

# MISMATCH BETWEEN FAMILIAR LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AMONG PUPILS: EFFECT ON READING COMPREHENSION IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA

by

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## ***Abstract***

*This paper examines the extent of the mismatch between familiar language and language of instruction among pupils and its effect on reading comprehension in selected primary schools in Lusaka district of Zambia. The study sampled 240 Grade 5 pupils from three (3) government primary schools between the ages nine (9) to 13 years. Results of the dependent (paired) sample t-tests indicated that there were significant differences in performance between listening comprehension in Cinyanja and Listening comprehension in English results. Equally, a MANOVA test indicated statistically significant differences in pupils' performance in English language than those based on the home language. The results also suggest that some pupils in primary schools are not benefiting from using Cinyanja as a language of instruction as it contradicts with their home language. Therefore, the study recommended, among other things, the need to simplify the class language of instruction to children's home and language of play and to train teachers in specific Zambian languages.*

**Key words:** *language of instruction; reading comprehension; familiar language; Mismatch*

## **1. Introduction**

In the period before Zambia's independence, education was described by its prominence on local language medium education (Manchishi, 2004). However when Zambia gained independence

from Britain in 1964 it declared English as the country's only official language. The government policy permitted seven Zambian languages to be used as well: in addition to the choice of English as the official language, the government also designated seven Zambian languages, namely Bemba, Kaonde, Lunda, Luvale, Lozi, Nyanja and Tonga as regional lingua francas to be used alongside English as school subjects, for functional literacy and public education (Nkolola-Wakumelo, 2012; Mbewe et al 2016 and, Chanda & Mkandawire, 2013). However in practice, the medium of instruction became English (Masaiti and Chita, 2014). English was the language of textbooks, although teachers were allowed to use one of the seven regional languages for oral explanations (Linehan, 2005).

The January 2013 National Guide for language of instruction practice, published by the Zambian Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MoESVTEE, 2013, Mwanza-Kabaghe 2015), mandates that Zambian languages replace English as medium of instruction in Grades 1 to 4, in all primary schools in the nation. The Ministry declared that familiar languages will be used for teaching initial literacy and content subjects in the early education (pre-school) and lower primary school (Grades 1 to 4). The new policy shall be implemented in January 2014, in all the primary schools, public and private" (MoESVTEE, 2013). The term "familiar language" as used in the policy is not referring to the seven regional languages, but rather to the local language of the community (Mkandawire, 2017). This dramatic policy change is based on the advocacy of Zambian linguists for many years, who argued that the use of English as medium of instruction was not serving the nation well (Muyebaa, 2009; Mwila, 2011; Sampa, 2005; Tambulakani & Bus, 2011). The 2013 local language-medium policy statement is expressed strongly.

For the past years, the seven regional languages namely Cinyanja, Bemba, Tonga, Luvale, Silozi, Kaonde and Lunda have been synonymous with Zambian languages used in education. However, with evidence that some school catchment areas have been found to be disadvantaged because their familiar language or language of play is not any of these seven, it has become vital that other dialects be brought on board (MoESVTEE, 2013). The use of language which did not match the learner's language of play and language used at home for instruction in Zambia, such as English has been a contributing factor to a poor reading level according to the National Guide document. Lusaka children are more familiar with the 'town Nyanja' the term 'maegges' (from the English 'eggs', but with Nyanja ma as a plural marker, and Nyanja phonology) rather than the

standard madzila. Or as a child put it: “when we are told to write, we are given different things, things that are spoken by other people, and not the Nyanja we speak” (Williams 1998). The National Guide also finds fault with the accepted use of zonal languages. Serious concerns with regards to low levels of learner achievement permeate research initiatives and educational debates (Matafwali 2010, Mubanga 2010, Mwanza-Kabaghe 2015, Mwanza-Kabaghe et al 2015). Evidence of poor performance has also formed the basis from which policy developments, changes and implementation have taken place. It is known that there is a mismatch between children’s familiar language and language of instruction among pupils, but the extent and its effect on reading and listening comprehension is not known.

### **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

This study examined the extent of the mismatch between familiar and language of instruction among pupils and its effect on reading comprehension in selected primary schools of Lusaka district. Four research questions were examined. (i)What is the language diversity outlook of the particular schools, classrooms, individual pupils? and what is the extent and nature of multilingualism of schools in Lusaka? (ii)What is the influence of language familiarity (home and instructional Language) on reading and listening Comprehension? (iii) How does a child’s socio-economic status (SES) as defined by schools attended determine reading and listening comprehension? (iv) Does the language spoken at home determine reading and listening comprehension skills in both English and Cinyanja among pupils in Grade five in primary schools?

### **1.3.Delimitation of the Study**

The study was conducted in three school zones of Lusaka district, Zambia. Out of the 10 zones of Lusaka district, the study was done in Chilenje, Lusaka central and Kaunda Square zones. The choice of the three zones necessitated the separation of geographical locations such as low densely populated area, peri- urban and medium densely populated areas. The other reason was that at the time of this study, the medium of instruction in Grade one to Grade four was Cinyanja for Lusaka province while Grade five generally used English as the medium of instruction.

