

The Language Planning Situation in Malawi

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This monograph presents a detailed study on the language planning situation in Malawi. It explores the historical and political processes, as well as current practices of language planning in the country. The discussion further reconstructs and demonstrates how sociopolitical change has been perceived in Malawi and how this perception has translated into language planning in education, the media and the general patterns of language use. The role of prominent individuals, the language situation itself and the sociopolitical issues serve as bases from which language planning in Malawi should be understood. Taken together the resultant language planning practices (past and present) present an interesting case study of pervasive *ad hoc* and reactive language planning based more on self-interest and political whim than research.

Introduction

Malawi is situated in central southern Africa and shares boundaries with Tanzania in the northeast, Zambia in the west and Mozambique in the southeast. The country is approximately 900 kilometres in length and ranges in width from 80–160 kilometres. It has a total area of 118,486 square metres of which 94,276 is land and the rest is taken up by Lake Malawi which is about 475 kilometres long (Malawi National Statistical Office (MNSO), 1996:1). Malawi is divided into three main administrative areas: the Northern, the Central and the Southern Regions. The country is further divided into 27 districts, 5 in the Northern Region, 9 in the Central Region and 13 in the Southern Region. Malawi has an estimated population of 12 million¹ of which 42% were literate in 1987 and 89% are located in the rural areas.

Malawi is linguistically heterogeneous with 13 Malawian languages and their numerous dialects being spoken within the country (Kayambazinthu, 1995). The language situation in Malawi, like that in most other African countries, is characterised by the asymmetrical coexistence of English, the official language; Chichewa, the national language, and 12 other indigenous languages and their varieties. This monograph provides a description of the language situation in Malawi and its various dimensions including the dynamism of multilingualism. The monograph focuses on the major languages, their spread, language planning and language maintenance and prospects in Malawi. The monograph also draws together a number of isolated surveys carried out in Malawi to elucidate the language situation there. The interplay and use of both major and minor languages are focused on at both macro and micro levels.

Part 1: The Language Profile of Malawi

Definition of terms

In this section *language* is defined on a combined geopolitical and genetic basis. The term language, as opposed to dialect, is defined according to Chambers and Trudgill (1980: 5) who regard dialects 'as subdivisions of a particular language. A language therefore is a collection of mutually intelligible dialects' or varieties. The discussion further recognises that there are many borderline cases where politically and socially it is difficult to make the distinction between a language and a dialect. On the basis of mutual intelligibility one would consider Malawian languages such as Khokhola and Lomwe as one and the same language, but not Yao and Lomwe. Therefore, the definition and count of different languages may vary considerably from the traditional or official count, especially in Chitipa District, where the definitions are based on an exaggerated older state of linguistic knowledge and or sociopolitical considerations than linguistic ones (see Ntonya, 1998).

The *names* of the languages are those currently being used in Malawi. Language names derive from the ethnic groups by adding (or not adding) either the prefix *Chi-*, *Ki-* or *Kya-* depending on the language. For purposes of this monograph and for consistency the language prefix will not be used.² The term *speaker* is reserved for active speakers able to converse with ease on a variety of topics who are likely to raise their children speaking the language and who are able to provide information on the basic documentation of the language. This then excludes those only able to understand the language or those with fragmentary or less fluent ability. The *number of speakers* given can only be taken as an estimate given the 32 year gap since the only language census was done. Malawian languages have not been studied or properly documented, except to a limited extent for Chichewa, Yao and Tumbuka.

The languages and their historical background

Geographically and culturally Malawi is linked with eastern Zambia, northern Mozambique and Northern Tanzania. All these neighbouring countries have contributed to the ethnic and linguistic composition of Malawi and vice versa. Typologically all Malawian languages are of Bantu origin. From the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries AD, several political entities originated from the Congo Basin, each of which was presumably dominated by a single monoethnic and monolingual core: the Chewa, Tumbuka and the Ngulube group. The foundations of the modern ethnic and linguistic map were completed with the coming of the Ngoni, Yao and Lomwe. In spite of the increasingly divergent ethnic and linguistic presence in the region, the political history of Malawi was characterised by peaceful existence of the groups. During this period, most of these Malawian languages had roughly equal positions as dominant languages of their culture. It was the coming of the missionaries and the later rise to power of Dr Banda that decisively turned the balance of power in favour of Chichewa. This section focuses on the history of the indigenous people, their languages and dialects from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries AD with a view to showing the historical processes that gave rise to the various dialects. In view of their different historical

relationships, the languages spoken in Malawi may be divided into three distinct groups: major indigenous languages, minor indigenous languages and minor non-indigenous languages. The territorial identities and sociolinguistic positions belonging to each language are discussed in the sections that follow.

Indigenous languages

*Chichewa (zone N, group 20)*³

In its standard and non-standard variety, Chichewa has been used as the sole national language since 1968, for both regional and national administrative, literacy and cultural purposes in Malawi. It is the native language of 50.2% of Malawians, both rural and urban (MNSO, 1966). A number of source dialectal varieties are spoken, reflecting the geographical origins of the population and their wave of migration connected to territorial expansion. The major dialects recognised in Malawi are Chewa, Nyanja and Mang'anja.

According to Phiri *et al.* (1992: 608), the central and southern part of Malawi was dominated by the Chewa speakers and their subgroups: the Mang'anja of the lower Shire Valley and Nyanja around the southern end of Lake Malawi. The northern area stretched on the western side of Lake Malawi from the Tumbuka-Chewa marginal zone in the centre to the Songwe river in the north was occupied by three language families: the Tumbuka group, Ngonde-Nyakyusa and the Sukwa-Lambya-Nyiha group.

Historians (Alpers, 1968, 1972; Pachai, 1973; Phiri *et al.*, 1992: 615) agree that between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries AD, most of central and southern Malawi was settled by Bantu speakers. These were at first a collective part of the vast and widely settled community of the Maravi or Malawi peoples, now known as Chewa, Nyanja and Mang'anja. The Maravi migrated from the Luba-Lunda kingdoms of eastern Zaire and settled in a place called Mankhamba (present-day Dedza district) in Malawi under their leader, Kalonga. Here they fused with the early inhabitants, the proto-Chewa.

Historically, a wave of migration took place connected with lack of space and territorial expansion. As noted by Pachai (1973: 8), terminologically, the various dialect clusters of Chewa,⁴ the language they spoke, is better understood within the framework of migration, economic power and the political organisation of the Maravi Empire. What started off as Maravi ended up as Chewa, Mang'anja, Nyanja, Chipeta, Nsenga, Chikunda, Mbo, Ntumba and Zimba, as a result of dispersion and decentralisation. For over half of the seventeenth century, the Maravi established an empire built upon ivory trade to Kilwa and Mozambique with the Portuguese and, later, the Arabs, and embarked on territorial expansion that took them beyond central and southern Malawi into adjacent parts of Zambia and Mozambique (Phiri *et al.*, 1992). Phiri also claims that by the early seventeenth century, their federation of states encompassed the greater part of eastern Zambia, central and southern Malawi and northern Mozambique. Population growth led to pressure on land, local quarrels, the desire to settle on one's own, and the urge to control or protect trade routes and goods (Pachai, 1973). Consequently, the empire disintegrated, leading to several different established subsidiary chiefdoms and kingdoms of related people speaking various dialects of the Chewa cluster (Marwick, 1963; Pachai, 1972).

For example, Kalonga is said to have sent out a number of his relatives to establish settlements in various areas for political and economic reasons (Alpers, 1968). Mwase settled in an ivory rich district, Kasungu; Kaphwiti and Lundu settled in the lower Shire Valley and Mkanda in eastern Zambia (now Chipata District). All these tributary kings owed allegiance to the Paramount Kalonga and paid tribute. However, the bond was later severed. For example, Undi left for Mozambique territory and was by 1614 reported to be trading with the Portuguese. This reduced Kalonga's position (Pachai, 1973: 8). External factors such as trade, availability of arms and ammunition acquired from the Portuguese and Arab traders, gold and ivory trading led to the strengthening of the power of the tributary kings like Undi, Lundu and Mwase-Kasungu (Pachai, 1973). Kabunduli, Chulu, Kaluluma and Kanyenda moved into the Tumbuka-Chewa marginal areas creating a mixed sociolinguistic group of whom the Tonga of northern Nkhota Kota and Nkhata Bay districts are the most obvious (Phiri *et al.* 1992: 622).

Wherever they moved, the Maravi called themselves by the geographical areas in which they settled, to distinguish themselves from other groups. For instance, people from the chiefdom of Mkanda in Zambia referred to themselves as Chewa, Kunda, Nsenga and Ambo; those of the southwestern lakeshore and the Shire River as Nyanja (meaning people of the lake or people living along the lake). Those of Undi and Mwase Kasungu who settled in the hinterlands of Kasungu, Dowa, Ntchitsi, Mchinji, called themselves Chipeta (Chipeta means tall grass or savanna). Those of Kaphwiti were known as Mang'anja. 'These various dialectal names were no more than regional or geographical designations of people who belonged to the same cultural and language groups, later on developing distinct dialects' (Schoffeleers, 1972: 96). Of these, the name Chewa referred to the numerically strongest group (Marwick, 1963; Pachai, 1973), of whom about 80% live in Malawi and the remaining 20% or so in Zambia and Mozambique (Pachai, 1973: 6).

Schoffeleers (1972: 96), unlike other historians, maintains that the Chewa-speaking people were never known collectively as Chewa or Maravi but were known by two names: a specific one and a generic one, the latter being Maravi. But what is clear from all historical accounts is that the name Maravi (not Chewa) stood for an ethnic group or part of it. One would therefore disagree with Chilipaine (1985: 3) who stated that all these groups were ethnically Chewa, because ethnohistorical evidence points to the fact that they were ethnically Maravi but dialectally rather differentiated. Although the linguistic affiliation between the Chewa and the Nyanja is still a matter of dispute as to who owns the language, it is likely that Chewa ethnohistory has involved a cyclic alternation between the three groups and Chewa dominance. There is also lack of consensus regarding the name Mang'anja. Banda (1975) and Mchombo (n.d.) maintain that it is a Portuguese corruption of Nyanja. The Portuguese encounter with South African ethnic groups like the Ama Tchangane, Ama Xhosa led them under the influence of Portuguese phonology, to velarise the palatal ny /ɲ/ to ng /ŋ/ thereby giving rise to a non-existent ethnic group *Mang'anja*, a people who were no other than Chewa.

There is little evidence in support of this patriotic statement that needs to be

examined in the light of the available historical and oral evidence adduced by Schoffeleers, who argues that:

we have some evidence in Portuguese documents of the 17th Century that the present ethnic designations were already used at that time. The names Nyanja and Mang'anja occur already, although it is not quite clear whether they were also used as ethnic names. (1972: 6)

This statement makes more sense than Banda's since the Mang'anja are mainly found in the Shire Highlands and not the Lake Shore. Most likely they called themselves by a different name like the rest. The dialects Chewa, Nyanja and Mang'anja are still present in Malawi but not those of Ntumba, Mbo⁵ and Zimba which can be found in Mozambique or Zambia (Henriksen, 1978: 249). According to Pachai (1972), in Malawi these groups mixed with the Ngoni who are mainly found in the areas these groups once occupied.

Tumbuka (Zone N, Group 20)

Tumbuka is a dominant ethnic and regional lingua franca in the northern part of Malawi. Tumbuka was (1947–68) the northern regional language for education and broadcasts until Dr Hastings Banda banned it in favour of Chichewa. It has the status of a second language for most northerners (Kayambazinthu, 1995). Tumbuka is broadly distributed in three of the five districts in the northern region and, according to the 1966 census, it was a language of 9% of the total population. The origins and diversity of the language stem from areas of settlement and Bryan (1959) identifies eight dialects: Tumbuka, Nkhamanga, Henga, Phoka, Wenya, Fulirwa, Lakeshore and Senga.

The area that covers the Rumphi and Mzimba Districts and extends as far west as the Luangwa valley in the modern Lundazi district of eastern Zambia also experienced a steady influx of Tumbuka migrants from 1700 to the middle 1800 (Vail, 1972; Phiri *et al.*, 1992).⁶ Pachai (1973) suggests that the Tumbuka are the oldest ethnic group in northern Malawi and were basically pastoral and matrilineal people. According to Vail (1972), and Phiri *et al.* (1992) the Tumbuka were organised into a loose confederation under their ethnic chief whose economic and cultural life changed with the coming of traders under their leader Mlowoka. For example, the Phoka inhabit the Nyika Plateau and the fringe lands between the Plateau and the lake shore; the Nkhamanga group are found in the Nkhamanga Plains, the Henga in the Henga Valley, the Wenya and Nthalire in Chitipa District and the Fulirwa between Chitimba and the southern part of Karonga. Below the Phoka are settled the Lakeshore people, so called because they settled along Lake Malawi. Phiri *et al.* (1992: 612) further state that the Nsenga, the present day inhabitants of Lundazi district, seem to have evolved into a tribe as a result of interaction between Tumbuka groups and Luba-Lunda immigrants from the west. Their language is akin to that of the Tumbuka with whom they share clan names. Like the Maravi, the Tumbuka geographical settlement also caused the present distinct dialects that are mutually intelligible.

In the 1780s Tumbuka economic and cultural life changed with the coming of Mlowoka, who had knowledge and experience of external trade. He stayed in the area and traded with locals in beads, cloth and ivory. Through economic power, Mlowoka established a loose confederation under the Chikulamayembe

dynasty at Nkhamanga but his influence was confined to this area and the areas controlled by his trading associates (Katumbi, Mwalweni, Jumbo and Mwamlowe) (Vail, 1972).

Tonga (Zone N, Group 10)

Functionally, Tonga is an ethnic language of the Tonga inhabiting the present day Nkhata-Bay District. According to the 1966 census, it had about 1.9% of speakers and is one of the minority languages confined to its borders. The Tonga inhabit the area between the Viphya range of mountains to the west and north-south of the Luweya River. To the north and west of Tongaland, now the Nkhata Bay district, are the Tumbuka, while the Chewa are to the south in Nkhota Kota District. According to Pachai (1973), the earliest inhabitants were the Nyalubanga clan, but he also connects the Tonga with the Maravi and the Balowoka. Tonga, according to Vail and White (1989), is similar in grammar and vocabulary to Tumbuka but is a distinct language.

The Ngulube Group

(Ngonde and Nyakyusa, Zone M, Group 30; Lambya, Zone N, Group 20; Nyiha, Zone M, Group 20; Sukwa, Ndali and Mambwe, Zone M, Group 10).⁷

All these languages can be functionally grouped as ethnic languages used within their ethnic group; in other words, they do not transcend other ethnic groups and are not documented. The area between the Dwangwa River in the south and the Songwe River in the north is the home of many ethnic groups who formed different linguistic groups. The sixteenth century also saw the coming in of the Ngulube immigrants from the northeast. They founded the states of Lambya, Ngonde, Chifungwe, Sukwa and Nyakyusa (Phiri *et al.*, 1992).

The Ngonde settled in the Songwe area on the northwestern shores of Lake Malawi and border with the Nyakyusa of southern Tanzania to the north, the Sukwa and Lambya to the west and the Tumbuka to the south. Kalinga (1985) (a Ngonde historian) dates their settlement to around the middle of the fifteenth century. Their new land was rich in ivory which they exchanged for cloth, porcelain and metal work with the Nyika people and those of the Misuku hills. Trade in ivory made their leader, Kyungu, a powerful figure (Kalinga, 1985; McCracken, 1972). Even at the peak of their power the Ngonde did not have much influence outside their country of settlement, the present day Karonga District. Wilson (1972) comments that the common factor among the Ngonde, Nyakyusa and Lambya is that they all originated from Bukinga country beyond the tip of Lake Malawi. Wilson (1972: 138) further claims that the Ngonde and Nyakyusa had close cultural and historical ties, speaking the same language although with a different accent. Kalinga (1985: 1) states the same: 'they (Ngonde) are more closely related to the Nyakyusa than any other ethnic group in this region. Their language, KyaNgonde is a dialect of KiNyakyusa, and like the Nyakyusa, they are great cattle keepers'. From this, one would conclude that Ngonde is a dialect of Nyakyusa⁸ (see also Tew, 1950: 75), even though in Malawi they are treated as separate or distinct languages (see Table 1).

Another group, the Lambya, under their leader Mwaulambya, is traced back to Rungwe in Tanzania. Ethnohistorical evidence points to the fact that the Nyiha were the earliest inhabitants of the area where the Lambya settled and peacefully

Table 1 Home languages in numerical order⁵⁵

Language	Number of speakers	Projected number of speakers, 1998	%	District where spoken
Chichewa	1,644,916	5,263,731	50.2	Dowa, Dedza, Lilongwe, Ntchitsi, Blantyre, Kasungu south, Chiradzulu, Nkhota-kota, Mchinji, Salima
Lomwe	476,306	1,524,179	14.5	Mulanje, Thyolo, Zomba, Blantyre Machinga, Chiradzulu
Yao	452,305	1,447,376	13.8	Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Chiradzulu, Blantyre, Mulanje
Tumbuka	298,881	956,419	9.1	Mzimba, Rumphi, Karonga, Chitipa Nkhata-Bay
Sena	115,055	368,176	3.5	Nsanje, Chikwawa,
Khokhola	74,466	238,291	2.3	Thyolo, Mulanje
Tonga	62,213	199,082	1.9	Nkhata-Bay
Ngoni	37,480	119,936	1.1	Mzimba, Deza, Ntcheu
Nkhonde	31,018	99,258	<1	Karonga
Lambya	18,646	59,667	<1	Chitipa
Sukwa	18,300	58,560	<1	Chitipa
Nyakyusa	3,994	12,781	<1	Karonga
Swahili	2,854	9,133	<1	Karonga
Other				
Mambwe	39,538	126,522		Chitipa
Ndali				Chitipa
Nyiha				Chitipa
English	209			Chitipa

established their political authority. Lambya is a dialect of Nyiha (Phiri *et al.*, 1992; Wilson, 1958: 28–9). My own personal communication with a Lambya⁹ points to the same fact. That is, the Lambya and Nyiha are related linguistically and their languages are mutually intelligible. Another Ngulube leader, Kameme, also settled and established his political power over the Nyiha, west of Ulambya. Phiri *et al.* inform us that the Mambwe and Namwanga linguistic groups migrated into the Kameme chiefdom. The linguistic interaction between the indigenous groups and the migrants clearly summarised by Phiri *et al.* (1992: 626) who argue that:

the modern language situation reflects something about the numerical strength of the various immigrant parties who founded chieftaincies as well as the means by which they assumed power and later governed the people. Cilambya and the language of Kameme are dialects of the indigenous Nyiha while Kyangonde and Kinyakyusa are dialects of the Ngulube people's language. In other words, the Mwaulambya and Kameme and their followers were assimilated linguistically while in Ungonde and Unyakyusa, the indigenous people were assimilated by the immigrants. Modern Chisukwa is a dialect of Ndali (a linguistic group north of the Songwe) understood by the Nyiha speakers and relatively easy to learn [*sic*]

by the Ngonde than Nyiha proper. Chisukwa thus forms a bridge between Nyiha and Ngonde languages.

What is interesting and worth noting is that Chitipa (where most of these languages are spoken) is the most linguistically heterogeneous district in Malawi. My informants from this district reported up to 13 languages being spoken in the district (see also Ntonya, 1998). This might be an exaggeration or confusion of the differences between languages and dialects, but it points to the interaction of different ethnic groups who have coexisted but maintained their separate languages within a small district.

The Sena (Zone N, Group 40)

Sena was spoken in Nsanje and Chikwawa by about 3.5% of the total population in 1966. In the Lower Shire, the Sena are said to have migrated to Malawi from Mozambique, their native country, along the lower Zambezi. Tew (1950) views Sena as a group of languages with its main dialects being Sena, Nyungwe and Chikunda. The absence of literature or documentation on this ethnic group in Malawi makes it difficult for one to tell exactly when they migrated into the country, especially into the Chikwawa and Nsanje Districts. However, Watkins (1937) states that the Sena language is spoken in the lower Zambezi and according to Werner (1906) is virtually identical with Nyanja. She also states that the languages called Sena and Tete (Nyungwe) are dialects of Nyanja. However, this assertion needs to be questioned on the basis of knowledge from native speakers and the writer's own experience in the country. Native speakers of Sena claim that their language is not mutually intelligible with Nyanja.¹⁰ Any Malawian coming across this language would agree that it is a different language from Chewa or any other language in Malawi.

