

It seems that there are still many studies in this area whose results seem to have been somewhat inconclusive. No other studies been found that attempted to compare pupils' performance where a local language is used as the language of learning for children from different but local linguistic backgrounds in Africa.

Thus, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the problem of medium of instruction in L2, more research has needed to be done in this field. This study hopes to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the effects of medium of instruction on the academic performance of learners, particularly in primary school.

1.7. Research Questions

The study seeks to determine if there any indications that instructing children in Social Studies through English is more efficacious than instructing them in Chichewa. In trying to achieve this the study assesses the performance levels of Standard 7 pupils in Malawi who are taught in English compared to those pupils who are taught in Chichewa. While Chichewa is the mother tongue of the majority of pupils in Malawi, it is not the only indigenous language. Speakers of other indigenous languages will, however, have been taught in Chichewa during their initial years at school in the same way as the Chichewa speakers. The main question that the study investigates is whether English or Chichewa is the most appropriate language of learning for Standard 7 pupils in Malawi. The study specifically addresses the following research questions:

1. Does the use of English as a medium of instruction in Social Studies result in better performance among Standard 7 pupils in Malawi in a series of uniform tests than the use of Chichewa does?
2. Under the existing conditions in the education system, does the English medium increase pupil participation in the learning process in Standard 7?

3. Does the use of Chichewa as the medium of instruction result in different levels of performance between Chiyao and Chichewa home language pupils in Standard 7 Social Studies?

Chapter 2

Bilingualism and Second Language Learning

Bilingualism is a reality in primary schools in Malawi. Many children come to school when they have already been exposed to one or two other local languages. Outside the classroom, it is not a strange phenomenon to see children freely code-switching during play. What makes the difference in school is that they have to start learning that the languages they speak can be represented by symbols called letters or words. When they begin to read and write in Chichewa they are acquiring essential skills, some of which they will be able to apply when they are learning English. However, the introduction of English as another language presents them with a different challenge. Unlike the local languages that they master in natural settings, they have to learn English mostly through formal or tutored settings. They have to master it well enough to be able to use it as the medium of instruction in the fifth year of their schooling.

The use of English as the medium of instruction among non-native speakers of the language is based on theories of bilingualism and second language acquisition or learning. The distinction between the terms 'acquisition' and 'learning' to mean respectively spontaneous or unplanned, and planned instruction as a means of becoming a bilingual

is well-known. However, the researcher does not wish to make such a distinction for reasons given in section 2.2 of this chapter.

In order to put the use of English as a medium of instruction in perspective, this chapter examines some of the theories of bilingualism and their related hypotheses as well as theories of second language learning.

2.1. Bilingualism

2.1.1. Definitions of Bilingualism

Users of the term 'bilingualism' define it in many different ways and sometimes they disagree on the precise terms and on how embracing the definitions are. Anderson and Boyer assert that the only agreement is that the term bilingualism "refers to the knowledge and use of two languages by the same person" (1970:12). This lack of unanimity originates from the specific position that an individual takes about bilingualism. For example, Bloomfield defines bilingualism as "native-like control of two languages" (1933:56). His definition implies that one is not bilingual in a second language if his or her pronunciation does not sound like that of the native speaker of the target language; if his or her grammatical knowledge of the target language is not equal to that of native speaker and so on.

It is not difficult to see how narrow and insufficient Bloomfield's definition is. It excludes those people who speak more than one language but without native-like control of one or both languages. In this regard, his definition of bilingualism is inadequate. However, despite its shortcomings, the definition raises the question of the level of proficiency a bilingual should reach before he or she is classified as a bilingual.

This is the question that Haugen addresses. Haugen says that bilingualism sets in when "a speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language" (1953:7). On the other hand, Diebold (cited in Liddicoat, 1991:1) suggests that bilingualism begins when a person begins to understand utterances in the second language. The two definitions put emphasis on two different sides of the coin of language use. These are production and reception. Diebold emphasises that one can understand and follow a conversation in a second language without necessarily being able to respond verbally to it. Applied linguists are aware of this situation and there are ways in which second language speakers cope with it. Canale and Swain (1980) say that such people develop a strategic competence. In this sort of competence, the speakers employ strategies that help them to convey their messages by using paralinguistic features such as gestures and facial expressions, which are also features of communication.

A more encompassing definition of bilingualism is that offered by Liddicoat (1991:1). Liddicoat says that the concept refers to some ability to use two or more languages. This use may therefore be the employment and application of any one or a combination of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in varying degrees. Some theorists actually consider regular use of the two languages rather than fluency as the hallmark of bilingualism (Grosjean, 1982). With this definition, it might be reasonable to look at bilingualism not as an absolute phenomenon, but rather, as something existing along a continuum. At one end of the continuum will be those speakers with native-like control of the two languages while near beginners will be at the other end. Between the two extremes will be placed those with different levels of proficiency in the two languages.

With reference to Liddicoat's definition, it is important to understand that any bilingual will have different levels of proficiency in the four language skills. In an illiterate society, a bilingual will be called such because of his or her listening comprehension and oral communication. In the school system a bilingual may be more comfortable doing reading comprehension than composing, for example. The opposite may also occur.

The recognition that the same bilingual may have different abilities in the four language skills is important in the use of English as the medium of instruction among pupils with another mother tongue or first language. It is also significant for curriculum specialists and syllabus designers. A curriculum that puts too much emphasis on the development of oral communication may deny the pupils the opportunity to attain acceptable levels of both reading comprehension and writing skills.

The question of proficiency is a fundamental one in bilingualism. A person's success in acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes through the medium of a second language seems to depend largely on his or her proficiency in the second language. Proficiency will therefore be examined in more detail in another section later.

2.1.2. Types of Bilingualism

Liddicoat (1991) points out that the study of bilingualism has often produced dichotomies and distinctions which tend to show different approaches to the subject. What is presented as a 'type' may be a reflection of either the way bilingualism is achieved or of what may happen to a young person's first language in the course of his or her acquiring a second language. Only two among several dichotomous types will be examined here. They are presented because they have some bearing on the study.

(a) Additive and Subtractive Bilingualism

Liddicoat (1991:6) cites Lambert who, he says, distinguishes between additive and subtractive bilingualism. In doing so he associates bilingualism with social and psychological aspects of the individual. When a child learns a second language, often a majority language, without losing his or her first language, that child develops additive bilingualism. Additive bilingualism develops where the two languages are not perceived to be in competition with each other. On the other hand, subtractive bilingualism occurs if in the process of acquiring a second language the child gradually loses the first language (see Landry, Allard and Thebe'rge, 1991 for an extension of the definition). The most important factors in first language loss are the age of the child, the social context and the prestige of the second language (Baker, 1996:80-81).

Research by Hakuta and D'Andrea (1992) and by Wong Fillmore (1991) indicates that young children from a minority language group have a greater chance of losing their first language if they are acquiring English, which is the dominant language in the United States. However, this is likely to happen only if the families where the children come from do not support their further development in their first language. Loss of the minority language may have far-reaching consequences both for the children and their parents. The children may be emotionally as well as

cognitively affected. Wong Fillmore (1991) argues that, if children lose the use of the language that their parents speak, parents have difficulty in socialising their children. “When parents are unable to talk to their children, they cannot easily convey to them their values, beliefs, understandings, or wisdom about how to cope with their experiences” (1991:343).

As regards the social context, Wong Fillmore (1991) argues that in the United States minority language children quickly

discover that one of the things that stand between them and easy participation in their world is language. They can tell by the way people interact with them that the only language that counts for much is English. If they want to be accepted, they have to learn English, because the others are not going to learn their language (p.342).

Thus, such children seem to see English not just as a majority language but also as a prestigious language that bestows some degree of inferiority upon their first language. The children may not even see much of their minority language written anywhere while they are constantly surrounded by written English and overwhelmingly bombarded by it through television and the radio. In a situation like this it is perhaps unlikely that it is possible to motivate the children to maintain their first language. Consequently, the children may choose to be integrated quickly into the mainstream language community.

It seems that language loss mostly occurs in young children of immigrants who speak minority languages. Baker (1996) supports this view. He says that research:

suggests that the younger the US language minority child is acquiring English, the greater chance that the minority language will be replaced. The later the age of learning to speak English, the greater the chance of retaining the minority language and becoming bilingual (1996:81).

This observation may be true in almost every country where the immigrants are in the minority. Perhaps it is even more so where the majority language is socially and economically powerful like English in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Australia. If the parents of the children were forced to migrate to other countries by traumatic experiences such as political persecution or economic hardships, they may perhaps have little intention of going back to their countries where their minority language becomes the majority language again. This unwillingness to go back to their home country might contribute to the parents' attitude towards teaching their first language to their children or speaking it to them. Yet research shows that resettling in a new country is least disruptive to children's cognitive and emotional development if the parents' first language is maintained in the home (Doepke, 1986; Bus and Van Ijzendoorn, 1988).

The factors that accelerate first language loss in favour of English in the United States and the other countries in Europe do not, however, exist in

Malawi. English is the minority language while Chichewa and other local languages are the majority languages. Furthermore, most children begin to learn English at school at the age of six, after their first language is firmly established in their cognitive structure. After school and indeed even within the school premises, business and almost all communication are done in their first language. Chichewa therefore, cannot be under threat of being replaced by English. Since the use of the home language continues for the majority, and is encouraged through the formal education system, one assumes that it enhances pupils' emotional as well as their cognitive development.

In the Malawian context, English and Chichewa are in no way in competition with each other. They are seen as complementary, fulfilling complementary roles in the society. Children are aware that they themselves do not learn English in order to be integrated into the native speakers' community. Rather they learn it because it is instrumental to the acquisition of new knowledge that they need and because of the upward mobility it offers them after schooling. Consequently, pupils who learn English in Malawi learn it in an environment where additive bilingualism is the norm. Many pupils have experience of additive bilingualism, even before coming to school, because they are in constant contact with their peers who speak other local languages.

It was pointed out earlier that Chichewa is under no threat of being replaced by English. In the same vein, English, though a minority language, cannot be replaced by Chichewa. It is firmly enshrined in the constitution of Malawi. However, in terms of learning English, rural Malawian pupils do not sit in the same class with native speakers of English as do the children of immigrant parents in the United States or in Britain. Native speakers of English are so few that those who have children or dependants send their children to private schools, either within the country or abroad. This means that Malawian children in the rural areas are under no pressure to compete with any native speakers of English in the classroom as do English second language speakers in the United States or Britain. One can therefore assume that the absence of pressure from native speakers is psychologically advantageous because it gives the learners the feeling that they are all on an equal footing.

Although children are under no pressures of the kind that minority children suffer from in the United States, other pressures may create similar anxiety among them in Malawi. English is both a prestigious and instrumental language in the country. School children are socially under pressure to master it. They are further under pressure because they are required to pass it in all national examinations in order to get a certificate. What is different from the situation of their counterparts in the United States and Britain is the environment outside the classroom.

In Malawi, most communication and interaction outside the classroom is done in Chichewa and there is usually nothing to motivate them to use English in the home. In a study by Mchazime (1994) school leavers cited the Bible and other religious tracts as the only reading materials in their homes. Worse still for the purpose of learning English, most of these were written in Chichewa. In Malawi learners have very limited opportunities to learn or reinforce their English in natural settings and to hear or read English outside the classroom.

(b) Simultaneous and Successive Bilingualism

While additive and subtractive bilingualism is concerned with what happens to the children's first language when they are acquiring or learning a second language, simultaneous and successive bilingualism is preoccupied with the spacing of the times when the children acquire their first language and when they acquire the second one. McLaughlin (1984) argues that when children learn two languages before the age of three, they learn them simultaneously. In that case, it is inappropriate to talk of the children's first and second languages. Both languages are the children's first languages, because McLaughlin argues that below the age of three children's first language is not yet established.

Successive bilingualism refers to the situation where a child acquires a second language after he or she has acquired the first one. Thus, in a

successive acquisition the languages can be clearly differentiated. Although the two languages are distinct from each other, Liddicoat (1991:5) points out that “Simultaneous acquisition of the two languages is not necessarily superior to successive acquisition and both patterns of acquisition can lead to bilingual competence.”

This assertion should, however, be treated with some degree of caution. Simultaneous bilingualism is acquired in a natural way and in natural contexts in which communication is of prime importance (see Ellis 1994:12). In such settings, utterances or speech acts are dictated or governed by social conventions and the need to express one’s feelings or to pass on information. Furthermore, the time for acquisition is not limited by any formal conventions of the classroom. On the other hand, successive bilingualism is mostly acquired through the formal system of education although it could also be acquired informally. In formal settings, successive bilingualism is timetabled and in most cases, the time is very limited. Furthermore, although the formal structure has lots of factors that may facilitate the acquisition or the learning process, other factors may militate against it. Such factors may be social, economic, political, attitudinal and pedagogic factors (Baker, 1996: 82). Therefore, pupils might not acquire appropriate communication abilities quickly enough.

The fact that the simultaneous bilingual acquires the language before the age of three means that he or she is likely to acquire even nuances of the target language as well as some aspects of the culture of the speech community. Under these circumstances a simultaneous bilingual may be more proficient than a successive bilingual in some ways. For example, the bilingual may acquire a native-like pronunciation.

2.1.3. The Facilitative Role of Bilingualism

Both parents and scholars have been preoccupied with the question of whether or not bilingualism is advantageous, particularly to children (Liddicoat 1991: 9). Early studies seemed to indicate that bilingualism is detrimental to the child (Jespersen, 1922). Saer (1923) surveyed rural and urban school children in Wales. At the end of his study, he concluded that bilingualism led to lower intelligence. Saer's study had some flaws and in his analysis he did not take into account other factors such as the differences caused by the urban or rural settings. Jespersen's writing on the subject has long been dismissed as based on his own intuition.

Better-designed studies from the 1960s to date have demonstrated that bilingualism is or can be advantageous to the bilingual. Peal and Lambert (1962) surveyed ten year-old bilinguals in Montreal and compared them with monolinguals of the same age. They found that the

bilinguals performed better in both verbal and non-verbal reasoning, in divergent thinking and even in the mastery of content. Another study by Bialystok (1987) found that bilingual children were superior to monolingual children in cognitive control of linguistic processes. They judged the grammaticality of sentences more accurately than monolinguals and they were better at separating and counting words. Bialystok then observes that:

Bilingual children were notably most advanced when required to separate out individual words from meaningful sentences, focus on only the form or meaning of a word under highly distracting conditions, and re-assign a familiar name to a different object (1987: 138).

Other studies have also indicated that bilingual children have shown better performance in convergent thinking (Kessler and Quinn, 1987) and have a cognitive advantage over monolingual children (Landry, 1974). Genesee's (1987) study also concludes that bilingual children tend to be more open-minded than monolingual children.

The studies by Bialystok are of particular importance to this research. First, because they are concerned with second language use in school. Secondly, the studies indicate that by age seven bilingual children in the United States were capable of focusing their attention on units of speech that they thought were relevant. This ability to attend to meaning rather than form is important for information gathering and it is perhaps the basis for independent learning. One would therefore assume that

because pupils in Standard 7 in Malawi have been learning English for a period of seven years, they should not find it difficult to learn by reading on their own and they should follow instruction in English with some ease.

Although most of the studies report positive effects for bilingualism, quite a number of other studies have been inconclusive and inconsistent with those that favour bilinguals. For example, Gorrell et al (1982) report that in kindergarten bilinguals had an advantage in spatial role-taking abilities over their counterparts. However, in a second study Gorrell (1987) reports no advantage for bilinguals over the monolingual children. In another study on elementary school language programmes in the United States, Landry (1974) reports a general cognitive enrichment among bilingual children, but this was only so for Grade 6 bilinguals. Their performance scores were significantly higher than those of monolingual children. However, there was little difference in performance between bilingual and monolingual children in Grade 4. Even more interesting was the fact that there was virtually no difference at all in Grade 1. Since these were children in the lowest grade with perhaps minimal mastery of the target language, and because those in the higher grades performed better (suggesting better mastery of the language of instruction), the study may mean that for bilingualism to be

academically beneficial, the bilingual must reach a certain level of proficiency in the target language.

Bain and Yu's study (1980) seems to indicate the same trend. On the other hand, a study by Geary et al (1993) does not seem to favour bilinguals, particularly in number processing. Earlier studies by Lambert and Tucker (1972), Peal and Lambert (1962) and by Toukoma and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977) suggest that many variables affect bilinguals' performance. The findings are sometimes contradictory. Some of the findings are that switches from home to school language are detrimental to submersion students but not to those in immersion programmes, and that the older immigrant children sometimes gain more than the younger ones.

These opposing research findings are difficult to reconcile. Baker (1996) suggests that some of the inconsistencies are due to poor design resulting in lack of adequate control and an insufficiently precise description of the degree of bilingualism of the subjects. Hakuta (1986) proposes that:

A full account of the relationship between bilingualism and intelligence, of why negative effects suddenly turn into positive effects, will have to examine the motivations of the researcher as well as more traditional considerations at the level of methodology (p.43).

2.1.4. The Thresholds Theory

Cummins' Thresholds theory (1976) was developed to account for the inconsistencies in the research on bilingualism and cognitive development. The theory according to Baker (1996:148 – 150) proposes that there must be two threshold levels of language proficiency. Below the first threshold level, bilingualism may have a negative effect on the child's cognitive development. When the child reaches the second threshold level in the target language then the child may begin to benefit cognitively from the bilingualism. Several research findings support the thresholds level theory (See Dawe, 1983; Bialystok, 1988 and Clarkson, 1992).

According to the theory, three things may therefore happen to a child in bilingual education. Below the first threshold level, the child will suffer from negative effects. When the child attains the first threshold level, the effects of bilingual education may either be negative or positive. On the other hand, the onset of the second threshold level will bring the child positive results in his or her academic work. This distinction seems to suggest that school children who have to change from their mother tongue or their first language to English as the medium of instruction, should reach a reasonable level of competence in English before they transfer to English medium.

However, there seems to be an inherent problem in applying the thresholds theory. The problem is how to define the 'reasonable level' itself. Many Southern African countries prescribe to teachers in public schools when English should be used as the medium of instruction. In Zambia pupils were until recently expected to start learning in English right away in Grade 1. In Zimbabwe, the language policy states that pupils should switch to English medium in Grade 3, while in Namibia the transition year is Grade 4 (Haacke, 1994). In Malawi, as stated in Chapter 1, English takes over from Chichewa as the medium of instruction in Standard 5. These prescriptions do not propose any standard proficiency tests to be administered before the pupils switch to the English medium. In some cases promotion to the next grade is de facto automatic. Can teacher-made tests be a reliable instrument to predict the level of a pupil's proficiency in English under these circumstances?

The weakness of the thresholds theory, therefore, lies in its imprecision in defining the parameters of the bilingual child's level of competence in the target language. In the hands of an inexperienced teacher, a test based on the theory could be used erroneously to hold pupils back from proceeding to the English medium class.

2.1.5. Second Language Proficiency

As pointed out earlier on, Cummins's Thresholds theory was developed to account for various inconsistencies in the research on bilingualism and bilingual education. For example, it sought to explain why submersion students do not benefit from bilingualism as much as do those in the immersion programmes (Lambert and Tucker, 1972). It also sought to explain why older immigrant children generally perform better at school than younger ones even though the latter have received instruction through the second language from the start (Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). Cummins elucidates his earlier theory by proposing the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (cited in Baker, 1996:151). The hypothesis argues that a child's second language competence is dependent on the level of development of the first language. Children whose first language is not well developed will find it difficult to develop their competence in the second language. This is probably why younger children whose first language may not be as fully developed as that of the older ones do not perform well.

Another issue in the bilingual debate has been to find an explanation why students from minority groups do not perform as well academically as mainstream students in spite of the fact that they are able to effectively engage themselves in communicative instances in their

everyday life. This issue is connected to the learners' proficiency and competence.

Ellis refers to L2 proficiency as the learners' skill to use L2 and to competence as "language user's underlying knowledge of language, which is drawn on in actual performance" (1994: 697). There seems to be no absolute agreement among researchers as regards to the precise meaning of the term proficiency. Ellis (1994: 198) points out that the term has "been conceptualised in different ways" and Stern observes that none of them gives "a completely satisfactory expression" (1983:356). Proficiency has been measured in various ways, ranging from rating scales to standardised tests. Sometimes, tasks have been designed to establish learners' proficiency in specific components such as in listening. It seems then that there are not only different levels of proficiency but also different components of it.

'Competence' is always contrasted with actual 'performance'. Bialystok and Sharwood Smith (1985) refer to the former as knowledge and the later as control. In their model they distinguish two types of L2 linguistic knowledge namely pragmatic and grammatical competence. Pragmatic competence is the learner's knowledge about how to employ linguistic knowledge to engage in communication. Bialystok and Sharwood Smith prefer to use the term 'control' for performance. This control is "the

processing system for controlling knowledge during the actual performance” (1985:104). Therefore, there are control procedures that L2 learners engage that lead to production or reception (output). According to Ellis the differences between L1 speaker and L2 learner proficiency can be in both pragmatic and linguistic competence as well as in control or both (1994:296). This suggests that there is no single type or level of proficiency.

Cummins (1984:2-19) proposes that, just as there are two thresholds so too are there two levels of language proficiency, namely the Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). These constructs account for failure or success in the academic performance of second language learners. Cummins argues that second language learners may reach a certain level of proficiency that includes oral fluency and sociolinguistic competence (BICS), which enables the second language learner to communicate effectively. According to Cummins it is relatively easy for the second language learner to acquire BICS because communication in this case is guided by the context in which the communication itself is taking place. In his words, communication in this situation is “context-embedded”. The context acts as a prop to support the learner and because of this prop, the communication at this level is cognitively relatively undemanding.

CALP is the more advanced proficiency that takes longer to develop (seven to eight years). CALP includes those aspects of language proficiency “related to the development of literacy skills” such as “vocabulary-concept knowledge, metalinguistic insights and knowing how to process de-contextualized language” (Cummins, 1979: 242). Much of the communication employing CALP is done in context-reduced situations, where abstract tasks are done. Thus, in the context-reduced situations communication is cognitively demanding. Therefore, a child who develops only BICS cannot achieve much in school because school contexts do not provide as much support as ordinary communication contexts do.

Cummins’s theory seems to oversimplify the complex situation of schooling and teaching. There are many factors that impinge on the L2 learners both at school and in the communities the learners live. For example, there are socio-economic as well as cultural differences between the native speakers and the second language learners (Harry, 1992; Crago, 1992).

Studies in learner differences suggest that social factors have a major impact on L2 proficiency. One of them is cultural identity. Pierce and Epling provide an example by saying that:

a person in an English-speaking culture learns to speak in accord with the verbal practices of the community. People in the community provide reinforcement for a certain way of speaking. In this manner, a person comes to talk like other members of the public and, in so doing contributes to the perpetuation of the culture (1995: 9).

The L2 learner belongs to a particular cultural group, which is different from the mainstream target language. Pierce and Epling seem to suggest that learners can choose to lose some of their former cultural identity and take on the L2 identity. Depending on how the learners view this new culture and depending on the pressure from their group their motivation to learn may either be strong or weak. Thus, language proficiency alone cannot be responsible for the success or failure of students in school.

Cummins's theory has been strongly criticised from several standpoints. They range from criticisms of the type of instruments (tests) he used, which his critics say normally favoured middle class children, to allegations that children's cognitive learning strategies and their learning styles are not recognised. They also refer to the difficulty of disentangling the "contextual" from the "cognitive" dimensions of learning (Frederickson and Cline, 1990:26; Martin-Jones and Romaine, 1985:26-38).

Perhaps the strongest criticism of BICS and CALP together with the term semilingualism (limited bilingualism) has come from Edelsky (1991).

Edelsky has called the notion of semilingualism (limited bilingualism) “a confused grab-bag of prescriptive and descriptive components” (p.66) while she has described the distinction between CALP and BICS as “a spurious language deficiency dichotomy”. She has argued that the theory has “great potential of working against the very children it explicitly supports” (p.71). Edelsky argues that instead of looking for ways of improving instruction or remedying obstacles to more meaningful learning for the child, the theory locates the problem of failure in the learner.

Although these criticisms are valid, Cummins’s position still holds some credibility. Education depends on communication. A large part of all classroom interactions are mediated by language. For the learner to receive and transmit knowledge lucidly, a certain level of language proficiency is therefore, essential.

The inconsistencies and the seeming contradictions in research about bilingual education suggest that it would be simplistic to say that all bilingualism leads to cognitive and social advantages. Any statement that bilingualism brings academic and social advantages should therefore, be qualified. First, it is when bilingualism is additive rather than subtractive that the bilingual is likely to benefit from it both cognitively and socially. Secondly, bilingualism may have positive effects

on the cognitive processes of the bilingual if the environment in which the bilingual education is offered creates favourable social, political, cultural and psychological conditions for learning. It is likely that under adverse conditions, bilingualism may vitiate the bilingual's cognitive processes and his or her social attitudes, particularly to the target language.

In Southern Africa it can be argued that there is political commitment to bilingual education and bilingualism. Schmied (1991) describes Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia as typical ESL countries. In these countries, as well as in Swaziland and South Africa, a pass in English at various levels of the education system is needed for the student to qualify either for a place in secondary school or for university entrance. In Zambia English assumes an important role because it is regarded as a *lingua franca*. Kashina (1994) argues that as Zambia is a country with a multiplicity of indigenous languages, "Zambians who communicate with each other outside their first language groups often choose to do so through English" (p. 19).

In Malawi, English is the official language together with Chichewa. The political commitment to English ensures that English occupies a prominent position in the classroom. For example, 18% of the teaching time in primary school is spent on the teaching of English. Even the

allocation of resources sometimes favours English. Kashina (ibid.) describes the considerable resources used in the process of implementing the English medium policy in Zambia. Writing and production of materials occurred on a large scale. Due to a shortage of qualified staff the Zambian government recruited language specialists, including British Council employees and Canadian Universities Overseas Volunteers.

Similar events took place in Malawi. Between 1979 and 1985 the government of Malawi implemented a primary teacher education English project because it had been argued that the standard of teaching of English in primary schools was low. In the project, English language specialists known as Key English Language Teachers (KELTs) were recruited through the British Council and placed in the three national teacher-training colleges of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu. The government had to withdraw some secondary school graduate teachers and attach them to each KELT full time. The reasons were that by the end of the project these people would be trained and would take over as heads of English Departments, thereby maintaining the standards set by the KELT officers.

Some undergraduates were sent abroad to train as English language tutors (ELT). As in Zambia, there was extensive writing of instructional

materials. Language laboratories were either installed or reactivated and language laboratory materials were developed and often used in English language lessons. The KELT officers also went round to other teacher training colleges to run in-service courses for language tutors. This kind of support does not only reflect the political commitment to English as a second language. It also reflects the real desire of the government that pupils succeed in mastering the language so that it can serve them better when it becomes the medium of instruction and as a means for them to ascend the economic and social ladder. From an institutional point of view, therefore, the context for bilingual education and bilingualism in Malawi is favourable.

2.2. Second Language Learning Processes

2.2.1 Second Language Research

Controversy surrounds the distinction between acquisition and learning (Krashen, 1985; 1988), although MacLaughlin (1978, 1987) and Gregg (1984) have systematically dealt with many of the criticisms of Krashen's Monitor theory and the acquisition-learning dichotomy.

The researcher shares Ellis's views on the issue. Ellis (1986:6) defines second language acquisition as "the subconscious or conscious processes by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or tutored setting." In his definition, Ellis makes no distinction

between acquisition and learning and he deliberately chooses to use the two terms interchangeably.

The term 'second language' needs to be glossed. Ellis observes that:

the term 'second' is generally used to refer to any language other than the first language. In some respect this is unfortunate, as the term 'second' when applied to some learning settings, such as in South Africa involving black learners of English, may be perceived as opprobrious. In such settings, the term 'additional language' may be both appropriate and more acceptable (1994:11).

In the context of this study the researcher uses 'second language' to include English as an additional language as the term is not regarded as problematic in the Malawian context.

As has been remarked, bilingualism is the product of learning. It is therefore logical to examine the process through which people become bilingual. As the context of this study is a country where English is learnt through formal instruction, much of the literature examined in this section is about classroom settings.

For language learning to take place, specific learning contexts must be in existence. Lado's (1991:146) typology of language learning contexts is a useful basis for the discussion. She provides four different contexts, namely:

- (i) a naturalistic context in everyday life in the home

- (ii) a naturalistic context in everyday life in the wider community
- (iii) a structured language learning context and
- (iv) a structured subject matter learning context.

Lado argues that the contexts are not exclusive. They reinforce each other by contributing to the acquisition of L2 in different ways, such as conversational fluency and literacy skills.

Contexts (iii) and (iv) are the ones through which English as a second language is learnt in Malawi. English is taught as a subject. Pupils also learn it through other subjects when it is used as the medium of instruction. Both of these contexts support each other in that the language of the classroom varies according to the subject that is being taught at a particular time within each subject area. Consequently, the interface between text, context and language (Chimombo and Rosebery, 1998:198) does not only create a negotiated discourse but also provides learners with an opportunity to master certain registers specific to certain subject areas. It also gives them concrete examples of how words change meanings in different settings.

Research in English as a second language (ESL) seems to have largely focused on teaching and learning processes in the classroom. By doing so, it has tried to capture the interaction that takes place during learning. The sociolinguistic perspective recognises the importance of

the learning environment because of “the interplay of linguistic, contextual and social presuppositions which interact to create the conditions for classroom learning” (Gumperz, 1986:65; Breen, 1985).

Ellis (1990) has made a detailed review of empirical studies of second language classrooms. He points out that the studies generally fall into three main groups: studies of classroom process; studies of classroom interaction and second language acquisition; and finally, studies of instruction and second language acquisition. According to Ellis, (1990:15) the main objectives of these pieces of research are threefold. First, to get an insight into how ‘social events’ in the classroom are enacted. Secondly, to test a variety of hypotheses concerning how classroom interactions contribute to second language acquisition so that those that best facilitate the acquisition can be isolated and possibly recommended for use by practising teachers. Thirdly, to find out whether formal instruction results in second language acquisition and to examine possible constraints to successful formal instruction.

Classroom process research has attempted to delineate the phenomena that either “promote or hamper learning in the classroom” (Van Lier, 1988:71). The assumption has been that if these phenomena are documented, teachers would be able to capitalise on those factors that improve second language learning and reduce, if possible, the incidence

of those factors that are known to hinder the acquisition and/or learning process.

In most studies, the preferred method has been observation. Schedules used for classroom observation and consequently as analytical tools have developed from being very simple, with few categories (Flanders, 1970) to being highly sophisticated, with many categories (e.g. Fanselow, 1977; and Allwright, 1988). With these instruments researchers have been able to document teacher talk (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) and classroom discourse (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982; Breen, 1985, and Ellis, 1984) among other areas.

There have also been studies in error treatment. An interesting aspect of error treatment is that teachers vary in their preferences about correcting learner errors. For example, Hughes and Lascaratou (1982) report that teachers who are native speakers of the target language tolerate learner errors more than non-native speakers do.

Inconsistent research findings about the effects of different ways to treat errors make it uncertain whether or not error correction contributes to L2 learning. Indeed, there are critics such as Krashen who argue that teacher correction will not produce credible results, even among the most motivated students, because it puts the learners on the defensive and

encourages them to avoid difficult structures. Krashen (1982:119) argues that: “even under the best of conditions, with the most learning-oriented students, teacher corrections will not produce results that will live up to the expectations of many instructors”. However, one can argue that error correction is likely to raise the level of awareness among learners, particularly if the corrections concern grammar. In any case, it is suspected that many teachers who are not native speakers of English would feel uncomfortable if they left learner errors completely unattended just because there is no clear evidence that correction contributes to learning. Possibly it would be safe to say that over-correction should be avoided.

The assumption that production assists language learning underpins much research about learner language (Ellis, 1990:84). According to this view, the classroom setting provides the opportunity for the learners to perform a variety of communication activities using different types of strategies and these language activities enhance learning. Such communication activities are often negotiated between the teacher and the learners or among the learners themselves. Allwright (1984) sees classroom interaction as a jointly managed undertaking that results in the joint management of language learning.

Some researchers (Ellis, 1990:64) have been interested in the classroom process to find out how communication in the classroom takes place and how discourse is created during language lessons as well as to document learner language and teacher talk. The contributions by the teacher are seen as the input and what learners say as the product.

Studies in learner language seem to indicate that L2 learners tend to produce more communicative acts when the teacher does not strictly control the discussions in the classroom. For example, Ellis (1990) reports a study done by Cathcart, who found that:

Situations in which the learners had control of the talk were characterized by a wide variety of communicative acts and syntactic structures, whereas the situation where the teacher had control seemed to produce single-word utterances, short phrases and formulaic chunks (p. 81).

Ellis also discusses another study done by House with German students. He says that House's German L2 English students produced a variety of communicative acts in role-play. According to Ellis the role-play conversations sounded much more natural than the conversations in the teacher-led discussion because the learners confined themselves to interaction rather than paying attention to appropriate "discourse lubricants" (1990:81).

In contrast to the studies above, Ellis cites another study done by Politzer, Ramirez and Lewis (1981). Politzer, Ramirez and Lewis found

that 90% of moves made by their subjects were responses to teachers' questions. The responses were usually short when the questions were closed. Brock (1986) however notes that, with open-ended (referential) questions, learners tend to produce longer utterances than to the closed type questions. The implication for the class teacher seems to be that flexible classroom settings and open-ended questions should perhaps be used more often so that learners are given the opportunity to produce or display their linguistic ability.

Classroom process research suggests that learning a language involves interaction and collaboration, both between the learner and the teacher and among learners themselves (Allwright, 1984). Through this collaboration learners display their linguistic behaviour. However, it has not been able to produce evidence that there is a direct relationship between learners' linguistic behaviour and learners' language development. Van Lier (1988:91) explains that it is impossible to provide proof of a direct link, because:

Learning is not generally directly and immediately observable. In the first place, it is characterised by improved performance or increased knowledge, and manifested by the learner's behaviour at some time (unspecified) after the learning has occurred. Secondly, the learning itself may not be produced by one specifically identifiable event, but rather by cumulative effect of a number of events.

2.2.2. Stages in the Learning Process

Learning is a developmental process. Generally researchers seem to have two different views about how people acquire L2, the cognitive and mentalist views. Their difference is the way they conceive the internal mechanisms that account for the L2 development. Ellis points out that:

A 'cognitive' view considers the mechanisms to be general in nature. It sees the process of learning a language - whether a first or a second one - as essentially the same as any other kind of learning. Language learning engages the same cognitive systems— perception, memory, problem solving, information processing etc.- as learning other types of knowledge (1994:295).

