

**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF REVITALISING A CROSS-BORDER  
LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF CHICHEWA IN ZIMBABWE**

By

BELIEVE MUBONDERI

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SUPERVISOR: PROF D.E. MUTASA

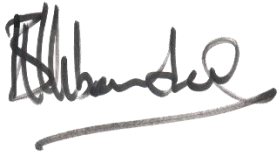
CO-SUPERVISOR: PROF G. MHETA

December 2021

**DECLARATION**

**Student number 553-9612-7**

I, Believe Mubonderi, declare that **Prospects and challenges of revitalizing a cross-border language: A study of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe** is my work and that the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



DECEMBER 2021

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Signature

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Date

## **ABSTRACT**

The study discusses the prospects and challenges of revitalizing a cross-border language in the Zimbabwean context. The researcher selected ChiChewa for this study because it is one of the prominent cross-border languages in Zimbabwe and one of the identified twelve cross-border languages by Academy of African Languages (ACALAN). The research study used interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis to solicit for information regarding the challenges and prospects of revitalizing a cross-border language. Data for this study was collected from ChiChewa native speakers, language experts and officials from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education. Findings in this research study were discussed using the language ecology and language ideology paradigms. The study established that the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe lie with the officialization of multilingualism and multiculturalism, vitality of ChiChewa and the education institutions. The constitution of Zimbabwe recognizes the existence of many languages in the country and clearly stipulates that all languages must be developed and used in equality. Even though the vitality of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe is compromised by a reduction in intergenerational transmission, the language is still spoken extensively by second and third generation Chewa speakers. The research also established that the education institution, regardless of its role in the endangerment of minority languages, remains key to the possible revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. The researcher identified language shifts, language policy, language activism and representation, globalization, language status, ideological clarification, and the hegemony of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele as the main challenges that work against the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the researcher has recommended that the status of cross-border languages needs to be enhanced through the equitable allocation of functional and instrumental roles if the cultural and intellectual wealth enshrined in languages is to be sustained. The study recommends that African languages policy and planning should be informed by African socio-historical and linguistic peculiarities. Such creation of a balanced language ecology is attainable only after challenging the hegemony of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele in Zimbabwe.

### **KEY TERMS**

Minority languages; cross-border languages; language revitalization; devitalization; commodification; Globalization; cross-border languages; language planning and policy; indigenous languages; language in education policy; domain; language ecology; language ideology; language status; nation-state

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my family members: Father, Mother, Blessed, Saru, Charity, Amanda and Anotida.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ACALAN	Academy of African Languages
ALRI	African Languages Research Institute
AU	African Union
BLRM	Basque Language Revival Movement
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CASAS	Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GIDS	Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
GNU	Government of National Unity
H	High variety
L	Low variety
LLD	Languages of Lower Diffusion
LPP	Language Policy and Planning
LWC	Language of Wider Communication
MDC T	Movement for Democratic Change Tsvangirai
MOPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
TOLACO	Tonga Language and Cultural Association
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
VETOKA	Venda Tonga Kalanga
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZILPA	Zimbabwe Indigenous Languages Promotion Association

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

The UNESCO Declaration on Linguistic Rights (1996) states that all people have a right to use their mother-tongue languages in their everyday business. However, as the world we live in continues to homogenise and adopt a cosmopolitan outlook, spaces and domains previously enjoyed by some languages is diminishing rapidly (UNESCO, 2003). Languages, which lack utilitarian value and linguistic capital, Hogan-Brun (2017), find themselves slowly sinking and face extinction (May, 2012). Social, political, and economic factors have redefined the roles of languages across the many different speech communities across the globe creating a new order in which languages have come to be categorised as languages of wider communication (LWC) and languages of lower diffusion (LLD). Languages such as English, French, Portuguese and Spanish have power and influence; they continue to encroach into the domains of the less powerful languages thereby endangering them.

Nettle and Romaine (2003:39) point out that, “By 1966, English was the language of 70 % of the world’s mail and 60% of radio and television broadcasts.” Histories of different speech communities have contributed to the predicament of indigenous and minority languages of the world. In the United States of America, the invasion of Native Indian territory by the Europeans led to the imposition of the English language onto the native populations. Legislation put in place was detrimental to the continued use and existence of indigenous languages. As noted by Cantoni (2007), the introduction of the boarding school system for the Indians was for ensuring that the young children would go on to give up their mother tongues and take up the English language, which was presented as more suitable for civilisation. While in South America, Craig (1992) discusses how the Moravian missionaries coerced the Rama people of

Nicaragua to switch from their native Rama language to English. Rama was presented as no language to the extent that the Rama people began to feel ashamed of speaking the language. Similarly, in Africa the situation was the same. As summed up by Bamgbose (2011:01) when he says,

It is well known that colonial powers imposed their language in each territory they governed as the language of administration, commerce, and education. Objectives differ from one colonial power to another, ranging from assimilation to the culture of the occupying power to selective cultivation of an elite that can relate to the masses in their own culture. Despite the superficial differences, the outcome is the same as far as language is concerned: the language of the colonial power was dominant and African languages took a secondary position in status and domains of use

Furthermore, the subsequent policies of administration and education ensured that most of the indigenous languages found themselves in precarious positions of neglect and slowly continued to sink into oblivion. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) concurs that throughout the world language education policies have been a powerful tool in the eradication of indigenous and minoritised mother tongues. Romaine in Martens (2015) also points out that the languages used for colonial conquest, and the dominant languages of nation states, continue to encroach and penetrate the territories of the minority communities. This results in the affected communities failing to maintain their languages, cultures, and identities.

Statistically the number of endangered languages continues to increase and the rate at which it is happening will lead to only a few languages remaining. According to UNESCO (2003), children are no longer acquiring their native languages with many thousands of speakers; at least 50 % of the world's more than six thousand languages losing speakers. We estimate that, in most world regions, dominant languages may replace about 90% of the languages by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Brenzinger (2005) predicts that almost 90% of the world's languages are likely to be replaced by the dominant languages at the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this would imply the reduction of the estimated number of languages from 7000 to 700. In Australia, out of the more than 200 languages at the time of European arrival, 50 languages have died in the last

500 years. The remaining 130 languages now have very few speakers (Brenzinger,2005). According to the Africa Review (2016), UNESCO estimates that there are 231 extinct languages in the world and 37 of these are from Sub Saharan Africa. *The Africa review.com* points out Nigeria and Cameroon as having the highest number of endangered languages in Africa, 15 and 23 respectively.

Such scenarios are a reality the world over. Some indigenous and minority languages are under the threat of extinction. Buoyed by the increased concern of the affected speech communities and nations, the last 50 to 60 years has seen a steady increase in the efforts towards reclaiming lost languages and those, which are falling out of everyday use (Hinton and Hale, 2005). Attempts to reverse the fortunes of the minority languages have in recent times gained momentum. There is a lot of literature documenting such attempts, such as: Fishman (1991); Grenoble and Whaley (1998); Grenoble and Whaley (2006); Bradley and Bradley (2002); Tsunoda (2005); Goodfellow (2009); Hinton (2010); Austin and McGill (2011). Notable examples of languages that were successfully revitalized include Hebrew, Maori, Catalan, Manx, Hawaii, and several American Indian languages that were on the verge of extinction.

While much attention has been on the efforts to revive and revitalize languages that are endangered, the focus has been on the various approaches, which can be used to bring back the languages to use. Revitalization programmes have seen the use of different approaches to reviving minority and indigenous languages ranging from, immersion programmes used for the Hawaiian programme to the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and language documentation as well as the archiving of the languages. This study, however, will focus on the prospects and challenges associated with revitalising a cross border language called ChiChewa that is spoken in Southern Africa. According to ACALAN (2009:4), cross border languages are “languages that are common to two or more states and domains straddling

various usages”. Ndhlovu (2013) points out that cross border languages in Africa were defined by colonialism whereby Europeans drew arbitrary boundaries during the “scramble for Africa” resulting in local languages straddling country borders.

Prah (2009) and Barro (2010) give a summary of some of the cross-border languages found in Africa as follows: Swahili in East and Central African countries (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Southern Somalia, Comoro, Democratic Republic of Congo, Northern Mozambique and Eastern and Northern Malawi); Arabic in the entire North African region and the horn of Africa region (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Mauritania, Chad, Djibouti, Somalia and Eritrea); the Fulfulde cluster including sister language forms such as Fula, Pulaar, Peul, Tuculor, Fulful, Fulbe and Fulani in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania and the Central African Republic); Nyanja/Chewa spoken in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and parts of Northern Mozambique; Afrikaans, Nguni and Sotho-Tswana clusters in much of the Southern African region (mainly South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho and Zimbabwe).

Zimbabwe has 16 officially recognized languages according to the current Constitution. Among those languages, we have the ChiChewa language, which is a cross border language, also found in Malawi, Zambia, and some parts of Mozambique. Recent developments have resulted in the choice of the ChiChewa language for this study. Historically, English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele have dominated the language terrain in Zimbabwe. This owes to the work and recommendations of the scholar Dr Clement Doke (1929-1931) who in the 1930s rearranged the purpose and status of the languages in Zimbabwe. According to one of the key recommendations in Doke’s findings, Southern Rhodesia had two important languages ChiShona in the north and IsiNdebele in the south and all the other small languages were of no significance (Doke, 1931). This resulted in the other languages being rendered minority



languages and relegated to the periphery with minimal documentation and standardization. This position continued throughout the colonial period up until after independence in 1980. Much emphasis and attention were put on English, ChiShona, and IsiNdebele (with English being the official language, IsiNdebele and ChiShona, being the national languages) while all the other languages were rendered minority languages. However, with the new constitution of 2013, the linguistic terrain changed when all the languages of Zimbabwe became ‘officially recognised languages’ (*Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013*)

It is the thrust of this study to discuss the possibilities and challenges of trying to revitalize ChiChewa language in the Zimbabwean context. Laoire (2008) defines language revitalization as a process which involves the reversal of a language shift among the people in the affected speech community whereby, they begin to use a threatened language again. The revitalization of a language brings together social, political, economic, and linguistic factors that would decide if the revival will be successful or not. Languages do not operate in a vacuum; they are influenced by different ideologies that prevail at the time. The amended Constitution of Zimbabwe signals an ideological shift in which previously marginalised languages are now officially recognised. There is a clear clause on the section to do with languages that the government must ensure the promotion and create conditions necessary for the use of all the languages in Zimbabwe,

The State must promote and advance the use of all languages used in Zimbabwe, including sign language, and must create conditions for the development of these languages (*Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013*)

With this background, it becomes imperative that these developments be critically examined from a position of language revitalization. This study will focus on the challenges and possibilities of revitalizing ChiChewa, a language which straddles borders.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

The Constitution of Zimbabwe gives a lifeline to the language situation of Zimbabwe. The constitution elevates previously marginalized languages to the status of officially recognised languages, as stated in Chapter 1 Section (6) that; (1) The following languages, namely Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Koisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda, and Xhosa, are the officially recognised languages of Zimbabwe (Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013). Previously the former minority languages were marginalized since the inception of colonial rule in the then Southern Rhodesia. Doke's 1931 recommendations regarding the language statuses of indigenous languages in Rhodesia resulted in English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele being the languages of administration, communication, and instruction while the other languages were relegated. Ndhlovu (2006) also concurs with Mpofu (2011) that in Zimbabwe, legislation concerning the use and status of African languages was determined by Doke's findings. This was to have adverse effects on the role and status of the other languages. At the attainment of independence in 1980, Zimbabwe adopted an exoglossic language policy centred on English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. The Education Act (1987) further entrenched the vulnerability of the minority languages in Zimbabwe as shown by its recommendations below, (Education Act of 1987, Chapter25:04)

- 1) Subject to this section, the three main languages of Zimbabwe namely Shona, Ndebele and English shall be taught in all primary schools from the first grade as follows:
  - a) Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona, or
  - b) Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of residents is Ndebele

- 2) Prior to the fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils.
- 3) From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction, if Shona and Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal time allocation basis as the English language.
- 4) In all areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorize the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to those specified in subsection (1), (2) and (3). (See comment No. 13)

Language revitalization entails giving a neglected, dying or an extinct language a new lease of life or vigour so that the language is used in everyday communication. The current sociolinguistic history of the Chewa language in Zimbabwe shows that it is a cross border language, and for a long time had the status of a minority language. The latest elevation of former minority languages to the status of officially recognised languages brings an interesting dimension to the language situation in Zimbabwe. During the colonial period, from the 1920s to the time of the Federation (1953-1963) the ChiChewa language dominated the townships, mining, and farming areas Hachipola (1998). Its visibility has seemingly diminished over the years in those areas it used to dominate. Hence, this study seeks to discuss at length the possibilities and challenges of reviving a cross border language, which has been categorised as a minority language for a long period.

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to discuss the prospects and challenges of revitalising the cross border ChiChewa language.

## **1.4 Objectives**

The objectives of the study include:

1. To examine the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa as a cross-border language.
2. To discuss the challenges associated with revitalizing a cross-border language.
3. To assess the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages.

## **1.5 Research questions**

1. What are the challenges and possibilities of revitalising the Chewa language?
2. What is the current state of the Chewa language in Zimbabwe?
3. What are the implications of revitalising a cross border language?

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

Language revitalization is a necessary activity to be carried out lest Africa will lose its rich linguistic diversity. Language endangerment needs urgent attention some African languages will become extinct in the coming years, because they have been officially neglected. As noted by Bamgbose (1991) language policies in Africa have been characterised by problems such as lack of implementation, avoidance, and declaration of policies without implementation. The result is that most African languages, especially the minoritised languages have been devitalized and face stiff competition from the more powerful languages. There is a need to revive and reclaim the minority speech communities together with their languages. Hence, this study focuses on the ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe because it is one of the several cross-border languages found in the Southern African country.

ChiChewa like other minority languages in Zimbabwe has mostly been restricted to use in the home. The other domains crucial for the survival of a language like the school and work environment have been dominated by ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English. Over the years intergenerational transmission of ChiChewa has diminished, as the language is no longer transmitted to the younger generations. In Zimbabwe, we currently have four generations of ChiChewa speakers, it is interesting to note that the different generations' exhibit marked differences in proficiency of the language (Chinyamunyamu, 2015). The older generations are bilingual while the younger generations are mostly monolingual in ChiShona, English and IsiNdebele, clearly showing that the language is endangered as the intergenerational transmission of the language is gradually dying.

One of the common arguments, levelled against Africa and its linguistic diversity, is that the large number of languages is an impediment to its development (Kamwangamwalu, 2016; Bangbose, 2014). Apologists of this standpoint advocate for monolingualism, which they believe and assume to be conducive for development. However, if Africa is to move forward then it needs to consider all its languages regardless of size, stature, and status. This is the reason why Maja (2007:07) argues that,

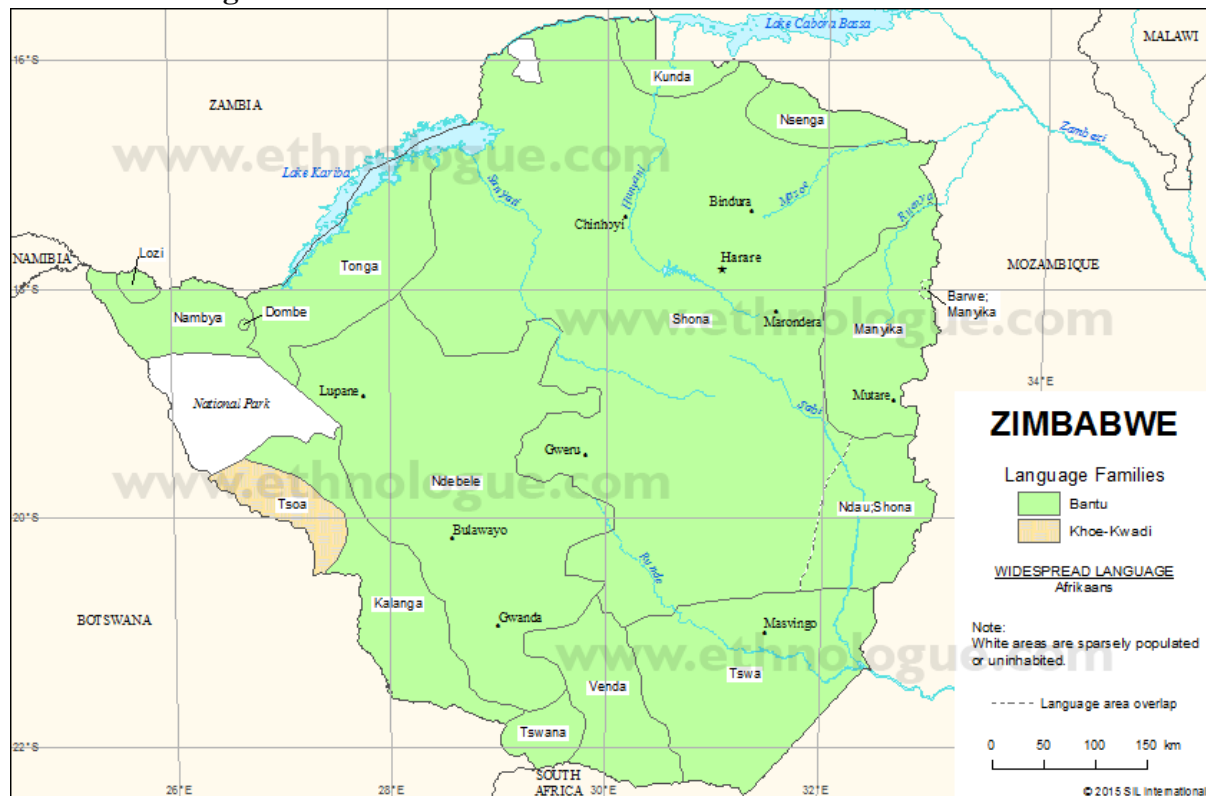
Any language is capable of being a vehicle for complicated human interaction and complex thoughts and can be the basis for a complex culture and civilisation. Therefore, all languages deserve respect and careful study. The interest in and appreciation of a person's language is tantamount to interest in and appreciation of the person himself. All languages are worthy of preservation in written form by means of grammars, dictionaries and written texts. This should be done as part of the human race

The recent elevation of all indigenous languages to the status of officially recognised languages in the new Constitution of Zimbabwe is a welcome development, which also provides an impetus for carrying out this study. Concerning policy formulation, the study will assist in bringing out the complexities and challenges to do with language in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, one of the objectives of the Academy of African Languages (ACALAN) is to ensure that cross border languages in Africa are promoted (African Union Assembly 1995). Several languages because of historical, political, and economic reasons find themselves straddling national boundaries. The ChiChewa language is one such example in Southern Africa, so from the perspective of language revival it is important to consider the prospects and challenges of revitalising the language.

ChiChewa is a national language in Malawi and recognised for education and administrative purposes in Zambia (Frawley, 2003). In Zimbabwe, ChiChewa was treated as a minority language until 2013 when the new Constitution was adopted. Now it is one of the sixteen officially recognised languages in Zimbabwe. Given this background, it is important to consider the challenges and possibilities of reviving the language from a Zimbabwean experience.

## 1.7 The sociolinguistic situation in Zimbabwe



**Figure 1: The language map of Zimbabwe (Ethnologue languages of the World 2016)**

Zimbabwe is a Southern African country, which like most African countries exhibits a lot of linguistic diversity. Sixteen languages are spoken and used, though at various levels. ChiShona and IsiNdebele are the two prominent and dominant languages spoken by 75% and 16% of the population respectively. The other indigenous languages are spoken by 7% of the population. These languages include Shangani, Venda, Kalanga, Tonga, Barwe, Sotho, Chikunda, Xhosa, Sena, Hwesa and Nambya (Nyika, 2008). Nyika (2008) omits the Chewa language from his list, while other earlier scholars like Hachipola (1998) include Chewa as part of the minority languages found in Zimbabwe. Until 2013 all these languages besides ChiShona and IsiNdebele were categorised as minority languages of Zimbabwe.

The general perception created during the colonial period was that the ChiShona and IsiNdebele languages in the north and the south linguistically dominate Zimbabwe. This misconception is corroborated by Doke's 1931 report on the Unification of the Shona Dialects. His report dismissed the importance and role-played by the other languages since he officially labelled them minority languages.

On the other hand, speakers of exoglossic languages make up 2% of the Zimbabwean population which currently stands at 16 320 537 million people (Central Statistical Office 2022). The English language continues to retain the official language tag, which was thrust upon it during the colonial period. It is the official language of instruction, business, and communication.

While the sociolinguistic situation has largely remained skewed in favour of the three dominant languages, the elevation of some minority languages has been noticed. Since 2011, Tonga and Kalanga are examined at grade 7 examinations. Tonga is taught at university level, with the University of Zimbabwe pioneering the project.

### **1.8 History of the Chewa people and language in Zimbabwe**

The Chewa people and language in Zimbabwe is chronicled in the context of the colonial period, a phase in history when Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi (formerly Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland) were under British colonial federal rule (1953-1963). The federation of the three colonies which resulted in Africans straddling national frontiers in the three colonies. The establishment of a capitalist system by the Europeans in Southern Rhodesia resulted in the setting up of labour-intensive industries (Groves, 2018). Mining and farming created the need for a large labour force. The locals shunned this kind of work in preference to seasonal employment (Yoshikuni, 2007).



Europeans were faced with serious labour shortages that would be inimical to the survival of the capitalist system; they resorted to hiring migrant labour. The Rhodesia Native Labour Association (RNLA) was responsible for hiring migrant labourers into the then Southern Rhodesia. The labour was mainly coming in from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, and Portuguese East Africa, that is present day Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique respectively. Hachipola (1998) notes that as early as 1909 migrant labour was hired into Southern Rhodesia through recruiting agencies.

With the locals shunning farm, industrial and mining work, the urban populations were to be dominated by the migrants. The Shona and the Ndebele resorted to seasonal employment in the industries and would go back to the rural areas for peasant farming. Hence, Mudeka (2011) claims that migrant labourers from Malawi made up half of the urban work force during the colonial era (Daimon, 2015; Yoshikuni,2007). Groves (2012) also points out that, by the 1920s and the 1930s many Nyasas (people from Nyasaland) had settled permanently in Salisbury (present day Harare). Male migrant workers from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa dominated the African population of Salisbury until the 1950s. The Federation of Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953-1963) was to play a significant part in population dynamics of the three colonies. Created for economic integration purposes, the Federation resulted in the movement of Africans into Southern Rhodesia which had more economic activity. The migration into Southern Rhodesia would only decline following the breakup of the Federation in 1963. The table below shows the African population by nationality for Salisbury from 1911-1969.

**Table 1: African population by nationality in Salisbury (now Harare), 1911-1969 (Yoshikuni 2007)**

Southern Rhodesia	1911	1921	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951	1962	1969
	2052	3346	6406	9550	12935	15810	30958	15870	231980
	49%	41%	49%	55%	49%	44%	41%	72%	83%
Nyasaland		3219	4637	5406	7665	9509	16399	41530	28830
		40%	36%	31%	29%	26%	22%	19%	10%
Northern Rhodesia	1155	366	791	774	935	1355	2339	4800	2770
	28%	4%	6%	4%	4%	4%	3%	2%	1%
Portuguese East Africa	879	1149	1008	1612	4665	9486	25367	13350	13460
	21%	14%	8%	9%	18%	26%	34%	6%	5%
South Africa & others	70	59	161	119	161	198	425	1260	1870
	2%	1%	1%	1%				1%	1%
Unspecified	66								1180
Total	4222(a)	8139	13003(b)	17461(b)	26361(b)	36358(b)	75488(c)	215810	280090
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The colonial administration attempted to manage the movement of Africans in urban areas by not creating permanent residences. Townships were created as transit camps, after one's tenure was over, he was supposed to go back to his original home. Migrant workers were supposed to go back to their homes in Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. The setup was that as they were working, a percentage of their earnings would be remitted back home to look after their families. Some migrant workers managed to go back to their families, but some decided to settle permanently in Southern Rhodesia. They eventually started new families with local women (Mashiri, 2005). The marrying of local women with Shona and Ndebele backgrounds meant a gradual assimilation into the local and dominant cultures. Some migrant workers managed to facilitate the coming of their families to join them and settle in Southern Rhodesia.

This created conditions for the maintenance of the Chewa culture and the language itself. This is corroborated by statistics provided by the British Foreign Affairs Office that, Malawians dominated four townships between 1940 and 1980 that is Mbare, Highfield, Rugare and Mufakose. Mabvuku and Tafara were established mainly to house the maids

and cooks of Europeans residing in Greendale, Eastlea and Highlands, they too had a large Chewa population. Similarly, the township of Rugare close to Kambuzuma in Harare was meant for workers of the then Rhodesia Railways (Mudeka, 2011) now the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ). So, the ethnic composition in the township of Rugare was again dominated by migrant workers of Chewa origin.

Even though the locals had a significant population in the urban areas, the way of life was inclined to the migrant way of life, since most locals favoured seasonal employment and did not own homes in the early urban areas (Ranger, 2010). Having settled in the townships, commercial farming areas and the mining towns, the migrants lived as closely knit communities tied together by a common Chewa culture and a common Chewa language. Cultural dances such as '*Gule wamkulu*' and '*Ben Arinoti*' distinguished migrants from the mainstream society (Yoshikuni, 2007). On the religious side, was the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). A church which until today remains synonymous with the Chewa language. The church is found in almost all mining towns and the oldest townships in Zimbabwe.

The location of Chewa speakers in Zimbabwe has mostly been in the oldest townships in Harare and Bulawayo. The mining towns and major farming areas also have concentrations of Chewa speakers. The Ethnologue of language (2016) states that in Zimbabwe, the ChiChewa language is spoken in the Mashonaland Central Province. However, it is important to note that since the land reform of the year 2000 a lot has changed in the composition of farming areas in Zimbabwe. Since the implementation of the fast-track land reform programme, most locals have moved into commercial farms to settle. This has resulted in farms no longer having a homogenous Chewa speaking population as previously before. In some mining towns adjacent to communal areas, retired workers mostly of

migrant origin have bought small farms and settled in the communal areas. They have assimilated into the local culture which makes it difficult to distinguish them from the local groups.

### **1.9 Definition of key terms**

It is important that terms used in this study are given contextual definitions.

**Language of wider communication-** is a language that facilitates communication among people of different linguistic backgrounds and from different nationalities.

**National language-** an indigenous language given recognised status by the government for use in specified domains within the country.

**Officially recognised language-** a language given the status of official recognition within a country.

**Indigenous language-** a language that carries the history and culture of a given society or country.

**Minority language-** refers to a language spoken by the minority of the population in a country.

**Language revitalization-** the activity of implementing programmes or strategies to re-establish the use of certain languages which would have fallen into disuse. It usually involves trying to increase the domains in which a language can be used.

### **1.10 Scope of the study**

The study is focused on discussing the challenges and prospects of revitalising a cross border language. The study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction of the research; it presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and

objectives of the study, the justification, and the methodology of the study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of the relevant literature. It focuses on the activity of language revitalisation on a global scale. It also provides a detailed review of literature on challenges and possibilities associated with reviving cross-border languages. Chapter 3 looks at the theoretical framework, research design and methodology of the research. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. Chapter 5 deals with the discussion on the research findings and includes an analysis of the findings from interviews, observations, secondary data, and focus group discussions. Chapter 6 is the conclusion which will present a summary of the research findings and the recommendations.

### **1.11 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the background of the study was outlined. The study objectives and the statement of the problem were clearly stated. The history of the ChiChewa language and its speakers in Zimbabwe was presented to situate the study in its sociolinguistic context. The next chapter discusses the literature review.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced the study through giving the background of the study, aim and objectives, statement of the problem, justification, and research questions of the study. This chapter embarks on an extensive review of literature on language revitalization. This chapter will define and elaborate the process of language revitalization seeking to show how an understanding of the process tends to differ from one speech community to the next.

#### **2.2 Language revitalization**

Languages found across the various speech communities in the world do not share the same statuses nor are they used for the same functions (Fishman, 2000). This results in some languages being marginalized, minoritised and sidelined. Inevitably, such languages become endangered as the more powerful ones subsequently encroach into the space previously enjoyed by these languages. This threat if left uncontrolled will normally lead to the loss, displacement or even death of the endangered languages. In most situations, the threat or the endangerment arises from the fact that intergenerational transmission of the language is not taking place with the younger generations in the speech community. Several reasons compound this situation in the speech communities concerned, language education policies and the hegemonic statuses of the dominant languages often work to stifle the transmission of the language to the younger generations. Sutherland (2003) concurs that the endangerment of languages is unavoidable. It is not a natural process. It is a product of modernization. According to Sutherland, the marginalization of indigenous languages is a result of colonial racist policies, punitive legislation, and intentional neglect. However there maybe attempts to

save the threatened languages, in many speech communities across the world various efforts and approaches continue to be made in attempts to arrest the situation.

Paulston et al., (1993) define language revitalization as the imparting of vigour to a language, which is still in limited or restricted use, most commonly by increased use through the expansion of domains. In language revitalization, the concerned language groups will be seeking legal and linguistic acknowledgement of their language. Besides legal and linguistic acknowledgement there is also advocacy for use of the language in everyday communication, which means expanding the domains in which the language is used. Language revitalization efforts are led by the affected speech community and the government or language experts. Hinton and Hale (2001) also define language revitalization as the implementation of programs, which raise the status of a language. It is important to note that language revitalization is multidisciplinary, attempts to revitalize a language usually go beyond just increasing the number of speakers but it has also cultural and political goals set to be achieved at the end of the day.

Similarly, Hinton (2011) defines language revitalization as the attempt of bringing back endangered languages to some level of use in the speech communities after a period of reduction in use. Cru (2013) asserts that the activity of language revitalization entails sociopolitical organization and the activism of speakers whose language practices work towards language maintenance and reproduction. Schwartz (2015) contends that language revitalization needs to be understood as a social movement, a symbolic approach to language in which recovering the language has broader social and cultural effects and language revitalization is a practice for contesting dominant language and cultural ideologies. The definitions above capture the essence of language revitalization. Over the years, revitalization has gradually evolved not just to concentrate on the reclaiming of speech and grammar forms

and to put emphasis on self-determination and the actual revival of the speech communities. The successful revitalizing of the Catalan language in Spain has now transformed into a political debate with the region of Catalonia now demanding independence from Spain. Language revitalization has been mainly viewed as language centred, the revitalization attempt is an effort to revive a speech community. Language revitalization is mostly associated with minority and indigenous languages. To date some examples of revitalized languages are indigenous languages notably in the North and South American contexts. However, it is important to point out that in this study language revitalization is being discussed in the context of a cross-border language.

### **2.3 Overview of literature on language revitalization**

While language revitalization is a recent subfield of linguistics, which mainly focuses on halting the death and extinction of, endangered and threatened languages, studies continue to be carried out to understand how endangered languages can be revived and maintained. Hinton (2010) discusses the practice of language revitalization focusing on different speech communities, while Baker (2011) focuses on the relationship between language planning and language revitalization. This current study, however, discusses at length the opportunities and challenges presented in attempting to revive a cross-border language. Similarly, Austin and Sallabank (2010) dwell on the various responses to language endangerment, while they make an immense contribution towards an understanding of the several approaches, which can be used to revive endangered languages. They did not consider the prospects and challenges associated with revitalizing a cross-border language. It is this gap, which the present study intends to contribute.



Fishman 1965; Jagodic 2011; Rasatma 2011; Mc Greavy 2013; Frey 2013; Karadakis and Arunachalan 2015; Meija 2015; Yelenevskya 2015, and Habtoor 2012 investigated language maintenance and language shift in their respective communities. Their studies were mainly concerned with the various ways the migrant communities were using to maintain their languages. They focus mainly on the strategies used by the speech communities to maintain their languages in a host country. To date most studies which have been done on language revitalization have taken descriptive and prescriptive approaches, focusing on how specific indigenous and minority communities have gone about the revitalization of their languages, [Hinton (2013), King et al., (2014), Creese (2012), Serafin et al., (2016), Marja-Lisa et al (2013), White (2015)]. In as much as all these studies contribute towards understanding language revitalization regarding indigenous languages and minority communities, they do not discuss prospects and challenges associated with reviving a cross-border language. Strategies to curb language endangerment are different because languages in themselves will experience different levels of endangerment. In some speech communities, languages might be extinct or remain with a few speakers and various approaches are used to revive the language. Socio-political and economic issues influence the revitalization of languages, and the current study addresses these issues contributing to contribute to understanding the challenges and prospects of revitalization attempts.

#### **2.4 Language revitalization in Africa**

Literature on the sociology of language in Africa has mostly focused on the problems in language planning and policy arising from the high levels of multilingualism on the continent. Arising from this challenge, scholars on language issues have written extensively on such issues as language choice, the threat posed by exoglossic languages such as English and French, Campbell (1997) and Bamgbose (2000). However, this does not imply that sociolinguists have

not paid attention to other challenges facing indigenous languages in Africa, Adebija (1997), (2001); Batibo (2005); Mutasa (2006); Mufenwe (2006); Bamgbose (2011) and Wa Mberia (2014). Issues to do with the revitalization of cross-border languages have not received much attention; most studies have been preoccupied with issues like the status of African languages in relation to the colonial languages they inherited. Studies on language revitalization in Africa are important because they raise pertinent issues since language endangerment is prevalent on the continent. Therefore, it is imperative that studies be carried out to understand how cross-border languages can be revived in the concerned speech communities. Therefore, this study intends to discuss the possibilities and challenges of revitalizing the ChiChewa language in the Zimbabwean context.