Phiri *et al.* (1992) claim that these Malawian people enjoyed a certain degree of social and religious cohesion even though they were politically and linguistically divided. Whilst most of the ethnic groups in the north were patrilineal and patrilocal (except for the Tonga), those in the central and southern part of Malawi, including the Tonga, were matrilineal and matrilocal (see also Tew, 1950). Religious practice for almost all ethnic groups involved ancestral veneration, spirit possession, rainmaking and the control of witchcraft. For the Chewa, the Nyau Secret Society was an important vehicle for expressing and dramatising ethnic creation myths, the moral code and so on (Phiri *et al.*, 1992: 613). The rain cults were the chief manifestations of a territorial religious experience. The Chikha-ng'ombe and Chisumpe cults of the Tumbuka and Chewa respectively belonged to this category. For both ethnic groups the deity took the form of a snake (Phiri *et al.*, 1992).

From the preceding discussion we can see how sociopolitical and economic circumstances created the seeds of the present language situation in Malawi. Factors such as mass migration, political expansion, decentralisation, trade and disintegration contributed greatly to the geographical distribution of early ethnic language groups. Geographical distance later on created dialect distance between people of the same language and culture. The migration patterns also touch on the possibility of genetic relationships between languages such as Chewa, Tumbuka and Tonga on the one hand, and those of the Ngonde, Nyakyusa,

Ndali, Lambya and Nyiha on the other. These ethnic groups, through time and geographical distance, have developed distinct cultures and languages. It is difficult to speculate on contact languages for this period since there is very little documentation. These groups had settled in Malawi for six centuries before the coming of the other ethnic groups that are the subject of our next discussion.

Nineteenth century Malawi: 1848–1897

This period in Malawian history is treated as one of isolated ethnic migration of 'intruders' (Palmer, 1972) as opposed to the mass migration considered previously. It has its own sociolinguistic trends of coexistence with acculturation of small ethnic groups into the numerically large ethnic groups under different circumstances.

The Ngoni (Zone N, Group 10)

Ngoni is another minority language that was spoken by about 1.1% of the population in 1966. Ngoni is a dying language and most of its speakers use Chichewa or Tumbuka except in the few areas where it still survives.

The first group to intrude upon nineteenth century Malawi was the Ngoni, a branch of the Zulu ethnic group in South Africa. Following the death of their leader, Zwangendaba, in 1848 at the south end of Lake Tanganyika, and due to succession disputes, the Ngoni dispersed in different directions. Of significance to this monograph are the Maseko Ngoni and Mpezeni Ngoni. The former, under Gomani, settled in the Kirk Range of Dedza and Ntcheu Districts, whilst those under Chidyaonga settled in Ntcheu, among the Chewa. Another group to settle among the Chewa was under Gwaza Jere who settled in Dowa district. The Mpezeni Ngoni under Mbelwa destroyed the Chikulamayembe dynasty and settled in Mzimba District among the Tumbuka.

McCracken (1972) and Spear (1972) agree that the Ngoni were a militant group who imposed their political or state structure upon their subordinates wherever they went. However, economically and socially, they adopted the agricultural-pastoral economy of the indigenous people. This was augmented by local raiding.

The Ngoni settlements produced a number of cultural and societal changes to the Ngoni themselves as they coexisted, interacted and integrated with the indigenous people. The cultural and linguistic exchanges between them and the indigenous people took a variety of forms depending on the Ngoni policy of assimilation or the lack of it, coupled with the local conditions. For example, Harding (1966) comments that the Gomani Ngoni who subjugated the Nyanja-speaking people in Dedza and Ntcheu spoke the Ngoni dialect of Zulu. 'Except for a few words, no trace of Ngoni is found in their present dialect hereafter called Chingoni' (Harding, 1966: 2). Similarly, the Mpezeni Ngoni who settled in Zambia became largely influenced by Chewa and Senga customs and languages and those of Mbelwa were influenced by Tumbuka (see also Mtenje & Soko, 1998).

The process of acculturation that led to language shift among the Ngoni is better explained in 'the lessened prestige and power of the Ngoni and the greater persistence of the culture of the peoples who were numerically superior in their home territory' (Spear, 1972: 36). Spear further argues that during what is

generally regarded as the 'march', or migration period, and prior to settlement, Nguni was retained as the language because of its prestige and because there was no language competing with it. After settlement, however, the alien group became the minority, and due to intermarriages between the Ngoni and Senga, Ngoni and Chewa, Ngoni and Tumbuka, the children spoke the language of their mothers (who belonged to the conquered group). Even during the march, Ngoni was already a changed language through the accumulation of ethnic groups that swelled their armies. The Ngoni remained a minority and the captives, the majority. Vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar were all altered in turn by various assimilated groups so that the characteristic Ngoni clicks were dropped and new vocabulary and prefixes adopted (Spear, 1972). Even though they remained Ngoni ethnically, linguistically they became either Chewa or Tumbuka and their languages had a significant impact on the languages they mixed with, leading to distinct dialects. Their settlement patterns followed those of the conquered but their political structure and names remained (Mtenje & Soko, 1998).

Among the Tumbuka, Ngoni was retained for some time because of the Ngoni policy of segregation, primarily by the older Ngoni, and in Emcisweni (Mpherembe's headquarters) Ngoni was retained well into the twentieth century (Spear, 1972: 31).¹¹ The language however, has undergone some considerable changes.

Dialect modifications such as the gradual elimination of the clicks and the substitution of 'r' for 'l', the double consonants 'dl' and 'hl' characteristic of Ngoni language were lost as well, pronoun forms of the verb were altered and there was large scale borrowing of vocabulary from Tumbuka. (Werner, 1906: 35)

Tumbuka gradually took over because of intermarriage, i.e. there were an increasing number of Tumbuka mothers within Ngoni society (Kishindo, 1995; Read, 1936). It is clear from Ngoni historiography (Elmslie, 1899; Fraser, 1914; Read, 1956; Kishindo, 1995; Mtenje & Soko, 1998) that cultural dominance in core areas other than language was still there. For example, the Ngoni Ingoma dance and war gear, their paying of the bride price, patrilinealism and Ngoni ceremonies were still their pride and have continued unabated (Mtenje & Soko, 1998). Whilst they remained culturally Ngoni, linguistically they became Tumbuka. The Ngoni language was basically dead and Donald Fraser (1914: 189) wrote: 'There are large districts in which it is an unusual thing to find even an old Ngoni who speaks the pure language of his fathers and one seldom hears it from the lips of a young person'.

Apart from factors like intermarriage and minority group status, one can also speculate that the Ngoni did not enforce their language on their subjects. For a militant group as powerful and aggressive as the Ngoni not to enforce their language on their captives is surprising. One probable explanation for not doing so can be found in their lack of concern for and promotion of their language, coupled with the tenacity of the Tumbuka language. One byproduct of the Ngoni policy of segregation and lack of control over their subjects in the periphery was the breakaway of the Tumbuka. One group settled at the end of Lake Malawi in

Karonga District where they dwell to this day, 'an island of Tumbuka language and culture in a sea of Ngonde people' (Vail & White, 1989: 153).

Yao (Zone P, Group 20)

The Yao form the third largest ethnic group in Malawi and their language was spoken by 13% of the total population in 1966. Yao dialectal variation also stems from geographical settlements and three dialects are identifiable: Mangochi, Machinga and Makanjira Yao (Kishindo *et al.*, 1997).

They were the second group of immigrants to invade Malawi, and derive their name from the Yao Hill situated near Mwembe (between the Lujenda and Rovuma rivers) in Mozambique (Murray, 1922: 45). The Yao were long-distance traders from Mozambique (where they are found in large numbers) who in the 1850s, as a result of either internal disputes or defeat (Alpers, 1972) or drought (Webster, 1978), migrated into Malawi and settled among the Nyanja at the southern end of Lake Malawi. They bred strong chiefs who traded with the Arabs and Swahili (as middlemen) in ivory and, later on, in slaves in exchange for cloth, ornaments and firearms. According to Alpers (1972) the Yao became the dominant population group of the entire northern half of the southern part of Malawi. Militarily powerful and commercially aggressive, they dominated and subjugated the Chewa or Nyanja and Mang'anja for the remainder of the nineteenth century in the Shire Highlands. Their long contact with Muslim traders influenced the majority to profess Islam and adopt Arab dress (Henriksen, 1978: 248).

The Yao came in two groups: the Mangochi Yao who are now settled in Chiradzulu, Blantyre, Zomba and Mulanje Districts, and the Machinga Yao who are settled in the Mangochi, Machinga and Liwonde areas. Murray (1922: 84) comments that there were few if any mixed marriages between the Mangochi Yao or Liwonde Yao and the Chewa, unlike among those who settled in the Shire Highlands. We learn from Murray (1932: 46–47) that:

The Shire Highlands Yao have lost their pride of race and do not observe their customs and the young generations do not know the customs of their ancestors and there are a lot of intermarriages between Nguru and Yao, Yao and Nyanja . . . so that most of them will be Yao in name but linguistically Nyanja. Even today many of the natives in the highlands are of doubtful origin and the majority of the so called Yao have little claim to the name. Amongst them, the Yao language is poorly spoken and shows signs of disappearance.

This reveals that through interaction with the Nyanja, the Yao gradually shifted towards Nyanja culture and language. This owes much to the initial harmonious existence between the peace-loving Nyanja and the Yao, a relationship that changed when the Yao took to the slave trade (Phiri, 1978). Even though intermarriage was one of the causes of language shift, this was also coupled with European employers finding the Nyanja dialect easier to learn and therefore promoting it to the detriment of Yao (Murray, 1932: 46).

Whilst the Shire Highlands Yao mixed with the Nyanja and Mang'anja, the Mangochi and Machinga Yao, having embraced Islam, were more conservative. Even today, they form the highest concentration of the Yao ethnic group in terms

of numbers and lack of integration with other ethnic groups. One should also note that the Shire Highlands was an area of great linguistic interaction with the coming of another group, the Lomwe.

The Lomwe (Zone P, Group 30)

The Lomwe comprise the second largest ethnic group in Malawi (14%). The language is confined to its ethnic group and is the least used language in the country. Lomwe historiography points to the fact that they migrated in small groups and their migration dates back to about 1760 (Rashid, 1978) even though their main impact was not felt until after 1895 (Vail & White, 1989: 167). The Lomwe derive their name from Lomwe Hill in Mozambique and they are akin to the Lolo (Boerder, 1984; Soka, 1953). Nurse (1972), from lexicostatistics, suggests that the Lolo were the forebears of the Lomwe. Soka also records that the Lomwe, who today inhabit Zomba, Mulanje, Thyolo, Chiradzulu and Machinga Districts belonged to five dialectal subdivisions: Muhipiti, Makua, Meeto, Nyamwelo and Mihavani. Another group, the Khokhola (people of the woodlands) crossed the Ruo River and settled in Mulanje, whilst another section, the Athakwani (named after a hill) also settled in the same area.

Rashid (1978), who did research on the relationship between one branch of the Lomwe, the Mbewe, and the Yao and Chewa, argues that there was a great deal of interaction between the Yao, Lomwe and Nyanja contributing to a multiethnic society, primarily Nguru¹² and Nyanja in origin among whom the Yao language was gaining popularity. Through interethnic interaction and the ivory trade, the Lomwe adopted the

language of a numerically very small but prestigious trading elite ... It may have been an advantage in state building and assimilation that the language being adopted was not a lingua franca of one of the major ethnic groups ... its use is linked to economic advantage and prestige. (Rashid, 1978: 20)

Even though this was the case in the early nineteenth century, later Lomwe immigrants are generally treated as late arrivals in the Shire Highlands where the Mang'anja and Yao had a strong foothold. This probably arose because they came in not as militants or traders, like the other intruders, but as settlers in search of land. The Lomwe settled in the Shire Highlands under the terms of Thangata (a feudal system of labour in exchange for land) to both Yao lords and later on British planters. The Lomwe provided a ready and permanent labour supply under this system. Acculturation for the Lomwe like the other immigrants was that of language shift either to Yao or Chewa, as Murray (1932: 56) observes:

The Anguru who have settled in Malawi are rapidly losing their tribal and social characteristics. Of the children born in the protectorate, a few boys or girls have their teeth filed and almost none of the girls have their lips pierced for the lip ring. Most girls later adopt what are accepted as Yao markings and wear a nose button and intermarry among the Mang'anja, Anyanja and Yao. The language readily adopts Mang'anja words, sometimes in a more or less modified form ... a verb within the Lomwe *o* instead of *ku* for the infinitive and with the stress in the wrong place. But the majority of the

younger generation speak Nyanja or Shire Highland Yao with considerable fluency.

From the Lomwe account it can be argued that the Lomwe were not invaders like the Yao and Ngoni; rather they settled and lived as subordinates to their lords, a position that has had and is having serious consequences for their language and self-esteem. Culturally, the Chewa, Lomwe and Yao are matrilineal and matrilocal whilst the Sena are the only patrilineal group in the south.

Non-Malawian minor languages

Arabic and Swahili

The Swahili and the Arabs belonged to the East African coast and their first connection with Malawi was mainly through the ivory and slave trade from the 1840s onwards (McMillan, 1972: 263). The Swahili formed the fighting force of the Arab slave traders and according to Murray (1922) were never numerous. They established settlements at various centres on the lakeshore of Malawi, notably Karonga, Nkhota-kota and Mangochi Districts. Murray (1922) states that through intermarriage with the local Nyanja speakers their language was adopted in these areas under their influence but not beyond it. Like other migrant groups, they also influenced the languages they interacted with, giving rise to a Chewa dialect that is very different in pronunciation and vocabulary from that of the Shire Highlands.

English

The last group of intruders were the British¹³ who introduced English in Malawi. Though there were only about 250 native speakers in the country in 1966, the British form another important and interesting part of linguistic history in Malawi. The role played by Scottish missionaries, Shire Highlands' planters and government administrators is important in both the formulation and shaping of the language policy. The discussion here will be brief as a fuller account is given in Part III of this monograph.

The first British visitors to Malawi were Dr David Livingstone and his party in 1858–64 and again in 1866–73, in the name of commerce and Christianity. The next group of Europeans were the pioneer parties of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions who settled along the lake in 1875 and at Blantyre on the Shire Highlands, respectively. The other groups, who came later, were referred to as 'planters' and were fortune seekers who acquired huge pieces of land for growing coffee and tea in the Shire Highlands.

The advent of the Europeans brought many changes to Malawian society. First, in a bid to protect her nationals in Malawi, Britain declared Malawi (then Nyasaland) the British Central African Protectorate in 1891. On 6 July 1907, the name was changed to Nyasaland Protectorate. Second, the growth of Christianity and its elite challenged the cultural and social fabric of Malawi. Third, it led to the development of a communication system and imbalanced economic development that favoured the Southern Region and in particular the Shire Highlands. Cole-King (1972: 88) states that by 1918, the basis of modern communication systems consisting of a rail, road and river route in and out of the country for

goods and passengers, telegraphic and postal communications with the rest of the world and a road network linking the administrative centres within the country had been established. This infrastructure, the availability of employment for the cash economy, the development of urban centres like Zomba as the capital city for administration and Blantyre as a commercial centre, had a tremendous impact on the mobility of various ethnic groups. People started to work in the tea and tobacco estates. Migration became one-sided, that is, towards the southern part of the country in the Shire Highlands and even to the mines in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Zambia. Urban migration created the need for a lingua franca for inter-ethnic communication. In an area like the Shire Highlands which was already linguistically heterogeneous, the situation became even more complex. The varied responses of different societies or ethnic groups to these changes, discussed later in this monograph, are of crucial importance to the understanding of the current language situation in Malawi.

Demographic distribution of Malawian languages

This section gives some figures indicating the size of each native speaker community based on the 1966 Census data (Malawi National Statistics Office Report (MNSO, 1966)).¹⁴ About 16 languages were investigated. The criteria used for determining languages and dialects are not clear. The total population in 1966 was about 3,275,181. Table 1 presents the languages and their location (see also Figure 1). The problem with the census data, as recognised by many scholars, is the difficulty in distinguishing accurately the number of persons of a given indigenous origin and identity living near traditional territory. Some of the people's identity could be considered more official than functional, with the younger generations forming an insignificant proportion of those who speak the language. This is especially true of languages such as Lomwe and Ngoni whose younger generation rarely, if at all, speak their languages (see Kayambazinthu, 1995; Matiki, 1996/7; Mtenje & Soko, 1998).

As Whiteley (1984) cautions, census data usually uses ethnicity rather than linguistic affiliation as a way of identifying people. Since ethnic and linguistic units are not comparable, the census figures presented do not give precise information regarding the number of people speaking the language as their mother tongue or as a second language. Also, as Stubbs (1972) observes, the census made no attempt to analyse the extent of cultural assimilation as indications of home languages and languages understood, for the four largest language groups in Malawi. The census only asked about the language people usually spoke in the home and their ability to understand one or more designated languages: Nyanja, Tumbuka, Yao and English. The base figure estimates are outdated and are therefore being used as a general guideline. The total population in 1966 was 3,275,181, while it is being estimated at 12,000,000 in 1998.

Data in Table 1 show that Chichewa was the largest home language. About 50.2%¹⁵ of the population spoke Chichewa. The next largest group was Lomwe (14.5%) followed by Yao (13.8%) and Tumbuka (9.1%). Quantitatively, these four are the largest linguistic groups in Malawi. Given the annual growth rate of 3.2% (MNSO, 1996), we can project new figures for these ethnic groups. The projections should, however, take into account the fact that some languages such as Lomwe,

Ngoni and Yao in that order are dying languages and they might not increase at the same rate as Chichewa. On the basis of isolated survey data (Kayambazinthu, 1995; Matiki, 1996/97; Kishindo *et al.* 1997 — Chiyao Survey; Chitumbuka Survey, 1998) we can project that Chichewa is now spoken by more than 50% of Malawians, both urban and rural.

Some observations

This section has emphasised the emergence of multilingualism as a manifestation of historical events and the nature of society in Malawian history. From the foregoing historical background we can trace trends of sociolinguistic change. The sixteenth–eighteenth centuries were dominated by the Maravi or Chewa in the southern and central regions of Malawi whilst other indigenous groups such as the Tumbuka and other smaller groups dominated the northern part of the country. One should look at this period of language contact as one of integration and synthesis between the immigrants and the earlier inhabitants. Among the immigrants themselves, it was a period of peaceful coexistence and stability, with little language assimilation or language shift.

The nineteenth century Malawi was economically and politically dominated by intruders (Yao, Ngoni, and British) who subjugated the indigenous ethnic groups. What is interesting sociolinguistically is that prior to the advent of British rule, there was a trend toward language maintenance by the indigenous groups, due to their being numerically stronger, and towards language shift among the intruders regardless of their political, military and economic power, due to their being numerically small. Factors such as the numerical size of the group, intermarriages, the nature of migration, the attitude of the immigrants and the friendliness of the indigenous groups can be put forward as possible causes of language shift. However, the continued existence of most of these immigrant language groups shows that this was a period of integration without total or complete synthesis. There are core areas where Yao, Lomwe, and a few Ngoni can still be found and their effect on Chewa or Tumbuka dialects is evident.

Apart from language shift, we can also trace the development of lingua francas, that is, languages that were adopted and used for purposes of inter-ethnic communication. These were mainly Chewa, Tumbuka and Yao, either because they were indigenous and demographically favourably distributed (Chewa and Tumbuka) or because of the economic advantage and the prestige associated with them (Yao). The development of distinct regional languages, Chewa in the central and southern regions, Tumbuka in the northern region and Yao in the southern region can be observed; as can the development of geographical dialects of the various languages.

The coming of the British and the need for streamlining administration, language for education and evangelism ushered in a different language — English. This forms a different period altogether. Colonialism created and confined Malawi within its present borders and artificially separated linguistic groups from each other, including the Chewa in eastern Zambia and western Mozambique from those of Malawi, and the Yao and Lomwe in Malawi from those of Mozambique. The Tumbuka from eastern Zambia were also cut off from those of Malawi. The British invasion, unlike that of the African groups, was

complete and led to total European control over the country and contributed greatly to the rise and spread of *lingua francas* in Malawi and the stratification between English and indigenous languages.

Part II: Language Spread in Malawi

This section provides a description of Malawian languages that have spread beyond their ethnic boundaries to become either a national language (Chichewa) or regional language (Tumbuka). Given their spread and important role, attention will be paid to these two languages whilst the other languages will not be treated in depth.