On the other hand, “the central claim of a mentalist theory of language acquisition is that linguistic knowledge constitutes a separate cognitive faculty, independent of the other cognitive systems involved in the use of this knowledge” (Ellis, 1994:296). Proponents of the mentalist view look at competence and performance as distinct from each other and therefore requiring independent treatment when accounting for the L2 acquisition.

Bialystok and Sharwood Smith (1985) argue that there are two types of linguistic knowledge namely pragmatic and grammatical competence and that there are control procedures that are at work during the learner's “actual performance”. They define knowledge as “the way in which the language system is represented in the mind of the learner” and control as “the processing system for controlling knowledge during actual performance” as control (Bialystok and Sharwood Smith, 1985:104).

Ellis argues that since there are these distinctions, then “L2 development can consist of changes in the learner’s knowledge systems, an increase in control of this knowledge system, or both” (1994:296). Similarly, this implies that there might be different proficiency levels within the same L2 learner.

In trying to understand how L2 is acquired, researchers who follow the mentalist view have mainly used two approaches in their studies. They are typological universals and Universal Grammar. The Universal Grammar issue is well known and it is often discussed with Chomsky’s *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* in mind. It will therefore not be discussed here.

Researchers who have employed linguistic typology in their studies have aimed at trying to get an insight into the influence of typological universals on the order of learning grammatical features, the effect of the status of grammatical features in L1 and L2 on L1 transfer and learning difficulty of L2. Among other features the research has used negative placement (Hyltenstam, 1977:383—411) preposition stranding (Mazurekewich, 1984:91-109) and relativisation (Schachter, 1974:205-214). Hyltenstam for example, studied the acquisition of Swedish negative placement by Turkish, Serbo-Croat and Hamito-Semitic speakers and found that the subjects opted for placement of negators

(e.g. not) after the finite verb in the main clause and immediately before the finite verb in the subordinate clause. However, Jordens found contrary results when he re-evaluated Hyltenstam's study (Jordens, 1980:195-207). Mazurekewich used a written question formation test to find out how easy it would be for his French and Inuktitut speaking subjects to acquire the preposition stranding and pied piping. His results did not show any clear distinction between the two. Thus, there was no evidence that either one or the other would be easier to learn than the other.

Relativisation has to do with avoidance behaviour in L2 learners, the acquisition of some relative noun phrase positions and the acquisition of different forms of relatives. Ellis points out that "learners of English whose L1 does not contain relative clauses or contains left-branching rather than right-branching clauses (for example, Japanese and Chinese) tend to avoid using relative clauses" (1994:423). This implies that learners in this group might acquire relative clauses later.

The limitation of mentalist research is that it has focused on explaining only a subset of the whole L2, that is, a selection of grammatical phenomena. However, the research has been able to establish some developmental patterns in the acquisition of morphemes and syntactic

structures such as plurals, negatives, relative clauses, word order rules and interrogatives (Ellis 1994:111).

Cognitive theories of L2 acquisition try to address the question of L2 acquisition as a mental process involving the use of strategies that explain how the L2 knowledge system is developed and how the knowledge is used in communication. Researchers in this field have studied interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) and the learner's explicit and implicit knowledge by means of Krashen's Monitor Theory (Krashen, 1981; 1982) and Bialystok's theory of L2 learning (1978). They have also been engaged in variability studies (Tarone, 1983; Ellis, 1984). Each of these areas has contributed to the understanding both of how learners acquire L2 and of the strategies that they use in communication. Perhaps what is important is the idea that L2 learning may be regarded as being on a continuum that is always changing as learners add more knowledge. Very few, if any, second language learners ever reach the end of the continuum. Sometimes the progress may be arrested at a certain point for reasons best known to the learner or for psychological reasons. Different second language learners have different styles of learning (Ellis, 1994:545).

Trim challenges the suggestion that language items are learned in a particular order. He argues that "the idea of language development as a

straight-line process does not stand up to closer inspection. We are not all marching at different speeds along that same road towards a common goal.” (1978:7). Thus, although in the past the accepted method was leading learners step-by-step, this method is no longer favoured. Instead, the communicative needs of the learner are seen as the guiding principle.

Although Trim challenges the ‘straight-line’ process of language development in learners, he does not offer any theory of non-linear acquisition. However, Rivers (1976) and Valette and Disick (1972) seem to suggest that learners’ linguistic development proceed through stages without alluding to the linear interpretation of language acquisition. Rivers proposes two broad divisions in language teaching, namely skills-getting and skills-using. Valette and Disick separate teaching objectives into four. The first three of these correspond to the acquisition of form, meaning and the automatisisation of what has already been acquired. The final set of objectives relates to the utilisation of all these in real life situations.

Both Rivers’ and Valette and Disick’s divisions can be understood to imply linguistic development stages. The problem here is that these divisions portray learners as passive recipients of linguistic knowledge and skills in the first stages and then move into action in the final stage.

Perhaps learners, particularly those being formally instructed, do not behave this way. They probably want to use elements of whatever piece of L2 they have acquired almost immediately for communication.

A more plausible description of the theory of the second language learning process is that advanced by Stern (1983). Stern characterises language competence or proficiency by four features, namely: formal mastery, semantic mastery, communicative capacity and creativity.

According to Stern:

The assumption is often made that these characteristics provide a kind of natural syllabus or sequence of second language learning: first the form of the second language is learnt, then meaning becomes attached to the form, then the communication capacity can be developed and finally the learner becomes sufficiently liberated in the second language to use it creatively (1983:399).

It is not the broad categories that make Stern's working theory plausible. It is his argument that "the four characteristics of language proficiency are best assumed to develop simultaneously from the start" (ibid.). Stern argues that the four complement each other throughout the learning processes although the interaction between them may be rudimentary at the beginning. However, some aspects of the language proficiency may need more attention than others as the learner progresses. In terms of teaching, it is possible then for the teacher to shift his or her emphasis from one component to another.

2.2.3. Theoretical Basis for the Study

The range of issues mentioned and the examination of the various research studies in bilingualism and second language learning in this chapter have shown how complex the question of using a second language as the medium of instruction is. However, Cummins's theories of language proficiency and the Thresholds theory have provided the researcher with a firm theoretical basis for the study and a framework for the interpretation of the findings.

In spite of the amount of research that has been published on the topic of L2 acquisition, Ellis observes that "it is not yet possible to construct a comprehensive cognitive theory of L2 acquisition, let alone an all embracing theory that incorporates both a linguistic and cognitive perspective" (1994:408).

Chapter 3

English as a Second Language

The term 'English as a Second Language' (ESL) refers to the role that English plays in the life of immigrant and other minority groups in English-speaking countries (Richards and Rogers, 1986). People in these groups may use their first language at home and among friends. They then use English at work and at school. In this context, the first language is the minority language and English is the dominant language. English therefore is the language of everyday use in public places.

The second context in which the term is used is where English is widely used but it is not the first language. In this context English is the language of learning at school and the language in which business and government transactions are conducted. It may be the language of everyday communication by some but not by all the people in that specific country. This second context is the context in which English is used in Malawi.

A related term often used in English methodology is 'English as a Foreign Language' (EFL). This term refers to the situation in countries where English is neither the first language nor the language of government, business and of learning. For example, English in Mozambique or Senegal is not an ESL, but an EFL. In these countries, English is simply

taught as a subject at school (see Schmied, 1991:33-4 for the situation in Africa). The distinction between English as a Second Language and English as a First Language (L1) has resulted in the development of specific methods for the ESL classrooms.

Second language acquisition (SLA) has over the years accumulated a plethora of theories. For example, Ellis (1986:248) lists seven, which he claims have taken a central place in SLA research. Although not all the seven theories are going to be discussed here, it is important to note that the multiplicity of the theories has sometimes concerned linguists. Schouten (1979) for instance, claims that "...too many models have been built and taken for granted too soon" (p. 4). Nonetheless, these theories or models have an impact on second language methodology, curriculum and classroom practice. This chapter examines only two of the methods or approaches and their underlying theories. They are the audiolingual and communicative approaches. These are singled out because of the impact they have made on the teaching of English as a Second Language in Malawi.

3.1. ESL Methodology

3.1.1. Approach, Method and Technique

Anthony (1963:63-7) makes a distinction between an approach, a method and a technique in language teaching. The three are

conceptually arranged in a hierarchical order. He defines an approach as "...a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning" while method "...is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material..." Furthermore a technique is defined as "a particular trick, strategem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective" in the classroom. He argues that an approach is "axiomatic". It describes the nature of the subject matter at the level of abstraction where assumptions about language and language learning are made.

Method is procedural in nature and it is at the practical level. It is at the method level where theory is put into practice. It is at this level where the teacher makes choices about what should be taught and the order in which the material has to be taught. Since this level is concerned with the orderly presentation of the language material, a specific method may employ several techniques within a single lesson as the material is being presented. Thus according to Anthony, an approach is an embodiment of many methods and a method may contain several techniques. Techniques are supposed to be consistent with the method employed and the method should not contradict the approach (the philosophy underlying the method).

In terms of teaching, current assumptions and beliefs about language learning provide teachers with several methods from which they choose the best alternative. The techniques that the teachers choose should therefore be those which support the method that they have decided to employ. The distinction between an approach and a method as examined in this section is important to this study, particularly when the researcher examines the communicative approach later in this chapter.

3.1.2. The Audiolingual Method

Developed towards the end of the 1950s, the audiolingual method was a result of a combination of the structural approach developed by Charles Fries (1945), insight from Skinner's behaviourist psychology and aural-oral procedures. Fries rejected the direct method that was then used. He believed that the starting point for language teaching should be the structure or the grammar of the target language. Following this line of argument, Fries saw the problems of learning a foreign language as originating from the conflict between the learner's home language and the phonology and other sub-systems of the target language. The consequence of this was the rise of contrastive analysis, which was aimed at finding potential areas of difficulty for the learners of English as a foreign language. It was believed that if these were isolated, systematic attention could be paid to them in order to reduce the levels of

interference “through carefully prepared teaching materials” (Richards and Rogers, 1986:46).

As the starting point in the structural approach was the structure of the target language, teaching a foreign language required systematic attention to its sentence patterns. According to Hockett (1969), the basic patterns constituted the learner’s task. Learners were required to drill using a minimal vocabulary to make the drills meaningful. These elements from the structural approach were brought into the audiolingual method.

The audiolingual theorists based their learning theory on the view that language was “a system of structurally related elements for encoding of meaning, the elements being phonemes, morphemes, words, structures and sentence types” (Richards and Rogers, 1986:49). Since combinations of these elements into meaningful wholes were rule-governed, learning a language was assumed to involve mastering both the elements and the rules that created the meaningful wholes.

A related development in structural linguistics was the assumption that speech was the primary form of language. The spoken language was seen as language and the written word as a representation of language. The written word was therefore seen as secondary (Brooks, 1964). Rivers (1964:5) reports that at the 9th International Congress of Linguists in

1961, Moulton told his fellow linguists that what native speakers of whatever language said constituted the language.

Two important principles of language learning related to the audiolingual method seem to have emerged from Moulton's speech. First, language learning should start with an oral presentation. Second, correct pronunciation of each word is of paramount importance. The yardstick for the correct pronunciation should be the way the native speakers of the target language say the words.

The audiolingual theorists based their learning theory on behaviourist psychology. In behaviourist psychology, learning is seen as a change of behaviour. The change is accomplished by providing the learner with a stimulus. The learner then gives a response, which is reinforced through reward (if the response is appropriate), or punishment (if the response is inappropriate). Repeated correct responses would result in the formation of a correct habit.

The psychologist Skinner equated language learning to the other forms of learning when he said, "We have no reason to assume...that verbal behavior differs in any fundamental respect from non-verbal behavior, or that any new principles must be invoked to account for it" (1957:10). Audiolingual method was therefore based on the principle of habit formation. It depended heavily on mimicry, imitation, repetition and

memorisation. Structural patterns were sometimes taught with disregard for meaning and context. Furthermore, teachers made an effort to prevent learners from making errors lest they formed poor linguistic habits. Seen from this point of view, the method was heavily teacher-centred. Richards and Rogers aptly describe the learners' role:

Learners play a reactive role by responding to stimuli, and thus have little control over the content, pace and style of learning. They are not encouraged to initiate interaction because this may lead to mistakes. The fact that in the early stages learners do not always understand the meaning of what they are repeating is not perceived as a drawback, for by listening to the teacher, imitating accurately, and responding to and performing controlled tasks they are learning a new form of verbal behavior (1986:56).

In Malawi, the audiolingual method has been in use for over thirty years. Throughout these years there has always been only one set of primary school textbooks. The textbooks were based on the 1966 syllabus, which was very clear in its intentions when it stated that:

first, it must be remembered that successful language learning depends on successful habit formation. The only way to form a habit is by constant repetition. Accordingly, the Teachers' guide is built on the principle of constant practice and repetition of the sentence patterns to be learned (Ministry of Education, 1966:106).

The syllabus then points out that the aim of the course was not greatly to increase the number of words to be learned but to ensure that pupils could understand and produce the basic sentence patterns of the English language. The syllabus does not see learning vocabulary as learning the language.

While it is true that learning the vocabulary of a language is not learning the language, it is perhaps equally true that learning to produce the basic sentence patterns in isolation is not learning the language either. The purpose of learning a language is to be able to use it in order to achieve particular intentions such as receiving and giving information, and expressing feelings of joy, fear, love, hate and anger. To achieve these intentions both language structures and vocabulary are necessary.

During the past thirty years of audiolingualism in Malawi, primary school teachers of English have developed a classroom culture in which language teaching has consisted of subjecting learners to repetition, imitation, mimicry and memorisation with perhaps little regard for meaning and effective communication. They have developed a culture in which learners' errors are perceived, not as part of the second language learning process, but as a sign of the learners' incompetence in English. The consequence of this may have a bearing on the overall English language proficiency of the learners.

3.1.3. The Communicative Approach

Whereas the audiolingual method was developed in the United States, British linguists developed the communicative approach. Linguists in Britain became increasingly dissatisfied with situational language teaching as a method. They therefore questioned the underlying

linguistic theory of the method (Howatt, 1984:280). By drawing upon theories of communication, theories of knowledge and insights from the functional linguistics of Halliday (1970), from sociolinguistics as advocated by Hymes (1972:269-93), and from philosophy (Austin, 1962), British applied linguists had a strong base to advance their argument for the need to develop a new approach to language teaching. One important dimension of the argument was the emphasis on the functional and on the communicative potential of language. The new approach became known as the communicative approach or simply communicative language teaching (CLT).

In contrasting the audiolingual method and the communicative approach, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:91-93) present over twenty differences. Two of these are pertinent to this study, namely the differences between the primary and the desired goals of these approaches to language teaching. Finocchiaro and Brumfit argue that in the audiolingual method the desired goal is linguistic competence while in the communicative approach the desired goal is communicative competence. The latter kind of competence means the ability to use the linguistic system of any language effectively and according to the demands of the context in which parts of the linguistic system achieve the intended function in a socially acceptable manner. Thus, the ability

to use the linguistic system is seen as more important than are mastery of the linguistic system itself (linguistic competence).

The second difference is that in the audiolingual method the primary goal of language teaching is to achieve accuracy, while in the communicative approach the primary goal is fluency and the appropriate use of language. In the view of Finocchiaro and Brumfit, formal correctness in the use or usage of the linguistic system is not important (see Widdowson, 1978:2-3 for the contrast between use and usage). What is important is how to use the system fluently and in an acceptable manner at all times and in various contexts. Finocchiaro and Brumfit however, do not dismiss accuracy completely as a goal of language teaching. They only argue that accuracy should not be judged in the abstract, but in context. Here then is the watershed between audiolingualism and communicative language teaching.

This watershed suggests departure from the traditional method of syllabus design, a rethinking of classroom procedures and practices and of the nature of instructional materials. In spite of the enormous challenges it posed, communicative language teaching was well received both in Britain and internationally. However, by contrasting the communicative approach with the audiolingual method Finocchiaro and Brumfit seem to imply that the communicative approach is at the same

level as the audiolingual method, that is, that it is a method. This researcher shares this view. He therefore prefers to refer to communicative language teaching.

Since the communicative approach sees language as communication, the primary purpose of teaching a language should therefore be the development of communicative competence. Within the broader framework of communicative competence Canale and Swain (1980) isolate four different types, namely: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences. Grammatical competence refers to linguistic competence (see Chomsky, 1965) while sociolinguistic competence has to do with being sensitive to the context in which communication takes place including role relationships, the status of the interlocutors and sometimes the type of audience at hand. Discourse competence comprises an understanding of how meaning is created in a text and how different linguistic components are interconnected to create meaning. Strategic competence refers to the ability of the individual to cope with different situations that arise during communication. Such strategies include knowing how to start or terminate a conversation and how to maintain, redirect or repair communication. One observation to be made here is that, if teaching a language entails the development of communicative competence, then by implication language teachers who use the communicative approach should be paying attention to the

development of all these sub-categories in ESL instruction. This seems plausible because competence in the target language should entail mastery if not knowledge of all of them.

In summing up the basic language theory underpinning communicative language teaching, Richards and Rogers present four characteristics of a communicative view of language. They observe that proponents of CLT view language as a system for the expression of meaning whose primary functions are interaction and communication. They therefore argue that the structure of language reflects its functional as well as its communicative uses. Finally, they view the primary units of language as not “merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse” (1986: 71). By looking at language this way, proponents of CLT seem to have the view that language teaching should be integrating both the grammar and the communicative functions of the target language. So both grammatical knowledge and ability to communicate will be developing simultaneously.

Although when the audiolingual method is used the learner’s role is reactive, in communicative language teaching the learner is at the centre of learning. The learner shares the responsibility for creating the

learning process itself with the teacher and his or her fellow learners.

Breen and Candlin describe the learner's role in this way:

The role of the learner as a negotiator – between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning – emerges from and interacts with the role of a joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way (1980: 110).

The teacher's roles in the language classroom are then redefined. The teacher becomes a catalyst, a facilitator of learning, an observer, a guide, a participant and a learner as well. To these roles may be added the role of a researcher and of a critical self-evaluator as is expected of a reflective teacher. Such roles require the ESL teacher to be flexible in his or her approach to teaching. However, flexibility itself is often uncomfortable to an insecure teacher and flexibility is usually foreign to an authoritarian culture. As it was stated in chapter 1, many primary school teachers in Malawi are untrained and this situation does not give them enough confidence in the classroom. Therefore, many teachers are still authoritarian and flexibility for most of them is interpreted as professional weakness. Thus, although CLT has been adopted in Malawi teachers still treat it with a certain degree of scepticism.

Teaching materials in CLT are supposed to be activity-based or task-based. A further requirement is that the materials should be both process-oriented and content-oriented. According to Legutke and

Thomas (1991), process-oriented materials are designed to stimulate interactions in the classroom and they are of four different types according to the functions they fulfil in the classroom. These are (a) language learning tasks that aim to train learners in specific language skills, (also see Littlewood 1984 for a skills learning model in L2); (b) pre-communicative tasks, such as language exercises; (c) communicative tasks proper, and (d) instrumental and managerial tasks. According to Legutke and Thomas, instrumental and managerial tasks “enhance learners’ managerial and procedural capacities” (p. 17). On the other hand, content materials are support materials that provide information about the target language in various communicative contexts. These are examined from semantic, linguistic and pragmatic standpoints. One interesting point raised by Legutke and Thomas is that learners’ products such as diaries are also forms of content material because they reflect on the learners’ experiences of the world through the target language. Mchazime (1985) supports this view when he argues that learners are ‘experts’ in their own right, particularly in writing.

Materials in CLT are also supposed to be authentic. Nevertheless, Widdowson (1979:162) cautions that “too exclusive a concern for ‘authentic’ language behaviour as communication can lead to disregard of methodological principles upon which the pedagogy of language teaching must depend”. Widdowson further argues that authenticity

should be the goal in foreign language teaching and to reach that goal some tampering should be done with the learning-teaching materials. Such a pedagogic action would ensure that learners reach the goal by gradual approximation. In the same vein, Breen (1985) argues that authenticity is relative to the purpose in the classroom, the standpoints of learners and teachers, the context in which the materials are used, and the content of the materials. In their opinion, a text can be authentic if it fulfils the purpose for which it is chosen.

The communicative approach has had diverse interpretations at both the design and classroom procedures level. For example, Yalden (1983) isolates eight different types of communicative syllabuses ranging from structural-functional to learner-generated syllabuses (Wilkins 1976). In classroom procedures the variations are even broader. These variations have led Howatt to argue that there are two versions of CLT, namely a strong and a weak version. This view suggests that communicative language teaching can be placed on a continuum with the two extremes at either end. Each of the versions may entail slightly different procedures from the others. This diversity in both syllabus design and classroom procedures makes communicative language teaching different from other language teaching methods such as the audiolingual method where both design and classroom procedures are clearly distinct and fairly predictable. For these reasons, communicative language teaching

can be described as more flexible than the other methods. It is this flexibility which breeds the various forms of CLT.

3.1.4. The Communicative Approach in Malawi

In 1989 Malawi witnessed a major shift in language policy in education. For the first time all the textbooks for Standards 1 - 4 except in English as a subject were to be in Chichewa. The whole curriculum was reviewed for the first time since the 1960s. This change necessitated a rethinking of English language methodology in an environment that was highly conservative in its perceptions about teaching. As a subject, English was perhaps the most vulnerable to this conservatism. The then President of Malawi, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, saw teaching English as being equal to teaching grammar. In a speech which he made at Kwacha National Cultural Centre on 10 December 1968 Banda argued:

...if English is to be learnt properly, Grammar and Composition have to be taught. Grammar, the very foundation of English, has to be taught; simply, clearly and with patience. At whatever level you start teaching a child Grammar, he has to be taught the very foundation on which English or any other language is based. Parts of Speech, Noun, Pronoun, Adjective, Verb, Adverb, Preposition, Conjunction, Interjection. Let the child know thoroughly what they are. I do not mind if you make them repeat them, but they must know (1968:4).

Since these sentiments were expressed by a state president in a one party state, the sentiments were taken by education planners, managers, the inspectorate and practitioners as a directive or a decree for the maintenance of the structural approach to English language teaching.

To think of introducing innovative teaching approaches was tantamount to defying the state 'directive'.

However, during the late 1980s things began to change. There was a general concern that educational standards were going down in the country. The national education advisory council began to acknowledge professional suggestions presented to them for the president's consideration. In 1985, the Malawi government published its third education development plan since independence from Britain in 1964. The plan put emphasis on acquisition and the development of literacy skills in language (Ministry of Education, 1985). This provided curriculum specialists with a point of reference and justification to change the approach. Subsequently, the current English language syllabus uses the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as its organisational structure. Functions and grammatical items are then provided, together with suggested learning experiences and possible teaching and learning materials.

Textbooks that have been developed from the syllabus (the *Activities With English* series) put emphasis on the functional approach. The teaching of de-contextualised structures is de-emphasised and the communicative approach promoted. For example, throughout the Teachers' Guides there are suggestions for games, role-play, storytelling, group and pair

work. In reading, pupils learn to use phonics to assist them in word-attack skills as early as in Standard 2, while other reading skills such as scanning, skimming, predicting and reading for detailed information are introduced in Standard 3.

In general, there seems to be a blend of the four language skills in the new curriculum as the dust jacket of the Standard 4 textbook points out:

In Standard 4 pupils develop their analytical reading skills as they learn to recognise main ideas and topic sentences and use this information to improve their writing skills as they first complete, and then produce paragraphs of their own. Information transfer exercises require pupils to utilise their listening skills to complete diagrams and tables, while their speaking skills come to the fore as they translate information from plans and maps into verbal instructions for their friends. Once again, as in Standards 1-3, rhymes, song, stories and lots of role-play involve all the pupils in interesting activities (*Activities With English Book 4*).

After examining the revised Malawi primary school curriculum, Miske and Dowd acknowledge that “the most dramatic change is the switch to a communicative-oriented approach from the traditional grammar-based method for English language instruction” (1998:33).

The new curriculum represents a major paradigm shift for the practising teachers in Malawi. Teachers must assume roles that they have never assumed before, such as those already discussed in section 3.1.3 above. It is known that whenever paradigms shift, particularly in teaching, there is a seeming loss of self-confidence, authority and power in the classroom. This is because the long experience that teachers may have

gained over many years of teaching is challenged and perhaps even shaken. The foundation of their authority can, therefore, no longer stand.

It is only through orientation and regular in-service education that teachers' authority can be restored. As Androsenko (1992) has come to realise in Russia, "Transition to communicative methodology is unthinkable without teacher training and education"(p.2). Unfortunately, Miske and Dowd report that teachers whom they met in Mangochi district complained that although the curriculum was revised, only Standard 1 teachers were specifically instructed in teaching the new curriculum.

In brief, the last decade has been a period in which a paradigm shift took place in English language teaching in Malawi. The transition from the structural approach to communicative language teaching has, if anything, been too swift for many teachers to internalise. After a quarter century of the audiolingual method, CLT may be viewed by many as too demanding. The situation gets worse when the teachers have not been introduced to the new approach systematically and sufficiently well. Consequently, some of them might be falling back on their old practices while using the new communicative materials. That may have a bearing

on how the teachers prepare pupils for learning through the medium of English.

3.2. Culture in ESL

Much of the research in academic achievement among second language learners has been done in relation to their linguistic competence. The literature review on the subject in Chapter 2 confirms this assertion. However, there are other influences such as culture, which may also pose problems for efficient learning. McKeon (1994) argues that in spite of the fact that learning English is essential for minority students, its acquisition does not guarantee the learners' success in school achievement. Linguistic competence alone cannot account for students' academic achievement. McKeon therefore points out that "...the cultural messages received by children from both the school and the larger society may influence their feelings about school as well as their feelings about themselves" (1994:23).

In the argument McKeon acknowledges that the school itself is a society and as such it has a culture of its own which may have a bearing on the performance of the students. Aikenhead (1996) brings in an additional dimension when he terms Science a subculture. Both McKeon and Aikenhead seem to suggest that within the school and within certain subject areas there are norms or an ethos that students should

internalise as they proceed with the business of schooling. Therefore, insensitivity to such norms may adversely affect students' performance.

In English as a Second Language, culture has been examined within the context of reading materials and comprehension. Within this context culture has been viewed as background knowledge (or schemata) that readers bring to the written text in order to understand the text. Although the emphasis of the research has been on reading, in writing too writers usually operate within culture-specific schemata. Clyne (1981) illustrates this by showing the contrast between English and German rhetorical patterns. Clyne observes that while English rhetorical patterns proceed in a linear way those of German are marked by digressions.

Similarly, after studying Arabic discourse, Koch (1983) points out that Arabic argumentative prose uses repetition as a device for textual cohesion while the western modes of argumentation are based on syllogistic modes of proof. In terms of class work these differences suggest that a perfectly argued piece of writing may be deemed slipshod if marked by someone who does not have the cultural background of the writer. If the writers are children, this may have serious consequences because the children may not understand why their notebooks are full of red markings when in their home language similar types of writing earn them praise.

Background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension. Steffenson and Joag-Dev (1984:48-64) say that schemata have three functions in reading comprehension. The first function is that it fills in gaps which the writer leaves in the text on the assumption that what is left out is the shared knowledge between the writer and the reader. It is the background knowledge that facilitates inferences when a reader is reading. In other words, background knowledge embeds a text that may seem highly abstract in context. Lack of background knowledge can create problems in the reader's understanding of the intended meaning of the text.

The second function is to constrain the reader's interpretation of ambiguous messages in the text. The reader's background knowledge restricts the meaning of a text for him or her. The reader matches his or her various schemata against the description in the text. This process enables him or her to utilise the schema that fits the description in the text. Without background knowledge, the learner cannot comprehend fully and retain the knowledge contained in the text because possible interpretations of the text may appear endless. Finally, schemata function as a checklist for the reader. The reader uses the schemata to confirm that she or he has understood the message in the text. Thus, schemata are crucial to comprehension.

Research into the effects of schemata on comprehension in ESL indicates that cultural differences are important variables (Steffenson and Anderson, 1979; Alptekin, 1993; and Lessow-Hurley, 1996). What this suggests is that people from different cultural backgrounds may interpret the same text differently simply because the previous knowledge which they bring to the text is different. The differences may sometimes be wrongly interpreted as lack of comprehension and therefore cause the person from the minority cultural group to be judged to be linguistically unprepared for the task of learning in an L2. In the scientific world, discipline-based schemata play an important role in the process of acquiring scientific skills and knowledge and in interpreting scientific phenomena (Alderson and Urquhart, 1985). This suggests that certain approaches to scientific texts should be formally taught if learners are to tackle the texts in the manner in which they are supposed to be handled.

The next section of this chapter examines how the issue of culture has been taken care of in the primary school English language textbooks in Malawi. The textbooks are published under the series title *Activities With English*.

3.3. Culture in the Primary English Books in Malawi

The implementation of the current primary school curriculum started in 1991 on a year-by-year basis. Standard 1 was the first and Standard 8

was the last. The first examination based on the curriculum was administered in 1998. In the English textbooks culture seems to have been given considerable attention. To begin with, there seems to be an understanding that the children come from a background where oral communication predominates. Oral stories are still told by elders particularly in rural areas, not only for aesthetic reasons but also for moral education (Mphande, 1998). Mphande points out that traditional stories always have a new life and freshness in them when they are retold. He argues that this is so because the narrator controls the process of the narration himself or herself. The narrator becomes a medium and as an artist he or she imaginatively selects, controls and arranges the material and sources of the material, “giving them new life and freshness” (Mphande, 1998:137). Thus, although the story line may be familiar, the ingenuity and artistic skills of the narrator render the traditional stories interesting and worth listening to over and over again.

Finnegan (1970: 71) observes that “one of the main characteristics of oral literature is its flexibility.” She further observes that in oral literature it is possible to find almost all the necessary elements that achieve the purpose for presenting the material. The elements include moralisation, an intention to amuse and an intention to entertain. For amusement and entertainment the narrator employs an “interesting plot, shocking episode or character and a vivid style and delivery” (1967:17). It is

perhaps this principle of flexibility and the desire to amuse and entertain children that convinced the writers of the textbooks to include some traditional stories in the instructional materials. Pupils encounter familiar stories that are retold in English.

Examples of such stories can be found in the teacher's guides (T. G.) for Standards 2 – 4. In the reading material presented in the series *Activities With English*, quite a substantial number of stories are developed within a familiar background. Serious issues such as inheritance, land degradation and population explosion are presented in a culturally relevant background.

An example of a story with a familiar context and that is culturally relevant to the children in school is found in the Standard 3 textbook.

The story describes children playing at night when the moon is bright:

At night, when the sky is clear and the moon is bright, children come out to play.... They all sing and clap hands. A boy leaves his line and dances towards the girls' line. He dances proudly and then sings

Come and dance with me!

Come and dance with me, girl.

Then all the girls sing together

You can't dance well!

I want to dance with your older brother.

Then one girl leaves her line and joins the boy. Both dance towards the centre as the other children sing and clap.

Boys and girls take turns to dance.... They dance until they are tired. Then they go home to sleep (P. B. 3:128).

This description of the African sky with a bright moon shining upon village houses and huts in the remote areas of Malawi where electricity does not interfere with the cool, silver light of the moon is a familiar experience for the children. Similar experiences are reflected in a girls' dance called *lipina-tsa-mokopu* in Lesotho. Mda (1993:76) argues that such experiences reflect "the world girls live in, and the social relations in the village".

In spite of the awareness shown of the importance of cultural background for comprehension, the textbooks also include texts that reflect western culture. One example of this is found in the Standard 4 textbook, where family relationships are taught following a western cultural pattern. Children learn that their father's brother is their uncle in the same way that their mother's brother is. They learn that the children of their father's brother are their cousins not their brothers or sisters as is the case in Malawian culture. They also learn that the children of their mother's sister are their cousins too. In the Malawian culture cousins are the children of your father's sisters and those of your mother's brother. In some cultures within the country, cousins can marry each other, but this rule does not extend to children of one's father's brother or those of one's mother's sister. This kind of description of family relationships goes counter to the cultural background that children bring to school. If it is not explained to children, it can lead to

misinterpretation of facts. In cases like this one teachers have an added task of bridging the gap between the western and Malawian culture before pupils can engage in reading for comprehension.

The second example, perhaps more striking than the first one, is the story in the Standard 6 textbook (p 157) 'Mayamiko visits London'. In the story there is a mention of Piccadilly Circus. Piccadilly Circus is outside the pupils' familiar context and even if it is explained, pupils will have no idea why such a place is called by that name. There are no circuses of any kind in Malawi.

The inclusion of material requiring various types of cultural background in the textbooks should not be interpreted as unintentional actions that may complicate the learning process. Such material serves to show the diverse contexts in which English is used as an international language. People argue that nobody can completely escape teaching the culture of the target language. They suggest that teaching English as a Second Language or as a Foreign Language should include teaching the culture of this target language (Sherman, 1992; Prodromou, 1992; Alptekin, 1993; Flowerdew, 1998; and Fandrych, 1999).

The solution is not to shun the target language culture but to "build conceptual bridges between the culturally familiar and the unfamiliar",

for example, by means of “comparisons as techniques of cross-cultural comprehension...”(Alptekin, 1993:141). There seems to be a strong case for cross-cultural teaching in this global world. Human beings today are living and participating in the affairs of an interdependent world. It is therefore the responsibility of educators to prepare learners to cope with the world’s universal problems within the context of their varied ethnic and cultural systems. This, one may speculate, is perhaps the reason why other cultures have been included in the textbooks.

This chapter has attempted to present and examine developments in ESL methodology. It has also examined the relationship between culture and comprehension. In both cases, an effort has been made to show how the issues have affected the curriculum and the teaching of English in primary schools in Malawi. The assumption has been that, because of all these developments in English language teaching in Malawi, pupils should be prepared for the English medium curriculum. The next chapter surveys and examines the available literature on the use of the second language, particularly English, as the language of learning. The literature review highlights sources that have implications for Malawi, which also uses English as the language of learning.

Chapter 4

The Second Language as a Language of Learning

The question of what language should be used in school as the medium of instruction has created a renewed awareness of the dilemmas policy-makers face when it comes to decision-making, particularly in multilingual societies. It has also created some interest among scholars concerning the effect on the academic performance of learners who use a second language as the language of learning. This section examines some of the dilemmas confronting policy-makers and reviews the literature that discusses the effect of using a second language as the language of learning.

4.1. Choice of the Language of Learning

The process of becoming educated involves the use of a particular language as the language of learning. The choice of the language itself is crucial to the fulfilment of the society's desired goal in education. Trappes-Lomax (1990) points out that an appropriate medium of instruction is one that enables the society to educate its youth. It must enable the youth to attain the educational objectives set forth by the system without discriminating against any particular group of the youth.