In Nigeria, several studies on language endangerment have been carried out, Adewale and Boluwuji (2013) examined the levels of endangerment of the following languages Kaami, Danji, Gelawa and Asu. Their study also focused on checking the frequency of use of the languages in domains such as the home and the marketplace. While Offiong et al., (2012) discuss language maintenance of the Efik language in Southeastern Nigeria. Despite having extensively focused on language endangerment and maintenance, the above studies did not dwell on the possibilities and challenges associated with the revitalization of cross-border languages in Africa.

Bodomo et al., (2009) consider the issue of language maintenance in the multilingual context of Ghana. Similarly, Van Aswegen (2008), Sitwala (2010) and Kipsisey (2010) investigated language shift and maintenance in their respective communities. While they provide comprehensive accounts of how the speech communities of concern have gone about maintaining their languages, they however did not look at the prospects and challenges of revitalization in their respective speech communities.

Cross-border languages are a common feature on the African linguistic landscape. This owes to the colonial past in which arbitrary boundaries were created by the imperial powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884. The result was that in some regions of Africa there are languages, which cut across national boundaries and are spoken in several countries like KiSwahili, Somali and Malagasy in East Africa, while in West Africa there are cross-border languages such as Hausa, Mandekan and Fulfide (ACALAN, 2009). It is important again to bring out this fact, in most cases the cross-border languages do not have the same status in the countries in which they are found. ChiChewa a cross-border language common in Southern Africa is the official language in Malawi, a national language in Zambia and Mozambique and an officially recognized language in Zimbabwe. In the Zimbabwean context, the officially recognized status was only assumed in the year 2013. Previously it had been categorized as a minority language. In as far as literature on revitalization is concerned there is a cursory mention of revitalization of cross-border languages in Africa, so this study will contribute something in this regard.

Nkoma-Darch (2003) analyses the educational challenges facing the ChiChewa cross-border language in Southeastern Africa. Her study sheds light on the issue of educational and linguistic challenges associated with cross-border languages in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. It did not however dwell on the revitalization of any cross-border language. Mathangwane (2015) discusses how the Kalanga community in Botswana has managed to maintain the language in an environment with a hostile language policy. Kalanga like ChiChewa is one of the cross-border languages found in Zimbabwe and Botswana. Her study however is mainly concerned with the promotion and preservation of the Kalanga language. Mlaudzi (2011) also focuses on the relationship between the cross-border varieties of Lembethu and Tshilembethu in Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is important to acknowledge that studies have been carried out on cross-border varieties and languages in Africa focusing on other issues other than revitalization. The current study discusses the prospects and

challenges associated with revitalizing a cross-border language. ChiChewa in this case brings up a very interesting scenario, while it is a cross-border language like most of the languages in Zimbabwe, it can also be categorized as an immigrant and diasporan language. The presence of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe as pointed out in Chapter 1 can be traced back historically from around 1900-1950. The period when migrant labour was being recruited from the then Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Mozambique to work in the industries and farms in Southern Rhodesia (present day Zimbabwe). Political developments in the three British colonies in Southern Africa led to the establishment of the Federation from 1953-1963. This ten-year period created a situation in which the three colonies were as one country. This makes the case for ChiChewa interesting when one considers the possibilities and challenges associated with its revitalization in the Zimbabwean context.

## **2.5 Language revitalization in Zimbabwe**

While there exists many studies and discussions on language issues in Zimbabwe, most of the studies make a cursory mention of the concept of language revitalization. Hachipola (1998) made a survey of the minority languages in Zimbabwe. His efforts were mainly concentrated on the status of the minority languages found in Zimbabwe. Hachipola's survey is limited to the sociolinguistic profile of the minority languages. The study provides an invaluable basis for understanding the history and status of minority languages in Zimbabwe as ChiChewa used to belong to this category until 2013 when it was elevated to the status of an officially recognized language. Makoni (2011) gives a historical analysis of the status of minority languages in Zimbabwe focusing on how the Education Act of 1987 and its amendment of 2006 led to the continued marginalization of minority languages in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Nonetheless Makoni (2011) like Hachipola (1998) did not consider the challenges and prospects associated with revitalization. Ndlovu (2009; 2010) discusses the influence of

politics in the marginalization of indigenous minority languages in Zimbabwe. Makoni argues that the dominant Shona and Ndebele groups have largely determined the fate of minority languages in the Zimbabwean context, and this has largely side-lined the other indigenous languages as they have fewer speakers. Nyota (2014) gives an evaluation of the ethnolinguistic vitality of the Tonga language in Gokwe to determine its level of endangerment. Though Nyota's study focuses on the issue of ethnolinguistic vitality, which is central in language revitalization cases, it did not dwell on the prospects and challenges associated with the revitalization of cross-border languages.

This study however is concerned with discussing factors associated with revitalizing a cross-border language in the hope of contributing towards literature on language endangerment and language resuscitation from a Zimbabwean perspective. Literature on language issues in Zimbabwe as highlighted earlier on has paid more attention to the dominant indigenous languages; it does not focus much on cross-border languages except for Mazuruse (2015) who considers the harmonization of cross-border varieties of ChiShona and Nyai in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. While Ndlovu (2013) analyses the significance of cross-border languages in the economic integration of Southern Africa. Their studies contribute invaluable knowledge in terms of harmonization and the usefulness of languages in regional integration they nonetheless did not focus on cross-border language revitalization. As pointed out by Ndlovu (2013), cross-border languages are a reality in Africa, and it is important to carry out studies to consider their revitalization in the wake of endangerment instituted by socio-political forces. Muwati et al., (2014) investigate the resuscitation of endangered languages in Zimbabwe. Their study makes an invaluable contribution towards understanding the status, strategies and challenges associated with resuscitating such languages. However, again their study is limited to the Tonga language whereas the current study shifts focus to the ChiChewa language.

Threatened languages might be placed in the same category but the forces, which prohibit or enhance the revival of such languages, are not the same. Hence, it is important to carry out comprehensive studies to ascertain how each language is affected. In the Zimbabwean context, ChiChewa is one of the fourteen cross-border languages. It has a unique history which is different from that of the other languages in that the presence of the language in Zimbabwe can be traced back to around 1900 Van Onselen (1990), whereas all the other indigenous and formerly minority languages have always been part of the Zimbabwean linguistic landscape. ChiChewa while considered a minority language, also qualifies to be an immigrant language, which even makes it very interesting because it's a language which unlike all the others, is prevalent in the farming, mining, and urban areas.

An endangered language with such a history presents unique challenges and prospects for its revitalisation. Reversing Language Shift theory (RLS) and Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), while providing us with a theoretical understanding of the course of action to take in the revitalization of languages, are confined to European contexts. As mentioned earlier on, speech communities are unique in their own sense, hence strategies employed in one community will differ in specific aspects with the next speech community. Thus, it is important that studies continue to be carried out to ascertain how revitalization can be approached in different contexts. The African linguistic landscape is multilingual in nature while in Europe monolingualism appears to be normative. Revitalization of languages in a multilingual setup such as in Africa is therefore complicated. This is the justification for focusing on the challenges and prospects of revitalizing the ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe.

## **2.6 Strategies for revitalizing languages**

The level of language endangerment affecting languages will always differ due to the many factors which affect the language in question. Socio-political and economic factors are at the

forefront in instigating different levels of endangerment for languages in the many different speech communities across the globe. For Hinton and Hale (2001), it is the disenfranchised languages which suffer the most. Languages that are not used for commerce, education and communication are prone to being marginalized. Minority languages usually find themselves in such a situation. Different speech communities will employ different strategies to revitalize their languages depending on the level of the endangerment. To date various approaches and methods have been used to revitalize minority and indigenous languages in many different speech communities across the globe.

Laerie (2008) and Arienne (2011) examined the tools necessary for the revitalization of indigenous languages, in the wake of globalization. Matsumoto (2010) discusses the role of social networks as mechanisms for language maintenance and revitalization. Focusing on the island of Palau his study brings out how social networks are being used in the revival of the languages in a post-colonial situation. While these studies provide detailed discussions on the approaches and strategies, which have been used in other speech communities to revitalize indigenous languages, they however did not look at the challenges and prospects involved in attempts at reviving cross-border languages. As evident from the vast literature available on revitalization strategies in the North American and European contexts, much focus has been on indigenous languages and communities. The current study draws attention to a reality common to the African linguistic landscape, that of cross-border languages (Ndhlovu, 2013). It discusses the challenges and opportunities, which are involved in attempts to revitalize the ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe. ChiChewa is one of the several cross-border languages found in Zimbabwe and historically has been marginalized (Mpofu 2011: Ndhlovu 2009, 2018). However, with the amended Constitution of 2013 its status has shifted from being a minority language to an officially recognized language. In line with this development, it becomes

imperative to carry out studies to ascertain what can be involved in its revitalization. This becomes a contribution to the growing body of literature on language revitalization.

Furthermore Gehr (2013); Mc Clain (2014); Man-Chiu (2013); Thorpe (2014); Smith-Christmas and Armstrong (2014) look at the possibilities of revitalizing native languages through museums, archives, libraries, adult heritage learners and information technologies in their respective speech communities. While their studies bring to attention how speech communities have made use of the different strategies to revitalize languages. It is important to point out that these studies take a descriptive approach in that they describe how the different approaches were used in the different speech communities. The current study instead adopts an analytical approach in discussing the prospects and challenges of revitalizing a cross-border language. While it is important to understand how speech communities make use of the many different strategies to revitalize their endangered or marginalized languages. There is need to understand language revitalization not just from a prescriptive point of view where emphasis is on the strategies used, but to have a deeper understanding of the prospects and challenges involved in any language revitalization situation. Language revitalization is an activity, which is influenced by socio-economic and political factors. Analysis brings into the fray these factors. Thus, it is important that studies focusing on language revitalization should not only focus on the strategies used but also consider other issues and factors, which influence language revitalization such as language policy, language attitudes and the socio-economic factors which affect speech communities and their languages.

While it is important to revitalize languages, which are endangered or facing imminent death, it is necessary to discuss the prospects and challenges of those languages under threat. Activities of language revitalization and maintenance as alluded to above should not only be understood as practical sociolinguistic tasks. There is need to understand the broad context of



the many complexities which come together to influence how different speech communities appreciate and use their languages. Hinton (2015) points out that social, political, and economic factors will continue to decide the fate of indigenous and minority languages. It has become evident that language revitalization goes beyond reviving the language but is a cultural and political activity geared towards establishing autonomy and identity of marginalized communities. The revitalization of Hebrew in Israel is one of the successes of revitalizing an extinct language. However, it should be noted that this did not only happen by following laid rules for language revitalization, but political factors also made an immense contribution in the revitalization of Hebrew. The political ideology of nationalism ensured that Hebrew was successfully revived in a speech community, which also had other languages. In line with the illustration above from the Hebrew case, it is relevant to discuss the prospects and challenges involved in revitalizing a language. Hence, this study focuses on the cross-border ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe.

Similarly, Adegaju (2009); Wamlwa and Olouch (2013); Mhute et al., (2014) propose the use of strategies like language teaching and electronic preservation of endangered languages in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe respectively. Ngulube (2012) discusses the role of publishers and libraries in the preservation and revitalization of languages in South Africa. Despite focusing on the different strategies which can be employed in revitalizing indigenous languages in Africa, their studies did not focus on specific communities and neither do they dwell on the challenges and opportunities associated with the revitalization of cross-border languages. It is this gap in research, which this study intends to cover. Language revitalization goes beyond simply identifying the strategies to use in revitalizing an endangered language and narrating how speech communities managed to revive their languages. There is need to focus on the various socio-political and economic factors which influence the revitalization of threatened and endangered languages. Revitalization is not limited to the language per se but to the whole

speech community, which is supposed to be using the language, so there is need to discuss all factors involved in the process.

It is evident from this extensive review of literature that while the idea of language revitalization has been dealt with extensively before. This current study intends to contribute to the literature relating to cross-border language revitalization. Previous studies have made immense contributions on strategies and approaches, which have been used to revitalize indigenous and minority languages across the globe. In the same vein, other studies have also focused on how speech communities have approached the issue of language revitalization. Most of the studies as mentioned earlier on in this chapter mainly place emphasis on prescriptive and descriptive approaches to the issue of language revitalization. The current study however discusses the factors, which can promote and or stultify the revitalization of cross-border languages in the Zimbabwean context.

## **2.7 Chapter summary**

The chapter reviewed literature on language revitalization. Through a survey of existing literature, the chapter has shown that at present there is a lot of literature on the revitalization of indigenous languages and minority languages. However, there is a dearth on literature focusing on the prospects and challenges of reviving cross-border languages, as earlier studies dwelt more on strategies and approaches which have been used in different contexts to revive endangered and threatened languages. The following chapter is going to focus on the theoretical framework and the research methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on the review of literature related to this study. This chapter will present the theoretical framework and the research methods used in this study. The methods of data collection used will be explained and a justification of their use will be given. The chapter will also outline the approaches used in the analysis of the data collected.

#### **3.2 Theoretical framework**

The study is guided by the Language ecology and Language ideology theories. Language ecology and language ideology are two linguistic oriented theories, which interpret the existence of languages as part of the socio-political environment. The two theories put emphasis on the view that language is shaped by people's views, attitudes, and perceptions. These views and feelings are dynamic and closely influenced by the socio-political and economic forces operating in the speech community. It is fitting for this study, which discusses the prospects and challenges of revitalizing a cross-border language to be grounded in these two theories. The two theories assist us in understanding how languages in a multilingual setup need to be understood and how the best approach can be used to revitalize such languages. Language ecology and language ideology demonstrate how societies understand and perceive languages, this goes a long way in elucidating what is involved in the revitalization of endangered and threatened languages. According to Silverstein (1979), the importance of language ideologies lies in the fact that beliefs about language mediate between language use and the social organization in a speech community.

Language revitalization is not restricted to reviving the language only, but the revival of the concerned speech community too. Revitalization in its broad sense implies challenging the status quo, deconstructing, and reconstructing the dominant ideologies. Most revitalization efforts turn out to be politically oriented with marginalized groups fighting for autonomy and recognition from the dominant groups. Above all revitalization resorts to acknowledge and recognize the existence of a threatened or endangered language in the broader context of other related languages in a speech community. Hence Hornberger et al., (2008) elaborate that in language ecology, the central emphasis is on the study of diversity in specific socio-political settings in the speech communities. Language choice and use are always challenging, maintaining hierarchies and hegemonies.

### **3.3 Language Ecology**

Einar Haugen is the leading proponent of the Language Ecology approach in his seminal work of 1972 entitled, *The Ecology of Language*. Haugen (1972:325) defined language ecology as follows,

The study of interactions between any given language and its environment. The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of its users and it only functions in relating these users to one another and to nature i.e., their social and natural environment. Part of its ecology is therefore psychological: its interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers. Another part of its ecology is sociological, its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication. The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others

The Language Ecology framework stresses two types of environments, which need to be understood from a linguistic point of view. Garner (2005:94) elaborates on the two types of environments when he says that

The psychological component is concerned with the language as it exists in the mind of the speaker his or her use of the language to make sense of the world. Its interaction with other languages in the mind and the speaker's attitudes towards the language. The sociological component is concerned with the language, as it exists within the speech

community, how it is used between people. It includes the where, when, and why a language is used and not used, and how these are related to the pattern of speakers' social behaviour. In other words, there is an actual relationship between community and language

The psychological component brings out how speakers perceive their languages in relation to the other languages. In a multilingual setup, languages are likely to have different statuses because some will occupy the official status while those spoken by minority speakers will have the minority status. These labels and classifications of languages are ingrained in the minds of the speakers, such that certain attitudes and perceptions develop over the languages. In speech communities where linguistic pluralism is overlooked speakers of the minority languages tend to see their own languages as inferior to the dominant and powerful languages. Hence, the prevalence of language shifts in such situations where there is unstable bilingualism. In situations, involving migrant languages everything is skewed in favour of the host speech community's languages, such that among the migrants their languages are perceived more of identity markers and culture only. While the dominant languages of the host country are the gateway to success and assimilation into the host society. Speakers of the dominant language in the host countries will always tend to look down upon the languages of the migrants, as the migrants are regarded as minorities.

Sociological environments bring out the issue of how languages are used within the speech communities. This describes more on the function and status given to the languages found within a speech community. Since most nations are not specifically monolingual in nature, languages are usually understood under the common labels like; official language, language of instruction, minority language and officially recognized language. These statuses and functions given to languages bring out the intimate relationship between languages and the communities, which use them.

The ecology approach does not look so much into one language, but it views language or languages as part of a linguistic ecosystem where all things being equal, languages are supposed to co-exist. Even though it is practically impossible for all languages in a speech community to share the same status, functions, and opportunities. The ecology approach stresses the need to acknowledge linguistic diversity and pushes for the need to ensure the sustainability of all the languages in the speech community is guaranteed. Wilhelm (2012) concurs that the language ecology framework does not look so much into one language but focuses on the entire linguistic ecology of a region. Language ecology as an approach checks to see if the sociolinguistics, economics, physical and political conditions of a given speech community are favourable for the support of linguistic diversity.

### **3.4 Language Ideology**

Irvine (2012) defines language ideologies as conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices. Language ideology focuses more on the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes which people hold over certain languages. Silverstein (1979:193) also asserts that, “language ideologies are sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use”.

Common to the definition of language ideology is the central idea of language and language use determined by the beliefs of the speech community in which that language is in use. Language does not exist in a vacuum, rather it is moulded and framed according to the needs of the speech community in which it is used. Hence, Silverstein in his understanding of language ideology stresses on rationalization or justification of perceived language use.

Languages as they exist in different speech communities are influenced by socio-historical, economic, and political processes. These processes go a long way in affecting and influencing how people begin to perceive, justify, and use language. Descriptions and labels attached to languages are a manifestation of how people have come to understand and use language. Terms such as minority language, majority language and languages of wider communication (LWC) reflect language ideologies at work across the world.

In most multilingual setups, dominant and marginalized languages exist, and speakers from both divides have their own beliefs and rationalizations of how they ought to use their languages. Its users view the dominant language, which normally enjoys wider use in every sphere of life, as the norm. They perceive the minority languages as not necessary for use by them since they make up the majority and the dominant group. Piller (2015) highlights the attitudes of Americans towards the minority Spanish language speakers in the United States of America (USA). The USA with its implicit English only Policy results in speakers of the dominant English language having negative attitudes towards minority languages such as Spanish. Efforts by indigenous or minority communities to have their own languages recognized or elevated are perceived by the dominant group as a threat to unity and progress in the nation. The dominant groups understand language activism as undermining the authority and territory enjoyed by the dominant languages. Bambgose (1991) argues that in Africa one reason why language planning has not been successful is that most governments fear that elevating minority languages will create disunity since there is a lot of multilingualism. Therefore, they opt to use the former colonial languages, which are viewed as neutral to everyone. This reflects the nexus between languages; culture and politics where people's feelings are also revealed through the medium of language. Language as understood within the framework of language ideology ceases to be neutral but a subjective entity which is influenced

by the justifications and rationalizations of the groups concerned. Speech communities strive to protect their interests where they feel threatened by other dominant or minority groups.

Speakers of minority languages have their own sets of beliefs about their own languages and the dominant language as well. In a speech community in which the language policy is not favorable to the minority speech community, their language is viewed and used as a symbol of solidarity in the face of the threat posed by the dominant languages. Besides being a medium of communication, the minority language is viewed by the minority group as an identity marker, that symbol which binds them all together. It is interesting to note that the minority speech community has certain feelings towards the dominant language which might be negative. On the contrary, the dominant languages are held in high esteem among the minority speech communities. The dominant languages ensure a brighter future for them, as it will be the language of school, communication, and the passport to jobs. Consequently, most minority language speakers are bi or multilingual so that they survive, assimilate, and work in an environment which might be hostile to them.

Considering the linguistic diversity, which characterizes Zimbabwe and Africa at large, the Ecology and language ideology frameworks come in handy in the attempts to discuss the prospects and challenges of revitalizing cross-border languages. The ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe is part of a language ecosystem made up of fifteen other languages. The ecology needs to be balanced so that the language, even after years of marginalization, may have its vitality improved and sustained. As highlighted above, language is not a neutral entity, it is subjective and loaded with people's conceptions, justifications and understanding of reality. Language revitalization is not just a linguistic activity to save or change the fortunes of a threatened or endangered language, it challenges the status quo and attempts to shift the balance of power and dominance in a speech community. Thus, it is preferable that this study be



grounded in the language ecology and language ideology frameworks. These two theories bring to attention the forces, which act upon languages as they come to be used in everyday situations.

### **3.5 Research Methodology**

The study adopts the qualitative research paradigm. Jupp (2006) defines qualitative research as “research which investigates aspects of social life which are not amenable to quantitative measure”, therefore, this study interprets the meaning of the data collected and presented in an argumentative form. It is in the nature and scope of qualitative research that attention and emphasis is put on interpretation and detail. The researcher will critically interpret the views and responses of the interviewees and the responses from the focus group discussions. Qualitative research is more subjective in nature, it involves examining and reflecting on the less tangible aspects of a research subject, e.g., values, attitudes, and perceptions (Neville, 2007). Sarantakos (1998:467) also observes that, qualitative methods of social research employ no quantitative standard and techniques...” therefore while quantitative research deals with quantity, qualitative data expresses in words information about feelings, values, and attitudes” Lawson and Garrod, (1994) in Sarantakos (ibid)

It is clear from the above that in qualitative research emphasis and focus is on the meanings and interpretations of various social phenomena. This study therefore revolves around extensive reading of secondary sources of data and the interpretations of responses from the interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions.

The qualitative approach enables research to be conducted in a natural setting. This allowed the researcher to participate and collect the data using interviews, focus group discussions and secondary data. Understanding the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of ChiChewa speakers, language experts and officials from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education regarding the discussion on the prospects and challenges of reviving a language is crucial. All

these parties are involved in activity to do with language revitalization. While the ChiChewa speakers are the owners of the language, insights from language experts, government officials and language practitioners are equally important.

Nieuwenhuis (2007), purposive sampling is a method that involves identifying and selecting supposedly typical or interesting cases. The participants in the study were selected owing to their knowledge, experience, and exposure to the topic under study. This type of sampling gives the opportunity to collect raw data from the most appropriate participants. Language revitalization efforts and approaches always draw the language speakers, language activists, language planners, experts, and the government together, as these are the parties involved in any attempt to revive an endangered language. In this study, participants were drawn from all these categories to make up the population sample.

### **3.6 Research participants**

#### **3.6.1 Native speakers of ChiChewa**

Native speakers are important in any study, which involves the topic of language revitalization because they are the owners of the language. It is their attitudes, perceptions, and opinions, which play a central role in issues to do with language revival. As highlighted in Chapter 2, language revitalization is not focused on the language only, but also on the speech community of concern. In a broad sense, to revitalize, a language also implies revitalizing the community, which speaks that language. If a language is marginalized and endangered, this means that the speech community, which uses that language, is also endangered and marginalized. Therefore, any talk of reviving a language should not omit the speakers of that language. For purposes of this study, native ChiChewa speakers are central in discussing the prospects and challenges of revitalizing ChiChewa. Since there are approximately four generations of ChiChewa speakers in Zimbabwe the researcher made sure that, they would be catered for in the study, as their

views and opinions are central to the discussion. The four generations which make up the ChiChewa speakers in Zimbabwe can be categorized as, the old generation (made up of the first migrant groups to come into the then Southern Rhodesia to work in the farms and mines and urban areas) their ages range between 55-90yrs old. The second generation largely made up of children of the first generation, for this generation the age range is 25-54yrs old. The third generation is comprised of children of the second, 0-24yrs old. The differences in the age among the four groups' means their perceptions and attitudes regarding the challenges and prospects associated with revitalizing the ChiChewa language will be different.

### **3.6.2 Language experts**

Language experts handle technical issues about language such as grammar, lexicography, orthography, terminology, and standardization (Sithole, 2017). Language experts deal with language issues from both academic and subject specific perspectives. Research participants in this category were mostly lecturing in language and linguistic courses. The others are involved in corpus development and language policy making. Three of the language experts make up the personnel at the African Languages Research Institute (ALRI). The views and perspectives of the language experts make immense contributions to this study. Their association with the ALRI institute would go a long way in assisting this study, since it is the mandate of the institute to carry out research on indigenous languages in Zimbabwe. They are the people on the ground to provide expert views on the activities of the institute and its position regarding the ChiChewa language.

### **3.6.3 Government officials**

The researcher interviewed government officials from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Curriculum Development Unit officers and personnel from the Zimbabwe School

Examinations Council (ZIMSEC). The Ministry of Education is important in this study because it is where much of the groundwork and implementation efforts to elevate the status of languages and their teaching is done. Government officials provided the researcher with information regarding the government's efforts and progress on the teaching of indigenous languages in Zimbabwe. They also advised on issues such as curriculum policy, language in education policies and progress on the implementation of the constitutional provisions on the teaching of the officially recognized languages in Zimbabwean schools. The researcher interviewed ChiChewa broadcasters from the state-owned National FM radio station, which specifically broadcasts using indigenous languages, and ChiChewa being one of them. The radio presenters provided invaluable information on the broadcasting language policy, listenership and challenges and progress made in broadcasting using indigenous languages.

### **3.7 Data collection methods**

The purpose and objectives of the study determined the quality and quantity of data collected. Several methods were used in the study, as they would assist in countering the limitations of the individual techniques.

### **3.8 Document analysis**

According to Bailey (1994) documentary analysis refers to the analysis of documents that contain information about phenomena we wish to study. Payne and Payne (2004) say document analysis is a method used to categorize, investigate, and identify the limitations of physical sources. Previous and current language policy documents, curriculum policies, newspaper articles, published and unpublished literature are examined to assist the discussion on the challenges and prospects associated with revitalizing a cross-border language. Document analysis as a method helped the researcher in examining policy consistency issues by relating to the responses provided by correspondents.

### **3.9 Observations**

In research, which uses a qualitative approach, observation allows the researcher to penetrate the world of participants to learn and understand what they do. Hughes and Tight (2001) note that observations can be participatory or non-participatory. In the context of this study, the researcher used the non-participatory type of observation. Observations of ChiChewa language use and practices were done in Harare and the mining and farming town of Arcturus. The researcher took time to attend cultural gatherings and attend church services of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). The researcher observed how the people would use the language in these contexts. Since the hometown of the researcher is Arcturus, it was easy to visit some respondents' homes to observe language usages in the home. Mbare, Mabvuku and Tafara were chosen because they have many ChiChewa speaking people which made it easy for the researcher to carry out field observations. It is important to point out again that while observation is a useful method in collecting data in qualitative research, the method has its strengths and weaknesses. While it has the advantage of not interfering with the people being studied, it tends to rely heavily on the perceptions of the researcher which may be biased.

### **3.10 Interviews**

Collins et al., (2000:177) define an interview as "... a face-to-face meeting between two or more people in which the interviewer asks questions while the respondent answers back". The interview method was used to collect data in this study to complement the other data collection methods. The main strength of the interview method is in its flexibility and adaptability to individual situations. Cresswell (2003:186) outlines the strength and weaknesses of the interview as a data collection method as follows

<b>Data collection type</b>	<b>Options within type</b>	<b>Advantages of the type</b>	<b>Limitations of the type</b>
interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to face: one on one in person interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful when participants cannot be observed directly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides “indirect” information filtered through the views of interviewees.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone: researcher interviews by phone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants can provide historical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides information in a designated “place” rather than the natural field setting.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group: researcher interviews participants in a group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows researcher “control” over line of questioning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher’s presence may bias responses.</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are not equally articulate and perceptive.</li> </ul>

The interview method reaches parts which other methods cannot reach” (Wellington and Szczerbinski 2007:81). This is because the researcher can follow up leads and, in the process, obtain data with precision. Interviews “allow the researcher to probe an interviewee’s thoughts, value prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives. (ibid: 81)

The interview questions were designed to suit the respondents as they belonged to different categories and backgrounds. Interviews allow the researcher to probe, especially in contexts or situations that are vague, and the interviewees provide inadequate answers. In this study, face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were used to collect data from respondents. The interviews were conducted in English, ChiShona and Chichewa (with the help of a ChiChewa native speaker since some of the respondents could neither understand nor speak fluent English and ChiShona). This was done to suit the linguistic backgrounds of the respondents. Each

interview session lasted approximately 20 minutes and before each session commenced the interviewer would first stress the issue of confidentiality.

### **3.11 Secondary sources**

While interviews, observations, document analysis and focus group discussions made up the primary sources, secondary sources were used extensively in this study. Haralambos and Holborn (1990: 270) assert that secondary sources “consist of data which already exists”. In this study books, theses, newspapers, and journal articles were used. All these sources provided useful insights to the study. Arguments central to this study are sustained by ideas raised by scholars in the various secondary sources, which were consulted and used in this study. Language revitalization is a discipline in which key scholars like (Fishman 1965; 1991; 2001), Tsunoda (2005), Hinton and Hale (2001), (2011) have written much literature on. Their views and perspectives concretized and sustained the main arguments raised in this study.

### **3.12 Focus group discussions**

These were used in the study to complement the other primary sources of data. According to Wilkinson (2004), a focus group is an informal discussion among a group of selected individuals about a topic. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2008:375) assert that, “broadly speaking focus groups are collective conversations which can be small or large”. The aim of a focus group discussion is to attain a description, understand meanings, and interpretations of a selected group of participants on a specific issue or topic from the perspective of that group. Since this study was centred on discussing the prospects and challenges of revitalizing the ChiChewa language, focus groups were used with the elderly ChiChewa speakers to get their views and feelings on the issue. The method was effective considering the age of the group participants and their scarcity. Three focus group discussions were carried out with the researcher being assisted to facilitate by a middle-aged ChiChewa native speaker.

### **3.13 Data analysis**

Rich and adequate data was collected through the various data gathering techniques. Content analysis and thematic analysis were used in the analysis and interpretation of data. Content analysis is a data analysis technique which involves making inferences through interpreting textual material. The method was employed in interpreting and understanding language policy documents, language in education Acts, the Nziramasanga Commission, newspaper articles, conference proceedings and other materials on language revitalization and cross-border languages. Content analysis allows the researcher to evaluate and interpret written documents. Thematic analysis was used on primary data gathered from interviews and focus group discussions. This approach enabled the researcher to identify and analyze themes for discussion in the study. The themes assisted the researcher to argue convincingly regarding the prospects and challenges associated with revitalizing a cross-border language.

### **3.14 Piloting**

A pilot study was carried out on the interview schedules to test them and see where they could be revised. According to Neuman (2003), a pilot study provides the researcher with approaches, ideas and clues not foreseen prior to the study. The pilot study was carried out in Tafara-Mabvuku where 10 respondents were purposively selected to test the interview schedule for ChiChewa native speakers. A question on the domains in which the ChiChewa language is used was added to the schedule.

### **3.15 Ethical considerations**

In all cases in which interviews and focus group discussions were used, the researcher sought consent from the research participants. The researcher ensured that confidentiality was



maintained throughout the data collection period. The study abided by the ethics of research by ensuring that permission was sought from relevant authorities before collecting the required information with guarantees that such information would only be used for the intended purpose.

### **3.16 Chapter summary**

The chapter explained the two theoretical approaches, which were used in this study, namely, Language ecology and Language ideology. These were outlined to bring about their justification for use in this research. The chapter outlined and explored the nature of the research participants. Since the study is qualitative in nature, interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document analysis were used to collect the required data. Data analysis approaches were also elaborated. The next chapter will dwell on the data presentation and analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of this research. Thirteen respondents were interviewed; five were language experts, five were ChiChewa native speakers and three were officials from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Twenty-four participants took part in the three focus group sessions, which were carried out during the data collection period from May 2016 to May 2017. A total of six observation sessions were carried out during the data collection period. However, data saturation was achieved with three sessions, so the researcher had to use those since there was no new data coming from the fourth, fifth and sixth observation sessions. Saunders et al., (2018) note that saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection because no new information or data may be found. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the three research questions, which this study sought to answer, are the following:

1. What are the challenges and possibilities of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe?
2. What is the status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe?
3. What are the implications of revitalizing a cross-border language?

These research questions stem from the following three research objectives:

- To examine the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa.
- To discuss challenges associated with revitalizing ChiChewa as a cross-border language.
- To assess the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages.

Since this was a qualitative study which relied on interviews, observations and focus group discussions for the collection of data, this chapter will present the findings from the field where the data were collected. The data is presented according to the research questions.