Conceptual framework

The phenomenon of language spread is defined by Cooper (1982: 6) as an increase, over time in proportion to a communication network that adopts a given language or variety for a given communication function. A distinction is also made between increase of spread in number of speakers and number of functions. This distinction is important in discussing Malawian languages with few speakers but having a wider communication function. As stated by Von Gleich (1994: 77), language policy spread has to be interpreted as a policy by a state or government that aims at fostering the spread of a specific language within and outside its boundaries in terms of who adopts what, when, why and how. Languages spread for a number of reasons, e.g. military conquest and religious missionary activities (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 67; see also Djité, 1988). These authors have also observed that language spread can be a natural occurrence even though language planners make it an explicit goal (see Ammon, 1992). In language planning terms, language spread is the attempt to increase the number of speakers, often at the expense of another language(s) leading to language shift (e.g. Wardaugh, 1987). However, language spread can also be seen as an unplanned language planning phenomenon (Baldauf, 1994). The discussion that follows attempts to contextualise the rise of Chichewa and Tumbuka in Malawi and explains the reasons for their spread. In discussing the spread of these two languages the role of language-in-education policy in Malawi is central to the argument of both planned and unplanned language spread.

The current education system in Malawi

As Welsh (1985: 1) points out, there is enough evidence that secondary and higher education in Africa represents the results of unequal educational opportunity. Also, occupational and educational structures in Africa are tightly interwoven, the occupational level attained by an individual being determined by the level of educational qualifications that s/he has managed to achieve. The educational structure started by the colonial regimes in Africa, which has been continued by most independent African countries, is a pyramid with a narrowing opportunity for advancement at each stage.

The formal education system in Malawi consists of an eight-year primary cycle, a four-year secondary cycle and various post secondary diploma and degree programmes. The basic structure can be seen in Figure 2. Primary education has been universal since 1994, but parents are required to pay school

STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

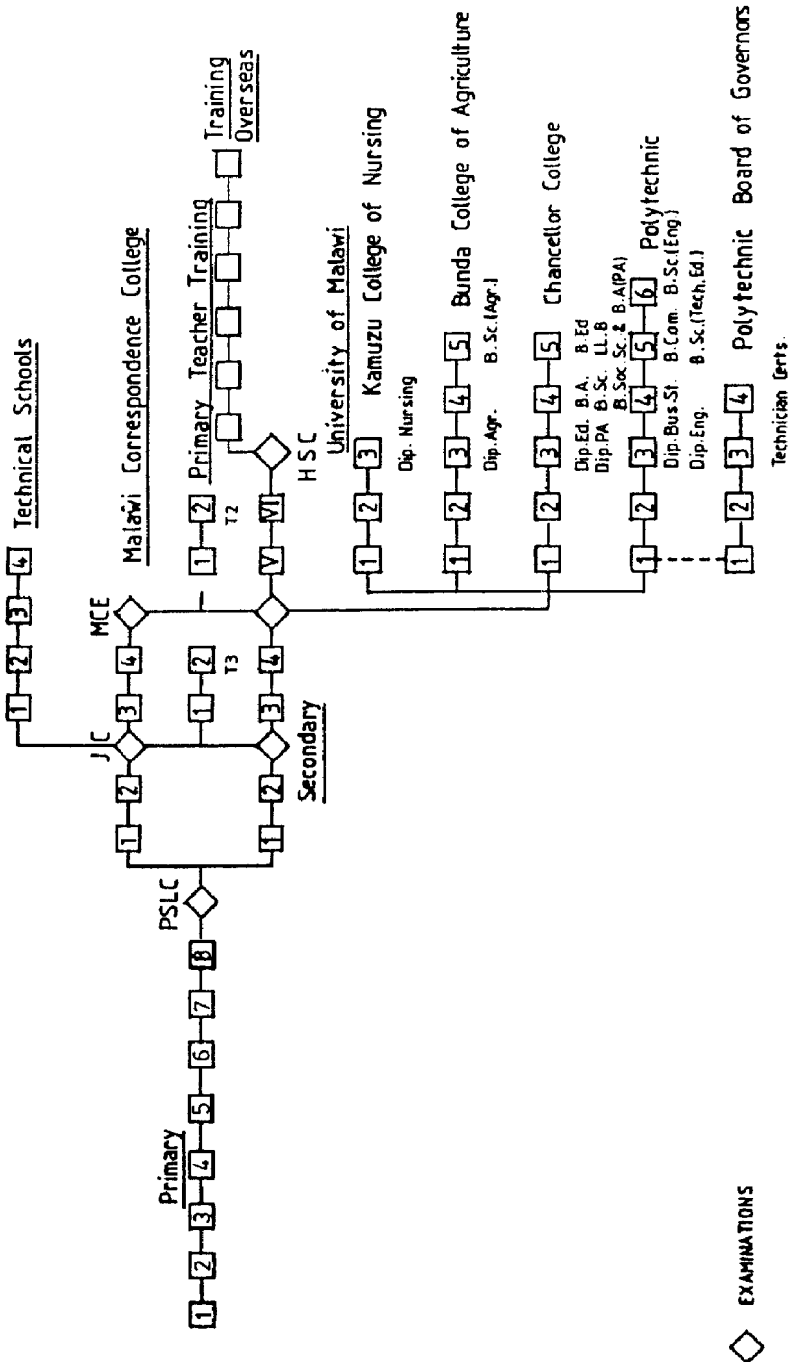


Figure 2 Basic structure of the Malawian educational system

fees from secondary school level up to the University. Since 1996, education has been free for girls under the Girls Attainment of Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project. Wastage is high in the education system because once the students get into the system, it fails to sustain them.

Access from the primary cycle to the secondary cycle (standard 8 to form 1) is highly restricted and competitive so that the majority of primary school leavers do not enter secondary school. For example, in 1996 the total enrolment in standard 1 was 2,887,107 pupils. Only 2% (N = 57,812) of these pupils made it to secondary school and 0.13% (N = 3872) continued to the University (Basic Education Statistics, 1996). Primary education is essential for one to climb the educational pyramid and enter the 'modern sector'. However, access to education and the efficient passage of a pupil through the system also depends partly on levels of regional development or on stratification factors such as class, ethnicity and other reasons. Important issues affecting access and wastage include: sex, household standard of living, parental education, occupation, income and poverty (Welsh, 1985). Despite the educational growth rate,¹⁶ the government does not provide equal opportunities for education for all its citizens in secondary schools.

If differences in access and wastage in the primary and secondary cycle exist, these should have direct consequences on the basic economic differences between regions, districts, communities, classes, ethnic growth and all other social variables used to differentiate between groups in society. Conversely, this too will affect people's language learning and use.

Apart from regional disparities, the ratios also depend on whether one lives in urban or rural areas. Those in the urban areas are at an advantage since teacher-pupil ratios and education facilities are better than in the rural areas. The pupils in Zomba, Mzuzu, Lilongwe and Blantyre had a teacher-pupil ratio close to the 1:70 compared to the rural ratio of up to 1:203 (Basic Education Statistics, 1996: 20-21).

If educational statistics are reliable, one could argue that by the time pupils complete the primary level, literacy in Chichewa has been established. Also, many people in the north and other areas where literacy is high will have learnt Chichewa. However, if those who drop out at the primary school level integrate into their various linguistic groups (as is the case), the level of competence or acquisition of Chichewa would be difficult to determine. They may lapse back into their own languages and lose competence in the national and official languages they have acquired at school, but do not use at home. This is coupled with a lesser motivation for learning the national language which may not be as profitable as English. Also, the nature of the system creates a small minority (3.4%) of an elite group of urban dwellers (Malawi National Statistical Office [Preliminary Report], 1987: 2) who speak English and other European languages with varying degrees of competence. Adult illiteracy rates stand at 58% for women and 28% for men (World Development Report, 1997).

Language-in-education policy issues

Language planning for educational purposes has received much attention in Africa and elsewhere and the discussion has not been conclusive. According to

Faure (1972: 170), cited in Hartshorne (1995: 306), the education policy of any country reflects its political options, its traditions and values and its conception of the future. Education policy also exists in the context of a particular socioeconomic and political order. Education is directed towards the achievement of certain goals behind which rest fundamental issues such as philosophies of life, religious beliefs, and ideas about state and society, political ideologies and the working of economic forces. It is in this context that the language-in-education policy of Malawi will be discussed.

The major question confronting language education planners in post-colonial societies such as Malawi, and indeed in Africa as a whole, is what language(s) to include in the school system. The question in Malawi (and in other Anglophone countries) has often hinged on the feasibility of English as a lingua franca for its practical usefulness for science and technology and world civilisation, as well as the maintenance of cultural identity as Malawians and ease of communication with the masses, since English remains far removed from them. This dilemma often translates into programmatic issues such as what should be the first medium of communication in school and when should the transition to English be made. Another argument revolves around which language should be used as a subject, which for literacy (Bamgbose, 1984) and when to introduce it. Most educationists and language planners acknowledge the cultural and educational benefits of using the mother tongue or a vernacular as a medium of instruction (Bamgbose, 1976; 1984; Fishman, 1989; UNESCO, 1953). There is general agreement that language determines what aspects of the culture are transmitted and should provide an essential link to the individual and group roots of personal identity and social continuity. Bamgbose (1976) notes that both children and adults learn to read and write a second language better after first becoming literate in their own mother tongue. Fishman (1989: 474) argues that the instructional use of disadvantaged mother tongues may lead to improved academic outcomes and safeguard the sociocultural and political interests of minority groups. However, UNESCO and Fishman, among others, also acknowledge the financial burden such a programme entails in multilingual countries. Other scholars have cautioned against total vernacularisation *vis-à-vis* colonial languages, especially if the chosen vernacular is not tied in with immediate important issues in the local population (Eastman, 1983: 71), world events, science and technology, employment and the general upward mobility (Sawadogo, 1990, on Burkina Faso). As Fishman (1989) rightly points out, vernacularisation should be supported by the whole community for reasons of integration, economics and political power. The implication of this discussion is that planners of vernaculars should clearly spell out the economic and cultural benefits of using such languages. There is no point in elevating a vernacular to a language of teaching if it does not elevate people's social mobility and economic standing. The policy is bound to fail as it did in Burkina Faso (Sawadogo, 1990).

The next section will discuss language planning in Malawi within the framework of continuing social-cultural interaction patterns and needs.

*Language use in the education sector*¹⁷

The history of language in education planning in Malawi is characterised by the dilemma of when to use the vernacular language and when to introduce

English. The literature reviewed in the previous section was indicative of the need to establish literacy and numeracy in one's mother tongue first before introducing English, a language that was seen as vital to one's socioeconomic advancement. The language(s) used in the Malawian education system varies according to the level of education and type of school. The schools can be classified into three categories: government schools, mission but government grant-aided schools, and private or designated schools. Whilst the government controls the language policy in the former two, the latter category formulate their own policies and English is the medium of communication.

In the preschools, there is no official language policy regulating language use. In practice, however, three categories of language use can be identified. The majority of preschools use vernacular languages plus a bit of English. The second largest group adopts a bilingual policy and use both English and a vernacular language. The smallest number uses English exclusively for both teaching and as a medium of communication. Rural preschools are likely to use more vernacular than English whilst semi-urban preschools tend to adopt a bilingual policy and the elitist preschools use only English, both as a subject and medium of communication.

In the primary schools, the current policy on paper stipulates that from Standard 1 to Standard 4 all teaching should be done in vernacular languages prevalent in the area except in the two subjects, English and Chichewa which are supposed to be taught in those languages respectively. From Standard 5 to Standard 8 all teaching is to be done in English except when teaching Chichewa. English becomes the sole language of instruction from Standard 5 up to university level. The number of hours devoted to the languages varies according to the prestige attached to the language. The number of hours assigned to each language is presented in Table 2.

Entrance into university demands a credit in English. All teaching is done in English except for French, Latin and Chichewa. English is also compulsory in the first year, that is, all first year students have to take an English for Academic Purposes skills course for four hours per week in the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi, and must pass English in order to proceed to the next year. Table 2 illustrates that Malawi adopts a bilingual language policy in education and that as the students progress into the upper years the role of English increases and that of Chichewa diminishes.

Language in the media

Table 3 presents a weekly schedule for Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). According to the controller of programmes, MBC since its inception in 1964 has largely broadcast in two main languages, English and Chichewa. Tumbuka was used on a minor scale up to 1968 when Dr Banda banned it on the radio. MBC broadcasts for 19 hours daily and since 15 November 1996 has broadcast in six Malawian languages mainly for news bulletins: Chichewa, Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena and Tonga. Languages such as Tumbuka, Sena, Lomwe, Yao and Tonga account for only 15 minutes of daily broadcasts or one hour and 75 minutes per week of news bulletins. Special broadcasts in each of these minor languages are done on issues such as for MASAF, Privatisation,

Table 2 Time allocation for each language depending on level of education⁵⁶

<i>Standard/level</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>No. of periods taught per week</i>	<i>Time allocated per lesson/lecture in minutes</i>	<i>Total no. of hours taught per week</i>
1-2	English and Chichewa	9	30	4 hr 30 min.
3-8	English and Chichewa	9	35	5 hr 25 min.
Forms 1-4	English	8	40	5 hr 20 min.
Forms 1-2	Chichewa, French, Latin	3	40	2 hr
Forms 3-4	Chichewa, French, Latin	4	40	2 hr 40 min.
University Year 1	English (Compulsory to all)	4	60	4 hr
Year 1-4	Classics, French, Chichewa, English (by choice)	4	60	4 hr

Source: J.T.K. Banda (Principal Education Methods Adviser for French) 16 January 1998. Ministry of Education.

Table 3 Broadcasts in Chichewa and English

<i>Total weekly broadcast hours: 109.5</i>				
<i>Weekly Chichewa broadcasts</i>			<i>Weekly English broadcasts</i>	
<i>Day</i>	<i>No. of hours</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No. of hours</i>	<i>%</i>
Monday	8.9	13.9	5.7	12.7
Tuesday	9.7	15	4.9	10.9
Wednesday	9.0	13.9	4.8	10.6
Thursday	7.5	11.6	7.8	17.3
Friday	9.2	14.2	8.2	18.2
Saturday	9.7	15.0	7.6	16.9
Sunday	10.6	16.4	5.9	13.1
Total	64.6	100	44.9	100
Total % per week per language		58.9		41

Source: Personal communication with the Controller of Programmes, Radio One, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) 22 January 1998.

prayers, election campaigns and a few sports messages and advertising.¹⁸ This accounts for 4.7 hours per week. Another 3.3 hours per week are devoted to bilingual broadcasts (Chichewa and English) for commercials, sports, personality shows and special productions. It is evident from the data that MBC broadcasts in Chichewa more (58.9%) than in English (41%) or any other language. Chichewa is given more prominence because radio broadcasting is viewed as the only means of effectively reaching the masses (which are largely illiterate) with important socioeconomic messages. However, it is presumed under the mono-

lithic belief that most Malawians understand Chichewa, which is not true (Kamwendo, 1994; Ntonya, 1998), that there need only be limited use of other Malawian languages.

The local newspapers also typify bilingual language usage in Malawi (see Chimombo & Chimombo, 1996) but, unlike radio broadcasts, English is the dominant language for publications. The data in Table 4 reveals that although some newspapers publish in both Chichewa and English, English is the dominant language and only those papers or sections of the papers which are geared to rural population are produced in Chichewa and sometimes a bit of Tumbuka and Yao. The two factors which account for the dominance of English *vis-à-vis* Chichewa are affordability of the papers and literacy. Newspaper costs are unaffordable for an average Malawian. Secondly, English dominates the spheres of elite Malawians' everyday life in reading and writing. Most educated Malawians prefer to read and write in English than in Chichewa or any other vernacular language because English (and not the vernaculars) is the language in which grammar and writing are thoroughly and formally taught in school (Kayambazinthu, 1995). Out of all the papers, only two papers are predominantly in the vernacular, a government paper and a church paper aimed at disseminating information in the rural areas for free. As in Samoa (Baldauf, 1990: 261) the data show that the print media in Malawi foster English language usage.

Table 4 Newspapers in circulation in Malawi

<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Language(s) published in</i>
<i>Boma Lathu</i>	Government of Malawi	Chichewa only
<i>The Enquirer</i>	Lucene Publications	Predominantly English and Chichewa
<i>The New Vision</i>	New Vision Publications	Predominantly English and Chichewa
<i>The Star</i>	Star Publishers	Predominantly English
<i>The Statesman</i>	Benfin Publishers	Predominantly English
<i>The Telegraph</i>	Akwete Sande	Predominantly English
<i>The Weekend News</i>	Government of Malawi	Chichewa and English
<i>National Agenda</i>	–	English and Chichewa
<i>Care Magazine</i>	Catholic Church	English
<i>The Chronicle</i>	Jamieson Promotions	Chichewa and English
<i>The Daily Times</i>	Blantyre Print	English only
<i>Malawi News</i>	Blantyre Print	Predominantly English and Chichewa
<i>The Independent</i>	Now Publications	English and Chichewa
<i>The Mirror</i>	Mirror Publications	English and Chichewa
<i>The Nation</i>	Nation Publications	English only
<i>The Weekend Nation</i>	Nation Publications	Predominantly English and Chichewa
<i>Odini</i>	Catholic Church	Chichewa only
<i>This is Malawi</i>	Government of Malawi	English
<i>UDF News</i>	UDF Party	English and Chichewa

Source: Jamieson, R.A. (1998) Jamieson Promotions (Pvt.) Limited.

The predominance of English can also be seen in other media areas such as films and the availability in large numbers of books in English in the libraries and bookshops. The illiteracy rate and the affordability of the papers necessitate that newspapers cannot be a medium of general information and dissemination of political ideas among the masses. Both the print and electronic media in Malawi favour the highly-educated elite or high socioeconomic class compared to the lower strata that form the core of vernacular users.

Migrant languages in Malawi

The Malawi government is silent on migrant languages. The education system and the media do not cater for immigrants, assuming that they might have learnt or will learn English and Chichewa. Under this category can be included languages such as Greek, Italian, Gujarati, Somali, Lebanese, Urdu and Punjabi. These are among the languages spoken by minority groups within their ethnic group communities in Malawi. Statistics on these languages are not available. Migrants from neighbouring countries such as Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania are expected to use cross-border languages such as Chichewa. Even though the Asians are the oldest immigrants, forming the highest socioeconomic class in Malawi, there are no language provisions for them in schools apart from their communities. The new immigrants are expected to be absorbed into their various Indian or Asian ethnic communities where their languages are maintained. Most migrant children will attend private schools, which are all taught in English, and to whom most expatriates' children go. English-speaking children go to designated English only schools such as Sir Harry Johnston, St Andrews, Bishop Mackenzie and Phoenix. All these are prestigious and expensive schools that are strategically distributed in the three main cities (Blantyre, Zomba and Lilongwe), to cater for the high socioeconomic groups to which most of these migrant groups belong.

Historical origins and processes in the use and spread of Malawian languages

The distinctive geographical spread and the functional prominence of Chichewa and English and to some extent Tumbuka seen in both the education system and the media can be traced back to the early language practices and policies applied in both the colonial and post colonial times. The earliest colonial influential practices were to maintain the distinction between horizontal and vertical modes of communication (Heine, 1977, 1992). Horizontal communication refers to all written and spoken discursive practices between and among the governing structures of a state, while vertical communication is the structure of interaction taking place between the authorities and the population. In those days, English occupied the horizontal communication role whilst the latter form was occupied by Chichewa.

During the colonial days English and Chinyanja were the first official languages for both vertical and horizontal communication. Both the missionaries and governments had to consider Malawi's linguistic heterogeneity that was seen as an obstacle for operational efficiency. The missionaries' and the government's concern was to find an appropriate medium to communicate with the Africans.

Preference for both missionaries and government was given to Nyanja in the south and centre, as a language of vertical communication. After an initial enthusiasm for Nyanja in the south, it was discovered that its geographical spread did not include the northern part of Malawi where Tumbuka was favourably distributed.¹⁹ The supremacy in both colonial and postcolonial times of Chinyanja over other Malawian languages stems from these nineteenth century practices to simplify the country's linguistic heterogeneity and administrative efficiency by applying different horizontal and vertical modes of communication.

Missionary penetration itself also shaped the spread of Chinyanja and Tumbuka, and their usage. That is, the missionary preference for Chinyanja in the south and Tumbuka in the north actually organised their spread over areas where they had never been spoken before and now had to be acquired as second languages. The emergence of Tumbuka was entirely triggered by the Livingstonia Mission. As agents and settlers in the northern part of Malawi, they used, imposed and spread Tumbuka as the mandatory language of colonial education in the northern part of Malawi.

The colonial phase 1875-1964

A constant question in language contact and language development has been how a lingua franca arises. Abdulaziz-Mkilifi (1993) and Cooper (1982) suggest that we study its linguistic, demographic, sociological origins, people's attitudes to it, the degree of dynamism in terms of development and spread and its linguistic and cultural affinity with contact languages. Accordingly, the discussion that follows focuses on the rise of Chichewa and other Malawian languages in relation to each other.