Furthermore, the language of learning should be able to fulfil the functions that Le Page (1964) proposes: communion, expression,

conceptualisation and communication. What Le Page refers to as communion is the social function of language. The language must allow the learners to relate effectively to their teachers as well as to their peers. It is through this kind of verbal interaction that mutual trust and confidence among the learners are built. Trust and confidence might create security in the learning environment.

The language of learning should also enable learners to react to learning experiences both covertly and overtly. Since learning involves thinking and learning to think logically, the medium of instruction should enable learners to conceptualise in that language and should afford them the opportunity to receive and transmit information clearly. It should give them the opportunity to examine critically what others say and enable them to express and elaborate their point of view.

Trappes-Lomax argues that such a language “should be *accepted* (emphasis his) by all concerned (parents, teachers, pupils and the society) as suitable for its assigned role and of such functional importance as worth the effort of acquiring” (1990:95). He further argues that the learners should experience the language itself. In other words learners should hear the language or observe it being used in their everyday life or they themselves should use it. Finally, Le Page advises that the language so chosen should be teachable.

However, Le Page does not seem to perceive the fact that in matters of language choice there are also political, cultural and economic considerations. Politicians sometimes have their reasons for wishing a particular language to be used and as Olshtain (1989:54) points out “political considerations have to do with the particular regime in power, and how it views the question of language in general”. Then there are cultural groups who may also put pressure on policy-makers. Economic considerations may be viewed from two different points namely, the nation’s wish to be modernised through a language of wider communication such as English and the shortage of money to invest in the adoption and implementation of the chosen language. Thus Le Page’s criteria may not be sufficient without these other factors.

Trappes-Lomax acknowledges that the question of acceptability is an attitudinal one. It is, therefore, difficult to gain acceptance of the chosen language of instruction by all the stakeholders. This difficulty is particularly prevalent in Africa where there are many multi-ethnic and multi-lingual societies. Policy-makers in these countries are always in a dilemma (Watson, 1994). They have to weigh the implications of choosing one language among a host of other languages. Kelman advises that:

In determining whether a common language would be helpful and if so, what form it ought to take, policy-makers and language

planners must consider not only the potential of such a language in binding the population to the nation state, sentimentally and instrumentally, but also the sentimentally and instrumentally based resistances that the proposed policy would call forth in different subgroups within the population (Kelman, 1971:48).

This dilemma is not recognised by policy-makers only. Even the international community also acknowledges the problem. Coombs (1985:256) for example, observes that “the choice of language of instruction is one of the least appreciated of all the main educational problems that come before international forums.” The UNESCO report on education in Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia) contains an example of the way the problem has been viewed. In 1963, a UNESCO mission was sent to Zambia to advise the Zambian government on the education system to be adopted and what language policy it should follow. At that time, Zambia was preparing for its independence from Britain in 1964. The UNESCO report was published in 1964. Its recommendation on the medium of instruction is contained in the following statement:

A child, therefore, may have begun in his mother tongue, changed to a main official vernacular, if that is not his mother tongue, changed to English as medium of instruction two years later. We [therefore] recommend that a policy decision be made to introduce English as the universal medium of instruction from the beginning of schooling (UNESCO, 1964:25).

Since its publication of a document on mother tongue education in 1953 UNESCO’s main thrust had been to encourage mother tongue as the medium of instruction. For many people therefore, this recommendation came as a surprise. However surprising it may be, the recommendation

does reflect some of the dilemmas and problems that confront multilingual and multi-ethnic societies in Africa.

Trappes-Lomax rightly points out that the acceptability of the language of learning has a bearing on motivation. Unfortunately, the acceptance by all concerned that he proposes is difficult to find in Africa. African governments have sometimes imposed the language of learning on the masses. The attempt by the South African Government to impose Afrikaans on the black students in that country, which led to the student uprising in 1976, is a case in point. There are very few cases, if any, in which there is *universal* acceptance of a single language of learning on the African continent. Somalia seems to be the only country and this is so because it is basically a single ethnic country. One of the reasons why it may be difficult is that policy-makers themselves and those who want to educate their children often have varying perceptions about the language of learning. One example, which Brocke-Utne (1993) presents, is the unfavourable perception of Africans about the mother tongue language policy put forward by western educationists during the time of colonialism. Brocke-Utne observes that:

The Africans suspected that the language policies were designed to keep them in their ghettos. They therefore rejected the systems supposedly tailored to their needs and demanded to be educated to exactly the same standards as the whites were (1993:238).

However, Simon Kapwepwe of Zambia took the opposite view. While many Zambians were in favour of the 'straight for English' policy, he rejected it sharply. In a speech made at the closing ceremony of the first national education conference in Lusaka, Kapwepwe argues:

We should stop teaching children through English right from the start because it is the surest way of imparting [an] inferiority complex in the children and society. It is poisonous. It is the surest way of killing [the] African personality and African culture. From my experience people defend what they have and not what they do not have. The African children will only defend the European culture because that is what they will have been taught from the start (1970:68).

Language embodies culture. It is a vehicle through which human beings express their experiences. It is one of a society's dearest possessions. Kapwepwe's reaction therefore, can be read as his defending the 72 Zambian local languages (Ohannessian and Kashoki, 1978). Differences in perceptions and opinions such as these place policy-makers and governments before various forms of dilemma (Watson, 1994).

Sometimes parents make their own policies for their children. For example, in Malawi like in many other African countries and in Asia parents are prepared to pay high school fees if the school teaches the children in English throughout. They argue that the use of English medium rather than the local language increases their children's chances to go to secondary school and that it subsequently leads to getting a job. This instrumental argument is similar to the one Malian parents put forward in a survey done by Mali's Ministry of Education in

1989. Bergmann (1996) reports that a majority of parents in Mali (91%) asked for French medium although the language is almost completely unknown in rural Mali. Their argument was that French was the language of the civil service. They wanted their children to be part of the system. They wanted to ensure that their children would not be cheated by some unscrupulous civil servants.

In India some parents send their children to English medium schools because they see these schools as offering a better education than state schools where the language of learning is one of the local languages. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) say that the reason for the decision is that state schools are badly neglected. Politicians “starve them of funds” (1996:165). State schools therefore do not offer the kind of education which parents expect their children to get.

All these examples and arguments illustrate the observation that language choice in education is a complex issue. It is therefore not surprising that the ideal situation that Trappes-Lomax alludes to is not attainable in many African countries. It is within this context that Bamgbose argues that:

whenever everything possible has been done, there will be small languages which cannot feature in formal education. There will also be others which can support use of initial literacy only in transition to the use of another language as a medium. This is the reality in many African countries and no appeal to language rights or rhetoric can change the situation (1993:28).

Nonetheless, the situation in Malawi regarding language policy seems to have eased over the past thirty years. English is secured through the constitution and Chichewa has generally been accepted as the lingua franca. Between 1998 and February 1999, the Centre for Language Studies (CLS) of the University of Malawi conducted four sociolinguistic surveys in predominantly Yao, Lomwe, Tumbuka and Sena areas. In all the four areas people recognised Chichewa as the language of wider communication in the country (Centre for Language Studies, 1999).

In March 1999, the Centre for Language Studies organised a national symposium on language policy. Although the conference proposed the introduction of other local languages in the school system, it recommended that Chichewa should be maintained and should be taught in all the schools (CLS, 1999). One of the delegates from Northern Malawi observed that in spite of the reservations one might have about the method that was used to elevate Chichewa thirty years ago, Chichewa had become a national language in which every Malawian is able to converse. It would be foolish therefore, to try to undo what Malawians have developed as a national language over the years. Similarly, when the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture issued a circular letter in 1996 stating that pupils in Standards 1-4 would be learning in their mother tongue, parents objected. They did not want their children to be taught in yet another local language. Chichewa was

said to be sufficient (Chisala, 1996; Namwela, 1996; and Chinsinga, 1996).

Trappes-Lomax emphasises that a language of learning should be chosen if it is generally acceptable to pupils, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. His argument is that general acceptance by all is likely to create high levels of motivation among pupils. Teachers too will be willing to teach by using the language as the medium of instruction. If this assertion is true, then Malawian children ought to have a strong desire to be taught both in Chichewa and in English at the various levels of the education system, because both English and Chichewa are acceptable to them.

4.2. Cognitive Psychology and Language of Learning

Cognitive psychology has had a strong influence on linguistics. Brown (1987) observes that due to the work of cognitive psychologists, linguists no longer look at language as an object or as knowledge that can be acquired through stimulus-response principles. They view language as a complex phenomenon that involves the engagement of cognitive skills in order for someone to acquire it. They therefore now look at language as “one aspect of the cognitive and affective ability to deal with the world and with the self” (Brown, 1987: 22).

The Russian psychologist, Vygotsky (1962), has made a significant contribution to the debate on language and cognition. Vygotsky argues that children's growth in thinking ability develops together with their linguistic competence and both are closely related to their social development. He sees language as a means of "regulating the self, the other and the object". Swartz (1994: 35) amplifies this by asserting that these functions represent the ability to think things out oneself, the ability to communicate effectively and the ability to categorise objects. Thus, without sufficient development of linguistic ability, learners have little chance of carrying out sophisticated academic tasks.

Linguists on their part have demonstrated how learning specific elements of language are dependent on the cognitive development of the individual. Slobin (1986) for example, has demonstrated that semantic learning depends on the conceptual growth of the individual. Bloom (1976) argues that "what children know will determine what they learn about the code for both speaking and understanding messages" (1976:37). Thus cognitive underpinnings are a factor in what the children learn. Bruner (1966) views cognitive development as a factor that influences intellectual development.

The literature above suggests that language and cognitive development are closely related and that they depend on each other. Therefore, it may

be argued that if a child's cognitive capacities are not sufficiently developed, his or her linguistic development may be delayed. On the other hand, a sufficiently developed repertoire of language in the child may enhance his or her intellectual development. It is through the deliberate engagement of an individual's intellectual abilities and skills that he or she is able to make the abstractions, generalisations and critical judgements so necessary for academic work.

Language is indeed crucial to academic performance. It is no surprise therefore that research on the second language as vehicular language in education tends to associate learners' failure to attain the expected learning outcomes with the language of learning. There are studies that seem to indicate that children's cognitive development and proficiency in the first language must continue to develop up to the age of twelve (McLaughlin, 1984; De Villiers and De Villiers, 1978). These studies suggest that lack of continuing cognitive development in L1 during second language acquisition may lead to lower proficiency levels in the second language and less cognitive growth. This kind of situation is what Cummins (1976) describes in terms of the lower threshold level with which negative cognitive effects are associated. When children are exposed to a new language that is totally different from their first language, they may be disoriented. There is a need for a gradual introduction to the new language in its various uses. Collier (1989:510)

argues that for the purposes of schooling, language acquisition must also “include the vocabulary and special uses of language for each subject area”. It seems that one of the problems of using an L2 as the language of learning is that some of the learners may not have the vocabulary with which to handle their academic work in the second language.

Research in second language acquisition and in language of instruction is substantial. However, in spite of this, it is unfortunate that such research has produced a range of somewhat contradictory results as is evidenced by the literature review in the next section.

4.3. Literature Review on Medium of Instruction

Research on the effect of the second language as a medium of instruction on the academic performance of students has sometimes produced contradictory results. In North America two different types of programmes have been employed to offer instruction in and through the second language. These are the ‘immersion’ and ‘submersion’ programmes. In the immersion programmes children who speak only one language are taught in what is their second language. For example, in Canada, English-speaking children are taught in French or vice versa. If the children are taught in their second language throughout the day, the programme is called ‘total immersion’. On the other hand, if children are given instruction through the second language for only part of the

day, the programme is known as 'partial immersion' (Richards, 1985). Some total immersion programmes are introduced early in school while the introduction of other programmes may be delayed. The former programme is known as 'early total immersion' and the later is called 'late total immersion'.

In submersion programmes, children from different linguistic backgrounds are taught in a language that is not the first language for all of them, but only for some within the classroom. For example, in the United States immigrant children are taught in English together with children whose first language is English. These two types of programmes have largely been the basis for evaluating the effect of the language of learning on the academic performance of learners.

In Canada, the French immersion programmes are acclaimed as programmes that "provide for effective mastery of a second language with no loss to the first language or academic achievement" (Carey, 1994: 136). Several studies show that students whose first language is English but who received instruction in French (the minority language), reached national performance norms by Grade 5 in both languages and in all their subjects (Swain and Lapkin, 1982). Genesee (1987) reports that generally students in early total immersion programmes score higher than the students in all the other types of immersion programmes on measures of academic attainment throughout their schooling. Cummins

and Swain (1986), and Larter and Cheng (1984) report other studies with similar findings although they also include other variables.

One important observation about the findings is that each one of them is qualified by conditions such as the age of the students, the length of the period of instruction and the students' literacy in the first language. In her synthesis of the research Collier concludes:

Consistent, uninterrupted cognitive academic development in all the subjects throughout students' schooling is more important than the number of hours in L2 instruction for successful academic achievement in a second language (1989:527).

Although Collier has reached this conclusion, she acknowledges that the instruments that were used in the research that she has synthesised are not the best measures of second language proficiency. Most of the instruments were standardised tests.

One of the critics of using test scores as measures of students' academic performance is Carole Edelsky. Edelsky argues that reading tests for example, do not test reading, but "test similarity to the test writer" (1991:143). In other words, the test takers must conform to what the test writer wants. It may therefore be possible for the students to fail even if the answer is correct from other perspectives than those of the test writer. Edelsky further argues that test scores that are used for judging students' proficiency are not about the total act of reading, but about reading exercises that are far removed from purposeful and

meaningful reading. To back up her argument, she cites a study done by Altwerger and Resta (1986). They report that a study of 1000 students did not show any relationship between reading and their test scores on the California Test of Basic Skills. There were some students who obtained high scores on the test, but read poorly. Other students got low scores, but read well and there were some students who got high scores and indeed read well.

In addition to their unreliability as a measure, test scores do not mean the same thing from one period to another. Edelsky cites Harste (n.d.) who observed that students who took the 1940 edition of a test in 1970 did much better on the test as a group than the people who took it in 1940. She therefore argues:

scores improve not because of any increase in reading ability, but because teachers teach to the tests and the curricular materials are geared to the tests. That is teachers, children and the public in general become more familiar with the format and context of the test as teachers teach children quite specifically how to take them and publishers quite deliberately produce textbooks and workbooks designed to match standardized tests (1991:145).

For these reasons, tests as they are used today do not adequately assess students' academic performance or their language proficiency. She argues that the reason why mainstream students score higher than students from the minority language groups is that the mainstream students are primed for participating in classroom discourse. Edelsky offers alternative assessment procedures to establish what she calls a

multi-tiered approach. She says that both product and process data should be collected. The process data should include oral reading strategies, notes based on writing conferences and portfolios, and information based on observation and reflective interviews.

Carey (1994) argues that, although the French immersion programmes together with the various models they adopt have been praised, the complexity of the interdependent factors leading to language acquisition has not been adequately considered. Carey argues that there are other conditions that influence the high scores obtained in the French immersion programmes such as the environment, home support and the attitude of parents. For instance, many French parents see the immersion programme as an enrichment programme. Carey also questions the research designs. He argues that the performance of the immersion students was compared with that of students in mainstream English, which was not an enriched programme. Consequently, the mainstream group of students does not serve as a reliable control for either a pre-test or a post-test match (Carey, 1994, 1991).

In an analysis of another study, which used the technique of comparison within the group, Carey found that immersion students demonstrated large differences in reading comprehension between their first and second languages. Moreover he found that, when using de-contextualised academic texts, the students translated the French

material word for word. That approach limited their ability to process the material at a deeper semantic level. Thus, although the Canadian programmes in second language medium are often quoted as examples of success stories, the research review here suggests that the findings are inconclusive. More studies need to be undertaken in order to come up with a decisive conclusion.

In the United States, the results are also varied. Collier (1987) and Collier and Thomas (1988) conducted two studies in which 2014 immigrants were taught in English only. Results of the studies show that the students' scores were below normal when their scores were compared on the so-called normal curve equivalence. Some of them scored as low as 27% in Science and 28% in Social Studies. Of course, there were differences within the group and these differences were attributed to the students' age on arrival and their length of residence in the United States. Other studies cited by Collier deal with specific aspects of L2 acquisition (Krashen, Scarcella and Long, 1982). In these studies, rates of proficiency in English through the medium of English were reported low. Alderson, Bastien and Madrazo (1977) for example, report that their subjects scored lower than their counter-parts in reading comprehension.

Similarly, in Europe literacy instruction in L2 has resulted in poor academic performance. Using Irish-English and French-English

bilinguals, McNamara (1970) found that his subjects obtained lower scores in L2 comprehension than they did in their L1 comprehension. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) found that her Turkish subjects in Bavaria, (Germany) scored lower than they were expected to, although the subjects were taught in their own language. Another interesting study is that by Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986). They examined variability in the school performance of different minority groups. They found that Koreans performed poorly in Japan, but obtained high scores in the United States. According to them a group may perform well in one country and perform poorly in another. In the light of their findings it should be re-examined whether L2 as medium of instruction is little more than a hindrance to higher performance.

One thing needs to be pointed out in relation to the school children in Malawi. The three factors highlighted in the literature review as favouring the acquisition of L2 among learners in the United States and Europe, namely: age, length of period of instruction and literacy in L1 seem to favour school children in Malawi. This is particularly so for Standard 7 pupils who are the subjects of the present research. In the first place, most of the pupils are between twelve and fifteen years of age when they are in Standard 7. That means they are mature enough to learn and retain English according to what the studies say. The researchers in these studies argue that older children learn faster and generally out-perform young ones. Secondly, the Standard 7 pupils have

been instructed in English for seven years, with English claiming the largest proportion of their class time.

If it generally takes five to seven years for learners to gain L2 proficiency that enables them to benefit academically from L2 medium, then Malawian children at this level may be assumed to have reached a high enough level of proficiency so as to be able to follow instruction through the medium of English. Finally, most Malawian children begin reading in their first language. Those who do not, for various reasons, begin in a language that is familiar to them and is closer to their mother tongue than English. They continue learning the vernacular side by side with English throughout their primary and secondary school education. In principle, therefore, the inter-dependence principle of Cummins (1979) should be at work among the pupils. With all these conditions in favour of the Malawian children, it is argued therefore that the subjects in the study ought to be confident in using English, not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool for learning.

Studies in the field of language of learning have been done in West Africa, in East Africa and in Southern Africa. Although similar studies may have been done in North Africa, there is not much information about them available in Southern Africa.

Perhaps the most widely publicised research on the language of learning in Africa is the six-year primary project in Nigeria. The project set out to

demonstrate that primary education provided through the pupils' mother tongue is more effective and more meaningful to the pupils than when pupils are taught in a second or foreign language (Afolayan, 1976). The project team selected Yoruba as the mother tongue in the experimental schools. The control group used the medium of English as required by the state.

With the financial support of the Ford Foundation, the project team at the University of Ife changed or revised the primary school curriculum for the experimental schools as well as the control schools. The team also wrote new instructional materials, trained specially selected teachers in new teaching approaches and recruited a specialist English language teacher to teach at the experimental schools. The school timetable was reorganised and headmasters were asked to adopt the new timetable, which was flexible and therefore allowed the pupils more learning time in each subject area. Pupils were taught Social and Cultural Studies, Science and Mathematics in Yoruba. They were also taught English. Control schools continued to teach the same subjects in English during the last three years of their schooling.

Akinnanso, (1993:266) cites Fafunwa, Macauley and Sokoya as having provided the most comprehensive report of the Ife project. According to Akinnanso, they assert that the evaluation procedures appeared to be well designed and were constantly adjusted when the need arose. They

then observe that in general the experimental group excelled the control group in cognitive and academic performance as well as in affective outcomes. Fafunwa (1975) also reports that pupils in the experimental classes were more fluent in both Yoruba and English than those in the control group. About the performance of the subjects in science, Ehindero (1980) says that the pupils in the experimental group performed at a high standard. However he raises an interesting point regarding the pupils' English language skills in the experimental group.

He asserts:

For, although no efforts were made to assess Ss' comprehension of the English language, the fact that Ss in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group on test items constructed and answered in English is an indirect evidence that Ss in the experimental group had a better grasp of the language (p.287)

However, this assertion could be challenged. Answering science test items correctly cannot be considered as a good indication of one's proficiency in English. Knowing 'science test' English cannot be the proof of how well one can express oneself when one is confronted with instances that require genuine communication outside the confines of the examination room. The students might have been "primed for the tests" (Edelsky 1991:70).

In general however, the Ife project demonstrated that instruction through the mother tongue could be more effective than instruction in the second language. According to the research instruction through the mother

tongue enhances the acquisition of the second language (English) and improves pupils' oral skills. This having been said though, it seems that evaluations of the project overlooked the effect of the inputs into the learning process itself as described by Afolayan (1976:123). He says that the curriculum was rewritten and new instructional materials that incorporated innovative approaches to teaching were printed. Teachers were specially trained and they continued to be trained during term time as well as during holidays. The project also recruited a specialist teacher to teach English. Even some aspects of administration in the schools were reorganised. These factors should have been treated as variables as well.

In Malawi, Williams (1993) addressed the issue of medium of instruction from the perspective of reading comprehension. He devised modified cloze tests in Chichewa and English for Standards 3, 4 and 6 pupils. The tests were based on both Chichewa and English material at the relevant grade levels. His sample was 480 subjects from five primary schools in the country. The subjects were given the Chichewa test first and then the English test. The results of the tests showed that the pupils scored higher in Chichewa than in English. Williams concluded that the current English medium policy as it was being implemented in Malawi was unlikely to benefit primary school children in the country.

It is interesting, however, to compare the Ife and the Malawi studies because of their difference in approach. The most obvious difference is that the Ife study followed and taught the pupils for the whole primary cycle while the Malawi study was a 'one-off'. The interesting part of the Malawi study though, is the fact that Williams did not inject any form of external input. Teachers were not told to teach in preparation for the test. The test materials were familiar to his subjects. In administering the test, his research assistants worked together with the class teachers. Furthermore, tests took place in normal term time, so that both the teachers and the pupils saw the tests as mid-term tests. Although pupils may not have had cloze tests before, they were somewhat familiar with them owing to the numerous gap-filling exercises present in their textbooks. Before pupils approached each test, his research assistants gave example questions to the pupils. After the pupils answered the example questions, the assistants discussed the answers with the pupils. It is apparent therefore, that whatever knowledge his subjects displayed in the study is what they would probably have acquired in their 'normal' context. The other factors levelled against the Ife study could not be attributed to the William's study.

The problems of English as the medium of instruction for second language speakers have also been reported in South Africa. At the primary school level, perhaps the most comprehensive study available is the Threshold Project. The project had its genesis in an earlier pilot

study among Sepedi-speaking children in 1985 (Macdonald, 1990:14-15). In the pilot project, it was reported that the standard of English of Standard 3 children was poor and that the pupils themselves could not adequately handle content subjects through the medium of English. The Threshold Project ran from 1986 to 1989. Five different reports, based on five different areas of the project team's concern, were produced. Of relevance to this study are the two reports on English language skills (Macdonald, 1990) and on the disparity between the English taught to the pupils as a subject and the English in the content books such as in Science, Geography and History (Van Rooyen, 1990).

In the English language skills evaluation Macdonald focused on the conventional language skills of oral and listening comprehension, reading and writing. She used a variety of tests, including composition and cloze tests. The subjects were drawn from black children in state schools. Results of the tests were compared with those obtained by children from non-racial schools. Children from the state schools consistently scored between 30% and 40% while their counterparts always displayed a mastery level of 85-95%. Macdonald observes that the children's writing skills were marked by "a high level of grammatical error and the absence of cohesive ties and any notion of coherence" (p. 40).

Their oral and listening skills are also reported to have been inadequately developed. In reading comprehension, the subjects appeared to have

difficulties with wh- questions. Their comprehension was so weak that they were not even able to answer low level inference questions, including those pertaining to agency, reason and cause and effect. Macdonald then concludes:

The pronounced weakness that we discovered with the children's English skills lead us to believe that the current generation of junior primary school children are not competent in terms of the demands of the medium transfer in Standard 3, at least in its present form (Macdonald, 1990:41).

Again as in the Ife project, other factors here should not be ignored. The research has to be put into the context of the educational environment of both the non-racial schools and the schools that the black children attended. Macdonald points out elsewhere in the report that teachers in the black schools were bent on grammar-translation rather than on facilitating communicative skills development. Teachers saw grammatical errors as an evil that had to be stamped out. It needs hardly to be stated that an emphasis on error correction can retard the development of children's communicative skills (Brumfit, 1984 and Widdowson, 1978). This argument was also raised and stressed by Krashen's argument elsewhere in Chapter 3.

Van Rooyen (1990) analysed the English as a second Language (ESL) scheme and two Standard 3 General Science textbooks that were used in state primary schools (meant for black students). In her analysis, Van Rooyen used a model that she described as eclectic. The two schemes

and the General Science textbooks were analysed at speech act, syntax, vocabulary and cross-sentential levels. The cross-sentential analysis looked at cohesive devices and coherence. The English schemes and the General Science textbooks were then compared at all the levels.

Van Rooyen reports that no disparity existed at the level of speech acts. However there was a high degree of disparity at both syntactic and vocabulary levels. In case of the syntactic disparities, the range was between 68% to 27%, thereby making the content in the Science textbooks incomprehensible to the majority of the pupils. Similarly between 55% and 38% of the vocabulary in the two Science books had not been taught by Standard 2. At the cross-sentential level, disparities existed in coherence conventions used as well as in cohesive devices. Lack of knowledge about cohesive devices might create problems for the pupils in following cause and effect or reaching logical conclusions when they are reading expository texts. Van Rooyen argues that ignorance of conventions which structure expository texts may lead to absence of comprehension of the overall meaning of the text. She then concludes that "at its worst the disparity picture becomes one of accumulated stumbling blocks to comprehension of a text when incomprehension of coherence conventions have also been added" (1990:99).

Thus, Van Rooyen's study has shown that the Standard 3 children in black schools had not sufficiently developed competence in English to

allow them to read content subject textbooks with full comprehension. In other words, the English scheme may only have developed the pupils' basic interpersonal skills (BICS) at the expense of their cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP). To the knowledge of this researcher, this type of study has never been done in Malawi, although Mchazime (1989) evaluated the then primary English textbooks from the point of view of text variety and levels of questions measured against Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). Mchazime believed that a variety of texts would allow children to learn the appropriate register of the subject areas from which the texts were taken. By looking at levels of comprehension questions, he attempted to find out how the textbooks challenged pupils' thinking ability, thereby developing their thinking capacity.

Other studies showing the negative effects of English as medium of instruction have also been reported within South Africa. In Bophutatswana, Amuzu (1992) reports that many high school students leave high school unprepared for further education because their competence in English is low and their general reading ability is rudimentary. In the investigation Amuzu found that primary school teachers in rural areas taught in Setswana although English was officially the medium of instruction. Teachers often read from textbooks or gave a topic in English and then repeated it in Setswana. They used this approach in Biology, Social Science and Mathematics lessons. Their

argument was that their children could not understand without the explanation in the mother tongue. Even in English lessons, reading to pupils was interspersed with brief explanations in the mother tongue.

However, in the same study Amuzu reports that a second group of students (in the urban schools) were highly proficient in English and they were able to follow instruction through the medium of English. Even at primary school, urban students' reading ability was high and many of the students were able to study independently. According to Amuzu the teaching of English itself was "as effective as one can find in any good school elsewhere where English is taught and learnt as a second language" (p. 133). These two groups of schools were within the then Bophutatswana. The difference in the students' performance was not so much dictated by language per se but rather by the environment in which they found themselves.

Blacquiere (1989) assessed black students' reading ability at the University of Natal. Blacquiere reports that most of the students were generally slow in decoding, had difficulties with interpreting extended text and were generally unable to integrate the content of the texts. They were, therefore, ill prepared for university studies. In another study at the University of the North, Swartz (1994:40) reports that 240 first year Geography students were tested for their proficiency in English. Of these, close to 90% scored 29% and below. The average score for the

group was 18.9%. These studies suggest that the problem of medium of instruction in South Africa is felt at both primary and tertiary levels. Most of the studies reviewed here seem to indicate that the problem is prevalent in what has come to be known as disadvantaged communities.

Nonetheless, Amuzu's second group presents an interesting case. Although his subjects in this group are said to be a mixed group of international children, there were also Tswana children whose first language was Setswana. There were children from other surrounding African countries whose first language was not English either. Yet, in the second group all the African children were said to have high levels of proficiency in English. Consequently, they were able to follow instruction through the medium of English and their performance was better than that of those in the first group.

Another interesting study was done by Rutherford and Nkopodi (1990). The two made a comparison between definitions of Science concepts in English and North Sotho among their subjects. Dzama and Osborne (1999: 388) quote them as saying that English enhanced rather than hindered concept development among the Northern Sotho students. Rutherford and Nkopodi seem to be supported by Case (1972), though indirectly. Case was teaching Chemistry to secondary school students in Malawi. In her study, she claimed that her subjects came to school without precise knowledge of certain scientific terminology. She then

argues that the imprecision hindered her subjects' understanding of scientific concepts. However, after additional English lessons the students' performance in Science improved.

Since English provides precise definitions of scientific concepts, the implication is that having extra tuition in English facilitated her students' understanding of scientific concepts as they continued with their chemistry lessons. Kaphesi (1999) presents a similar case in his study of mathematical terminology in Chichewa and Chiyao among his Chewa and Yao subjects. One can argue against the case of precision of terminology on linguistic grounds. However, this is not the concern of this study.

Three other studies done in Malawi need to be examined here as well. Kachaso (1988) did a study on the use of Chichewa as medium of instruction in Mathematics. His subjects were Standard 7 pupils. The subjects took twenty-five Mathematics lessons in Chichewa. In a post-test the pupils performed better in word problems in Chichewa than the English group. However, a follow-up study by Reinhard (1996) shows that the mean of the students taught in Chichewa was lower than of those who were instructed in English. In other words, the English medium group was superior to the Chichewa group in their performance. Reinhard used year three secondary school students. 70% of the subjects were native speakers of Chichewa and the class teacher was an

L1 speaker of Chichewa. Reinhard argues that since the performance range of the experimental group had changed in favour of the experimental group, most of the students benefited from learning science through the mother tongue. Reinhard defends the poor performance of the experimental group by arguing that the period of instruction was too short for the group to produce any significant results. Whatever the reasons may be given the main issue here is that the two experiments produced different results.

Finally, Dzama and Osborne (1999) did an empirical study among year four Physical Science students in Malawi. Their aim was to investigate the cause of poor performance in Science among African students. All the students were instructed in English, which was the students' second language. Although their study was mainly concerned with the view that African students perform poorly because of traditional beliefs that hinder their reasoning, their conclusion is pertinent to this study. Dzama and Osborne conclude that poor performance in developing countries is due to "the absence of a supportive environment for serious Science learning" (1999:401). They argue that the context in which Science is taught does not motivate the learners. Dzama and Osborne do not make any reference to the medium of instruction although their literature review has a reasonable number of references to the medium of instruction (Thijs and Van der Berg, 1995; Rollnick and Rutherford, 1993; Lemke, 1990).

In an ethnographic study of Standard 6 pupils in Botswana, Arthur (1994) links weak second language teaching methods and the inadequacy of teachers with the problems caused by the use of the English medium. In his report, he observes that teachers were more concerned with the regulatory use of English. They paid more attention to grammatical accuracy than to communicating or expressing knowledge of content to their pupils. Consequently, pupils were not exposed to communicative uses of the English language. In writing, pupils displayed a lack of ability to use English creatively.

Arthur argues that up to Standard 4 when the medium of instruction is Setswana, pupils are given a commendable grounding. The poor educational experiences that pupils have after Standard 5 when the switch to English medium takes place must, therefore, be due to the English medium (1994:75).

In the study, Arthur seems to suggest that the problem of medium of instruction begins with the preparation of teachers. If teachers are inadequately prepared, their lesson delivery through the foreign language medium suffers. Consequently some of them “take refuge in African languages, others venture upon a special English ‘interlanguage’ to bridge the gap between the subjects’ language requirements and students’ language competence” (Schmied, 1991:108) and of course the teachers’ own linguistic competence is inadequate. In Burundi,

Ndayipfukamike (1994) found that during the transition year to French (Grade 5) teachers used code switching as a coping strategy particularly in Mathematics, Natural Science and History. She argues that as a communicative phenomenon, code switching “plays a crucial role in reconciling two contradictory demands in classroom interaction: using Kirundi in domains where French is expected, to ensure understanding; abiding with the official policy that requires the teaching of French” (1994:91).

Tanzanian studies undertaken by Criper and Dodd (1984) indicate that the majority of Grade 7 pupils were still at picture book-reading level and that by the time students got to Form IV only 10% of them were capable of using English as medium of instruction. In other words, English was a barrier to the acquisition of knowledge and skills at that level. However, English is regarded as a foreign language (EFL) in Tanzania. It is used as a medium of instruction in secondary school only, while Swahili is the medium in the primary school (Rubagumya, 1991). The transition from Swahili to English medium could be quite difficult, especially in a situation where teachers themselves punctuate Science lessons taught in English with Swahili. In any case, the Tanzanian situation could be used as an example of a situation in Africa where a delayed transition from L1 to a foreign language as a medium of instruction has had a negative effect. The situation is different in Kenya.

English is generally used as the medium of instruction from primary school up to university level.

A study done by Seddon and Waweru (1987) yielded significant results. Seddon and Waweru wanted to find out whether scientific concepts learned in English, Kikuyu or Swahili could be transferred to the other two languages among multilingual secondary school students in Kenya. They set up three experimental groups and a control group. In each group, students were taught in only one of the three languages.

After getting their lessons, the subjects were given the same test in a language that was not their medium of instruction. In other words, they changed from the language of instruction to Swahili, Kikuyu or English. The results did not only show that transferability was achieved but also more importantly, that the performance of the three groups could not be differentiated. Seddon and Waweru then say:

In conclusion, the experiment has demonstrated that transfer can be effected from English to both Swahili and Kikuyu, and between both Swahili and Kikuyu. Moreover, for all the three languages of teaching, the resulting performance in both vernacular languages was indistinguishable from that of English (1987:248).

Thus, in the study the language of instruction did not have any adverse effect on the students' academic performance in Science.

Zambia presents an interesting case. Taking a position diametrically opposite to that of the Ife project in Nigeria, Zambia opted for the English

medium policy from the first day that children entered the gates of a school. Until 1996 Zambia followed this policy in her education system. Several studies on the effect of the policy on students' learning have been conducted (Chishimba, 1985; Chikalanga, 1990; Williams, 1993 and Kashina, 1994). Of particular importance to this study are the two studies done by McAdam and Sharma respectively. After the introduction of English medium, McAdam (1978) did a study on pupils' performance using the new curriculum. He designed a number of tests and administered them to a sample of the pupils who were following the new curriculum through English and a control group which had been taught in a local language just before the English medium policy was fully implemented. McAdam reports that the experimental group was superior to the control group, particularly in Social Studies and in English itself. He concludes that English as a medium of instruction was working in Zambia.