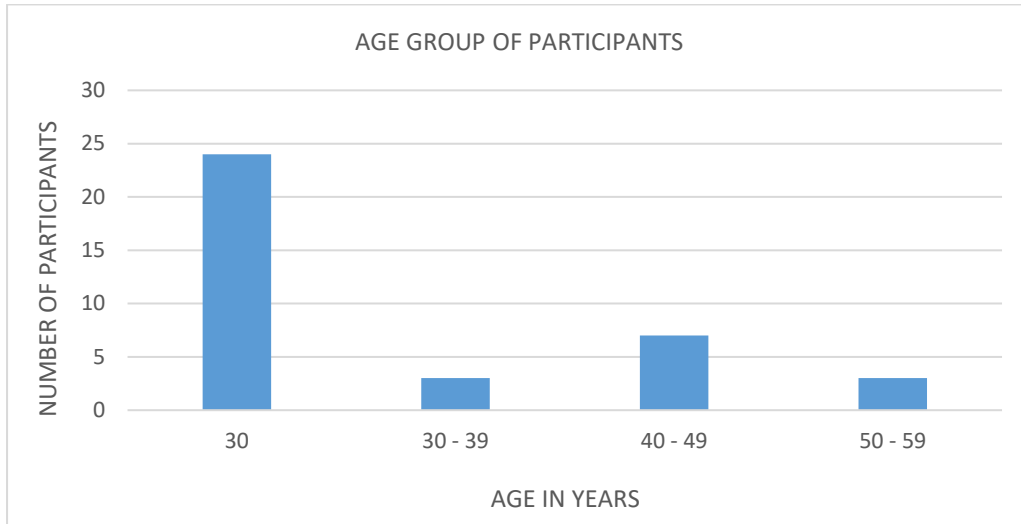
#### **4.1 Demographic data of participants**

Interviews were carried out with thirteen interviewees who included five language experts, five native speakers of ChiChewa and three Ministry of Education officials. Focus group discussions involving twenty-four participants were conducted and three observation sessions were used to collect data.

#### **4.2 Age groups of participants**

*Table 2: Age of participants*

Age	Number
30 and below	24
30 – 39	3
40 – 49	7
50 – 59	3



***Figure2: Age group of p articipants***

### 4.3 Interviewee profile

Interviewee	Profile
Interviewee 1	Director of the African languages Institute
Interviewee 2	Lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University
Interviewee 3	Lecturer at University of Zimbabwe
Interviewee 4	Research fellow at African languages Institute
Interviewee 5	Director of Zimbabwe Indigenous Languages Promotion Association
Interviewee 6	Native speaker, Broadcaster at National FM
Interviewee 7	Former farm worker native ChiChewa speaker
Interviewee 8	High School teacher, native ChiChewa speaker
Interviewee 9	Priest in the Church of the Province of Central Africa Presbyterian church (CCAP)
Interviewee 10	Retired mine worker, native ChiChewa speaker
Interviewee 11	Director Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Interviewee 12	Director Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Interviewee 13	Officer Curriculum Development Unit

Table 4.2:

### 4.4 Presentation of research findings from language experts

This section presents responses from language experts. The experts were asked to respond to questions on their understanding of cross-border languages, their status, government policy, significance of language revitalization, possibilities, and challenges of revitalizing ChiChewa.

#### 4.4.1 Cross-border languages

Language experts demonstrated that they are familiar with the concept of cross-border languages. Interviewee 1 defined cross-border languages as

‘Languages that traverse national boundaries’

Cross-border languages cut across national boundaries of usually neighbouring countries.

Another interviewee said,

I can define cross-border languages as languages spoken across national or international boundaries, or languages that straddle boundaries. Languages of this nature have a significant number of speakers found across the countries in which they are spoken. Southern Africa has good examples of these cross-border languages like Chewa, Shona, and Sotho. (Interviewee 2)

According to the second interviewee, cross-border languages are spoken across international boundaries where they command significant numbers of speakers across the borders.

Languages, which cut across national boundaries and spoken by speech communities in neighbouring countries. (Interviewee 3)

Interviewee three’s description suggests that national boundaries gave rise to cross-border languages, as the boundaries are artificial and in Africa, most of them are because of the Berlin conference of 1884. This differs with the other interviewees who say these are languages, which are found in different countries, it makes the definition and description of cross-border languages interesting as some of the languages might not fit the criteria.

I understand them as languages, which are found across neighbouring countries with a sizeable number of speakers in the countries. (Interviewee 4)

The size of the number of speakers keeps recurring, interviewee four concurs with interviewee two on the number of speakers. This characteristic goes a long way in differentiating cross-border languages from other types of languages.

These are languages with speakers across national boundaries, Zimbabwe has about 14 cross-border languages and most of these languages are marginalised in the country. (Interviewee 5)

The interviewee concurs with the others on the nature and description of cross-border languages. He goes further to give the statistics concerning the actual number of cross-border languages in Zimbabwe as fourteen. It is important to note that over 80% of the language ecology is made up of border straddling languages.

#### **.4.4.2 Status of cross-border languages in Zimbabwe**

The responses got from the participants indicate that 80% of the cross-border languages have a low status within Zimbabwe; this is shown through the following responses given during the interview sessions.

Zimbabwe has fourteen (14) cross-border languages and historically they are marginalised except for ChiShona and IsiNdebele, hence they have a low status. That low status if you notice is reflected through stigmatisation, negative labelling, and dialect humour. Therefore, if these are no longer present then it would imply that the languages no longer have a low status. So currently, I can conclude that cross-border languages except for Shona and Ndebele have a low status even though the Constitution says they are now officially recognised. (Interviewee 3)

The classification of ChiShona and IsiNdebele as cross-border languages by the interviewee is interesting; it raises questions on what constitutes a cross-border language. ChiShona and IsiNdebele are found in the neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe mainly because of migration. There is vagueness in the nature and characteristics of cross-border languages as defined by the language experts and interviewee three's standpoint that ChiShona and IsiNdebele are cross-border languages.

Amendment No. 20 to the Constitution of Zimbabwe now says we have 16 languages that are officially recognised, to be honest most of the languages have a low status in the country. Therefore, I contend that even in the minds of the speakers of these languages their languages have a low status. (Interviewee 4)

It is common knowledge that of the fourteen (14) cross-border languages in Zimbabwe only ChiShona and IsiNdebele have a high status. The rest of the cross-border languages have a low status. We might say things changed with the new Constitution

of 2013 but those languages still have a low status. Since then, has been done to raise their status apart from the pronouncements in the Constitution. (Interviewee 5)

If the elevation and development of indigenous languages is not prioritised the languages will remain marginalised. This marginalization is a clear indication that even the cross-border languages in Zimbabwe have a low status as they fall under the category of indigenous languages. (Interviewee 1)

Before 2013 cross-border, languages had a low status but now they are officially recognised. Despite this I still argue that that their status remains low, I cannot come up with indicators now which can point out that indeed the status has shifted from low to high. (Interviewee 2)

All respondents concur that cross-border languages in Zimbabwe have a low status, even though all languages in the country are now officially recognised. Their argument is premised on what is recognised officially, is different from the reality were ChiShona, English and IsiNdebele continue to dominate and are still considered to be the only languages with a higher status in Zimbabwe, since they continue to dominate critical sectors like Education and Communication.

#### **4.4.3 Significance of language revitalization**

All interviewees view language revitalization as important in promoting and saving threatened languages. They see it as an activity that must be done to protect African languages and the communities, which speak those languages. The viewpoints of the respondents are reflected in the following responses:

I see language revitalisation as an important initiative because it allows for the revival and resuscitation of languages, which are under threat. I also see it as crucial in that it will allow for the strengthening of African communities and participation in issues, which concern them. To empower a language is also to elevate the speech community, which speaks that language. So, I can say that language revitalization in Zimbabwe and Africa is very important. (Interviewee 2)

It is an important activity considering that we are living in a world, which has come to be dominated by a few languages like English, French and recently Mandarin and indigenous languages are pushed to no use. Language revitalization gives indigenous languages the opportunity to be revived and be used in everyday communication. In Zimbabwe and most African countries, it is colonialism, which restricted the use of most local languages therefore revitalization is a noble attempt to save those languages. (Interviewee1)



I see language revitalization as important because it allows for the revival and resuscitation of threatened languages. It provides opportunities for marginalised languages to be revived. The revitalization of languages allows for the countering of hegemony, which is imposed by the dominant communities and their languages. (Interviewee 2)

Language revitalization is important because it resurrects languages, which are facing extinction. It promotes and encourages the visibility of the language and the affected community. (Interviewee 3)

The process of reviving languages is noble, we would need to preserve and sustain the linguistic diversity in Africa. Its common knowledge that Africa has over 2000 languages and most of those languages are under threat. The other reason why language revitalization is important lies in the fact that communities and cultures are also revitalized, and they become visible. (Interviewee 4)

Language revitalization must be carried out in Zimbabwe because several of the languages are still marginalised, it is the only way marginalised or threatened languages can be saved. Minority communities in Zimbabwe have always lagged in terms of development and national participation since their languages are limited in their contexts of use. It is language revitalization, which will make it possible for the languages to be elevated; therefore, it is a necessary activity, which is overdue in Zimbabwe. (Interviewee 5)

The language experts view language revitalization as of paramount importance as it saves marginalized languages and communities. Their understanding of language revitalization is not limited to languages only but the communities, which speak those languages. The responses bring out an important standpoint on the nexus between language revitalization and development of marginalized communities. Revitalized languages give speakers the ability to participate in development issues, which affect them.

#### **4.4.4 Possibilities and challenges of revitalizing ChiChewa**

On the question regarding the challenges and possibilities of revitalising ChiChewa, the interviewees highlighted and outlined the myriad challenges and opportunities, which face the revitalization of ChiChewa. Sixty percent of the respondents solely dwelt on the challenges while 40% discussed both. The following responses bring out some of the views of the interviewees who dwelt on the challenges only:

It is difficult to revive ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because it has no official language association representing it. Tonga and Kalanga have vibrant associations representing them; look at where they are today. If a language has no official representation, how do you expect it to be revived? Secondly, you and I know very well that our government (Zimbabwe) is not concerned about language issues, they have never paid much attention to this issue. All that they do is lip service. That is the reason why we do not have a language policy yet in Zimbabwe. (Interviewee 5)

Interviewee 5 believes that language associations and official representation are key in the revitalization of languages and the absence of these for ChiChewa means the language cannot be successfully revitalized. However, he concurs with interviewee 3 on questioning government commitment, as it is central in language revitalization.

Language revitalization is more of a political initiative and the first and immediate challenge I see is the lack of political will by the government to drive the initiative, remember revitalization challenges the dominant languages and cultures so the government may be willing to maintain the status quo of Shona and IsiNdebele dominating. Again, efforts to revive Chewa are complicated by lack of a language association representing the language that can lobby and push for the revival of the language. (Interviewee 3)

However, 40% of the respondents indicated that the attempts to revive ChiChewa as a cross-border language are faced with both opportunities and challenges, which will need to be considered if the initiative is ever to take place. This is expressed in their views below:

There are obviously strong possibilities for the revitalization of languages like ChiChewa, look at the developments, which have taken place in Zimbabwe in recent years in Tonga, and Kalanga, which have been resuscitated. Our Constitution now recognises 16 languages, and it stresses on the need to develop and elevate all the languages including ChiChewa. Language experts, researchers and language activists have made invaluable contributions on the need to recognize and appreciate all languages in the country therefore I believe this provides hope for revitalization to take place. However, it would be prudent for me to elaborate on the challenges which I feel may hinder the revitalization. ChiChewa is a cross-border language with different statuses in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe; this complicates the efforts to revive the language. We all know that again language revitalization has political implications as those in power usually decides what goes. (Interviewee 1)

International bodies such as UNESCO and ACALAN support the revival of languages and ChiChewa is one of the languages recognized by ACALAN as a cross-border language, this is one important possibility if we try to revive the language here in Zimbabwe. Secondly, all our languages have now been elevated to an officially recognised status, this I see as an opportunity that any of previously marginalised languages can be resuscitated. The only challenge I see however is that of language

shift were most of the speakers of ChiChewa might have shifted to speak ChiShona and IsiNdebele since they are the dominant languages. (Interviewee 4)

There are strong possibilities for reviving ChiChewa in Zimbabwe the language still has many speakers who can be instrumental in its revitalization. The challenge that I can talk of is language shift and probably a negative attitude towards revitalization by the speakers. (Interviewee 2)

The responses from the interviewees indicate that they all have mixed feelings towards the challenges and possibilities associated revitalising ChiChewa in the Zimbabwean context.

#### **4.4.5 Status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe**

In their response to the question on the status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, all interviewees indicated that the language has a low status in Zimbabwe. They largely attributed this to lack of a language policy and the inheritance of a colonial stance in post-independent Zimbabwe regarding language policy and planning. Their sentiments are expressed in the following responses:

In Zimbabwe only English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele have a high status the rest of the languages have a low status, inclusive of this ChiChewa we are talking about. (Interviewee 1)

Chewa has always had a low status in colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe. (Interviewee 2)

Minority languages have always had a history of being marginalised in this country and they have always had a low status. That has not changed even to the present therefore I can say ChiChewa has a low status in Zimbabwe. (Interviewee 3)

In the Constitution it is an officially recognized language but, the language has a low status. People continue to shun it even the native speakers. (Interviewee 4)

Despite all what has been done since 2013 ChiChewa still has a low status in Zimbabwe. Everyone including the speakers of the language know that. (Interviewee 5)

The language policy issue in Zimbabwe is interpreted differently by the language experts. The absence of a language policy document gives some the impression that there is no language policy. However, Zimbabwe's language policy is enshrined in the Constitution and before 2013; it was reflected in the 1987 Education Act.

#### **4.4.6 Language policy issues in Zimbabwe**

The last question for the language experts focused on how language policy issues have affected ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. In their various responses, all interviewees concurred that language policy issues have adversely affected ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, their responses which follow clearly point out the different ways in which the language has been affected

I strongly feel that language policy issues have affected ChiChewa in a negative way, the inheritance of a colonial language policy in 1980 coupled by failure to come up with a language policy in post-independence Zimbabwe meant that ChiChewa like other minority languages went through a phase of official neglect. Even the 1987 Education Act did more harm than good for the language. (Interviewee 1)

The lack of a language policy resulted in minority languages inclusive of ChiChewa being relegated to the home domain at the expense of English, Shona, and Ndebele. This is a huge disfavour. Today of course, all 16 languages are now recognized by the Constitution, but the damage had already been done. (Interviewee 2)

The ChiChewa issue is interesting, you see that language dominated in most urban areas, mining, and farming communities but it was overlooked in favour of Shona and Ndebele. All this was because lack of a clear and coherent language policy and an Education Act, which was hostile to minority languages in Zimbabwe. Therefore, to me language policy issues did ChiChewa more harm than good. (Interviewee 4)

However, while interviewee 3 also concurs with all the other respondents that language policy issues have affected ChiChewa in a negative way through lack of a language policy in the first years of independence and largely the 1987 Education Act. He predicts a turn of things because of the amendments to the Constitution, which occurred in 2013, this is highlighted in his response:

Earlier on, I outlined how the policy issues have grossly affected the language but let me also point that the 2013 Constitution gives me hope that changes can take place, which will benefit all the 16 languages we have. (Interviewee 3)

#### 4.5 Interviews with mother tongue speakers of ChiChewa

The first question, which was directed to the native speakers, was on the number of languages they speak and the languages they use at home. Their responses indicated that 100% of the interviewees are bilingual, speaking at least two languages, ChiChewa and ChiShona that are the dominant languages they also use at home. Their responses are highlighted in the following:

I speak ChiChewa, ChiShona and English. When I am at home I use mostly Chewa and Shona. Conversations with my wife and siblings are all in Chewa while the Shona is mostly with my kids and neighbours who are not Chewa. (Interviewee 6)

*Inini ndinogona kutaura Chewa na Shona, kumba kwangu Chewa ndavakungotaura navadzimai vangu nekuti tavakungogara tiri vaviri vana vese vakura vane mhuri dzavo. Shona ndinotaura nevazukuru vangu kazhinji vauya kumaholiday. (Interviewee 7)*

(I can speak ChiChewa and ChiShona, at home I now only speak ChiChewa with my wife since we now live alone all our children are grown-up. ChiShona I normally use with my grandchildren when they come over for the holidays)

I can speak 4 languages English, ChiShona, ChiChewa and IsiNdebele. At home I use ChiShona. (Interviewee 8)

*Pamitauro ndinogona kutaura Chirungu, ChiChewa ne ChiShona. Asi ChiShona changu hachinyatsobuda hacho zvakanaka. Kumba ndinotaura Chewa ndofunga ibasa rangu rinokonzera kuti zvidaro. (Interviewee 9)*

(I speak English, ChiShona and ChiChewa though my proficiency in ChiShona is not good. When I am at home, I use Chewa mostly because of the nature of my work).

*Ini ndinotaura Chewa ne Shona asi Shona ndakatozodzidzira muno tabva Mozambique nevabereki vangu. Ndakazororwa nemuShona ndizvo zvakaita kuti ndizonyatsogona Shona, uye kumba ndakutongotaura Shona. KoChewa yacho ndinenge ndichitaura nani ini ndakaroorwa nemuZezuru. (Interviewee 10)*

(I speak ChiChewa and ChiShona though ChiShona I had to learn it when I came to Zimbabwe with my parents from Mozambique. I am married to a Shona man and that helped me to speak the language well. At home, I use ChiShona since I'm married to a Zezuru man)

#### 4.5.1 Perceptions towards English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele

Dominant languages in a country have a profound effect on minority language speakers to the extent that minority language speakers unwillingly decide to use only the dominant languages. The dominant languages usually provide access to education, employment, and acceptance into the dominant society. In language revitalization it is important to understand how the affected speech community perceives the dominant languages, this is one indicator to measure if the revitalization initiative can be successful or not. The second question for the native speakers focused on their perception of three dominant languages in Zimbabwe. In their responses to this question, it emerged that they perceived the three languages to be dominant, powerful, and useful as compared to the other languages. The sentiments of the interviewees are expressed in the following responses:

Those three languages are powerful and important. Anyone living in Zimbabwe should master English, Shona and Ndebele are the official languages. (Interviewee 6)

*Ini ndakabva KuMalawi handisi wemuno, asi kuti ndikwanise kugara muno ndakatodzidza kutaura chirungu nechishona ndiyo mitauro yemuno. Kugona ma language iwaya kunopa mikana yekuwana mabasa akanakawo. So, kwandiri ndiwo malanguages ane basa muno MuZimbabwe ende ndiwo anodzidzwa muzvikoro futi. (Interviewee 7)*

(I came originally from Malawi but for me to be able to stay and work in Zimbabwe I had to learn to speak Shona and English because these are the local languages. Speaking these languages gives one the advantage of getting well-paying jobs. So, I see these languages as important and that is the reason they are taught in schools)

ChiShona, English and IsiNdebele are the official languages of this country; they have a high status associated with them. While Chewa is just a marker of identity for me, the important languages in Zimbabwe are English, Shona and Ndebele. Chewa in Zimbabwe can never be at the same level with these three languages because they are powerful socially, politically, and economically. (Interviewee 8)

Of all the languages in Zimbabwe only these three have a high status and I think that everyone should be able to speak the three languages regardless of ethnicity. (Interviewee 9)

*Shona nechirungu ndizvo zvinowanisa basa muno MuHarare, vana vangu vese pavaikura ndakatoita kuti vagone chirungu neShona kuchikoro handiti ndiyo mitauro ine basa, KuBulawayo chaiko Ndebele ndiyo language yakakosha chete chete. (Interviewee 10)*

(ChiShona and English are the access to getting jobs here in Harare. When my children were growing up, I made sure they would do well in both languages and subjects

because they are the important languages in the world of work. Even in Bulawayo, the only important language is IsiNdebele.)

#### 4.5.2 Language transmission of ChiChewa

The survival of any language rests upon its transmission from the older generations to the younger generations. The study also inquired from the interviewees if they were engaged in any activities of transmitting ChiChewa to their children or young members of the community. 60% of the respondents indicated that they have ceased transmitting the language because of various social and economic reasons:

*Handichatombodzidzisi vana nevazukuru vangu Chewa, handiti ndakaroorwa nemuShona. Vana vangu vese 6 havatogoni Chewa ndaitombodawo kuvadzidzisa asi murume wangu akandirambidza. (Interviewee 10)*

(I no longer teach my children and grandchildren ChiChewa, I'm married to a Shona man. All my six children can't even speak the language, I used to attempt to teach them ChiChewa, but my husband stopped me)

Transmission of ChiChewa to my children is no longer important; I personally do not see any value in it because they do not use the language in everyday communication. Therefore, I am not involved in any efforts to transmit ChiChewa

*Chewa vachaidii honai takungogara takakomberedzwa nemaShona kuBhuruwayo nemandeverere, vazukuru vacho chero ukada kuvadzidzisa kwese kwavanoenda kunongotaurwa Shona neNdebele zvinondingapedzerei nguva ndichidzidzisa vana kana vazukuru language isingazovabatsira mune ramangwana ravo. (Interviewee 7)*

(They no longer need ChiChewa, we live in communities, which are surrounded by the Shona and Ndebele in Bulawayo, even if I transmit the language to my grandchildren, it is no use because everywhere they go it is mostly Shona and Ndebele, which are spoken. I would rather not waste my time transmitting a language, which will not help them in future.)

Nonetheless, 40% of the native speakers still believe that transmission of the language is important. They argued that ChiChewa is a marker of identity; therefore, they continue to embark on efforts to transmit the language to the younger generations. Their sentiments are echoed in their responses below:

I transmit the language to my children because I want them to know their roots and identity; occasionally I travel with them to Malawi for them to meet relatives and get

to know about our culture. I will continue to transmit the language despite them speaking and learning Shona at school. (Interviewee 6)

My work as a priest in the church encourages me to transmit the language and I do so. I always make sure I use ChiChewa throughout the church services to try and teach the young ones the language. However, I can admit that it is becoming a challenge because Most of them speak and like to use ChiShona. (Interviewee 9)

The sentiments from the mother-tongue speakers above indicate that language transmission is compromised because of education, intermarriages, and commerce. ChiChewa has remained a home language, which has no prestige and utilitarian value that come with it; therefore, mother tongue speakers are compelled to make language choices, which benefit their children in the future.

#### **4.5.3 Contexts in which ChiChewa is used**

The last question for the native speakers of ChiChewa was on the contexts in which they used the language. 60% of the responses indicate that the language is confined for use in the home domain, while 40% of the interviewees also use the language at work. Their responses below show this:

I use ChiChewa at home with my family and siblings and other relatives who can speak the language. I also use ChiChewa at work where I'm a radio announcer, news anchor and soccer commentator. In all these occasions I will be using Chewa since its National FM's mandate to broadcast in the national languages of Zimbabwe. (Interviewee 6)

*Chewa ndinoshandisa pakutungamira service mu church, pakuparidza kunyanya though mazuvano takusanganisa neShona kuti vese vanenge varimo vagonzwa. Ndinoshandisa futi kana tichitaura nyaya nevezera rangu kumba nekuchurch. (Interviewee 9)*

(I use Chewa when leading mass at church and mostly when I am giving the sermon though nowadays I have to codeswitch with Shona so that everyone present can understand the sermon. I also use Chewa with my peers at home and at church)

In as much as Chewa is confined for use in the home domain according to 60 % of the respondents, it is important to acknowledge that the language is also in use outside the home



domain. 40 % of the respondents use the language at work and at church. The language is still visible in the linguistic repertoire of the mother-tongue speakers.

#### **4.6 Interviews with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials**

Since the issue of language is central to the curriculum and education, the study also made use of insights from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). Interviews were carried out with three officials from the ministry. It was imperative that the study draws insights from the perspective of the government on the issue of revitalizing a cross-border language like ChiChewa.

The first question for the Ministry officials inquired on how they perceived the issue of revitalizing a cross-border language. Responses from the officials indicate that they perceive the initiative as a noble one, which needs to be carried out. All three respondents viewed the revitalizing of cross-border languages as important in the Zimbabwean context. This is revealed in the following responses:

Revitalizing of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe is a welcome development, the language, and its speakers the Chewa are part of Zimbabwe, so it must be revived like what was done for Tonga. Being a cross-border language is a small issue here in Zimbabwe alone there are many ChiChewa speakers. (Interviewee 11)

Cross-border language is a linguistic term, the language is also Zimbabwean look at the number of Chewa speaking people who dominate the urban areas, and I believe it is one of the languages, which has many speakers here in Zimbabwe. It must be revived. (Interviewee 12)

To revive Chewa is important because the Constitution calls for that, and it is one of the Zimbabwean languages. So, I see no problem in revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. (Interviewee 13)

The second question focused on the prospects and challenges associated with revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Since all three interviewees were representing the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, their responses reflect government policy. All interviewees were upbeat that the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa:

The Constitution of Zimbabwe now recognizes all 16 languages, and it clearly states that all the languages should be developed to be used in everyday communication. The government since then has introduced a new curriculum, which emphasises the need to teach all languages from an early age. I see all this as good intention, which provides a conducive environment for revitalization to take place. (Interviewee 13)

Strictly speaking, I would say we have embraced multilingualism officially as a country and that means now all languages within Zimbabwe can be developed or revived if need be. The developments have allowed for the provision of legal grounds to do so that is why you see there are plans underway to translate the new curriculum syllabi into all the 16 languages. All these are positive indicators to show that revitalization for any indigenous in Zimbabwe can take place. (Interviewee 12)

New developments in terms of the Constitution and the education curriculum have taken place; these provide conditions that make it possible for the revitalization of ChiChewa to take place. (Interviewee 11)

In as much as the three respondents outlined the prospects associated with the possible reviving of ChiChewa, interviewee 12 and 11 also elaborated on the challenges, which can hinder the initiative:

What do the Chewa speaking feel about the initiative, if they have a negative attitude then it will be a worthless exercise, as far as I know most of them are shy to even speak the language these days. Secondly, language revitalization requires the input and commitment of different groups and if some of those do not commit then we have challenges. We as the government are committed to such an activity to take place and am not sure about the levels of commitment of the other parties. The other challenge I see is who is going to use the language? 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Chewa do not even know the language. They were born speaking ChiShona and IsiNdebele mostly. (Interviewee 11)

I feel the language no longer has many speakers and those who speak it fluently are now old, the younger generations grew up speaking ChiShona and Ndebele, this presents a challenge as efforts to revive a language with few speakers might not be necessary. As for the speakers of the dominant languages, I wonder how they would react to its revival as they have always looked down upon ChiChewa. (Interviewee 12)

#### **4.7 Focus group discussions**

Three (3) focus group discussions were carried out with Fourth generation ChiChewa speakers. The participants in these focus group discussions were selected with the help of key informants. The age groups of the participants ranged from 20yrs to 40yrs and all participants in the discussions had a strong ChiChewa background with either one or both parents being a native Chewa speaker. The focus group discussions were conducted in Chakari, Nyabira and Arcturus.

Each focus group comprised eight (8) participants and the gender were balanced. The topics that were discussed in the groups centred on languages spoken, perception of ChiChewa and the dominant languages in Zimbabwe, views on reviving ChiChewa and the contexts in which they use the language.

#### **4.7.1 Languages spoken by fourth generation ChiChewa**

All group discussants indicated that they spoke ChiShona fluently and ChiChewa and English to a limited extent. They said that their fluency in ChiShona arose from the fact that they were born in Zimbabwe. While they had Chewa parents and grandparents, they grew up speaking ChiShona and attended school where it was one of the languages of instruction alongside English. Thirty percent of the group discussants indicated that their parents were born in Zimbabwe, while 70% had come into Zimbabwe from Malawi and Zambia. Twenty percent of the group discussants revealed that they spoke limited ChiChewa, which is limited to mostly greetings and other basic words:

*Ndinogona kungotaura ma words ekumhoresa mashoma-shoma sana Machoma bwanji Nana mawuka bwino. (FGD participant 7)*

(I can only speak a few words mostly greetings like, how are you? and good morning)

*Chewa ndinongoita yekukiya-kiya ndinotaura ma words mashoma nekunzwawo Nekuziva ma meanings emamwe ma words. Kuinyora handigone. (FDG participant 18)*

(My ChiChewa is not perfect I speak a few words and can only hear and understand a few words. I cannot write the language)

*Ma roots edu ndeeyeChiChewa vanasekuru vedu ndivo vaya vanamubvakure. Asi isu vazukuru takazokura takutaura vanaShona, Ndebele nanaEnglish muzvikoro mataiendeswa. Takutoita kunge mazeduru but tiri manyasarandi hedu. (FDG participant 23)*

(We have Chewa roots; our grandparents were the migrant workers from Malawi. We grew up speaking Shona, Ndebele, and English because of the schools we went to. We now seem like the Zezurus but truly speaking we are “Nyasalands” (sic) (from Malawi)

#### 4.7.2 Perception of the dominant languages in Zimbabwe

Views and opinions from group discussions indicate that most of the participants hold the three dominant languages in high esteem. 90% of the discussants concurred that English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele are the only important languages, while 10 % argued that every language is important. Their argument is premised on Zimbabwe now having 16 officially recognized languages in its Constitution. However, the other discussants thought otherwise as they believe English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele are the only languages, which have a high status in Zimbabwe:

English neShona ndipo pane yese kana uchida kuzowana basa rakanaka. Chero pa O level zvinotonzi 5 O levels including English language. Pane paunombonzwa here zvichinzi any other language besides iwaya. Kana kuri KuBulawayo Ndebele ndiwo mutauro wacho. How would you expect to work there usingakhulumi? (FGD participant 6)

(English and Shona are the languages, especially if you want to get a good job. That is the reason why they emphasise five O levels including English. Have you ever heard them stressing any other language apart from these? Even in Bulawayo the language to speak is IsiNdebele. How would you expect to work in Bulawayo when you cannot speak IsiNdebele)?

You cannot compare official languages with minority languages, amwe ma languages ese ayo haana basa that's why asingabvunzwe. Kubasa chaiko vanongoda English kunyanya

(You cannot compare official languages with minority languages; some of those languages are not useful that is the reason why they are not considered. Emphasis is put on the English language)

The opinions of 90% of the discussants indicate that they perceive English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele as superior to all the other languages in Zimbabwe. They also argue that these are the only three languages that should be considered in communication and education. According to them, the three languages have historically dominated the linguistic terrain so they should continue like that despite all languages in Zimbabwe now being officially recognized.

### 4.7.3 Revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe

Revival of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe drew different sentiments amongst the group discussants with 60% not appreciating the efforts to revitalize the language, while 40% thought there is need to revitalize ChiChewa as it is one of the languages in Zimbabwe and it is a marker of identity. The different sentiments arose from how revitalization was understood by the focus group discussants and their perception of ChiChewa as a language. Sixty percent of the participants who saw no need to revitalize the language put forward arguments such as these:

Chichewa is a migrant language, which is not Zimbabwean, why should it be revived moreover? Who will use the language? (FGD participant 10)

*Tinomutsirei language yaishandiswa mumapurazi nemumigodhi? Haichina basa vana vemazuva ano havatogoni kutaura chewa yacho. (FGD participant 20)*

(Why should we revive a language that was used in the farms and mines? It's no longer useful and the children of today cannot even speak ChiChewa).

Even if the language is revived who is supposed to use it when currently the remaining speakers are the elderly. (FGD participant 15)

I think ChiChewa should be recognized as a cultural and heritage language in Zimbabwe. It cannot have the same status as the other local indigenous languages, there is even no basis for the language to be taught in Zimbabwean schools because no young children are speaking or using the language nowadays. (FGD participant 3)

Chewa will always remain a minority language in Zimbabwe despite it being an officially recognized language. It might be a waste of resources to revive such a language since it has no use. (FGD participant 17)

My grandparents came from Zambia and resettled here, even my parents have established a rural home in Chinhoyi. To me it simply means I have Zimbabwean roots therefore why would I want ChiChewa to be revived. (FGD participant 18)

Despite most of the discussants seeing no need for the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, 40 % of the discussants strongly felt that it was noble to revive the language since it is part of the Zimbabwean linguistic landscape:

Chewa is an equally important language that should find its place alongside all other Zimbabwean languages. Hence, it should be revitalized. (FGD participant 20)

While it is claimed that a few people can speak the language in the country there is no justification to ignore any efforts to promote and safeguard the language. The

Constitution of Zimbabwe calls for the elevation and development of all languages. (FGD participant 2)

It is noble to revive Chewa; it carries the history and identity of the Chewa people in Zimbabwe. (FGD participant 22)

If Tonga has been revived and now being taught in schools then the same can be done for ChiChewa, since the 1950s it has been part of Zimbabwe therefore it is a Zimbabwean language. (FGD participant 5)

#### 4.7.4 Contexts in which ChiChewa is used

Domains in which languages are used provide indicators to whether a language is still in use and can be successfully revived. The last topic for discussion focused on the contexts in which the focus group discussants used ChiChewa. 30% of the participants admitted to using the language at home, church, and social gatherings. Though they openly acknowledged that it was to a limited extent since most of them were not proficient in the language. Their responses below reveal this:

I use the language mostly when singing ChiChewa hymns in church on Sundays. (FGD participant 4)

The only time I use Chewa is at home when we are praying and singing with my grandmother and grandfather. (FGD participant 19)

*Ndinoshandisa Chewa kana tiri kumutambo wedu weBen Arinoti, nziyo dzatinoimba ndedze Chewa. Tinozombotaurawo nevechikuru vanenge varipo asi Chewa yangu ini ndeye kukiya-kiya. (FGD participant 21)*

(I use ChiChewa when we are at the *Ben Arinoti* club where we sing most of our songs in ChiChewa, occasionally we use ChiChewa when speaking with elders at the club. I must admit my ChiChewa is not good)

We only speak Chewa at home when my grandmother comes from Zambia to visit, when she is not around, we use Shona all the time. (FGD participant 1)

70% of the group discussants however, admitted that they do not use the language in any domain. It is a language that they overhear their elders using in everyday conversation and on the radio, but they do not speak or use the language.