The colonial period can be divided into two parts. The period between 1875 and 1918 is the *laissez-faire* phase of unplanned or uncoordinated planning, when each missionary body followed its own policy according to its needs and linguistic environment. No attempt was made at status planning, but language was used as a communication tool for religious and educational purposes. The second phase, between 1918 and 1964 was one of coordinated efforts by both the colonial government and the missionaries. Of importance, during the colonial period is the ideology and objectives of the colonialists, their treatment of various linguistic groups and their cultures and how this redefined the relations between the language groups in terms of status and prestige.

The uncoordinated period 1857-1917

Missionary education, evangelism and the rise of Nyanja and Tumbuka

As in other African countries (see, among others, Djité (1988) on the rise of Dyula; Diop (1989) on Senegal and the rise of Wolof; Mukama (1991) on the rise of the Baganda and Luganda in Uganda), formal education in its Western form and its twin goals of evangelism and colonialism can be singled out as the dominant forces in language development and language spread. Education was instrumental in causing new ideals and ideas of perceived social reality (Kashoki, 1990) and in exposing Malawians to a foreign language, English, and its values.

The significant development of education together with evangelism are considered as important social factors that contributed to language spread and later on language planning.

The advent of missionary work in Malawi and the many languages that missionaries encountered created the need for a language for evangelism and educating Africans. The various Christian missionary bodies adopted local languages within their spheres of influence for evangelism and education. For example, the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) in the Southern Region used Nyanja and Yao and so did the Livingstonia Mission Society (LMS). When LMS moved to the northern part of Malawi, they were hoping to use Nyanja and English for two reasons: (1) Nyanja was the language in which scriptural writing had already been produced; and (2) English was the language of 'the high' culture (Elmslie to Laws, 1892; see also Rahman, 1995). Thus, as early as 1901 Nyanja language was regarded as 'a common ground or lingua franca, enriched by such words as may be adopted from other languages' on grounds of its literary heritage (Jack, 1901: 34). Nyanja was already being used by the planters,²⁰ the government and the people themselves in the south. However, the situation in the north was different because of the decline of Ngoni and the rise of Tumbuka. The mission accepted the situation and abandoned the policy of using Nyanja as a neutral way of overcoming linguistic disunity in the north (Turner, 1933; Vail, 1981).

The systematic reduction of Malawian languages to writing using the Roman Alphabet, which started with the Christian missionaries, contributed greatly to the development of some languages. This had the effect of elevating the status of some languages which were ultimately chosen *vis-à-vis* others. As Doke (1961a: 52) notes:

apart from some elementary school readers, catechisms and hymn books, the development of Bantu literature in this period was confined to the translations of scripture. The Bible translation work ... is of immense importance. Just as the English vernacular translation of the Bible by Coverdale in 1535 was of inestimable value in the ultimate standardisation of literary English, so have the early Bantu vernacular translations laid the foundations of literature in a number of these languages.

The translation of the Bible or parts of it using a phonetic or Roman alphabet were done in Nyanja (western and eastern), Ngoni, Yao, Nkhonde/Nyakyusa, Tumbuka, Lomwe, Nyiha, Tonga. Apart from Bible translations, a number of publications also came out during this period (see Kishindo, 1990, 1994; Kayambazinthu, 1995). Both Kishindo and Kayambazinthu note that major linguistic analyses were done on Nyanja, Yao and Tumbuka in that order. This language development had a significant impact on the status of these languages.

Since different missionary bodies translated the Bible or parts of it into dialects according to where they were settled, coordinated efforts began towards a unified dialect of Nyanja.²¹ In 1900, a joint Bible Translation Committee was formed with the purpose of coming up with a Union Version of Nyanja that could be used by all missionary groups. The committee chose to unify Chewa and Mang'anja dialects and this resulted in the publication of Matthew in 1901, the

New Testament in 1906 and the whole Bible in 1922. A revised version of this Bible was printed in 1936 (Doke, 1961b; Heine, 1970: 62). It is clear that different mission groups promoted different dialects: the UMCA elevated the lesser-known dialect Nyanja (eastern or Likoma dialect), the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Chewa and the Blantyre Mission (BM) elevated the popular dialect Mang'anja.²²

Book publishing and distribution was mainly controlled by various mission bodies and their publishing houses.²³ The major missionary bodies that contributed to the growth of literature were the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa (ICCLA) set up in 1926 to promote the production, publication and distribution of literature for use in connection with missionary work in Africa. Another body established for the same purposes was the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. By 1949 the ICCLA was assisted locally by the Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasa Joint Publications Bureau which had a local branch in Nyasaland — The Christian Literature Council set up in 1958 which has now been replaced by the Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM). What is significant is that the literature that came out during this period was mainly published in Nyanja and English and other languages used in the missions areas of influence, notably Yao and Tumbuka. For example, the Livingstonia Press published in Tumbuka, English and Tonga (school texts) whilst the Hetherwick Press published mainly in Nyanja and English in that order.

Language policy in education

According to Pretorius (1971) and others, the pioneers of Western type schools in Malawi (for example, the UMCA, BM, LMS, DRC, among others), used vernaculars as a media of instruction, and these included Nyanja, Yao, Tumbuka and Tonga. Schools were streamlined into three levels: Vernacular, Lower Middle and Upper Middle. Yao was the medium of instruction in the UMCA schools in southern Malawi and Nkhota Kota districts, whilst the two government schools among the Yao used Nyanja. Tumbuka, Tonga and Nkhonde were used in both elementary and Lower Middle schools by the LMS in the northern region. English was the language in the Lower Middle schools. In the Upper Middle schools English became the medium of instruction, but the vernaculars were taught as subjects (Annual Reports, 1930). By the end of 1902, there were at least eight missions working in the country, and they had under their management nearly 300 primary schools, one teacher training school and one superior institution (the Overtoun Institute) (Pretorius, 1971: 72).

The effect of evangelism and education on the ethnic groups and cultural stimuli

The different responses from different ethnic groups to education also impacted on the rise and spread of Chichewa and Tumbuka. According to the LMS:

The Henga are a keen, vigorous progressive people, the greater majority of the church members are from them, their schools are well attended, the

pupils alert and the boys and girls in about equal numbers. (Livingstonia Mission Report, 1911: 38, cited in McCracken, 1977: 106)

However, 'the Ngonde are . . . slow to move, extremely conservative and suspicious of the new movement going on all around them' (Livingstonia Mission Report, 1911: 38, cited in McCracken 1977: 106). McCracken maintains that unlike other ethnic groups, the Tumbuka reacted favourably to Christianity because their religion, the Chikangombe cult, was largely dead (due to the Ngoni invasion), and they were ready to experiment with a new one.²⁴ The Ngoni, on the other hand, invited the mission to stay in their land for political and economic reasons but at the same time feared the possible corrosive power of the word of God upon their traditional military ethics (McCracken, 1972). Instead of sending their children to school, they only sent the children of their Tumbuka slaves (Vail, 1981; Vail & White, 1989). Through their embrace of an education which had a substantial English language component, the Henga were well on their way to developing an educated petty bourgeoisie with values shaped by Victorian missionary teaching and examples (Vail & White 1989: 154). The Henga became the teachers in the local schools, and by 1909 Tumbuka was being used in local schools in the district, having largely displaced other languages (McCracken, 1972: 118). By 1914 the use of Tumbuka was widespread (through imposition) in the mission's sphere of influence, apart from the Tonga who continued to use their own language.

As the Tumbuka embraced education, their language gained respectability; and as the early elites with new educational opportunities, their language could no longer be seen as the language of the slaves only. Rather it was the language of a rapidly expanding group of educated and progressive people (Vail & White, 1989: 154). As Vail & White have noted, the mission's press confirmed the status of the Tumbuka language by pouring out thousands of texts in Tumbuka. For the Tumbuka, this was a psychological symbol of their rising respectability and self-esteem, whilst for the Ngoni, it was their adopted language within a larger context of competing languages. During the political struggle, Tumbuka became the northern regional language (Vail, 1981).

However, the situation in the central and southern part of Malawi was different: education was less effective. In the south the planters wanted to run their estates or their workers without government intervention or missionary interference. Consequently, missionary work was barred from the estates and the network of schools that were established in the north did not develop in the south (Vail & White, 1989: 167). Among the Yao Islam became the main blocking factor. As Alpers (1972: 175) observes: 'the Yao embraced Islam because they regarded it as the most amenable way of modernising their societies, especially of acquiring literacy for their people ... every Muslim village had its own Koranic schools'. Islam in Africa had first offered a way of advance beyond rigid tribalism and still provided a possible alternative for the African who sought some status and dignity *vis-à-vis* the Europeans (Shepperson & Price, 1958: 407). Kishindo (1994: 133) argues that the development of schools and consequently of Yao as a lingua franca, unlike that of Tumbuka, was a consequence of complex and shifting attitudes of the colonial government influenced by Christian missionary antagonism to Islam.²⁵ While this is true to a greater extent (especially the period

Kishindo quotes (1912) and thereafter),²⁶ this does not explain the favourable attitude the government had towards the Yao which will be shown later in this monograph. It can be argued that the linguistic environment itself in the southern part of Malawi, coupled with the early development of Nyanja, did not allow for the development of a competing lingua franca since Nyanja had for a long period already occupied that position.²⁷ As observed by Greenberg (1972: 201), once a lingua franca is established as advantageous to know, it rapidly overshadows other languages existing in the same market.

Education also contributed to the production of the early elites and lobbyists who documented the histories of their ethnic groups. The documentation of certain ethnic groups' history inculcated ethnic consciousness and separatism. Vail (1981) singles out cultural brokers like Edward Bote Manda, Andrew Nkonjera and Cullen Young for the Tumbuka, Kamuzu Banda for the Chewa, Bandawe for the Lomwe, Abdallah for the Yao and Yesaya Chibambo for the Ngoni. In short, these histories emphasised separatism and the important existence of each ethnic group within Nyasaland. The writers glorified the past of the people they wrote about whom they portrayed as empire builders, people with a culture and tradition.

Although it is difficult to generalise about the consequences of the missionary or educational impact on Malawian society, it can be noted that the policy of different missionary bodies and the reaction of the indigenous people themselves to education are important in explaining the language practices that emerged. As McCracken (1972: 230–31) argues:

The dynamic response of various northern peoples, when combined with Livingstonia's own exceptional concern for change, had the effect of making the northern province the most advanced area in terms of educational activity in Central Africa.²⁸

Second, education was selective and open to few people, so society was stratified, making English accessible to the few only. Third, the growth of the Malawian elite in a region that had no industries led to mass migration to areas of employment in the southern part of Malawi which was predominantly Chewa speaking. Fourth, education gave this elite bargaining power and led to the development of political pressure groups. The emergence of political problems beyond single self-interested groups to issues that could be put forward to the colonial government united their otherwise disparate separate claims. In the process of this political evolution, lingua francas were used to articulate their grievances. Vail and White (1989) argue that political discontent was viewed differently by different regions. For the southerners it was the abolition of the *Thangata* system (a system of labour in exchange for land) and access to appropriated land. The central region focused on the European monopoly over the tobacco trade that suppressed African involvement. What is worth noting, however, is that all this culminated in the formation of the Nyasaland Educated African Council which allowed these intellectuals (from the south and the north) to air their views.²⁹ What is also significant is that for the north, Tumbuka became the language that united the people whilst in the south no one language did so (Vail, 1981; Vail & White, 1989).

Government contribution 1918–1964

Nyanja gained the lead over the other languages for various reasons. Nyanja was geographically favourably spread in both the central and southern parts of Malawi. Secondly, the colonial government documented languages that it considered vital in the running of the country. Having settled in an area where Nyanja was the dominant language and a lingua franca, the government chose Nyanja as their language for administration and promoted it through a series of publications.³⁰ Thus, Nyanja became the official language of the police and the army. Using early-educated Nyanja elites as agents, the language was carried to other areas where it was not spoken in both Malawi and Zambia (Heine, 1970: 61) and Zimbabwe.³¹ The Nyanja acted as intermediaries between Europeans and Africans. 'On account of lack of skilled workers in the neighbouring territories to serve as clerks, overseers, artisans and specialists, the Nyanja soon spread themselves into Zambia and Zimbabwe, taking the language beyond its borders' (Heine, 1970: 61).

The government also required officers of the colonial agricultural, veterinary and forest service to have a thorough knowledge of the language for administration. The colonial government reinforced the significant position of Nyanja by making it a language for examinations in the civil service. All new entrants to these posts were to write a higher standard examination in Chinyanja as a precedent to the first efficiency bar or proscribed bonus (Kittermaster, 1936a: 4).

Chinyanja also received international recognition when it was included in the syllabi of the Cambridge School Certificate for both Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia now Zambia in the late 1940s: 'Two of the vernaculars, Chibemba and Chinyanja, have been accepted for about twenty years as subjects for the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations' (Mwanakatwe, 1968: 21). Chinyanja was also being studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London using Malawians as informants (Kishindo, 1990: 65). Thus Nyanja became widespread as an important lingua franca in both Zambia and Malawi due to the government policy.

Another language promoted by the government (but not so much as a national or regional lingua franca) was Yao. Rashid (1978) argues that the interaction between the Yao, Lomwe (Mbewe group) and Nyanja contributed to a multiethnic society which was primarily Nguru and Nyanja in origin, among whom the Yao language was gaining popularity. Through this interethnic interaction and ivory trade, the Lomwe adopted

the language of a numerically very small but prestigious trading elite ... It may have been an advantage in state building and assimilation that the language being adopted was not a lingua franca of one of the major ethnic groups ... its use is linked to economic advantage and prestige. (Rashid, 1978: 20)

Thus the rise of Yao can be traced to trade. Politically, the British embraced the most traditional and conservative chiefs, the Yao, as instruments of indirect rule (Vail & White, 1989: 170). These two authors also argue that the colonialists formulated ethnic theories and stereotypes of African differentiation. This is substantiated by the favourable attitude towards the Yao unlike the other ethnic

groups; while to the whites the Lomwe were 'gangsters, irregular soldiers, cringing-starving unclothed refugees ... drunken, slothful and vicious ... They were candid bandits, their prey human flesh and blood and having gorged eyes like hyenas, they then returned to Manguru for the most part replete' (*Nyasaland Times*, 13 July and 6 August 1942). The Nguru (Lomwe) 'are represented among the idle and criminal classes to a disproportionate extent' whilst the 'Yaos are intelligent and quick, making excellent servants, while as soldiers, they have proved of inestimable value; they also speak perhaps the finest of all Central African languages' (Murray, 1922: 55-7, 95). Compared to the Yao the Nyanja 'are industrious, quiet and peace loving people but have not the physique nor the brains of the Yao nor the agricultural perseverance of the Nguru ... He is easily impressionable' (Murray, 1932: 83). These stereotyped images of Lomwe, Yao and Nyanja were to remain powerful, particularly of the Lomwe, into the early 1980s (Vail & White, 1989: 173) and contributed greatly to the decline of the language.

Vail and White argue that after the war official support for the political and economic authority of the Yao ruling elite continued to grow and this further led to the growth of an alliance between the British administrators and the Yao. As a mark of respect for a people with real history, in marked contrast to other local Africans, Abdallah's *The Yaos* was published in both Yao and English by the Government Press, with the aim of writing 'a book that would tell all about the customs of we Yaos, so that we remind ourselves whence we sprang and our beginnings as a nation' (Abdallah, 1919: Preface). Note that the Yao looked at themselves as a nation within a multilingual protectorate. This documentation was certainly not a consolidation of personal power base as Kishindo (1994) might suggest.

The coordinated period

Nyanja continued to be recognised as a lingua franca as evidenced by the discourses of the colonial government, the missionaries and the Malawians themselves in a more coordinated manner. In 1918, a government administrator proposed that Nyanja be made an official language for use in all schools on the basis that it was widely spoken in the protectorate. Despite the colonialists' fear that such a move would unite the diverse Malawian ethnic groups (Mombera District Annual Report 1918-1919 in File No. S1/1008/19), the government, concerned with cutting down on administrative costs, argued for the adoption of a single official language for unity and economic purposes (Moggridge, 1919: 4). In June 1930, the Ordinary Committee on Education endorsed the recommendation by making Nyanja a compulsory subject in all assisted schools, not later than the stages of class three in elementary vernacular schools. The Advisory Committee also adopted the recommendation of its Language and Textbook Sub-Committee that Chinyanja be introduced as the medium of instruction not later than Class 4 in all government and assisted schools (Young H. to Cunliff-Lister, 1934).

However, the LMS, which had already been working with Tumbuka in the north and had published a lot of texts in it announced on 15 July 1933 their inability to accept a ruling that jeopardised their efforts socioeconomically

(Turner, 1933; Young, 1933). Whilst the Ngonde (Chief Kyungu to District Commissioner, 9 November 1932: 18) and Tonga on whom the mission had imposed Tumbuka accepted the ruling, the Tumbuka themselves, using their cultural broker and educationist, Levi Mumba, were opposed to the idea, saying it was 'unfair to force people to accept a language which they do not wish ... People go to school to learn their own vernacular books, after which they wish to learn English which is more profitable' (NNM1/16/4, Mombera District Council, 1931/39). If anything, the language issue resulted in a merger of local Tumbuka and ethnic consciousness into a new regional coalition glued together by the possession of a common language in a country of many languages. Tumbuka became the language for focusing their political discontent with the colonial government (Vail, 1981: 165). Faced with this opposition, the new governor Sir Hubert Young, in an attempt to sell the policy to the northern region, met with a varied response. The Ngoni leaders told him, 'Chinyanja is not wanted in this Tumbuka speaking area' and 'Tumbuka should be preserved for future generations as seed for native produce, domestic and wild animals is preserved for them' (NN1/2005, Native Administration, Mzimba, 1932, Minutes of Barazas). Levi Mumba, a high ranking Tumbuka on the influential Advisory Committee of Education, in agreement with the anti-Nyanja forces, argued that it was much too early to have a lingua franca in Nyasaland and that if ever one were adopted, it should be English (S1/449/32, Minutes of 19 October 1933 and 1936 Round Table Conference in PROCO 525/161). Thus English was held in high esteem and was the language to learn.

Despite the resistance from LMS, the Tumbuka and the Yao, in 1934 the government proclaimed:

After careful consideration, the government of Nyasaland has decided definitely to encourage Chinyanja as the lingua franca and as the official language of the protectorate. Competency in Chinyanja would be sine qua non to admission to the native civil service and the missions which worked in areas where Chinyanja was not the mother tongue would be asked to introduce and teach it as a subject in all assisted schools beginning in class 3 of the village schools. (Young, H., 1934: 7)

The missions were being forced either to comply with the new government regulations or lose their government education grant. The LMS however appealed directly to Whitehall officials in London (Turner to Vischer, 1935). Sir Harold Kittermaster was ordered to hold a conference and not to implement the policy (Kittermaster, 1936b; Bottomley to Sir Kittermaster, 1935). A round table conference was held in Zomba on 22 June 1936 and resolved that Nyanja be encouraged as a lingua franca in the protectorate but the free use of other native languages should not be suppressed or discouraged (Public Records Office, Colonial Office (PROCO) file no. 25352, CO 525/161 1936: 5-7). In 1947, after World War II, Nyanja and Tumbuka were made official languages (Vernacular Language Policy, 1947). They were broadcast on the radio, taught and used as medium of instruction in schools within their regions. The working of the language policy can best be captured in the following quotations:

Chinyanja is the lingua franca throughout the territory ... The request of

the Tumbuka people has been granted and Tumbuka is the educational lingua franca in the northern province ... (Annual Report, Nyasaland Education Department, 1949: 8)

Or in 1951 we are told:

Chinyanja remains the lingua franca of the country but there is an increasing awareness that Tumbuka is the natural language in the northern province and the government itself now recognises this language for language examination purposes. (Annual Report, Nyasaland Education Department, 1951: 11)

Standardisation and implementation

Policy implementation involved the standardisation of Nyanja³² in an attempt to bridge the differences between the various dialects. A committee was appointed, and its first meeting held in 1931. Among its significant recommendations was the production of the Chinyanja Orthographic Rules of 1931. In 1945, the Phelps-Stoke Commission took over the work and reconvened the meeting at the invitation of the African Publications Bureau. In 1953 the federal government decreed that all languages with a substantial number of speakers should be standardised. As a result, a number of languages were broadcast on the radio and these were Nyanja and Tumbuka in Malawi.