### **1.4. Limitations of the Study**

The data was collected using self-reported questionnaire and may, therefore, have been subject to misreporting either deliberately or unintentionally. Additionally, causation could not be determined because of the nature of the study design. Although reading instructions in Zambian schools are initially conducted in the child's mother tongue or most familiar language, pupils' oral and reading proficiency may have been moderated by their knowledge of the English language. There is a general bias towards English when teaching in the content areas. Finally, the number of schools involved in this study was rather small for a multilevel approach, and results of such an analysis can be improved by including more schools and more pupils per school.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Participants**

In this research, the population comprised six Grade five classes each comprising of an average of 40 learners making a total of 240 participants from three primary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia. Care-givers of the participants were also involved in the study in order to provide social economic status. Information such as home possessions (TV, radio and electricity) and parent/guardian's occupation became part of pupils' data. Out of the ten school zones of Lusaka district, three zones were targeted. In each one of these targeted zones, one school was purposively selected because it was a government school which implemented the 2013 language policy and within one of each school, two classes were also purposively selected in order to compare their reading and listening comprehension. The other attribute which necessitated the selection of the Grade five (5) pupils was that they were the first intake to have taken the new language policy learning from its inception, which guaranteed reliable data. Each selected class consisted of the at least forty-five male and female children: 20 high achievers and 20 low achievers were randomly sampled from their group membership of 40 based on information provided by class teachers using the regular literacy class assessment and pace grouping of the children. The researcher ensured field calls to three zones, Chilenje, Lusaka central and Kaunda Square.

The purposeful sampling technique was applied in the selection of high and low performing schools from which children were later drawn. In the selection of pupil-subjects, the stratified simple random sampling was desirable and applied. Children were selected after reviewing their school-attendance. Children with a regular school attendance were eligible for recruitment in the study. Secondly, eligible children came from the average and above average ability groups to

exclude those who were in the below average groups. This was done in order to deal with children who could at least read and write unlike those who could not perform these academic skills. Children who attended school regularly and were not from the lowest ability groups constituted big groups more than the required number for the study. From the eligible bigger groups, the required forty children were then selected and recruited for the study.

## ***2.2. Data collection Instruments and Procedures***

Data was captured through a pupils' self-report biographical data sheet, an orally administered questionnaire aimed at collecting data from the sampled Grade five (5) pupil participants. The questionnaire probed language background, exposure to literacy activities in class, exposure to literacy activities at home, availability of reading materials at home, exposure to literacy activities in the community, social-economic status and home possessions. A care-giver's self-report home literacy questionnaire was also administered prior to learner's engagement. Tests to assess reading and listening comprehension skills in both Cinyanja and English were later administered. The reading comprehension test was in order to assess whether learners read the words correctly or not (fluency), learners were asked to read aloud a short passage and to answer comprehension questions from the read passage. This test assessed the learner's ability to understand what was read by answering questions.

After reading a short passage, a learner was asked five (5) questions just after completing oral passage reading in both English and Cinyanja. The wh-questions (what, who, how) were asked to test learners' basic understanding of the story. A learner was given two (2) minutes to read the short passage answer the question asked by the test administrator (researcher). Each question answered correctly carried two marks while an incorrect response carried one(1) mark and zero (0) mark for no response. For listening comprehension, two stories were read to participants slowly and fluently in English language and Cinyanja separately. The language skill tested were those of recall and application in the areas of vocabulary. Participants were expected to listen carefully and attentively, comprehend what had been said and respond to the five (5) follow-up questions in relation to the story. The listening comprehension test included ten (10) questions altogether of which five (5) in Cinyanja were drawn from the Cinyanja story and the other five (5) came from the story in English language.

### **3. Results of the Study**

#### **3.1. Profiles of Language Diversity in Schools and Classrooms of Lusaka District.**

In order to understand the claims proposed that urban communities are far more multilingual than peri-urban area, a linguistic profile of learners, schools was necessary to see how multilingual they are in practice. Such language diversity profiles helped to understand the extent to which the practice or disregard of familiar language education in various types of schools in Lusaka was informed by the nature of the multilingualism found in them. Pupils were rated in terms of proficiency according to their performance in the four (4) test items presented to them. There were three study schools under this research. All the selected schools were government schools (Lus-1 is located in low density area (Kabulonga), Lus-2, located in the peri-urban area (State Lodge) and Lus-3 located in the medium densely populated residential area (Chelstone). In terms of class language, the results shows that learners in peri-urban or outskirts of the district used more of Zambian languages in class than the school located in a low densely populated residential area and interestingly, the school located in the medium densely populated residential area recorded 56 pupils (59.6 %) using Zambian language and 24; (16.4%) using English language.

On the other hand, learners in the school situated in the low densely populated residential area recorded 60; (41.1%) of learners using English language in contrast to 20; (21.3%) learners using Zambian languages in class. Sixty-two (62) learners represented by 42.5% in the peri-urban school used English as a class language while the other 18; (19.1%) of the learners used Zambian language. The total users of English language in classes for all the three schools was 146; (60.8%) while the total representation of learners who used Zambian languages was 94; (39.2%). These results suggest language diversity in primary schools of Lusaka District. In terms of class language, Table 1 below shows the distribution of the respondents who participated in the study from all the schools located in low density areas, peri-urban and schools located in high density areas

*Table 1: Languages Spoken by Pupils in Sampled Classes of Lusaka District*

<b>School</b>			
<b>Lus 1</b>	<b>Lus 2</b>	<b>Lus 3</b>	<b>Total</b>

English	60 (41.1%)	24(16.4%)	62(16.4%)	146(60.8%)
Cinyanja	20(21.3%)	56(59.6%)	18(19.1%)	94(39.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>80(33.3%)</b>	<b>80(33.3%)</b>	<b>80(33.3%)</b>	<b>240(100%)</b>

**Note:** Lus 1= the school in low densely populated residential area, Lus 2 = the peri-urban school and Lus 3 = the school in a medium densely populated area.