## **4.8 Observations**

The researcher wanted to have a clear understanding of the situations and contexts in which ChiChewa is used. Therefore, observations were focused on cultural gatherings, meetings, and church services. These contexts were chosen because it is where ChiChewa speakers converge in their numbers, and it would be easy to observe their language practices. The CCAP church was chosen for this exercise because it has its roots in Malawi and the official language of the church is ChiChewa. Furthermore, most of its congregants have Malawian and Zambian roots. The observation session for cultural gatherings depended on the duration of the meetings and events. For church services, the observations lasted for the duration of the church services, which were on average about two hours. In all observation sessions, the researcher was noting the frequency of ChiChewa use, age groups of people who used the language and the proficiency levels of the users. It is important to point out that for all the observation sessions, the researcher had the assistance of a key informant who assisted mostly in noting the proficiency of the speakers. Observations were carried out in Arcturus, Bindura, Mufakose and Mbare.

### **4.8.1. Cultural gatherings and meetings**

The people of Malawian and Zambian origin in Zimbabwe have a long tradition of practising their cultural dances in the form of *Gule Wamkulu*, *Chihodha* and *Ben Arinoti*. Those dances are performed during weekends and other important functions like Independence Day celebrations. Most mining towns in Zimbabwe have registered clubs performing these dances. The researcher observed that *Gule Wamkulu*, *Chihodha* and *Ben Arinoti* bring together the people of Malawian, Zambian and Mozambican descent with Chewa ethnicity. During their performances, ChiChewa songs are sung and the language in use is mostly ChiChewa. It was

also observed that the elderly and the middle-aged groups were overseers of the events. The dominant language used in these gatherings was ChiChewa. The researcher noted that even the younger generations were actively involved in everything; however, their proficiency levels of ChiChewa were low because they sang ChiChewa songs but could not speak the language fluently.

Despite having come to present-day Zimbabwe mostly as migrant workers during the colonial period, many Malawian and Zambian nationals managed to maintain strong links with their home countries. *Mugwirizano* is the name used for these meetings they hold to discuss cultural and other social matters. The meetings are attended by grownups and ChiChewa is extensively used during these meetings, with limited use of other languages. The researcher had the opportunity to attend a meeting between Malawian nationals and the ambassador of Malawi to Zimbabwe who had just been deployed to Zimbabwe. The meeting took place at Arcturus Mine, the researcher observed that ChiChewa was the dominant language used, and the attendees were predominantly the elderly and the middle age. Issues under discussion included welcoming the new Ambassador and clarification of visa requirements. It was observed that there were no youths present for this meeting with the ambassador.

#### **4.8.2. Church services**

The researcher managed to attend and observe four church services in the high-density suburbs of Mbare and Dzivarasekwa. The observations focused on the CCAP church. Having been granted permission to attend the prayer sessions at the mosque in Dzivaraesekwa, the researcher observed that during the service Arabic and ChiChewa were used. All prayers and recitations from the Koran and the singing was done using the Arabic language. The male church elders led the prayers and the singing. Occasionally they would make emphasis after



readings from the Koran in ChiChewa. After the church service, the elders switched to using ChiChewa in their conversations as peers, while the youths mostly spoke ChiShona.

ChiChewa is the official language of the CCAP church according to the church's constitution. (CCAP Synod, 2012). However, the researcher observed that in almost all the services, codeswitching between ChiChewa and ChiShona was prevalent. During sermons the preachers and the priests used both languages while intercessions which were done by the Elders, were recited in ChiChewa. Praise and worship sessions led by the youths are characterised by songs in ChiChewa even though for other sessions the youth used ChiShona. This observation was not limited to Mbare, it was also noticed in Arcturus, where the two languages were used interchangeably throughout the service. The researcher managed to establish that this practice was done to accommodate church members and visitors who could not speak and understand the two languages fluently. A deacon at the Mbare CCAP church informed the researcher that the church has had to accommodate other languages like ChiShona and IsiNdebele because it now had members who spoke those languages. According to the church's tradition, their priests were trained and ordained in Zambia and Malawi but were expected to learn to speak ChiShona or IsiNdebele if they were deployed to Zimbabwe.

#### **4.9 Analysis of findings from language experts**

This section analyses the findings from the language experts using subheadings derived from the questions presented to the experts.

##### **4.9.1 On cross-border languages**

Concerning the understanding of what is a cross-border language, 100% of the participants contended that these are languages that cut across national boundaries. The language experts felt that the use of the term cross-border is justified as it captured the reality of the African

languages in Africa. Southern Africa is an exception because it has the largest number of cross-border languages (Ndhlovu, 2013). There is no clarity in their definition and categorization of cross-border languages.

#### **4.9.2 Status of cross-border languages**

All participants concurred that the status of cross-border languages remains low in Zimbabwe, except for ChiShona and IsiNdebele. The continued low status of minority cross-border languages can be attributed to socio-historical factors. In the Zimbabwean context, like in most other African countries, most indigenous languages were overlooked during and after colonial rule. Language policies have not managed to address the status of African languages. As pointed out by the respondents, ChiShona and IsiNdebele were the major beneficiaries during and after colonial rule while all the other languages had the status of minority languages. It is interesting to note that even though Zimbabwe amended its Constitution in 2013, with all languages now officially recognized, the languages experts were adamant that cross-border languages still have a low status. Speakers and non speakers of these languages continue to hold English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele in high esteem while this is not so for most of the minority cross-border languages of Zimbabwe. While Zimbabwe now has 16 officially recognized languages, the diglossic relationship between the former minority languages, which also comprise cross-border languages, continues to persist. So, regardless of the officially recognized status given to all the 16 languages in Zimbabwe, the status of the other twelve cross-border languages remains low.

#### **4.9.3 Language revitalization**

Findings reveal that the language experts concur that language revitalization is a noble initiative, which needs to be carried out to develop and sustain Zimbabwe's linguistic diversity. The sentiments of the language experts from a language practitioners' perspective reveal that

language revitalization must be carried out. The revitalization of languages should bring together the speakers, language experts and the government. As pointed out by the language experts, the developments in the Constitution and the political front are conducive for language revitalization to be conducted. The Constitution clearly emphasizes the need for the government to develop all the indigenous languages in Zimbabwe. The language experts are in favour of language revitalization because their understanding of the exercise is not limited to the language only, but to the speech communities also. Revitalization according to their understanding also revives the community, which speaks and uses the language. If the domains in which a language is used are increased, it also brings about the participation of that community in key developmental issues. In a way language, revitalization is intertwined with the development of marginalized communities.

#### **4.9.4 Challenges and possibilities for language revitalization**

While the language experts appreciate that language revitalization is an important exercise, they also expressed mixed feelings regarding the challenges and possibilities of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Sixty percent of the language experts expressed reservations over the ease of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. In their sentiments, they highlighted the lack of a clear language policy, lack of a language association and unclear political will from the government as the main challenges, which can hinder the revitalization of ChiChewa.

Zimbabwe before 2013 had no clear language policy, which clearly stated the specific functions and roles of its sixteen languages. The linguistic terrain has largely remained skewed towards English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele even though the Constitution now stipulates that there are sixteen officially recognized languages. As elaborated by the language experts, there is no firm foundation from which language revitalization can occur due to the absence of a language

policy. Revitalization allows for expansion and increase in the contexts in which the language is used. Traditionally, most indigenous languages have always served as home languages, but that territory has been encroached by the more dominant languages of ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Therefore, if there is no language policy, it will be difficult for proper language revitalization to take place.

As noted by Bangbose (1991), language issues remain partially unresolved in Africa largely because of the absence of government will. To date most African governments have paid lip service to issues concerning indigenous African languages and Zimbabwe is no exception. Hence, the feelings of the language experts clearly stress the need for the government to show its will and commitment first by developing an elaborate language policy for Zimbabwe. It is a welcome development that the country has sixteen officially recognized languages, however, from a pragmatic point of view it is vague because there must be equity in the functions which can be allocated to all the languages. This can only be achieved and addressed by a clear language policy not just stipulations in the country's constitution. Success stories of revitalization from Hebrew, Welsh Gaelic, and Maori contexts show commitment and will of the respective governments to carry out revitalization.

The sentiments of the language experts on the government's will and sincerity to resolve language issues once and for all resonates with Ndhlovu (2018), who argues that at independence the government of Zimbabwe adopted the assimilationist approach. An approach that saw minority speech communities being assimilated into the dominant Shona and Ndebele groups giving the country a bi-cultural identity. This stance reveals the position of the government on the language issue, as even close to forty years after independence there is still no clear language policy. Language experts concurred that there is no government will revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, 40% of the language experts dwelt more on the possibilities of revitalizing ChiChewa and interestingly their argument is premised on the amendments made to the Constitution in 2013. The elevation of ChiChewa to an officially recognized language gives them enough confidence that there are strong possibilities of reviving the language. They believe as stipulated in the Constitution, it is the task of the government to ensure the development of all languages in Zimbabwe, and it is mandatory for the government to ensure that all languages have been developed. Since 2001, 80% of the languages in Zimbabwe are broadcast on radio through the establishment of National FM, a station that is solely dedicated to airing in indigenous languages. According to the language experts, these developments provide a conducive environment for the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.

The optimism from 40% of the language experts is premised on the fact that ChiChewa is one of the languages identified as a cross-border language by the Academy of African Languages (ACALAN), an organ of the African Union (AU), whose task is to ensure that cross-border languages in African are fully developed and to be used for communication across the African countries where they are found. So again, at regional and continental level ChiChewa is recognized as one of these languages, which can be used for regional communication. Therefore, its revitalization is possible because there is the backing of the AU.

While the former minority languages in Zimbabwe have been marginalised for many years, Chichewa has remained resilient because it still has a sizeable number of speakers in Zimbabwe, Taylor (2020) posits that ChiChewa is the third most spoken language in Zimbabwe after ChiShona and IsiNdebele. The language still has many speakers as compared to other languages like Khoisan (The Standard, 2013) Unfortunately, accurate data on the number of speakers is not available but ChiChewa is one language whose ethnolinguistic vitality is still high in Zimbabwe. Yoshikuni (2006) notes that Chewa speaking people dominated the urban

setting during the colonial period and even in the post-independence period, the language still has a sizeable population which speak it. While some may have shifted to speaking the dominant ChiShona and IsiNdebele, the language has the potential to be successfully revitalized.

#### **4.9.5 Status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe**

Concerning the status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, 100% of the language experts felt that the language has a low status in the country. Fishman (2002) notes that, linguistically, all languages are equal however sociolinguistically they are not. All languages in Zimbabwe have an officially recognized status, which means they are at par in as far as the Constitution is concerned; however, the responses of the language experts are to the contrary. ChiChewa still has a low status, a status that was perpetuated by political and historical factors. Some of the language experts pointed out that, if ChiChewa continues to be associated with dialect humour, then that is an indicator that it still has a low status. The language, despite having its status changed in 2013 is still confined to the home domain and is used to a limited extent in the media. Kaunda (2018) points out that ChiChewa has an allocation of nine hours per week of broadcasting at National FM. The language is still to find its way into the print media, which continues to be dominated by English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele.

While Zimbabwe is now examining seven indigenous languages at Grade 7 level (ChiShona, IsiNdebele, ChiTonga, XiChangana, Ndau, Nambya, Kalanga), ChiChewa is yet to make that list. The Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) says that the language cannot be examined because of the low number of students who can sit for the examinations in ChiChewa at grade seven level. Therefore, these present realities convince the language experts that ChiChewa has a low status in Zimbabwe.

#### **4.9.6 Language policy issues and ChiChewa in Zimbabwe**

The last question for the language experts focused on how language policy issues had affected ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. The responses given by all the five language experts reveal that language policy issues have negatively affected ChiChewa such that the language has been greatly devitalized. Since gaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has no clear language policy, rather, it has inherited the colonial language policy, with a few modifications that remain vague. As noted by scholars like Makoni et al., (2006), Ndlovu (2018) issues to do with language policy have been addressed through Education Act (1987), (2006) and in the section on language in the Zimbabwean Constitution. What is of interest here is that, in all documents, there is no actual clarity on the specific functions allocated to the sixteen languages in Zimbabwe. The Constitution only talks of the country having sixteen officially recognized languages and further stresses the need for the government to develop all the languages. Not all these pronouncements address the pertinent issues about languages that a proper language policy should be addressing such as the specific functions of the languages. English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele are miles ahead of all the other languages. They have achieved and benefited more in terms of corpus, status, and acquisition planning. While the other indigenous languages including ChiChewa are still lagging in these areas. This explains the position taken by the language experts that the failure to address language policy issues in Zimbabwe has affected ChiChewa negatively.

#### **4.10 Analysis of interviews from mother-tongue speakers of ChiChewa**

This section analyses the findings from the mother-tongue speakers of ChiChewa., The analysis is guided by the responses given by the mother-tongue speakers. The subheadings are derived from the interview guide questions that have been used to present the analysis.

#### **4.10.1 Language competence of mother-tongue speakers of ChiChewa**

The findings on the number of languages spoken by the native speakers reveal that 100% of the interviewees are at least bilingual; they speak ChiChewa and ChiShona fluently. It was interesting to know that 20% also spoke English and IsiNdebele in addition to ChiChewa and ChiShona. The interviewees make up the first and second generations of migrants from Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. Their bilingualism is explained by economic and social factors. They came to Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) to seek employment in the farms, mines, and industries, which had been setup, by the settler economy. While their native language was ChiChewa, inevitably they had to learn the host country's languages. Apparently, ChiShona and IsiNdebele were also and have remained the two dominant indigenous languages which were and are used for communication and learning besides the English language. The migrants had to make the economic decision of securing jobs and be integrated into the host country. Even though Chewa migrants were concentrated in the farming and mining towns, the languages of administration have always been English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Therefore, ChiChewa remained confined to the home domain. Nkoma-Darch (2003) acknowledges that at one time ChiChewa was the language of instruction in Schools at Wankie Colliery because the population was predominately Chewa. However, IsiNdebele eventually replaced it, as it was the dominant language in Southern Zimbabwe.

Assimilation into the host communities meant the Chewa people had to learn and speak local languages to be appreciated in the host communities, which were chiefly Shona and Ndebele. Overtime, intermarriages became common with many Chewa men marrying local Ndebele and Shona women, this resulted in ChiShona, IsiNdebele encroaching into the territory of ChiChewa, thus the present scenario where ChiShona, and IsiNdebele have come to be home languages in Chewa homes. These are some of the key factors, which explain why the first and



second generation of Chewa speakers in Zimbabwe are largely bilingual. Bilingualism is a key attribute for the minority groups in any speech community; it gives them the opportunity to have the economic advantage to secure jobs and to be part of the host country. The bilingualism is evident amongst the interviewees because they belong to the first and second-generation group of Chewa migrants, the language to them is a marker of identity and they maintain the language as part of their linguistic repertoire.

#### **4.10.2 Perception towards ChiShona, English and IsiNdebele**

Findings reveal that 100% of the interviewees perceive English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele as the only useful languages in Zimbabwe. The responses indicate that the three languages are not just useful but also dominant in every aspect of their lives. Since they moved to the then Southern Rhodesia as migrant workers during the colonial period, English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele had already cemented their position as the key languages for communication and administration. English assumed the role of the official language while ChiShona and IsiNdebele became the national languages. This created a diglossic relationship between ChiChewa and the three languages. English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele assuming the (H) status while ChiChewa, the (L) variety.

Their responses also reflected the perceived dominance of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. The three languages are used for official communication and as languages of record for over sixty years, to the extent that they have established functional and institutional dominance over the thirteen other languages.

#### **4.10.3 Language transmission**

In language maintenance discourse, language transmission is critical because it ensures the passing on of the language to the younger generations. 60% of the interviewees indicated that

they are no longer involved in transmitting ChiChewa to the younger generations. Their actions reflect how they perceive the language in a linguistic terrain skewed in favour of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. ChiChewa in Zimbabwe does not have the utilitarian value, which can motivate them to pass on the language to their children and grandchildren. It has largely remained a home language with no use in the key areas of life such as business and education. While ChiChewa is a home language, socio-economic factors have allowed the dominant languages to become home languages in Chewa homes. Hence, most of the interviewees saw the transmission of ChiChewa to the younger generations as a futile exercise. However, 40% of the interviewees are still actively involved in transmitting the language to the young ones. Perceptions and feelings about language tend to differ even among homogenous groups. Regardless of the fact, ChiChewa might not have the utilitarian value as compared to the other languages. To some sections of the Chewa speaking community, it is useful, and they transmit it. The issue of identity and maintained contacts with the home country, influence this motive such that total assimilation into the host country is not considered. So, efforts to transmit the language continue even though there might be overwhelming challenges.

#### **4.10.4 Contexts in which they use ChiChewa**

The last question for the mother-tongue speakers was the contexts in which they used ChiChewa, and their responses show that the language is used in the home. The use in the home setting is limited to conversations as spouses or with peers. This is so because the younger generations are more proficient in ChiShona. Within the home domain, ChiChewa is also used during cultural gatherings where the participants are from the first and second generation of Chewa speakers in Zimbabwe. The church, specifically CCAP needs to be singled out, as the other important place where the respondents use the language. According to synod records of the CCAP, ChiChewa is the official language, even though the generation gap and

intermarriages have sneaked into languages like ChiShona into the church services. ChiShona is now being code mixed and code switched with ChiChewa in most church services, this is done to accommodate all congregants who make up the composition of the church today. Therefore, it is important to note that even though the interviewees say they use ChiChewa mostly in the home and at church, languages like ChiShona and IsiNdebele are gradually limiting the space enjoyed by ChiChewa in the informal setting.

ChiChewa has its own allotted time for broadcasting on the National FM radio channel where it gets approximately nine hours per week. This has since 2001 created another context in which ChiChewa speakers can interact and they get the opportunity to use the language through various programs designed for them by the radio station.

#### **4.11 Analysis of findings from Ministry officials**

This section presents an analysis of findings from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials. The analysis is centred on the responses to the questions, which were asked regarding language revitalization, challenges, and possibilities of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.

##### **4.11.1 On revitalization of ChiChewa**

All Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials were upbeat and optimistic that the revitalization of a cross-border language is possible in Zimbabwe. Their perspectives are informed by government policy and regarding position matters on language. Since Zimbabwe adopted a new education curriculum in 2017, which has allowed for the teaching of all indigenous languages from the Early Childhood (ECD) level. This shift in policy from prioritising English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele as enunciated in the Education Act of 1987,

2006, informs the perceptions of government officials that revitalization of ChiChewa is possible in the Zimbabwean context.

#### **4.11.2 Challenges and possibilities of revitalizing ChiChewa**

Concerning the prospects and challenges of revitalizing ChiChewa, the sentiments of the interviewees indicate that there are strong possibilities for the revitalizing of ChiChewa. The positive outlook reflected in the responses of the Ministry officials is premised on the role and stance taken by the Zimbabwean government from 2013. The amended constitution of 2013 recognizes sixteen languages, and it points out that the government should develop all these languages. This development highlights that Zimbabwe has embraced linguistic pluralism. Hence, the ministry officials were upbeat on the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa. Furthermore, the new curriculum for education at primary and secondary level brings out the government's position on languages. The curriculum stipulates that all indigenous languages should be taught starting from ECD level. While the government might have put in place policies that provide a conducive environment for revitalization to take place, there are challenges that are associated with revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. 60% of the ministry officials highlighted that the greatest drawback was on the negative attitude by some of the ChiChewa speakers themselves. They are shy to speak and use the language and this has led ZIMSEC to delay examining the language at grade 7 as the numbers are very low. What is interesting however is that ChiChewa according to unconfirmed reports has many speakers especially in urban settings.

#### **4.12 Analysis of findings from focus group discussions**

This section focusses on the analysis of findings from the focus group discussions which were carried out with the Fourth-generation Chewa speakers. The discussions were centred on

language competence, perception of the dominant languages in Zimbabwe, revitalization of ChiChewa and contexts in which they use ChiChewa.

#### **4.12.1 Language competence**

An analysis of the findings gathered from the focus group discussions carried out with Fourth generation ChiChewa speakers highlight some interesting issues. The discussions were centred on languages spoken, revitalizing of ChiChewa, perception of the dominant languages and the contexts in which they use ChiChewa.

Fourth generation ChiChewa speakers are more proficient in ChiShona than ChiChewa, 60 % of the group discussants indicated that they could speak ChiShona with a native-like accent more than ChiChewa. The first and second-generation speakers are more fluent in ChiChewa though most of them are bilingual. Fourth-generation Chewa speakers were born in the host country, Zimbabwe, and they grew up in a social, political, and economic environment dominated by ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English. Their lack of proficiency in ChiChewa is explained by economic and social decisions, which immigrants must make while in the host country. As they need to be accommodated in the dominant society, language choices are influenced by the usefulness of languages that are available. The parents ensure that their children speak the official and national languages, as these will guarantee them better-paying jobs. In the process, the home language is devalued to the extent that the younger generation of speakers rarely want to be associated with it, as it serves no other purpose outside the home. The lack of a clear language policy in Zimbabwe entailed the devitalization of the former minority languages while strengthening the position of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. While ChiChewa was confined to farming, mining, and the urban setups in which the Chewa speaking people had huge numbers, their language was never used in school or at work. Therefore, in the end, the children grow up speaking and using the dominant languages only

and this is marked by language attrition, which will eventually lead to language loss. The idea of language being a marker of identity is attached to the older generations, for the younger generation's languages, which bring socio-economic gain, are more important and they invest in those.

#### **4.12.2 Perception of chishona, IsiNdebele and English**

Findings reveal that 90% of the Fourth-generation group discussants perceived that ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English are the important languages in Zimbabwe. The focus group discussants grew up in a social environment dominated by the three languages, an environment in which socio-economic advancement is achieved if one masters and can use the three dominant languages. It is common knowledge that to find proper paying jobs in Harare or Bulawayo, a minority language speaker must master ChiShona and IsiNdebele respectively and proficiency in English is a welcome advantage. The colonial and post-colonial setup in Zimbabwe perpetuated a bicultural setup in which the Shona and Ndebele cultures were buttressed as “the cultures” at the expense of the other ethnic groups. Subsequently ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English's position was cemented as the languages, which were to be used in education, commerce, and administration. Thus, the majority of the fourth generation Chewa speakers feel that it is only English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele that are important.

#### **4.12.3 Revitalization of ChiChewa**

Concerning the issue of revitalizing ChiChewa, 60 % of the focus group discussants think there is no need to revitalize the language. They felt ChiChewa has no place in the Zimbabwean linguistic landscape because it is a migrant language, and it has no uses in the country. This sentiment is informed by the fact that ChiChewa like the other former minority languages had no economic value as compared to English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele, which are used in education and the public media. Most of the former minority languages in Zimbabwe do not

have economic value, which can make them compete with the powerful and highly valued ChiShona English and IsiNdebele. Chichewa has witnessed over sixty years of devitalization such that its fourth-generation speakers see no reason for the revitalization of the language. While the language serves as a marker of identity to the older generation, for the younger generations, it is of no significance because there are no incentives that come with learning and mastering the language.

The implicit dominance of ChiShona and IsiNdebele in post-independent Zimbabwe created the impression that Zimbabwe was a bi-cultural country with only two important cultures and languages. Consequentially, speakers of the other languages like ChiChewa now believe that Zimbabwe is not a multilingual country and they do not see their language as part of the language ecology of Zimbabwe. Rather they would speak and use the dominant languages for their communication.

However, 40% of the focus group discussants are of the view that it is important to revitalize ChiChewa as it is one of the sixteen languages of Zimbabwe. Despite ChiChewa being a migrant language according to their understanding, it is used in Zimbabwe more as a cultural language therefore it has also to be revitalized. Their argument is based on the Constitution, which stipulates that the government must develop and promote all languages:

The State must promote and advance the use of all languages used in Zimbabwe, including sign language and must create conditions for the development of these languages. (*Government of Zimbabwe 2013*)

The last question focused on the contexts in which the group discussants used ChiChewa, and findings reveal that 70 % do not use the language while 30% use it partially at home. The proficiency in ChiChewa is absent and limited because there has largely been no intergenerational transmission. Their parents were compelled by the socio-political and economic forces not to transmit the language to their children. Those who use the language

partially at home do so because their parents have insisted on passing on the language to their children and grandchildren. Regardless of the social and economic factors, which push for the acquisition of the dominant languages, they still consider ChiChewa as a marker of identity, which they would want to pass on to the younger generations. It is important to point out that, within the Chewa group in Zimbabwe, some have cut ties with their countries of origin and assimilated into the host country while others have maintained ties with the home country. Those who have maintained links and ties still hold ChiChewa in high esteem and they proudly ensure the transmission of the language even to their grandchildren.

#### **4.13 Analysis of findings from observations**

This section presents the analysis of findings from the observations, which were carried out to establish how the Chewa people used the language in social settings. Observations were carried out in the CCAP church and at cultural gatherings.

##### **4.13.1 Cultural gatherings**

Observations were carried out on Chewa cultural gatherings and church services in the CCAP and Islamic Mosques. The Chewa people since coming to Zimbabwe in the 1950s as mostly migrant workers have maintained cultural practices that are distinct to them just like any other ethnic group. Cultural gatherings allow them to socialize and connect as people who are away from the home country in a foreign land. The gatherings bring together the different generations of Chewa speakers, and it is the older generations who actively participate and lead the gatherings. Use of ChiChewa during the gatherings is confined mostly to the older generations; the younger generations will be partially involved. This reflects the differing ideologies regarding culture and language among the Chewa people. The first and second-generation



Chewa speakers have a strong attachment to their language and cultural practices. To them ChiChewa, is a marker of identity and they perceive themselves as migrants who will go back to Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique some day.

In efforts to maintain that Chewa distinctness they always maintain and sustain strong links with the home country even if they know it might no longer be possible to go back home to their country of origin. On the contrary, the younger generations have grown up in an environment where it is beneficial to assimilate into the dominant group because there are social and economic advantages that come with it. There is not much desire to speak, use or be associated with ChiChewa as compared to the older generations. During the observed cultural gatherings, it was the older generations who used the language mostly with their peers. While the younger generations would use ChiShona and occasionally switch to ChiChewa, their proficiency in ChiChewa is limited because in most of their domains they rarely use the language. This observation refutes the popular assertion that language is a permanent marker of identity as it shows that speakers of a language can develop different ideologies about the same language. The differing ideologies are influenced by the prevailing socio-economic and political factors that operate within the speech community.

The church domain is critical in the maintenance of a language. Nonetheless, for minority languages it is a challenge because with time the powerful languages tend to encroach into the church domain and start competing with the home language. Chichewa is the official language of the CCAP church, but over the years ChiShona and IsiNdebele have come to be used in the church also. Hence, the code mixing and code-switching during sermons as observed during the data collection stage. The composition of the CCAP church is no longer homogenous; assimilation through intermarriages has brought in people from other language groups into the Chewa society. Therefore, ChiShona and IsiNdebele have been naturalised in Chewa homes.

It is now imperative to accommodate the two languages in the Chewa society as the younger generations grow up speaking these languages. The key point to note is that the space for ChiChewa continues to shrink as the power and influence of ChiShona, English and IsiNdebele continues to spread.

#### **4.14 Chapter summary**

The chapter has presented the findings and analysis from the interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Findings from the interviews reveal that, ChiChewa is a cross-border language that can be revitalized in Zimbabwe. Results from the interviews suggest that there are prospects and challenges associated with revitalizing ChiChewa, which include language policy enshrined in the constitution, government commitment and the interpretation of language revitalization. The results from the interviews showed that the status of Chichewa in Zimbabwe is low and language policy issues have adversely affected the status of ChiChewa. The chapter revealed that mother-tongue speakers of ChiChewa perceive English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele as the dominant and important languages in Zimbabwe and they no longer transmit the language because of educational and economic reasons. Furthermore, results from the interviews revealed that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is confident that ChiChewa can be revitalized as the government has put in place blanket policies, which promote the use of all the sixteen languages in Zimbabwe. Findings from the focus group discussions showed that 100% of the Fourth-generation Chewa speakers are not fluent in Chewa; rather they speak ChiShona with a native-like accent. Their views are like those raised in the interviews that ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English are the only important languages in Zimbabwe. Results from the mother-tongue speakers and Fourth-generation Chewa speakers revealed the difference in perception towards the ChiChewa language, for the former it is a marker of identity while for the latter it is of no significant value. The chapter revealed that

most of the Fourth-generation Chewa speakers do not appreciate the efforts to revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe and they no longer use the language in most of their domains. The findings from the observations showed that the use of ChiChewa is restricted to the older generations of Chewa speakers and dominant languages are encroaching into the informal domains once dominated by ChiChewa. Considering these findings, Chapter 5 will be preoccupied with discussing the key issues raised in this Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research findings of this study. The chapter discusses the prospects and challenges of revitalizing ChiChewa as a cross-border language in Zimbabwe. The chapter also assesses the revitalization of cross-border languages in Africa. In Chapter 4, responses from the language experts, native speakers, and ministry officials raised several factors, which will be examined, discussed, and assessed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 established from the responses that there are prospects and challenges concerning the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. The responses from the interviewees, focus group discussions and observations indicated that ChiChewa has a low status in Zimbabwe and language policy issues have adversely affected the status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Findings from the native speakers of ChiChewa revealed that ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English are the important languages in Zimbabwe and the intergenerational transmission of ChiChewa is dying out.

To enhance discussion, the researcher has divided this chapter into three parts, which will be guided by the research objectives of this study. The first part of the discussion will dwell on examining the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, the second part will discuss the challenges of revitalizing ChiChewa, and the third part will assess the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages in Africa.

#### **5.1 Prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe**

This section examines the prospects of revitalizing ChiCewa in Zimbabwe. The findings from Chapter 4 established that while ChiChewa has a low status and is marginally used in informal

domains, there are good prospects that the language can be revitalized in Zimbabwe. The research study identified multilingualism, education, and vitality as the prospects for revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe therefore, this section examines these factors.

### **5.1.1 Multilingualism and Multiculturalism**

As most speech communities across the globe continue to warm up to the idea of embracing multiculturalism, multilingualism, and move away from the nation-state ideology, it is gradually dawning on nations that multilingualism enriches rather than impoverishes nations. This has driven the impetus for most speech communities to agitate for the revival, reclamation, and revitalization of their languages. The language revitalization discourse resonates well with minority speech communities whose languages have been dominated by the more widely spoken languages.

The sentiments of the language experts are informed by the fact that Zimbabwe is not just a multilingual and multicultural setup but that its Constitution recognizes that there are sixteen officially recognized languages. Historically the nation-state ideology has influenced language policy and planning in many speech communities creating an impression that multilingualism is an aberration from the norm (May, 2012). However, the fact is that multilingualism and multiculturalism are prevalent everywhere even though in some speech communities their presence is denied officially or by decree.

To date most indigenous communities and minority groups across the world continue to work towards the revitalization of their languages and cultures and some speech communities have successfully revived and revitalized their languages such as Hebrew, Maori, Basque and Welsh Gaelic as already noted above.

Multilingualism is prevalent in most countries and speech communities across the globe. Approximately six thousand languages are shared among the one hundred and ninety-five countries of the world. Africa's two thousand languages belong to fifty-four countries and multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are recognised officially through international bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and its organ on culture and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

One of the major objectives of UNESCO is to ensure that multilingualism is recognized and embraced in all speech communities whose countries are members of the United Nations. Furthermore, in 1996, the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was passed, and it serves the purpose of ensuring that all language communities have human and material resources to have their languages used in all fields of life. It is such developments made by international bodies, which present chances for the revitalization of minority and threatened languages. The positives, which can be drawn for ChiChewa, are that Zimbabwe is a member of the United Nations and has the legal mandate to acknowledge multilingualism and multiculturalism. Therefore, it has the obligation to carry out activities to revive, reclaim and revitalize speech communities and their languages.

Linguistic pluralism is evident in Zimbabwe, which officially recognizes sixteen languages. Its language policy is enshrined in the Constitution and there are provisions for the development of all the sixteen languages. The amended Constitution of Zimbabwe has increased the chances of revitalizing former minority languages like ChiChewa in that it officialises multilingualism, multiculturalism, and linguistic pluralism. This is the reason why 100% of the language experts interviewed, as noted in Chapter 4, were upbeat that ChiChewa can be successfully revitalized in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the positivity expressed by the language experts is premised on the

fact that Zimbabwe appears to have shifted from the one nation one state ideology to an ideology, which recognizes and embraces plurilingualism. Hence, their strong belief that revitalization for ChiChewa is possible.