After viewing the trend that the language issue took during this period, some pertinent questions need to be raised. Why were only Nyanja, Tumbuka and Yao selected and not the other languages? And why did Tumbuka, a language spoken by a minority group, gain such status? In answer to the former question, the growing status and spread of Nyanja (apart from being a lingua franca in the south and centre) owes much to the following factors:

- (1) It was the first contact language between the indigenous people and the missionaries; between the governed and the government which promoted it. It became the first language, through this contact, to have a literary heritage.
- (2) It was close to the seat of power and authority. The colonisers having their headquarters in the Nyanja-speaking area and using Nyanjas as aides, guides or catechists created prestige for the language. Because of this contact they were to constitute the bulk of the first generation elite.
- (3) Emergence of new economic poles in towns located mainly in Nyanja-speaking areas attracted people from various areas and ethnic origins to look for better opportunities.

Linguistic heterogeneity in the south created the need for a lingua franca and Nyanja was the obvious choice because it was already established. It is clear from the historical as well as the sociopolitical facts examined that the main outcome of colonialism was the tremendous boost of Nyanja prestige nationwide due to these interrelated factors.

Despite the rise of Yao as a trade lingua franca and a language of instruction in the UMCA schools, it did not achieve regional lingua franca status for the reasons already discussed. As for Tumbuka, the alliance of educated Africans as

well as the Scottish missionaries was a vital one. It ensured and promoted Tumbuka's current position. It is clear that, apart from being a language that swamped Ngoni, Tumbuka was still a minority language whose regional status can only be explained in terms of education and the pride of the people themselves. One cannot refute the fact that education gave Africans bargaining power. Without influential people like Levi Mumba and missionaries like Cullen Young, Tumbuka would not have gained such a status. As much as the mission supported the people, it also stood to gain from the policy economically. They did not have to publish new books or train new teachers. So for both economic and educational reasons Tumbuka stayed.

The advent of colonialism, the introduction of Christianity and education had the effect of elevating the status of two indigenous languages as official languages. From a sociolinguistic point of view, this also changed the existing culture and the value of these languages *vis-à-vis* the rest. Among these languages, Nyanja was an important lingua franca that dominated colonial administration for vertical communication, setting an important trend as urbanisation developed, coupled with the fact that industries were located in the Nyanja areas. English continued to be an important educational and official language for horizontal and vertical communication and therefore a language of high educational attainment that consequently led to better employment opportunities.

Exploring the relationship between the imported language and Nyanja, English had more prestige than Nyanja. Thus language stratification had already taken root. Firstly, through the attitude of the whites themselves who looked at their language as a language of high culture, implying that the indigenous languages and their cultures were less prestigious. Thus English became the language of higher education, parliament and law, of the elite, and in general of superiority and power. Secondly, as the indigenes themselves attained education, the practice was perpetuated as they looked down upon themselves and their culture in favour of the foreign language and culture. As Roscoe (1977: 4) has argued:

Colonial conditions produced a situation whereby functional literacy in a European language for all practical purposes came to be equated with the ability to speak English. As a result, the African was deliberately made to look upon his language as 'primitive' and to look at the knowledge of English as the golden means of breaking out of the old peasant pattern into the money economy and white collar comfort of the coloniser.

Thus, from the colonial times Nyanja and other languages were a stepping stone to the ultimate goal of acquiring English. When Nyasaland (Malawi) gained independence in 1964, the country inherited that colonial policy.

The post colonial period since 1964

The Kamuzu Banda Phase: 1964–1994

Whilst Nyanja was a well-established lingua franca in Malawi, its spread beyond its boundaries into the northern part of Malawi was done single-handedly by Dr Hastings Banda, the first president of the republic of Malawi from

1964 to 1994. Banda's language policy was a deliberate and militant way of spreading the language as can be seen in its implementation and dissemination. During the 1968 Annual Convention of the then ruling Malawi Congress Party held in Lilongwe, the question of national unity resurfaced and the Convention recommended that in the interest of national unity:

- (1) Malawi adopt Chinyanja as a national language.
- (2) That the name Chinyanja henceforth be known as Chichewa.
- (3) That Chichewa and English be the official languages of the state of Malawi and that all other languages will continue to be used in everyday private life in their respective areas. (Malawi Congress Party, 1978: 6)

Policy implementation and dissemination

The decision to make Chichewa the sole Malawian official language affected the use of other languages such as Tumbuka on the radio and in the mass media in general. The second phrase in resolution three in the policy formulation implied that other languages could still be used in the country and that Chichewa was going to be used solely for intra-communication and national integration. The other vernaculars could be used in political mass rallies and day-to-day life. Thus the dissemination of Chichewa was constantly expanding and its implied status as a lingua franca was increasingly reinforced. The policy was implemented by the education sector and various other organisations set up for its dissemination.

Ministry of Education and Culture

Following the convention's recommendation, Parliament decreed that Chichewa and English were the only two official languages in the country. This decree was followed by a Ministry of Education and Culture announcement that from the 1969–70 academic year, Chichewa was to be taught in all elementary schools as well as in teacher-training colleges. English became a mandatory subject and a prerequisite for obtaining any certificate or for educational and general purposes up to the certificate level. As a result, in the first three years of primary education, Chichewa served as the medium of instruction whilst English was taught as a subject. Gradually from the third year, English took over up to university level. In the last five years of primary education, English became the sole medium of instruction whilst Chichewa became a compulsory subject up to the end of secondary level and an optional subject at university level.

The establishment of the Malawi Certificate Examinations Board (MCEB), now the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB), to replace the Cambridge Overseas Exam was followed by a change in examinations grading policy which required both northerners and southerners to obtain higher grades in their School Leaving Exams than those in the central region if they were to qualify for places in the secondary schools (Short, 1974; Vail & White, 1989). Also the Parliamentary Secretary for Education further decreed that all school children who failed their required examinations in required courses in Chichewa would be required to resit the exams (Short, 1974). All these stringent measures were imposed to enhance the status of Chichewa and ensure that other ethnic groups had no option but to learn it.

Personalities and the role of the Chichewa Board

According to Nahir (1977, 1984), language reform is a deliberate manipulation of language triggered by the need to facilitate language use as well as to serve the underlying political, socioeconomic, cultural and ideological tendencies of the community at the time. Perry (1985: 295) defines language reform as 'primarily a sociopolitical, not linguistic and cultural, process, though its effects remain to colour the speech and literature of succeeding generations'. Language reform during Banda's era was handled under the Chichewa Board which he established in 1972 and mandated to look into the expansion of Chichewa and its purification, befitting its role as a national language in Malawi (see Chichewa Board 1984 Malawi Congress Party Convention Fliers Ref. No. CD/4/25/104). The Board was set up with the aim of:

- providing a new Chichewa dictionary (see A brief history of the Chichewa Board (1970–71) Ref. No. ADM/1/40:1) to replace the existing ones which were inadequate not only because they were compiled by non-native speakers but because they were unrepresentative since they were preoccupied with the Mang'anja dialect;
- providing guidance to language users in education, media and publishing;
- encouraging as well as carrying out research work with the aim of standardising the description of Chichewa, the results of which would be reflected in the media publishing and the materials used in the educational institutions (A brief history of the Chichewa Board 1970–1971: 1; Kishindo, 1990: 67).

The reform process during Banda's era can be likened to the Turkish (Dogançay-Aktuna, 1995) and French Academy views of language. In Malawi, however, unlike in Turkey, it was not religious factors, but rather political, as well as Banda's personal preferences that prevailed. Reform took the shape of purification and the removal of all words that were not in Kasungu Chewa, the Chichewa that Banda spoke. Banda saw language as an integral part of national building and elevating Chichewa to become the national language was equated with the unification of the diverse Malawian population. At the same time Banda did not believe in authentication of other Malawian languages.

Banda's interest in Chichewa is traced back to 1937, when he acted as an informant to Mark Hannah Watkins who published *A Grammar of Chichewa, a Bantu language of British Central Africa* in 1937.³³ Banda's continued interest is also seen in the number of lectures he delivered in the early to mid-1970s (1972–1976) at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, on various aspects of the language (see Banda, 1975). Banda, who was the 'highest authority on Chichewa matters' (Kishindo, 1990: 67), took a purist attitude to language preservation or reform. 'Chinyanja would first have to be standardised into a real Chinyanja, a real Chichewa' as it had been spoken in his youth and was still spoken in the villages of the central region. He did not want the anglicised 'Chi-mission' or 'Chi-Heaven or Chi-planter' which was currently in the town' (Hansard, 1963: 844). Thus the 'correct' form of Chichewa was that of the Chewa dialect understood by him as opposed to the popular Mang'anja dialect of the southern region. He stressed it in his speeches and public Bible readings. As Vail (1981: 147) has observed:

the message in the late 1960s and 1970s was clear. The Chewa people and the Chewa culture was the core of modern Malawi by right of being the most ancient and least compromised by colonialism, and Malawi culture would be considered synonymous with Chewa culture.

Like Turkish language reform, Malawian language reform was centralised (Tollefson, 1981) and government sponsored. The reform essentially consisted of two undertakings: changing the orthography and strengthening the use of 'correct' Chichewa. The Board first produced the orthography rules (Chichewa Board, 1973, 1980, 1992), which were supposed to correct the 1931 rules written by the missionaries. The Chichewa Board was then to carry out corpus planning decisions to be codified through dictionaries, grammars and guides. Implementation occurred as a centralised activity supervised by the president.

The role of the University of Malawi

Banda further strengthened the spread of Chichewa by directing the establishment of the Department of Chichewa at the University of Malawi to do research on and describe the language. The department (now African Languages and Linguistics) trained Chichewa teachers (Bachelor of Education) and other linguists to graduate level (Bachelor of Arts). It was not clear if there was any coordination between the two language bodies that Banda set up to strengthen Chichewa, that is, if the Board incorporated research findings of this department in its decisions or changes.

The media and publishers

As in education, the media also adopted a bilingual policy even though most of the published materials were in English, unless they were for rural population consumption. This contributed to the prevalence of publications in English and Chichewa and no other languages. Periodicals containing news, articles of opinion, features and advertising were mainly bilingual. (For a discussion on language for publications see Ng'ombe, 1985). Short stories, plays, novels are mainly in English (Chimombo, 1994). Almost all academic and government publications and other magazines that were not intended for rural consumption were published exclusively in English. The Bible Society, however, continued to print the Bible and hymn books in various vernacular languages.

The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) also adopted a bilingual policy. The main news bulletin and news briefs were broadcast in both English and Chichewa at alternative hours. Kishindo (1990) categorises Chichewa programmes into purely musical entertainment, didactic and educational. Programmes specifically designed to promote Chichewa were *Timphunzitsane Chichewa* (Let's teach each other Chichewa), where listeners wrote to the programme expressing their views about a particular expression, vocabulary item or syntactic structure. A panel headed by a member of the Chichewa Board then discussed their views. At the end of the programme a solution or conclusion was reached and recommended to the listeners.

The spread of English

English plays a vital role in Malawi, though its spread cannot be compared to Chichewa. Its vital role but limited spread should be contextualised within the

functional load along vertical and horizontal modes of communication; and the concepts of elite closure (Djité, 1990; Scotton, 1993) and imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). Both of these terms refer to the privilege or domination of one language over another, its use by the elite of power, culture and money, in so many domains as to limit the access of speakers of other languages to positions of power and privilege. The dominance and limited access to English from the colonial times to the present has created an elite group.

The use of English in Malawi can be conceptualised on a proficiency continuum. At one extreme of the continuum are members of the small intellectual Malawian elite who have received their formal education to university level or other higher levels of education. Their proficiency in English is near native (Kayambazinthu, 1994).³⁴ According to my 1992 data these elites maintain and regularly use their knowledge of English in their professional environments, where they typically occupy the higher ranks of the political, administrative and academic institutions. At the other extreme of the proficiency continuum are the completely unschooled, who do not use English at all or have limited knowledge of English in the form of word expressions or trade and joking phrases used by illiterates, especially the vendors at markets and by some comedians.

A wide range of proficiency marks the area between the two extremes. Codeswitching and borrowing in the form of words or phrases is common (Kayambazinthu, 1994, 1998). Since level of education is an important correlate to the learning of English in Malawi (Kayambazinthu, 1994), the education figures given earlier in the paper are indicative of an education system with a very high drop out that gives rise to this lack of access to high proficiency in English. Girls are particularly susceptible under this system. The effects of these historical gender-related asymmetries are seen in men having higher proficiency and use of English than women (Kayambazinthu, 1994). From experience, there is a general outcry in Malawi on the gradual decline of standards and level of expression in English as evidenced by data in Table 5. Most employing organisations complain about the students' standard of expression as do University of Malawi external examiners' reports. The causes of this drop in standards may be attributed to the education system itself, lack of resources (textbooks) and the high pupil-teacher ratio.

Table 5 English performance 1987–98⁵⁷

<i>Year</i>	<i>Distinction</i>	<i>Credit</i>	<i>Pass</i>
1997	0.13	13	71
1996	0.19	14	68
1995	0.13	12	55
1994	0.4	13	56
1993	0.22	37	71
1992	0.18	27	60
1991	0.17	32	70
1990	0.37	39	7
1989	0.30	38	81
1988	0.30	38	80
1987	0.62	38	90

Source: Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB, 1998).

With respect to the population's English usage patterns, Kayambazinthu (1994) reports that the number of households in which English served as the exclusive means of interaction was negligible (2%), even though use increased with codeswitching (14%) in the home. One would therefore argue that English has a very minor role to play in the home context where the Malawian languages flourish. Although the spread of English is confined to the few elites, its functional spread and importance in Malawi cannot be denied.

As already argued, English dominates Malawians' reading and writing practices, as well as through codeswitching or codemixing. In the 1968 Constitution, English was identified as the country's official language. As an official language, English is confined to the institutional, formal and written patterns of interaction. At the level of horizontal communication, English is the medium of interaction in all legislative, administrative and judicial institutions in Malawi. In the legislative assembly, English is the medium of communication for debates and speeches in the Malawian parliament, making it difficult for those whose proficiency is low to fully and meaningfully participate in the debate. It is also the only language in which the constitution of Malawi and all other legal texts are written. At the administrative level, all written correspondence between officials as well as oral contacts in formal contexts such as in meetings and the like, are in English (Kayambazinthu, 1994). In the judicial system, all laws and decrees, as well as written reports, prosecutions and trials are in English. Overall, all forms of horizontal communication at an institutional level are typically the domains of English. At the formal socioeconomic and political decision making level, English is the exclusive language of government matters, only to be abandoned when disseminating the information to the masses. By virtue of its confinement English is not a language of mass communication but of power and prestige, hence its limited spread but crucial role in the running of the country. Table 6 indicates the domains of official language use during Banda's era.

English is the main language of the court beyond the lower courts. In the magistrates courts and high court, interpretation services for people who do not understand English is available. All laws, statutes, decrees, directives, rules and regulations, contracts and documents pertaining to them are written in English, making them inaccessible to the average Malawian and empowering the elite.

The use of classical languages

The introduction of Greek and Latin in schools again was a single-handed effort. Their use stems from Banda's philosophy that 'no man can truly call himself educated' without learning the Classics (A brief history of the Academy and Kamuzu Academy Programme, 1986: 13). Banda opened his own school, Kamuzu Academy (popularly known as the Eton of Africa), in order to reintroduce Latin in schools after a 15-year absence. Banda declared in the opening speech at the Academy that 'if you are not prepared to learn these subjects (*Latin and Greek*, my own emphasis) you must not come here (because) such subjects as Latin are there to discipline the mind and the brain' (New Era in Education, 1981). The Ministry of Education was forced to reintroduce the Classics in schools and in order to cater for the demand of scarce teachers in classics, they rehired the old retired teachers. Under the same pressure, the

Table 6 Summary of official language usage in Malawi, 1968–1994

Domains	Language used				
	English	Chichewa	French	Latin	Greek
Parliament	+	–	–	–	–
Law/Legislature	+	–	–	–	–
Courts:	+	–	–	–	–
Magistrate	+	–	–	–	–
High	+	–	–	–	–
Lower	+	+	–	–	–
Radio	+	+	–	–	–
Films	+	–	–	–	–
Newspapers	+	+	–	–	–
Advertisements	+	+	–	–	–
Magazines	+	+	–	–	–
Adult literacy	–	+	–	–	–
Agricultural extension services	–	+	–	–	–
Education medium of instruction:					
Lower primary	–	+	–	–	–
Standard 5 up to university	+	–	–	–	–
Subjects:					
Lower primary	+	+	–	–	–
Secondary up to university	+	+	+	+	+
International communication	+	–	+	–	–

Source: Kayambazinthu (1995).

University of Malawi established the Department of Classics to accommodate Academy students selected to Chancellor College and to produce secondary school teachers of Classics (Kishindo, 1998:261). Banda's rhetoric and enthusiasm about Latin and Greek far outweighed the usefulness of these languages in Malawi. Hence, as Kishindo (1998) observes, now they are dying a natural death at least within the Ministry of Education programmes.

The foregoing discussion has contextualised the spread of Chichewa and English within colonial and neocolonial practices. The dissemination of Chichewa can be seen as a deliberate or explicit policy to promote and spread the language, using education and the mass media as implementation agents. The Kamuzu Banda phase shows that direct, forceful and unambiguous decisions were made about the language questions without proper consultation (surveys, etc.) or guidance and evaluation of the programme. For fear of its inadequacies in planning, evaluation of the policy was guarded and undemocratic. Amendments to the educational policy, broadcasting, etc., are clear examples. There was also a deliberate and active denigration of repression of the development of other languages apart from Chichewa (e.g. see the mandate for establishing the Chichewa Board and Chichewa Department at Chancellor College), hence their restricted use and spread. This denigration has resulted in language shift,

especially among the Yao and Lomwe, as evidenced by the failure of their youth to acquire proficiency in these languages (see Kayambazinthu, 1989/90, 1994, 1995). The Banda era was also characterised by the neglect of 'open' research into Malawi's rich multilingual and multicultural heritage. The study of other Malawian languages was hampered and neglected. Also the teaching of these languages as second languages was prohibited and English which is an exclusive second language was promoted. The development of Chichewa into a neutral lingua franca was hampered by the purist attitude prescribed by Kamuzu Banda who saw the Chichewa of Kasungu as the model Chichewa or the standard variety. Whilst a standard dialect needs to emerge, studies have to be done to establish it. Chichewa needs to be allowed to continue borrowing from other languages in Malawi to broaden its base. The policy decisions made during the Banda phase, though explicit, deliberate and to some extent practical, were politically directed and representative of particular political positions and cultural values of a particular ethnic group, the Chewa. The introduction of other languages on the radio has come about only because of the current language policy in Malawi that forms the basis for the discussion in the next section.

Part III: Language policy and planning

Language planning has been defined as 'a deliberate language change ... planned by organisations established for such purposes' (Rubin, 1984: 4) to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or functional allocation of their language codes' (Cooper, 1989: 45). As noted by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: 3) language planning undertaken by the government is intended to solve complex sociopolitical (my emphasis) problems, even though a great deal of societal level language planning is different and modest. The discussion that follows puts into perspective deliberate language planning directives in Malawi focusing also on important players in decision making and implications for policy formulation. This section of the paper will also focus on the political philosophy, *Zasintha* (things have changed) behind the current language policy decisions in Malawi. The current decisions should be understood from the conceptualisation of freedom from the autocratic Banda era³⁵ and should therefore be viewed as politically and pragmatically motivated.

The present phase 1994-

Newspaper publications during the pre- and post-referendum period (1992-94) initially signalled ethnic language resurgence. According to Kishindo (1998: 260) opposition papers such as the United Democratic Front's *UDF News* and *The New Voice* started publishing in languages such as Lomwe, Sena, Tumbuka and Yao. This could have been indicative of people's ethnic aspiration or publishers capitalising on ethnic consciousness for the forgotten languages during a period of general protest. The fact that most of the papers that published in these languages are defunct or that these languages are no longer used may also be indicative of readership apathy towards vernacular languages.

The evolution of the general ethnic consciousness was reflected by that of the corresponding language policies. Cultural and linguistic activities among Malawians were initiated during the referendum period. After the referendum

the government took an active policy of linguistic pluralism on the radio and schools. The significance of language movements among the minority or neglected languages in Malawi is closely connected to the new wave of ethnic consciousness that emerged among Malawians.