In addition, a Cross-tabulations was used to examine any differences in the results between groups of interest in this case which were schools. It was observed that the preference of language of use by learners in class in the three schools varied and reviewed that 20; (21.3%) pupils in the school located in the low densely populated zone preferred Cinyanja while 60; (41.1%) learners favoured English. In the peri- urban school, 24; (16.4%) pupils indicated English while 56; (59.6%) learners alleged that Cinyanja was their language of communication in class. Pupils in the school located in a high densely populated residential area indicated that 62; (42.5%) used English and 18; (19.1%) of learners used Cinyanja in class. The overall number of pupils who use English as a language of communication in class was 92; (38.3%) and Cinyanja was submitted by 94; (39.2%) pupils. The results suggests that the school located in a low densely populated area had the highest number of pupils using English in class while the school located in a peri-urban area had the highest number of pupils using Cinyanja in class.

The chi- square test between child’s language and class language was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2, N=240) = 48.336, P<.0.1$ ). Meaning, that there are statistically significant differences among reading and listening performance with respect to the following characteristics of the respondents: child’s language, (significant at  $P < 0.05$ ) and class language (significant at  $P < 0.1$ ).

### **3.2. Language Demographics of the Pupils in the Sampled Schools: Proportions of Language Distribution by Ethnicity**

Acknowledging the possibilities of children from many African communities growing up with multiple languages which can all be regarded as their L1, a record of linguistic profiles of learners was called for. The results as expected reveals that the school situated in the low densely populated residential area and the school located in a medium densely populated areas had the highest number of learners using English Language as represented by the numbers 39 and 41 respectively. These

results might be as a result of their location as most pupils came from high class residential area. On the other hand the peri-urban school recorded a small number of learners using English language in class. This illustration is as a result of its location in the rural outskirts of the district and learners came from a low socially and economical homes.

This justifies the reason why the peri-urban School had the highest number of Zambian language speakers in classes above the school located in a low densely populated residential area and the school situated in a medium densely populated area. The statistics for child language were as follows: the total number of pupils who claimed to speak English language for all the schools was 46, Cinyanja 140, Icibemba 31, Chitonga 13, Silozi two (2), Luvale six (6) and other Zambian languages recorded two (2) pupils. Surprisingly, the school in the peri-urban area had no child who claimed to have had used English as home language. Cinyanja appeared to be the most dominant language of all the languages presented in the results, seconded by Icibemba. Almost all the regional languages of Zambia have appeared on the language profile of pupils' language in schools of Lusaka district, giving the impression of multilingualism of learners.

In order to understand this language pattern in the profile very well, the study simultaneously probed the background language for the participants under study and recorded that the collective numbers for child mother's language was English 27, Cinyanja 128, IciBemba 36, Chitonga 19, Silozi four (4), Luvale 14 and other Zambian Languages two (2). Interestingly, the Childs' father language margin for figures were not so much apart from the child mothers' language as the overall numbers for fathers' language indicated; English 21, Cinyanja 113, IciBemba 42, Chitonga 14, Silozi seven (7), Luvale 18 and other Zambian Languages recorded eight (8).

### **3.3. The Extent of Influence of Language Familiarity (Home and Instructional Language) and its Effect on Reading and Listening Comprehension.**

The results for the independent variables were showed that there was a mean difference and standard deviation between reading comprehension in English ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = 4.35$ ) and Reading comprehension in Cinyanja ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 2.96$ ), the results were statistically significant because the two variables were likely not caused by chance for a given statistical significance level. This means that children performed better at reading comprehension in English than reading comprehension in Cinyanja ( $t(239) = -9.655$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Additionally, the scores of Listening



comprehension in English were ( $M = 6.51, SD = 3.26$ ) while Listening comprehension in Cinyanja recorded ( $M = 2.72, SD = 2.92$ ), the two results were also statistically significant considering the level of confidence between the two variables ( $t(239) = -7.941, p < .001$ ). These results suggested that the scores in listening comprehension in Cinyanja were lower than that of listening comprehension in English. Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant positive association between reading comprehension in Cinyanja and reading comprehension in English  $r(240) = .43, p < .001$  and moderately negatively correlated between listening comprehension in Cinyanja and Listening comprehension in English  $r(240) = -.35, p < .001$ .