However, Serpell, (1989: 100) reports another study done by Sharma. Sharma's study indicates that by the time pupils were in Grade 3, they were not able to read even basic words which the curriculum had expected them to master. Consequently, Sharma concludes that the English medium policy in Zambia was not facilitating reading among the school children. It was creating a pool of semi-literates and therefore it prevented the children from mastering what was required by the curriculum.

Both Sharma and McAdam have been criticised from different points of view. Sharma, for example, has been criticised for setting his expectations too high. In research terms, this suggests that the instruments he used were designed to test knowledge and skills that were not commensurate with the learning that his subjects may have accomplished by the time he administered his data collection instruments. On the other hand, McAdam has been criticised on the basis of his method of selecting his sample. His critics have argued that McAdam chose schools that were in urban settings and that the so-called rural schools in his sample were mainly those along the railway lines in Zambia. These were, therefore, not truly rural schools. Objections like these are not uncommon when research findings seem to produce divergent conclusions. In spite of the various challenges directed at the two findings, the argument remains that the two studies came to two different conclusions, although the curriculum and the medium of instruction were the same. That is the interesting aspect of the two studies.

In Kenya, another study on Science teaching in primary school shows that mother tongue medium is not a guarantee for getting high scores in school. A study on language policy and Science teaching done by Cleghorn, Merritt and Abangi (1989) in Kenya showed that in some English medium primary schools pupils performed better in Science tests than those in schools in which the medium of instruction was the

mother tongue. Although the analysis of rural and urban lesson transcripts by Cleghorn and his colleagues suggests that the rural lesson was better because of the use of the vernacular, their performance results seemed to favour urban schools where the medium was English.

The Kenyan study is supported by the findings of a Ugandan study. Akinnaso (1993: 276) cites an Iganga project where pupils who received their lessons through the medium of English achieved superior results to those who were taught in the mother tongue. Akinnaso (1991) argues that even in Nigeria there are studies that show that there are schools in that country whose children consistently out-perform the mother-tongue medium children.

Finally, one study in North Africa presents another piece of supporting evidence for L2 medium. Wagner et al (1989) studied Berber first language speaking children and Arab first language speaking children in Morocco. They followed them from Grade 1 to Grade 5. Both the Berber children and the Arab children were taught in Arabic. Although at the initial stage the Berber children lagged behind the Arabic-speaking children, the Berber children later performed equally well when compared to the L1 Arab first language children. Their literacy skills were equal. Wagner and his colleagues argue that literacy does not necessarily need to be achieved in the first language. It can also be achieved through L2. The Moroccan case seems to be an isolated case,

particularly because it involves using an L2 to teach children initial reading. However, the study serves as a warning against making generalisations about the success of the mother tongue as medium of instruction without putting the results of any study in their proper context or stating the prevailing conditions at the time of the study.

4.4. Overview

The literature review on medium of instruction in this chapter has tried to present a balanced view of the nature of the problem. Research findings from various parts of the world, particularly Canada, the United States, Europe and Africa, have been presented and examined. The main concern of most of the studies has been to find causes of pupil failure, especially reasons why foreign students do not perform as well as native students in countries of migration. In the literature, the major apparent cause seems to be the language of instruction. Since most African countries use a former colonial master's language as medium of instruction, the search has been extended to these countries in order to find causes of student under-performance in these countries and indeed in other developing countries.

Unfortunately, results from various studies on the medium of instruction appear to be inconclusive. Both evidence and counter evidence abound in this area. For example, in Canada teaching through an L2 seems to produce high achievers. On the other hand, the United States and

Europe have not been so successful with L2 as medium of instruction. There have even been cases where teaching minority groups in their first language has produced negative results in Europe. The complexity of this situation has been compounded by the results of the variability study by Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi cited earlier in the review concerning Korean students who perform poorly in Japan and successfully in the United States.

It has been argued in this chapter that some research studies done in Africa and elsewhere seem to have produced contradictory results. A case in point are the results of the two research studies in Zambia where one researcher reported that the English medium policy was working whereas another researcher stated that the same policy produced hurdles to literacy. In East Africa, while Tanzania reports problems in using English as the medium of instruction, studies in Kenya and Uganda present a counter view. This pattern seems to be similar in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. In Malawi, the results of the study done by Reinhard contradicted results of an earlier study done by Kachaso and in South Africa the Bophutatswana study conducted by Amuzu provides counter evidence for the superiority of L1 medium. Finally the Moroccan case in North Africa perhaps presents even much stronger counter-evidence.

While it is generally accepted that there have been many studies that seem to indicate that teaching through an L1 results in high academic performance, the studies that show the opposite cannot be ignored. They too have something to contribute to the on-going search for conclusive evidence.

What one concludes from the literature review is that both sets of findings are inconclusive. The search should therefore continue. It was in light of this understanding that this researcher decided to investigate the effect of English (L2) on academic performance of learners in Malawi within a specific context and learning environment.

Chapter 5

Research Method and Process

The researcher is aware that the use of the first person in qualitative research is acceptable. He, therefore, proposes to use the first person in this chapter because most of what is discussed is a description of what he did.

The rationale for the methodology adopted in this research study rests on some basic assumptions that underpin social research, and therefore its subcategory, educational research. These assumptions provide the theoretical framework for the choice of the procedures and techniques used in the study. However, before the discussion of the assumptions and the theoretical framework, the choice of the research topic needs to be accounted for.

5.1. The Choice of the Research Topic

Marshall quotes Lewin as saying, “most research projects begin with a set of ideas germinating over a period of time and always have a personal biography attached to them” (Marshall, 1992:56). This observation is in some way true of the genesis of this research project. During the period 1990-1994, Malawi was going through a political metamorphosis. Malawians wanted change to multiparty politics from the totalitarian form of government that had dominated the lives of people since 1964.

During this period Malawians began to question a number of things, including the education system. A certain Malawian citizen living abroad questioned the use of English in the education system of Malawi, particularly in primary school in an article published in the *Moni Magazine* (Kulemeka, 1994). When I read the article, I dismissed it as the ramblings of a person detached from the realities on the ground. A year later I was attached to a project on basic education. While I was running the project, I met an expatriate from Germany who raised the same question about the language of instruction. This time I began to think that perhaps there was a problem of some sort with the use of English as the language of learning. An interest in trying to investigate the problem began to grow.

However, the final intellectual trigger did not come until 1996 when a heated public debate on the use of mother tongue as the language of learning broke out. In March that year, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture issued a circular letter (IN/2/14 (Ministry of Education, 1996) stating that with immediate effect pupils in Standards 1, 2, 3 and 4 should be taught in their mother tongue or a vernacular spoken in their environment. The justification of the decree was that research had shown that children learn better in their mother tongue than in other languages. Parents vehemently rejected the policy, saying that it was retrogressive and smacked of tribalistic and regionalistic

tendencies. For some people it was reminiscent of the decree in 1989 when all the teachers in the country were forced to go and teach in their home districts. Many said that two years after the return to democratic rule the move could not be tolerated in the new dispensation (Namwela, 1996). Politicians joined in the debate, particularly those from opposition parties. They challenged the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture and accused the Ministry of making a serious decision based on shaky ground. Estone Kakhome, President of the Social Democratic Party, was perhaps the most forthright critic of the policy:

Where did the research come from? Is it relevant to our customs? It is not just a matter of taking a document from somewhere like the United Kingdom and imposing it on Malawi? After all it does not require research to know that a child taught in English will learn better than a child taught in vernacular (quoted by Matemba, *The Nation* 24 May, 1996)

Kakhome then challenged the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture to come up with its own and thorough research.

Hetherwick Ntaba of the Malawi Congress Party described the policy as very misguided and irresponsible. He argued that the Ministry should have told the public “when and where the research took place.” (Matemba, 1996). Ntaba’s argument seems to suggest that research might be relevant at a certain point in time and within a certain context. In his view, certain conditions might change over time. These conditions

would probably affect the results and render what may have been creditable findings no longer so with the passage of time

Both Ntaba and Kakhome were asking for research that should be sensitive to the local conditions - research that would take into account the Malawian context in which educational problems could be meaningfully understood. That kind of research would offer Malawian policy-makers a sound basis for making informed decisions concerning the education of the Malawian child.

This line of argument is quite understandable. Nonetheless, it is Kakhome's seemingly contradictory argument that inspired me to undertake this research. Kakhome's unsubstantiated argument that no research was required to know that a child learns better when he or she is taught in English than when he or she is taught in the vernacular seems to be a contradiction of his call for thorough research into the problem. I then speculated that behind the seeming contradiction there was an underlying assumption. He seemed to assume that some kind of knowledge about the superiority of the English medium over the vernacular in school achievement existed. What one was inclined to ask was what kind of knowledge this was.

Seliger and Shohamy (1989) present four types of knowledge in the context of second language research. They are knowledge as belief,

knowledge as authority, a priori knowledge and empirical knowledge. According to them the basis of knowledge as belief is the notion of common sense, while knowledge as authority is based on the assumption that knowledge is derived from reputable sources such as established researchers, renowned linguists or even important figures in public life. Since such figures command respect in society, some people may accept their opinions as truth without careful examination of the opinions. In this way, knowledge as belief and knowledge as authority are similar in that they are not derived from empirical evidence.

A priori knowledge is usually derived from a set of axioms about some phenomenon and then using reason and logic within the framework of the axioms. Since axioms are accepted as evident without proof, logical conclusions derived from reasoning within the framework of the axioms is accepted as knowledge. A priori knowledge is unlike empirical knowledge in being obtained through a systematic and rigorous process that involves observation and experimentation. To stand up to the rigours of critical examination, such knowledge “appeals to evidence that is available to others and outside the researcher himself” (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:16). In so doing, it seeks the approval of the public that this is indeed authentic and objective knowledge.

So, what kind of knowledge did Kakhome mean? My speculation was that Kakhome was basing his argument on a commonly held, but never validated view about what takes place in primary school classrooms in Malawi when English is used as the language of learning. I was therefore inspired to try to find out whether the commonly held view, that English promoted learning, was valid. We now turn to the theoretical underpinnings that led to the final research design.

5.2. Theoretical Underpinnings

Over the years two distinct research traditions have emerged in social research, namely the positivistic scientific and the interpretative, ethnographic traditions, the latter having been relatively recently introduced in educational research. The two research models are based on different assumptions about the nature of the social world and the basis of human knowledge. The assumptions lead to two different approaches to methodologies. The positivistic model relies on quantitative while the interpretative models use qualitative methods. A brief examination of the two will provide an insight into the conceptual framework for the research design adopted in the study.

Since the positivistic model for social science research developed out of the scientific model which is applied in the natural or physical sciences, Kerlinger's definition of research as "systematic, controlled, empirical

and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena” (1969:13) applies.

According to Gay (1987), the scientific method involves “induction of hypotheses based on observation, deduction of implications of the hypotheses, testing the implications, and confirmation or disconfirmation of the hypotheses” (p. 4). The conclusion is a statement that either confirms or disproves the hypotheses. The hallmark of quantitative research is the adoption of the principles of objectivity, causality, quantification, falsification and what Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) call the nomothetic principle - generalisability of the outcomes.

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), interpretative research emphasises the principles of intentionality to capture the active side of human behaviour and acknowledges the use of language to draw out meaning from the research. Thus, interpretative ethnographic research acknowledges ‘subjectivity’ and the value of individual cases instead of ‘objectivity’ and generalisability. In trying to explain what is meant by subjectivity in qualitative research Maykut and Morehouse say that:

To be subjective is to be aware of the agency, that is, of action. From phenomenological point of view, subjective is synonymous with agency or with the actor’s perspective. To be subjective, therefore, is to ‘tend to’ the subject. The speech patterns and behavior of actors or agents and specific context in which these behaviors occur are what the qualitative researcher is trying to understand (1994: 20).

Thus, the subjectivity in qualitative research is differently understood from the way in which it is understood in quantitative research.

Through examination of some of the literature pertaining to the two traditions, I became aware of other forms of research that could be undertaken. In these other forms, parts of each of the two could be combined. Pollard (1984) for example incorporated qualitative and quantitative sources of data into one study and showed how effective and useful a combined study of this nature could be. Thus, knowledge and insights gained through studying some principles of both quantitative and qualitative research provided the conceptual framework for the research design.

5.3. Research Designs in Language Learning and Use

Research on language learning and language use has widely used formal and quasi-experiments to collect evidence in the classroom. However, it seems that there have been fewer cases where data has been collected in genuine classrooms. When I use the term 'genuine' classrooms I refer to the definition by Nunan (1992:92) who says genuine classrooms are constituted for the purpose of instruction as opposed to those that are constituted for the purpose of research and in which certain variables or phenomena are manipulated. These other forms of research he calls classroom-oriented. In a survey of fifty research reports in this area,

Nunan (1988) found that only fifteen research projects were done in genuine language classrooms. Of these, only two used the experimental design. In the survey, 60% of the studies were done in laboratories and in other simulated settings.

The main reason for this state of affairs seems to be that it is extremely difficult to control variables in real-life classroom settings. A classroom is a complicated setting. It is always dynamic so that a host of things takes place simultaneously all the time. Those who are familiar with teaching are aware that in every lesson teachers have to make many decisions and that such decisions are dictated by a host of variables. For example, a teacher may change the direction of a lesson because of the type of responses his or her pupils give.

Although the problem of controlling variables is acknowledged, Nunan (1992) deplores the limited number of research studies in genuine classrooms. As context is important in research outcomes, he argues that far more classroom-based research is needed. Van Lier (1988) supports this argument and then suggests that classroom researchers' task should be "to identify, describe, and relate in intersubjective terms, actions and contributions of participants in the L2 classroom, in such a way that their significance can be understood"(p. 47). Van Lier's argument seems to suggest that isolating an aspect of a classroom

phenomenon and studying it out of context may create problems of relating it to other aspects within the classroom. It might also raise the question of its applicability in the real classroom setting.

Another survey of language research was done by Beretta (1992). Beretta's paper cites fifty studies with wide-ranging differences in terms of duration; number of subjects involved and attempts to control the teacher variable among others. The research periods ranged from six lessons to four years (Beretta and Davies, 1985) and the number of subjects ranged from twenty-one to five thousand. Twelve studies did not attempt to control the teacher variable at all. They used different instruments such as teacher questionnaires and recorded lessons. Beretta reports that one study by Bushman and Masden used the same teachers in both the experimental and the control groups. By adopting this approach, they assumed that they had better control of the teacher variable. However, this may not necessarily be the case. Classroom contexts vary in a multitude of ways. For example, the learning environment can be different from day to day and this may affect teacher performance. Furthermore, in the case of research, the novelty of the research project itself can direct the teacher's energy in favour of one and not the other group of learners.

The other two approaches to control of the teacher variable have their own problems as well. In the first place, asking teachers to complete questionnaires that require them to say what they did has the problems associated with self-reporting. On the other hand, using recorded lessons “removes the study from the real world and does not permit generalisation beyond the confines of the inquiry” (Beretta, 1992:11). These different attempts to control the teacher variable illustrate the fact that, of all the variables in classroom research, the teacher variable is perhaps the most difficult to manipulate.

One of the early classroom experimental studies that has been widely discussed and criticised in language research is the Pennsylvania Project (Smith, 1970). The study wanted to demonstrate the difference between the ‘traditional’ and the ‘audiolingual’ methods. However, the results showed no significant differences between the students taught by the different methods. The various studies that I examined provided a strong grounding and a reasonable ‘launching pad’ for my own design. Let us now turn to the description of the design.

5.4. The Design

At the time the research problem was identified I did not know exactly what form the study was going to take. Preliminary discussions with a colleague who was an expatriate educationist working in a basic

education project in Zomba indicated the magnitude of the task. I was overwhelmed by the various suggestions this colleague made. One of the observations he made was that the problem would warrant a study that could be nothing but a comparison. This implied some form of experimentation and therefore, the use of statistics. Being a language specialist, I was frightened by the mere mention of statistics. A feeling of incapability weighed heavily on me so that the idea was almost abandoned. However, the encouragement of the colleague in Zomba and the enthusiasm that he showed gave me some confidence. After an initial literature search, I was able to see the problem in a wider perspective.

In her analysis of both experimental and qualitative research designs Marshall (1992:52) asserts that in experimental research the researcher can relatively easily analyse the results of such enquiry and establish its reliability and validity statistically, since statistical manipulation is accepted as a guarantee of objectivity. This assertion almost swayed my thinking towards the experimental design. But Charles (1989), though admitting that experimental research is built on solid ground and that it is highly prized in natural sciences and in psychological research, warns that in education this kind of research must be used with caution. While in natural sciences the researcher does not work with live creatures that require treatment by human beings, in education the researcher does so

and must therefore consider other issues. Such issues may include the reluctance of parents to allow their children to be involved, the deleterious or unfair effects that the experiment might have on some students, and the possible effect on student behaviour.

In addition to these problems, both teachers and higher authorities may oppose such designs on ethical and philosophical grounds (Gay 1987). It is also possible in developing countries, that experimental designs in education may have unfavourable or undesirable political or ethnic undertones. For example, this research would have been unthinkable in 1980s in Malawi. It would have been seen as trying to break the purported unity that Chichewa was claimed to have accomplished. Furthermore, withholding a programme that is perceived as potentially beneficial from students may be strongly opposed because the move might be seen as discriminatory. The Ife project discussed in Chapter 4 was initially opposed because some Nigerians argued that it was going to promote the Yoruba language. Others said it was going to relegate their children to instruction in the vernacular so that only those in high positions could perpetuate their class by sending their children abroad where English was used extensively as the language of learning.

At the time the research was being planned, the political situation in Malawi was still fragile. The country had just achieved a democratically

elected government after years of one party rule. One was not sure whether conducting quasi-experimental research in a country whose government was also experimenting with democracy under very trying and fragile conditions was the right thing to do. Secondly, since the new language policy had been heavily attacked, any researcher who showed interest in the medium of instruction policy might be seen as trying either to disprove or to confirm the claim of the policy. In the case of the former, one might be suspected of siding with the opposition parties while in the latter case one might be viewed as submitting to the wishes of the ruling party. As the permission was to be granted by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, one was not sure whether pure experimental research would be accepted. The reason for this doubt was simply that the research might be seen as capable of disproving the new policy.

The quasi-experiment design seemed the best option under the prevailing conditions then. It had the advantage that intact groups would be used. This would avoid existing classes being disrupted by subjects being chosen and reallocated randomly as a pure experimental design would require. I personally was not keen to 'disrupt' the existing classes because one of my strong preferences was to conduct the research in classrooms that are constituted for the purposes of instruction, that is, not in classes designed for research purposes only. The design I had in

mind would also incorporate the collection of qualitative data, which Spada (1990) has shown to be necessary for the interpretation of the statistical results gained through quantitative methods. Based on these convictions and the practical realities, the design is both quantitative and qualitative. It is graphically presented in the following model:

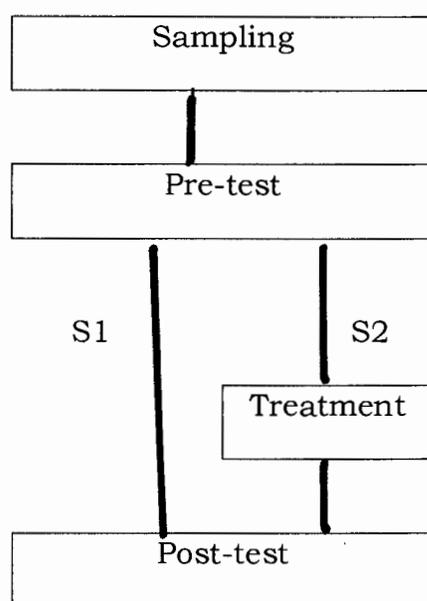


Figure 1: The research design

Subjects in group 1 (S1) were the control group while subjects in group 2 (S2) were the experimental group. After sampling, the subjects were given a pre-test. Then each group was allocated to a different medium of instruction, namely Chichewa and English. The experimental group was then given the treatment (English medium). After that, both the control and the experimental groups were given a post-test, that is, a test written in English for the experimental group and the same test written in

Chichewa for the control group. The sets of results were then compared. A detailed description of the procedures now follows.

5.4.1. Population

The population from which the sample was drawn was Standard 7 pupils in Malawi. The choice of this population within the primary school system was necessitated by two factors. The first was that Standard 7 is one year before the pupils in primary schools sit for the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations. The examination is the first national examination in the country and it is used for secondary school selection. Standard 7 is, therefore, the last preparatory year because most of the work in Standard 8 is either revision or is built on the work covered in Standard 7. Consequently, it was assumed that pupils in this class should have mastered the English language sufficiently so that following instruction through the English medium might not be a problem to the population.

The second reason why Standard 7 pupils were chosen was that Standard 7 pupils were in their third year of learning all the subjects (except Chichewa) through English. So, in principle, problems that usually arise from the transition from the vernacular to English ought to have been ironed out by the time they are in this class. Finally, research into second language learning suggests that seven years of learning

English is sufficient for the learner in order for them to benefit from receiving instruction in other subjects by means of English.

The ideal population would have been Standard 8 pupils who would have been completing the primary school cycle. For that reason, they could have been assumed to have achieved the objectives of primary school education which include the ability to follow instruction through the medium of English as preparation for more advanced work in secondary school. However, because of the fact that the pupils in this class were preparing for the national examination, no teacher would allow his or her class to be disturbed by an 'intruder' whose purpose was not clearly understood. The possible benefit to be gained from his or her presence was not known.

5.4.2. Sampling

Sampling enables researchers to select a number or a group of individuals in such a way that those selected represent the larger group from which they are selected (Gay, 1987). The ideal population that a researcher would like to target may be too large to manage during the research period. A group of the size that the researcher would like in order to be able to generalise the findings of his or her study, may not be available for the study. In sampling the researcher has to face up to the hard realities of real life rather than continue in the idealistic world in

which research ideas are hatched. Sampling reduces or eliminates some unwarranted biases, which are a threat to the credibility of the results of the study.

Several procedures of sampling exist in research. They include random, stratified, systematic and cluster sampling. The first three basically involve the selection of individuals within an identified population. In random sampling the selection process ensures that every individual has an equal opportunity of being selected independently for the sample, while in stratified sampling identified subgroups in the population must be represented in the same proportion as in the population. In systematic sampling individuals are selected from a list following every N th name where N is a given number (e.g. $N = 5$). Cluster sampling is different from the other three in that it deals with groups. These are intact groups with similar characteristics such as classrooms or hospitals.

Gay argues that “cluster sampling is more convenient when the population is very large or spread over a wide area. Sometimes it the only feasible method of selecting a sample” (1987:110) for various reasons. Cluster sampling was used in the present study. Under the available conditions in Malawi at the time, this was more feasible than the other types of sampling. When the procedure was chosen, it was known that it

had its own weaknesses such as the possibility of the sample being unrepresentative. However, to compensate for this weakness it was decided to have a large number of subjects drawn from an appropriate number of randomly selected schools.

After the topic was chosen, a decision had to be made about which out of the thirty-two educational districts should be involved. Since it had already been decided that the study would target pupils in the rural areas of Malawi because pupils in urban areas are generally more advantaged and exposed to a print-rich environment, all the urban districts were excluded. However, it was considered convenient to take one district in the South and one district in the Central region of the country. The decision was based on two factors. First, the project was funded by a German organisation commonly known as the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). This organisation was running a basic education project in Zomba and Lilongwe districts. At that time I was an employee of the GTZ working within the project. For this reason, it was convenient to choose the two districts in which the project was operating. Furthermore, the GTZ was increasingly becoming interested in language education. It was, therefore, keen to obtain the results within the Basic Education Project area.

The second reason was that one aim of the research was to compare Chichewa first language speakers' performance with that of the Chiyao first language speakers when the medium of instruction was Chichewa. Zomba is a Yao district, while Lilongwe is predominantly a Chewa district. For this reason it was hoped that the two districts would present an ideal comparison. Many Yao children in Zomba are already bilingual when they go to school. The idea of comparing them with pupils whose home language was Chichewa, was therefore an interesting one. Furthermore, it was envisaged that the cost of the research would be greatly reduced if it was conducted within the project area. Sometimes I would be able to combine my normal work with fieldwork.

It was decided to obtain a sample of between 600 and 800 due to the limitation that my employment imposed on my time and travel. In order to come up with the number of schools needed, the number of the expected sample was divided by 50, a national average for the number of pupils in a Grade 7 class. The number of schools targeted was, therefore, sixteen.

District Education Officers in the two districts were then asked to submit a list of full primary schools in their respective districts. Between 1994 and 1998 many new schools had sprung up in the country as a response to the free primary education (FPE) policy that was introduced by United

Democratic Front (UDF) government, but these schools had not yet been developed to full primary schools. The emphasis on lists of full primary schools was, therefore, to ensure that only schools that had Standard 7 were considered.

Thirty schools from both districts were randomly selected. The 30 were chosen from 350 schools - 140 from Zomba and 210 from Lilongwe. Two schools in Zomba were on an island on Lake Chirwa and another one was on the Zomba Plateau. These were removed from the list because they were not accessible. In Lilongwe, one school happened to be in Dzalanyama Forest Reserve, close to the border with Mozambique. Local forest rangers indicated that it was sometimes unsafe to drive there. Consequently, it was dropped.

One school was very close to Lilongwe City, although administratively it was in Lilongwe Rural district. Since the research interest was in the rural population, this school was considered unsuitable. The third school was dropped after the first visit. It was 87 kilometres away from the city and the road was in a very bad condition. As the research was going to be conducted during the first term of the school year when the rains are usually heavy in the country, it was considered unreasonable to include it.

The remaining twenty-four schools were first matched by proprietors and then by the qualifications and by the teaching experience of Standard 7 teachers. The reason for matching schools by their proprietors was to avoid undue influence of one type of proprietor over the sample. In Malawi schools may be owned by the government, the Catholic Church, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) and by other Christian Churches. Recently the Muslim Association of Malawi has built a small number of schools as well.

Matching the schools by teacher qualification and teaching experience was an attempt to reduce differences in the teacher variable. The last two criteria for final selection reduced the number further to sixteen. However, at the very last minute something unforeseen reduced the number to fifteen schools. Although all the head teachers and class teachers said that they were willing to participate in the research, one school in Lilongwe did not send both its research assistant and the class teacher to a training course. The school was dropped for this reason. I did not pick another school to replace it because such a school would be outside the random sample, which might affect the results. In any case, classroom observation was about to start and to begin looking for a new school with a teacher with the requisite qualifications and experience would probably have delayed the research. Therefore, I worked with the remaining fifteen schools.

5.4.3. Characteristics of Subjects

It was considered necessary to know and capture the basic characteristics of the subjects. Therefore, a special form was devised for this purpose and sent to the heads of the research schools. The form requested each head teacher to fill in the following particulars for each Standard 7 pupil: name of the pupil, sex and age, home language, whether the pupil was repeating the class or not and finally whether the pupil had come on transfer from another school or not. The social and economic background of the pupils was not included. However, parents' socio-economic activities were captured during interviews with head teachers after the completed forms had been received. The form about the subjects' characteristics is reproduced in Appendix A4.

During the course of the research I realised that a characteristic that could have been included was the status of the pupils in their families. In Malawi, the Aids scourge is taking a big toll on families. Some families look after the children of their relatives who passed away. Whether some of the pupils were orphans or not would be valuable information. However, the social stigma attached to Aids patients and deaths related to Aids means that this information would be too embarrassing if not too painful for the pupils to give. A further complication is that even parents are sometimes unwilling to divulge this information. They fear that the

action might lead to giving away the orphaned children to non-governmental organisations that run orphanages.

The information from the research schools was collated. There were 401 boys and 454 girls, making a total of 855 subjects. However, by the time the post- test was administered during the last week of the classroom research, 167 pupils had either dropped out or gone to other schools on transfer. As was shown in Chapter 1, pupil dropout in primary schools in Malawi is a big problem.

The total number of pupils in the sample who claimed that Chiyao was their home language was 164 and the number who claimed that Chichewa was their home language was 455. Other home languages were Chilomwe 37, Chitumbuka 12, Chisena and Chitonga 2. Nineteen subjects did not indicate their home languages.

Twenty-two boys and thirty girls were repeating and no pupil had come from another school on transfer. The age range was interesting. The youngest pupil was ten while the oldest was eighteen years of age. The average age was fourteen.

One class in Zomba was multilingual. All the languages reported in the study were home languages for some pupils in the class. Furthermore,

all the pupils from the schools in Zomba spoke one or two more Malawian languages. Besides this, they were receiving instruction either in Chichewa or in English. Therefore, these pupils were trilingual. In Lilongwe schools, the situation was different. Almost all the classes were monolingual. Most of the pupils spoke only Chichewa and they were receiving instruction either in English or in Chichewa.

5.4.4. Teacher Characteristics

One of the most difficult variables to control in classroom research is the teacher. Human beings and the situations they find themselves in are too complex to be subjected to a too rigid research environment. This is perhaps more so for teachers in the classroom since classroom life is very complex (Simpson et. Al, (1995: 7). Research environments often require teachers to conform to certain norms. This is in conflict with the way teachers respond to the requirements of their pupils during the learning process in the classroom. Many teachers are likely to use whatever they think is the most appropriate method to satisfy their learners' needs, regardless of what is expected of them in any research. This is understandable, particularly when the research is done under 'normal' classroom conditions.

However, in spite of these limitations, the researcher must find a way of reducing the diversity among teachers' characteristics so that

comparison of outcomes from the various research classrooms is made easier and the comparisons themselves are valid. A special form was devised as a way of capturing the characteristics of the teachers in the research. Copies of the form were sent to the heads of the twenty-five schools initially selected. An accompanying letter requested the head teachers to give the forms to their Standard 7 teachers. A stamped return envelope was enclosed to ensure rapid return and to avoid involving the class teachers in an unexpected expenditure.

The form requested the teachers to provide their names, date of birth, their first language, other Malawian languages they were able to speak, their teaching registration number and their teaching experience. All the teachers sent in their forms. The individual particulars were then collated. The age range of the teachers was from eighteen to thirty-seven. Their teaching experience ranged from four to eight years. This was the case because the oldest teacher had worked for a company before he joined teaching. A copy of the teacher profile form is reproduced in Appendix A5.

One factor that came as a surprise was gender representation. Only one female teacher was teaching Standard 7 in the research schools. Interviews with head teachers showed that many female teachers in the rural districts prefer teaching infants and junior classes. Furthermore, a

substantial number tend to be concentrated in urban centres. This is so because many of them are married to civil servants or to employees of big companies. Generally head teachers tend to allocate male teachers to senior classes. They argue that female teachers tend to have lots of responsibilities in their homes, for instance nursing family members such as husbands or children when they fall ill. Male teachers do not have the same degree of responsibility to care for their families and therefore they may not be absent from school as often as female teachers. Female teachers are also given long periods of maternity leave (3 working months). Head teachers feel that an absence of 90 working days in a senior class is too long for teaching to be entrusted to a caretaker teacher. There is also a general feeling among some teachers that senior classes give them some degree of prestige in the community. Many male teachers, therefore, volunteer to teach a senior class if asked by their heads.

The language variable was interesting. Of the fifteen teachers selected, only six teachers knew no other Malawian language than their home language. These were teachers from the schools in Lilongwe and they were speakers of Chichewa. The rest of the teachers reported that in addition to their home language they also spoke Chichewa. However, this was not surprising since Chichewa is the *lingua franca* in Malawi and it is taught throughout the school system.

As regards their academic qualifications, ten teachers had the Malawi School Certificate, an equivalent of the London O - Level Certificate. The remaining five teachers were in possession of the Malawi Junior Certificate. Differences in the academic qualifications of student teachers are underplayed in teacher training colleges in Malawi. For example, both groups of students sit for the same paper in subject methodologies. For this reason, it was assumed that the differences in the qualification of their teachers would not exert undue influence on the performance of the pupils. In any case, teachers who have both kinds of qualification were evenly distributed between the Chichewa and English medium schools. All the teachers had taught Standard 7 for more than one year.

The interest in teachers' qualifications and their experience was based on two developments in the education system of Malawi. Between 1987 and 1996 the Malawi teacher education component adopted three different systems of training teachers. There was the conventional two-year programme with six weeks of supervised teaching practice in the first and the second year. Then, there was a one-year programme that allowed the teacher trainees only six weeks of supervised teaching. In this programme, three quarters of the students' time in college was spent on foundation studies and the remaining quarter was shared among

what the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture called core subjects. These were Mathematics, Science, English and Chichewa.

The third programme, known as the Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme (MASTEP) was a three year one, but covering the content of the conventional two-year programme. Students in this programme were already teaching in schools when they received their training. They were given a total of forty weeks of residential courses spread over three years. They were called into colleges during holidays. Since they were already teaching, supervision was mostly done by Primary Education Advisors in their own areas of deployment. Most of their academic work was provided through self-instructional materials that were bound in modules.

It was speculated that the three modes of training perhaps produced teachers with different philosophies about the nature of teaching. However, the difference between teachers produced by the MASTEP programme and the one-year programme may not have been large, because the programmes shared a number of common features. First, students recruited into the one year programme were those who had taught as unqualified teachers for a period of not less than two years. These years were equated to the three years that the MASTEP students were doing, since the latter were called for residential courses only

during vacations. Secondly, the emphasis during the residential course in the MASTEP programme was on a core that included foundation studies and the other subjects covered in the one-year programme as core. The foundation studies and the core subjects were common features in both programmes. Finally, both groups of students had some experience of supervision by their heads and Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) before they qualified as teachers.

These experiences were not open to the students in the conventional programme. The students in this group were recruited straight from secondary school. Their first teaching experience was closely supervised by college tutors who wanted to see how the student applied the knowledge he or she had acquired from their lectures. On the other hand, head teachers' and PEAs' first attention was paid to how the student was coping with classroom problems before they turned to application of the theories and principles of education.

It was my opinion that the two approaches to supervision would have some bearing on the philosophical outlook of the graduates from the conventional and the innovative programmes that produced them respectively. For instance, those in the innovative group might speculate that some theories or principles could not work in their classes without critical justification because they did not have as much theoretical

background as those in the conventional group. More importantly, the teachers in the two innovative groups were trained through materials that allowed them to regard pupil errors in language as part of the learning process. Therefore, they might tolerate some pupil errors more than the teachers in the conventional group would. The innovative groups were also encouraged to engage pupils in active learning through the use of participatory strategies such as project and group work. They themselves did a lot of project work as well as group work during their training. Because they practised these participatory strategies they were more likely to use them in their lessons than the teachers in the conventional group.