The sixteen officially recognized languages include sign language:

The following languages, namely Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Khoisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangaan, Shona, sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa are the officially recognized languages of Zimbabwe.

This is an important development about language revitalization as it spells out the position of the Government of Zimbabwe on languages and related issues. In almost every language revitalization situation, the government's position and attitude are key because they go a long way in determining if the exercise would be successful. Besides the native speakers of the language to be revitalized, governments are key stakeholders in the revitalization initiative, their will and commitment are crucial. Shohamy (2006) notes that the government of Israel through enforcing nationalism tied around the Hebrew language, played a major role in the revitalization of that language. Before 2013, the language ecology setup in Zimbabwe was skewed in favour of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele, which are the official, and national languages respectively, while all the other languages were categorized as minority languages. Since the adoption of the new Constitution in 2013, this has changed as all the sixteen languages are now officially recognized.

The provisions in the language policy of Zimbabwe which is enshrined in its constitution further create a conducive environment for the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, because they stipulate what the government is supposed to do to ensure that all the sixteen languages are developed. Subsections 3 and 4 on the section on language spell this out:

The state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must,  
(a) Ensure that all officially recognized languages are treated equitably and

(b) Take into account the language preferences of people affected by government measures or communication.

The state must promote and advance the use of all languages used in Zimbabwe, including sign language and must create conditions for the development of these languages.

Zimbabwe has already made significant strides in meeting some of the constitutional provisions. Since 2001, National FM has been broadcasting in all indigenous languages, ChiChewa as highlighted in chapter four has its weekly allocation of nine hours of broadcasting. When the new Education Curriculum was introduced in 2017, it stressed on teaching in all languages from ECD level and to date there are seven indigenous languages, which are examined at grade seven. All these are significant developments in as far as embracing multilingualism, multiculturalism is concerned in Zimbabwe, and they create a conducive environment for the revitalizing of the former minority languages. Hence, the language experts expressed optimism that ChiChewa can be revitalized in Zimbabwe because its Constitution recognizes multilingualism and multiculturalism. This recognition reflects political and linguistic ideologies that are pluralistic in nature and a direct shift from prior political and linguistic policies, informed, by the nation- state ideology, which lead to the assimilation of the small minority groups into the dominant mainstream larger groups. Historically Zimbabwe has always been depicted as made up of two dominant indigenous groups and languages ChiShona and IsiNdebele Doke (1931) while the other ethnic groups were considered as insignificant (Ndlovu 2009; Makoni 2011).

ChiChewa is both a cross-border language and a migrant language; it is now one of the sixteen officially recognized languages in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, it should enjoy equitable treatment like the other fifteen languages. In some speech communities, it is difficult for migrant and minority languages to be recognized officially because the language policies are implicit and assimilatory (May, 2012) There is a strong emphasis on using the dominant language only



while minority and migrant languages are not considered. The United States of America (USA) provides an interesting example. While the USA is considered a melting pot of cultures and languages, it has over the years implicitly promoted the English only policy (Schmidt, 2001). The suppression of some migrant and minority languages continues despite having sizeable number of speakers.

May (2012) notes that to talk of minority languages is to talk of power relations and in a speech community with unequal linguistic relations the minority groups will clamour for the recognition and promotion of their languages. This assertion by May (2012) describes language revitalization as a contest of the status quo, where previously marginalized languages are seeking to gain space in a territory dominated by the powerful and dominant languages. Depending on the speech community, of course, the dominant languages always have a hegemonic grip. Language revitalization is a noble initiative, which speech communities embark on to save, promote, empower, and develop threatened languages and groups. However, language revitalization attempts are unique to the contexts in which they are carried out.

Officialization of multilingualism and multiculturalism is a welcome development because it lays the foundation for the acknowledgement of cultural and linguistic pluralism in each speech community. However, it is not the end in the quest to revitalize a language. Experiences from other speech communities show that even when multilingualism is officially recognized, the revitalization of certain languages is difficult. The native speakers who took part in this study positively acknowledged that ChiChewa is one of the sixteen officially recognized languages in Zimbabwe; however, 70% of them see no need to revitalize the language, as they would never use it because it is only ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English, which are important.

On the part of the native speakers, officialization of multilingualism in Zimbabwe is of no significance to them since they are preoccupied with mastering the three important languages, which will give them access to better jobs and other opportunities. At the same time, the language experts were upbeat that the officialization of multilingualism was a milestone achievement in addressing language issues in the country.

All this goes to demonstrate the complexity of revitalizing the ChiChewa cross-border language. The position of the language experts is informed by the pluralistic language ideology, which is embraced in the Amended Constitution of Zimbabwe, while the native speakers still embrace the monolingual ideology in which the dominant language(s) are only important.

Furthermore, declarations and officialization of multilingualism premised upon the linguistic rights ideology are idealistic in nature because in most cases, they are not enforceable and in most speech communities, they are ignored. As observed by Bamgbose (2000:09) when he says that:

A language rights approach to language policy is fraught with problems, first it attributes power and influence on international conventions and agreements which advocates of linguistic rights are fond of invoking. The reality is that such agreements are not legally enforceable.

Article 24 of the Declaration of Linguistic Rights highlights that language communities have the right to decide which language they would want to use for communication and at all levels of education. On policy documents and declarations, this article is obviously a welcome development; however, it is not feasible. Due to various socio-historical, economic, and political factors, many language communities around the world find this right elusive to enjoy. Language policies and practices are not influenced by the speech communities needs but rather by the politicians and market forces operating in those speech communities. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), Turkish Kurds continue to be denied the right to use their language in present day Turkey despite the matter being brought before the United Nations.

Makoni (2012: 192-193) warns about the misleading nature of the ideologies informing the understanding of multilingualism when he says that:

[Multilingualism] contains social romanticism, creating an illusion of equality in an a highly asymmetrical world, particularly in contexts characterized by a search for homogenization [...] I find it disconcerting, to say the least, to have an open celebration of diversity in societies marked by violent xenophobia, [racism, discrimination, and so on...]

Multilingualism is romanticized to the extent of overlooking how different languages fair in the multilingual setup. While it is a fact that multilingualism and multiculturalism are the norm in most African countries, the reality remains that most indigenous languages remain dominated by ex-colonial languages and nationalised indigenous African languages (Batibo, 2005). In the Zimbabwean context, ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English have dominated all the other 13 languages for over 80 years. This has had serious ramifications in as far as the language ecology of Zimbabwe is concerned because the linguistic and cultural reality embraced by most citizens is that Zimbabwe is a bilingual and bi-cultural country. So, while the language experts expressed optimism that Zimbabwe had embraced multilingualism, officially there is need to understand that this does not translate overnight into everyone accepting the multilingualism especially among the various language groups themselves. The native speakers of ChiChewa in Chapter 4 had pragmatic reasons for their language choices and practices, which clearly indicated that they were not influenced by multilingualism.

Languages wielding economic and political power dominate the linguistic ecology and they stifle the less powerful languages, which normally belong to the minority and dominated groups. Languages with economic power become the preferred choice because they provide advantage to social and economic gain. English, French and Chinese Mandarin have become powerful global languages because they are buttressed by language policies, which are informed by ideologies of domination and power (Grenoble, 2013).

Their influence and dominance are so strong that even in multilingual communities, speakers of minority languages will find it morally acceptable to use the dominant and powerful languages at the expense of their own. This is the reason why in Chapter 4, the native speakers of ChiChewa identify with the Chewa identity but they do not see anything wrong with using English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Similarly, 60% of the focus group participants see no need to use and maintain the Chewa language because only the three dominant languages are important. Hence Fairclough (2001) notes that through powerful ideologies language contributes to the domination of some people by others through consent rather than coercion.

Even if there are declarations and conventions, which embrace and officialise multilingualism it does not necessarily mean that they will always be observed and respected in all speech communities. Spolsky (2004:22) observes that:

The real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices than in management. Unless the management is consistent with the language practices and beliefs and with the other contextual forces that are in play, the explicit policy written in the constitution and laws is likely to have no more effect on how people speak.

The language practices of the people concerned are informed by the language ideologies they embrace as a speech community and within the speech community. It can be observed that the declarations regarding the use of languages are recognized more at the macro level of language planning while at the micro level, family and individual choices override everything.

The sentiments drawn from the native speakers in Chapter 4 show that their everyday language practices are not informed by declarations and officialization of multilingualism. The study also observed that language experts were more upbeat about the officialization of multilingualism in Zimbabwe than the native speakers. Since 2013 when the Constitution of Zimbabwe was amended, language practices and preferences of the Chewa largely remain inclined towards the use of ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English. To further augment this, interviewee 13 in Chapter 4 pointed out that ChiChewa is yet to be examined in the ZIMSEC

public examinations because of the low number of candidates. This is an indicator of the perception of ChiChewa speakers towards their language.

## **5.2 Vitality of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe**

Edwards (1996) and Grenoble (2013) point out that vitality is a central factor in language revitalization. Drawing from experiences for Welsh Gaelic, Edwards asserts that if the linguistic vitality of an endangered language is high, then that language can be successfully revitalized. Ehala (2015) outlines that, ethnolinguistic vitality is a group's ability to maintain and protect its existence in time as a collective entity with a distinctive identity and language. It involves continuing the intergenerational transmission of a group's language and cultural practices.

The Chewa people have been present in Zimbabwe for over 80 years and they have managed to survive most of the socio-historical and political vagaries faced by an immigrant community in a host country. Findings from Chapter 4 indicate that even though the Chewa community in Zimbabwe is no longer homogenous, it has managed to remain resilient. Demographic wise migrant groups are always small when compared to the host groups and the chances of assimilation into the host society are very high, however, in Zimbabwe, the Chewa identity remains present. Observations carried out by the researcher attest to the fact that the Chewa identity and the language are still present though at varying degrees across the four generations.

The first and second generation of Chewa speakers identify themselves strictly as Malawian and Zambian migrants who came into Zimbabwe but have strong ties with their home countries. This group's proficiency in spoken and written ChiChewa is excellent, and this group is more of the custodian of the Chewa identity in Zimbabwe. During the observation sessions, the researcher noticed that the first and second-generation groups lead all cultural practices and activities, which define the Chewa people. This resilience of Chewa culture and its key

institutions also translates to mean that the ChiChewa language's linguistic vitality is still favourable even though intergenerational transmission is compromised as illustrated in the previous chapter where 60% of the native speakers indicated that they no longer transmit the language to the younger generations. Cultural and linguistic vitality is critical in language revitalization attempts; if the two are significantly high, then the prospects to revitalize a threatened or extinct language also become high. Though it is difficult to ascertain the actual number of ChiChewa speakers in Zimbabwe, it appears that the current fluent speakers though old, can be a useful resource in the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. These fluent speakers continue to play an important role in maintaining Chewa identity in a cosmopolitan society. Cultural dances like *Gule waMkulu*, *Chihodha* and *Ben Arinoti* have been passed on over generations and they remain strong markers of Chewa identity.

To add, the Chewa community has made notable and significant contributions to Zimbabwe as a country, Mudeka (2015) and Daimon (2012) acknowledges that Chewa women were the pioneers of urban agriculture in the urban areas. The Chewa community has also produced outstanding personalities in different fields like sports, music, and politics. Successful footballers, musicians, politicians, and social activists such as Shackman Tauro, Maronga Nyangela, Benjani Mwaruwari, Alick Macheso, Nicholas Zacharia, Bernard Chidzero and Mai Musodzi all have Chewa backgrounds. Their achievements go a long way in keeping the Chewa community intact and confident that it has made invaluable contributions to Zimbabwean society.

ChiChewa has continued to receive institutional support. The new school curriculum introduced in 2017 has provisions for the language to be taught in schools from ECD level. Bourhis and Barret (2006) assert that a language can remain intact and further strengthen its vitality if demographics, institutional support, and status work in its favour. While an actual

study to test the ethnolinguistic vitality of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe is yet to be done, observations and findings in the current study point to the fact that prospects to revitalize ChiChewa are high.

Nonetheless, it is important to realise that some of the key components, which make up the vitality of a given language would need further examination to ascertain if the language can be revived. Nelde (1996) opines that the demographic size of a group is no guarantee of the group's linguistic vitality. A collective identity is important in pushing and galvanising a speech community towards revitalizing its language, as all group members will be pushing for the same goal. For ChiChewa in Zimbabwe the case is different because the identity issue is complex as reflected by the findings in Chapter 4.

The four generations of Chewa speakers who participated in the study, while all were put under the collective term of Chewa, no longer represent a monolithic Chewa identity. Third and fourth generation Chewa speaking people in Zimbabwe are largely products of intermarriages and assimilation with other local groups, mainly the Shona and Ndebele. While the first and second generations have predominantly Chewa roots from Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. It is important to note that even the first-generation Chewa speaking men even married local Ndebele and Shona women. Mashiri (2006) concurs with this observation on Chewa identity in Zimbabwe when he says that first-generation and sometimes second and third-generation Malawian Zimbabweans whose parents are both of Malawian origin speak mainly ChiChewa as their first language and ChiShona as their second language.

These generational differences go a long way in influencing different language ideologies within the group which is outwardly thought of as collective. Responses by the group discussants in Chapter 4 brought out the differing ideologies regarding language across the generations of Chewa speaking people in Zimbabwe. Most of the group discussants were fourth generation Chewa speakers, and they have ChiShona and IsiNdebele as their first languages

while ChiChewa is the second language to them. Thus 70% of the focus group discussants saw no need to revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, while the second and third generations believed in maintaining the ChiChewa identity and language even in the face of stiff competition from ChiShona and IsiNdebele. In line with this, there are various language ideologies held by the different generations of Chewa speakers in Zimbabwe although they are treated as a homogenous group. The language ideology which each generation holds is shaped by the socio-political and economic environments they have been exposed to. A change in the socio-political milieu will also influence change in language ideology since these do not remain static. Kroskity (2000) further clarifies how language ideologies operate in a speech community when he says that:

Language ideologies are not monolithic or one-dimensional, rather they should be viewed as a cluster concept consisting of a number of converging dimensions including (1) language ideologies representing the perceptions of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group (2) throughout polities of any scale (3) members possibly displaying varying awareness of local language ideologies (4) and language ideologies as bridging socio-cultural experience and linguistic and discursive resources by constituting those linguistic and discursive forms as indexically tied to features of members socio-cultural experiences.

### **5.3 Education**

Prior to 2017, Zimbabwe's language in education policies worked in disfavour of the minority languages as they promoted the teaching and learning of ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English only. The 1987 Education Act clearly illustrates this on the language section,

62 Languages to be taught in schools

(1) Subject to this section, the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely, Shona, Ndebele and English, shall be taught in all primary schools from the first grade as follows—

(a) Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona; or

(b) Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Ndebele.



(2) Before the fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils.

(3) From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction:

Provided that Shona or Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal-time-allocation basis as the English language.

(4) In areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorize the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to those specified in subsections (1), (2) and (3).

Section 62 in the Education Act of 1987 shows how the education establishment devitalized minority languages in Zimbabwe. Subsection one (a) and (b) explicitly indicate that ChiShona, English and IsiNdebele were to be the only languages of instruction in schools while the thirteen other languages were relegated to home languages. If a language is not taught or used in school the quick interpretation by its users is that it has no purpose or function and it assumes a low status, parents will ensure that their children master the language used in school. Most of the native speakers who participated in the study indicated that they ensured their children prioritized learning and using languages, which were taught, in school only. Similarly, 70% of the focus group participants argued that there was no need to learn or use other languages when only ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English were the languages taught and used in school. Hence, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:500) observes that:

Formal education reinforces the relative importance of different languages and cultures. It does it partly through the way it is organized where some languages are media of education; some are learned as subjects and some not at all. It also does it through the ideological content of the instruction: what is said about the different languages and cultures explicitly and implicitly. Which languages and cultures are maintained [Shona, Ndebele, and English] Formal education is decisive for which languages are in fact learnt and maintained.

It is interesting to point out again that subsection 4 was never prioritized as the decision was the prerogative of the Minister of Education and successive ministers of education never attempted to ensure that subsection 4 was implemented. It is fact that in Zimbabwe there are certain regions where other languages are dominant other than ChiShona and IsiNdebele.

ChiChewa was dominant in the farming, mining, and some of the oldest townships in the major cities of Zimbabwe Hachipola (1999), Nkoma-Darch (2005), Yoshikuni (2005) but it was not used in education even though there was a sizable population of speakers in these areas.

In this regard, by hindsight, education decimated multilingualism and multiculturalism in Zimbabwe. This had far-reaching consequences for minority language speakers as they were forced to abandon their languages and cultures in favour of the dominant cultures, which were supported by state institutions like the education department. The nation building agenda pursued by most African countries after gaining political independence from colonial Europe resulted in the assimilation of minority groups and their languages into the dominant cultures. The 1987 Education Act builds upon the erroneous recommendation made by Doke (1931) that Zimbabwe has two main important indigenous languages ChiShona and IsiNdebele. This explains why the focus group participants, who inherited and were beneficiaries of Doke's misrepresentation, concurred that it was English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele, which really matter in Zimbabwe.

It also explains the observed speech patterns in which the younger generations of Chewa speaking people in Zimbabwe speak and use ChiShona and IsiNdebele as their first languages. This generation grew up exposed to a language ecology setup in which there was hierarchization of languages (Makoni 2011; Kabel 2021) and institutional support for the use of only three languages while all the other previously marginalized languages were reduced to home and cultural languages. Mutonga (2009) alludes to the fact that most Kalanga parents see no practical reason for their children to learn Kalanga but instead IsiNdebele because it creates better opportunities for them in life.

Even though the Education Act was amended in 2006 the space for the previously marginalized languages remained constricted as they were being taught up to grade 7 only and the teaching

had to be done gradually as there were human, financial, and logistical issues to be addressed for each specific indigenous language. ChiChewa is yet to be examined at grade 7 while Tonga and Kalanga were some of the first languages to be examined in public school examinations.

The new Education curriculum introduced in 2017 states:

This curriculum framework emphasizes the use of indigenous languages in line with the provisions of the Zimbabwe Constitution. At the Junior School level, indigenous languages remain important as avenues for fostering early literacy. The introduction of a second language and its alternate use with the indigenous language in the learning environment helps learners' master concepts and achieve linguistic competency for learning and communicative purposes (Government of Zimbabwe 2017:34)

This important development, which allows the teaching of all languages in Zimbabwe, makes it possible for the educational institution to be used in the revitalization of languages like ChiChewa; it complements provisions in the Constitution, which emphasize the development and use of all languages in Zimbabwe. If the constitutional provisions on the language are fully implemented, then it raises more prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Indeed, it is a cross-border language, but it is part of the Zimbabwean linguistic terrain.

In Chapter 4, the Ministry of Education officials expressed optimism that the revitalization of ChiChewa is possible because all the languages in Zimbabwe are being taught from the early childhood development level (ECD). This promotes literacy in all the languages of Zimbabwe and gives them the opportunity to be visible and their use to be expanded into the other domains such as business, communication, and the media. One of the central marks in language revitalization is that of the language being used once they are used in everyday interactions with intergenerational transmission to the young being guaranteed (Grenoble, 2013).

However, it is also important to note the current language in education policy of Zimbabwe further presents obstacles to the minority languages. As pointed out in the curriculum framework, the use of indigenous languages is stressed at the elementary levels of ECD and junior school for fostering early literacy. The other challenge is that of the introduction of a

second language, which is supposed to alternate with the indigenous languages and help learners' master concepts and achieve linguistic competence. An education delivered in the mother tongue is ideal for children especially in the formative years, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), Ouane and Glanz (2010), but in the context of language revitalization, this presents challenges. This promotes the idea of hierarchization of languages in the minds of the users of indigenous languages whereby they come to view their languages as not suitable for use in other domains. Technically, if a language is restricted to the formative years of learning, it becomes restricted simply as a school language, whereas the whole idea of language revitalization is to promote the use of a language in as many domains as possible.

Bangbose in Nelson et al., (2020) points out that the challenge, which continues to face indigenous African languages is that they are restricted to the early learning years in primary education only. This makes them to be perceived as not suitable to be used to teach complicated concepts because they are not 'technologically ready' like languages of wider communication such as English. Such a development suggests that the language in education policy could be a typical political statement where there is no real intention by the authorities to ensure education in indigenous languages.

The curriculum framework of 2017 cited above states that a second language would be introduced to alternate with the indigenous languages in the teaching of children so that pupils master concepts and achieve linguistic competency. The interesting observation about this second language is that it is not mentioned by name and the 'alternate use' is vague. As things stand in Zimbabwe the only language which has the capacity to play this role is English, Shona or Ndebele. The later two have a somewhat limited capacity to teach some of the modern complicated concepts. There is a danger, therefore, that in the alternation of languages, the indigenous languages will be sidelined because most of them still face challenges in terms of

corpus and status planning while English has status and corpus advantages. Furthermore, the framework does not point out at what level the second language will be introduced to alternate with the indigenous languages. This again raises issues of the approach used in teaching, whether it is subtractive or additive bilingual learning. Traditionally, Zimbabwe has used the subtractive bilingual learning approach as indicated in the 1987 Education Act and as amended in 2006. As the new curriculum was introduced, there appeared to be a shift from a subtractive bilingual learning approach to additive, but the wording in the curriculum framework suggests otherwise. The linguistic landscape has 16 languages but there is no mention of bilingual education, which would be the most ideal in the circumstances.

Subsection 4.4.1.2 of the Curriculum framework singles out the importance of the English language and foreign languages in the development of literacy and communication as follows:

The learning of English and its use as a language plays a vital role in the development of literacy in that it enhances learning in other areas of the curriculum. A foreign language creates opportunities for the learner to interact with an otherwise closed world. Both English and any foreign language play complimentary roles. They help learners to develop communication skills and critical understanding that are necessary for meaningful and active participation in society at large. (Government of Zimbabwe 2017:34)

English and foreign languages are part of the Zimbabwean linguistic ecology owing to colonialism and globalization. Without taking anything away from it, English assumes the role of the de facto lingua franca for official communication and other purposes within and outside the country. This singling out of English and foreign languages in the language in education policy is a clear statement of intent on what the policymakers want to achieve with regards to the use and functions of languages in Zimbabwe. The clear hierarchization of languages and their purposes is testament to this, that; indigenous languages are for formative learning, while English is for literacy and communication. In the minds of the language users, indigenous languages are perceived as inhibiting communication with the outside world, while useful for

the informal domains. What is interesting in this observation is the difference in how the purposes and functions of languages are presented in the policy framework document and in the Constitution. The Constitution bestows the status of official language to all the sixteen languages found in Zimbabwe which is a development from the past when only English was the official language with ChiShona and IsiNdebele as the national languages, while all the rest of the languages had a minority status. However, the language in education policy appears to be retrogressive again by categorizing the languages in terms of function and status with indigenous languages being used only in formative learning at junior school level and English continuing with the role of communication and instruction for complicated concepts.

Analysing all these points from the perspective of revitalizing ChiChewa, it is an insurmountable challenge for its speaker base to use it in other domains. For over 80 years, ChiChewa was considered a minority language in Zimbabwe, mainly used in the home. It has a diglossic relationship with English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. In the language ecology of Zimbabwe, ChiChewa and the other minority languages' space has been constricted. As is well documented in language endangerment discourse, a language, which is not used, is not transferred to the younger generations in a speech community, Hinton and Hale (2001), UNESCO (2003). 60 % of the native speakers indicated in Chapter 4 that they no longer transmit ChiChewa to their children because their children only use ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English. Institutions of socialization such as education and the media shape the children's language choices and practices. The focus group discussants also concurred that there is no space for ChiChewa in their linguistic repertoire and this translates to language attrition and the subsequent language shift. The diglossic nature that exists between ChiChewa, and the three dominant languages is influenced at both the macro and micro levels of language planning where ChiShona and IsiNdebele are the national languages and English is the official language.

If ChiChewa continues to be confined to the education institution and used for early literacy and being taught as a subject, it will be difficult for the language to carve a niche for itself in the other domains of use. Unfortunately, the wording of the curriculum framework highlighted earlier on points to this; hence, the criticism levelled against the institution of education for promoting the endangerment of indigenous languages in post independent Africa (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994).

The Ministry of Education officials in Chapter 4 lauded the new curriculum as being progressive in promoting indigenous languages and their revitalization. However, from all these observations, nothing has really changed about the promotion and use of indigenous languages in education. They are likely to continue to be restricted to the formative years of learning while English, Shona and Ndebele will further entrench their hegemony as the languages of education, media, and commerce. The sentiments of the Ministry of Education officials who took part in this study resonate with the elitist ideology of the policymakers who seek to protect the interests of the dominant language groups while overlooking those of the minority groups. While Zimbabwe might have a new Constitution and an elaborate language policy, the fate of indigenous languages especially the former minority languages continue to be difficult to change. This is the reason why Chimhundu (2001), Mutasa (2006) and Magwa (2008) blame politicians for lacking the will to promote indigenous languages in education and in other domains of African people's lives.

In language revitalization discourse, the education institution is central in the maintenance or devitalization of a language; hence, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) accuses the education institution of leading to the loss of indigenous and minority languages. Language in education policies can either promote or disrupt the intergenerational transmission of languages, a process which is key in sustaining languages.

#### **5.4 Challenges associated with revitalizing a cross-border language**

Chapter 4 outlined the key findings of the study, which included salient issues regarding the challenges associated with revitalizing ChiChewa as a cross-border language. The purpose of this section is to embark on an in-depth discussion of the challenges, some of which have been alluded to in the section above. As highlighted in the previous chapter, language revitalization is an important initiative to maintain and save threatened or endangered languages. The possible revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe has its fair share of linguistic, socio-political, and economic challenges, which will be discussed extensively in this section.

#### **5.5 Ideological clarification on language revitalization**

King (2001) outlines the nature and purpose of language revitalization when he says that it is an attempt to add new linguistic forms and social functions to a language, which is facing extinction or being threatened. He further argues that the main purpose of revitalization is to increase the number of people who speak the language and to extend the domains in which the language is used. Friedman (2011) further elaborates that language revitalization is concerned with revaluing subordinate languages and granting them prestige so that they can be used for valued functions.

The foremost challenge with language revitalization is that it means different things to different groups of the people involved. Normally what revitalization means to the native speakers of a language is different from the interpretations of the policymakers, language experts and majority language speakers. Hence, Costa and Gasquet-Cyrus (2013:223) assert that:

No language revitalization can be homogenous and that such movements are born of the creation of charter myths and are based subsequently on interpretations that serve various often conflicting interests.



Language revitalization is an ideologically driven process whose impetus, direction and success are determined by the ideologies held by all the stakeholders concerned. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998) argue that failure to achieve prior ideological clarification about the revitalization of a language amongst stakeholders concerned is fatal for the language to be revived. They stress that,

a disparity between a community's expressed desire to revitalize their language and deep rooted, or even unconscious, fears and biases about the language, often stemming from colonial attitudes all of which can be serious impediments to revitalization (Ibid (1998:63)

For a successful revitalization of an endangered language to take place, there is need for an honest assessment of the state of the language and how the speakers of the language feel about using it and preserving it. There is need to appreciate that the feelings and attitude towards a language are determined by the context and language ecology in which the language operates (May 2012; Hogan-Brun 2018). The feelings and attitudes that an indigenous community has for its language are likely to be different from those a migrant group will have in a host country. Political, economic, and social factors entice migrant communities to give up their cultures and languages in favour of those of the host community.

Findings from Chapter 4 indicate that most fourth-generation Chewa speakers who took part in the study strongly felt that there was no need to revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because the language had no use. According to them, the language had become redundant as it only served home and cultural purposes, while English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele catered for the 'proper' functions of education, communication, and business. The comments below by focus group discussant 10 summarize the views expressed and attitudes towards ChiChewa by a generation of its speakers:

Chichewa is a migrant language which is not Zimbabwean, why should it be revived? And who will use the language anyway. (FGD participant 10)

Fourth-generation Chewa speakers in Zimbabwe are largely monolingual in ChiShona and IsiNdebele, their competence in ChiChewa is close to none. They are a generation whose language choices and practices are shaped by the legitimization and institutionalization May (2012) of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. This setup has convinced them that ChiChewa has no utility value and purpose on the Zimbabwean linguistic terrain thus they have negative views towards ChiChewa. Furthermore, fourth generation ChiChewa speakers have been assimilated into the dominant host societies of Shona and Ndebele, such that those issues of identity and belonging for this generation are explained through hybridity and fluidity. In language revitalization discourse, they may be classified as speakers of the language but, and for pragmatic reasons the generation alternatively switches allegiance between Chewa and the dominant communities. Hence, Edwards (1994) and Brut-Griffler (2010) argue that language does not define a people and may not be an important marker of identity. Rather, the detachability of language from ethnicity also closely accords with wider constructionist conceptions of ethnicity, which highlight the hybridity, fluidity, and malleability of identity construction.

To add on, second and third generation ChiChewa speakers also have mixed feelings towards the ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe. While the researcher established that most of them were bilingual and had a strong command of ChiChewa, ChiShona and IsiNdebele, they have gradually given up transmitting ChiChewa to their children who make up the fourth-generation group. This act of abandoning intergenerational transmission of their language is a clear sign of their attitude and perception towards the language. Migrant groups always must weigh their options regarding language choice and use when in the host country. Usually, the prevailing

conditions are not favourable for them to maintain their native languages, so they end up having to sacrifice their identity, culture, and language. UNESCO (2003:03) notes that

immigrants and migrants must abandon their language and culture in the hopes of overcoming discrimination to secure a livelihood and enhance social mobility or to assimilate in the global marketplace

Chewa migrants came into present day Zimbabwe for economic reasons from Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. Securing work in the mines, farms and industries meant they had to assimilate into the dominant host society, as this would help them to secure a future for them and their offspring. Proficiency in the two national languages meant more job opportunities and being accepted into the host society. Inevitably, ChiChewa had to be relegated to the status of a minority language meaning, it had no significant economic role to play other than being a home language. Language policy in colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe ensured the hierarchization of languages as English assumed the role of official language while ChiShona and IsiNdebele were the national languages (Ndlovu, 2009). The rest of the other languages including ChiChewa were relegated to the status of cultural and home languages. A minority status accorded to a language is construed as the culture and language of that group having no significance in a nation-state setup. Socially this breeds contempt towards minority cultures and their languages amongst the dominant groups and even the minorities themselves.

Grillo (1989) asserts that there is an “ideology of contempt” associated with the culture and languages of subordinated groups, he says that subordinated languages are despised languages, then inevitably so too are those who speak them. It is a socio-historical fact that the host community in colonial and post-independent Zimbabwe (Mashiri 2005; Mudeka 2015; Groves 2018) looked down upon ChiChewa culture and language. The resentment towards Chewa culture and language gradually became ingrained in the Chewa migrant community and the younger generations come to despise their own language and culture. Resentment of African languages and cultures in Africa owes its roots to a colonial past. European intrusion into Africa

created false images about the African people which subsequently led to the disdainment of African languages in preference of western languages and cultures. Attempts at linguistic and cultural nationalism Mazrui (1994) did not do much to restore confidence in African languages. Hence today African languages continue to be held in low esteem by their very own speakers.

In the Zimbabwean context, the nation building agenda instituted at independence in 1980 gave the precedence that the country should have a bi-cultural setup centred on Ndebele and Shona culture (Ndhlovu, 2018). Minority cultures inevitably had to assimilate into the dominant cultures as state institutions like education, media and administration necessitated this. Such scenarios left migrants to shift to the dominant host cultures to ensure their survival because their own culture was overlooked. This explains the negative feelings towards ChiChewa language and culture by over 60% of the focus group discussants interviewed in Chapter 4.

May (2012:20) observes the challenges facing migrant groups living in countries which embrace an assimilationist approach to language planning when he says that:

In effect the ethnic interests of the majority group are legitimated and naturalized as civic ones, which are equated directly with modernity. By this the legitimate claims of minorities for similar recognition and inclusion in the public or civic realm are ignored, discounted and /or suppressed on the basis that they are merely ethnic.

A speech community will maintain its language when it has utilitarian value and commodified to help the community meet its socio-economic needs. However, this is not the case for languages, which have a minority status because their chances of gaining value and prestige are limited. Their speakers develop negative attitudes and shift to using languages, which are more prestigious. Besides being the owners of the language, the minority speech community members may be indifferent to language maintenance and revitalization attempts because they believe it is beyond them. The sentiments by focus group discussant 17 below sums up the perception of fourth generation ChiChewa speakers in Zimbabwe towards ChiChewa:

Chewa will always remain a minority language in Zimbabwe despite it being an officially recognized language. It might be a waste of resources to revive such a language since it has no use. (FGD participant 17)

Smolicz and Secombe (1998) point out approaches to minority languages that are evident among minority language speakers about how they feel about their language. These comprise:

Negative evaluation of the language; indifference, seeing no purpose in language maintenance and showing no interest in it, general positive evaluation- regarding the language as a vital element of ethnicity but not prepared to learn it, personal positive evaluation- regarding the language as a core cultural value and putting this language commitment into practice.