Results of the Spearman correlation further showed that there was a significant positive association between reading comprehension in Cinyanja and reading comprehension in English other than listening comprehension in Cinyanja with Listening comprehension in English. In addition, results of the independent sample t-tests specified that there were significant differences in Reading comprehension between Cinyanja and English.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Means, SD's, and Correlations

	MEAN	SD	1	2	3	4
Listening Comprehension_Cinyanja	4.72	2.84	1			
Reading Comprehension_Cinyanja	2.72	2.96	<b>.44**</b>	1		
Listening Comprehension English	6.51	3.26	.35**	.23**	1	
Reading Comprehension English	5.25	4.33	.29**	<b>.43**</b>	<b>.67**</b>	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Furthermore, results of the dependent (paired) sample t-tests indicated that there were similarly significant differences in performance results between listening comprehension in Cinyanja and Listening comprehension in English. These results suggest that if a child is unfamiliar with Listening comprehension in Cinyanja, the reading comprehension will definitely be affected too, hence the low performance in reading. This suggestion has been illustrated by the moderately high correlation figure between the two components. The results for this study further reveal the overall effect of familiarity of language listening comprehension on reading by the minimal margin of

mean difference between reading and listening comprehension in English and a significantly high correlation.

### **3.4. The Effect of a Child's Socio-Economic Status (SES) as Defined by Schools Attended on Listening and Reading Comprehension.**

The study also sought to identify the factors experienced by primary school pupils which affect reading comprehension based on the socio-economic status, school attended and location and language used at home. Based on the cross tabulation results, 50% of the participants came from densely populated low socio-economic communities. A small number in learners using English language in class as it was located in the outskirts of the district and learners came from a low socially and economical homes and it had the highest number of Zambian language speakers in classes above the school located in a low densely populated area and the school in the high densely populated community.

A 3X2 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the effects of a child's socio-economic status defined by home possessions on reading and listening comprehension. According to descriptive statistics, the possession of a Television (T.V) set ( $M = 1.09$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ), possession of a radio ( $M = .720$ ,  $SD = .451$ ), electricity in the house ( $M = .709$ ,  $SD = .456$ ) and the guardian/parent's occupation recorded ( $M = .325$ ,  $SD = .471$ ),  $p = >.05$ . There was a significant mean difference in Reading comprehension in Cinyanja in all the home possessions recorded in the results. it was interesting to discover that there was a significant difference in mean difference examined in listening comprehension in Cinyanja among the home possessions Electricity ( $M = .837$ ,  $SD = .373$ ), and the guardian/parent's occupation ( $M = .432$ ,  $SD = .502$ ),  $p = < .05$  and a slight significant mean difference in Television (T.V) set possession ( $M = .804$ ,  $SD = .346$ ) and possession of a radio ( $M = .621$ ,  $SD = .491$ ).

A significant mean difference was recorded in reading comprehension in Cinyanja between the possession of a T.V ( $M = 1.06$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) and electricity in a home ( $M = .847$ ,  $SD = .361$ ),  $p = < .05$ . A significant mean difference was additionally noted in Listening comprehension in English between T.V possession and the guardian/parent's occupation ( $M = .307$ ,  $SD = .470$ ),  $p = < .05$ . The MANOVA test also illustrates that learners possessed Television (T.V) sets used more of English languages both in class and at home than those who did not claim to possess a TV at home.

The general regression model was statistically significant in all the four data sets: reading comprehension in Cinyanja,  $F(3,231) = 1.188, p = .307$ , Listening comprehension in Cinyanja,  $F(3,231) = .919, p = .501$ , Reading comprehension in English,  $F(3,236) = 19.455, p < .05$ , and Listening comprehension in English,  $F(3,236) = 27.389, p < .05$ ; meaning all the variables named above have an effect on reading and listening comprehension with the three variables explaining about 16% ( $R^2 = .040$ ), 0.96% ( $R^2 = .031$ ), 49% ( $R^2 = .221$ ), 67% ( $R^2 = .258$ ) of the performance variances respectively. The regression results shows that Pupils' age had a significant impact on performance in reading comprehension in both languages but was a factor only in listening comprehension in English language  $p < .002$ . These results mean that the older the pupil, the more likely they did better in the performance of the given comprehensions. In addition, age was not a factor in listening comprehension in Cinyanja  $p > .05$  meaning, how old one was did not affect their performance in listening to Cinyanja.

Age, school location and home language had statistically significant effect on Listening comprehension in English performance and listening comprehension in Cinyanja, refereeing by the respective largest and smallest proportions of variance accounted for  $R^2$ . Results indicated that pupils' age had a statistically significant influence on performance in the reading and listening comprehension in English models only, with  $\beta = .205, t(-3.078) = -.664, p < .05$  and  $\beta = -.187, t(-2.367) = -.635, p < .05$  respectively. These results suggested that the older the child, the better they performed in reading and listening comprehension. However, the beta coefficient was greater for, Reading comprehension in English than for Listening comprehension in English. Home language had no statistically significant influence on reading and listening comprehension performance for all the four variables ( $p > .05$ ). On the other hand, school location had no influence in all the four reading and listening skills.