Teachers trained through the conventional programme were excluded because of the considerations discussed in the previous paragraph. Only teachers from the innovative programmes were chosen. Furthermore, teaching experience of at least three years was needed. It was assumed that teachers would be more confident after three years of teaching experience than if they were still serving as probationers. In Malawi, primary schoolteachers must serve for eighteen months before they are officially given the 'Authority to Teach' certificate. Therefore, only teachers who graduated between 1990 and 1995 were included in the research study.

The second development that assisted me in finding a rational cut-off point for the teacher selection was the change of the primary school curriculum in 1989. This change also led to the change of the teacher education curriculum. Students who qualified before 1990 were trained using a curriculum that was not being taught any more at the time of the research study. Since there was almost no national orientation to the new curriculum for serving teachers, those who qualified earlier than 1990 were likely to find it difficult to cope with the new approaches advocated in the new curriculum.

The criteria of narrowing down the age differences, differences in teaching experience and in method of training, presented the most logical approach to selecting teachers under the prevailing conditions. As it was pointed out elsewhere, teacher characteristics were also used for sifting the twenty-five schools down to the required number of sixteen. The teacher variable, therefore, had a great deal of influence on decisions regarding which schools were to be included in the research study.

5.4.5. School Characteristics

According to Silberman (1973), schools differ “according to the nature of the community, parents, the schools’ own history and tradition, the outlook of its teachers and administrators” (p 122). Silberman then argues that such differences are largely differences in degree and that,

compared to uniformities and similarities between schools, these differences are trivial. This generalisation may be true. However, in Malawi the differences are real and can be very noticeable.

There are schools in Malawi that operate in precarious shelters while other schools operate in brick-built classrooms with glazed windows and brick walls guarded by watchmen. Official inspection reports always have a section in which school buildings and teachers' houses are categorised as temporary, semi-permanent or permanent structures. Permanent structures have walls of fired bricks or some other permanent material such as cement blocks, roofs with corrugated iron sheets or tiles and cement floors. A semi-permanent structure will have one or two of the features of the permanent building. Temporary buildings are those with roofs thatched with grass. The walls of such buildings are either constructed with poles and grass or mud and grass. The floor is smeared with mud. These official descriptions are a clear acknowledgement that real differences exist among schools.

It would be useful to enlarge on the implications of the context that the two extremes represent. The brick and fenced schools usually exist in an urban setting, while thatched-grass temporary shelters are usually consistent with the level of development the school has reached. Most of the schools of the latter kind are in a rural setting and are usually those

that have been opened a short while ago on the initiative of local communities. As such, most of them do not yet offer education up to Standard 8. The schools that were chosen in this research study are those between the two extremes. Therefore, they represent the majority of the over 4,000 primary schools in the country.

One factor common to primary schools in Malawi is that all of them teach the same curriculum that is centrally planned and implemented. The teaching of this curriculum is reinforced by the Primary Education Advisory Service in each district. The Advisory Service sends its advisors to schools to see how the curriculum is being enacted and how each school conforms to the government's expectations. Thus, in spite of whatever differences may exist in the various communities that the schools serve, teachers must look to the government's guidelines as they enact the curriculum in the classroom. What this implies is that the community as a factor has little influence on the curriculum and perhaps even how it is implemented.

Let us now turn to the visible characteristics of the schools in the sample. It should be pointed out at the outset that I did not use questionnaires but pen and paper to record what I saw and what I heard from head teachers and teachers during the first visit to the research schools.

(a) Buildings

(i) Classrooms

All the fifteen schools had permanent buildings. Classroom blocks were roofed with corrugated iron sheets and they all had cement floors except for two schools in Lilongwe. At these two schools, two classroom blocks were very old. Although the blocks were built with fired bricks and roofed with corrugated iron sheets, their floors were smeared with dark clay. The windows of the two blocks did not have window frames, let alone windowpanes. There were just big open spaces on one side of each block. The windows faced the west. Since classes were conducted in the morning, the four classrooms did not get enough light although there was sufficient air circulating.

The two old classroom blocks were in direct contrast with the other three blocks facing each other. These other blocks were newer. They were well ventilated and they allowed enough light into the classrooms at all times of the day. The new classroom blocks still had windowpanes fixed to the windows and doors were still fixed. They also had big blackboards on the walls near the teacher's seat. In the other thirteen schools, two schools had removed the windows and replaced them with cement blocks that have holes for ventilation and light (breezeblocks). When asked why this action was taken, class teachers said pupils and sometimes unruly ex-graduates of the school broke the windows too often. This was

becoming costly to the community. When I asked teachers whether the decision had not compromised the safety of pupils in times of emergency, they said that the possibility of danger was remote.

Desks and benches were available in the senior section of each school. A teacher's chair and a table were also available. The most striking thing about the classrooms was the absence of educational wall hangings such as posters, displays of pupils' work, charts, reading boards and anything that helps to create a learning environment in the classroom. Thus, although the schools were well established, no attempts were made by teachers to create a literate environment in the classrooms for the children to practise and enjoy reading.

(ii) Teachers' houses

Teachers' houses were in short supply in all the schools. There was an average of six houses per school against twenty-eight or so teachers. Most of the teachers complained that they were living in villages where they were renting houses too small for the size of their families. Some of them travelled six kilometres to the school to teach. Female teachers were particularly disadvantaged as most of them were residing where their husbands were working, on the outskirts of towns. In Lilongwe, one teacher paid over thirty Malawian Kwacha for her transport every day. Fortunately, all the teachers assigned to the sampled classes were

either resident at the school or living within the school vicinity except one. This one was a female teacher whose husband was working in a cement factory a few kilometres away.

(iii) Toilets

Pit latrines were present at all the schools. However, one school in Zomba was unfortunate. The school is situated between two streams. During the rainy season, water overflows onto the grounds of the school. The water table also is high so that springs of water are almost everywhere around the school. The effect is that many latrines collapse and each year new ones have to be dug. During the research period four of them collapsed. On the other hand, one research school in Lilongwe was blessed in that a Christian organisation built eight permanent latrines for the school. The pits were built with brick and mortar.

(b) Sports grounds

Although sports grounds were available, they varied in size. In the Southern Region (where Zomba is), the pressure of high population density was having an impact on land. There were reports during the visit that some villagers were actually encroaching on the school land. One school had given up its spacious sports ground for the construction of a new classroom block. In the Central Region (Lilongwe area), the

situation was different. Each school had sufficient sports fields, particularly football and netball grounds.

(c) Water

Water is associated with health. All the schools had boreholes nearby, although teachers reported that when the pumps broke down it normally took months before they were repaired. Some of the boreholes were shared with the local community. Such boreholes were seen as the property of the community at large, not solely of the school itself. Although pupils' clothes showed the various economic backgrounds they came from, there were no signs of ill health among the pupils. Nevertheless during the four weeks of the field research one research school lost two pupils through illness - one in Standard 3 and another in Standard 7. The major threat was the Aids scourge that was increasing the number of orphans daily.

(d) School size

The size of the schools can be judged by the following enrolment figures that were collected during the visit. Two schools were single sex schools – one for boys and another one for girls.

Table 1: Enrolment and staffing levels

School	Enrolment	Teachers
Ching'ombe	1340	29
Karonga	1200	20
Kafutwe	1280	14
Malemia	700	17
Malili	1355	32
Mchengawedi	1426	28
Mdzobwe	11800	34
Mtentera	1200	22
Namikhate	1129	29
Nankhunda	1482	24
Nathenje	1553	27
Nsondole	1257	20
St Anthony's Boys	1345	22
St Anthony's Girls	1154	26
St Michael's	1217	20
Total	19448	358

On average, each teacher was teaching a class of fifty-five pupils. The availability of textbooks was related to the enrolment. Textbooks were generally in short supply, to the extent that some teachers claimed that they had to travel to a neighbouring school to borrow teachers' guide. Discussions with Primary Education Advisors in both districts showed that sometimes the shortage was created artificially by an unsystematic distribution system. PEAs found schools where there were more books than the pupils needed.

5.5. School Proprietorship and Communities Served by the Research Schools

Schools serve particular communities. Each community exerts some influence on the day-to-day running of the school in many different ways. For example communities are involved in school development

programmes in Malawi. The socio-economic activities of the community have also a bearing on pupils' learning. In turn, schools sometimes influence the thinking and daily lives of the people who surround them.

Figure 2 below presents a summary of the socio-economic activities and characteristics of the communities around the research schools.

School	Proprietor	Socio-economic Activities	Problems Related to School Attendance
Ching'ombe	LEA	Subsistence farming- growing peanuts, maize, cassava, smallholder tobacco, farming. Butcheries and grocery shops as business activities. Selling vegetables and peanuts.	Market days, traditional dances (nyau), theft of school property, lack of clean water.
Karonga	LEA	Subsistence farming growing smallholder tobacco, maize peanuts. Selling peanuts, tobacco and groceries.	Market days, traditional dances (nyau)
Kafutwe	CCAP	Subsistence farming- smallholder tobacco, maize, beans vegetables. Selling farm products.	Market days, traditional dances (nyau), high illiteracy rate, and shortage of food.
Malemia	LEA	Subsistence farming- growing maize, cassava, vegetables and potatoes. Selling firewood, charcoal, vegetables and wild mushrooms and fruits.	High illiteracy rate, initiation ceremonies, market days, theft of school property, poverty, vandalism.
Malili	LEA	Subsistence farming- growing maize, peanuts, smallholder tobacco and vegetables. Small businesses, some clerks, nurses.	Traditional dances (nyau), high illiteracy rate, and shortage of food.
Mchengawedi	Muslim association of Malawi	Subsistence farming- growing maize, cassava and vegetables. Selling firewood, charcoal, wild mushrooms, fruits and vegetables.	High illiteracy rate, initiation ceremonies, market days, shortage of food, community uncooperative.
Mdzobwe	CCAP	Subsistence farming- smallholder tobacco farming, tobacco, peanuts, maize. Commercial tobacco farming. Selling small groceries.	High illiteracy rate, traditional dances (nyau), market days, food shortage.
Mtentera	CCAP	Subsistence farming- smallholder tobacco, peanuts, maize, vegetables and a small business (grocery shop).	Market days, traditional dances (nyau).
Namikhate	Catholic	Subsistence farming- growing tobacco, maize, cassava. Selling vegetables, tobacco by smallholder farmers.	High illiteracy rate, initiation ceremonies, food shortage.
Nankhunda	Catholic	Subsistence farming- growing maize, cassava and vegetables. Selling vegetables, doughnut.	Initiation ceremonies, shortage of food.
Nathenje	CCAP	Subsistence farming- growing maize, peanuts, cassava, smallholder tobacco. Small businesses and second hand clothes.	High illiteracy rate, market days. Traditional dances (nyau).
Nsondole	CCAP	Subsistence farming - growing smallholder tobacco, maize, rice, cassava and peanuts.	High illiteracy rate, initiation ceremonies.
St Anthony's Boys	Catholic	2 commercial tobacco farms, subsistence farming - growing maize, cassava and beans. Casual labour, selling some produce.	High illiteracy rate, initiation ceremonies, market days.
St Anthony's Girls	Catholic	2 estates (Commercial tobacco farms) Subsistence farming- growing maize, cassava, vegetables. Selling vegetables, cassava.	High illiteracy rate, initiation ceremonies, and market days.
St Michael's	Catholic	Subsistence farming- growing maize, rice and cassava. Fishing, selling fish, vegetables, rice and cassava.	High illiteracy rate, initiation ceremonies, and market days, shortage of food.

Figure 2: Community characteristics

Schools in Malawi can be established by the government, by religious organisations and of late, by private individuals. Local Education Authorities (LEA) run government primary schools. On the other hand, different religious organisations run their own schools. In Malawi, the dominant churches are the Catholic Church and the Central Africa Presbyterian Church. These two own the majority of primary schools in Malawi. Although this is the case, all primary schools except those individually owned receive government grants. Teachers are paid by the central government and instructional materials are centrally procured and distributed to all primary schools except private schools. This suggests that the provision of educational services is at a par in all the schools in the country. However, proprietors of the schools exercise their authority in the appointment of the head teacher, in terms of teacher discipline and on religious matters. For example, Catholic schools are almost without exception headed by teachers who are Catholics.

Proprietors' influence in the running of their schools was recently demonstrated when Catholics and other Christian churches rejected a secondary school religious education curriculum. This created a lot of debate in the mass media so that the State President was forced to intervene by directing the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture to withdraw the curriculum. Since proprietors exert some pressure on their schools, I decided to include them as part of the community.

Figure 2 above shows that, at the time of the study, most people around the schools practised subsistence farming and that the majority of them were illiterate. The existence of subsistence farming was evident when I went round research schools during my first visit. Teachers confirmed this in interviews. Further evidence was obtained from the research assistants and class teachers. I observed that even where there were commercial estates most of the people who sent their children to the schools were tenants and farm labourers. The estate owners were either white farmers who sent their children to schools abroad or they were 'absentee' Malawian farmers who were resident in towns or in some other educationally better served localities.

The high illiteracy rate could not however, be confirmed by statistics from the 1998 population census. It was considered too time-consuming to go into details of individual communities in this matter since the focus of the study was on learning. The statements on illiteracy came from head teachers. A head teacher at one school complained about the frequent absenteeism of pupils and the lack of co-operation between parents and teachers at his school. He said:

Many parents do not appreciate the importance of schooling to their children. They send them on errands during school days. When they are invited for Parents' Teachers' Association meetings, they don't come to attend. Well, I can understand them. They themselves never went to school (personal conversation).

In any case, the observations about literacy levels were in accordance with the documented national trend discussed in Chapter 1.

The issue of cultural practices interfering with the educational activities of children is a real problem in Malawi, particularly in the Central and Southern regions of Malawi (see Appendix D). Initiation ceremonies take many children away from school over long periods. Some children may be away from school for more than a month at a time. In 1999, chiefs asked the government to reorganise the school calendar so that sufficient time could be given to initiation ceremonies.

At a national conference on the issue chiefs insisted that they could not defy, modify or change the culture that was handed down to them by their ancestors. They argued that culture was also education in itself. They could not understand why a ministry that was committed to the preservation of culture did not consider this aspect when the school calendar was changed in 1995. The chiefs then claimed that reorganising the school calendar could reduce absenteeism in school. Consequently, the Ministry acceded to the chiefs' demands.

The problem of initiation ceremonies is similar to that found in areas where 'nyau' traditional dances are practised. In addition to their attending initiation, boys may be away from school attending the dances.

Alternatively, they may attend the dances at night and come to school tired in the morning.

Absenteeism is also associated with commercial farming. Where there are big commercial estates child labour is common. Children may be absent from school because commercial farmers pay them for planting and harvesting tobacco.

During my research it was necessary to document all these community practices. They might affect not only the schooling of the subjects but also the interpretation of the overall results from each community. My immediate response to the existence of community practices was to plan the research period within the context of these possible constraints so as to minimise their impact. Consequently, the fieldwork took place in February, after planting season and before the tobacco harvest. The initiation and 'Nyau' dances take place from July to October. My second response was to prepare attendance registers for the research classes in all the sampled schools. The purpose of the registers was to monitor the attendance rate of the subjects during the research period so that in the end I would be able to compare the performance and attendance of the subjects.

5.6. The Researcher

In qualitative research the researcher is an integral part of its methodology. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:26) point out that “the qualitative inquirer looks to indwelling as a posture and to the *human-as-instrument* for the collection and analysis of data.” This is so because a human investigator has knowledge-based experience, possesses an immediacy of insight into subtle situations and has the opportunity to clarify and to summarise things on the spot. Furthermore, because of his or her background, skills, experience, knowledge and flexibility he or she is able to capture the complexity and subtlety of human experience (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:193). Because of the importance of the researcher in qualitative research, its methodology expects a description of the researcher.

What follows below is my personal description. I have worked my way up as an educationist through the education system of Malawi. I qualified as a primary school teacher and taught both elementary and senior classes in the primary school sector. I also headed a number of primary schools until I was appointed an Inspector of schools and subsequently acted as a District Education Officer. It was through regular visits to schools that I began to get interested in problems relating to basic education.

After further training, I became a College tutor training English Language students. I used to sit in classrooms as their supervisor watching them

grappling with the realities of the class when teaching. Later I was appointed Head of Languages at a Teachers' Training college until I was given an opportunity for further training in Applied Linguistics in the United Kingdom. On my return I joined an Institute of Education and was briefly a part-time lecturer at a local University, preparing English language college tutors.

As a curriculum specialist at the Institute, I have led teams of textbook writers and have co-authored several books both in English and in Chichewa. I was also formally trained by the Malawi National Examination Board in item writing and examinations setting. After the training, I was appointed Chief Examiner for English both at primary and teacher training levels.

My research interest and background dates back to the 1980's when I first evaluated the then existing ESL books for primary schools in Malawi. This was an academic exercise that was submitted to the University of Warwick as part fulfilment of requirements for my Masters degree.

I have been commissioned in the past by UNDP/UNESCO to undertake a study on textbook availability and feasibility in SADC countries. The study included Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Malawi. UNESCO

published the findings. I was also commissioned by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) to do a study on teacher deployment and management. The study on teacher deployment and management included South Africa, Botswana, Uganda and Malawi and I was responsible for the Malawi part. The results were published in 1998 as an IIEP publication. At the Institute, I also did a study on the reading habits of primary school graduates in Malawi.

These experiences paid dividends when this study was finally undertaken. First, the part of the education sector in which the study was undertaken was reasonably familiar to me. However, I was also increasingly aware of the challenges of working in familiar settings, such as the danger of taking them for granted. The challenge therefore was, as Hitchcock and Hughes point out, trying as much as possible to render “the familiar strange in order to avoid missing or taking for granted crucial aspects of the situation or topic being explored” (1989:59).

Secondly, through the Basic Education project activities I was able to establish a rapport with education leaders in the two districts, so that I would not be treated with the suspicion or scepticism that often comes with strangeness. This rapport was manifested when the pre-and post-tests were about to be administered to the subjects. It was the Primary Education Advisors who suggested the best way of distributing the tests.

They advised that the instruments should be delivered on the day of the tests and they volunteered to wait at the school until the tests were written and collect the test envelopes from head teachers of the sample schools. They said that in that way the tests would not be leaked.

Thirdly, the experience gained in the other studies prepared me for the practical difficulties associated with the study. The problems of travel, the possible attitudes of teachers, pupils and their parents and the prospect of working for long hours were all rehearsed before the field trips started.

Finally, my training as Chief Examiner helped in the task of setting the pre- and post-tests. In item writing, the principles of preparing reliable test items were consistently borne in mind. Furthermore, the items could be sent for validation to some professionals with whom I had worked in the National Examination Board.

One of the biggest problems I faced was the lack of availability of an up-to-date library in Malawi, particularly during the time the research proposal was being developed. However, my first contact with my promoter greatly improved the situation. I was able to borrow most recently published books and articles related to the field.

5.7. Securing Permission for Access to Schools

Some research activities had to run simultaneously in order to keep to the timeframe envisioned during the planning stage. This was particularly so with securing permission to conduct the research and the development of instruments. The chain of command is quite long and the hierarchy in the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture is complex. Access to schools depends on the consent of many people and the information about such requests follows the Ministry's hierarchy.

Permission for this study had to be sought from the headquarters of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, where the chain started. The Secretary for Education, Sports and Culture would not only respond to the permission but also inform the Districts Education Officers for the two research districts about the granting of the permission to do the study. Even if I wrote to heads of the research schools, they would expect to receive further instructions from the District Education Officer (DEO).

However, as it turned out, the Secretary for Education Sports and Culture sent the letter of approval to me and I was advised to send copies to the District Education Officers. So I delivered the letter, together with another letter of introduction to both the District Education Officers and the heads of schools in person. With this arrangement however, the

Divisional Education Office, which is above the DEO's office and below the Ministry headquarters, was bypassed.

Although things worked out in the end, communication with the Ministry was somewhat frustrating. After the request for permission was sent to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture in August 1998, it took exactly eleven months before the permission was granted. A reminder was sent after five months. The delay of eleven months nearly jeopardised the field programme.

Field data was to be collected in January 1999. That meant that the research schools and teachers had to be informed before the first term started in January. Between November and December 1998, I started to make informal contacts with the DEOs, showing them a copy of the request that had been sent to the Ministry. I also contacted a colleague in the Ministry. Both the DEOs and the colleague assured me that the Ministry would have no objection to the study.

With this assurance, I began to work informally through the DEOs offices so that by the time the formal approval came, the DEOs had already informed their schools on the basis of the copy I had shown them. The letter of introduction sent to the research schools was, therefore, more of a formality than anything else.

The informal approach, therefore, served to resolve the awkward situation in which I found myself for two reasons. Because the study was being conducted in districts where the Basic Education project was operating, as said earlier, rapport had already been created with the district staff and my role was already somewhat established. For the same reason, it was covertly understood that I had a certain degree of freedom to carry out research related to instruction as the project was working to establish zonal and school-based in-service structures in the districts. This gave me confidence to pursue the informal approach. Without this approach, the fieldwork would have been delayed for a year. The reason was that the curriculum topics that were chosen for instruction in the research schools were better suited to the first term of the year, as some concepts were regarded as prerequisites to other work in the subsequent units of the curriculum.

5.8. Choice of Social Studies

Most of the studies in the area of medium of instruction that I was aware of were either in Mathematics, Science or languages. The three studies done in Malawi and examined in this research were done in Mathematics (Kachaso, 1988), Chemistry (Reinhard, 1996) and in English/Chichewa (Williams, 1993). Mathematics and Science are traditionally considered difficult subjects, subjects that deal with figures and formulas, while

learning English and Chichewa may be complicated by linguistic structures and the comprehension of a given test and vocabulary. Social Studies, however, presents a different perspective on the language of learning. Social Studies is an expository subject. As such, it normally has longer episodes of expository language as opposed to the expressive language found in language texts, for example.

The classroom discourse of Social Studies as an expository subject is not mediated by mathematical symbols, which are a special language in themselves, nor is it mediated by formulas. It could be argued that sometimes the results of performance tests might be skewed by the occurrence of formulas and mathematical symbols that are not understood. This situation does not arise in Social Studies in primary school.

The reason for the choice of Social Studies was, therefore, twofold. First, I wanted to avoid the possible attribution of the results to the general perception that Mathematics is difficult. Secondly, I wanted to advance the knowledge about the language of learning using an expository subject rather than Science and Mathematics.

5.8.1. The Social Studies Curriculum

It was pointed out in Chapter 3 that the process of rethinking the curriculum in English started when the Malawian government released its Third Education Plan in 1985. Language specialists at last had their justification for changing the teaching approach then used in the classroom. The changes did not affect the English language curriculum only. All the primary school subjects including Social Studies were affected.

The term 'Social Studies' encompasses Geography, History and Civics, which were all separate subjects in the 1982 syllabus. Some topics that were taught in Standard 8 in the old syllabus became part of the new Standard 7 syllabus. Other topics that were in Standard 6 before were also included in Standard 7. Several of the topics in the old Standard 7 were moved up to Standard 8. One example of these is the Geography topic that dealt with the world in the old syllabus. Malawi, which had been taught in Standard 5, became a topic in Standard 7. Other topics were dropped for various reasons.

New instructional materials were developed to accompany the syllabus. They were first used in Standard 7 in 1998. By the time the research study was done in 1999, teachers were using the new materials for the second time. The reorganisation of the subject into Social Studies and subsequent changes in approach had some implications for teaching. I

assumed that many teachers would still be trying to come to grips with both the approach and the instructional materials. Therefore, I decided right from the time the curriculum topics were chosen that an orientation of the class teachers to the new materials should be conducted before classroom observation could start.

5.8.2. Preparing the Curriculum

The decision to use Social Studies was thoroughly discussed with the curriculum expert responsible for Social Studies at the Malawi Institute of Education. Topics in the Social Studies teacher's guide were examined and then five topics were chosen particularly because they were meant to be taught during the first term of the year.

The five topics, namely longitudes and latitudes; the location of Malawi; trade; money, and patrilineal and matrilineal tribes of Malawi were reordered according to conceptual links between them. After that, I broke them into teachable units. A scheme of work consisting of twenty-four lessons was drawn up. The lessons were grouped into six for each week so that teachers could teach the curriculum in four weeks.

The length of this period was crucial. First, it was a way of avoiding fatigue on the part of the teachers and research assistants. Secondly, it

was meant to reduce possible interference from unforeseen conditions that might be difficult to control.

The completed scheme of work was presented to the expert for comments. Two primary school teachers who were not from the research schools but from a school nearby the Malawi Institute of Education were invited to discuss the scheme. Both the expert and the teachers agreed that each lesson could indeed be taught in the official government lesson time of 35 minutes. Thus, the whole curriculum was supposed to be covered in 14 hours. This would allow the teachers to repair any damage that they might have thought was caused by the research activities. Moreover, a longer period than this would probably displease parents whose children were being taught in Chichewa. From the research point of view, a longer period could perhaps threaten the external validity of the results. A copy of the scheme of work is in Appendix B.

5.8.3. Translating the Instructional Materials

All the Social Studies instructional materials in Standard 7 were written in English like materials for all the other subjects in the senior section of the curriculum. Chichewa materials were the only ones that were written in Chichewa. In infant and junior classes, teachers' guides were written in English. Teachers themselves translated the materials for every lesson into Chichewa in these classes. This was because at that level pupils learned every subject in Chichewa.

However, although the problems associated with teachers translating the materials for their infant classes had not been investigated, it was considered prudent to avoid burdening the teachers in the control group with the demands that translation makes on translators and interpreters. Consequently, someone had to translate the materials.

Newmark (1988) asserts that translation is a science, a skill and an art. It is a science in that it entails knowledge of and verification of facts and understanding of the language that describes the facts. It is a skill because it calls for both appropriate language and the acceptable usage of that language. Because it is an art, in translation one can distinguish good from indifferent forms of writing. As both a science and an art, translation demands systematic training and understanding of its theoretical framework.

The important role that translators play cannot be overemphasised. Translators are mediators between the culture of the source language and the culture of the target language. In their task of mediating they seek “to overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning” (Hatim and Mason, 1990:244). It is this ability to render “the meaning of text into another language in the way that the

author intended the text” (Newmark, 1988:5) that distinguishes a good and seasoned translator from a novice.

Translators face special challenges in the developing world. They have to create new expressions and terminologies in such fields as Science and Mathematics. This is particularly demanding when they are working from source languages such as English or French, which have fully developed scientific and technical cultures. These challenges were discussed with the person who had been requested to translate the materials. It was agreed that all scientific symbols such as those in Systems International (SI) should be transferred to Chichewa and that the technical terms should be maintained but written in Chichewa orthography.

The person who translated the material had done translation work before. He himself spoke four languages - Chichewa, English, Shona and Tumbuka. He was one of the compilers of the Chichewa dictionary, which was then in print. He had taught Social Studies, Chichewa and English in primary school, as well as Social Studies and Chichewa in teacher training colleges and Linguistics and Chichewa at the University of Malawi as a part-time lecturer. He had some formal training in translation and was one of the two Malawians who were appointed to orient British volunteers who were being prepared to come to work in

Malawi in the mid 1960s and to teach the volunteers Chichewa. Locally he was extensively used by organisations to translate Aids materials as well as materials on nutrition and health, adult literacy and various government documents. He had also written and revised Chichewa textbooks. He was the most qualified person I could find.

My major area of interest in the whole process was the assessment of the translated materials - the target texts (TT). I was particularly interested in their readability, their conformity to the generic and discourse conventions of the target language (TL), and finally in the adequacy of the translated material for the specified purpose, which was to inform and educate the children and to some extent the teachers as well.

The materials were generally found acceptable by the Social Studies expert at the Institute and one primary school teacher. Both of them approved the materials at the level of the reader. One step forward had, therefore, been successfully completed. Both consensus and validation had been achieved.

The final step in this stage was to get the translated materials printed and distributed. However, it should be borne in mind that these materials were teachers' materials only. Due to the large enrolment it would be too expensive to produce pupils' materials and in any case,

pupils' books were in very short supply generally. The materials were finally printed and ready for distribution. After the teachers were trained they received the materials. A sample of the materials and extracts from the English version are in Appendix B.

5.9. Developing Instruments

Research instruments are developed and used in order to capture or collect appropriate data. Data is appropriate if it provides evidence that helps to unravel the problems that the research study seeks to resolve. In order to capture appropriate data the instruments that are developed must suit the task for which they are meant. In this study, three different types of instruments were used, namely an observation schedule, pre- and post-tests and a short schedule for a structured interview. A description of each one of them now follows.

5.9.1. The Observation Schedule

The purpose of developing the observation schedule was twofold. First, the schedule was developed to capture classroom interactions during a live lesson. Interaction in this context means the process of interpersonal communication that involves the efforts of both the learner and the teacher in the classroom to achieve learning (Ellis, 1990).

The second purpose was to record the language of learning used during the entire course of the lesson. This was added because of the

observation made by Clark in the Pennsylvania project cited earlier in this chapter. Clark (1969) argued that the observation procedure was less than precise in the Pennsylvania study and therefore it did not ensure the strict adherence of teachers to a particular method. Since the present study was done to find out the effects of English as the language of learning, it was crucially important for its success to record the phenomenon of adherence or non-adherence to the language of learning.

There are many published observation instruments for use in classroom interaction today. Acheson and Gall (1987) present a number of techniques and instruments for a detailed observation of what goes on in the classroom and for recording the interaction between the teacher and the learners. They include wide-lens observation, in which the observer tries to capture as much as possible of what is happening in the classroom. They also include anecdotal observation, in which the observer sits in a strategic position and takes down notes of what happens in the classroom; and a seating chart observation record (SCORE) for recording the verbal flow between individual pupils and the teacher.

Then there are what Wallace (1991:66) calls system-based observation instruments. Among the notable systems is the one developed by Bellack (1966) and further refined by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Although

Bellack's system was appealing, it fell short of the requirements of the present study. His system was based on analysis of transcripts while this study was designed to capture events in live lessons in real time. The system-based observation instrument that appealed to me was the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC). Flanders (1970, see Gay, 1987:215) developed a ten-category observation system in which seven categories concern teacher talk, two pupil talk and the last one silence. In spite of its appeal, the FIAC observation instrument did not meet the requirements of the research study but was adapted to suit my purposes. The adapted FIAC used here has 17 categories.

As a starting point I took the three main parts of a lesson, namely the **introduction, presentation** and the **conclusion**. In an introduction to a lesson the teacher usually starts with either giving instructions, revision of a previous lesson and/or linking the lesson to the new subject matter. Thus, categories 1-3 fall within the introduction. During the presentation of the new subject matter the teacher may explain new concepts or facts and ask pupils questions as the lesson proceeds to check their understanding. Pupils may give short answers, explain a point, and ask the teacher for clarification of the new concepts or facts. The teacher then may clarify and instruct pupils to do group work. In the groups, pupils interact with each other as they do their task. They may ask each other questions, clarify points to each other and then

present their group findings to the whole class. Thus, categories 4-16 (except number 5) are concerned with learning of the new concepts and consolidating them through group activities. The teacher may conclude the lesson by the way of summary (category 17). Category number 5 is unique in that it deals with discipline of all kinds, although here it is labelled 'reprimand.' The seventeen-category interaction sheet developed in this study is in Appendix A2.

The observation schedule was also designed to capture the level of adherence of teachers and pupils to the language of learning. A language key was developed for this purpose. The key consisted of four variables: teacher uses English (TEN); teacher uses Chichewa (TC); pupil(s) use English (PEN); and finally pupil(s) use Chichewa (PC). The letters in parenthesis were used for recording instances of these in the appropriate category and time box. The language key was placed at the bottom of the observation sheet.

A lesson in the senior section of a primary school generally takes 35 minutes. Initially the time unit for observation was to be 2 minutes, so 18 two-minute interval boxes were plotted against each category. That is, box number 1 read 2; box number 2 read 4 and so on until box number 18 read 36, therefore 1 minute extra. At the end of the observation sheet, a space was provided for the observer's comments.

The observer was asked to comment on methodology, adherence to the language of learning and overall pupil participation.

I then pilot tested the instrument with a primary school teacher at a primary school nearby the Malawi Institute of Education. Some adjustments to the time interval were necessary. Consequently, 35 1-minute boxes were made against each category. Further changes were suggested during the training of research assistants. For example, the first observation sheet did not number the categories. The numbering was therefore incorporated after the assistants' comments.

5.9.2. Test Construction

When I first considered the idea of investigating the effect of English as language of learning on pupils' performance in Social Studies it became clear to me that class observation alone could not provide an objective means of comparing the performance of pupils. A test of some kind was needed so that scores could be objectively compared. This meant that a baseline score for each subject had to be available in order to establish the performance level of the subjects before the instruction through English could start.

The first possibility to establish the purported entry level of performance of the subjects was to use the subjects' placement results. However, placement results as baseline scores were rejected because the Malawi education system does not have a common standardised test for placing or promoting pupils to the next grade. Therefore, there were as many tests as there were teachers at the same grade level. In effect then, there were fifteen different placement tests from the fifteen schools. It would, therefore, be unacceptable to take them as a common starting point for the two groups because the levels of difficulty of the tests could hardly be the same.

A second reason why I decided not to use the placement results was that, without my looking at the nature of the tests themselves, test results could be almost meaningless. Since the time was limited, it was going to be impossible to collect and go through the placement tests from the fifteen research schools anyway. The best alternative was to construct uniform pre- and post-tests. Fortunately I had had experience in constructing and administering tests.

The test items were based on the objectives of the topics in the scheme of work prepared earlier. The objectives were taken from the Social Studies teacher's guide. Although many of the objectives in the teacher's guide were at a low level, a deliberate attempt was made to spread the test

items following Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom 1956). Seventy items were developed for the test. The test, the list of objectives and the purpose of the test were sent to two experts in Social Studies at the Malawi Institute of Education. One of them was a co-author of the teacher's guide and the other was a college tutor teaching Social Studies to teacher trainees. Both of them had set national examinations in the subject. A copy of the test was also sent to my promoter.

Observations from the two experts resulted in my making some changes. Some items were rewritten and two items that were not quite appropriate were replaced. The test was then pilot tested in Standard 7 at two primary schools close to the Malawi Institute of Education. The teachers who administered the test were requested to adhere to the time specified on the test paper, so I could gauge the time needed.

Two class teachers marked the test. Individual items were then examined for facility, difficulty and discrimination. Two primary school teachers who were invited to discuss the results suggested that the time should be extended and that the number of items should be increased to a hundred for ease of scoring. They also suggested that some of the items that looked too difficult should be split into two. This was done and the number of items was increased to eighty. The adjusted test was presented to the two experts again. When they finally accepted the test it

meant that the necessary precautions had been taken to secure both content and sampling validity.