The 1995 *Malawi Government Constitution* stipulates in article 26 on culture and language that 'every person shall have the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of his or her choice' (1995: 18). The constitution is silent on what is the national language and what is the official language. The 1996 UDF Government Education Policy Document also is silent on the issue. On the basis of current linguistic practices we can say that the country is still upholding, with some modifications, the 1968 MCP Convention resolutions cited earlier in this monograph. The draft National Cultural Policy Plan of Action of 1996 sheds more light on language issues in Malawi. The document is intended to provide guidelines from which all players can derive short, medium and long-term programmes. The overall goal of the policy is 'to achieve Malawian cultural identity through the preservation of her cultural heritage ...'. In this document, culture is defined as 'the people's way of life'. Research into and local use of vernacular languages is encouraged and the print media are also encouraged to devote some pages to articles in Chichewa or in any other vernacular languages (1996: 8). On languages, the cultural policy affirms the role of Chichewa as the national language but advocates a neutral name because it is a

language that every Malawian understands and speaks though with varying degrees of fluency. The unifying potential of such a language is obvious and if Malawi is to maintain a national language, there cannot be much debate about the choice. The debate should perhaps be on what to call it. Reverting to the old terminology of Chinyanja would be ideal in such a situation. That would reflect the international status of the language for it is also spoken widely in Zambia and in Mozambique. Besides it would be a politically correct terminology locally. Malawi should also recognise the existence of other vernacular languages and their local importance in the areas in which they are regularly spoken. Research in all of Malawi's languages should therefore be encouraged with a view to promoting one common language to reflect national unity. (1996: 14)

The cultural policy, which also recommends or embodies the policy the government would like to follow, indicates the need to recognise the role of other vernaculars that should be researched and preserved. However, the policy seems to look at this research as a feeder for the promotion of Chichewa. The policy also falls short of recommending the areas in which the vernaculars should be used. That this is left to the Ministry of Education and the president is evidenced by the number of language policy directives the UDF government has issued since it came into power in May 1994.

The current language policy

The present situation poses its own problems and idealism resulting from the *Zasinth*a philosophy. There is an assumption that all Malawian languages can be fully utilised or rehabilitated into full use. It has been a period of general protest

and political activism where sections of the population have mobilised to agitate for social reform in the promotion of the lesser-used languages as if the nation has the resources to sustain such a policy.

The UDF government under Dr Elson Bakili Muluzi came into power on 17 May 1994 through a multi-party general election. Their policy making has been *ad hoc* and reactive. On 25 June 1994 the president directed that Tumbuka be reintroduced on the radio without prior identification of resources and training of personnel (Kishindo, 1998). Similarly, on 15 November 1996 the presidential directive to introduce Yao, Lomwe and Sena for news broadcast on MBC radio also preceded personnel training, as was evident in the failure of a Yao newsreader to read the news.³⁶ On 13 September 1997 the president, at a political rally in Nkhata Bay, directed the introduction of Tonga on the radio upon a request from Chief Fukamapiri (a Tonga).

On 31 July 1995, a cabinet directive dissolved the Chichewa Board and replaced it with the Centre for Language Studies (CLS) which came into operation on 1 April 1996. The directive was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Department of Statutory Corporations that mandated the University of Malawi, Chancellor College establish a Centre for local Malawian languages. The Centre was mandated with the responsibility of promoting and developing Malawian languages. The Centre's objectives are:

- to establish orthographic principles of Malawian languages;
- to develop descriptive grammars for Malawian languages;
- to compile lexicons of Malawian languages;
- to promote and preserve Malawian languages
- to teach various languages of socioeconomic and political relevance to Malawi;
- to provide translation, interpretation and editing services and to promote research in language studies.

(Chancellor College 'Proposal for the establishment of a Centre for
Language Studies' Ref. No. CC/2/1/3/1)

The Centre therefore provides research and consultancies in both Malawian and relevant foreign languages such as English, German, Portuguese and Spanish.³⁷ Apart from this, the Centre also offers services such as translation, interpretation, editing, and conducting short courses in both Malawian and non-Malawian languages in collaborating with foreign research centres. It is doubtful that the Centre will be able to fulfil its mandate given budget cuts and the irregular funding it gets (Deputy Director of CLS, 1998, personal communication).

The introduction of all these languages can be accounted for by the new political orientation or *Zasinthu* political philosophy. Kishindo (1998: 264–5) who believes that the introduction of Tumbuka was for political expediency rather than serious linguistic concerns, questions the introduction of a minority language such as Tumbuka, which ranked fourth in the 1966 census, instead of the elevation of Lomwe or Yao which ranked second and third respectively. According to Kishindo (1998) the introduction of Tumbuka could only be justified on the basis that Muluzi was trying to win political favours in the

northern region where his party had polled badly (7% of the total votes) during the general election.³⁸ However, contrary to Kishindo's argument, Tumbuka though a language of about 6% northerners, mainly in Rumphi, Mzimba and part of Karonga — since its imposition in schools by the Livingstonia Mission in the 1940s — has and would have sustained its regional lingua franca status if it was not for its ban in 1968 that limited its prospects. Kishindo's argument is a misrepresentation of the linguistic situation in Malawi, where neither Lomwe nor Yao are learnt as second languages in their areas, where Chichewa is learnt as the main lingua franca. Lomwe, as evidenced by two surveys, is a dying language and does not have the number of speakers indicated in the census (Kayambazinthu, 1989/90, 1994; Matiki, 1996/97). Secondly, Tumbuka in the north is learnt as a second language by 64% of the population in a linguistically heterogeneous region. Tumbuka is the only language that has regional lingua franca status in the north as affirmed by the recent Tumbuka survey. In my view, Malawi has only two lingua franca zones, that is, the central and southern regions of Malawi are dominated by Chichewa whilst the north uses Tumbuka. The political overtones for the promotion of Tumbuka cannot be doubted but the pragmatics of it cannot be denied either.

A significant directive on education policy came on 28 March 1996, introducing a three plus or minus language formula. The Secretary for Education stated that:

The Ministry of Education would like to inform all ... that with immediate effect, all standards 1, 2, 3 and 4 classes in all our schools be taught in their own mother tongue or vernacular language as a medium of instruction. English and Chichewa will however, continue to be offered as subjects in the primary curricula. In the past Chichewa was used as both a medium of instruction and subject, making it very difficult for beginners to grasp ideas. However, English will be used as a medium of instruction beginning in standard 5. (Secretary for Education's Letter. Ref. No. IN/2/14.)

The justification³⁹ for this directive is based on hearsay and systematic research elsewhere, not in Malawi, as the circular revealed:

You may wish to know that research has revealed that school children learn better and faster if they are taught in their own mother tongue or in their own vernacular language during the first 4 years of their formal education than when they are taught in a second language as a medium of instruction. It is for this reason that this policy is being instituted.

This policy typifies a policy-by-decree approach that was not based on any research or proper planning despite the fact that it is the only policy document that assigns a role for the vernacular languages in Malawi other than Chichewa in the national education system. It should be noted, however, that this directive preceded the training of teachers, preparation of materials and resources and general research into the current language situation and attitudes in Malawi. Because of the impromptu nature of the directive it is not surprising that the government is failing to implement the policy. The ministry continues to post primary school teachers where they are needed regardless of whether they know

the language of the community or not, thus contradicting the declaration and its intentions. The failure of the plan is related to the lack of adequate background planning before the policy was decreed. The policy also contradicts other relevant provisions against the backgrounds of availability of physical and material infrastructure for the successful implementation of such a policy in Malawi.

People's reaction to the education policy

Chauma *et al.* (1997: 38) (see also Kazembe, 1996; Saukani, 1996) have summarised the public's negative reactions to the directive through their asking pertinent questions and giving reasons ranging from having an inferiority complex to the economics of language planning. Examples of these reactions were:

- If pupils from Standards 1 to 4 are to be instructed in local language dominant or common in an area in which a school is located, children will get inferior education and will end up drawers of water and hewers of wood.
- It is a political decision because the ruling United Democratic Front does not want to be reminded of the former ruling party, the MCP, which made the teaching of Chichewa in primary schools compulsory ...
- The use of the mother tongue will encourage tribalism in the country. Smaller groups of people will want to identify themselves with their mother tongue.
- What happens to children staying with their parents in areas where their mother tongue is not dominant? Will they have to transfer back to their home district to be taught in their mother tongue? (*Malawi News*, 22–28 June 1996).
- The policy is aimed at saving the face of some teachers who, according to some people, are not conversant with English.
- New teachers' guides, textbooks, manuals, pupils' reading materials in all dialects or vernaculars will need to be produced and printed.

Problems of educational policy

Under this new political orientation, it is obvious that Malawian minority languages are in a favourable position considering their introduction in schools. However, the intention of the ministry to develop native language skills and national literacies is not an end in itself. One looks at the entire programme as a stepping stone to prepare pupils for further instruction in Chichewa and English. The policy does not build in the development and maintenance of reading and writing skills in the native languages. It will be interesting to find out if in a decade's time people have acquired literacy in these languages. The Ministry of Children Affairs and Community Services runs adult literacy classes. The general policy has been to teach reading and writing skills in Chichewa only throughout the country.⁴⁰

As previously pointed out in this monograph, the process of vernacularisation does not improve the linguistic and cultural situation without the accompanying measures of broader socioeconomic impact. The general tendency of viewing the elevation of a language through functional use on the radio or in early primary

school does not always raise its prestige as much as it might change its sociolinguistic position. Research has yet to be done to ascertain the impact that these elevations are having on the languages and how the speakers themselves view the move towards the preservation of their languages. Another crucial issue is the unilateral emphasis on native languages in schools rather than learning them in families and during preschool education. It is doubtful that Lomwe children who do not learn the language in their homes will pick it up in schools. Msonthi's (1997) BEd dissertation on the vernacular policy in Malawi concludes that parents are not in favour of vernacular languages in schools. They would rather have their children learn English, the prestigious socioeconomic language. Similarly, the 1996 Yao survey also revealed that parents would favour the strong use of English (which would make them clever) or Chichewa in schools rather than Yao (see also Bwanali (1998: 10) on Chichewa as a communication tool). Also, the policy seems to treat the issue of mother tongue use as a monolithic problem. In areas where three languages prevail which one will be used and what criteria will be used for selection? Will the teacher's proficiency determine it or its wide usage in the area? How will the system cater for pupils with insufficient knowledge of the school language?

It is clear from the discussion that the current policy is giving higher priority to ideological and prestigious issues rather than practical objectives in planning for language in education. The needs of the communities are parallel with the government policy. If the general public is complaining about the decline of the standards of English (the cherished language) what will happen when the number of hours are reduced because of the proliferation of languages of instruction? The government, which is one of the poorest and most debt ridden in the third world, has to realise that it cannot sustain such a policy, hence its failure to implement it. One would also question whether the standard pattern of creating and developing literacy language (i.e. alphabets, school textbooks, formation of national elites), and popularising them through the media is always the way to go. Probably efforts should be spent on teaching and learning the ethnic language in its oral mode first in the villages or urban schools and creating conditions for the preservation of the language in its traditional domains before the formal school system as Chauma *et al.* (1997) suggest.

National consciousness: Debates in newspapers and language movements

Kishindo (1998) states that in the months preceding the National Referendum of 14 June 1993, writers openly debated the language issue in the newspapers. The arguments revolved around Chichewa as a national language *vis-à-vis* other vernacular languages and what to call the national language. Arguing on the basis of national unity one contributor said 'the use of one language as a national lingua franca makes people really feel as one' (Phiri, 1993). Another argument recognising the spread and use of Chichewa stated that:

Chichewa should still be used as a national language ... as long as it is widely spoken. Not of course (because) Chichewa was chosen by MCP as it is Kamuzu's language ... I think people must learn and appreciate that a

common language is the one of the most powerful means of communication. (Mandimbe, 1994)

Counter-arguments against Chichewa wanted equal treatment of all languages because the elevation of Chichewa as a national language was detrimental to the development of other vernaculars and called for a change in the name of Chichewa Board to be all-encompassing.

The truth is that the country has only preserved Chewa culture and this is very unhealthy, and if not checked, our children will question our thinking. The Chichewa Board should change. It should be called the Language Board. I do not see the future of our children where only one language dominates the conversation of our nation. This is our dream. Our children shall switch from Chichewa to Tumbuka, Yao, Nkhonde, Tonga, Sena etc., and our children will never look down upon other language speakers (Timau, 1993).

The name of the language also became a contentious issue. Some contributors felt that Chichewa was too closely identified with Dr Banda and wanted to revert to the old name Chinyanja for neutrality.

This debate reflects people's strong feelings against the way Banda elevated and implemented Chichewa in Malawi. The language policy that Banda followed (the Chewalisation of the Malawi nation) was seen as divisive. The issue of using Chichewa as a tool of communication was not well understood in that climate.

The earliest case of ideologically ethnic based movements was that of the Yao (two journalists and six intellectuals) who formed a 'Society for the advancement of Chiyao', formerly known as 'Society for the preservation and promotion of Yao culture and the language' in order to promote cultural and literary activities in Yao.⁴¹ According to the minutes of their first meeting (n.d.), the idea was hatched by two journalists in collaboration with a linguist at Chancellor College. Committee members agreed on the need to provide a philosophy as a foundation for cultural diversity and for divergent views of life, to promote cultural pluralism and to help establish the basis of national unity. The society was going to focus on research in Yao, build schools where Yao culture could be taught and create a Yao cultural Centre which would preserve and promote Yao. The society was also going to draft a bill for tabling in parliament with the intention of including Yao in the MSCE syllabus as an optional subject. The meeting noted that Yao was becoming more or less extinct (Minutes of the first meeting of members of the Likuga Iya Chiyao, n.d.). It was also documented in these minutes that Yao was the official language of deliberations, even though the minutes were written, as usual, in English!

Apart from the Yao group, the Tumbuka formed an 'Association for the Advancement and Preservation of languages and cultures — Chitumbuka language and culture sub-division' — claiming that the movement was nationwide. The letter mentions the organisation of a workshop involving Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena and Nkhonde. A prominent member in this group was M.S. Mkandawire who had been involved in Chitumbuka text production before Tumbuka was banned in schools. Like the Yao group, they viewed themselves as a forum for all matters pertaining to the preservation of Tumbuka and its

introduction in the school curriculum (Letter from Secretary of the Association to the Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, n.d.).

Another Association, the Abenguni (or Ngoni) Revival Association was formed in 1998 by Mr Thole, a Ngoni, who is also the chairperson. The association has more than 100 members comprising Ngoni chiefs, journalists and some intellectuals. The objectives of the Association are to:

- revive the language which is not being passed on from their forefathers to younger generations;
- bring unity to the Ngoni from both central and northern region;
- foster Ngoni identity.

The association's activities include the drafting of a constitution, revival of the Ingoma dance using old Ngoni songs as provided by Dr Soko, a Malawian Ngoni and French linguist. The Association runs a club at the Mzuzu museum, which practises old songs and also provides entertainment to museum visitors, Ngoni classes which have produced a handout in Zulu/Ngoni language using two books: *Learn Zulu* by C.L.S. Nyembezi and *A Zulu Comprehensive Course* by A.T. Cope, both bought from South Africa. Thus, the Ngoni want to go back to their roots — are taking a purist attitude towards Ngoni revival — instead of concentrating on Mzimba-Mpherembe-Ekwendeni Ngoni that has survived the century.⁴² The association is hoping to have village-based clubs where Zulu learning lessons will be offered and teachers will be identified by the chiefs. At the moment they have two volunteer teachers who have learnt Zulu up to O level in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The association has not liaised with the government or the Ministry of Education.⁴³

It is well documented that the recent political changes in Malawi have affected positively the role of other indigenous languages in Malawi. The sudden wave of democratisation and liberalisation following the collapse of Dr Banda's Malawi Congress Party machinery stimulated non-Chewa Malawians to raise their national consciousness and to activate their long suppressed ethnic movements. Apart from political movements, the democratisation process has included linguistic movements. It is difficult to judge the impact of such movements on the current state of affairs in Malawi. However, concessions from the government have now been obtained in the form of the right to use language in education, on the radio and in the newspapers. At the same time, the legal functions of these languages have increased, allowing official services and documents to be produced and circulated in them. Even so, the lack of official status and all other necessary supporting institutions such as vernacular language schools, materials for teaching, mass media, or norms for linguistic standardisation, makes these efforts less worthwhile.

Institutional recognition and semi-official status of Yao, Tumbuka and Lomwe

The functional attribution of Tumbuka, Yao and Lomwe to institutional domains such as education, administration and jurisdiction gives these languages 'semi-official status'. This status is substantiated by other types of formal and institutional recognition of these languages. However, there are no statements in the Malawian constitution or Malawian laws that clearly name these

four languages as a specific class within the totality of Malawian languages. In education as well, the only explicit distinction made in the official instructions is between English on the one hand, and Malawian languages on the other, the latter category being treated as a block. This lack of direction in a multilingual country like Malawi strengthens English and gives it a stranglehold in these domains. In administration; there are no official instructions at all regulating the choice of language in oral contracts, which is similar to the situation in jurisdiction, where the instructions only refer to orality, not to the languages to be used in this oral component.

It must be stressed that the absence of any explicit government policy does not imply that language in Malawi is in no way affected by the political realm. In practice, there exists a set of linguistic practices applied in domains which are to be situated outside of the government's official legislation but which are undeniably close to the political authorities and which have a distinctively semi-official and institutional character.

Chichewa is the working language of the president and all who are involved in mass communication. The prominence of Chichewa is a product of the interrelationship between implicit activities and the outcome of a consciously modelled policy. This does not imply however, that the unintended results are less tangible. These invisible activities are making quite an impact on Malawian society. For example, both Presidents Banda and Muluzi, though they have not given Tumbuka the official status of a northern region lingua franca, have indicated its status by accepting the use of translation into Tumbuka when in the northern region. In July 1998, a Nkhonde chief who does not speak Tumbuka addressed President Muluzi in Nkhonde, and the interpreter interpreted in Tumbuka, a regional language he assumed a Chewa and Yao-speaking president should understand. In other words, Tumbuka's regionality and interethnicity is further entrenched. In the south and the central region, Chichewa is the only language used in political or presidential discourse.

The Bible Society in Malawi continues to follow its policy of translating the Bible and Jesus Films into various vernaculars in Malawi such as Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Nkhonde and Braille. Other language planning agents include the British Council in Malawi and the French Cultural Centre which are both engaged in the spread of their languages by providing courses, expertise and training in English and French respectively. Islam is seeing a revival in Malawi and the Islamic Centre has just completed the translation of the Koran not into Yao, but in Chichewa (Quran Out, *The Nation*, 14 July 1998), the language of wider communication in Malawi.

This section of the monograph has attempted to contextualise the historical, social and political ecology of the current language planning and implementation in Malawi. The section has focused on the evolution of change in Malawi and the perceptions taken by the government and the people. The next section will focus on language maintenance and prospects in Malawi.

Part IV: Language Maintenance and Prospects

In a linguistically heterogeneous country such as Malawi, the likelihood of linguistic groups coexisting relatively permanently or some losing their language

is expected. Language maintenance or shift in Malawi may be characterised by a number of factors with common denominators such as numerical strength, socioeconomic value of the language(s) and migration. The social contacts between the various groups produce stable or unstable bilingualism, codeswitching and loanwords. Where shift is occurring it tends to be unidirectional to Chichewa in the central and southern part of Malawi and to Tumbuka in the north. This section discusses the implications of the various language policies followed in Malawi for the maintenance of Malawian languages. Data on Lomwe, Yao, Chichewa and Tumbuka will be used to illustrate the current patterns of language use and intergenerational transmission of languages from which planners can draw some insights for future rational planning.

I am using the term language shift according to Holmes (1992: 65) and Fasold (1984). The former defines language shift as a process by which one language displaces another in the linguistic repertoire of the community and the result of the process, whilst the latter adds a temporal aspect and describes language shift as a long-term, collective result of language choice. Language shift means that a community gives up (consciously or unconsciously) its language completely in favour of another (Fasold, 1984: 213). Language maintenance is the opposite of language shift.

The Ngoni

In Part I, I indicated that Ngoni is a dying language that is not being transmitted to children in the various Ngoni settlement areas. Only a small pocket of Ngoni speakers can be found in Ekwendeni and Mpherembe in Mzimba district. According to Soko (1998, personal communication), a Ngoni, in these two areas, Ngoni is even spoken by the children. However, as there is no quantitative survey data to give the exact figures on Ngoni, its decline can only be discussed based on qualitative reports. Both Kishindo (1995) and Mtenje and Soko (1998) attest to the decline of the language, which, as reported by the chairperson of the Abenguni Association, is not being passed on to the younger generation. The cultural aspects of the Ngoni, especially the oral traditions, are still alive and distinguishable (Mtenje & Soko, 1998: 15), but cultural preservation did not include the language. The Ngoni are linguistically either Tumbuka or Chewa depending on their settlement areas. Factors such as intermarriage, nature of conquest and assimilation of captives; and the fact that Ngoni, compared to Tumbuka or Chichewa, was an aristocratic language not available for everyday communication (Kishindo, 1995: 52) account for the fact that the language is dying. Hopefully the activities of the Abenguni Association will be properly funded and will focus on linguistic research to revive the dying language.