### **3.5. Language Spoken at Home as a Determinant of Reading and Listening Comprehension Skills among Pupils in Grade Five in Primary Schools**

These results illustrate the specific trajectories home language affects reading and listening comprehension. Post hoc comparisons to evaluate pairwise differences among group means were conducted with the use of Tukey HSD test since equal variances were not tenable. Tests revealed significant pairwise differences between the mean scores of pupils who come from families who claimed to speak Cinyanja language at home LC-NY; ( $M = 4.57$ ), RC-NY; ( $M = 2.53$ ), LC-ENG;

( $M = 6.00$ ); RC-ENG; ( $M = 4.55$ ) and those who claimed to speak English language, LC-NY; ( $M = 5.35$ ); RC-NY; ( $M = 3.52$ ); LC-ENG; ( $M = 8.65$ ); RC-ENG; ( $M = 8.17$ ). A post hoc Tukey test showed that the groups differed significantly; Listening comprehension in Cinyanja illustrated non-significant  $p = .455$ ; reading comprehension in Cinyanja non-significant  $p = .1.17$ ; Listening comprehension in English was statistically significant  $p = < .05$ , reading comprehension in English group presented significantly significant  $p = < .05$ . Meaning the results were likely not caused by chance for a given statistical significance level and this statistical significance level reflects the risk tolerance and confidence level.

The majority (58.3%) of the learners alleged that they used Cinyanja in their homes. Those that alleged that the language spoken at home was English was 19.2 percent and those who indicated that they used other languages were representing 22.4 percent of the total population of the pupils. As to whether the language spoken at home was same as the one at school, the study revealed that 42 percent of the learners showed that the language spoken in their homes was the same as the one used at school for instruction, while 58 percent indicated that the language of instruction was different from the language they spoke at home.

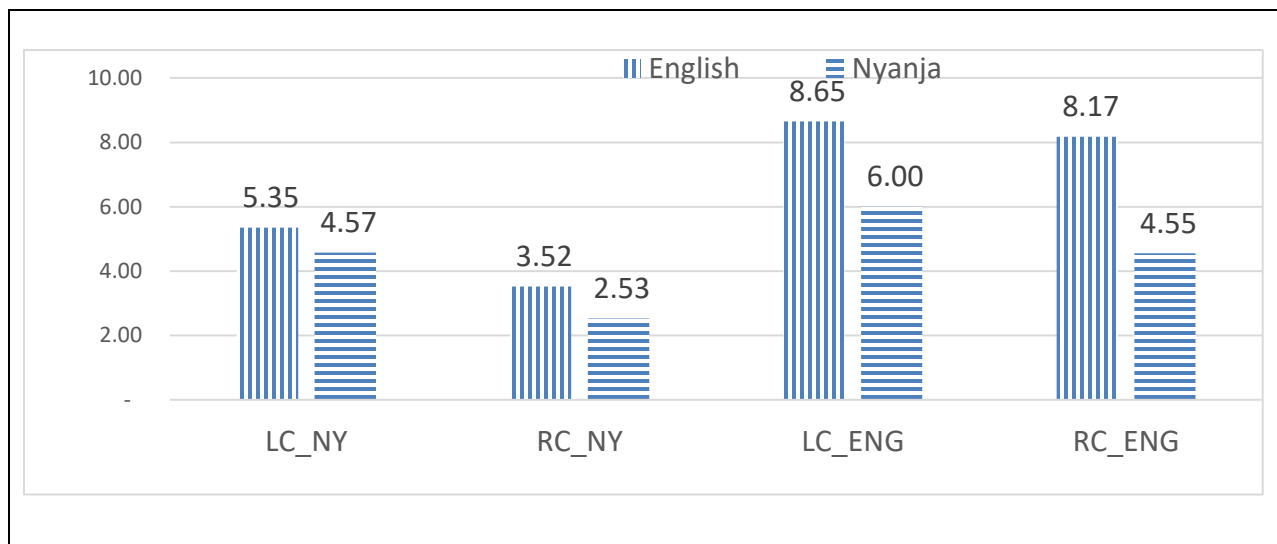


Figure 1: Language spoken at home and performance in comprehension.

Furthermore, a Multiple Linear Regression was run to evaluate the contribution of variables to performance. Reading comprehension, mother’s language, Childs’ language, and home language were used to explain the performance variance. Overall, the regression model was statistically

significant,  $F(3,236) = 9.756, p < 0.01$ . With the four variables accounting for about 12.1% ( $R^2 = .110$  and Adjusted  $R^2 = .099$ ) of the performance in reading comprehension in English language variance. Mostly, results revealed that reading comprehension ( $\beta = -.230$ ), home language ( $\beta = -.352$ ) made statistically significantly ( $p < .05$ ) contributions to pupils' performance in reading comprehension in English language. In contrast, child language had no statistically significant contribution ( $p > .05$ ). However, the contribution of home language was smaller than child's language and mother's language as illustrated by the comparison of the beta coefficients.

The results of this study suggests that Pupils from homes where English and local language are used have a clear advantage in performance in both English and Cinyanja. Pupils from homes which used Cinyanja only on the other side obtained lowest scores in English and Cinyanja. The low scores by pupils from Cinyanja speaking homes may suggest that these learners are not benefiting from the local language use in school as a medium of instruction. The higher scores of those from homes which use both English and local language may be due to the fact that, in such homes, the home language situation is very similar to that of the school, with great flexibility and versatility in moving from one language to the other, and in intermingling the languages, in both home and school.