The next stage was to try to establish the reliability of the test. Frankel and Wallen (1990:126) say that reliability refers to the consistency of scores or answers from one administration of an instrument to another, and from one set of items to another.

Methods of establishing the consistency of scores and answers include testing, re-testing, using equivalent forms and adopting split-half. However, different requirements and conditions dictate each of these. The choice in this study was the split-half because of existing conditions. Other forms such as testing and re-testing had budgetary implications as well as being precluded by the time factor.

After the administration of the first test the items were divided into two parts. All items with an even number made up the first test (pre-test). All the items with odd numbers made up the second test (post-test). The advantage of this kind of selecting the items was that, because test items from each topic were grouped together it was certain that each of the two tests covered all the topics. In other words, the sampling could not be skewed. Furthermore, the difficulty of items in the test was incremental.

The use of both even and odd numbers ensured that each test had both relatively easy and difficult items.

The test developed for the study was principally multiple-choice. The Malawi National Examinations Board uses multiple choice extensively both in primary and secondary school examinations. It is, therefore, the type that most pupils were familiar with. The pre-and post-tests consisted of thirty multiple-choice items each. In addition each had ten questions from an adapted cloze text.

The second test (the post-test) was then translated into Chichewa. The same person who translated the curriculum material also translated the test. All the steps for validating the translated curriculum were also followed here. The first (pre-test) was not translated because its scores were going to be the baseline for comparison later.

One of the problems met during this time was getting the co-operation of the curriculum expert in Social Studies. Initially she was formally asked to help with constructing of the test items. Unfortunately she was very busy, although she kindly agreed to produce the test items. A good number of weeks elapsed without any action. Since the time was running out, I decided to draft the tests and submit them to her for validation. Samples of the tests are in Appendix A1.

5.9.3. The Interview Schedule

The purpose of the interview schedule was to capture the opinions of both teachers and learners about the language of learning in their schools. Their opinions could affect the efforts that teachers make when teaching the subject matter in a particular lesson, for example the way they clarify points and extend the meaning of certain words for the learners' better understanding of whatever concepts are being taught. In the same way, learners' opinions may psychologically affect their willingness to come to grips with the subject matter and their motivation to learn. It was against this background that the interview schedule was developed.

The instrument was a semi-structured schedule consisting of four questions. The questions for both teachers and learners were similar in that they solicited similar responses, but those for the first referred to teaching while those for the second referred to learning. The instrument was developed in such a way that it could be administered towards the end of the research study.

Since the interview schedule was phrased in such away that it targeted only those who had gone through the specially designed curriculum, there was no matching or equivalent group on which it could be pre-

tested. Nonetheless, attempts were made to discuss its relevance and possible outcomes with a few researchers at the Malawi Institute of Education. The questions were then rephrased on the basis of their comments.

In constructing the schedule I was aware of the problems associated with constructing and conducting interviews. For example, Gay (1989) warns that interviews are expensive, time consuming and generally require smaller samples. Interviews may be affected by interviewer bias and require great sensitivity to the responses. On the other hand, interviews are preferable to questionnaires in that face to face interaction with the interviewee offers the researcher opportunities for clarification. A reproduction of the interview schedule is in Appendix A3.

At this juncture, all the research instruments had been validated. The only remaining activity in the process before administration was the selection and training of research assistants

5.10. Selection and Training of Research Assistants

Research assistants were selected in conjunction with the head teachers of the research schools. The assistants were teachers.

5.10.1. Selection Process

The relationship that I developed with the local education officials made the choice of research assistants simple. Either the Primary Education Advisor in the zone where the research schools fell or some teachers at the schools could be chosen. The problem with Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) was that their presence at a school was often associated with inspection or supervision. Although they were willing to combine their normal school visits with the classroom observation required by the study, they were likely to create a sense of insecurity in the classroom, which might distort the observation. The teachers might behave atypically because they would be conscious of being observed (Gay, 1989:228). Consequently, I decided to use teachers at the same school.

Taking teachers from the same school has its advantages and disadvantages, as I knew from my experience between 1983 and 1993. During this period, the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) ran courses for Primary Education Advisors and heads of schools. Part of the assessment was to observe them running in-service courses in their respective schools. Although teachers liked the in-service course, they were generally wary of being observed. However, if the relationship among teachers at the school is good, being observed by a professional colleague from within the school is less threatening than being observed by the teachers' boss (the PEA). On the other hand, some teachers resent being observed by a colleague. Nonetheless, the experience from

the MIE helped in mapping out the training strategy for the research assistants.

In spite of these limitations, teachers were chosen. Head teachers of the research schools were asked to find willing teachers. They were teachers who usually had at least three free periods per week. Names were submitted and then a one and half day training session was organised for them.

5.10.2. Training

The fifteen research assistants, together with the Standard 7 class teachers from the fifteen schools, were brought together. The class teachers were introduced to the selected and translated curriculum that they were going to teach in the following four weeks after the training, while the research assistants were trained in data collection. This arrangement offered an opportunity for the two sides to interact. Since the research assistants were using the teachers for their training, the class teachers got accustomed to the presence of the research assistants before the actual teaching. Furthermore, this arrangement gave each pair the opportunity to create rapport and to define their roles informally.

Of the three instruments developed for the research, only the observation schedule was meant for the training. The tests were straightforward and

the research assistants were asked only to invigilate and to collect the subjects' scripts after they had finished writing. I was going to administer the interview schedule, therefore, no training was needed in how to interview subjects. I had a fair knowledge of how to do it.

The training started with an examination and discussion of the individual categories on the observation sheet. I explained what each category was meant to capture and how the assistants should record the information they see or hear during class observation. After a thorough discussion of each category all the trainees were asked to go and observe the teachers who were then doing peer teaching during their orientation. I too joined in the observation. Later all the research assistants were brought together again to discuss what they had observed and captured with the instrument. Again the group went through the observation instrument item by item. This was done to compare the recordings and to find reasons why differences in recording occurred.

A number of pertinent issues emerged out of the discussions. First, the assistants suggested that all the items in the observation sheet should be numbered for ease of reference during discussions and of course during the analysis phase of the research study. Secondly, the research assistants became aware of the degree of alertness that systematic observation necessitated. Thirdly, they came to realise that when a

lesson is in progress many things happen that can easily distract the attention of the observer.

Finally, the research assistants were increasingly aware of the need for accurate recording during the time that the differences in recording were discussed. In essence this forum offered the trainees a chance to recognise what could be termed 'threats' to systematic observation, namely an absence of alertness, distractions and inconsistent recording. When the trainees were sent for a second observation of the peer teaching, they were advised to avoid the 'evil three'.

The discussions also helped the assistants to reflect on their teaching. For example, when they were examining the responses that were recorded during the first lesson one of them observed a particular pattern. The teacher who was observed used the question and answer technique almost exclusively throughout the lesson, although in his lesson plan he had indicated that he was going to use group work. Once this was known to the other research assistants, they too observed other patterns. Then they discussed how often teachers deviate from their plans and then only realise later that they did not cover what they thought they would. This discovery was perhaps one of the most rewarding experiences the research assistants acquired from the training because it brought them an insight to apply to their own teaching. Thus,

according to Marshall (1992:54) this was “a means towards the creation of mutual respect and co-operation between observer and participants” in that the participants felt that the proceedings were “of some benefit to them and not just the researcher”.

This process of observing, recording and discussing was repeated four times. By the time the research assistants brought in the fourth set of observation sheets, all the differences that were noticed during the first round had almost been eliminated. Possible observer biases were reduced through the process.

At the end of the training, all the research assistants were given five copies of the observation instrument. These were given for them to use immediately when they got back to their respective schools as a means of perfecting their skills before the actual research started. The training was done two weeks before the research started, giving them ample time to practise further by observing other teachers in their schools wherever possible. As it turned out, all of them managed to do this.

The system of organising the training worked well. All the research assistants were trained together at once and the same person did the training so that all the assistants got the same message. Furthermore, there was a healthy interaction among the trainees. Listening to their

discussions during breaks confirmed this interaction. However, the approach was expensive. Finding suitable accommodation for the thirty people, paying for their accommodation, allowances and travel costs was possible only because the curriculum training was part of the drive by the Basic Education Project to develop the capacity of a cadre of teachers who would later act as resource persons in school-based as well as zonal in-service courses.

The training of the research assistants and the orientation of the class teachers to the curriculum marked the end of the preparatory phase of the research study. All the materials, the instruments and the human resources were ready and available. The next logical phase was, therefore, to go into the field to collect data.

5. 11. Data Collection

As was discussed in the previous section, three different data collection instruments were used. They were the pre- and post-tests, the observation schedule and a semi-structured interview schedule. The method of using each of these is described below.

5.11.1. Pre-and Post-test

The pre-test was sent to all the schools on the day the instruction through English and Chichewa started. Two colleagues from the two

education offices volunteered to deliver them on the same day, so that teachers would not open them before the agreed date. The pre-test was then administered in the morning during the first Social Studies period. However, because the pre-test lasted longer than a single Social Studies lesson, adjustments were made to the subject that followed the Social Studies period. The research assistant at each school became an invigilator. Pupils' scripts were packed into a return envelope, sealed and then handed over to the head teacher of the school.

The two colleagues went back to the schools the following day and collected the sealed envelopes. They brought them to the district offices where I collected them on the first observation trip to the schools in Lilongwe, but on the same day in Zomba where the district office was close to the project office.

The envelopes were then opened one by one and the scripts in each envelope were counted and put back. The open envelopes with the scripts were given to an assistant, a secondary school graduate, who marked them. Because the pre-test was multiple choice and cloze, each question had only one possible answer. When the assistant finished marking, I took a sample of the marked scripts and checked and verified them, particularly in terms of scoring.

The raw scores were subsequently entered on a score sheet manually. Since this was the first test only the names of the pupils who sat for the test were recorded and later entered on a computer. The scores were also kept on a floppy diskette as a back up. The score sheets were also preserved.

Towards the end of the fourth week the post-tests were sent to the schools in the same way as the pre-tests. Subjects wrote the test on the same day. The process that was followed during the pre-test was followed again. The same assistant marked the scripts. The post-test scores were subsequently entered on computer next to the pre-test scores.

5.11.2. Class Observation

Observation sheets were sent to the research assistants on the day the pre-test was sent to schools. Each packet contained information about the minimum number of lessons to be observed and what lessons should be observed per week. The minimum number of the lessons to be observed was eleven. Lessons 2 and 5 were observed in week 1. Lessons 9,10 and 11 were observed in week 2 while lessons 13 and 15 were observed in week 3. Finally, observers were advised to observe lessons 19, 20, 22 and 24 in the last week.

The reason behind this guided distribution was to ensure that data were not collected only for two weeks but that observation should be spread over the entire research period. Secondly, it was one way of controlling the assistants so that they would observe and record observations at different times of the day, because the time of the lesson might have some effect on the performance of both the teacher and the learners.

Following these guidelines the research assistants observed more than 150 lessons all together. Some assistants observed more than was agreed but the most interesting part was that all but one observed the stipulated lessons. The assistant, who did not, observed only seven. The reason was that he was ill for some time during the period.

I made only two observation visits to the schools instead of the proposed three visits. The problem was both time and transport. The research was done at a time when Basic Education Project staff was preparing for the visit of an external consultant. Furthermore, a vehicle could not be released as often as was planned before.

It was agreed with the research assistants that the assistant should not sit in the same classroom when I visited a school lest the teacher felt threatened. During the first visit, which was done in the second week, I sampled the sheets already recorded by the assistants in each school. I

also held discussions with individual assistants. In other words, the first visit combined supervision of the assistants and data collection.

The data from the observation schedules was put together and tallied category by category. Percentages were then calculated. The information was later put on the computer. Observation schedules from the English medium schools and the Chichewa medium schools were computed separately for ease of comparison.

5.11.3. Interviews

Two different types of interviews were done namely teacher interviews and pupil interviews. Both types of interviews were done during the last week of the study. Eight out of the fifteen teachers and sixty-four pupils from eight schools were interviewed. While the teachers were picked purposively, the pupils were chosen through a stratified random sampling within the class setting. That is, names of girls were separated from those of boys at each school. Then four boys and four girls were randomly picked.

All the interviews were recorded manually because there was no tape recorder and the sponsors of the research could not buy one for the purpose. At the end of each interview the recorded points were reordered and then later in the day, after both the teacher and the eight pupils had

been interviewed, a fair copy was written in the field note book. The notes from the various schools were then synthesised. The interviews marked the end of the fieldwork and perhaps the most hectic part of the research.

5.12. Overview

This chapter started with a description of how the research topic was chosen. Reactions from political figures to the new language policy were presented and examined. In light of the reactions, the question seminal to the study was: What language of learning would be most useful in Malawi, particularly in primary school?

Then the chapter examined three different types of experimental research designs in language learning and language use. They were the pre-experimental, the true experimental and quasi-experimental designs, the last of which was chosen. The rationale for its choice was discussed. The procedures that were followed during the research were described and justified by means of details about the population, characteristics of the subjects, teachers, research schools and the communities served by or serving the schools. Finally, the process of developing, pilot testing and administering the research instruments was presented.

Problems faced during the course of the research were also presented. These included communication with authorities in the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, time pressure, and financial constraints which led to a reduced number of visits to the research schools. However, the whole process was worthwhile in that it yielded the required data. The next chapter describes the procedure of data analysis and discusses the findings.

Chapter 6

Analysis and Discussion of Results

The issue of English as the language of learning in Malawi was first put in its proper context in Chapter 1 of the study. It was argued that the introduction of communicative materials in the school system presented the possibility that pupils would be able to acquire sufficient English by the time they were in Standard 7 to enable them to use it as a language of learning. At this level, they probably would be able to learn other subjects in the curriculum through English without much difficulty. The research study was designed to find evidence for this hypothesis.

6.1. Data Analysis

The data presented below is from two sources. The first set of data consists of the results of classroom observation and information from pupil and teacher interviews. The second set consists of scores obtained through a pre-test in English for both the experimental and the control groups and a post-test written in English for the experimental group and written in Chichewa for the control group. The class observation data is presented first.

6.1.1. Teachers' Adherence to the Language of Learning

One of the threats to reliability in an experiment like the one reported here is the likelihood of teachers deviating from their designated

language of learning. Teachers working in real class situations are professionally and emotionally bound to respond to the learners' needs moment by moment during the time they are teaching. Their primary concern is that their pupils should learn as fast as possible. If they feel that a language other than the one assigned to them will achieve the purpose, they are tempted to use this other language.

In order to ascertain the degree of adherence to the language of learning assigned to the teachers by the researcher, the observation instrument described in the previous chapter had a section in which the research assistants reported on teachers' overall degree of adherence to the language of learning. The assessment was based on the number of the utterances the teacher made in either language during the lesson, as recorded in the 17 categories on the observation schedule. Research assistants used statements such as "the teacher used English twenty times and Chichewa five times", or "the teacher spoke English for ten minutes then Chichewa five times and then spoke English again for ten minutes" etc. These statements were verified against the entries on the observation sheets. This kind of recording was favoured more than the use of scales. The reason was that it gave the research assistants some freedom to comment on salient occurrences that an ordinary scale could not capture.

The research assistants observed and recorded 165 lessons. Ninety percent of the lessons were conducted in the designated languages of learning. The remaining 10% were lessons in which teachers code-switched, which occurred particularly when the teacher asked a question in English and pupils did not seem to understand. The results therefore show that generally, teachers adhered to the language of learning which they were requested to use during the research period. Therefore, none of the pupils in either the experimental or the control group had an undue advantage over others by being exposed to two languages of learning during the lessons.

6.1.2. Pupil Participation

Research assistants were also asked to comment on the overall participation of pupils in the lessons. Their comments were based on the entries they made on the observation schedule under categories 7-9 and categories 12-16 (see Appendix A1). They backed up their comments with their observation of what was happening in groups if group work was given. There was a marked difference in responses between the pupils in the experimental group and the control group. Far fewer pupils answered the teachers' questions in the English medium classrooms than those in the Chichewa medium classrooms did. For example, 67% of the pupils were able to explain a given point in the Chichewa medium classrooms while only 33% were able to do so in the English medium

classrooms when the teacher asked them. The following statements were extracted from a sample of the research assistants' comments in the English medium schools:

- Most pupils did not take part because the teacher did not explain the new concepts to the pupils clearly. Pupils did not understand him.
- The second language (English) interfered with the pupils' participation. Most of them wanted to speak in Chichewa.
- Pupils participated only to some extent because they were unable to enumerate the characteristics of money. They were unable to express themselves in English.
- Pupils lacked confidence in expressing themselves. They always wanted to speak in the vernacular.
- The participation of pupils was not good. They were hesitant in providing answers to the teacher's questions.

These extracts are from 5 of the 8 English medium schools and this was the general pattern throughout the English medium schools. Furthermore, the number of pupils who volunteered to answer questions was fewer in the English medium classes than in the Chichewa classes. Sometimes the same pupils volunteered throughout the lesson.

In group work, the general pattern was for the pupils to discuss every problem in Chichewa and then the group leader would report to the class in English. Members did not challenge group reports from other groups even when the teacher asked other group members to comment. The reason for this behaviour may not be known because no attempt was made to talk to the pupils after the lessons. However, one possibility could be that some of the pupils did not have the linguistic ability to challenge reports. In any case, most of the group presentations consisted of statements lifted from the textbook.

At one of the English medium schools in Zomba, the teacher taught a lesson about the concept of money. She used the so-called question and answer technique. The following extract depicts the nature and the degree of interaction in the class:

- T** What is money?
- P1** Money is paper.
- T** (Looks at P2 who volunteers)
- P2** Money is gold.
- T** Is it?
- P3** Money, we can buy things.
- T** Can someone try?
- P4** Money is homogeneity.

T No. That is a characteristic of money. Money is stamped metallic object, usually a disc or a printed piece of paper approved by government to be the accepted medium of exchange for buying and selling goods and services. What is money, class?

Ps Money is metallic object.

The teacher repeated the definition several times and the whole class followed her until the pupils had memorised this textbook definition of money. The teacher lifted the definition from the Teacher's Guide wholesale. It might be difficult to understand why the teacher actually read the definition to the pupils for them to memorise. It is likely however, that she herself was not confident enough with her knowledge of English. She was afraid that she might distort the meaning if she rephrased it for the sake of the pupils' understanding.

The notes the teacher gave to the pupils at the end of the lesson confirmed this assertion. They too were just lifted from the Teacher's Guide without any modifications. There were such terms as **homogeneity, identifiability, durability, acceptability, portability, divisibility, security** and **value**. None of these words except value exists in any of the English textbooks below Standard 7. Pupils met them here for the first time. In spite of this fact, the teacher did not even attempt to explain in language that pupils would understand easily what

the terms mean and why money must have these characteristics. The opportunity to expand pupils' linguistic repertoire and vocabulary was missed in the lesson. She herself struggled with correct pronunciation of some of the words.

This situation might mean two things. The teacher might either have come into the classroom unprepared or she herself might have problems with English. However, the first probability is unlikely because the teacher had a lot of teaching aids on her table and when teaching she always went back to her lesson notes whenever she seemed to have forgotten a point. The most likely thing was that her English was weak. After the lesson the researcher had some discussions with the teacher. In the process of the discussions she said, "the new textbooks are difficult. You know, the vocabulary is hard."

In group work, the teacher wanted the pupils to discuss the characteristics of money. When the pupils went into groups they began to ask their group leaders in Chichewa what they were supposed to do. *Kodi akuti tichite chiyani?* (What does she want us to do?) Some group leaders explained in Chichewa. Others waited for the teacher to come and explain the task to them again. When she came, she explained the task in Chichewa.

You did not understand what I said. Who is the group leader here?
What did I say you should do? I have taught you what money is

and how money looks like. I have also given you characteristics of money. Now I want you to discuss and write in your own words characteristics of money. In your own words (Extract from field notes).

Discussions in the groups were in Chichewa. Group reports consisted of what the pupils had copied from their textbooks verbatim. No group or pupil asked for clarification or questioned the content of the reports during presentations.

A similar situation was observed at another English medium school in Lilongwe. The teacher was teaching patrilineal and matrilineal cultural activities among Tumbuka and Chewa ethnic groups of Malawi. The terms **patrilineal** and **matrilineal** were used without explanation. Yet these words do not appear in English language textbooks although family relationships are taught in the lower classes. When the pupils were asked to discuss the advantages of lobola and *chikamwini* (a practice where a son-in-law lives with the woman's parents and relatives when he marries), the whole class was silent. Later a few individuals pointed out what they saw as advantages and disadvantages of both practices. However, their answers were mostly one-word answers. They did not explain why they thought such practices were an advantage or not. Whenever the teacher questioned their answers, they did not defend their views. This topic was familiar to the pupils in that marriages and marriage ceremonies are part of their experiences. Their communities take part in marriage ceremonies very often and the pupils themselves

are part of these cultural events. Lack of a lively debate on the issue could therefore be attributed to the problems of the language used, especially in the light of the lively discussion on the same topic in the Chichewa later in the lesson.

During the lesson, the researcher asked boys in Chichewa whom they would prefer to marry if they could choose between a girl from a lobola family and a girl from a *chikamwini* family. There was a crowd of hands in the air. One pupil chose the *lobola* family “because all the children are yours. In *chikamwini*, your relatives want to take all your property before you even die and they leave your children without anything”. This pupil was from the ethnic group that practices *chikamwini*. Many more pupils wanted to be given a chance to express their views. The same question was put to girls and most of the girls too raised their hands, wishing to express their opinions. One of the girls said *chikamwini*, because she would not leave her parents. The issue in the argument is not the pupils’ choices but the marked difference in the pupils’ ability to express their opinions in Chichewa and in English within the same lesson.

In the Chichewa medium schools there was no lack of debate. The following extracts from the research assistants’ comments provide a contrast with the extracts from the comments on the ‘money’ lesson in the English medium schools:

- Pupil[sic] participated very well by answering questions, explaining concepts and even asking questions wherever possible.
- Pupils were all active. They participated in group discussions.
- Most pupils participated in the lesson, especially in the group work.
- Pupils expressed themselves clearly when reporting group work to the whole class.
- Pupils' participation was very good indeed.
- They answered questions correctly without the difficulty of the language [sic].

In Lilongwe the researcher observed a teacher teaching the topic of external trade at one of the Chichewa medium schools. Towards the end of the lesson he asked his pupils to get into groups to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of external trade. Pupils were actively engaged in their work. Although there was order, pupils argued, disagreed and clarified their points of view before they reached a common understanding. During the presentation of their group work in a plenary, members helped their group leaders to clarify and defend their group views. This was not only a mark of group solidarity but also an indication that almost all of them understood what they had finally come up with as a final product of their deliberations.

One of the groups reported that one of the advantages of external trade was that Malawians could buy cheap things from other countries. The group leader gave an example of second-hand clothes that were available in most rural markets in their area and compared their prices with those of the other clothes that were manufactured by a local company.

However, a 14-year girl from another group rose and challenged the statement. She said:

Importing cheap things into Malawi is not an advantage. It is detrimental to the development of our country. If we are not careful, other countries will be dumping their cheap things in this country. Then our relatives who are working in factories that produce similar things will be out of jobs because things from these factories will no longer be sold. We will no longer go to secondary school because our relatives will not have any money to pay for our fees (notes made during personal observation).

This kind of thinking, in which the girl was able to link the short-term gains with the long term effects of importing cheap goods surprised the researcher and fascinated the other pupils. They all clapped hands for her. A boy in another group commented that he had never thought of such possible effects until the girl mentioned them. This was a typical example of children teaching each other and enriching each other's knowledge.

A similar experience was observed at another Chichewa medium school in Zomba. The teacher was teaching a lesson about Malawi's neighbours. In the process of building up his notes on the chalkboard,

he said that one of Malawi's neighbours was Zaire. A boy from the back raised his hand. He stood up and said, "But sir, people do not call that country Zaire anymore. They call it the Democratic Republic of Congo." Then the teacher smiled and asked: "When did they change the name, class? Another pupil answered. The classroom atmosphere was relaxed. When the teacher gave them group work, the pupils discussed and corrected each other as they worked on a sketch map of Southern Africa together.

The description of the lessons and the degree of interaction in the two schools contrast sharply with the one presented earlier for the English medium schools. While group work there consisted of copying answers from the textbook, in contrast, group members in the Chichewa medium schools discussed argued about and clarified ideas before they agreed to write their final group answers. Unlike group leaders in the English medium schools who did not feel confident to express themselves because they lacked the appropriate English vocabulary, leaders as well as group members in the Chichewa medium schools confidently and logically presented their points of view. Pupil participation both in group work and in class deliberations was much higher in the Chichewa medium schools than in the English medium schools.

6.1.3. Pupils' Opinions on the Language of Learning

Interviews were conducted for both teachers and pupils separately. The schedule for each group consisted of 4 questions. The interviews were done in order to gauge the attitude of teachers towards the language of instruction that they had just used in the research. Similar questions but requiring answers from the pupils' perspective were administered to 64 pupils from 8 schools - 4 boys and 4 girls from each school. Eight teachers were interviewed at the schools from where the pupils were chosen. In both cases, the number was half of the number the researcher had planned to interview. The remaining half was not interviewed because of transport problems and time constraints. Pupils' opinions are presented in this section while those of teachers will be presented in the next section.

Pupils were asked what they felt about being taught and learning Social Studies in the language assigned to their class (English or Chichewa). They were also asked to say whether they thought pupils who were being taught in the other language were able to understand Social Studies content better than they did. Concerning the first question, 94% of those who were being taught in Chichewa said they felt at ease and comfortable while only 31% of those who were being taught in English said so. These percentages represent 30 out of 32 pupils in the

Chichewa medium sample and only 10 out 32 pupils in the English medium sample.

When they were asked the reason why they were at ease and comfortable, those who were taught in Chichewa said they understood what the teachers were teaching them because the teachers were using their language (the pupils' home language). They further said that learning through Chichewa helped them to understand the new concepts in Social Studies faster. They asserted that even the teachers themselves presented their work more clearly in Chichewa than they did in English. It should be pointed out that these were pupils who were taught in English before the experiment. From that point of view, they had a practical comparison between the way they were taught in English and the way the teachers expressed themselves in Chichewa lessons.

On the other hand, when those who were being taught through English were asked the reason why they felt comfortable, most of their answers were not related to their ability to understand the concepts in Social Studies or the learning process. They said they felt good because they were learning "more" English and they would be able to use English better in the end. Because they were learning more English they would do well in secondary school and get better jobs later. If they met foreigners, they would be able to communicate with them in English.

However, in Zomba, one of the pupils who felt that it was difficult to be learning in English said:

Sometimes our teacher uses big words that we don't understand and when we ask her in Chichewa to tell us the meaning of the difficult words, she says she cannot tell us unless we ask her in English. But when I want to ask in English my friends laugh at me. They say my English is bad. Sometimes I just keep quiet because I am afraid of my friends (Extract from interview).

At an estate school in Lilongwe another pupil said:

My father says that when I know English I will be able to work in town. But I don't understand much when the teacher is teaching. Sometimes I do understand and when he asks questions, I think I know the answer. But I cannot give the answer because I don't have the English word for it. When I stand up I keep quiet and my friends think that I do not have the answer. The teacher looks at me and then turns to another pupil who gives the same answer I have in my mind. I feel very bad (Extract from interview).

The statements from the two pupils seem to suggest that in a situation like this, the pupils were going through a mental struggle, searching for the correct words or sentences with which to accomplish the task before them. To their disappointment the words and the sentences were not available in their English language repertoire although they had them in Chichewa. This experience must have been frustrating to them as learners. Therefore, it is likely that instead of enjoying learning and reflecting upon what they were learning, the pupils were thinking more about their inability to express themselves. The psychological effect the experience might have on their overall learning is subject to speculation.

However, it can be argued that a heightened degree of anxiety reduces the motivation to learn or to concentrate on the task at hand.

From these statements, it is clear that the type of comfort referred to by the English group was different from that of the Chichewa group. The English group felt comfortable because they were being taught in a language that had instrumental value for their future life. Thus they were comfortable, not because the language facilitated learning or because they understood other subjects better, but because they had further opportunities to learn English through Social Studies. They felt that by learning through English they were becoming better bilinguals faster than their friends in the Chichewa medium schools were.

The strength of the instrumental value of English among the pupils cannot be underestimated. This is reflected in the following statement made by one of the pupils during an interview:

I know it is difficult to learn in English. But I try to persevere because I cannot succeed in life without English. I cannot find a place in a secondary school without English and in offices people speak English. Without learning English you cannot get a job in town, even as a cleaner in an office (Extract from interview).

Thus, the pupils were very clear about the key role that English plays in the upward social and economic mobility of the Malawian society.

On the question of their feelings about their friends learning in the other language than the one they were using, 52% thought that those who

were learning through the Chichewa medium were learning better. Only 25% said those learning through English were learning better. The remaining 23% did not feel that one group was in any advantageous position. A pupil from one of the Chichewa medium schools remarked that there was no difference in learning through English or Chichewa. "It is the way teachers teach that counts."

However, one of the pupils from the English medium schools said:

I know that our friends who are learning Social Studies in Chichewa will get higher marks than we will if we are given an examination. Learning in Chichewa is easy. They know the language and when the teacher is explaining [things] they understand quickly. In English it is difficult. In most cases, you have to ask the teacher what certain words mean. Sometimes the teacher thinks that you are wasting his time. (Extract from interview).

What this pupil seemed to suggest was that it was not only how teachers taught the subject that counted, but also the language the teachers used when teaching. Thus, some pupils seemed to be aware of the important role that the language of learning played in their understanding of the lessons. The implicit mention of wasting time may also suggest that because pupils in classrooms where Chichewa was the language of learning did not need to ask for explanations often, pupils in these classrooms might cover more ground in their learning than in the English medium classrooms.

The next question put to the pupils was whether they would like to continue to be taught through the language they were using, that is, English for the English medium schools and Chichewa for Chichewa medium schools in the study. They were also asked to give reasons why they wanted to continue to be taught in the language. All the pupils who were taught in English said they would like to continue to be taught in English. On the other hand, only 31% of those who were taught in Chichewa were in favour of continuing to learn in Chichewa. The remaining 69% said Chichewa-medium should be discontinued. Taken as a whole group, 84% were in favour of the use of English as the language of learning while only 16% wanted Chichewa as the language of learning. The reason advanced in favour of Chichewa was mainly that it was easy to follow lessons. Those in favour of the continuation of English as a language of learning gave reasons such as:

- to expand my knowledge of English
- to enhance my ability to speak English
- to practise our English
- to learn special English in other subjects (different registers)
- to prepare for secondary school.

Significantly, although 94% of the pupils clearly saw the advantage of learning in Chichewa in the first question, only 16% of the same group said Chichewa should be continued as a language of learning. The

following remark by a fifteen-year old girl from one of the schools in Lilongwe provides the basis for the response:

It is not good for us to be learning Social Studies in Chichewa. I come to school to learn English not Chichewa, because I always use Chichewa at home. This is killing us [learning in Chichewa]. We will not know much English. I am glad that our teacher says this will stop after we have written the final test (extract from an interview).

The dilemma in which the pupils found themselves was clear. They were unable to reconcile the instrumental value of English with the problems it posed to their acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. This dilemma may be a reflection of bigger dilemmas facing policy-makers in the education system as a whole. What the classroom results suggest to them is contrary to their commitment to the existing language policy.

In spite of the understanding that the worth of pupils' opinions is often limited by their restricted experience and to some extent by their inability to express themselves with a reasonable degree of precision and confidence, the results reflect what it was that the pupils valued. In any case, those who were interviewed in the study were old enough to speak with authority. The youngest was thirteen while the oldest was eighteen years of age.

The results from the classroom observation and interviews presented above reflect the learning process and feelings of the learners. Participation of pupils in the learning process was much higher in the

Chichewa medium classes than in the English medium classes. Pupils in the Chichewa medium classes interacted both among themselves and with their teachers more than their counterparts in English medium classes. However both groups favoured English as a language of instruction.

6.1.4. Teachers' Opinions on the Language of Learning

Teachers were asked what they felt about teaching Social Studies in the language assigned to them. They were also asked what they thought were the experiences and problems of the teachers who were teaching in the other language (Chichewa or English). In reply to the first question, those who were teaching in English said they felt good and comfortable when they were teaching in English. Those who were teaching in Chichewa said they did not like to teach in Chichewa. When they were asked why they did not like to teach in Chichewa, all of them said they were used to teaching in English. One of the teachers elaborated this statement by saying:

You know that in college we learn everything in English except when we are learning Chichewa. We do our teaching practice in English and all our notes are in English. This means that our thinking about teaching is almost certainly turned towards using English. It is very difficult to break away from what we are used to. There are times when I have to search for a Chichewa equivalent when I teach in Chichewa (Extract from interview notes).

This teacher from Lilongwe was a native speaker of Chichewa. It was striking therefore, that he was talking of searching for equivalent words

when teaching in Chichewa. The teacher suggested that even when teaching in his own home language he was translating some of the concepts from English. However, there is some merit in suggesting that through the teachers' long exposure to English, teaching in English might have been turned into a habit. Like any other habit, it might be a big challenge for the teachers to change to Chichewa.

There was another reason why the teachers did not want to teach in Chichewa. They said that teaching in English enhanced their ability to communicate in English. It may be speculated that teaching in English is important both for personal and for professional reasons. These were teachers in rural areas. In the remote areas of Malawi the most educated person in the community may be the teacher. The only place where the teacher can use English without offending others is in the classroom. Since English is associated with "being educated" in the country, it is possible that teachers cherish it and they do not wish to forget how to use it lest they fall back to "being semi-educated" and lose their professional status.

Teachers also said that some Chichewa terminology lacked precision and some terms translated from English or other languages were difficult to explain. As an example, one of the teachers who used Chichewa medium said:

I was teaching longitudes and latitudes in Chichewa. These terms were not translated into Chichewa. Instead, they were imported into the language and then they were given a Chichewa spelling. I don't think that by replacing English spelling with the Chichewa spelling simplified my task as a teacher or that of my pupils as learners. I was at pains to explain these abstract concepts to my pupils. My pupils also found them difficult to understand. I think the reason is that the concepts do not exist in Chichewa (Extract from interview notes).

This observation is valid and suggests that borrowed words must take the context of the indigenous language and be given the local flavour in order for them to be meaningful.

However, what also seems to be at issue here is the choice of the abstract terms in the argument. The researcher found a teacher at one of the English medium schools in Lilongwe asking pupils to explain what latitudes and longitudes were. No pupil volunteered. Then he repeated the question in Chichewa. There was silence. At this moment the teacher sensed that his pupils had not understood the two terms when he was teaching them. He then repeated the explanation in Chichewa drawing on the pupils' experiences:

You remember that we said the earth is round like an egg. People divided up the earth into parts by using imaginary lines. The imaginary lines that are drawn from the north to the south are called longitudes and the lines drawn from the east to the west are called latitudes (Extract from field notes).