The Lomwe

The dispersion of the Lomwe from Mozambique and their migration into Malawi due to Portuguese brutality, their advanced stage of assimilation where they settled among the Nyanja and Yao in the Shire Highlands, longstanding negative attitudes towards the use of Lomwe by both the Lomwe themselves and other ethnic groups, the perceived difficulty of the language, make the Lomwe

an interesting case study of language shift. Lomwe has been well surveyed and both rural and urban Lomwe data are presented to show how the Lomwe have shifted from their language to Chichewa.

The discussion of Lomwe language shift revolves around the interplay of both external and internal factors and the pressures that were brought to bear on the people and the language. According to Kulik (1994: 4) shifts in language are not caused by languages as such, they are rather caused by shifts in the values and goals of the speakers of the language (see also Holm, 1993). Lomwe historiography and cultural practices are bases from which to understand their process of language shift. Lomwe historiography has already been presented in Part I of this monograph. According to Tew (1950) the Lomwe doubled in number between 1921 and 1931 increasing from 120,776 to 235,616. In 1945, they were 379,638, an increase of 144,022 or 61%. According to the 1966 Census report, the Lomwe formed the second largest ethnic or linguistic group (14.5%) in Malawi and they stood at 476,306, an increase of 20% over a period of 21 years. Their growth rate had slowed.

The evolution of negative attitudes towards the Lomwe language and the identity crisis of the Lomwe can be better understood by examining not only the values and attitudes of the Lomwe people but also those of the non-Lomwe ethnic groups. Labov (1966, 1972) defines a speech community as the sharing of norms and values and the homogeneous usage of forms and elements. Hymes (1972, 1974) adds that members of a speech community share strong feelings of belonging to a local territory and of participating in an interactional network inside this territory (also see Milroy, 1987). Both historians (Boerder, 1984; Chipendo, 1980/81; Rashid, 1978) and sociolinguists (Kayambazinthu, 1989/90, 1994, 1995; Matiki, 1996/97) have confirmed by empirical evidence the evolution or change in Lomwe usage from the days of settlement to the present situation. The questions that can be raised include: Does there exist a Lomwe speech community? Is there a Lomwe culture that can be attached to language preservation and aspects of identity? What has really distinguished the Lomwe from the other ethnic groups that they settled amongst? Apart from the distinct family surnames, language, and dances, what were the Lomwe core cultural values (Smolicz & Secombe, 1985)?

According to Chipendo one side effect of mission education, which used Chichewa and English as mediums of instruction was the dying out of the Lomwe language. After their arrival and prior to the 1960s the Lomwe language was fluently and frequently spoken and meetings were held in Lomwe. However, when writing and doing research in 1980, Chipendo (1980/81) noted that it was mostly the old people who spoke the language in Mthiramanja area and that the youth communicated in Chichewa. Chipendo indicated that this was due to the fact that the young people learnt everything in English and Chichewa only, and no Lomwe was spoken at school. Chichewa replaced Lomwe even at home because it became less and less of an advantage to use and preserve. The Lomwe began to view their language as a severe handicap to socioeconomic advancement, Chichewa being dominant at work, political and commercial activities or domains. According to one 70-year-old lady, shifting to Chichewa was a way of

weakening the traditional stigmatisation towards themselves and especially their children (1992, personal communication).

Makonokaya (1981: 12), who studied the Lomwe of Lirangwi, reported his respondents saying: 'We teach them Lomwe, but when they go out and meet friends who speak Chichewa, they easily forget what they had been taught. Most of the time our children laugh at what we teach them. I do not know what is awkward about our language. This prevents them from learning how to speak Lomwe'. However another respondent had a different view that sheds light on the conscious loss of Lomwe: 'It would be difficult for the children to learn Chichewa after acquiring Lomwe as their mother tongue'. To eliminate such problems the informant said, 'we prefer teaching them Chichewa at an early stage so that they should be able to grow up with Chichewa as their first language'. The children (N = 39) themselves said they were not interested in learning Lomwe because 'most of our friends don't know how to speak Lomwe. Now for us to have easy communication with them we prefer learning Chichewa. Moreover, in our schools, we are not taught Lomwe but Chichewa' (Makonokaya, 1981:12).

Recent data collected at different times by different researchers exemplify language shift. Kayambazinthu's 1992 survey⁴⁴ collected data in three main cities in Malawi (Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu) and involved 107 Lomwe speakers born mainly in the southern region of Malawi, in Lomwe-speaking areas but now living in the cities. Both observation and survey techniques using a questionnaire were used as data collection tools over a period of three months. Respondents were purposely selected on the basis of being Lomwe households. Matiki's 1995 study (Matiki, 1996/97) was carried out in rural areas of Lomwe-speaking villages in Thyolo, Mulanje and Chiradzulu; and involved 180 respondents. It also employed observations and the questionnaire was the main data collection tool. Respondents' age, education and place of birth were correlated with language competence and use. While accepting that each set of data is representative of the particular groups in question, at that particular time and situation, the two groups are still comparable in certain important ways. Thus, some similarities and contrasts can be observed from the data especially on fluency and frequency with which respondents used Lomwe. Patterns of language use across four generations and the actual language use in domains was revealing.

Data analysis revealed that the majority of rural (50%) and urban (70%) the Lomwe acquired Chichewa as their first language. Data further showed that only 40% of rural Lomwe and 9% of urban Lomwe acquired Lomwe as a first language. Both Kayambazinthu (1995) and Matiki (1996/97) report that during fieldwork most Lomwe reported having acquired both Chichewa and their ethnic language simultaneously during childhood within their neighbourhoods before reaching school age. Thus, childhood bilingualism was a common phenomenon. Societal bilingualism has been cited as a crucial stage or precursor in the processes leading to language shift (Lieberson, 1972). Lieberson (1972: 1981) noted that almost all cases of societal language shift came about through intergenerational switching. Since intergenerational switching requires the earlier generation to be bilingual, the proportion of a population that is bilingual constitutes an 'exposure to risk'

that one of the languages might eventually be lost (Lieberson, 1972: 242), as was and is the case with the Lomwe.

The parental language acquisition pattern was rather different. Rural data showed that most parents (mothers, fathers and grandparents) spoke Lomwe, whilst urban data showed the reverse. Very few of the urban respondents (16%) and their parents (father 6%, mother 4%), children (12%) and spouses spoke the language or used it as a home language (14%). Matiki's data on intergenerational bilingualism showed that the first generation of parents and grandparents of the 50–82 age cohort and parents of the 35–49 age cohort, was monolingual in Lomwe (51%) followed by those who were bilingual in both Lomwe and Chichewa (37%). Monolingualism in Chichewa was minimal (12%) amongst this group. The second (72%) and third (76%) generation were mainly bilingual in Lomwe and Chichewa; and if they were monolingual it was mainly in Chichewa. By the fourth generation, bilingualism in Chichewa and Lomwe was still the dominant pattern (59%) but monolingualism in Chichewa was rising rapidly (41%). By this stage, no one claimed to be monolingual in Lomwe. Matiki (1996/97) observes that from the first to the third generation, the number of bilinguals in Lomwe and Chichewa increased by a little over 100%. By the fourth generation, however, the percentage of these bilinguals decreased by 17%. The Lomwe used Chichewa (76%) more regularly than Lomwe (33%). These data illustrate that the Lomwe have overwhelmingly shifted from monolingualism in Lomwe in the early twentieth century through bilingualism in Chichewa and Lomwe to monolingualism in Chichewa in the late twentieth century. The data show that Lomwe and Chichewa contact did not lead to stable bilingualism but to displacement.

Data on competence and frequency of use of Lomwe revealed that most respondents could speak (41%) and understand (50%) Lomwe but could not read (46%) or write it (54%). Their skills in speaking (69%), understanding (71%), reading (59%) and writing (59%) Chichewa were far superior to their abilities in Lomwe. It is obvious that the respondents were more fluent and literate in Chichewa than in Lomwe. More important is the comparatively high level of mastery of Lomwe by the rural Lomwe compared to urban Lomwe. The urban respondents could not speak (65%), understand (43%), read (71%) and write (79%) Lomwe at all. This pattern reflects the literacy policies followed by both the colonialists and the neocolonialists who did not provide opportunities for the development of Lomwe reading and writing skills.

Data on how frequently respondents used Lomwe revealed that Lomwe was not used regularly (33%) compared to Chichewa (76%). This tallies with their competence in the language as well. Lomwe use was split between very little (31%) and regularly (33%) which means that it was a language that was dependent on speakers' availability. Of the 107 urban Lomwes, 43% claimed never to use the language or to use it sometimes (43%). Chichewa was usually used (68%). Even though the rural Lomwe show more competence in the language and to some extent use the language more than the urban Lomwe, they are similar in their higher competence and use of Chichewa than their language.

Data on respondents' actual language use in various domains: home, neighbourhood, school, religion and media use revealed the significant and dominant use of Chichewa over Lomwe, whether in the rural or urban areas.

Literature on language shift has documented the fact that shift can be detected from the home domain and if parents are passing or not passing the language to their children. Even in the family domain, the inability of the Lomwe to maintain the home as an intact domain for the use of their language has been decisive in language shift. It can be observed that respondents in the two surveys reported to speak only or mostly in Lomwe to parents and older relatives. The proportion claiming the use of Lomwe with brothers and sisters or siblings fell substantially among rural Lomwe and was almost non-existent among urban Lomwes. These results are comparable with the generational decline in Lomwe usage.

Romaine (1995: 42) states that the low usage of an ethnic language in the home domain is symptomatic of a more far-reaching disruption of domain distribution and pattern of transmission. Fishman (1991) emphasises the significance of intergenerational transmission. He proposes a scale to measure the degree of disruption and shift which a community has experienced in the use of its language. He calls this the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). Fishman proposes that only when a language is being passed on in the home is there some chance of long-term survival. Otherwise efforts to prop up the language elsewhere (e.g. school, church) may end up being largely symbolic and ceremonial. The low usage and mastery of Lomwe, especially among urban Lomwes and rural Lomwes, to some extent reflects the low priority given to the language in homes, community and schools. This tallies with Chipendo's observation of the non-reciprocal use of Lomwe between parents and their children. The high use of Chichewa indicates the tolerance Lomwe adults have of Chichewa. They do not mind its use; neither do they reinforce Lomwe with their children. Urban data showed a similar trend even though it showed a more complete shift towards Chichewa and only few respondents used Lomwe to older brothers and sisters (4%) and older relatives (7%). None of the children were spoken to in Lomwe and there were no Lomwe exchanges between husbands and wives.

Due to the nature of their immigration, interaction and settlement, the Lomwe experienced stigmatisation. First, they were nicknamed the Nguru,⁴⁵ a stigmatised Yao description of those people who lived on the fringes of Yaoland and could not speak the Yao language properly (Bandawe, 1971). Secondly, due to their settlement patterns, the Lomwe were seen as less intelligent and more ignorant than the Yao.⁴⁶ An attempt to revive this flagging Lomwe image resulted in the creation of the Lomwe Tribal Association in the 1940s to try to regain the dignity of the Lomwe. This dignity unfortunately did not include the revival of the flagging language. Even during this recent period of ethnic consciousness, a Lomwe group has not yet been set up.

Right from the settlement days the Lomwe were not a coherent group. Use of Lomwe began to decline slowly, the low status of the Lomwe and the low prestige of the language accelerated the process. Urbanisation and industrialisation at the beginning of the twentieth century transformed the communities. These developments made it possible for the Lomwe to escape their poverty and find better paying jobs and provide their children with educational advantages. These economic and social processes fostered assimilation into the Chewa culture and had negative consequences for the growth of Lomwe language. The proclamation

of Chinyanja as the sole and obligatory lingua franca in Malawi and medium of instruction in schools, alongside English as an official language since the 1920s, gave no opportunity for the development of Lomwe script in schools or its extended use in other domains apart from the home. Nyanja dominated the neighbourhood domain as a lingua franca in a Nyanja-speaking environment.

The Yao

Another language that has been undergoing shift is Yao. The earliest Yao survey carried out in the Malindi and Domasi areas in 1987 (Kayambazinthu, 1989/90) revealed that Yao was the dominant mother tongue (77%) and most frequently used language in the home (72%). However, in both Malindi and Domasi, Chichewa was the main lingua franca outside the home domain and bilingual acquisition and use of Chichewa and Yao was the norm. Yao was confined to intraethnic communication. The 1992 urban survey however, revealed that the Yao were shifting to Chichewa. Of the 112 Yao interviewed, 14% learnt it as their first language and both Chichewa (35%) and Yao (37%) were their best languages. Chichewa was also the respondents' most frequently used home language (61%) and that of their children (71%). Thus, in the urban areas Chichewa was the dominant lingua franca except when talking to ethnic friends, siblings and neighbours who spoke the language.

Another Yao survey was carried out in 1996 (9–30 April) Kishindo *et al.* (1997) with the aim of investigating the current attitudes to Yao among Yao native speakers of Mangochi, Machinga, Dedza, Salima, Nkhota Kota, Blantyre, Zomba and Chiradzulu. The survey specifically wanted to find out:

- whether native Yao speakers in these Yao-speaking areas would favour the introduction of Yao as a medium of instruction in primary schools; and
- the Yao speakers' attitudes to the national language, Chichewa. The survey also wanted to find out if Chichewa has made headway since it was made the national language, as a lingua franca for different ethnic groups or was ever used between members of the same ethnic group.

To test these questions, data were collected from 862 randomly sampled subjects from the Yao-speaking districts already named over a period of three weeks. The results showed that 93% of the total sample could speak Yao and that Yao was the mother tongue of 83% of the respondents. Ninety-five per cent of these respondents could also speak Chichewa and only 5% were monolingual in Yao. Most of the respondents (66%) used Yao more frequently more than Chichewa (3%) and other languages (4%). Sixty-two per cent of the respondents were in favour of Yao becoming a language of instruction in Yao-speaking areas and the Yao in general had a strong and positive attitude towards their own language. However, the results also showed that the least educated were the ones who were in favour of Yao in schools, unlike the educated who favoured English (Kishindo *et al.*, 1997: 13).

The *de facto* position of Chichewa as a lingua franca in Malawi is seen in the following figures. Respondents (94%) reported that they liked speaking Chichewa. Fifty per cent of the total population interviewed, in response to the question: 'Which language they would prefer as a language of instruction in schools?', gave a bilingual answer. Fifty per cent chose Chichewa followed by

Yao (47%) and English (11%). Yao was selected for the radio by 59% of the respondents, followed by Chichewa (41%). Overall, Yao was the language the respondents wanted for reading (54%), radio (41%) and health extension work. In all these areas, Chichewa was the next most favoured language. Age grading, however, showed a different pattern. That is, the younger generation (5–20 years old = 49% and 21–35 year olds = 19%) preferred to speak Chichewa, unlike the older generation of 46+ (17%) who liked to speak Yao.

The Tumbuka

Surveys done on Tumbuka in urban areas and within its region revealed high use of the language and its maintenance. The survey I carried out on 400 respondents in Rumphi and Karonga Districts in 1991 revealed that Tumbuka was highly used both as a home language and an interethnic language. Another Tumbuka survey was carried out on 1732 respondents in 1997 by the Centre for Language Studies.⁴⁷ Data was collected through interactive interviews in all five districts in the Northern Region of Malawi: Rumphi, Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Karonga and Chitipa. The authors observed a high competence in Tumbuka. The report indicates that about 76% of the respondents who took a vocabulary and comprehension test of Tumbuka showed clear understanding of Tumbuka. The vocabulary test showed a pass rate of 96%. Interviews with teachers showed a high approval rating and acceptance (from 59% to 72% in all districts) of Tumbuka as both a subject and medium of communication. This showed that

teachers in the northern region are prepared to teach in Tumbuka and that Tumbuka is a *de facto* regional lingua franca.

Tumbuka was the language most frequently spoken at school in both Karonga (51%) Rumphi (100%) and Mzimba (94%). In Chitipa, Lambya (41%), Sukwa (29%) and Bandia (29%)⁴⁸ were commonly spoken. In Nkhata Bay, Tonga (92%) was prevalent. Chichewa was the dominant language for radio broadcasts and newspaper articles in Nkhata Bay, Chitipa and Karonga, unlike Rumphi where Tumbuka use was the same as Chichewa (50%). This further indicates the regionality of Tumbuka and Chichewa as a national lingua franca. Recognising the power of English, most respondents opted for English in Parliament followed by Chichewa then Tumbuka. Most of the pupils interviewed (59%) wanted to learn in English followed by Chichewa. Their desires seem to reinforce the two long-standing subjects and mediums of communication, and suggest that they have become more established school languages than Tumbuka, which was marginalised for nearly 30 years. The results also showed favourable liking for Chichewa in radio, newspapers, church and hospitals especially in Nkhata-Bay and to some extent in Karonga. Tumbuka was favoured for radio, newspapers, church and hospitals in Rumphi, Karonga and Mzimba (Centre for Language Studies, 1998).⁴⁹

Observations

The distribution of speakers according to age groups serves as a reliable indicator of the chances for the preservation of a language. The data in all the surveys showed that the level of competence in the native language was lower among the younger generation and all the sociolinguistic surveys give that

uniform picture. The complete absence of native speakers among children, or among people below 30–40 seen in Lomwe reflect the lower use of Lomwe and Yao especially in the urban areas. However, when considering these figures one should also account for conservative patterns of behaviour and that when people grow older they sometimes learn the language. Also to be taken into account is the preservation of languages such as Yao and Lomwe in the rural areas. Despite its ban in 1968 Tumbuka is still thriving in both rural and urban areas.

The results of these surveys point to three important issues:

- (1) Malawi has two lingua franca zones: Chichewa in the centre and southern region, and Tumbuka in the northern region.
- (2) Of the two lingua francas, Chichewa is the *de facto* national lingua franca in Malawi and Tumbuka is the *de facto* northern regional lingua franca by virtue of being the language that is best understood by the majority of people in the region.
- (3) The elevation of Chichewa and the teaching of English and Chichewa only in schools have had a major impact on coexisting languages such as Lomwe and Yao to some extent, which are in decline. Vernaculars continue to fulfil intraethnic communication.

These results have further implications for language planning in Malawi. What Malawian planners need to do is to ascertain the role of minority languages especially in the health sector, agricultural extension and community development.

Future prospects

This monograph has raised a number of issues that Malawi needs to address for language planning purposes:

- (1) In Malawi, conscious and deliberate language planning in response to sociopolitical and economic problems has been *ad hoc* and has not been preceded by any research into the linguistic situation. If the move towards pluralism is to be effective, surveys and linguistic analyses need to be done to determine and establish standard varieties of the languages involved.
- (2) Historically, Malawi has planned for trilingualism by deliberately neglecting second language education in schools in indigenous languages other than Chichewa. Malawi has also practised linguistic imperialism by promoting English, associated with social and economic mobility at the expense of Chichewa and other Malawian languages; and by using Chichewa as a stepping stone to the ultimate goal of acquiring English. If Malawian planners intend to vernacularise the education system then there is need to tie vernacular education to job opportunities, which is not done at present. Cases of language shift testify to the active and deliberate denigration and repression of some Malawian languages during the colonial and Banda eras.

Language planning in a multilingual and multicultural country such as Malawi is a complex process that needs serious consideration rather than *ad hoc* or reactive measures. As an emergent underdeveloped country, Malawi needs to

address national concerns, pedagogical concerns and social or human rights concerns. Within the *Zasintha* philosophy the latter and the former issues are fulfilled, but the various logistical programmes and pedagogical issues have not been fulfilled. While a pluralistic alternative has many appealing features, it also brings its own pluralistic dilemmas. Bullivant (1981: ix) argues that even in the most enlightened and tolerant societies, pluralistic options can potentially function as ideal methods of controlling knowledge/power, while appearing through symbolic political languages to be acting solely from the best of motives in the interests of ethnic groups themselves. The government's commitment to multilingualism is commendable but is prohibitively costly.

The current recognition of six languages on the radio, the introduction of other vernaculars in schools and the protection of minority languages is a commendable idea, but it raises a number of questions that remain to be answered. Malawian planners have to realise that status planning decisions will have to be reflected in corpus planning decisions. The implementation of specific language policies will be problematic politically, economically and educationally. Where should the line be drawn? If equity is the criterion, then all languages should be treated equally, an undertaking that the government cannot afford. Would the president refuse the Ngoni if they agitate for it to be broadcast on the radio? The emerging picture from the survey of literature on language planning in Malawi, newspaper debates and the various surveys this monograph has reviewed shows that nationally, the selection of Chichewa as national language and English as the official language is not in question.