Table 3: *Multiple Linear Regression Results: Unstandardized and Standardised Beta Weights*

Model	B	$\beta$	P
Mother's language	0.50	.018	.791
Child's language	.127	.036	.641
Home language	-3.865	-.352	.000
Reading comprehension	-.2.524	-.230	.000

*Note.* The dependent Variable was Performance of Pupils in Reading Comprehension.  $R^2 = .110$  and Adjusted  $R^2 = .099$ . B = Unstandardized Beta Coefficient and  $\beta$  = Standardized Beta Coefficient

Analysis of results revealed that majority of the pupils reported claiming to use English at home did better in reading comprehension both in English and Cinyanja as well as listening

comprehension in English but not in listening comprehension in Cinyanja. It was evident from the findings that There are striking differences among children in patterns learners from schools which was located further in the outskirts of the district used more of Zambian languages both in class and at home than those within the district. In general, the difference in mean score performance for listening comprehension in both English and Cinyanja with respect to location were statistically significant  $p. <.05$ .

#### **4. Discussion**

A linguistic profile of learners, and schools was necessary to see how multilingual they are in practice. The significance of this undertaking lies in providing a guideline for language teachers on how to ascertain the linguistic profile of their learners and thus reflectively adapt their teaching to their particular classroom context. The implications for policy may be heeded by the national education authorities as there is a mismatch between the skills of learners and what the policy documents expect learners are capable of doing. Further research could be conducted by drafting a standardized test which determines the linguistic profile in order to align policy documents with classroom reality, and to encourage language teachers to focus on the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of the learners enrolled at schools where English or Cinyanja is the medium of instruction. Such language diversity profiles will help us to understand the extent to which the practice or disregard of familiar language education in various types of schools in Lusaka is informed by the nature of the multilingualism found in them.

In this case, the language profile devised by this study provides valuable information as there are quite a few sources of information for documenting educational language issues and planning for change. International indices of linguistic diversity (Greenberg 1956; Harmon & Loh 2010) are used by the Ethnologue (Lewis et al 2016) to quantify linguistic diversity over time and by country; these have been used by UNESCO (2009) to discuss cultural diversity, and could be cross-referenced with factors like poverty and language policy to reach conclusions about the degree to which educational systems are addressing the needs of their learners. The presence of multiple languages in one school catchment area should not be grounds for ignoring the language of instruction issue; rather, creative solutions should be sought such as organizing classrooms by language rather than by age or grade level (Kosonen 2006), grouping learners for L1 reading lessons while teaching other subjects bi- or multilingually, or using community members as

classroom aides. The linguistic proximity between these languages is also a factor, as it may be possible for teachers to use one “standard” but make oral adaptations to include all learners.

In line with Banda (2012) results, the third school was an urban school in Lusaka located in a high densely populated community. Most of the learners at this school are from the neighboring shanty townships where several Zambian languages were spoken though Cinyanja was still the lingua franca and official Zambian language for the region. Notable languages spoken by many pupils in this school once they are home with parents are Cinyanja, Bemba, Tonga, Soli, Lenje, Lozi, Kaonde and many other Zambian languages. This goes to show that although Cinyanja is the language of play and used as the medium of instruction for initial literacy, it is not the mother tongue of many of the children.

The results as expected reveals that the school located in a low densely populated area and the school situated in a medium densely populated community had the highest number in pupils using English Language because of their location as most pupils came from high class residential areas. In many post-colonial contexts, particularly in multilingual African countries, the distinction between official (European) and national (African) languages “ironically highlight the social distance between the elite and the masses (Alexander 2007: 5). On the other hand the school in the outskirts of the District recorded a small number in learners using English language in class as it was located in the rural outskirts of the district and learners came from a low socially and economical homes.

The Outskirt School had the highest number of Zambian language speakers in class above the school in the low densely populated community and the school located in the medium densely populated community. Despite the high number of Cinyanja users in the mentioned school, the performance in all the tested language areas such as listening and reading comprehension was not impressive. Surprisingly, the peri-urban (outskirt) school had no child who claimed to have had used English as home language. The present research is in tandem with what was also established by Mwanza-Kabbaghe (2015) in Lusaka among first graders. Further, Mkandawire (2012);, Mubanga (2010);, Mubanga (2015);, Chileshe et al (2018), and Matafwali (2010) discoveries are in line with the current study.

Therefore, the results of this study rejects Tambulukani and Bus (2011)’s hypothesis that a better fit between children’s most familiar Zambian language and the Zambian language in which basic reading skills are practiced leads to better reading skills in the Zambian language. The

Manova was significant evidence to agree with the null hypothesis and conclude there is a significant difference between familiar and language of instruction among pupils and it affect reading comprehension.

The Overall findings of this study supports the idea that the language selected as the official language of instructions in a primary schools of Lusaka may not be the one in use in the homes and on the streets for children. The current findings are in line with Tambulukani (2015) but contradict the assumption that Zambian children easily switch from a vernacular language to the official local Zambian language that is used for instruction. Even with the perceived cohesion between pupils' vocabularies and the language of instruction in most primary schools in Lusaka District, children experience serious problems with comprehension as the recorded low scores of pupils in the reading and listening comprehension in Cinyanja as the tests results indicate.

This research further disputes the suggestion by Kashoki (1990) that an allowance of the period in which reading was to be practiced in the Zambian language with two to four years, as occurs in some neighboring countries, has not improved the success rate of the Zambian language-medium policy because even after receiving instructions in Cinyanja for years like in this case, children have not had a chance to become familiar with the Zambian language of instruction in primary schools, however so far there is no empirical evidence that a longer period guarantees greater success for the local language-medium policy. Not only is progress in the reading of English rather weak but progress in reading of a local language is as well. The majority's reading ability does not enable them to comprehend simple written sentences in a Zambian language even though they have been exposed to four (4) years of reading instruction in Cinyanja. Failure to understand reading text may be associated with laziness to comprehend texts or mere aliteracy behaviour (Silavwe, Mwewa and Mkandawire, 2019).