The two experiences indicate that generally, very abstract terms are difficult for learners to internalise. It is the explanation that bridges the

gap in the pupils' minds. The teacher in the English medium school succeeded in bridging that gap by resorting to the language that his pupils knew better.

Although this was the case, the argument that some Chichewa words are imprecise still holds. For example, the second teacher used the analogy of an egg to describe the earth. An egg is not round. It is oval. Since there is no Chichewa word for oval the word 'round' is used for both oval and round shapes. It is outside the scope of this study to try to explain how words of this nature are dealt with to give them a precise meaning.

Teachers also said that it would be difficult for them to teach in Chichewa because there were concepts and words in Chichewa which were taboo and very embarrassing to say in front of pupils. One of the teachers at a Catholic primary school in Zomba said:

These taboo words are not found in Social Studies, but in Health Education and Life Skills. In Life Skills we are supposed to teach sex and sexuality. I feel very embarrassed when I attempt to talk about sex in presence of adolescents. As you know in our culture nobody talks about sex in the open. It is also viewed as crude to talk about certain parts of our bodies. But we can talk about them in English (Extract from an interview).

According to the teacher's argument, English seems to serve another social function among the teachers. The function is to fulfil the obligation of the syllabuses in which some concepts and words are culturally a taboo. Thus by using English as the language of learning,

the teachers seem to avoid the embarrassment of being too open when discussing topics that are often restricted to married people or people of a particular age group. However, this line of thought was not probed, but it would be interesting to pursue it. As regards the second question, those who were teaching in English felt that those who were teaching in Chichewa were facing a lot of problems. They used the same arguments about the lack of precision in some Chichewa terminology, the problems of translating some words from English into Chichewa and the taboo argument. Those who were teaching in Chichewa felt that their counterparts were in a better position than they themselves were. Their arguments were the same as those of the teachers who taught in English. However, there was one teacher who said that he felt uncomfortable when teaching in Chichewa for a different reason:

I find teaching in Chichewa very challenging. Although I learned Chichewa in secondary school and at college, I don't think that I know it well enough, particularly for the purpose of using it in teaching. Chichewa is not my home language. Here I am teaching children whose home language is Chichewa. Sometimes, when I am teaching, the children whisper to each other or giggle in low tones. When they do that, I suspect that I have probably used a wrong Chichewa word. This often embarrasses me (Extract from an interview).

During the interview with the teacher and in subsequent informal discussions the teacher seemed not to have serious problem with the language. However his remarks here seem to suggest that using Chichewa in everyday life is different from using it in formal settings like the classroom where the language is used in technical ways. In his case,

the problem of using formal Chichewa was compounded by the fact that the audience was composed of home speakers of the language of learning. The use of the Chichewa must have raised a certain degree of anxiety in the teacher. Therefore the teacher might have been over cautious in his choice of words. This in turn could have some impact on the lesson delivery itself.

This teacher's statement about using a second or an additional language as the language of learning for pupils whose home language is the language of learning itself raises an interesting question which may have some implications on language policy in education. For example, if the policy is to use a local language as the language of learning, what guarantee is there that teachers whose home language is the language of learning will be provided? The teacher in the interview suggested implicitly that it is better to have native speakers of the language of learning to teach pupils through that home language than to have teachers whose native language is different from the pupils' home language, even if this is a local language. Of course, this argument looks weak when one considers that English is not a home language for almost all the primary school teachers in Malawi. However, the point is that, unlike Chichewa, English is a second language for both the teachers and the pupils.

In spite of these observations, answers from both groups of teachers were consistent. They felt the same when it came to the difficulties of teaching through the Chichewa medium. However, what was interesting was the fact that none of them ever mentioned anything from the learners' point of view. For example, none of them said that some concepts would be difficult for pupils to understand if he or she taught in a particular language or that the teachers who were teaching in a particular language were working harder to make their pupils understand. In their arguments there was no discernible link between teaching and learning.

Possibly teachers tend to assume that what they find easy to explain is also easy for the pupils to understand. They think that learners understand what they mean and that when they initiate interaction their pupils see things the way they see them (Edwards and Furlong 1978). This assumption makes them blind to the fact that their job demands that they should not be acting as dispensers of information but as effective communicators who must help the learners to digest that information.

The next question asked teachers to say why some teachers used both English and Chichewa in the same lesson in the classroom. They were also asked to list a few topics that they felt they did not teach well because they used the 'wrong' language of learning. Only one teacher

said he had difficulties with teaching latitudes and longitudes because he taught in Chichewa. The rest said they did not attribute any difficulty in teaching any concepts to the language of learning.

Concerning code switching in the classroom, teachers gave two reasons only to justify this practice. First, they said that teachers indulge in code switching because they want to ensure their pupils' complete understanding of the new concepts in a lesson. Secondly, they said that teachers resorted to code-switching in order to make up for their deficiency in the appropriate vocabulary for the content in the lesson.

This was the first time that teachers were able to reflect upon their own competence in English and put the academic welfare of the pupils within the framework of the language of learning. It was also a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that some of them had problems with English and therefore were finding it difficult to communicate clearly with the pupils.

Like the pupils' responses, the teachers' responses indicate that teachers had a more positive attitude towards teaching in English than towards teaching in Chichewa. By using English in the classroom they were convinced that they would maintain their own proficiency in it.

Therefore, those who were teaching in English had a high motivation to do so.

The results from classroom observation and interviews presented above reflect the learning process and the feelings of both the learners and the teachers. Test scores, which are a reflection of the learning outcomes, are now presented.

6.1.5. Test Scores

The test scores were obtained on three 40-item tests. The scores were given to the Research Department at the Malawi Institute of Education where statistical analyses were done. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used. The conventional significance level of 0.05 was used. The results are presented in the following tables:

Table 2: Pre-test and Post-test Results

Tests	MOI	N	Mean	SD	Median	Max	Min
Pre-test	Chichewa	250	27.18	12.44	26.00	72.00	4.00
	English	414	24.98	10.61	24.00	64.00	2.00
Post-test	Chichewa	250	45.33	14.74	46.00	80.00	5.00
	English	414	39.16	15.59	40.00	82.00	6.00

Key: MOI = Medium of Instruction, SD = Standard Deviation, Max = Maximum, Min = Minimum

The results show that both groups gained from the instruction. The Chichewa medium group means rose from 27.18 to 45.33 while the means for the English medium group rose from 24.98 to 39.16. The standard deviation for the Chichewa medium group widened by 2.30 while the standard deviation for the English medium group widened by 4.98, twice that of Chichewa. Thus, the difference between low and high achieving pupils who were taught through English was wider than it was among the pupils who were taught in Chichewa.

When the test of significance was applied to the two post-test means, it was found that the two differed significantly at $p > 0.05$. Pupils who were taught in Chichewa scored significantly higher than those who were taught in English did. These results are consistent with findings by Kachaso (1988) and Williams (1996). The results relating to the third question of the research study are presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Chichewa Medium: Comparative Results for Chichewa and Chiyao Mother Tongue Pupils.

Test	MT	N	Mean	S D	Median	Max.	Min.
Pre-test	Chichewa	176	27.89	13.31	26.00	72.00	4.00
	Chiyao	68	24.94	10.06	26.00	42.00	4.00
Post-test	Chichewa	176	45.43	14.64	46.00	80.00	5.00
	Chiyao	68	44.71	15.52	44.00	74.00	14.00

Key: MT = Mother tongue SD. = Standard Deviation, Max. = Maximum, Min. = Minimum

The table shows that both groups gained. The mean for Yao children moved up from 24.94 to 44.71 while that of the Chewa children shifted from 27.89 to 45.43. However, the difference in the means of the two groups at the post-test level was less than 1.0. When the test of significance was applied there was no significant difference in performance between the two groups. In the multilingual societies of Africa studies on comparison of pupils' performance using two local languages seem to be relatively few (See Chilora, 2001 for the relationship between teacher's home language and pupils' home language in infants' classes). This researcher is unaware of any similar study in this area with which to compare the results.

6.2. Discussion of Results

The results have indicated that Yao children performed as well as Chewa children when the medium of instruction was Chichewa. They have also shown that pupils who were learning in Chichewa performed better than those who were being taught in English did. The difference in performance may be attributed to a number of factors such as the learning environment, teacher variable, attitude and motivation of learners and the language of instruction. These factors are examined below.

6.2.1. Learning Environment

Thinking of possible surface differences in the learning environment between the English medium schools and the Chichewa medium schools, one might suggest that perhaps pupils in the Chichewa medium schools were learning in a more conducive learning environment than the pupils in the English group. However, the detailed description provided in Chapter 5 concerning the condition of school buildings, the communities around the schools and the limited learning resources in both groups of schools indicates that the environment in both groups was relatively homogeneous. For example, both the English medium and Chichewa medium schools had problems such as acute shortages of instructional materials; bare classroom walls (no charts); being surrounded by communities that survived on subsistence farming; and parents with

high levels of illiteracy. Therefore, any assertion suggesting differences in the learning environment cannot be supported. The sets of schools were almost at par in terms of the learning environment.

6.2.2. Teacher Variable

The second possibility could be that the teacher variable explains the results. However, in this study the selection criteria for teachers were such that they reduced the major differences among the teachers. The training just before the start of the study also contributed to bringing the teachers closer to each other. Furthermore, the general pattern of the teachers' lessons on the observation sheets was very similar. The conclusion drawn from this careful selection, systematic training and the observation of lesson delivery in the classroom is that teachers were not very different in their teaching approaches.

6.2.3. Pupils' Attitude and Motivation

The third possibility might be that pupils in the 'English' group were not motivated enough to learn. Motivation indeed energises both learners and teachers. However, the interview results suggest that pupils who were learning through the medium of English had a more positive attitude towards the language of learning than those pupils who were learning in Chichewa did. The instrumental value that the English medium pupils attached to English must have motivated them to persist.

with learning by means of English. The statement made by one of the pupils that she would persevere, although learning in English was difficult, is a case in point.

On the other hand, the girl who was quoted in the study as saying that their teacher was wasting their time by teaching them in Chichewa presents some evidence of an attitude less positive towards learning through the medium of Chichewa. Furthermore, as said earlier, a majority of pupils who were taught through the medium of Chichewa did not want to continue to use this language as the language of learning. They wanted to switch to English, while none from the English medium group wanted to switch to Chichewa. Therefore, it may be argued that pupils who were taught in English were more motivated to learn in that language than pupils who were learning through the medium of Chichewa were. In spite of this low motivation the Chichewa group scored higher than the English medium group. The low performance in the written tests by the English group can therefore not be attributed to lack of motivation. The possible cause of the poor performance by the group remains speculation.

6.2.4. Language of Learning

The language of learning could be a contributory factor towards the group's low performance. This hypothesis is supported by the results of

the classroom observations. Education essentially takes place in discourse between teachers and their pupils. When teachers fail to express themselves or are unable to adjust the language of the textbook to the level of their learners, then education does not take place. Teachers in the English medium schools often gave textbook definitions of the concepts they were supposed to teach their pupils and even impressed upon them the necessity of memorising some definitions without understanding them. They often gave notes from the teacher's guide without adjusting them to the linguistic level of the pupils.

Teachers are intuitively aware that rephrasing, restatement and sometimes demonstration improve learners' comprehension of subject matter. Their classroom experience bears testimony to this claim. However, one can only rephrase or adjust a description of a particular concept when one has a sufficient repertoire of the language in use. Without this repertoire, the safest way is to reproduce wholesale what one has read or heard. This is what the teachers did. The alternative would have been for them to resort to code switching, but they could not do this because of the restriction imposed by the study. Teachers themselves acknowledged that they sometimes resorted to code-switching because they wanted to make up for their deficiency in vocabulary and lack of the appropriate language that would make pupils understand

what they were teaching. However, one teacher commented on the issue.

He said:

Using both Chichewa and English in a lesson can be confusing to pupils, particularly if the pupils are asked in English later. Pupils may not have the English vocabulary for the concept. Besides this problem, their spelling in English may be affected (Extract from interview).

Perhaps this is why teachers did not speak much on the issue. Lessow-Hurley argues that “the switches a bilingual speaker may make in ordinary conversation do not necessarily meet instructional objectives for language development and delivery of content (1996:67-68).

Similarly, pupils failed to communicate with their teachers about key concepts in particular lessons because of the language barrier. A classic example was the situation in the study where the observer recorded that some pupils wanted to say something in Chichewa but because they were not allowed (because of the restriction imposed by the study) they simply sat back. They did not have the confidence to express their points of view because they did not have the linguistic ability to do so. To use Cummins’s (1976) theory, they may have been operating below the threshold level.

The new teaching approaches (communicative approaches) were introduced in Malawi with the view that they could improve pupils’ ability to communicate and therefore to prepare the pupils for English medium

faster than the old approaches. In spite of the new approaches, pupils were not sufficiently prepared to participate fully in the learning process. Unlike what was happening in the English medium schools, pupils in the Chichewa medium schools discussed and argued their ideas with and clarified them to both their teachers and their fellow pupils. Since input is made comprehensible through interaction, it could be possible that their relatively good performance in the post-test was because they talked over whatever new concepts they came across both among themselves and with their teachers. Through this interaction, they were able not only to grasp the meaning of the new concepts or skills but also to expand the meaning of what they were learning. They were able to present a broader picture of what they were learning and to relate it to their local experiences. This was demonstrated by the very strong academic argument that the girl reported in the study made about the possible negative consequences of buying cheap goods from other countries.

They were able to do this because they were using a language in which their competence was sufficiently developed to tackle their work. They themselves acknowledged that they were able to understand their teachers better because the teachers were using a familiar language. This linguistic factor may be a contributor to their high scores. It can therefore be argued that pupils who used English as their language of

learning did not benefit academically as much as their counterparts in the Chichewa medium schools. The use of English as language of instruction did not improve their participation in the learning process. This state of affairs has implications for the existing language policy in education in the country, suggesting that it may need to be reconsidered. Turning to the Yao and Chewa results, the performance of the two groups of pupils suggests that neither group suffered from the use of Chichewa as the language of learning. The Yao children seemed to show that they had sufficient knowledge of the Chichewa language although it was not their home language. With this knowledge, they were able to follow instruction in Chichewa just as well as their counterparts who were native speakers of the language.

The question that comes to mind then is why the Yao children performed just as well while Chichewa is their L2. Why did the English group not perform equally well although English is also an L2 for most of them as Chichewa is to the Yao children? Both English and Chichewa are introduced in year 1 at school. Why were there such differences? In the first place, there is one major difference between English and Chiyao in the Malawian context. Chiyao is a Bantu language with very close affinity with Chichewa. English is not. As a Bantu language, Chiyao has sentence structures that are similar to those in Chichewa. Some of the vocabulary is the same, with very minor differences in pronunciation.

For example, the words *Chikamwini* (marriage system where the man joins the parents of his wife) and *malonda* (trade) mean the same in both languages. These similarities may have facilitated quick mastery of Chichewa by the Yao children so that by the time they were in Standard 7 they had a better control of the language and therefore were able to follow instruction in it more efficiently than those who were instructed in English could. Furthermore, Yaos and Chewas are in constant contact with each other through trade, migration, employment and intermarriage. The contacts provide children with an opportunity to become bilingual by the time they come to school.

On the other hand, English is far removed from the pupils. The sentence structures are often very different from the structures in both Chichewa and Chiyao. There is no single word of vocabulary in English that is similar to either Chichewa or Chiyao vocabulary except borrowings. Unlike the Chichewa and Chiyao situation, opportunities for children to practise English do not arise in the rural areas of Malawi. Thus, for most children in rural Malawi, their first contact with English is on the day that they start schooling. Most of the parents are illiterate. Since English is predominantly acquired through schooling in Malawi, such parents can do nothing either to encourage or motivate their children to practise the language at home. Among Yaos parents can encourage their

children to practise Chichewa and that provides the children with a firm base for language development when they start school.

The results of the study suggest that a language that is closer to the child's home language is better for the child to use as the language of learning in school than a language that is too far removed from his or her home language. The Malawian languages therefore seem more suitable for Malawian school children to use for learning than English, particularly in primary school. Then, the question about what the implications are for the existing language policy in education in the country arises.

6.3. Implications

One of the results of the study relates to the effect of the medium of instruction on learning. The results suggest that the English medium policy as it exists does help learners sufficiently in the acquisition of the knowledge and skills that the primary curriculum stipulates. It might even contribute to the high repetition rates discussed in Chapter 1.

The results imply that teachers may not have prepared the learners well enough for them to be learning through the medium of English. It was pointed out in Chapter 4 that the country had changed its language methodology from the structural approach to teaching to communicative

language teaching (CLT). It was further said that the new English language materials took cultural relevance into consideration in order to reduce barriers that might exist between the materials and the learners. These innovations were meant to improve the language learning process.

In spite of the innovations, learners still faced problems in understanding the subject matter in the lessons. They were not able to express their views clearly and logically. They resorted to Chichewa whenever they had a burning issue to put across to their friends. Therefore, although CLT was introduced, the approach does not seem to have been able to provide the learners with sufficient communicative skills, which are so vital in classroom interaction.

To be fair to the teachers, the introduction of the communicative materials into schools did not go together with some kind of orientation of teachers to the new materials. The failure to train them may have made them feel incapable of handling the materials effectively. Since teachers were coming from a classroom culture where structural presentation of language items was the norm, the new language materials might have been viewed as confusing. Consequently, teachers might have fallen back on their old ways or indeed have created a hybrid of the old and the new approach whenever that worked.

Classroom procedures and learning processes are mediated by language. If language itself is not taught well enough, pupils are not equipped for the English medium. Therefore, if the existing language policy has to serve its purpose, teachers of English should be trained in how to prepare pupils for the English medium. In its present situation the policy seems to affect the learning process of the children adversely.

The third implication of the results refers to the similarity between the performance of Chiyao-speaking and Chichewa-speaking pupils being taught in Chichewa. The results suggest that, in a multilingual society like Malawi, a local language that is more widely understood and is closely related to other local languages within the society could be a better choice for a medium of instruction than a remote foreign language that has no affinity with or resemblance to the local languages. The Yao children demonstrated that they were able to understand and follow instruction in Chichewa just as well as their Chewa counterparts. Therefore possibly there is no need for a policy that stipulates that all the children in the country should be using their different ethnic languages as languages of learning. A selected number of local languages that are understood by many speakers of other local languages might be an appropriate option. However, such a move could be a daunting one because of the teachers' attitude towards local languages as indicated in the interviews. Similarly, the interview data suggests that parents as

well as pupils would probably not be pleased with such a policy. Pupils made it clear that they came to school to learn English.

The findings of a different study undertaken by the same researcher are relevant in this regard. Selected school committees and community leaders in Northern Malawi were interviewed (Mchazime, 2000). Parents felt uneasy that their children spoke too much Chichewa and were afraid that their children might eventually lose their home language.

The need for a home language to be maintained is important. Maintenance relates to the preservation of the home language and the society's culture, which is embedded in the language. However, the facilitative role of the home language in education is a different matter. In terms of language policy in education a distinction should be made between the educational functions of the home languages and their cultural and preservative functions. Decisions about the former should be left to educationists while the latter should be the prerogative of language rights groups.

6.4. Conclusion

This study was undertaken to investigate the effect of English as the medium of instruction on pupils' academic performance in Social Studies in Standard 7 pupils in Malawi. The main question was what the most

appropriate language of learning for Standard 7 pupils in Malawi is. Three specific research questions were posed. The first was whether the use of English as the medium of instruction in Social Studies resulted in higher academic performance among Standard 7 pupils in Malawi. The second was whether the English medium increased pupil participation in the learning process under the existing conditions in the education system. The final question was whether the use of Chichewa as the medium of instruction resulted in different levels of performance between Chiyao and Chichewa home language pupils in Standard 7. It was hoped that the investigation might suggest or point to a possible appropriate language of learning for senior primary school children in Malawi.

However, the quest for an appropriate language of learning is a difficult one. The literature review in section 4.3 has presented a complex picture of effects of using a second language as the language of learning. Some studies within the same context have produced contradictory results. In the review the studies done by Sharma (cited by Serpell, 1989) and McAdam (1978) in Zambia were cited as examples. The study done by Williams (1993) in Malawi and that done by Wagner, Sparatt and Ezzaki (1989) in Morocco also produced different results in reading in L2. It will be recalled that in Williams' study Malawian children performed better in Chichewa than in English while in Wagner's study both Arab and Berber students performed equally well in literacy in Arabic. Then there was the

variability study done by Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986) which produced different results among Korean students depending on the country where the subjects were. These studies and several others discussed in the literature review signal a warning against making sweeping generalisations about the success of home language as medium of instruction.

In addition to the limitations imposed on the interpretation of the findings by the literature review, the size of the sample in the study was small. It covered only 15 schools out of close to 2 700 rural senior primary schools and it involved only 664 pupils. Furthermore, the scores for the comparison were from a single test although there was a pre-test. However, the research was done in natural classroom settings and there were regular and systematic observations when lessons were being conducted. Consequently, the results are a fair reflection of the pupils' performance under the normal teaching conditions in Malawi. Any conclusions drawn from the study should be understood within this context.

It has been demonstrated that the performance of the pupils in the English medium classes was lower than the performance of the pupils in the Chichewa medium classes. In the discussion, it was argued that the possible explanation for this difference was the language of instruction.

A number of reasons were advanced to support this argument. Following this argument, it may be further argued that the results suggest that generally, English as the language of learning did not assist the pupils to perform as well as did the Chichewa medium group.

The results from the classroom observations also suggest that English might have prevented learners from effective and sufficient participation in the learning process. Whenever the class teacher asked questions the few pupils who understood the questions answered in single words, even where the questions required them to explain (wh- questions). Most class interactions among the pupils were done in Chichewa rather than in English. In contrast, pupils in the Chichewa group participated significantly more frequently and more freely than their counterparts in the English medium group. They clarified their points of view, argued logically and defended their answers whenever they were challenged. This suggests that their linguistic ability facilitated their high degree of participation in the learning process.

Finally, the Chiyao/Chichewa results suggest that the performance of the Yao children did not suffer as a result of their being instructed in Chichewa, although it was not their first language. At Standard 7 level, there was no significant difference between their performance and that of the Chewa children although Chichewa was the first language for the

Chewa children. The study therefore, suggests that under the existing conditions, Chichewa may be more appropriate than English as a language of learning for senior primary school children in order for them to learn other subjects in the curriculum effectively.

One of the most interesting insights offered by the findings of the study concerns the attitude of both pupils and teachers towards using a local language as a language of learning. When the study was being designed it was assumed that pupils would be pleased and willing to be taught Social Studies in a language they knew better and that such an experience would psychologically motivate them. However, contrary to this assumption, pupils made it clear that they came to school to learn English not Chichewa. They did not distinguish between using English as language of learning and as a content subject. They saw the use of English as language of learning as their opportunity to learn the various forms that English takes when used in other subject areas (register).

The teachers' attitude towards the use of Chichewa as the language of learning came as a surprise too. Most teachers were Chichewa home language speakers and the remaining few were almost perfect bilinguals except for one. One would assume that using a language that was familiar to both the pupils and the teachers would be appealing to the teachers. This was not the case with the teachers in the study. They

were sceptical about the use of Chichewa as the language of learning. The reasons they advanced were not strictly educational. Perhaps there were deeper underlying social reasons for their attitude. Nonetheless, their attitude could have some bearing on the implementation of any policy that does not address their stand first, since possible resistant groups should not be under-estimated in language planning (see Kelman, (1971).

6.5. Recommendations

It is difficult to make recommendations for a system that strongly believes that English is the passport to better jobs and therefore to personal economic prosperity. It is perhaps even more difficult when one looks at the complex picture that the literature review has painted on the use of second language as language of learning. Nonetheless, the study has confirmed the findings of earlier studies done in Malawi by Williams, (1993) and (Kachaso, 1989).

On the basis of both the present study and the two before it, it is recommended that the existing language policy in education in Malawi should be reviewed because English as the language of learning seems to retard learners' progress. Better ways of teaching English should be investigated if English is to remain the language of instruction. There are several alternative ways of making children acquire the language.

Alternatively it could be introduced as the language of learning at a later stage in the education system.

It is recommended that a separate study should be done to investigate how teachers in schools are using the new language materials and to gauge the impact the materials are making on the learners.

It is further recommended that the possibility of a study on teacher behaviour and motivation when teachers use a particular language as the medium of instruction should be investigated. Such a study may be able to elucidate teachers' attitudes towards the language of instruction that they use. Further research is needed in this area to guide language planners and policy makers.

Finally, it is recommended that research studies should be undertaken to compare performance among different ethnic groups in multilingual societies of Africa when instruction is in one of the local languages. The results could aid educationists in critically examining the need to use more than one local language as a language of learning in any country, enabling them to make the best use of scarce financial and other resources.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A1: Pre – and Post-tests

6. The store of value in money is dependent on _____
- A. inflation rate
 - B. interest rate
 - C. exchange rate
 - D. goods sold
7. Cheques and postal orders are safe because they can be _____ immediately if they are lost
- A. found
 - B. cancelled
 - C. deposited
 - D. reported
8. Why do banks break money into smaller units? They do so because _____
- A. of divisibility
 - B. some goods can be bought with small amounts of money
 - C. smaller units are easy to carry
 - D. they want to provide variety of coins
9. Which of these are characteristics of money?
- A. durability and paper money
 - B. divisibility and coins
 - C. bank notes and coins
 - D. acceptability and portability
10. Matrilineal communities are those communities in which succession is traced through
- A. an uncle
 - B. the father
 - C. the mother
 - D. both parents
11. The following tribes originally came from Zaire:
- A. *Sukwa, Lambiya and Mang'anja*
 - B. *Tonga, Tumbuka and Ngonde*
 - C. *Chewa, Tonga and Sena*
 - D. All the tribes in a, b and c
12. Another name for longitude is _____
- A. Equator
 - B. Arctic circle
 - C. Latitude
 - D. Meridian
13. Malawi is located _____
- A. across the 36° E longitude
 - B. along the 17 °S latitude
 - C. between Zambia and Zimbabwe
 - D. between 9 °S and 17 °S latitudes and 33 °E and 36 °E longitudes

STANDARD 7 SOCIAL STUDIES PRE-TEST

Candidate's name _____ School _____

Time: 90 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer ALL the questions on the same sheet of paper.

Questions 1 – 17 (1 mark each)

Put a circle round the letter which contains the correct answer:

1. Vehicles, machinery and tyres are examples of _____
 - A. Malawi's goods
 - B. Malawi's exports
 - C. Manufacturing goods
 - D. Customs duty

2. Customs and excise duty is charged on goods that come into Malawi in order for the government to _____
 - A. collect revenue
 - B. sell the goods
 - C. catch car thieves
 - D. discourage international trade

3. Trade is the exchange of goods and services for _____
 - A. tea, tobacco and sugar
 - B. goods and services
 - C. money or other goods and services
 - D. imports

4. One of the problems that Malawi faces in the external trade is _____
 - A. large volumes of goods for sale
 - B. money for buying goods
 - C. lack of direct access to the sea
 - D. import duty

5. Another name for external trade is _____
 - A. transit trade
 - B. foreign trade
 - C. internal trade
 - D. sub-regional trade

14. *Thimbwidza* is an initiation activity for girls among _____
- Chewa, Nyanja and Mang'anja* tribes
 - Tonga and Sena* tribes
 - Chewa and Lomwe* tribes
 - All the tribes in Malawi
15. *Chitengwa* is a marriage arrangement in which _____
- the husband lives with his wife in her village
 - the wife lives with her husband in his village
 - patrilineal tribes give away their daughters to their husbands
 - both husband and wife pay a chicken or money to their fathers in-law and mothers-in-law as a sign of thank you
16. One of the reasons why cultural practices are important is that _____
- marriages are arranged
 - chieftainship moves from father to son
 - they prepare the youth for adult roles and responsibilities
 - best food is given to adults
17. Some cultural practices can be dangerous because they can spread related HIV/AIDS diseases. An example of this practice is _____
- nsondo*
 - gulewamkulu*
 - succession to chieftainship
 - giving better food to adults

Questions 18 – 20 (1 mark)

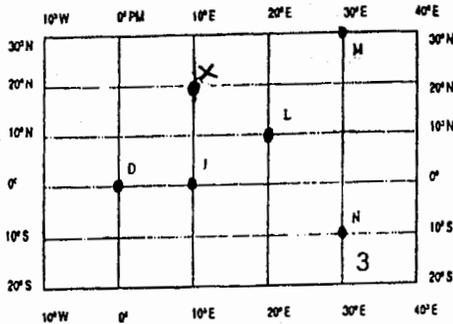
In what five ways are patrilineal and matrilineal cultural activities similar? They are similar in the sense that:

- 21 _____
- 22 _____
- 23 _____
- 24 _____
- 25 _____

Questions 26 – 30 (2 marks each)

On the sketch map below, what is the location of places D, J, L, M, and N?

Example: X is 10°E and 20° N



Questions 31 – 35 (1 mark each)

work, examine, wages, living, help, status, salaries

Complete each of the the blank spaces with the most appropriate word from the box above: People work for many reasons. They work in order to earn a (31) _____, to improve their environment or to (32) _____ other people who are in great need of their services. Trained and qualified people such as doctors and engineers are paid (33) _____. Untrained workers such as messengers and cleaners receive (34) _____. Voluntary workers do not receive any payment for their (35) _____. They work in order to assist others.

Questions 36 – 40 (1 mark each)

Choose the correct word for each of the spaces in the passage below. The words have been listed in the box below at the end of the passage for you.

It is easy to overcome idleness. While you are still at school, you should learn to (36) _____ work. If your school provides (37) _____ and technical skills learn and acquire them. The skills will enable you to be (38) _____ and get your own money when you have left school. With the money you will be able to buy your (39) _____. On its part, the government should always encourage school leavers to attend various (40) _____ for them to acquire useful skills.

needs, value, vocational, courses, self-employed, companies

STANDARD 7 SOCIAL STUDIES POST-TEST

Candidate's Name _____ School _____

Time: 90 Minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer ALL the questions on the same sheet of paper.

Questions 1 - 17 (1 mark each)

Put a circle round the letter which contains the correct answer.

1. Malawi gets _____ when she sells her products to other countries.
 - A. support services
 - B. customs duty
 - C. transit services
 - D. foreign currency

2. Malawi can reduce its imports by _____.
 - A. investing into local manufacturing industries
 - B. producing more goods for export
 - C. charging good prices for its exports
 - D. joining SADC

3. External trade is important because _____.
 - A. our tobacco is sold in other countries
 - B. goods that Malawi does not produce are made available
 - C. travelling to other countries is easy
 - D. traders meet often.

4. Because Malawi is a _____ country, it is expensive to both import and export goods.
 - A. small
 - B. landlocked
 - C. member of SADC
 - D. developing

5. Sub-regional trade is also _____.
 - A. external trade
 - B. internal exchange of goods
 - C. transit trade
 - D. protection of internal market from foreign traders

6. Money is nothing else than simply a _____.
 - A. bank note
 - B. coin and bank note
 - C. durable paper
 - D. medium of exchange

Which of these are characteristics of money?

- 1. identifiability and bank deposits
- 2. value and security
- 3. homogeneity and coins
- 4. bank notes and bank deposits

How can you keep your money safely _____.

- 1. in a bank
- 2. in a lockable safe
- 3. by buying valuable things which you sell later
- 4. if you use any of the 3 ways above

Which of the following are examples of bank deposits:

- 1. traveller's cheques and bank drafts
- 2. cheques and coins
- 3. postal orders and bank notes
- 4. 20 tambala coin and K100 bank note

Where did the Chewa originally come from _____.

- 1. Katanga
- 2. Mankhamba
- 3. along Lake Malawi
- 4. Tanzania

Who did Nkhosho traditionally inherit his father's property. He must be coming from a

_____.

- 1. matrilineal society
- 2. patrilineal society
- 3. religious society
- 4. chief's family

What common cultural customs and practices do Chewa, Lomwe and Yao share?

- 1. initiation, marriage and succession
- 2. initiation, inheritance and *gulewamkulu*
- 3. succession, *chiputu* and marriage
- 4. none of the above customs

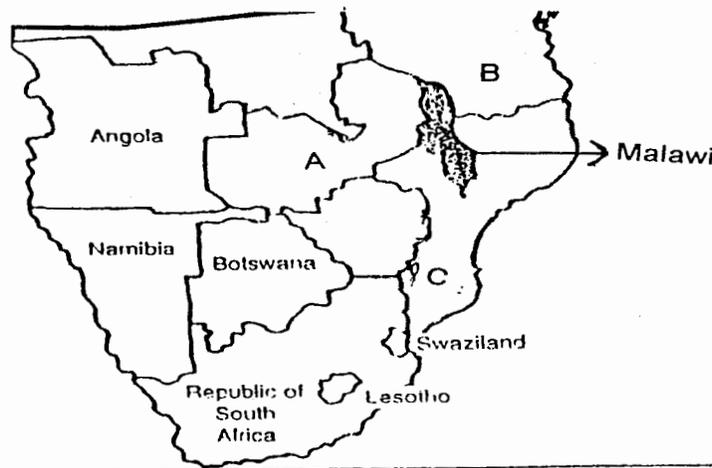
Patrilineal communities are those communities in which succession is traced through

- 1. both parents
- 2. the father
- 3. chiefs
- 4. mother

14. *Chiputu* is an initiation activity for girls among the _____ tribe.
- Lomwe
 - Tumbuka
 - Yao
 - Sena
15. The bride price that a husband pays to his father-in-law among the patrilineal societies is called _____.
- Chiongo*
 - Chinkhoswe*
 - Lobola*
 - Chikamwini*
16. The International Dateline is a longitude at _____.
- 180°
 - 0°
 - 23 ½°
 - 22 ½°
17. The following countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa:
- Egypt, Zaire and Somalia
 - Botswana, Malawi and Lesonho
 - Zambia, Kenya and Libya
 - South Africa, Tunisia and Morocco

QUESTIONS 18 – 20 (1 mark each)

On the map of Southern Africa below, which countries are A, B, C.