Vernacularisation touches at the core of Malawian authentication of its multiculturalism and multilingualism. It was evident at the launch of the Malawian National Long Term Perspective Studies (Malawi Vision 2020) workshop in November 1997, that Malawians do not like their cultures nor their produce, favouring external products. The authentication of Malawian languages and their ascendancy to fulfil that role or that status demands that Malawians accept that what they have is as good as what they can import, including languages. Attached to vernacularisation should be the economic benefits for the use of Malawian languages, breaking the monopoly of English as the catalyst for socioeconomic development. However, Malawi also needs to tackle global issues and English will still be needed as a global language.

The roles of both the national language and the official language programmes need to be clearly delineated, with lexical and orthographic development being attached to status planning. The popularity of English among both the educated and uneducated as the language to learn shows that English has a positive profile in Malawi. However, if access to scientific and technological information is embodied in English, as is the case now, then one can only hope that the government will check English's role as a stratifying tool or linguistic boundary, to make it more accessible to everyone through free primary education.⁵⁰

Pedagogically, the use of vernaculars in early primary school is both educationally sound and pragmatic. The role of vernaculars as stepping stones allows the children to adjust to the school system and helps them to understand concepts they would have found otherwise difficult to understand in English (see also Chauma *et al.*, 1997). So, should the Ministry then post people according to

their district of origin? This would raise political eyebrows as it did in the Banda era and would also go against teachers' aspirations and motivation. The Ministry of Education needs to produce materials, train teachers in these languages and constantly review the progress of the plan.

The government needs to support linguistic research in the various languages in Malawi and establish lingua franca zones of mediums of communication. Linguists should also be involved in the standardisation, production of orthography and lexical expansion of these languages to meet the communicative needs of the communities. A number of Chancellor College intellectuals⁵¹ have called for vernacularisation of the school system, a policy that has been adopted in a number of countries both in post colonial Africa and world wide. Although UNESCO and other research studies have endorsed the merits of such a policy, it is unlikely to prove popular in the current Malawian setting, given the popularity of English and its current status. However, the authentication of Malawian languages has its own place. Debates in Parliament would be better done in Chichewa than English. The laws should be translated into the various vernaculars for ordinary people to understand⁵² and Malawi could benefit from learning the Samoan model (Baldauf, 1990). One cannot but agree with Djité (1990: 98) that:

It's hard to believe that there can be or that one can possibly argue for a true and lasting development under such a policy when so many people do not know their constitutional and legal rights, cannot understand the development goals of their governments, and actively participate in them.

The current dominance of English in administration and legislature means that nearly 90% of Malawians are excluded from decisions that affect them. It is also doubtful, given the calibre of our Malawian Parliamentarians, that they are able to understand or follow the bills that they pass in Parliament.⁵³

Conclusion

This monograph has attempted to trace and contextualise the historical, social and political ecology of Malawian language policy formulation and implementation from the colonial period to the present situation.⁵⁴ In an attempt to present the history of language planning in Malawi I have proceeded to present more than an overview of the history. The processes, conflicts and the different lobbyists behind language planning in Malawi are focused upon. Further, the complexity of the issues in language planning and the reactive and *ad hoc* way that has perversely characterised language planning is shown. During the colonial period consultation and lobbying for languages shaped the language policy. However, the post-colonial period is marked by spontaneous planning without consultation and decisions are connected to the socioeconomic and political environment in which they were made. Hopefully the future development of language policy in Malawi will be systematic and directives will be based on real research, not on vested interest.

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Notes

1. The figure was given at the Malawi population day (11 July 1998) organised by Ministry of Health in conjunction with the NSO. The national census was held in 1998, the first census in Malawi since the 1966 census to include a question on home languages. The census however, was not expected to find out about ethnic composition for one to determine language maintenance or shift in the country.
2. Bailey (1995: 34–35) has an interesting discussion of whether one should use the vernacular language prefix in English for Bantu languages. He recommends the omission of the prefix.
3. I am using Guthrie's (1967) classification of Bantu languages.
4. During the colonial period up to 1968, Chichewa was known as Nyanja. In all the information on languages where Nyanja appears as a language, it should be read as Chichewa. This is distinct from Nyanja as a dialect of Chichewa. In Zambia, the language is still known as Nyanja.
5. Personal correspondence with Monica Masonga, a Zambian.
6. Vail (1972: 150) on the basis of Tumbuka cultural differences, states that the Tumbuka came from three different areas. Those in the south derived from a mixture of matrilineal peoples of Chewa origin. The northern zone was peopled either by groups who immigrated from the patrilineal system in southern Tanzania and northeastern Zambia or by those who immigrated from matrilineal areas to the west at a relatively later date and adopted a patrilineal system of descent and inheritance.
7. Guthrie (1967) does not classify some of these languages.
8. According to Kishindo (Personal Communication, 1998), there are two Bibles in the two 'dialects' and the textual comparisons leaves one in no doubt that they are the same language.
9. Personal communication with Dr Matembo Mzunda, a Lambya speaker and lecturer at Chancellor College, 1991.
10. Personal communication with Peter Lino, a native speaker of Sena. Also, even though I am a fluent Chichewa speaker, I cannot understand Sena news items on the radio.
11. Personal communication with Mazganga Lino, a Ngoni.
12. Nguru has become a derogatory name for the Lomwe. The use of this term is now banned in Malawi.
13. The British were not necessarily the first Europeans to make contacts with Malawians since prior to the British the Portuguese had already been trading with the Malawians but did not take full control of the country.
14. This discussion is based mainly on the 1966 census data because to date, it is the only comprehensive language survey done on Malawian languages. The 1987 census collected data on literacy in the official language (English) and the national language (Chichewa) but excluded all other languages.
15. Vail and White (1989: 180) state that the figure was exaggerated. 'President Banda was able to lump together the various dialect groups of the southern region — Chipeta, Nyanja and Mang'anja, even Lomwe to produce a national population that was ...

- more than 50 percent Chewa. Banda's deep concern for a paper majority for the so-called Chewa was demonstrated when he ordered the University of Malawi to no longer use the services of the University of London's distinguished linguist, Prof. Wilfred Whiteley, after he had observed in a report prepared for the University of Malawi that the number of Chewa speakers was clearly exaggerated in official estimates'.
16. In 1964 when the country gained independence about 359,841 (approximately 10.5% of the total population (N = 3,275,181) pupils were enrolled in primary school. By 1996 the enrolment rate had grown to 2,887,107 pupils (24.3%) due to free primary education (Basic Educational Statistics, 1996).
 17. Personal communication with the principal education methods adviser for French sitting in for the language adviser. Ministry of Education and Culture, 16 January 1998.
 18. MASAF is a microlending programme for socioeconomic development of rural communities in Malawi. Privatisation refers to programmes announcing which companies are being privatised and when people can buy shares.
 19. Dr W.M. Turner of LMS states that historically, the experience of the missionaries was that for the first 25 years of its work in Nyasaland, Chinyanja was insisted on as the medium of instruction in schools ... It was because it was obvious that the policy was failing educationally to reach the mass of the people *in the north* (my emphasis) that the mission council decided to use the local vernacular and pass them on to English. Since that decision was taken, the advance made in education has been both rapid and continuous, and the education given in the Livingstonia Mission has won a high reputation not only in Nyasaland but in the adjoining territories. (Turner to Chief Secretary, Zomba, 29 July 1933). The discussion on colonial discourses and language policies is based on my archival research, especially File Nos.: S1/1008/19, S1/449/32, S1/235/32, S1/510/30 at the National Archives of Malawi in January 1992 and the University of Malawi Library, Chancellor College, Zomba.
 20. White fortune seekers who acquired huge pieces of land for growing coffee and tea in the Shire Highlands in the late nineteenth century.
 21. For example, Laws translated Mark's Gospel in western Nyanja dialect and in 1866 completed his version of the New Testament in the same dialect. At the Blantyre Mission David Scott brought out Matthew and Mark in 1892, the Gospels in 1893 and certain Epistles in 1894 in the Mang'anja dialect (Doke, 1961b: 122). Bishop Mackenzie of the UMCA at Likoma Island translated Mark in 1891 and Archdeacon Johnston the Psalms in 1893 in eastern Nyanja or the Likoma dialect. The New Testament was completed in 1898 and the whole Bible in 1912 by Archdeacon Johnston and Miss K.H. Nixon Smith. This version is still used by this mission (Doke, 1961b: 122).
 22. Price (1940: 132) and Heine (1970: 62) note that the move towards union Nyanja did not gain a foothold because the contrast between the two dialects had already deepened far too much and speakers of each dialect felt that each other's dialect was represented beyond its merit.
 23. Local mission presses included the Livingstonia Mission Press (Presbyterian), Likuni Press (Catholic), Montfort Press (Catholic), Malamulo Publishing House (Seventh Day Adventist) Hertherwick Press (Presbyterian) publishing mainly in Nyanja and Yao (Pachai, 1971: 55) and the Government Printer. All these helped in the distribution of books to agencies and schools.
 24. Vail (1981: 126) states that in 1893 there were 10 schools with 630 pupils, and by 1901, there were 55 schools with an average attendance of 2800 pupils.
 25. When the colonialists were deciding on a lingua franca for Malawi, the other two alternatives, apart from Nyanja, were English and Kiswahili. From the Church of Scotland, James Alexander argued that 'personally, I would not favour Kiswahili, not merely because it would mean uprooting and replacing the vast output of Chinyanja literature put out by the government and various missions, but also because of its association with Mohammedanism (Islam)'. Letter from Church of Scotland Mission, Blantyre, Nyasaland, 12 September 1932. To the Director of Education, A.T. Lacey from James F. Alexander.
 26. James Alexander of the BMS wrote to the Director of Education T.M. Lancy that 'in

- our mission Yao was at first the language always used and of course remains the mother tongue of a vast number of natives in these parts but at the beginning of this century the official policy of the mission was to supersede Yao with Chinyanja ... The contention has been advanced by those responsible for the working of village schools in our district that were Yao to be the medium of instruction, the women and girls would come in far greater number to school. A contention that cannot be gainsaid but which economically is impossible' (James Alexander to T. Lacey (Director of Education) 12 September 1932.
27. Language shift towards Nyanja in the Shire Highlands dates back to early settlement without the intervention of the colonial government or missionaries due to the fact that the Yao were a minority among the majority Nyanja (see the 1921 population census report and Tew, 1950). My urban data collected in 1992 from 450 respondents comprising Chewa, Yao, Lomwe and Tumbuka speakers in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu showed that only 3% of the respondents learnt Yao as a second language and 6% learnt it as a third language compared to Chichewa's 49% and 30% respectively.
 28. By 1904, 64% of the pupils receiving education in Malawi did so in Livingstonia's schools, whilst all those obtaining post primary training attended the Overtoun Institution (Alpers, 1972: 215).
 29. By 1944, the name changed to the Nyasaland African Congress and in 1960 to the Malawi Congress Party (MCP).
 30. For example, Sanderson's and Birthrey's *An Introduction to Chinyanja* was written primarily for the increasing number of settlers in Nyasaland both official and unofficial, requiring a working knowledge of Nyanja, whilst Thomson's *Military Nyanja* was written to provide a skeleton grammar and vocabulary for those engaged in learning the language for military use, a memory fresher for those who have done so and to serve as a handbook of mainly military terms for those who learn the language in civil life.
 31. It should be noted that Nyanja has a speech community in eastern Zambia.
 32. On problems of standardisation of Nyanja see Young (1949), Mtenje (1980) and Kishindo (1990). By Chinyanja was meant the Nyanja of southern region of Malawi and central region and it did not include Lake shore Nyanja (Lacey to Chief Secretary, A memoranda 17 April 1936).
 33. Banda's uncle, Chief Mwase of Kasungu, in collaboration with the colonial government also acted as an informant to the colonial linguists in London when the government was trying to elevate Chichewa as a national language and selecting the dialect to be standardised.
 34. Most educated Malawians find it very difficult to express academic and technical issues in Chichewa or vernacular languages (see also Gonzalez, 1990, on bilingual education in the Philippines). This was evident at the National Long Term Perspective Study Conference (Malawi Vision 2020 Conference) in 1997 when the vice president asked the resource persons to present their findings in both Chichewa and English for the sake of the uneducated chiefs. While the presenters were very comfortable in English, they struggled to express the ideas in Chichewa or Tumbuka to the amazement of the participants.
 35. For a thorough discussion on this era and Banda's iron fist rule characterised by lack of freedom and lack of dissenting views, see Vail and White, 1989; Chirwa, 1998; Phiri, 1988; Chimombo, 1998 and Kishindo, 1998.
 36. My personal communication with one MBC worker revealed that they got the directive two days before the three languages went on air. As such they were caught unawares and were unprepared for the task. That this was a political ploy for the government to gain votes in a particular by-election is clear. This decision also affected the time slot for Tumbuka which used to be aired at prime time, 7.10 pm to 9 pm to the annoyance of the Tumbuka listeners. The Tumbuka were quick to accuse the government of tribalism and politicking. See for example, Chakachaka, L. 'Why mistime Tumbuka'. Letters, *The Star*, 20 November 1996, and Manda, M. 'Welcome Yao, Lomwe, but' Letters to the Editor, *Malawi News*, 7-13 December 1996. See also Kishindo (1998).

37. This type of work has not yet been effected. The Centre has so far conducted the Tumbuka survey (sponsored by the German Technical Corporation) and produced a draft dictionary of Chichewa, revised Chichewa orthography rules, *Malilime: Malawian Journal of Linguistics*, teaching manuals for teaching Tumbuka and Chichewa to non-native speakers.
38. It is well documented in Malawi that the general elections were done along regional lines (see Chirwa, 1998; Kishindo, 1998 among others). The regionalistic and ethnic tendency clearly showed when Tom Chakufwa Chihana, a Tumbuka from the north and candidate for the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) won over 85% of the votes from the region against his 8% from the centre and 7% from the south. Dr Banda, a Chewa from the central region and an MCP candidate got 70% of the votes in his region against 16% from the south and 9% from the north. Elson Bakili Muluzi, a Yao from the southern region won 75% of the votes in the southern region against 23% in the centre and 7% in the north (Kishindo 1998: 265).
39. The secretary for education explained in a press release in *The Nation* newspaper of 25 June 1996: 13 that 'The fact has however remained that although other languages were banned as mediums of instruction in Standard 1–4, many teachers teaching in the remote rural primary schools, have used and are still using the commonly spoken languages in their schools as mediums of instruction in Standards 1 to 4 making learning more meaningful to pupils. The teachers, however, make sure that School Inspectors do not find them doing so, otherwise they quickly switch over to Chichewa at the sight of the School Inspectors. The new policy is trying to grant teachers the freedom to use languages commonly spoken in the area where schools are situated. Yet teachers will be posted according to the need of that particular district or region that is regardless of whether one knows the language or that area or not'.
40. Kishindo (1995: 56) footnotes that in 1994 people in Chitipa were calling for the abolition of literacy classes in Chichewa. They wanted to learn in Tumbuka. 'Recently, literacy instructors in Chitipa have asked the department of community services to teach adults in Chitumbuka which they claim they understand better than Chichewa'. 'Instructors push for Chitumbuka', *The Nation*, 3 October 1994. In another situation, adult learners wanted literacy classes to include English!
41. Pascal Kishindo, lecturer and Head of African Languages and Linguistics Department, says he initiated this movement with the aim of forming clubs that could discuss orthography issues and creative writing in the various languages. However, the initial idea was hijacked and the association turned into a political forum for frustrated Yao politicians. When he pulled out, the association also died.
42. According to Dr Soko, an Associate Professor of French and a resource person to the Association, Malawi Ngoni is closer to South African Xhosa than South African Zulu. He says that when a praise poet from Mzimba (Malawi Ngoni) presented his epic poem at a conference, the Zulu delegates understood only half of what he was saying and a Xhosa delegate understood everything. Dr Soko confirms this from other Malawian Ngonis living in South Africa near the Xhosa who also confirm the close mutual intelligibility between Xhosa and Malawian Ngoni. Therefore Malawi Ngoni is closer to original Nguni than Zulu (see also Mtenje & Soko, 1998). Probably the Malawian Ngonis need to study Malawian Ngoni rather than using Zulu texts. The early missionaries also mistakenly assumed that Ngoni equals Zulu.
43. The whole movement was initiated by Mr Thole, a senior museum curator at Mzuzu Museum by virtue of being Ngoni, his job and interest in the language and its culture (personal communication with Mr A.W. Thole, Chairperson, Abenguni Revival Association).
44. My survey, unlike Matiki's, took a comparative approach and studied the language use of four major linguistic groups in Malawi: the Chewa, the Lomwe, the Yao, and the Tumbuka in that order. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the data.
45. The origin and use of this word is still contentious. Some authors such as Tew (1950) referring to it as originating from a hill near where the Lomwe came from and some Lomwe claiming it as a dialectical variation of Lomwe (Kishindo, personal communication, 1997).

46. 'The Anguru are naturally a wild and low-caste race whose ignorance makes them at once savage and timid. The immigrant Anguru rarely or never form communities of their own when settling in British territory but prefer to attach themselves to prominent Yao or Anyanja chiefs in return for whose protection they usually perform a certain amount of menial labour. The status of these Anguru strangers in a Yao or Anyanja village is somewhat peculiar. They are often described by other natives and indeed describe themselves as "akapolo" (slaves), a misleading term ... although their racial inferiority causes them to be held in some measure of contempt and relegates them naturally to an inferior position as compared with more intelligent tribes' (Murray, 1910: 107-108).
47. The results of this survey should be understood from the point of view that given the population in the northern region and the sample obtained, on which the results are based, is far from representative. Given the nature of the project that was undertaken a higher sample would have yielded more significant and elucidating results than is given. The survey interviewed 1105 primary school pupils, 194 primary school teachers, and 433 parents/guardians. The sample was skewed towards pupils.
48. A newspaper reporter who visited Chitipa recently says that he was surprised to see that most people in the district could hardly converse in Chichewa despite having been born and brought up in the country. There were also very few people who discussed issues in Tumbuka. Although there are several dialects in Chitipa (he exaggeratedly cites 20) people are able to understand each other, that is, they do not need a lingua franca because the various languages are mutually intelligible. The mutual intelligibility is questionable but probably, Chitipa being a small district, most people have maintained their languages but at the same time they have learnt each other's language to the extent that they can understand each other. His argument is however flawed in that he assumes that being born and bred in Malawi means one automatically learns Chichewa. At the same time his article raises the important question of how far spread are Chichewa and Tumbuka and Chitipa in the remote villages of Malawi (Ntonya, 1998).
49. The resistance to Tumbuka by the Tonga and the Ngonde is historical. Refer to the colonial debates which also show the two groups resisting Tumbuka and favouring Chichewa in their areas. The resistance stems from the rivalry of the two ethnic groups with the Tumbuka. The Ngonde hated the Tumbuka because the latter collaborated with the Arab slave traders (Mlozi) during the slave trade when Mlozi plundered the Ngonde villages. For the Tonga, according to Wiseman Chirwa (personal communication, 1998), Tumbuka is associated with the Ngoni who also subjugated the Tonga through their raids. Later on though, the Ngoni provided ready labour to the Tonga. As such the Tonga do not hold the Ngoni in high esteem.
50. The president's speeches which used to be monolingual in Chichewa, have of late tended to be bilingual or containing codeswitching between English and Chichewa (Kishindo, 1998, personal communication), probably as a way of signalling his multiple identity of being a Malawian (Chichewa) and educated (English).
51. See Kamwendo, 1994; Kulemeka, 1995; Chauma *et al.* 1997. As Kishindo (Personal communication, 1998) rightly points out, Malawian intellectuals harbour contradictions at the personal level. Most intellectuals will send their children to exclusive schools where English is the main language and speaking a vernacular is an offence. It seems Malawian intellectuals pay lip service to vernacularisation and have no confidence in the government school system. The intellectuals also realise that English is a prestigious language they cannot disregard.
52. One of the daily papers reported a meeting where shareholders were angry with the way their constitution was written. The legalese was beyond them and they called for simple language that they could all understand and participate in discussion. These were not village or uneducated people but educated Malawians. What more with the uneducated?
53. The author runs a communication skills course for the Malawian Parliamentarians under the sponsorship of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in conjunction with Malawi Parliament. The debates in the newspapers also indicate that

- most MPs do not know why they are in Parliament and their participation leaves a lot to be desired.
54. For more details see Kishindo (1990, 1992), Vail (1981), Vail and White (1989), Kayambazinthu (1995).
 55. Tables 1 is based on the 1966 census data.
 56. The new recommendation from the syllabus committee gives equal number of hours for English and local languages, i.e. five hours each, to give more time to Chichewa and other Malawian languages (Professor Moira Chimombo, personal communication, 1998).
 57. The improvement in 1996–1997 may be due to changes in the evaluation of testing. Students are writing multiple question tests than essay type (Moira Chimombo, personal communication, 1998).

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