It is important to note that the three approaches noted by Smolicz and Secombe (1998) above are evident among the Chewa people who participated in this study. The majority of the fourth generation of Chewa speakers exhibited a negative evaluation of ChiChewa. While the first- and second-generation regard ChiChewa as part of their culture and heritage, but they clearly indicated that they were not passing on the language to the younger generations. 20% of the native speakers felt that the language was a key part of their culture and heritage, and they believed in maintaining and preserving ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.

The mixed feelings towards ChiChewa reflected across the four generations of speakers are a manifestation of the different language ideologies, which inform and influence the speakers. These language ideologies are further shaped by the language ecologies in which the native speakers operate in, ideologies of nation building, contempt of minority groups and globalization, have inextricably worked together to bring out largely negative feelings that the Chewa people now have towards their own language today.

Nation building is informed by the political ideology of nationalism, and it strives to create cultural and linguistic uniformity within nation states. Gellner (1983:01) defines nationalism as the theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones. The consequence of nationalism and nation building is that it promotes the creation of an ethnically exclusive and a linguistically homogenous country in which minority

languages and cultures are sidelined. In Zimbabwe, the nation state is modelled along Shona and Ndebele linguistic and cultural groups while other minority groups have been significantly sidelined (Ndlovu, 2018). This explains why the Chewa, originally an immigrant group has gradually been assimilated into the dominant cultures with the fourth generation associating more with the dominant culture as the space for minority language use in the Zimbabwean language ecology is constrained because of the hegemony of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Such a language ecology setup goes a long way in shaping the language ideologies of the minority language speakers as well as those of the dominant language speakers. Fourth-generation Chewa speakers have assimilated into ChiShona and IsiNdebele cultures to the point of becoming monolinguals in these languages.

May (2012) notes that the establishment of a national language should always be regarded as a deliberate political act, whose long-term intention is to homogenize the citizenry into one linguistic and cultural group. In Zimbabwe, this has been achieved largely in that the country has a bi-cultural appeal in which the speakers of minority languages have to conform to in almost all facets of life.

De Varennes (1996:86-7) outlines the implications of establishing national languages when he says that:

By imposing a language requirement, the state shows a definite preference towards some individuals on the basis of language. In other words, the imposition of a language or languages for use in state activities and services is by no means a neutral act, since the chosen language becomes a condition for the full access to a number of services, resources and privileges such as education and employment. Those for whom the chosen state speech is not the primary language are thus treated differently from those whom it is. The latter have the advantage or benefit of receiving the state's largesse in their primary tongue, whereas the former does not and find them in a more disadvantaged position.

Observations and findings in this study indicate that the language choices and practices of the Chewa are influenced by politico-economic factors. The nationalization of ChiShona and

IsiNdebele perpetuates the ideology that knowledge of these languages is associated with belonging to the Zimbabwean identity. This subsequently marginalizes the other minority ethnicities and promotes a shift to the nationalized cultures and languages. Shifting to the dominant cultures and languages has its socio-economic incentives and for most migrant groups it is the way to go. This is the reason why most of the Chewa native speakers who participated in the study had negative views towards their language and cultural heritage.

The findings from Chapter 4 show that the language experts understand the revitalization of ChiChewa as a noble initiative, which will promote and help to restore and maintain the multilingual setup in Zimbabwe. The language experts' view on the revitalization of ChiChewa is informed by the ideology of linguistic pluralism and multilingualism. Linguistic pluralism acknowledges that the presence and use of several languages in a speech community is the norm and all languages in a speech community should be developed and used. Interviewee 2's sentiments regarding language revitalization summarize how the language experts perceive of the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe and the ideology which informs their collective thinking about indigenous languages as forms of cultural identity and vehicles for development:

I see language revitalization as an important initiative because it allows for the revival and resuscitation of languages which are under threat. I also see it as crucial in that it will allow for the strengthening of African communities and participation in issues which concern them. To empower a language is also to elevate the speech community which speaks that language. So, I can say that language revitalization in Zimbabwe and Africa is very important. (Interviewee 2)

On the other hand, the native speakers of ChiChewa had varied opinions with the younger generations indicating that there is no purpose and need to revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. In this regard, language revitalization tends to be interpreted differently by language planners, government, and the owners of the language, mainly because the language ideologies informing their interpretations of revitalization are different. The ChiChewa language found

its way into Zimbabwe through migrant workers in the colonial period and gradually became one of the minority languages of Zimbabwe; from 2013, it attained the status of one of the sixteen officially recognized languages in the country.

This change in status of the language coupled by the fact that it is a cross-border language reflects the changes and shifts in language ideologies informing language planning and policy in Zimbabwe. Ndlovu (2009; 2018) argues that colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe's language planning was influenced by the nation-state ideology, which resulted in the assimilation of minority communities and their languages into the dominant Shona and Ndebele cultures.

A nation-state ideology advocate for a one language one nation but in the case of Zimbabwe the Shona and Ndebele are the two dominant groups in terms of power, size, and influence hence the bicultural setup noted by (Ndhlovu, 2009). Groves (2020) notes that during the colonial period most Chewa migrants had the privilege of having dual citizenship and considered themselves as both Malawian and Zimbabwean which also enabled them to maintain strong ties and bonds with their country of origin.

However, the Citizenship Act of 2006, Daimon (2015) removed this privilege, and most Chewa people were forced to renounce their dual citizenship and lost their right to vote as they were considered aliens under the new law. This explains why the majority of the second and third generation ChiChewa native speakers were adamant that they are migrants in Zimbabwe even though most of them indicated that they had settled permanently in Zimbabwe. According to the native speakers, the Citizenship Act of 2006 was a clear indicator that they were not true citizens of Zimbabwe, an impression they had always held from the time they came into Zimbabwe as migrant workers.



This tallies with sentiments revealed to the researcher in Chapter 4 explaining the of existence mixed feelings amongst the pioneer generations of Chewa speakers on revitalizing ChiChewa despite government efforts to increase uptake of ChiChewa in the new education curriculum of 2017, which promotes the teaching of all languages in Zimbabwe from ECD level. Furthermore, 90% of the younger generations of ChiChewa speakers who made up the focus group discussants in Chapter 4 also felt that revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe was not necessary. Being offspring of the second and third generation Chewa people most of them indicated preference to speaking ChiShona or IsiNdebele as their first languages. This generation is a product of the implicit assimilation during and after the pre- and post-independence period in Zimbabwe.

While the older generations perceive ChiChewa as a marker of solidarity and group identity, the younger generations associate the language with their elders and grandparents. Their language ideology is shaped by the nation-state ideology imposed by the government through a language in education policy and language policy planning which stressed a bi-cultural identity in Zimbabwe. Ndhlovu (2018: 100) argues that:

The language policy enterprise in Zimbabwe has been intricately entwined with the process of constructing a supposedly bicultural Zimbabwean identity in a nation of fluid and multiple ethno linguistic groups. Policy documents were conveniently and tailor made to serve the interests of ‘majority’ groups seeking to dominate and control speakers of so-called minority languages.

The nation-state ideology enhances a language ecology setup in which language choices and preferences become skewed in favour of the dominant languages.

Minority language speakers give economic justifications for opting to use the powerful languages because their own native languages cannot compete in the same linguistic ecology with institutionally empowered languages such as English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Although ChiChewa is now an officially recognized language in Zimbabwe since 2013, the incentives

for using it in everyday communication and other domains remain low. Thus, the younger generation of Chewa speakers who took part in this study have no cultural urgency to speak and use the language, so they opt to use ChiShona and IsiNdebele.

Language revitalization from the perspective of the policymakers must be carried out in a careful manner to ensure that the socio-political situation remains under control. The fact that language revitalization brings up issues of language activism and language rights make it a non-neutral activity, and in multi-ethnic setups it can become politically charged as the minority groups seek recognition or autonomy as the case of Catalan in Spain.

May (2012) observes that minority language revitalization is tantamount to adjustments of power dynamics in a speech community. Language is not restricted to just a medium of communication but also a marker of identity and a means to settle or impose certain political agendas, which normally suit the dominant groups or those in power. Hence, the relationship between language policy planning of minority and indigenous languages in most nations tend to be fractious with the speakers of the language and the government suspicious of each other's intentions. In Matebeleland some people have refused to accept non native speakers to teach languages in the schools (Mtonga, 2009)

While language revitalization is directed at saving threatened and endangered languages, most of its efforts are targeted at domain expansion and trying to increase the number of speakers. Powerful languages tend to dominate the informal and formal domains thereby squeezing out minority. Fishman (2001) points out that while linguistically all languages are equal, sociolinguistically they are not. The Chewa identity as reflected in the previous chapter is no longer fluid, the older generations identify with the language while the younger generations see it more as a cultural good which limits their opportunities, and they see no reason in

investing in the language. These factors point to the fact that language revitalization has challenges regarding the the goals sought.

## **5.6 Language activism and language representation**

Shohamy (2006:159) defines language activism as, “specific actions that can be taken by linguists, native speakers, teachers, and the public at large to open up the discussion of language planning as a tool of power that should be examined and critiqued”. On the other hand, language associations are important in lobbying for and recognition of indigenous and minority languages in many speech communities, their presence shows a determined effort and agency by the native speakers of the language to have it elevated and given roles that are more functional.

An increased awareness by indigenous groups and minority communities of the need to preserve, promote and conserve their languages has resulted in the formation of language associations. In Zimbabwe, notable language associations included Tonga Language and Cultural Association (TOLACO), Venda, Tonga, and Kalanga (VETOKA) and Zimbabwe Indigenous Language Peoples’ Association (ZILPA). While TOLACO and VETOKA have ceased to exist, ZILPA has continued to represent the interests of most indigenous communities in Zimbabwe. Ndhlovu (2010). Most of the the former minority languages now under ZILPA managed to embark on language activism activities leading to the teaching of the languages in schools though their use in other domains remains minimal. These efforts contributed immensely towards the eventual granting of the officially recognized status to all the sixteen languages found in Zimbabwe.

Interestingly, ChiChewa has no language association representing it and Interviewee 5 who is the director of ZILPA confirmed this. What is evident for the Chewa people in Zimbabwe is more of cultural activism rather than language activism. With over eighty years of sojourn in

Zimbabwe, the Chewa have been resilient in maintaining and promoting their cultural values and specific practices. Most notable of these include cultural practices like *Gule Wa Mkulu*, *Ben Arinoti*, *Chihodha* and *Chinamwari*, these activities have defined Chewa identity in Zimbabwe more than the ChiChewa language. The researcher established through the Director of ZILPA that there are no specific cases of language activism about ChiChewa, but the language was represented by some of its native speakers during consultations for the translation of the Constitution and the new Education Curriculum of 2017.

The prominence of cultural activism over language activism by the Chewa in Zimbabwe reflects their understanding of themselves as a migrant minority group. Thus, a claim for sovereignty and self-determination, which is typical of indigenous minority groups is not for them especially in a host country, which for many years promoted and institutionalized monolingualism (Ndhlovu 2010; Rudanpaa 2018).

Sentiments by the native speakers during the data collection process spoke to this perception especially the first and second-generation ChiChewa speakers. These two generations have a strong sentimental attachment to their country of origin. Despite having settled permanently in Zimbabwe, they still regard themselves as migrants. Third and fourth-generation Chewa speakers' attachment to the culture and language is limited because most of them grew up in a social milieu dominated by IsiNdebele and ChiShona. Hence, only 10 % of the focus group discussants in Chapter 4 confessed to having a limited knowledge of ChiChewa. This could further explain the lack of notable language activism amongst the ChiChewa in Zimbabwe as compared with other indigenous minority groups.

Parallels can be drawn with Schimdt's (2001)'s observation of Chinese migrants in the USA. He noted that the older generations are more committed to preserving their Chinese culture and language while the younger generations always make efforts to assimilate into the mainstream

dominant culture of the USA. Migrant groups are motivated by the economic incentives to survive in new environments, so they learn their host country's language and culture with energy and commitment (Hogan-Brun, 2017). Since 1900, Chewa migrants have learnt IsiNdebele and ChiShona so that they could economically position themselves well for the available job opportunities and not just limit themselves to menial jobs on farms and mines.

Hachipola (1998) and Nkoma-Darch (2003) acknowledge that during the colonial period ChiChewa was taught in schools at Wankie colliery (now Hwange) but was replaced with IsiNdebele even though most of the people spoke ChiChewa in the mining town. On the other hand, ZILPA lobbied the government of Zimbabwe to address some issues regarding minority languages as noted by Makoni et al (2008) in Ndhlovu (2010:181):

ZILPA appears to be a more radical and determined association, taking practical measures such as writing its own version of the 1987 policy on the teaching and learning of minority languages. Furthermore, ZILPA came up with a robust action plan aimed at improving the status and visibility of minority languages in all forms of media and at all levels of the Zimbabwean education system. Orthographic reforms in the spelling systems of the names of the six languages were instituted as a form of resistance to Shona and Ndebele hegemony. Another ambitious aim of ZILPA was that of lobbying the government of Zimbabwe to recognise and permit the use of TjiKalanga, ChiTonga, TshiVenda, ChiNambya, ChiChangana and SeSotho as official languages.

Furthermore, language associations are important because they present the voice of the native speakers of the language; they are the catalysts to force policymakers and governments to appreciate minority and indigenous languages. Tonga, Sotho, Kalanga are now being taught and examined in Zimbabwe schools because of the active and vocal associations which represented them at various stages (Makoni, et al 2008; Mumpande 2006; Nyika 2008).

Most of the native speakers who took part in the study perceive ChiChewa in Zimbabwe as a migrant language, despite its official profiling as one of the sixteen languages of the country. It is a political fact that Chewa migrants have gone through assimilation and naturalization to be categorized as Zimbabwean citizens. ChiChewa was never labelled a migrant language but as a minority language (Makoni, 2011). Prior to 2006, Chewa migrants and their offspring had the opportunity of having dual citizenship and they had the right to participate in the electoral processes of Zimbabwe. (Daimon 2015; Groves 2018).

However, the Citizenship Bill of 2006 forced them to renounce their dual citizenship leading to the classification of most of the Chewa people as *Aliens*. The Chewa community interpreted this development as betrayal as they had believed that they had become part of the post-independence Zimbabwean identity (Groves, 2020). This political development can be interpreted as having had far-reaching consequences on the identity and citizenship of the Chewa people in Zimbabwe. The Citizenship Bill of 2006 confirmed that the Chewa people were foreigners, while they had believed that they had been integrated into mainstream society. Conscious of their foreign origin and being made to feel so by the Citizenship Bill of 2006, the Chewa lost the sense of entitlement to contest for space in the language ecology of Zimbabwe, hence the absence of notable ChiChewa language activism.

However, Tonga, Kalanga, Sotho, Venda, and Khoisan are national minorities hence their vibrant language activism shown through the activities of VESOTOKA and ZILPA. The Chewa on their part are an ethnic minority in Zimbabwe therefore, they cannot make the same claims and demands like those of the national minorities. May (2012:21) notes that:

Ethnic minorities do not usually seek separate and self-governing status within the nation- state as is typically demanded by national minorities. Rather they argue for a more plural and inclusive conception of national identity and culture which recognizes their contribution to and influence on the historical development of the nation.

In line with May's (2012) observation above, the Chewa ethnic minority in Zimbabwe has sought an inclusive conception of identity and recognition of their contribution to the development of Zimbabwe. This they have done more through cultural activism rather than language activism like the national minorities. An interview with the Consular of Malawi, Mr Fredrick Malire, confirmed that the Chewa ethnic minority in Zimbabwe is more concerned with maintaining and promoting its culture. Malire went on to say that the fate of the Chewa language in Zimbabwe is determined by the language policy of Zimbabwe.

Edwards (1994) and Brut-Griffler (2010) argue that language does not define us and may not be an important factor in the construction of identities at the individual or collective levels. This detachability of language from ethnicity was reflected in the different views regarding towards ChiChewa by the focus group discussed in Chapter 4 above. The researcher observed that most of the focus group discussants lacked proficiency in ChiChewa and no longer had the ethnic and sentimental attachment to their language and culture. This explains why 60% of the focus group discussants saw no need to revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because their language choices and practices were informed by the assimilation ideology pursued in post-independent Zimbabwe (Makoni 2011; Ndhlovu 2018).

A language can only be successfully revived when the impetus and direction of the revitalization initiative is undertaken by the owners of that language (Fishman 2001; Pine and Turin 2017; Rudanpaa 2018). The revitalization of Catalan in Spain was successful because of language activism by its speakers despite the ban and persecution from the Franco regime (1935-1975). Speakers of Catalan worked underground to preserve their language and they successfully lobbied the Spanish government to grant Catalan an official status after the demise of Franco May (2012). According to Shohamy (2006), the revitalization of Hebrew was made possible through the activities of the speakers, which were complemented by support from the

government of Israel. In the same vein, Yaman (2017) highlights that Basque was revitalized because of language activism efforts by the Basque Language Revival Movement (BLRM). All these real-life examples of language revitalization clearly show the centrality and importance of the native speakers in language revival efforts.

## **5.7 Language status**

Makoni (2011) argues that ChiChewa (CiNyanja) is neither a foreign nor a minority language in Zimbabwe. Hachipola (1998) also presents ChiChewa as a minority language in Zimbabwe but not officially recognized like Kalanga, Sotho, Venda, Nambya and Shangani. Makoni (2011:444) further asserts that ChiChewa (CiNyanja) is not a Zimbabwean language when he says that:

Even though Nambya and to some extent, C(h)iNyanja are dominant languages in specific locales, they are not officially used in education or recognized as minority languages in Zimbabwe. Speakers of these languages are not considered citizens of Zimbabwe, despite the fact that they were born in Zimbabwe and know no other place as home.

Language experts concurred that sociolinguistically ChiChewa is a minority and a cross-border language in Zimbabwe. They argued that even though the language has been elevated to an officially recognized language in 2013, it remains a low status language in Zimbabwe.

The status bestowed upon a language goes a long way in determining its use. A higher status implies the language is used in mainstream communication and official domains whereas low status relegates a language to the informal domains. The Education Acts of 1987 and 2006 stated that minority languages could not be used as languages of instruction in schools. This limited the domains in which these languages could be used. Similarly, as noted by Mpofu and Mutasa (2014) the print and electronic media in Zimbabwe have largely remained a preserve of English and to a lesser extent ChiShona and IsiNdebele.



Grillo (1989) observes that languages with a low status subsequently become despised just like their speakers. There is a strong desire by the native speakers of the language especially the younger generations to give up the language because of the contempt surrounding it. Hence May (2012:20) says, “Subordinated languages are despised languages then inevitably so too are those who speak them, languages in the end reflect the status of their speakers.”

Chewa immigrants mostly came to work in the mines and farms doing menial work, but they had to acquire the high-status languages so that they could increase their prospects. The dominant ChiShona and IsiNdebele groups also despised their language such that even the ChiChewa native speakers ended up developing negative attitudes towards their language. Grillo (1989) argues that non-speakers despise any language, which is not a language of state or power, and this attitude is transferred to the native speakers who overtime will shift to the more prestigious languages. Negative attitudes breed negative ideologies amongst the native speakers of the language, which lead to language attrition and language shift to the dominant languages. This has been the case for minority languages in Zimbabwe, the socio-political and cultural organization as a nation-state created conditions for minority languages and culture loss.

Mashiri (2005) discusses the contempt with which Chewa migrants were treated in Zimbabwe. This contempt was often expressed through dialect humour by the other ethnic groups. What is significant is that this presents challenges towards revitalization because the low status results in the native speakers shifting to use the prestigious languages. A negative attitude towards a language in language revitalization diminishes any hope for success. Hence, language status is an obstacle in the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because of its low status.

The Zimbabwean Constitution was amended in 2013 to grant all sixteen languages an officially recognized status. While this elevation of status was a welcome move it did not do much to assist the ChiChewa enter mainstream usage. Languages by nature need to be used in everyday communication and in the highest possible number of domains, this way they can assume value and utility. Official recognition does not automatically make the former minority languages expand into those domains dominated by the more powerful languages.

In a linguistic landscape like that of Zimbabwe, languages do not need to be officially recognized but to have an official status. Official recognition alone is likely to curtail prospective efforts of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because the government has never adequately addressed language matters. This new status reflects the escape clause, which assists the government and policymakers to avoid commitment and responsibility when confronted with language matters like revitalization. Hence, Pennycook (2000:04) contends that,

Language policymakers in Africa formulate policies loaded with escape clauses intended to maintain the status quo rather than to promote the use of indigenous languages in such higher domains as education

ChiChewa as a cross-border language found in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe commands approximately 13 million speakers in the four Southern African nations (Other sources?) (Ndhlovu, 2013). As a cross-border language, it has four different statuses in these countries as indicated in **Table 3** below.

**Table 3: ChiChewa Status by Country**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>LANGUAGE STATUS</b>
Malawi	Official language
Zambia	Regional language
Mozambique	Indigenous language
Zimbabwe	Officially recognised language

The scenario shown in the table above presents complications regarding the revitalization of ChiChewa as a cross-border language with its four different statuses in the four countries. The different statuses reflect the perceived value placed on the language and its speakers in each country. The different statuses reflect the language ideologies in the respective countries. In Malawi, ChiChewa assumed the official status because of the influence of Kamuzu Banda (1898-1997) and his one-party state ideology which ensured that the other languages would be side lined (Banda, 2002).

In Zimbabwe, as noted earlier on, ChiChewa was not initially treated as a foreign or minority language (Hachipola 1998); Nyika 2011) but from 2013 the language received officially recognized status. In as much as the language now has a higher status in Zimbabwe, nothing much has really changed according to language experts in Chapter 4. ChiChewa still has a low status in Zimbabwe. The language experts pointed out that officially recognizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe did not change its status because this did not alter or remove the hierarchization of languages in the language ecology of Zimbabwe.

English remains at the top as the de facto official language while ChiShona and IsiNdebele are the national languages, all the other languages occupy the bottom rung playing the role of home and cultural languages. The position and influence of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele have remained unchallenged even after 2013. Hence, 90% of the focus group discussants maintained that the only important languages are English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. They did not see any need for the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.

It is true that language ideologies held by a speech community are not static but dynamic and are influenced by socio-economic and historical developments (Shohamy 2006; May 2012). Ideologies held towards certain languages do not change through declarations but only when people realize the benefits of using the language. If a language gets more functional space and instrumental value, it becomes commodified, and people tend to make concerted efforts to learn that language. Williams (2008) observes that Irish could not be successfully revived in Ireland because of the socio-economic factors that were overlooked which enticed native Irish to speakers prioritize learning English rather.

Despite communal and government efforts, the task of revitalizing Irish has proved greater than the resources and commitment hitherto shown. The underlying fault is an over optimistic assessment of the capacity of state intervention to restore Irish as a national language without concomitant investment in socio-economic planning to bring about the necessary conditions to regulate the market forces which encouraged widespread Anglicization [in the first place]. (Ibid 2008:220)

Furthermore, while there have been notable collaborative efforts on language harmonisation between Southern African countries through the activities of Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) at the level of language planning and policy this has not been the case. Despite Southern Africa having many cross-border languages as shown by Elugbe (1998) in **Table 4** below, language planning in most of the countries has been informed by the

monolingual ideology that has overlooked the presence of cross-border languages (Ndhlovu, 2013).

**Table 4: Cross-border Languages of Southern Africa**

Cross-border languages	Countries where spoken
Afrikaans	South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland
Chewa/Nyanja	Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi
Herero	Namibia, Botswana, Angola (negligible in the latter)
Kwanyama	Angola, Namibia
Lozi	Zambia, Namibia
Nama Khoekhoegowab	Namibia, Botswana, South Africa
Nguni cluster	South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, Zimbabwe
Sotho-Tswana cluster	South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe
Tonga-Tsonga	Mozambique, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Venda	South Africa, Zimbabwe

Source: Adapted from Elugbe (1998).

Ideological planning would ensure that African governments capture accurate linguistic realities of their speech communities and enhance these realities through multilingual language policies. Through language, planning devoid of influence of western ideologies such as the ‘nation-state’ ideology May (2003; 2006), the place and significance of cross-border languages would be present in the language policy documents of Southern African countries. Overlooking the role of cross-border languages in Zimbabwe’s language policy reveals the extent of the impact of hegemonic and ecumenical languages on the language ecology of Zimbabwe. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) categorize languages into three groups, preponderant, hegemonic, and ecumenical. In the African context, English and other foreign languages fit into the ecumenical category since they are not communalist or ethnical in Africa.

Hegemonic languages belong to the ruling elite, and they are languages of power, while preponderant languages are widely spoken but at the same time are not languages of power. Ecumenical and hegemonic languages are expansionist in nature, and as they do so, they stifle

the preponderant languages and condemn them to lowly functions. This explains why ex-colonial languages like English, French and Portuguese remain the official languages in post-colonial Africa while most indigenous and minority languages must make do with a low status.

Cross-border language issues call for collaboration across all speaking countries, but this has been difficult considering the nature of language planning which is pursued by most African countries. The ideology of monolingualism and the nationalization of a few dominant indigenous languages at the expense of the minority languages and the reality of cross-border languages have informed language policy and planning. Batibo (2005) laments the actions of African governments about language policy and planning because the actions are not informed by the actual realities but by political decrees based on logistical convenience, when he says “...most African governments declare their policies through political decrees based on logistical convenience rather than the objective realities of the respective countries”, Batibo (2005).

The history and status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe reflects this observation by Batibo (2005). Developments leading to ChiChewa being accorded an officially recognized status can be better understood from a political rather than a linguistic one perspective. The political crisis, which ended with the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009, led to the writing of a new constitution for Zimbabwe and this culminated in the 2013 Amended Constitution. A new language policy enshrined in the Constitution saw Zimbabwe now having sixteen officially recognized languages. While there were concerted efforts for recognition by other minority language groups through language activism, the same cannot be said for ChiChewa because it was considered as an immigrant minority language (Nyika 2011; Ndhlovu 2010).

What is striking about the Amended Constitution of 2013 was that the two feuding political parties, ZANU-PF, and MDC-T, shaped the direction and impetus of the new constitution. It was meant to give some advantage to each party. Thus, certain concessions and issues had to be addressed to gain political advantage and language was one such issue because the allegiance of minority groups was important for political parties at election times. Hence, even languages, which had been previously, denied minority status like ChiChewa found themselves officially recognized. Shohamy (2006:62) notes that:

As is often the case, the mere act of declaring certain languages as official does not carry with it much meaning in terms of actual practice in all domains and it does not guarantee that officiality is anchored in law. Such is the case when certain languages are declared official as part of historical events but the official status does not carry with it any aspects of practice in both the oral and written domains.

Shohamy (2009) further argues that officiality is used as a tool by nation-states to manipulate political situations that have contestations between the dominant cultures and the minorities. Giving a higher status to a previously marginalized language goes a long way in containing and pacifying the ambitions of the respective minority groups, because those in power are intent on maintaining a hegemonic and homogenizing grip on minority cultures. At face value, an officially recognized language status for ChiChewa in Zimbabwe appears progressive but practically nothing has changed. The legitimation and institutionalization of English, IsiNdebele and ChiShona as the official and national languages of Zimbabwe continues unabated. The diglossic relationship with the former minority languages still exists, even though only the Education domain has opened to accommodate more languages. English remains the language of official business, communication, print and electronic media and commerce, Mpofu and Mutasa (2014) while ChiChewa and the other former minority languages remain largely confined to informal domains.

From this perspective, therefore, declaring ChiChewa an officially recognized language in Zimbabwe, may be argued to have been more of a political act than a genuine attempt at

language equity in the country. The status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe remains as before, as reflected by Interviewee 5's sentiments:

It is common knowledge that of the fourteen (14) cross-border languages in Zimbabwe only ChiShona and IsiNdebele have a higher status, the rest of the cross-border languages have a low status. We might say things changed with the new Constitution in 2013 but, those languages still have a low status. Since then, what much has been done to raise their status except the pronouncements in the Constitution. (Interviewee 5)

The low status of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe presents obstacles in revitalization because of the native speaker's own contempt for the language. Thus, this study postulates that the status of Chichewa in Zimbabwe does not augur well for its successful revitalization.

## **5.9 Language policy and planning**

Language planning is a sociolinguistic initiative designed to solve perceived language problems in a speech community, through the allocation of specific functions and roles to the different languages. However, as noted through the interviews, observations and document analysis done by the current study, ChiChewa was disenfranchised by language planning and policy in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. This is so because language planning and policy are shaped by ideologies of domination, power, and self-determination, what may appear as a neutral language exercise always turns out to be a political act meant to control the minorities and the dissident groups or to retain power (Cummins, 2000). Shohamy (2006: xv) further observes that:

Language planning serves as a device to perpetuate and impose language behaviours in accordance with the national, political, social, and economic agendas. It represents the wishes of groups in authority to promote the agendas of protecting collective identities, promoting globalization stating who is in charge, creating imagined communities and maintaining political and social orders.

The history of language planning in Zimbabwe indicates that ChiChewa was not considered a minority language or a foreign language (Makoni, 2011). This overlooking of ChiChewa is understood through assimilation ideology pursued by post-independent Zimbabwe through the



nation-building agenda (Ndhlovu, 2018). Makoni (2011) asserts that the fate of minority languages in Zimbabwe was sealed as early as 1987 when they were excluded from the official domains explicitly through the 1987 Education Act. When he says that (ibid: 442)

The space for minority languages was narrowed by the President of Zimbabwe (Robert Gabriel Mugabe), who referred to a 1987 agreement of the super tribes, as ‘a charter which would bind once and for all, the two major tribes of Zimbabwe, namely the Shona and Ndebele, into one... The Unity Accord thus forms the bedrock upon which peace democracy, social justice and prosperity should be built’. Minority language groups were clearly excluded from a political and linguistic standpoint, which is evident in both Education Acts.

It is from such pronouncements that ChiChewa was ranked low on the hierarchy of power regarding the languages found in Zimbabwe. English would rank first followed by the two national languages ChiShona and IsiNdebele, then the officially recognized indigenous languages Kalanga, Venda, Tonga, Shangani and Nambya. Furthermore, language planning in Zimbabwe would oscillate around the three main languages English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. State institutions in the form of education and media (both print and electronic) have institutionalized and entrenched that position.

While there had been no specific policy document on language policy in Zimbabwe. Makoni (2018) argues that the *National Cultural Policy of Zimbabwe*, the *1987 Education Act*, the *Position Paper on Zimbabwe’s Language Policy*, the *National Language Policy Advisory Panel (NLPAP)* and the *Nziramasanga Commission on Education and Training in Zimbabwe* are reflective of the actual language policy of post-independent Zimbabwe. For instance, the Nziramasanga Report of 1999 acknowledges that Zimbabwe is a multilingual country but itself contradicts this when it presents ChiShona and IsiNdebele as the only important languages in the country:

The two indigenous languages, ChiShona and IsiNdebele play a key role in facilitating participation by all in the process of development. Throughout the colonial era, African languages were denigrated. ChiShona and IsiNdebele should be taught throughout the country to guarantee mutual respect of each other’s language and culture in a multi-

lingual environment and for peace and tolerance. Literacy in both ChiShona and IsiNdebele would help create a new generation of Zimbabweans who are proud of their languages, values, the diversity of their cultures and heritages (*Government of Zimbabwe 1999:156*)

These documents show how language is used to negotiate and build a nation-state through the subtle and deliberate undermining of other linguistic groups. Hence, Lo Bianco (2001:33) argues that language policies are used as apparatus to legitimise the preferred ideologies of the nation-state when he says that:

Language policies constitute the intellectual means by which the voices of the marginalized groups are suppressed during the process of constructing a unitary monolithic citizenship.

To add, since 1982 Zimbabwe as a country has never had a systematic count of the population in terms of linguistic and ethnic complexion. Makoni (2018) also notes that the 1992 and 2002 National Census questionnaires excluded questions of language and ethnicity. This further shows language policy is used to meet intended political goals through the obliteration of multilingualism and ethnicity.

What is important for the current study is to show how language planning and policy (LPP) have had nefarious effects on ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Once a people's culture, ethnicity and language are undermined and overlooked, contempt is bred among the dominant and minority groups. Contempt of minority groups carries with it ideologies of inadequacy and instigates devitalization of the language because the perceptions created entail exclusion from the linguistic repertoire of the community.

Krokitsy (2000) highlights that language ideologies shape language choice and preference in a speech community, the powerful languages are portrayed positively and as progressive while low status languages are associated with immobility and backwardness. Language ideologies at national level cascade downwards to influence language choices and practices at the micro-family level of language planning. This is evident in speech communities in most African

countries where the dominant languages are legitimated and institutionalized May (2012) through education (Bamgbose in Nelson et al., 2020).

At community level, speakers of minority languages inevitably shift to use the dominant languages, which are protected by the language policies. The focus group discussants who participated in this study gave pragmatic reasons for opting to learn and use English, IsiNdebele and ChiShona at the expense of their native ChiChewa, focus group participant 6's response to the choice and importance of using English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele sums it up below:

*English neShona ndipo pane yese kana uchida kuzowana basa rakanaka. Chero pa O level zvinotonzi 5 O levels including English language. Pane paunombonzwa here zvichinzi any other language besides iwaya. Kana kuri KuBulawayo Ndebele ndiwo mutauro wacho. How would you expect to work there usingakhulumi? (FGD participant 6)*

(English and Shona are the important languages, especially if you want to get a good job. That is the reason why they emphasise 5 O levels including English. Have you ever heard them stressing on any other languages than these, even in Bulawayo the language to speak is IsiNdebele. How would you expect to work in Bulawayo when you cannot speak IsiNdebele)?