Despite the emphasis on the 2013 language policy, most primary school pupils are not instructed in their most familiar language as the vocabulary differs the language of instruction. This study therefore argues that the four year period of instructions in Cinyanja has not only provided evidence to the language mismatch but other facets of reading instruction which might explain delays in learning to read at a broader analysis should be considered in future investigations. Especially these findings concerning low achievers suggest that apart from unfamiliarity with the language of instruction, the quality of decoding training and probably also



the lack of language or listening comprehension as proposed by Gough and Tunmer (1986) may contribute substantially to pupils' reading comprehension success rate.

Results of this study illustrates the low correlation coefficient in listening comprehension in English and Cinyanja, which in outlook of the simple view of reading should definitely give advantage in better performance in reading comprehension. The results further reveals the effect of familiarity of language listening comprehension on reading by the minimal margin of mean difference between reading and listening comprehension in English and a significantly high correlation. Interestingly, the results additionally demonstrate that pupils exhibited strength in listening comprehension but pupils could not perform better in reading. This would call for more research as it contradicts the Simple View of Reading (SVR) model proposed by researchers Gough and Tunmer in 1986 which places emphasis on the vitality of listening comprehension in reading.

In agreement to Tambulukani's (2015) conclusions, the current study similarly observes that, reading in both English and Zambian language. Lusaka children score higher when they read English comprehension as compared to Zambian Language (Cinyanja) comprehension. These results for Lusaka could point to the possibility that for primary schools in Lusaka based on a good performance in English makes it seem more familiar language to the children than the profound Cinyanja (Cichewa) used in NBTL although they are both second languages to these children because they have the other Nyanja that is most familiar to them as demonstrated in the language profile devised in this study.

The current study further sought to identify the factors experienced by primary school pupils which affect reading comprehension based on the socio-economic status using a regression test and it suggests strong, cumulative and empirical evidence that the family not only influences school preparedness but also performance through various means such as emergent literacy behaviours. The role families and emergent literacy plays in the development of literacy is echoed by Nkhata et al, (2019); Mumba and Mkandawire (2020); Chansa-Kabali, Mwanza-Kabaghe (2015); Matafwali (2010); and Mubanga (2015) suggest that these differential effects on literacy achievement in early school years are closely linked to the quality and quantity of literacy-related experiences and language development in early childhood. To achieve this, the study investigated family factors such as languages spoken at home, parental support such as helping with homework and the frequency of reading habits for both children and parents (Chileshe et al, 2018). The study

furthermore pursued to establish school factors that support reading fluency such as languages of instruction teachers used as well as the number of Cinyanja and English text books children possessed.

Age, school location and home language had statistically significant effect on Listening comprehension in English performance and listening comprehension in Cinyanja, refereeing by the respective largest and smallest proportions of variance accounted for R<sup>2</sup>. Results indicated that pupils' age had a statistically significant influence on performance in the reading and listening comprehension in English models only. However, the beta coefficient was greater for, Reading comprehension in English than for Listening comprehension in English. Home language had no statistically significant influence on reading and listening comprehension performance for all the four variables. On the other hand, school location had no influence in all the four reading and listening skills.

In relation to Serpell's (2005) results, this study shows that Parents' own literacy habits influence children's interest and motivation for reading. This illustrates that although socio-economic status between schools located in medium density areas and schools located in low density areas play a role in the performance of reading comprehension, it does not play significant a role as that of language, which indicates a moderate size of  $d=0.53$ . Surprisingly, the regression analysis further illustrated that age had a significant effect on the performance in reading Cinyanja and English language suggesting that the older a pupil was, the better they performed in reading and listening comprehension. On the other hand, School location, age and home language had also a significant effect on listening comprehension in English. In the same vein, research has shown the importance of the type of school a child attends in influencing educational outcomes.

The language spoken at home was a factor investigated by the study. This was deemed to be important because ideally initial reading fluency should be based on the language children speak in their homes. It was evident from the findings that there are striking differences among children's performance patterns. Learners from schools which was located further in the outskirts of the district used more of Zambian languages both in class and at home than those within the central business district. Furthermore, linear regression analyses were carried out to predict reading comprehension performance from a number of background variables.

As to whether the language spoken at home was same as the one at school, the study revealed that 42 percent of the learners showed that the language spoken in their homes was the

same as the one used at school for instruction, while 58 percent indicated that the language of instruction was different from the language they spoke at home. These findings show that the language policy on the language of instruction in schools of Lusaka district has not been implemented with caution as advised in the 2012 examination council of Zambia national assessment survey recommendations. It was anticipated that children who came from homes which used Cinyanja as home language would perform better than their counterparts who came from English speaking homes. Surprisingly, therefore, results show that home language strongly predicted reading and listening comprehension in both English and Cinyanja. Reading achievement is likely mediated by language Foster et al (2005) have also recorded that the quality of the home environment is widely recognized as a strong contributor to young children's emergent literacy and social competence and to their subsequent educational success.