18. A. _____
19. B. _____
20. C. _____

QUESTIONS 21 – 24 (2 marks each)

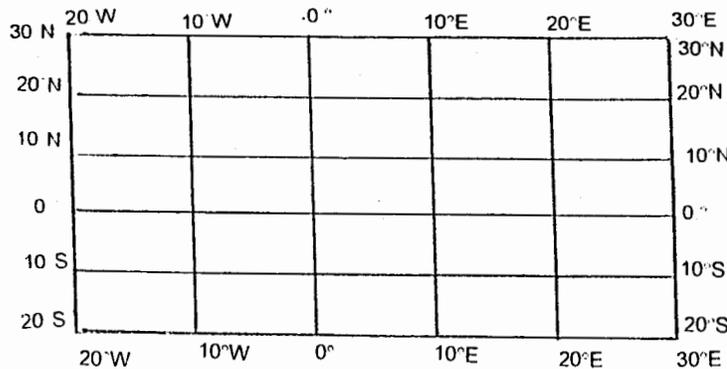
In what four ways are patrilineal and matrilineal cultural activities different? They are different in the following ways:

- 18. _____
- 22. _____
- 23. _____
- 24. _____

QUESTIONS 25 – 30 (2 marks each)

Put letters A, B, C, D, E and F in their correct places on the sketch map below. Use the following key:

- 25. A= 10°W and 10°S
- 26. B= 10°E and 10°N
- 27. C= 20°E and 10°S
- 28. D= 20°W and 30°N
- 29. E= 30°E and 20°N
- 30. F= 20°E and 20°N



QUESTIONS 31 – 40

Choose the correct word for each of the spaces in the passage below. The words are in the box at the end of the passage.

It is true that people who work hard get most of what they need in life. However, there are some people who do not want to (31) _____ - at all. They are always (32) _____ - and they hate work. Such people do not have the means to (33) _____ their needs. As a result, they cause (34) _____ both for themselves and for the (35) _____. They may begin to (36) _____ other people's property. They may even (37) _____ others in order to rob them of their things. In some cases, these idlers begin to (38) _____ *chamba* and to drink (39) _____ heavily. In the end some of them commit (40) _____.

problems, alcohol, idle, satisfy, steal, smoke, work, suicide, society, kill, ask

TESITI YACHIWIRI YA SOCIAL STUDIES YA SITANDADE 7

Dzina _____ School _____

Nthawi: Mphindi 90

LANGIZO

Yankhani mafunso ONSE

MAFUNSO 1 – 17 (Malikisi 1 yankho lililonse)

Lembani kamzere kozungulira lembo lomwe lili ndi yankho lokhoza

1. Dziko la Malawi limapeza _____ likagulitsa katundu wake kumayiko kwina
 - A. thandizo la ntchito zina
 - B. ndalama za kasitomu
 - C. ntchito zapaulendo
 - D. ndalama za mayiko ena
2. Dziko la Malawi likhoza kuchepetsako kugula katundu kumayiko kwina _____
 - A. poyambitsa ntchito zam'mafakitale.
 - B. popanga zinthu zambiri zogulitsa kunja.
 - C. pogulitsa zinthu zopita kwina ndi mitengo yabwino.
 - D. pokhala nawo m'bungwe la SADC.
3. Malonda ochita pakati pa mayiko n'njofunika chifukwa _____
 - A. fodya wathu amagulidwa ndi mayiko ena.
 - B. zinthu zomwe Malawi sapanga yekha zimapezekanso m'dziko muno.
 - C. n'kosavuta kupita ku mayiko ena.
 - D. amalonda amakumanakumana.
4. Poti Malawi ndi dziko _____ zinthu zogulitsa ndi zogula ku mayiko ena zimadula
 - A. lochepa
 - B. lopanda doko
 - C. la m'SADC
 - D. longokwera kumene
5. Malonda ochitika pakati pa mayiko oyandikana ndi _____
 - A. malondanso ochita ndi mayiko ena
 - B. kusinthana katundu m'dziko lomwelo
 - C. malonda odzera m'dziko lina kupita dziko linanso
 - D. kuteteza misika ya m'dziko

¶ndalama tikhoza kungoti ndi _____.

- A. mabankinoti
- B. ndalama zaweyereweyere
- C. chi pepala cholimba
- D. chinthu chogulira zinthu pa malonda

Ndi zinthu ziti zomwe zikunena za momwe ndalama zenizeni zimayenera kukhala nazo?

- A. kuzindikirika msanga ndi mabanki dipositi
- B. mphamvu yogulira zinthu ndi kusabedwa kapena kusatengereka wamba
- C. kufanana m'maonekedwe ndi ndalama zaweyereweyere
- D. ndalama za mapepala ndi mabanki dipositi

Mukhoza kusungitsa ndalama zanu bwino _____

- A. kubanki.
- B. m'sefa moti n'kufungulira kapena kukhoma.
- C. pogula zinthu zofunika kwambiri zoti n'kudzagulitsanso pambuyo pake.
- D. ngati muchita chimodzi cha zinthu zitatatu zatchulidwa m'mwambamu.

Zinthu zili m'munsimu ndi zitsanzo za mabanki dipositi

- A. matisizi ndi mabanki dirafuti
- B. macheke ndi ndalama zaweyereweyere
- C. mapositolo odala ndi mabanki noti
- D. 20 t yachitsulo ndi mabanki noti ya K100

Mbiri yakale ikuti Achewa adachokera ku _____.

- A. Katanga.
- B. Mankhamba.
- C. M'mbali mwa Nyanja ya Malawi.
- D. Tanzania.

Malinga ndi mwambo wamakolo, Phiri adatenga chuma cha atate ake iwo atamwalira. Motero, iye adali mwana wa m'banja la _____.

- A. anthu omwe amati mwiniana ndi mayi.
- B. anthu omwe amati mwini ana ndi bambo.
- C. anthu achipembedzo.
- D. lachifumu.

Kodi Achewa, Alomwe ndi Ayawo amalingana bwanji pa miyambo yawo? Iwo amalingana _____.

- A. pochita chinamwali pa ukwati ndiponso polowetsa ufumu
- B. pochita chinamwali, potenga chuma chamasiye ndi pa gulewamkulu
- C. polonga ufumu, pochita chiputu ndi pa ukwati
- D. palibe pomwe amalingana

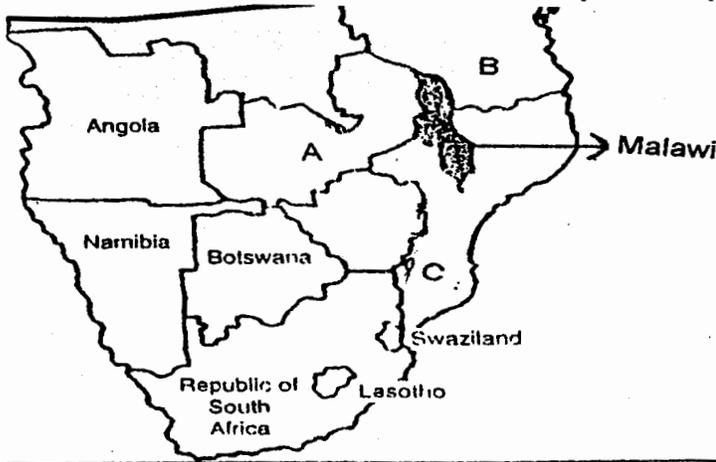
Mitundu yoti bambo ndiye mwiniana ndi anthu omwe ufumu umachokera kwa:

- A. bambo mwinanso mayi
- B. bambo
- C. mafumu
- D. mayi

14. *Chiputu* ndi chinamwali chovinira atsikana pakati pa _____.
- Alomwe
 - Atumbuka
 - Ayao
 - Asena
15. Chuma kapena chikole chomwe mwamuna amapereka kwa atate amkazi wake kuti atate a mkazi wakeyo pakati pa mitundu yoti bambo ndiye mwiniana chimatchedwa _____.
- chiongo
 - chinkhoswe
 - lobola
 - chikamwini
16. *International Date Line* ndi longichudi la pa _____.
- 180°
 - 0°
 - 23 ½°
 - 66 ½°
17. Mayiko otsatirawa ali kum'mwera kwa Saharan Africa _____.
- Egypt, Zaire ndi Somalia.
 - Botswana, Malawi ndi Lesotho.
 - Zambia, Kenya ndi Libya.
 - South Africa, Tunisia ndi Morocco.

MAFUNSO 18 – 20 (malikisi 1 yankho lililonse)

Pa mapu a Southern Africa ali m'munsimu, lembani mayina a mayiko A, B, ndi C



18. _____
19. : _____
20. _____

MAFUNSO 21– 24 (Malikisi 2 yankho lililonse)

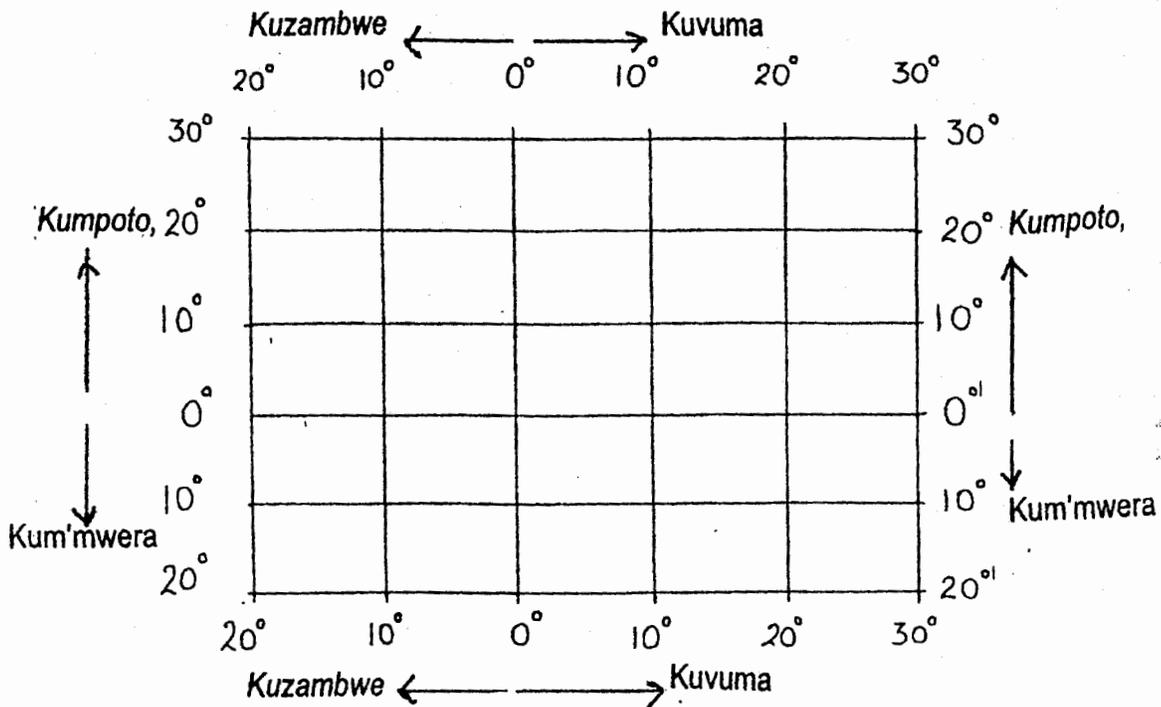
Kodi mitundu yoti bambo ndiye mwiniana ndi yoti mayi ndiye mwiniana isiyana bwanji?
Mitunduyi isiyana m'njira zinayi zili m'munsimu.

- 21. _____
- 22. _____
- 23. _____
- 24. _____

MAFUNSO 25 – 30 (Malikisi 1 yankho lililonse)

Lembani A, B, C, D, E ndi F pamalo poyenera pa mapu ali m'munsimu (potsata malatichudi ndi malangichudi ali pambali pa malembo ali m'mwambawa)

- 25 A 10°kuzambwe ndi 10°kum'mwera
- 26 B 10°kuvuma ndi 10°kumpoto
- 27 C 20°kuvuma ndi 10°kum'mwera
- 28 D 20°kuzambwe ndi 30°kumpoto
- 29 E 30°kuvuma ndi 20°kumpoto
- 30 F 20°kuvuma ndi 20°kumpoto



MAFUNSO 31 – 40 (Malikisi 2 yankho lililonse)

Yankhani yankho loyenera kuchokera ku m'ndandanda wa mawu ali m'musimu ndi uwalemba m'mipatamo

Idi zoonadi kuti anthu olimbikira ntchito amapata zomwe amazifuna pa moyo wawo.

Komabe, pali anthu ena omwe safuna kugwira 31 _____ n'komwe.

wo amakonda 32 _____, sakonda kugwira ntchito iliyonse.

Anthu otero satha 33 _____ zofuna zawo. Chifukwa cha ichi,

amayambitsa 34 _____ ogwera iwo omwe ndiponso 35

_____. Mwina amayamba 36 _____ zinthu

za anthu ena. Mwinanso 37 _____ anthu kumene pofuna kuwabera zinthu

anthuwo. Komanso, anthu osakonda kugwira ntchitowa, amayamba 38

_____ chamba ndi kumamwa 39 _____

mwauchidakwa. Zikatero, anthu oterewa mwina 40 _____

mavuto, mowa, kungokhala, kupeza, kuba, kusuta, ntchito, amangodzikhweza, amafunsa, anzawo

Appendix A2: Observation Schedule

Class Observation Sheet

School Name _____ District _____ Proprietor _____ Date _____

Observer's Name _____ Topic _____ Lesson No. _____

Language of Instruction _____

No.	Teaching and learning Interaction	Time in Minutes																																				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35		
1	Teacher give instructions																																					
2	Teacher revises previous lesson																																					
3	Teacher links it with the new lesson																																					
4	Teacher explains new concepts																																					
5	Teacher reprimands pupil (s)																																					
6	Teacher asks pupil (s)																																					
7	Pupil (s) give short answer																																					
8	Pupil explains a point																																					
9	Pupil asks teacher																																					
10	Teacher clarifies concepts																																					
11	Teacher give instruction for group work																																					
12	Pupil asks question (s) to pupil																																					
13	Pupil answers another pupil																																					
14	Pupil discuss an activity in group																																					
15	Pupil clarifies a point to pupil																																					
16	Pupils report work to the class																																					
17	Teacher summarises lesson																																					

Language Key

TEN = teacher uses English, TC = teacher uses Chichewa, PEN = pupil (s) uses English, PC = pupils (s) uses Chichewa.

Observer's Comments

a) **Methods used when teaching the lesson**

b) **Adherence to the language of instruction**

c) **Overall pupil participation**

Appendix A3: Teacher and Pupil Interview Schedules

Teacher Interview Schedule

1. Your friends have been teaching these Social Studies topics in Chichewa (English). What do you think about their teaching?
2. How do you feel when you teach Social Studies in English (Chichewa) yourself?
3. Is there anything that you feel you have missed or have not taught according to your satisfaction by teaching the Social Studies topics in English (Chichewa)?
4. Sometimes teachers use both English and Chichewa simultaneously in one lesson. Why do they do this?



Appendix A 5: Teacher Profile Form

Name of School _____
Your Name _____ Date of Birth _____ Mother Tongue _____
Registration No. _____ Academic Qualification _____

Please provide below your teaching profile since you qualified as a teacher.

Year		School Taught	Class Taught
From	TO		
9	-		
9			
9			
9			
9			
9			

Appendix B: Social Studies Curriculum Documents

<p><i>Lesson 1: The Equator and the other latitudes in relation to the South and North Pole</i></p>		<p>Sketch map</p>	<p>Studies Teachers Guide p2</p>
<p><i>Lesson 2: The Prime Meridian and the other longitudes including the International Date Line</i></p>	<p>Expository question and answer Pupils locate position on a globe</p>	<p>Diagram showing latitudes and longitudes also using a globe</p>	<p>MIE, Teachers Guide p3,4</p>
<p><i>Lesson 3: Reviewing latitudes and longitudes</i></p>	<p>Expository, question and answer. Pupils locate the east and west prime meridian on the globe</p>	<p>Diagram showing latitudes and longitudes and a globe</p>	<p>MIE, Teachers Guide p4</p>
<p><i>Lesson 4: Locating places on a sketch map using latitudes and longitudes</i></p>	<p>Expository and question and answer. Pupils locate places on a sketch map using latitudes and longitudes.</p>	<p>Diagram showing latitudes and longitudes and a globe</p>	<p>MIE, Teachers Guide p4,5</p>
<p>Location of Malawi</p>			
<p><i>Lesson 5: Location of Malawi using latitudes and longitudes.</i></p>	<p>Expository. Pupils locate the position of Malawi, identify north and south latitudes, west and east longitudes.</p>	<p>Sketch map of Malawi</p>	
<p><i>Lesson 6: Position of Malawi in relation to its neighbours</i></p>	<p>Pupils draw Sub-Saharan Africa map showing all the countries.</p>	<p>Sketch map of Sub-Saharan countries</p>	<p>MIE, Teachers Guide p9</p>

Week 2	<i>Lesson 7: Position of Malawi in relation to its neighbours continued</i>	Expository: Pupils locate the position of Malawi in relation to other countries using latitudes and longitudes. Pupils indicate the position of Malawi's neighbours	Sketch map of Sub-Saharan countries	MIE, Teachers Guide p9
	<i>Lesson 8: Positions of countries using latitudes and longitudes</i>	Pupils individually describe the location of Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana using latitudes and longitudes	Sketch map of Sub-Saharan countries	MIE, Teachers Guide p9
	Money			
	<i>Lesson 9: Meaning of the term money</i> Types of money	Question and answer for questions 1 and 4. Group discussions:- questions 2 and 3 and reporting	Real money and real postal order and real cheque	MIE, Teachers guide p23 & 24 Pupils Book p 15, 16
	<i>Lesson 10: Characteristics of money</i>	Question and answer and note taking	Real money of different denominations	MIE, Teachers Guide
	<i>Lesson 11: Importance of money and how to keep it safely</i>	Group discussion on the importance of money and ways to keep it safely	Pictures of a bank or post office savings bank	
<i>Lesson 12: Different types of work</i>	Group discuss types of work and report	Pictures in pupils books and posters	MIE, Teachers Guide pg 27 & 28	

Week 3	Work			
	<i>Lesson 13: Importance of work</i>	Question and answer and note taking Class discussion	Same as in lesson 1	MIE, Teachers Guide pg 28
	<i>Lesson 14: Problems of idleness</i>	Class discussion Pupils Role play problems created by idleness	Pupils role play	MIE, Teachers Guide pg 28
	<i>Lesson 15: Ways of overcoming idleness</i>	Class discussion and note taking		MIE, Teachers Guide pg 28,29
	<i>Lesson 16: Short written test</i>	Paper and pen test		MIE, Teachers Guide p26 and 30
	Trade between Malawi and other countries			
<i>Lesson 17: Malawi's exports and imports</i>	Expository Group discussions on types of trade that Malawi engages on and identify imports and exports. Exercise 1 & 2 Group reports and note taking	Samples of tobacco, tea, coffee	MIE, Teachers Guide p13	
<i>Lesson 18: Malawi's Trading partners in the region</i>	Pupils draw Sub-Saharan Africa map and identify and label the countries that trade with Malawi	Map of Sub-Saharan Africa	MIE, Teachers Guide p13	

Week 4	<i>Lesson 19:</i> Malawi's external trade problems	Pupils discuss in groups exercise 3 and report. Note taking	Map of Sub-Saharan Africa	MIE, Teachers Guide p13, 14
	<i>Lesson 20:</i> Importance of external trade	Pupils discuss in groups exercise 4 and report. Note taking		MIE, Teachers Guide p14
	Marriage practices in Malawi	Resource person's talk questions and answer class discussion on various matrilineal cultural activities	Resource person	MIE, Teachers' guide p 16,17
	<i>Lesson 21:</i> Matrilineal ethnic groups of Malawi			
	<i>Lesson 22:</i> Importance of cultural institutions in matrilineal ethnic groups	Pupils debate the advantages of <i>chikamwini</i> and <i>chitengwa</i> as well as initiation in the matrilineal ethnic groups.	Resource person	Teacher's Guide pp16 - 17
	<i>Lesson 23:</i> Patrilineal ethnic groups of Malawi	Resource person's talk; question and answer; class discussion on various patrilineal cultural activities.	Resource persons	Teacher's Guide p21
	<i>Lesson 24:</i> Similarities and differences between ethnic groups marriage practices	Class construct a table with columns of inheritance, marriage, succession, coming of age, completing under similarities and differences	Chart paper or chalkboard	MIE, Teachers guide p17 & 21

UNIT 3 Trade between Malawi and other countries in the sub-region

Rationale

Trade is the exchange of goods and services for money or other goods. People may trade to satisfy their socio-economic needs. Trade can be within a country or between countries. Pupils need to know about trade between Malawi and other countries in the sub-region so that they understand and appreciate some of the factors which influence trade between countries. This knowledge may enable them to participate meaningfully in the trade in future.

Objectives

By the end of this unit, pupils should be able to:

- explain the meaning of the term 'trade'
- identify types of trade
- identify types of goods and services involved in Malawi's external trade
- identify Malawi's sub-regional trading partners
- identify Malawi's external trading problems
- suggest possible solutions to Malawi's external trading problems
- explain the importance of external trade to Malawi

Background information

Meaning and types of trade

Trade means exchanging of goods and services either for money or other goods and services. When that exchange takes place within a country, it is called **internal trade**. When that exchange takes place between two countries, it is called **external** or **foreign trade**. Sometimes goods have to be transported through another country. These goods attract some fees in the transit country. This is called **transit trade**.

Malawi's exports and imports

EXPORTS

Malawi exports the following goods in the sub-region: tobacco, tea, cotton, sugar, groundnuts, rice, beans, peas, sunflower, coffee, maize and tung oil. When Malawi exports goods and services, the government earns foreign currency. The exporters are required to pay a certain fee to the government when they export their goods. Malawi also provides transit services to other countries for goods passing through in form of roads, airports and lake services.

and steel goods, vehicles, (cars, lorries, buses) fuel, clothing, tinned foods, electrical goods, fertilizer, paper, rubber goods, tyres, paint and plastic.

The government charges a fee for all goods imported into the country. This fee is called customs and excise duty.

Customs and excise duty is charged on imported goods in order to:

- collect revenue for the government
- control the flow of goods
- protect the local market

Malawi's sub-regional trading partners

Malawi's sub-regional trading partners include: South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique.

In addition to these countries, Malawi also trades with the following overseas countries: Japan, Portugal, Great Britain, Republic of China, United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Italy and Germany.

EXTERNAL TRADE PROBLEMS OF MALAWI

Malawi experiences a number of problems when conducting trade with other countries. These problems include:

Lack of direct access to the sea

Malawi is a landlocked country, ie, it has no export port of its own. The country relies on ports of sub-regional countries like Beira and Nacala in Mozambique. Dar-es-Salam in Tanzania and Durban in South Africa. As a result of this situation imports in Malawi are expensive because sea ports where the goods are loaded charge fees. The countries through which these goods pass charge customs duty.

Delays in exporting and receiving goods

Both imports and exports take long to deliver or receive. This happens because the ports handle large volumes of goods and they cannot manage to clear them on time. For instance, goods from South Africa use the land route passing through Zimbabwe. Transit trade takes quite a long time as clearance must be made in each country the goods pass through. The map on page 13, shows Malawi's sub-regional trading partners. It should be noted that the volume of trade varies from country to country. Most of the trade is done with South Africa, and overseas countries such as Britain, Japan, United States of America, India, Canada, Germany and others.

Prerequisite knowledge

Pupils should already have learnt about the importance of transport and communications. Some may have already participated in the buying and selling of goods. This knowledge and experience should be used to introduce the unit.

Suggested teaching/learning activities

Activity 1 (1 lesson)

- Pupils explain the meaning of 'trade'.
- Discuss with pupils types of trade.
- Pupils identify Malawi's export and import commodities.

Activity 2 (3 lessons)

- Using a map of Sub-Saharan Africa, pupils:
 - identify Malawi's regional trading partners.
 - trace Malawi's external trade routes.
- Discuss with pupils Malawi's external trade problems.
- Pupils suggest possible solutions to Malawi's external trade problems.

Summary

Trade is the exchange of goods and services either for money or other goods and services. There are two types of the trade, internal and external. Malawi external trade involves export commodities such as tea, tobacco and sugar. The trading partners include South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Because of its landlocked position, Malawi experiences a number of problems with its external trade.

External trade is important to Malawi because it brings foreign exchange and makes essential goods available on the local market.

Suggested pupil assessment

Set the following exercise for pupils to do.

- 1 What is trade?
- 2 Identify the imports and exports of Malawi.
- 3 Identify Malawi's trading partners.
- 4 (a) What is the main problem that Malawi faces in external trade?
(b) Suggest possible solutions for this problem.
- 5 Why is external trade important to Malawi?

UNIT 4 Matrilineal tribes of Malawi

Rationale

The tribes in Malawi follow two distinct traditions concerning especially marriage practices. One such tradition is that children born in a family either belong to the mother — **matrilineal tribes**, or to the father — **patrilineal tribes**. Matrilineal and patrilineal practices influence a number of aspects of Malawian traditional life.

Most of the pupils in Malawi belong to either matrilineal or patrilineal societies. In this unit however, pupils will learn about matrilineal tribes. This knowledge should help them to accept variations in culture, and develop tolerance as well as enhance their identity.

Objectives

By the end of this unit, pupils should be able to:

- explain the meaning of the term 'matrilineal'
- identify the matrilineal tribes according to their places of origin
- describe the cultural activities of the matrilineal tribes
- explain the importance of the cultural activities of the matrilineal tribes

Background information

Origin of matrilineal tribes

The term 'matrilineal' describe communities in which succession is traced through the mother. The Chewa, Lomwe and Mang'anja, Nyanja and Yao are some of the matrilineal tribes of Malawi.

The Chewa originally came from Katanga in Zaire. Their original settlement was at Mankhamba in Central Malawi. Those who settled along Lake Malawi are called the Nyanja. Those who settled in Central Malawi retain the name Chewa.

The Lomwe and the Yao originally came from Moçambique and settled in Southern Malawi.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Some of the cultural activities and practices of the matrilineal tribes of Malawi include:

Marriage

Matrilineal tribes practise *chikamwini* and *chitengwa* systems of marriage. *Chikamwini* is a marriage arrangement where the husband lives with his wife in her village.

Chitengwa is a marriage arrangement where the wife lives in the husband's village with the acceptance of the wife's relatives. In this arrangement, the husband gives a gift to the relatives of the wife in the form of a chicken or money as a token of gratitude.

Succession

When a chief or village head dies, the eldest sister's son or daughter becomes the next chief.

Coming of age

The matrilineal tribes have established institutions for training the youth when they come of age. These institutions are organised according to gender, eg:

- Among the Chewa, Nyanja and Mang'anja, *gulewamkulu* is for boys and *thimbwidza* for girls.
- Among the Lomwe, *lupanda* for boys and *chiputu* for girls are practised.
- Among the Yao, *jando* is for boys, and *nsondo* for girls.

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The cultural activities of the matrilineal tribes are important for the following reasons:

- ensuring order and survival of the communities
- keeping the community together
- instituting responsible behaviour in young people
- preparing young people for adult roles and responsibilities

In spite of these advantages, some cultural activities and practices have negative effects. For example:

- During *nsondo*, girls are encouraged to accept men's sexual advances without questioning them, saying it's every woman's responsibility to satisfy a man's sexual desire.
- During *thimbwidza*, girls are provided with a *fisi*, who is a male sex partner, to confirm their coming of age. This may lead to transmission of sexually-transmitted infections including HIV. It may also lead to early unwanted pregnancies.

uninitiated are forced to pay for freedom to travel within this cultural area.

Suggested teaching/learning resources

The following may be used:

- cultural environment, eg, observing the traditional dances and wedding ceremonies
- resource persons, eg, elders

Prerequisite knowledge

Pupils should already have participated or seen some of the cultural activities and practices in their community. This experience should be used to introduce the unit.

Suggested teaching/learning activities

Activity 1 (1 lesson)

- Pupils explain the meaning of the term 'matrilineal'.
- Pupils identify the matrilineal tribes in Malawi.
- Pupils group the matrilineal tribes according to their places of origin.

Activity 2 (2 lessons)

- Pupils describe common cultural activities and practices among the matrilineal tribes.
- Pupils debate the advantages and disadvantages of *chikamwini* and *chitengwa* marriage practices.
- In groups, pupils:
 - identify the importance of cultural activities
 - identify negative aspects of the cultural activities and practices
 - suggest how the negative cultural aspects may be corrected

Summary

The Chewa, Lomwe, Mang'anja, Nyanja and Yao are some of the matrilineal tribes of Malawi. These tribes share common cultural activities and practices. These cultural activities and practices give these tribes an identity and ensure their continuity.

Appendix C: Correspondence

Malawi Institute of Education
P O Box 50
Domasi
31 August 1998

The Secretary for Education, Sports and Culture
Private Bag 328
Lilongwe 3
(Attention: the Director of Planning)

Dear Sir,

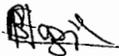
Re: Permission to Carry out Ph D Research

I am studying for a Ph D with the University of South Africa. My research topic is in the area of medium of instruction in primary schools in Malawi. The study requires me to observe lessons in primary schools.

The purpose of writing you is therefore to ask for your permission for me to conduct the research in some primary schools in Lilongwe and Zomba rural districts early 1999. This research is a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Ph D I am pursuing.

I look forward to hearing from you Sir.

Yours faithfully,



H S Mchazime

CC: Dr M C Marshall, Department of English, UNISA
The Acting Director, MIE

Malawi German Basic Education Project
P O Box 655
Zomba
2 June 1999

Mr J Matola
(The Director of Methods Advisory Service)
Ministry of Education
Private Bag 328
Lilongwe 3

Dear Mr Matola,

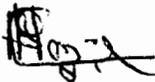
On 31 August last year, I wrote a formal request for permission to the Ministry for me to carry out PhD D research in some primary schools in Lilongwe and Zomba.

Since that time, I have received no reply. I understand that at that time the Ministry was making some changes in its set up. This could be the possible reason for the silence.

I have been talking to some friends about it and they have suggested to me that perhaps the letter should have been addressed to your Directorate since the topic of my study is about instruction and is in basic education. I was following what used to be done some time back, when all research matters were being channelled to the Planning Division. I have attached a copy of my letter for you. I am appealing to your personal assistance because the letter of permission forms part of my PhD D documentation.

I look forward to your assistance.

Yours sincerely



H S Mchazime

Ref. No: IN/2/8D

7th June 1999.

MR. H.S. MCHAZIME,
MALAWI GERMAN BASIC EDUCATION
PROJECT,
P.O. BOX 655,
ZOMBA.

Dear Sir,

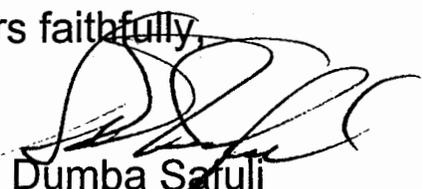
**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT Ph.D RESEARCH IN
SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ZOMBA AND
LILONGWE.**

I acknowledge receipt of your letter on the above subject.

I am pleased to advise you that permission have been granted to you to conduct the research in the selected Primary schools in Zomba and Lilongwe.

I wish you a successful research work and hope that the results will help the Malawi Education System.

Yours faithfully,


Sam D. Dumba Saruli

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CULTURE

cc : DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS (ZOMBA URBAN AND RURAL) ✓
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS (LILONGWE URBAN AND RURAL)

BY BRIGHT SONANI

CHIEFS in the country, not amused by government's lack of consultations in drawing up school calendars, have asked the Ministry of Education to come up with school terms which are sensitive to traditional and cultural values.

"We know education is important but at the same time people cannot go away from our traditional and cultural values. The new calendar has disturbed our programme for the initiation (chinamwali) season and we want to make it clear that there are no two ways about it. The Ministry of Education should go back to the old calendar," said Traditional Authority Kalembo on Monday.

Kalembo, who was speaking on behalf of his fellow traditional leaders from Balaka, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Nkhosakota and Salima during an open day at Ulongwe II School in Balaka said school terms should not include the months of July, August and September.

He said many pupils have missed classes during these months because they attend to initiation ceremonies.

The ministry early this year effected a new school calendar which runs from January to October. Previously, the school calendars ran from October to July.

"We have consulted people in those areas involved and we resolved that the ministry should go back to the old calendar if the standard of education is to improve in the country," said Kalembo.



Stark choice: Pupils in some schools especially in the lakeshore districts are caught between school needs and the dictates of culture—Library photo

SCHOOL CALENDAR, CULTURE IN CONFLICT

Chiefs ask Ministry to change school terms

Minister of Water Development Yusuf Mwawa speaking at the function, also registered concern over the initiation ceremonies clashing with the school terms.

"We recommend that initiations be done during holidays. However, incidentally

long holidays come in November and December and initiation cannot be done during that period due to several factors. But we will take the matter further to find an urgent solution to avoid conflicts between the two," he said.

Education Principal Secretary Mathews Matemba said yesterday government was aware of the problem.

"Actually the issue is not only on the change of the calendar but we need to target the actual months affected and see how we can best handle

the situation," he added.

Many communities in the country, especially the Yao tribe, conduct initiation ceremonies during which they teach children about sex life and prepare them for adult life.

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"Actually the issue is not only on the change of the calendar but we need to target the actual months affected and see how we can best handle

the situation," he added.

Many communities in the country, especially the Yao tribe, conduct initiation ceremonies during which they teach children about sex life and prepare them for adult life.

School calendar to include rites

by Our Reporter

Government has changed the school calendar in response to concerns by communities which hold initiation rites in the dry months of August/September.

Ministry of Education spokesperson Dorothy Matiti said in an interview yesterday the government would provide for a month-long recess after the second term to accommodate initiation rites.

"Conventional and grant-aided schools will have one month vacation. We think it is enough to have the initiation rites during that holiday. It was not easy to have this break but that is the compromise we have made," Matiti said.

Primary schools, she said, would close on July 28, 2000 and open on August, 28 while secondary schools will open on August 21, 2000.

"Majority of the pupils who go for such rites are in primary schools and that is why we have extended their holiday by a week. Research has shown that the longest rite sessions last for three to four weeks," she explained.

Culture, education clashing — Parents

ZOMBA:

Parents, teachers and traditional leaders in Zomba have said traditional practices such as initiation ceremonies disrupt school calendars because pupils drop out of school to attend the ceremonies.

The remarks were made during a community sensitizing meeting for school committee members and traditional leaders at Songani Primary School on Saturday.

The meeting observed that the dropout rate rises in summer when most areas in Zomba are involved in initiation ceremonies.

On his part, Zomba Rural District Education Officer (DEO) Abraham Sineta urged parents to take advantage of

free primary education by sending their children to school to help the government in promoting basic education in the country.

The meeting, which was attended by traditional leaders, parents, teachers and some government and non-governmental organisations officials, aimed at finding ways of improving basic education in the district.

The DEO said it was sad to note that despite the introduction of free primary education in the country, there are still some children who do not attend school and that the school dropout rate in Zomba continues to rise.

In his remarks, Zomba GTZ Technical Advisor for Basic Education, Hartford

Mchazime, advised the parents to cooperate with teachers to increase the number of pupils attending primary school. —

Mana