Furthermore, the complexities of language policy should not only be understood at the level of the nation but the family level as well. The choice of language to be used in the home reflects a language policy instituted by the parents; Chapter 4 indicated that Chewa parents who took part in the study were comfortable with encouraging the use of ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English as the home languages. The language used in the home of most immigrant groups is influenced by the socio-economic conditions set by the dominant host group (Hogan-Brun, 2018).

Emphasis on the conscious and subconscious use of ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English is a response towards creating a better future in the host country. Because of the machinations of those in power, language policy and planning altered the language ecology of Zimbabwe by ignoring the prevalence and importance of multilingualism in the linguistic repertoire of the Zimbabwean speech community. The downplaying of multilingualism in post-independent

Zimbabwe is a continuation of the colonial stance adopted in 1931 after Doke's recommendation that Rhodesia had only ChiShona and IsiNdebele as the only important languages, the rest of the minority languages had no importance (Doke, 1931). Overlooking multilingualism propagates the illusion that monolingualism is the ideal. Unfortunately, this illusion has been inculcated into minority speech communities such that efforts to revive or revitalize their own languages are stifled. The researcher discovered that 60% of the fourth-generation Chewa speakers who participated in this study did not approve of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Similarly, Kalanga faces challenges of revival because its young speakers have shifted to the dominant Ndebele language and culture (Mtonga, 2009).

Although ChiChewa was accorded officially recognized status in the language policy of Zimbabwe, which is enshrined in the amended Constitution of 2013, this study argues that the situation for minority languages is still the same as before. The language policy is more of an appeasement to minority communities in response to their activism through ZILPA and the political crisis in Zimbabwe from 2000-2013. The policy does not lay out clearly the functional status and respective roles of the sixteen languages; rather it bunches all of them under the category of 'officially recognized languages. Even though all the other languages had a minority status and ChiChewa was not recognized previously as a minority language in Zimbabwe. Hence Romaine (2002) states that many language policy documents are reactive ad hoc declarations which lack the planning element. The researcher further argues that the culture of 'logistical convenience over ideological planning' Batibo in Coleman (2005) was true in the case of Zimbabwe.

The language policy contains escape clauses with vague terminology like 'officially recognized', which gives the impression that all languages are on an equal footing regarding their functions and uses. MacLeod (1997) defines an official language as one, which is used in

the business of government (legislative, executive, administrative and judicial) and in the performance of other functions of the state. Fasold (1984:74) further clarifies the roles and purpose of an official language when he says that:

A true official language fulfils some or all the following functions listed under the following 1 to VII

- I. As the language of communication by government officials in carrying out their duties.
- II. For written communication between internal to government agencies at national level.
- III. For the keeping of government records
- IV. For the original formulation of laws and regulations that concern the nation.
- V. For such forms as tax forms
- VI. In the schools
- VII. In the law courts.

In Zimbabwe, the English language plays this role, and its position as the de facto official language has not changed even after 2013 when the new language policy was introduced. ChiShona and IsiNdebele also continue with their roles of the 1987 Education Act as the national languages of Zimbabwe. The rest of the other languages have what Banda (2002) calls semi-official status since they mainly feature on national radio and partly on television for newscasts. While interviewee 3 in Chapter 4 was confident that the amended Constitution of 2013 would turn around the fortunes of the former minority languages in Zimbabwe, this might not be the case.

The hierarchy and hegemony, which has always existed in the linguistic terrain of Zimbabwe, still exists with English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele dominating all the other languages in that respective order (Magwa 2008, Charamba 2012, Ndhlovu 2018). One can confidently say that according the sixteen languages of Zimbabwe the same status further entrenches the influence and dominance of the three dominant languages and cultures (English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele). Especially if there have not been any notable attempts to expand the functionality

and use of the former minority languages into the domains dominated by English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele.

In such a case minority, language speakers will never find motivation to revive the use of their own languages if the languages remain condemned to the home and cultural domains even if they have an officially recognized status. Romaine (2002) argues that language policy presents challenges to language revitalization because normally changing the status of a language does not mean intergenerational transmission of the language will resume. Sixty percent of the native Chewa speakers indicated that they no longer transmit the language to their children although ChiChewa is no longer a minority language.

Regarding the influence of dominant and hegemonic languages on African language policies, Bambgose in Nelson et al., (2020) is of the view that English has taken centre stage in determining the course and purpose of language policy in Africa. He argues that instead of language policy and planning serving the interests of African languages, it has promoted and entrenched English to the detriment of minority African languages.

The resuscitation of African languages in the African language ecology is uncertain because ex-colonial languages have buttressed their position through functionality accorded to them by post-independent language policy and planning in Africa (Brock-Utne 2000; Bambgose 1991; Batibo 2005). Zimbabwe's curriculum framework attests to this on the section, which contains the roles of English and other foreign languages:

The learning of English and its use as a language plays a vital role in the development of illiteracy in that it enhances learning in other areas of the curriculum. A foreign language creates opportunities for the learner to interact with an otherwise closed world. Both English and any foreign language play complimentary roles. They help learners to develop communication skills and critical understanding that are necessary for meaningful and active participation in society and the world at large. (Government of Zimbabwe 2017:34)

By stressing the role of English and other foreign languages, the language in Education policy of Zimbabwe strengthens the place of English at the top of the hierarchy of languages in the country. Again, the current language in education policy is like its predecessors Education Act of 1987 and Education Act of 2006 in sidelining the significance of indigenous languages. For obvious reasons both policies do not capture the linguistic realities of multilingualism and cross-border languages, but rather they prepare for interaction with the outside world. Philipson and Skutnaab-Kangas (1995:04) observe that:

The evidence from studies of minority education and post-colonial education is that resources of powerless groups, especially their immaterial resources, among them their languages and cultures, are socially constructed through stigmatization so that they become invisible or are seen as handicaps. In this way minority resources are invalidated, become non-resources, and hence cannot be converted to other resources or to positions of structural power. At the same time the resources of the dominant groups, among them their languages and cultures, are through glorification validated, socially constructed so that they are seen as resources (actual and potential) and can thus be converted into other resources or to positions of structural power.

One realizes that ideologies associated with powerful languages influence language policies in the African context. The influence is so immense that African resources such as multilingualism, multiculturalism and cross-border languages are obliterated from the picture in preference of ex-colonial languages. When there is no commitment to officialise multilingualism or sustain it there is gradual devitalization of many African languages. Attempts to revitalize African languages are complex because the languages must compete for space and functionality in domains dominated by ex-colonial languages. Contrasting ideologies held by speakers of the languages and those in power makes the task of language revitalization difficult. Hence May (2012) highlights that to talk about language is to talk about power.

## **5.9 Language shift**

Stroud and Hylden (1996: 569-570) assert that:

A minority group that possesses a publicly stigmatized identity, that has few legislative means at its disposal with which to secure its interests, that lives in a society

characterized by an assimilatory ideology and that is disadvantaged in relation to the majority with respect to economic and educational resources could be expected to be less likely to maintain its language overtime.

The findings from chapter 4 revealed that there is little intergenerational transmission of ChiChewa to the younger generations taking place, 60% of Chewa adults interviewed indicated that they no longer teach or use the language with the young ones. Historically there has always existed an unstable bilingualism between ChiChewa, ChiShona and IsiNdebele due to the different statuses and language functionality in Zimbabwean. In the eyes of the minority immigrant group the host culture and its language are treated with high esteem especially if the immigrant group are least educated (Schimdt, 2001). The researcher noted that 90% of the focus group participants who took part in the study were monolingual in ChiShona. No passive speakers or semi-speakers of ChiChewa could be identified from this age group thus leading the researcher to conclude that the fourth generation of Chewa speakers in Zimbabwe had shifted to ChiShona. It is important to note that most fourth-generation Chewa speaking people are products of the post-independent nation-building project Ndhlovu (2018), their socialization was instituted and legitimized through an education system which is bi-cultural (Shona and Ndebele).

Technically this generation has become naturalized even though the issue of citizenship for Chewa people was contentious in Zimbabwe (Nyika 2011; Groves 2020). Subsequently, ChiShona and IsiNdebele encroached into the home domain, hence they had no option but to teach their children the dominant languages thus the language shift. Grenoble in Bayley et al., (2013) observes that:

Education policies of some countries, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in the United States and the Unified State Exam (*edinyj gosudarstvennyj ekzamen*) in the Russian Federation, which require nationwide testing in English or Russian, respectively are examples of legislation that is a serious impediment to the development of local languages.



To add on, when immigrant groups move into new territories to seek employment opportunities, linguistic and cultural contact with the local groups is inevitable and there is gradual assimilation into the host groups. In their studies of cultural integration in host communities, Bourhis, Moise, Perreault and Seneal, (1997: Koene 1999) identify four clusters of state ideologies which shape language policies and integration namely: pluralist, civic, assimilation and ethnist. (1) Pluralist ideology: Here the state provides support for language classes and cultural activities to promote mother tongue maintenance alongside proficiency. The maintenance of ethnic group norms and values is accepted. (2) Civic ideology: Here, immigrants will adopt the public values of the mainstream society. The state does not interfere with the private values of its citizens, nor does it provide any support for the maintenance or promotion of the linguistic or cultural values of the minorities. (3) Assimilation ideology: In this case, in the name of homogenization, total linguistic and cultural assimilation into the mainstream society is expected. (4) Ethnist ideology: This is whereby- most aspects of assimilation ideology are shared, yet there are ideological and institutional barriers for immigrant minorities to be accepted legally or socially as full members of society.

The Zimbabwean setup fits in well with the assimilation ideology in which total homogenization is expected at the linguistic and cultural levels. The assimilation of the Chewa immigrant group was done in a covert way under the guise nation-building using state apparatus like Education. The Cultural and Education policies turned a blind eye to the ethno linguistic setup typical of most African states, rather the policies emphasised monolingualism and biculturalism (Shona and Ndebele) (Ndhlovu 2009; 2018). Consequentially, there has been language shifts observable in the fourth-generation Chewa speakers.

It is important to note that the sojourn of Chewa immigrants was punctuated with a lot of resentment and stigmatization from the dominant Shona and Ndebele groups. As noted by

Mashiri (2005) and Mudeka (2015), resentment towards Chewa culture and language was rife during both the colonial and post-colonial period. Ranger (2011) observes that hostility towards Chewa immigrants rose mainly out of cultural differences and suspicion because early Chewa immigrants took up jobs deemed unfit by locals.

This in turn led to the stigmatization of the Chewa community. Interviewees 7 and 10 disclosed to the researcher common derogatory terms which are still used to refer to people of Malawian and Zambian origin such as *Mabhurandaya*, *Mabwidi*, *Manyasarandi*, *Mateeranjanji* and *Mabvakure*. Daimon (2010) and Groves (2020) highlight an incident in which the former President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe made an ethnic slur during a political rally by referring to Chewa immigrants as people with no totems, which of course was not true. To curtail this open stigmatization, from the host country, most of the immigrants made conscious efforts to integrate and assimilate into the Shona and Ndebele cultures. Inevitably, cultural and language shifts took place.

According to Yoshikuni (2006) the farming, mining and urban setups in colonial Rhodesia were dominated by migrant workers from Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. In as much as these migrants tried to preserve their own culture, they gradually assimilated into the mainstream Shona and Ndebele dominant groups. Mashiri (2005) notes that a significant number of Malawian and Zambian men married local women while others opted to marry from the home countries. Mudeka (2015) concurs that the migrant workers married local women, and some even dumped their families back home to settle with new wives in the then Southern Rhodesia.

The intermarriages resulted in cultural assimilation and hybridity, which led to a generation of ChiChewa speakers who are more Shona and Ndebele. The 4<sup>th</sup> generation ChiChewa speakers are highly monolingual in ChiShona and IsiNdebele with little or no knowledge of ChiChewa

as reflected in the previous chapter 4. This cultural assimilation goes a long way in impeding efforts to revitalize the ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe because this 4<sup>th</sup> generation does not see any need to revitalize the language because it grew up speaking ChiShona or IsiNdebele and English.

While the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations of Chewa speakers believe it is important to revitalize the language as it is a marker of their identity in a foreign land, it is important to note that assimilation in migrant groups occurs mostly because socio-economic choices which outweigh other variables. Migrants move into other countries in search of a better life and brighter prospects, so group solidarity and identity are often sacrificed for economic gains. Buzasi (2015:48) further cements this viewpoint when he observed that,

If the benefits from acquiring a new identity are higher than the costs of abandoning the existing one, people are likely to give this latter up and chose the more advantageous one.

While some second and third-generation Chewas have maintained contact with their home countries, the younger generations have settled permanently in Zimbabwe. The researcher established that in the farming and mining town of Arcturus, former employees settled permanently in the adjacent communal lands of Goromonzi. They broke with the historical culture of going back to Malawi, Mozambique, or Zambia upon retirement or retrenchment. The former farm and mineworkers indicated to the researcher that it was no longer possible for them to go back to their home countries.

This is a clear indication that some decided to cut ties with the country of origin. Assimilation is an inevitable socio-cultural process but in the context of revitalization, it impedes the revitalizing of ChiChewa because a homogenous Chewa community no longer exists. Furthermore, when a group becomes heterogeneous, group vitality is compromised making the efforts to revive the language difficult.

The identity of the Chewa speaking people is fluid; their ideology towards ChiChewa has become varied according to the different generations of speakers. For the younger generations, ChiChewa is more of a cultural good, and has not much value to them because they have grown up in a socio-economic environment dominated by ChiShona, English and IsiNdebele. Focus group discussant 3 confirms this view when she argued that:

I think ChiChewa should only be recognized as a cultural and heritage language in Zimbabwe. It cannot have the same status as the other local indigenous languages, there is even no basis for the language to be taught in Zimbabwean schools because no young children are speaking or using the language nowadays. (FGD participant 3)

Meanwhile, ChiChewa is a marker of identity for the older generations; they hold it in high esteem as they consider themselves migrants in a foreign land. The older generations believe that the younger generations need to use the more powerful languages if they are to have a brighter future.

The other important factor in relation to language shift is that of language attitudes. These are views and feelings, which people have towards a language. When people have a positive attitude towards a language they want to associate with it, and it becomes a marker of identity, and they want to use it to access goods and services. As mentioned earlier on, the Chewa community in Zimbabwe is no longer as homogenous and closely knit as before because of the socio-cultural changes that have taken place. Findings in chapter 4 have shown that there are marked differences of attitudes towards ChiChewa by its speakers across the different generations.

The first generation of Chewa migrants was generally closely knit in the mining, farming, and urban areas. ChiChewa unified them, marked group solidarity in the face of host groups, Yoshikuni (2006), Ranger (2008) but economic factors subsequently led to the gradual assimilation into the host groups, and the attitude towards ChiChewa changed. The realization that acquiring the dominant languages meant access to better opportunities created disdain for

the language among the younger generations who enjoyed the benefits that came with speaking English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele.

Colonial and post-independent language policy largely disfavoured minority languages and this contributed to the younger generations of ChiChewa speakers developing a negative attitude towards the language. Even though the Chewa people constitute a significant population size in Zimbabwe approximately 446 000 (*joshuaproject.net*), their language and culture are treated with a degree of contempt. This socio-historical fact went a long way in instilling a negative attitude towards the language by the younger generations who welcomed assimilation.

Positive attitudes towards a language are important when there is a need to revitalize that language. The speakers of the language will appreciate and support the initiative if they have a positive attitude towards the language to be revived. Successful cases of language revitalization such as Hebrew, Maori, Basque and Catalan were characterized by positive attitudes towards the respective languages from the speakers. However, for ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, some sections of the speakers had a strong attachment and positive attitude towards the language while the others had a negative attitude. Such a situation presents a challenge associated with revitalizing ChiChewa as a cross-border language in Zimbabwe, as the owners of the language are divided along generational and ideological lines.

### **5.10 Hegemony of English ChiShona and IsiNdebele**

This current study further contends that another obstacle, which stifles the revitalization of ChiChewa as a cross-border language in Zimbabwe, is the hegemony of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Using Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)'s conception of hegemony that members

of the bourgeoisie (ruling class or elites) use force and consent to implement their rule on their subjects the researcher argues that this has been also the case, whereby dominant groups imposed their language by either force or mutual consent on minority language groups. Thus Charamba (2012:72)'s assertion that "the hegemonic power uses its language to enforce its hegemonic position through the use of both coercive and consensual strategies". This study understands the linguistic hegemony prevalent in Zimbabwe to be at two levels because there is a hierarchy between English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele.

Batibo (2005) argues that the endangerment of indigenous African languages is caused more by fellow African languages that have been nationalized, legitimated and institutionalized, as national languages, May (2012). Together with ex-colonial languages such as English, French, and Portuguese, they have a hegemonic grip on the minority languages in most African countries. Ndhlovu (2013:176) observes that:

Indigenous languages such as Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe, Zulu and Xhosa in South Africa, Setswana in Botswana, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo in Nigeria and Chewa in Malawi have consistently received government support and propagation in the form of policies promoting their use as languages of widest communication in mainstream social domains, thereby constricting the functional space of smaller languages.

The dominance of ChiShona and IsiNdebele span the colonial into post-independent Zimbabwe to such an extent that this hegemony appears to be subconsciously normalised by speakers of other minority languages. Sociolinguistically, the two are the de facto national languages in Zimbabwe; they dominate the linguistic and cultural landscape of Zimbabwe at the expense of the other 13 languages. IsiNdebele and ChiShona are spoken by most of the population in Zimbabwe, but their influence is because of socio-political factors which have worked in their favour hence Fishman (2001) says, linguistically all languages are equal but sociolinguistically they are not.

Ndlovu (2009; 2018) contends that the issue of language in Zimbabwe has always been political with the dominant Shona and Ndebele groups using political power to emasculate the other minority groups through language. He further argues that from 1980 the Zimbabwe government created a bi-cultural outlook in which Zimbabwean identity would oscillate around Shona and Ndebele identity only. Makoni (2011:442) confirms this position taken by the elite and ruling class in Zimbabwe to entrench the dominance of the Ndebele and Shona cultures when he says that:

The space for minority languages [and cultures] was narrowed by the President of Zimbabwe, who referred to a 1987 agreement of the super tribes as ‘a charter which would bind once and for all, the two major tribes of Zimbabwe, namely Shona and Ndebele, into one...The Unity Accord thus forms the bedrock upon which peace, democracy, social justice, and prosperity should be built (Mugabe). Minority language groups were clearly from a political and linguistic standpoint.

With such a position taken by the ruling elite this meant that, minority groups had to assimilate into either Shona or Ndebele mainstream groups. In hegemonic discourse, this was a form of coercion employed by the ruling class to enforce and entrench the dominant cultures on minority groups. McLellan (2003:187) says, “The worldview of the dominant class of elites is so thoroughly diffused by its intellectuals as to become the common sense of the whole society, such that the ruled will accept the dominant class’s endeavours as common sense”.

Successive language policies and language in Education Acts (1987, 2006) ensured and subsequently bestowed power to the two languages and this further entrenched their hegemony over all the other languages in Zimbabwe. The utilitarian value bestowed upon ChiShona and IsiNdebele through the institution of Education further reduced the value and significance of all the other languages and cultures.

May (2012) acknowledges that in the nation-state, Education is used as a tool for social control and maintenance of the required linguistic and cultural shape. By exposing minority groups to education strictly in the two languages, the ruling elite in Zimbabwe managed to naturalize the

dominance of ChiShona and IsiNdebele. This is the reason why fourth-generation Chewa speakers who participated in this current study were complicit in the linguistic hegemony by supporting the use of only the two languages in education. Phillipson and Kangas (1992) point out that language ideologies and hegemony influence each other to the extent that linguistic imperialism is accepted by the dominated on moral grounds.

The hegemony of ChiShona and IsiNdebele saw the further relegation of ChiChewa in the language ecology through amendments made in the 2006 Education Act. The Act broadened its category to include 'new' indigenous languages, Shangani, Tonga, Venda and Nambya. However, ChiChewa was excluded from this category as it was deemed an immigrant language, (Makoni, 2011). Furthermore, National FM radio station was established in 2001 to broadcast in all the indigenous languages of Zimbabwe. The presence of ChiShona and IsiNdebele on this radio station endangers the vitality of the former minority languages whose use has been restricted to the home and cultural domains. From these examples the researcher argues that the hegemony of Shona and Ndebele has been immense, well calculated, and effective in creating an imaginary state which conforms to nation-state ideals.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) asserts that the imposition of hegemony follows three strategies, stigmatization, glorification, and rationalization. In the case of Zimbabwe, the glorification of Shona and Ndebele is done through state institutions like media (print and electronic) and education. These institutions have heralded Zimbabwe as a bi-cultural country and in the process obliterated the true multicultural picture. When a language is denied use in formal settings this creates ideologies of inadequacy, at the same time use in formal domains further glorifies and adds instrumental value to a language hence the position of ChiShona and IsiNdebele.



As the two languages are glorified, at the other end there is stigmatization of minority languages. Minority languages are portrayed as deficient and lacking instrumental value as noted by Kabel (2021:13) when he says that “Local languages [indigenous languages] are folded into the schemata of belonging, tradition, identity, and culture while the powerful languages are construed as repositories of modernity”. This is the reason why the use of indigenous languages in education remains low because of the scepticism created by language in education policies, which overlook them as media of instruction. The resentment of ChiChewa language and culture as highlighted in the previous section provide fertile ground for the rationalization of the hegemony of Shona and Ndebele. At the ideological level, it becomes imperative to maintain the monolingual ideal because the minority languages are deemed imperfect.

The effects of language hegemony usually have far-reaching consequences on the minority language groups as their language attitudes and ideologies are altered. Hence, Henrich (2005:61) says,

Negative language attitudes towards minority language varieties are well documented and are not only held by the majority language speakers but also assimilated by speakers of the minority languages themselves.

The hegemony of ChiShona and IsiNdebele as has been illustrated go a long way as an impediment of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Even though there have been significant changes in the status of all Zimbabwean languages since 2013, the influence and legacy of the two dominant languages continues to hold a grip on the Chewa speaking community in Zimbabwe. This hegemonic influence has propagated different language ideologies across the four generations of ChiChewa speakers, compounding further problems, which can stymie efforts to revitalize the cross-border language in Zimbabwe.

## 5.11 Globalization

Yeats (2001) defines globalization as an extensive network of economic, cultural, social, and political interconnections and processes, which go beyond national boundaries. The process of globalization has resulted in a global village in which the world takes a cosmopolitan outlook. While it is appealing from an interconnectedness perspective, language-wise it presents challenges to indigenous and minority communities together with their languages. Languages of wider communication (LWC) such as English, French, Portuguese and recently Chinese Mandarin have come to dominate the world language ecology. Globalization as an ideology has ensured the spread and relevance of English as a global language. May (2012) estimates that English alone has an estimated 1.5 billion speakers in the world and Crystal (2010:370) asserts that English has grown to be a dominant global language because of the following:

English is used as an official or semi-official language in over sixty countries and has a prominent place in a further twenty. It is either dominant or well established in all the six continents. It is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music and advertising. Over two thirds of the worlds' scientists write in English, three quarters of the world 's mail is written in English. Of all the information in the world's electronic retrieval system 80% is stored in English. It is the dominant language of the internet (though other languages are catching up)

The influence of English and other powerful international languages is felt even at a local level as they have encroached on the African languages' ecology, they continue to pose a threat to the sustenance of multiculturalism and multilingualism in most African countries. Most indigenous languages cannot match the power, influence, and utility of the LWC.

This study contends that as globalization spreads across the globe it continues to create a demand for the use of LWCs at the expense of the indigenous languages. This is the reason why indigenous languages are shunned in favour of the LWC. It is a noble initiative to attempt

to revitalize and use the threatened or dying languages but the threat from globalization is real and it forestalls the efforts towards the revitalization. According to Bambgose in Bayley et al (2020) post-independent language policies in Africa have not done much to elevate or equate the status of African languages, rather they have accommodated and protected the position of LWCs. This current study notes that this has been the position taken by most countries in the global South and Zimbabwe is one of them.

The language policy of Zimbabwe enshrined in its Amended Constitution of 2013 stresses the promotion and advancement of all its languages and the creation of conditions for the development of the languages. However, the language in education policy has a specific section, which clearly outlines the role and purpose of English and other foreign languages:

The learning of English and its use as language plays a vital role in the development of literacy in that it enhances learning in other areas of the curriculum. A foreign language creates opportunities for the learner to interact with an otherwise closed world. Both English and any foreign language play complementary roles. They help learners to develop communication skills and critical understanding that are necessary for meaningful and active participation in society and the world at large. (Government of Zimbabwe 2017:34)

This section on English and other foreign languages bares the effects of globalization and how it is shaping the ideologies informing language planning by stressing the prioritization of ‘global and technologically ready languages like English, French and Chinese Mandarin’ (Hogan-Brun, 2017). English is presented as the language, which can foster literacy and create links with the outside world, a responsibility that cannot be bestowed upon indigenous languages because they are limited to the local context. It is interesting because this position contradicts what is stipulated in the Zimbabwean Language Policy on the need to promote and develop all the sixteen officially recognized languages. To add on, the Makerere Report 1961 on Education cited in Phillipson and Kangas (1994:04) further illuminates how African countries have come to embrace globalization via language in education policy decisions:

“If a community has decided to participate as speedily as possible in the technological and other advantages of a wider society an early introduction of English as a medium of education is inevitable, if it lays more stress on the preservation of a traditional way of life it will not introduce English as a medium until later in school life of the child” (Makerere Report 1961). The underlying argument is that maximum exposure to English is what makes a society modern and technological, whereas use of other languages, hence less English typifies stagnation and obscurantist traditionalism

One observation that is made from this report is that language policy and planning in Africa is more of political statements, which are carefully crafted to appease the African populace, while shortchanging the local languages by presenting them as parochial and traditional. Phyak (2021) adds that nation-states in the third world continue to perpetuate language education policies, which promote language hierarchies, which are detrimental to the existence and maintenance of indigenous languages. Ministry of Education officials who participated in this study highlighted that it was possible to revitalize Chichewa because the policies in place were accommodative to multilingualism. However, the researcher disagrees with their elitist position because the African experience according to (Bambgbose 1991; 2000) is typified by lip service and declaration without implementation.

Language revitalization is geared towards expanding and increasing the number speakers of a language, however, the contradiction between language policy and curriculum framework clearly shows how globalization makes it a challenge to revitalize ChiChewa as the policy framework is insisting more on appreciating English and other foreign languages and limiting indigenous languages to the local domains only. While globalization talks of the interconnectedness of societies across the world and creating a global village, the reality is that the dominant cultures and their languages are spreading into all territories choking out multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Drawing from the research findings in Chapter 4, this study posits that globalisation presents challenges to the revival of languages like ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because it promotes language education policies that do not challenge the dominant language ideologies. As

illustrated by May (2012) and Rudanpaa (2018), language revitalization is an issue of self-determination and sovereignty it is therefore difficult to get self-determination in a nation-state which pursues the dominant language ideology.

Languages of wider communication have largely been the conduits for the spread of the phenomenon of globalization and African languages, which have largely remained indigenised, cannot match their influence. LWC is buttressed by efficient acquisition planning processes and their numbers of speakers continue to increase across the globe, on the contrary, indigenous languages in Africa continue to struggle with status issues. As mentioned earlier on in this discussion, ChiChewa has few chances of gaining more speakers because of language shifts, low intergenerational transmission, and lack of incentives for speaking and using the language. Even though ChiChewa is a cross-border language with a significant number of speakers in Zimbabwe, the impact of globalization on its revitalization cannot be overlooked. Experiences from other speech communities have shown that language ideologies change over time and people prefer to embrace and acquire languages, which bring economic benefits.

According to Pine and Turin (2017), globalization has modified the African language ecology by pitting Languages of Wider Communication (LWC) against Languages of Lower Diffusion (LLD). LLDs have challenges of being disenfranchised by colonial and post-colonial language policies; this makes it difficult for them to be used for the same functions. To further compound the problem, Globalization brings with it monolingualism in the form of LWCs which are also the global trade languages, since most LLDs lack officiality they are subsequently relegated to informal and cultural uses. This unbalanced linguistic ecology impedes on the possible revitalization of ChiChewa because it must compete with English for functional space and globalization does emphasize the powerful cultures and their languages while relegating the

other cultures and their languages to the peripheries of use. Hence, Bourdieu (2001:84) asserts that,

Globalization serves as a password, a watchword while in effect it is the legitimate mask of a policy aiming to universalize particular interests and the particular tradition of the economically and politically dominant powers and to extend to the entire world the economic and cultural model that favours these powers, while simultaneously presenting it as a norm, a requirement and a fatality a universal destiny in such a manner as to obtain adherence or at least universal resignation.

### **5.12 Assessment of the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages**

The two previous sections focussed on discussing and examining the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. This part will work on assessing the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages; drawing from the findings gathered during data collection, the researcher opines that the sociolinguistic situation of ChiChewa is representative of the many cross-border languages in the many different speech communities in Africa. The Academy of African Languages (ACALAN), an organ of the African Union (AU), prioritizes the cross-border phenomenon, which was setup in 2001 to deal with language issues on the African continent. The objectives of ACALAN on cross-border languages are as follows:

The fundamental objectives of ACALAN are as follows:

- a. Promoting African languages.
- b. Promoting cross-border languages.
- c. Promoting vehicular cross-border languages.
- d. Strengthening cooperation between African states in African languages.
- e. Promoting African languages in all educational sectors.
- f. Promoting African languages at international level.
- g. Analysing language policies in Africa.
- h. Promoting a scientific and democratic culture based on the use of African languages.
- i. Contributing to the economic, social, and cultural development of member states based on African languages and in relation with partner languages.

- j. Promoting use of African languages as factors of integration, solidarity and respect of values and mutual understanding in order to promote peace and prevent conflicts.
- k. Promoting African languages organizations on the continent.

The objectives of ACALAN make a bold statement about the perception, status, and functions of cross-border languages on the African continent. This is an important acknowledgement considering the vast linguistic diversity and multilingualism endemic to the continent.

Language revitalization is context-based and largely determined by the socio-historical and economic factors acting upon the language or languages in question. It is this complexity, which needs to be taken into consideration each time speech communities decide to embark on the initiative of revitalizing languages (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006). Language policies and language in education policies adopted by countries go a long way in creating conducive or unconducive environments for language revitalization. In the African context most language policies have not dealt with the issue of cross-border languages, yet they are prevalent (Ndhlovu, 2013). The language experts in Chapter 4 were of the view that the revitalization of cross-border languages is important because it promotes development and the maintenance of linguistic diversity in African speech communities. This tallies with this researcher's perspective that linguistic diversity should not be viewed as a problem but a resource to be harnessed for the benefit of humanity.

The Social Capital Theory as enunciated by Print and Coleman (2003:125) stresses that:

In general, social capital functions through enabling people to engage with each other More effectively by building trust, networks and cooperation . . . Social capital allows people to resolve collective problems more easily; facilitates trust and interaction in communities; enhances the sense of interconnectedness amongst people; facilitates the flow of information; and enhances individual lives through helping people to cope with the vicissitudes of life.

In the same vein, this research study further posits that cross-border languages do have functions in which they are used in the African speech communities. All languages in multilingual setups have functions and roles regardless of their size, value, or status. Facilitation does not only occur at the formal or standardized networks levels, in African societies facilitation and interaction begins at the spiritual level with specific languages serving this purpose. Thus, it is very difficult to dismiss or trivialize certain languages based on size, value, and status. The current study therefore agrees with Ndhlovu (2013) when he rallies for the consideration of cross-border languages in regional integration and trade purposes.

Cross-border languages like multilingualism and multiculturalism are a reality in the African linguistic setup; they have served as conduits for communication and social integration since pre-colonial times. UNESCO (2020) about the position and role of KiSwahili as a cross-border language asserts that:

Among many other cross-border languages, Kiswahili is one such example. This sub-Saharan African language is spoken by 120 to 150 million people. It is a hybrid tongue composed of linguistic elements from Southern Africa, Arabia, Europe and India. Its evolution tells a rich story of migration, trade, slavery, colonialism. Today, it is both sub-Saharan Africa's most important lingua franca, and an enabling force promoting African unity and diplomacy. It is a national and official language in the United Republic of Tanzania, a national language in Kenya and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is a cross-border lingua franca in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, northern Mozambique and southern Somalia, and to a lesser extent, Malawi, Zambia and Southern Sudan.



Feyisa and Hoehne (2010) also point out that the role of cross-border languages in the Horn of Africa region include the following, facilitating access to citizenship and refugee status, facilitating cross-border economic activities and trans-border political mobilization. This current study concurs with the sentiments of the language experts that cross-border languages in Africa need to be revitalized because they play significant roles on socio-economic and political matters.