The 2014 examination council of Zambia survey categorised the location of schools according to high class low densely populated residential or low class high densely populated divided. It was evident from the findings that learners from the high class low densely populated residential settings outperformed their counterparts in English language. In the same vein, the performance in Zambian languages was almost at par in both locations with an insignificant difference of 0.8 percent in favour of high class low densely populated residential areas. In general, the difference in mean score performance for reading comprehension with respect to location of school in this study were surprisingly statistically significant. These results are constant with those of the 2012 examination council of Zambia national assessment survey and the current study (ECZ, 2015).

The results of this study suggests that Pupils from homes where English and local language are used have a clear advantage in performance in both English and Cinyanja reading and listening comprehension. Pupils from homes which used Cinyanja only on the other side obtained lowest scores in English and Cinyanja. The low scores by pupils from Cinyanja speaking homes may suggest that these learners are not benefiting from the local language use in school as a medium of instruction. The higher scores of those from homes which use both English and local language may be due to the fact that, in such homes, the home language situation is very similar to that of the school, with great flexibility and versatility in moving from one language to the other, and in intermingling the languages, in both home and school.

On the other hand, majority of the pupils reported claiming to use English at home did better in reading comprehension both in English and Cinyanja as well as listening comprehension in English but not in listening comprehension in Cinyanja. It was evident from the findings that There are striking differences among children in patterns learners from schools which was located further in the outskirts of the district used more of Zambian languages both in class and at home than those within the central business district. In general, the difference in mean score performance for listening comprehension in both English and Cinyanja with respect to location were statistically significant. Adequate reading comprehension skills are crucial for virtually all aspects of formal education as well as for full participation in society.

### ***5. Conclusion***

The investigation assumes that urban schools are multilingual to the extent that they cannot choose a dominant local language; as such, urban schools may use familiar Cinyanja to instruct learners from early childhood to grade four (4) in primary school. However, the linguistic repertoires of individual schools (government), classrooms, and individual learners have revealed that extreme multilingualism such that almost all the regional languages have appeared on the language profile of pupils' language in schools of Lusaka district giving the impression of multilingualism of learners. The language of instruction in lower primary schools is one of the most important inputs into the education production function, however, findings from studies done in Lusaka District imply that most children in primary schools are denied the opportunity to develop basic literacy skills using their familiar language as it differs from the language of instruction.

Furthermore, this study indicate that vocabulary knowledge is not a determinant factor for the success of a reading comprehension activity in L1 and L2 contrary to the suggestion of the simple view of reading (SVR). This view is evident as the participants involved in this study suggest that lack of knowledge in word meaning results in them being unable to process certain information which is crucial to the understanding of the whole text. Although Cinyanja is their native language, some words that appear in Cinyanja text are still new to the pupils and they are unaware of the meaning of these words. The same situation also occurred when they processed the English text.

This study contends that knowledge in vocabulary is one of the major hindrances for reading comprehension. Similarly to what other studies have assumed that knowledge in

vocabulary and reading comprehension are interdependent and there is strong correlation between the two in order to successfully process reading text in any language, the results of the present study affirms in disapproval the claims. These results for Lusaka could point to the possibility that for Lusaka schools, English is a more familiar language to the children than the deep Nyanja used in NBTL although they are both second languages to these children because they have the other Nyanja that is most familiar to them.

Even though there is some commonality between pupils' vocabularies and the language of instruction in most Lusaka District schools, children experience serious problems with reading as the low scores of pupils on the reading comprehension in Cinyanja tests indicate. The performance of pupils in this study was not in any way better than those in the previous surveys, with no significant positive changes in the scores obtained. The results have showed that the situation has remained consistent. In relation to socio-economic status (SES), School location, age and home language had also a significant effect on listening comprehension in English.

In the same vein, research has shown the importance of the type of school a child attends in influencing educational outcomes. Generally, the findings of this study support the idea that the language chosen as the official language in Lusaka District may not dominate in the homes and on the street. Even though there is some commonality between pupils' vocabularies and the language of instruction in most schools in the District, children experience serious problems with reading as the low scores of pupils on the reading comprehension in Cinyanja tests illustrated. Hence, there is no familiarity of pupils' language of instruction with home and language of play (familiar language).

### **5.1. Recommendations**

Based on the study findings and their interpretations as well as the conclusions, the findings of this study inform helpful recommendations pertaining to the language in education policy and the education system of Zambia. Firstly, there is a need to compile countrywide community and/or school linguistic profiles so as to come up with a well informed and practical language policy. Furthermore, the study also recommends interrogation of the language policy in line with what is practical on the ground since most of the instructional materials in the schools are in English but not Cinyanja. First, the focus should be on the development of materials in the local languages and then enforcing the policies. The system should also support for the production of reading materials

in the children's familiar or language of play to enhance the reading culture. In addition, teacher language proficiency is key to implementing L1-based familiar language. Qualified teachers from the same linguistic communities as learners are well positioned to teach initial and continuing literacy as well as other academic content through the L1, though they may need training in L1 orthographic conventions and bilingual teaching methods. In contexts where qualified teachers with proficiency in learners' L1s are not available, the two choices are (1) training existing teachers in the learners' L1s, or (2) training youth or adult L1 speakers to be teachers.

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