While the presence and contributions of cross-border languages has been overshadowed, by the influence of colonial languages, they remain important and there is a need to revitalize them by way of expanding the domains in which they are used. This study argues that the officialization and according of functional roles and complimentary use with ex-colonial languages goes a long in changing the fortunes of cross-border languages in Africa.

Unfortunately, discourse on revitalization has largely remained focused on minority languages and indigenous communities yet there is need for the appreciation of the role of cross-border languages and their prioritization on the African linguistic landscape. The African language ecology is made up of both African and ex-colonial languages. Despite a colonial history there is need to reconsider the place and significance of African cross border by extending their use from the informal to the formal domain. This is healthy for the language ecology of Africa. The use of cross-border languages in the informal domains cannot go unnoticed as they play an important role in fostering and facilitating communication amongst cross-border traders and refugees (Ndhlovu, 2013).

It is the number of speakers and the territory covered by cross-border languages, which show that they cannot be, overlooked in as far as everyday communication, business and trade are concerned. Most cross-border languages in Africa happen to be mother tongue languages, home languages, regional languages, and lingua francas. Since pre-colonial Africa and before

the establishment of arbitrary colonial boundaries in 1884, cross-border languages have always served the African populace as conduits of communication between and within different groups at local and regional levels. UNESCO (2020) notes the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages when it stresses that, cross-border languages can be used to promote peace and dialogue across the African communities in which the languages are spoken. This study observes that subconsciously cross-border languages continue to be used as mediums of communication by refugees in the conflict regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and in other humanitarian crises, which face the continent (IOM, 2010). The cross-border languages have not been afforded this role; however, they execute it well because all the African speech communities, which use them, have a shared identity regardless of the national borders, which divide them. This is a perfect example of ‘unplanned language planning’, which is characteristic of the African language ecology which individual African countries, and ACALAN can take advantage of to further strengthen and promote integration and communication.

Africa’s tragic misalliance with Europe resulted in the gradual devitalization of African languages inclusive of the cross-border languages, as European languages systematically replaced them in most domains. While European languages might be powerful and modernized to move with the changing times, they have not been able to assist in bringing about development in Africa (Batibo 2005; Mazrui 1998; Brock-Utne 2000). Rather they subconsciously promote inequality as they are spoken by a few people while most of the African populace has access and use indigenous African languages, which are not used in the formal domains.

The reality facing most African citizens has been that only those few who have mastered ex-colonial languages like French, English and Portuguese have access to resources. Those few happen to be the elite and they are the policymakers, according to Myers-Scotton (1999), they promote elite closure by ensuring that only a few access resources by playing the language trump card. Continued insistence on the use of ex-colonial languages in the official domains always ensures that the majority will always lag in education, communication, and developmental issues. Above all, it keeps the minority in the strategic positions of power thus the lack of commitment to address the language matters in post-independent Africa by maintaining language policies which protect ex-colonial languages (Bamgbose in Nelsen et al ,2020).

Revitalization of cross-border languages is imperative because like the other indigenous languages, most of the African populace use them, and they are a manifestation of the multilingual and multicultural nature of Africa. The African populace has easy access to cross-border languages than the ex-colonial languages, which would require more investment and resources (Ndhlovu, 2013). Unfortunately, most colonial, and post-independent language planning and policy has overlooked this reality of cross-border languages with most countries not considering regional language planning, but rather have done language planning in isolation without considering that their national boundaries are artificial in the first place.

Hogan-Brun (2017) notes that one of the main reasons why languages like English have come to dominate the knowledge economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is because they have been propped up with resources and policies which favour their use. In the same vein, cross-border languages in Africa are strategic for communication in all facets of life. The language experts in Chapter 4 concurred that cross-border languages assist in community development and participation, the researcher adds further that the languages facilitate communication from the grassroots to the

national levels as they permeate all social strata. A task which ex-colonial languages have failed to convincingly perform because they are spoken and used by the minority elite population in Africa according to Brock-Utne 2000; Mazrui 1998; Djite 2008; Ouane and Glanz 2010; Kamwangamalu 2016. It is important to note that cross-border languages have a wide speaker base as compared to the ex-colonial languages and are easily accessible to the African populace. They permeate the entire social stratification at individual and societal levels of multilingualism, which characterize the African language ecology.

It is pragmatic to use indigenous languages in schools because they are easily accessible to the African populace than the ex-colonial languages. The lack of investment in African languages is a major hurdle to inclusive education and civic participation (Bamgbose 2000; Alexander 2008; Djite 2008; Prah 2002). Furthermore, Ouane and Glanz (2010) argue for the investment in African languages to curb the challenge of illiteracy and developmental inequality in most African countries. The revitalization of cross-border languages in Africa assists in the long-term establishment of language in education policies, which are centred on the use of indigenous languages. To date, many African children still struggle to perform well in school because the language of instruction is mostly English, French, or Portuguese. Alidou and Jung (2002:66) point out the challenges faced by African children in Francophone Africa:

Regarding the effectiveness of the use of French as the exclusive language in education, several studies indicate that there is a strong correlation between post-colonial language policies and the high rate of academic failure (high attrition and wastage rates) experienced by students in Francophone African countries (Alidou, 1997; Bokamba, 1991; Mateene, 1980). Most pupils who enter formal schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger do not know French, the language of instruction; yet they are expected to participate actively in learning. Secondly, French is not the mother tongue of any ethnic group in these countries, therefore teaching in French as a first language is certainly not appropriate. The language policy implemented in the schools is bound to produce negative results, as it ignores the basic findings of second and foreign language acquisition and bilingual education in multilingual settings (Cummins, 1981; Collier and Ovando, 1998). In particular, the policy fails to consider the role that longer

exposure to meaningful linguistic input in a second or foreign language plays in developing adequate academic proficiency in that language.

Adebija (1994:04) further contends that the use of European languages in education in Africa has left most Africans educationally impoverished, functionally illiterate, and participatorily demobilised. Such a historical anomaly can be rectified by the revitalization of African languages and giving them functional and instrumental roles such as official languages, languages of instruction and mediums of communication in commerce and trade.

In the language revitalization discourse, one of the challenging issues has been to avoid revitalizing languages for sentimental and emotional reasons, where languages are reduced to cultural goods. Kabel (2021) argues that language policies in Africa have done disservice to African languages by promoting linguistic stratification and language hierarchies in which ex-colonial languages have instrumental value while African languages are presented as markers of identity and cultural goods when he says that

Local languages [indigenous languages] are folded into the schemata of belonging, tradition, identity and culture. While English and French are construed as a repository of cosmopolitan modernity and English as a medium of international exchange, scientific innovation and the knowledge economy. And because of its global affordances English recursively represents the language of opportunity Kabel (2021:13)

The revitalization of cross-border languages in Africa, however, is important because these languages are not restricted to being cultural languages, but they are used in everyday communication in the formal and informal domains. The expansion of domains in which cross-border languages are used allows them to go through language engineering which makes the languages remain important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Of the twelve cross-border languages identified by ACALAN, KiSwahili had gone through the process of modernization through the creation of technical terms before the project was abandoned at the insistence of the World Bank (Brock-Utne, 2000). However, Ouane and Glanz (2010) acknowledge that Microsoft has committed to investing in KiSwahili in the creation of ICT software. Hence, this researcher's

views concur with those of the language experts that the revitalization of cross-border languages is important.

Furthermore, Hogan-Brun (2017) acknowledges that the world is now living in the information age where access to information is key to the survival and development of modern societies. Cross-border languages are the immediate link for societies and communities in Africa to have access to critical information, which eventually leads to development. In this regard therefore, it is a pragmatic initiative to revitalize cross-border languages in Africa. Language planning in Africa should not be limited to elevating the status of indigenous languages but it should go further to create opportunities for the cross-border language so that they become part of the language industry in this age of information technologies.

Indeed, European languages dominate the Global and African language ecologies, if African languages, specifically cross-border languages are positioned properly and the functions they have played on socio-economic and political issues are realised and appreciated (Ndhlovu 2010; UNECA 2010; Prah 2009) they can be part of the Global language ecology. Their revitalization goes a long way in changing the language attitudes and ideologies held by most African people that African languages have no space or place in the global future. Banda (2016) and Kamwangamalu (2016) argue that a future for African languages is possible if prestige planning is prioritized because it will help the languages to be seen in better light by the African populace, prestige planning enhances the image of African languages so that the negative attitudes towards them are eradicated. Revitalization of cross-border languages and expanding their functional space and instrumental value will ensure that African speech communities will have positive attitudes towards their languages.

It is critical and important to revitalize cross-border languages in Africa as they have key roles to play in economic integration, education, and development (Ndhlovu, 2013). Africa has lagged in these fields because it has not fully exploited its linguistic resources and the advantages brought about by cross-border languages. The failure to exploit the linguistic resources by Africa is best explained by the continued reliance on the 'Standard language ideology' Gal (2009) for language policy and planning. Language planning informed by the western concept of language standardization has led to the overlooking of historical and linguistic peculiarities regarding the African language ecology. Most African countries disregard the multiplicity of languages in their speech communities and place emphasis on trying to identify one or several standardized languages to be used as national or official languages. This standard language ideology gives the erroneous impression of the actual speech and language practices which occur in everyday communication. Therefore, this study contends that the revitalization of cross-border languages is important because it is one way in which the languages resources can be used for the benefit of the African people.

This study argues that the reviving of cross-border languages is part of the fulfilment of ideological planning which African countries must embark on to balance the language ecology that continues to be skewed in favour of ex-colonial languages. Batibo (2005) asserts that language policy and planning in post-independent Africa has been determined more by logistical convenience than ideological planning and according to him, this has contributed to the marginalization and subsequent endangerment of African languages as ex-colonial languages benefited because of the convenience of neutrality and standardization. Ideological planning as espoused by Banda (2012) and Kamwangamalu (2016) will ensure that African languages are given complementary roles together with the ex-colonial languages for use in education, communication, and commerce. This ideological planning will ensure that the actual

language and speech practices will be protected by policy and legislation since individual and societal multilingualism already characterize the everyday life of African speech communities.

Nonetheless, the impetus and choice towards revitalizing languages lie squarely with the concerned speech communities, if they fully support the initiative then it will succeed and if they do not offer their support, it will be a failure. The successful revitalization of cross-border languages lies squarely on the shoulders of the African communities, which share and use those languages. The ChiChewa experience outlined in this discussion is representative of the reality facing cross-border languages across the African continent. While this study admits that it is noble and progressive to revitalize cross-border languages, the will and commitment by African countries to settle language issues has largely remained indifferent (Kamwangamalu 2016; Nelsen 2020). The researcher maintains that language planning and policy in Africa continues to be informed by the standard language and monolingual ideals, thus making it difficult to prioritize African linguistic peculiarities like the prevalence of cross-border languages. Bamgbose in Nelsen (2020) observes that language policies in most African countries continue to entrench and solidify the position and influence of ex-colonial languages thus propagating the monolingual ideal. Escape clauses in the language policy documents informed by elite closure, Myers-Scotton (1999), ensure that African languages remain in the shadows of the dominant English, French and Portuguese. Since language planning in Africa is top-down, indigenous, and cross-border languages will find it difficult to be prioritized because they are not the languages of the minority elite and policymakers.

According to Kamwangamalu (2016) the failure by ACALAN to make significant progress on cross-border languages since its inception in 2001, reflects the negative attitudes towards cross-border languages and African languages in general. The researcher argues that since most African language policies are vague and more of political statements, the same can be said of



the vision and objectives of ACALAN. The setting up of ACALAN by the African Union (AU) was a political statement meant to give the impression that language matters in Africa would be resolved. However, there has not been any significant progress, the diglossic relationship between ex-colonial languages and African languages still exists with most African languages having no instrumental value and lacking use in the official domains.

Adebija 1994; Batibo 2005; and Kamwangamalu 2016 observe that the African language ecology is diverse and complicated, made up of big and small languages. The small languages face imminent danger from the bigger and preponderant languages according to Mazrui and Mazrui (1998), interestingly the twelve cross-border languages identified by ACALAN fall into this category as they are widely spoken across the neighbouring African speech communities. From a language ecology and multilingual perspective, expanding the domains of use for cross-border languages ultimately puts the small languages in a precarious position because their speakers will gradually shift to use the cross-border languages. So, language planning and language revitalization which overlooks the small languages will only serve to threaten their place in the African language ecology.

The language experts in Chapter 4 argued that the revitalization of cross-border languages in Africa is important, however, from the findings of this study there is need to appreciate that language issues are contestations of competing ideologies. The nation-state and monolingual ideologies (May 2012; Ricento 1999) have dominated and informed the political organization and language planning in Africa. These ideologies are internalized and normalized such that multilingualism is considered complicated and expensive. In the same vein, the welfare of Africa's rich linguistic diversity is discussed from a cost benefit analysis and African languages suffer neglect. Hogan-Brun (2017) discusses the potential threat of globalization on less powerful languages as it favours the commodified languages, which are deemed to have

instrumental and functional capacity. Kabel (2021) asserts that present day language planning is determined by neo-liberal economic policies, which neglect the functions and positions of African languages. He argues that the neo-liberal economic policies promote a form of neo-liberal multilingualism in which there is linguistic stratification, ex-colonial languages are perceived as the only commodified languages while African languages are portrayed as scientifically impoverished. Because of these ideologies, it remains a challenge to revitalize African languages or even see the need to promote multilingualism because the dominant language and political ideologies favour monolingualism. The Zimbabwean experience highlighted earlier on in the discussion attests to this. The language policy and language in education policy are designed to promote the hierarchization and the embracing of globalization, through the entrenching of the position of the English language. In this regard, attitudes towards African languages remain negative because they continue to be squeezed out of the African language ecology and consequently ex-colonial languages firm up their position in the ecology.

### **5.13 Chapter summary**

This chapter has examined the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, which includes the officialization of multilingualism and multiculturalism, education, and vitality of ChiChewa. The examination showed that the recognition of multilingualism in the Constitution of Zimbabwe augurs well with the idea of revitalizing ChiChewa as the language policy of Zimbabwe is enshrined in the Constitution. Constitutional provisions provide for the development and elevation of all the sixteen languages and ChiChewa could benefit from this development. While the study acknowledges the importance of officializing multilingualism and multiculturalism, it also revealed that this does not necessarily guarantee that the revitalization of ChiChewa would be successful. ChiChewa language is still spoken by the

second and third generations though intergenerational transmission is now limited leading to the researcher to conclude that the language is now moribund in Zimbabwe. This, nonetheless, raises prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because there is still a sizeable number of native speakers and a favourable degree of institutional support through education and media. Developments in the education institution in Zimbabwe now promote the learning and use of all the indigenous languages and this creates a conducive environment for ChiChewa to be expanded into other domains, which was not the case previously. The examination further revealed the paradoxical nature of the education institution in the revitalization of languages. Education is a state institution used in the nation-state for socialization and creating linguistic and cultural homogeneity. The study argued that in the case of Zimbabwe like most other nation-states education could curtail efforts to revitalize languages such as ChiChewa because of its legacy of promoting ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English.

The chapter also discussed the challenges associated with revitalizing ChiChewa as a cross-border language in Zimbabwe. The discussion pointed out that language attitude, language policy, language status, language shift, hegemony of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele and globalization present challenges, which can inhibit the successful revitalization of ChiChewa in the Zimbabwean context. The study established that ChiChewa speakers in Zimbabwe have a negative attitude towards the language and the majority feel there is no need to revitalize the language. In the same vein, the low status of the language despite its official recognition adds to the negative attitudes, which the speakers have about the language thus making revitalization difficult. The discussion also revealed that language policy curtails the possible revitalization of ChiChewa, because it continues to entrench and protect the position of English. The research maintains that the current language policy promotes a linguistic hierarchy in which former minority languages like ChiChewa continue to be trivialized thus making it difficult for them to be revitalized. The chapter showed how globalization spreads the influence and the

dominance of the English language. The discussion demonstrated how globalization determines and shapes language policy and language in education policies making it difficult for African languages to expand their domains of use. The researcher established that language shift has occurred amongst the Chewa speakers in Zimbabwe and the fourth-generation Chewa people have shifted to speak the dominant ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Therefore, it is a challenge to revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because the generation that is supposed to be the recipients of the language do not speak it and do not intend to do so. The discussion further revealed that the hegemony of the three dominant languages in Zimbabwe makes it difficult to revitalize ChiChewa because English, IsiNdebele and ChiShona have been legitimated and institutionalized as the only important languages in Zimbabwe.

Lastly, the chapter assessed the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages in Africa. The assessment indicated that it is important to revitalize these cross-border languages, as they have always been central to communication and integration among African polities in the past. Cross-border languages still have a role to play in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of development, communication, trade, and integration between African speech communities. In as much as the chapter highlighted the importance of revitalizing cross-border languages in Africa, the chapter also noted that the issue of cross-border language revitalization is a contestation of differing language and political ideologies. As things stand currently in Africa, the dominance of the monolingual ideology is firmly entrenched in the minds of policymakers thus making it difficult for cross-border languages to be appreciated and given instrumental and functional space in the African language ecology.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study has been a critical discussion of the prospects and challenges of revitalizing a cross-border language in Zimbabwe with focus on ChiChewa. Guided by the frameworks of language ecology and language ideology, the study examined and discussed the prospects and challenges of revitalizing ChiChewa as a cross-border language in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the study assessed the significance of revitalizing cross-border languages in Africa. This chapter provides conclusions derived from the major findings of the study as reflected in chapters four and five and makes some recommendations.

#### **6.1 Summary of findings**

Upon examining the prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, this research concluded that, the official acknowledgment of multilingualism and multiculturalism in Zimbabwe 's Constitution presents prospects for the revitalization of ChiChewa. There has been an ideological shift from monolingualism to multilingualism in Zimbabwe. This ideological shift is important because the Constitution acknowledges that there are sixteen languages in the country. The researcher maintains that this ideological shift is a positive starting point for language revitalization. The Constitution provides the legal basis for the preservation, development, and maintenance of all the languages. However, official recognition of multilingualism alone does not guarantee language vitality, nor will it lead to the successful revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because this process is influenced by a myriad of socio-political and economic factors. In the case of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe, historical, economic, and political factors have decimated the language over the years such that the four generations of Chewa speakers perceive of revitalizing the language differently. Notably the fourth-generation Chewa speakers do not see the need for revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe

as they strongly believe the language has no use in their everyday life. This study, therefore, confirms what Grenoble and Whaley (2006) and May (2012) found, that, official recognition of multilingualism is inadequate for language revitalization.

The researcher established that education presents prospects for the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe as the new curriculum introduced by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education in 2017 allows for the teaching of all the sixteen languages from elementary level. Education has the potential to revitalize ChiChewa because it allows the language to be passed on intergenerationally and expand its uses into other domains. It adds instrumental and functional value to the language.

However, education plays a paradoxical role in language revitalization. In the Zimbabwean context, typical of most nation-states, education is used for linguistic and cultural homogenization. The Education Act of 1987 and 2006 played a central role in the socialization of minority groups into the dominant Shona and Ndebele groups. In this regard, the researcher agrees with Fishman (2006) that education alone cannot be used to revitalize endangered languages.

ChiChewa is moribund in Zimbabwe. Interviews and observations confirmed that intergenerational transmission of the language was no longer taking place. The majority of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Chewa speakers confirmed that they no longer taught ChiChewa to their children because the children now speak and use ChiShona, IsiNdebele or English in the formal and informal domains. Moreover, institutional and government support for ChiChewa is limited. Responses from language experts and focus group discussions confirmed that ChiChewa has a low status in the country despite official recognition since 2013. It is from this status of ChiChewa that the researcher maintains that it is difficult to use the vitality of a language as a way of measuring if language revitalization will be possible or not.

The research established that language shift has occurred amongst the fourth generation ChiChewa speakers in Zimbabwe owing in large measure to the non transmission of the language to the younger generations. The fourth- generation has shifted to use the mainstream languages of ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English. Their responses and attitudes revealed a lack of attachment to the language and identity of their Chewa forbearers. For them it was pointless to revitalize ChiChewa. The language shift poses a challenge to the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.

Based on the findings from the interviews, observations and focus group discussions, the study established that language ideologies have been central to the devitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. Language ideologies at the macro and micro level have had a strong bearing on language use and choice of the Chewa speech community. The study established that language ideologies of monolingualism, standard language and globalization in colonial and post-colonial language policies and language in Education policies, ensured the systematic relegation of ChiChewa to informal uses. This led to the language being despised by its own speakers. Colonial and post-colonial language ideologies and policies ensured the obliteration of the significance of multilingualism in Zimbabwe. The nation-state ideology promoted cultural and linguistic homogeneity, and this squeezed out languages such as ChiChewa to the peripheries of the Zimbabwean language ecology. The nation-state ideology pursued in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe is responsible for the marginalization of minority linguistic communities. and their assimilation into the dominant Shona and Ndebele communities. The identity of young Chewa speakers is characterized by hybridity.

Findings from the study indicate that the diglossic relationship between ChiChewa and the dominant ChiShona, IsiNdebele and English is still prevalent in the Zimbabwe language ecology. ChiChewa has limited functional space and no instrumental value. Since 2001

ChiChewa programs are broadcast on National FM radio the language is taught in primary schools.

Fishman (2000) notes that the speakers of a language are the arbiters of language revitalization, however as established in this study the majority of ChiChewa speakers feel there is no need to revitalize the language. Above all, the researcher is convinced that this low status presents challenges about the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. The hegemony of ChiShona and IsiNdebele has had far-reaching consequences on the former minority languages in Zimbabwe. ChiShona and IsiNdebele have benefited through colonial and post-colonial language policy and language in education policies to such an extent that their hegemony has been naturalized. The hegemony has been implemented in a covert way through education, media, and administration.

The researcher maintains that the hegemony of IsiNdebele and ChiShona is accepted as legitimate by the Chewa speech community; hence, they are teaching their children to speak and use these two languages. ChiShona and IsiNdebele are associated with belonging. Thus, the two languages are used overtly and covertly to legitimize the citizenship of people in Zimbabwe. This hegemonic influence of ChiShona and IsiNdebele makes it difficult to revitalize ChiChewa in Zimbabwe because as shown through findings, most of the young Chewa have grown up under the influence of Shona and Ndebele culture and do not see the need for the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe. The study maintains that language policy and planning disenfranchised Chichewa by not affording it status until 2013. The researcher therefore argues and maintains that the current language policy in Zimbabwe continues the further disenfranchisement of ChiChewa, by hierarchization of the languages with English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele maintaining their roles as official and national languages respectively.



This study maintains that the language policy of Zimbabwe is a political instrument designed to appease minority communities while protecting the position of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele. The use of the term 'officially recognized' is a deliberate strategy to give the impression that the the language policu issue has been resolved. In this regard, this study concurs with Bambgose (1991) and Kamwangamalu (2016) that language policies in Africa are designed with escape clauses to mask the unwillingness of those in power to decisively deal with language issues.

Globalization directly and indirectly poses a threat to indigenous minority languages by shaping and influencing the language and language in education policies. Through the influence of globalization, post- colonial language policy in Zimbabwe accommodates and protects the role of English more than that of indigenous and minority languages. This is espoused further in the language in education policy, which stresses that the English language is important for interactions with the outside world, while indigenous languages should be prioritized for formative early learning only. The position of English has not been compromised but rather strengthened and this is a clear indication of how Zimbabwe as a country wants to position itself in the global world. Giving the officially recognized status to all languages in Zimbabwe is a deliberate strategy by policy makers to protect the interest of the elite, what Myers-Scotton (1993) calls elite closure. This presents challenges in the possible revitalization of ChiChewa because globalization continues to squeeze out the minority languages in the language ecology.

Revitalizing cross-border languages is a contestation of differing political and language ideologies and policies. Cross-border languages have always been part of the African language ecology even before the advent of colonialism which imposed the monolingual and nation-state ideologies adopted from Europe on the African linguistic landscape. Languages in Africa

regardless of status are important in the dissemination of information and the preservation of certain unique human experiences, knowledge and ideas. This current study agrees with Batibo (2005), Brock-Utne (2000) and Kamwangamalu (2016) that English, French and Portuguese serve more as languages of the elite and boundary markers, whereas most Africans actually speak their indigenous languages which often transcend political boundaries, thus it is imperative to maintain and revitalize these languages.

Furthermore, the revitalization of cross-border languages covers the gap created between ex-colonial languages and indigenous languages in education and community participation for development. Ouane and Glanz (2010) advocate for investment in African languages because they are used by the African communities from grassroots level and in community participation and interaction. The researcher established that expanding the domains in which cross-border languages are used ensures participation in developmental issues at the local, national, and regional levels. While the continued use of English, French and Portuguese only further sideline indigenous languages and the communities that speak and use them. This study argues that cross-border language revitalization is important and necessary because it addresses the issues of mother tongue education and literacy. Literacy and mother tongue education have remained elusive in post-independent Africa because of the over reliance on ex-colonial languages as languages of instruction. The use of indigenous languages and cross-border languages promote high literacy rates in African countries and improved access to quality education.

Most of the cross-border languages identified by ACALAN are orthographically developed and standardized compared to African languages which are still to be codified, hence, they can assist in improving literacy in Africa if used to the highest possible level of learning. Revitalization of cross-border and indigenous languages in Africa is an investment in the commodification of African linguistic resources. Once cross-border languages have increased

functional space and instrumentality through revitalization, the asymmetrical relationship, which has always existed between African and ex-colonial languages is reduced Hogan-Brun (2017). African speech communities will then begin to appreciate and to exploit their own indigenous linguistic resources for communication, commerce, and education.

The revitalization of cross-border languages is essential as it helps in regional and continental integration. Cross-border languages bring together African communities across national boundaries since they share similar languages and cultures and most of them have common proto roots. The European Union has twenty-four working languages for its socio-economic uses. African regional blocs such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have twelve cross-border languages at their service for communication, facilitating trade and conflict resolution. It is important to revitalize cross-border languages in Africa as they have socio-economic and diplomatic roles to play

The study concurs with the Social Capital theory that all languages have value and significance because they have contexts in which they can be used. Cross-border languages perform functions at the individual, societal, national, regional, and continental levels of the various African speech communities. Revitalizing cross-border languages is part of achieving the goal of ideological planning on language policy in Africa because language planning in post-independent in Africa is informed by logistical convenience (Batibo, 2005). The revival of cross-border languages is in tandem with meeting the key objectives of ACALAN, which stress the need to promote and make use of the African linguistic resources for development. Revitalizing cross-border languages is a restoration of the languages to their position and functions in precolonial times.

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are derived from this research:

1. The study recommends that language planning in Africa should prioritize cross-border language planning, in this way the accurate linguistic reality of African speech communities and their language and speech practices are captured. Language planning in isolation without collaboration amongst African countries, which share the same languages, does not help in Africa exploiting its linguistic resources for human capital development and technological innovations.
2. The language policy in Zimbabwe and Africa at large should be clear on the allocation of equitable functions to all languages within speech communities. The use of escape clauses and vague phrases such as ‘officially recognized’ in language policy documents serves only to entrench the position and dominance of ex-colonial languages; it therefore renders African languages useless in formal domains. Due to the prevalence of cross-border languages in Africa, language policies should be reflective of the socio-economic roles and functions of cross-border languages. The role of cross-border languages in facilitating economic integration, communication, trade, conflict resolution and peace, go a long way in helping Africa realize the benefits, which can be achieved by exploiting its linguistic resources.
3. Language revitalization in the form of domain and functional expansion concerning should be prioritized by African countries. The study has shown that African languages fall short because their use is restricted to the informal domains. The researcher believes that the commodification of African languages enables them to be fit for functional expansion and assume instrumental value like the ex-colonial languages. In

this regard, when they assume instrumental value, African languages can be used in complementary roles with ex-colonial languages in all facets of life.

4. In as much as Zimbabwe recognizes multilingualism and multiculturalism, the study recommends that state institutions need to open and allow multilingualism to be practiced and exploited. Confining linguistic pluralism to the education domain only promotes the continued devitalization of the previously marginalized languages in Zimbabwe. Use of all languages in the media, administration, commerce, and trade enhances their status and utilitarian value; above all, it encourages the maintenance of the languages.
5. The study recommends that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education needs to revisit the language in education policy and reconsider the position of using indigenous languages for formative early learning only and the complementary role with English. Experience from Africa has shown that using indigenous languages and English to complement each other in learning serves only to domesticate African languages as unfit for use in other fields. As the policy position stands, it nullifies all the attempts to enhance the status and functions of the former minority and indigenous languages of Zimbabwe by limiting their use to primary education only. The policy further perpetuates the fallacy that African languages cannot be used for complicated scientific concepts and using them will keep Africa isolated from the rest of the world. New words can always be borrowed, invented, and added to the African languages' vocabularies for the most complicated concepts and new discoveries. Therefore, there is need to relook into the policy as it adversely affects the status of previously marginalized languages and their possible revitalization in Zimbabwe.

6. For long, inimical language ideologies such as monolingualism and the standard language ideology have led to the devitalization of African languages and continued reliance on western ex-colonial languages, it is high time African language planning be informed by African realities and ideals, which capture the real language and speech practices on the continent. Western informed language planning has failed to address social challenges such as high rates of illiteracy and lack of grassroots participation in development issues. Thus, this study believes that ideological reorientation is imperative if African speech communities and their speech practices are to be maintained and sustained into the future.

The current study, though with reference to ChiChewa, has shown the current sociolinguistic position of minority languages in Zimbabwe. Future studies could focus on ways and approaches to commodify and expand the domains of usage of African cross-border languages.

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## **Interviews**

Interview with Chinyamunyamu David at Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings on 12 March 2015.

Interview with Kaunda Ezra at National FM studios on 17 February 2017.

## Appendix 1

### Interview guide questions for language experts

My name is Believe Mubonderi, a PhD student (African Languages) with the University of South Africa in the African Languages Department. The topic of my thesis is **‘Prospects and Challenges of revitalising a cross border language: A study of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe’**. The main issue raised in this study is to discuss the possibilities and challenges of reviving a cross border language in a multilingual society like Zimbabwe. I gently request for your contribution by answering the questions below. Your viewpoints will assist the researcher in generating ideas for his doctoral thesis. The solicited information is purely for research purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity of all research participants is guaranteed.

---

1. What is your understanding of a cross border language?
2. What is the status of cross border languages in Zimbabwe?
3. Discuss the significance of language revitalisation.
4. What do you see as the possibilities and challenges of reviving a cross border language like ChiChewa?
5. What is the status of the ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe?
6. How have language policy issues affected the ChiChewa language in Zimbabwe?

## Appendix 2

### Interview guide questions for ChiChewa native speakers.

My name is Believe Mubonderi, a PhD student (African Languages) with the University of South Africa in the African Languages Department. The topic of my thesis is **‘Prospects and Challenges of revitalising a cross border language: A study of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe’** the main issue raised in this study is to discuss the possibilities and challenges of reviving a cross border language in a multilingual society like Zimbabwe. I gently request for your contribution by answering the questions below. Your viewpoints will assist the researcher in generating ideas for his doctoral thesis. The solicited information is purely for research purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity of all research participants is guaranteed.

---

1. Where were you born?
2. Which languages do you speak?
3. What is your perception of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe?
4. What is your perception of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele?
5. Are you involved in any efforts to transmit ChiChewa to your children or grandchildren?
6. In which contexts or domains do you use ChiChewa?

### Appendix 3

#### Interview guide questions for Ministry of Primary and Secondary education officials.

My name is Believe Mubonderi, a PhD student (African Languages) with the University of South Africa in the African Languages Department. The topic of my thesis is **‘Prospects and Challenges of revitalising a cross border language: A study of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe’** the main issue raised in this study is to discuss the possibilities and challenges of reviving a cross border language in a multilingual society like Zimbabwe. I gently request for your contribution by answering the questions below. Your viewpoints will assist the researcher in generating ideas for his doctoral thesis. The solicited information is purely for research purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity of all research participants is guaranteed.

- 
1. What is the contribution of the Ministry to the overall maintenance of linguistic diversity in Zimbabwe?
  2. How do you perceive the revitalization of a cross-border language in Zimbabwe?
  3. Identify and elaborate on the challenges and prospects of revitalizing ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.
  4. How ready is the Government of Zimbabwe to meet the Constitutional provisions regarding language?

## **Appendix 4**

### **Focus group discussions guide topics.**

My name is Believe Mubonderi, a PhD student (African Languages) with the University of South Africa in the African Languages Department. The topic of my thesis is **‘Prospects and Challenges of revitalising a cross border language: A study of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe’** the main issue raised in this study is to discuss the possibilities and challenges of reviving a cross border language in a multilingual society like Zimbabwe. I gently request for your contribution by answering the questions below. Your viewpoints will assist the researcher in generating ideas for his doctoral thesis. The solicited information is purely for research purposes and confidentiality is guaranteed.

---

1. Languages spoken
2. Level of proficiency in the spoken languages
3. Perception of ChiChewa
4. Perception of English, ChiShona and IsiNdebele.
5. Views on the revitalization of ChiChewa in Zimbabwe.
6. Contexts and domains use of ChiChewa.