

## **Preschool Teachers' Experiences in Handling Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners in the Teaching and Learning Process in Multilingual Literacy Classes of Luampa District of Zambia**

Peggy Zulu, Sitwe Benson Mkandawire, Geoffrey Kazembe Tambulukani

*The University of Zambia, School of Zambia.*

### **Abstract**

Multilingual classes across age groups are becoming more and more challenging to teach and manage due to the diversity in the culture and language of learners. Multiple counties around the world are struggling to handle multilingual classes in an inclusive way as most adopt monoglossic practices (one size fits all) while a few have adopted heteroglossic practices that include all learners in classes. As globalization and cultural integration deepen, understanding the intricacies of multilingual classrooms has become crucial. In this study, researchers sought to analyse preschool teachers' experiences in handling linguistically and culturally diverse learners in multilingual classes of Luampa District of Zambia. As a qualitative study, we used a descriptive research design and sampled 6 preschools comprising 28 to 42 learners in each class, 6 preschool teachers, 18 parents to preschool learners and 6 preschool headteachers. Data was collected through class observations, and semi-structured interviews. Content analysis was used to analyze data collected. The findings of the study showed that teachers of Luampa district used multiple strategies to handle learners from the following languages: Lozi, Mbunda, Luvale, Chokwe, Luchazi, and Nkoya among others. Teachers stated that the linguistic diversity of Luampa district presents both a unique opportunity and a significant challenge for educators and learners. The study offered insights and recommendations to foster an inclusive and effective learning environment. The study makes suggestions that inform policymakers and educators on how to better accommodate and leverage the rich linguistic tapestry of Luampa district's preschool learners. Due to multilingualism across classes, preschool teachers and learners faced experiences such as language barrier, lack of linguistic competence in the familiar language, inadequate classroom space, lack of teaching and learning materials, shallow planned work in the syllabus. The study recommended that the government should consider a bilingual or trilingual language in education policy in Luampa district where Mbunda, Lozi and English, for example, can be used simultaneously in classes to reflect what is happening on the ground.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, codeswitching, translation, bilingualism, multilingualism

### **Introduction**

Like most African counties, Zambia has a long history of multilingualism due to the existence of 73 languages and dialects (Tambulukani & Bus, 2011; Banda & Jimaima, 2017). According to Chanda and Mkandawire (2013, p.viii),

The exact number of Zambian languages is not known although many texts claim that Zambia has 73 languages or 73 languages and dialects. The figure 73 is probably due to a non-distinction between language and dialect using the

criterion of mutual intelligibility. If this criterion was used, the number of  
Zambian languages would probably be about 20 to 30 only.

The census carried out in 2010 revealed that Zambia has about 73 ethnic groups with the corresponding languages and dialects and all these languages belong to the Bantu family. In 1927, the state began to elevate some Zambian languages to the status of regional official and by 1980s, seven regional languages were recognized (Bemba, Kaonde, lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Nyanja and Tonga). These languages were to be used in education as media of instruction especially in the early years of primary education (Manchishi, 2004; Simwinda, 2004; Chibamba and Tambulukani, 2023; Mkandawire et al., 2022). In 2024, the state began the process of elevating five more additional languages (Lamba, Lenje, Namwanga, Soli and Tumbuka) by developing orthographies of these languages. The total number of Zambian regional official languages will soon be increased to twelve (12). This is a move to allow children to learn in the languages they are familiar or the language of play (Mkandawire, 2017).

Studies have shown that Zambia is a multilingual country with over 70 languages spoken (Kashoki, 1978). Mkandawire (2015) alluded that today's classrooms are multilingual and multicultural cultures. These variables were mirrored in Zambian classrooms. He acknowledged that learners come from a variety of cultural and linguistic origins make up classes at all educational levels in Zambia, which results in classrooms that are typically multilingual and multicultural in nature. Zambia like many other African countries is a multilingual and multicultural society. Multilingual in the sense that there are many languages and dialects that are spoken within the borders of the country. For instance, English is the official language and is widely spoken throughout the country mainly for official purposes in education and offices.

Research has equally highlighted the experiences faced by teachers and learners in promoting language learning in multilingual classrooms (Mwanza, 2017; Nyimbili, 2018). It has also shown that language application experiences are inevitable in multilingual classrooms (Garcia, 2009). Teachers may struggle to use learners' home languages as a medium of instruction, leading to language barriers and decreased academic achievement (Mwanza, 2017; Nyimbili, 2018).

Preschools play a critical role in promoting multilingual literacy, as they lay the foundation for future language development (Hall, 2012). However, preschools in multilingual contexts face unique experiences in promoting language learning, including inadequate teacher training and lack of resources (Mkandawire, 2022).

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to establish the language situation in preschools as well as determine the experiences learners and teachers face in the application of diverse languages in the teaching and learning processes of multilingual literacy classes in preschools of Luampa district.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

The study was purely qualitative. Six classrooms were sampled comprising 28 to 42 learners. Each teacher who was teaching literacy to a particular preschool class was also part of the sample. These participants were sampled purposively. In total, the study had 36 study participants. Data was collected through semi structured interviews with preschool

headteachers as well as semi structured questionnaire which was administered to preschool teachers. Class lesson observations were also done. As a result, the experiences being reported in this study emanated from the real-life experiences of the teacher and learners. Classroom observations were conducted to see how teaching and learning was going on and identify any learning and teaching experiences in the preschool class. Thus, the study used the semi- structured interview guide, semi- structured questionnaire and the observation guide. The researcher also took some notes especially during classroom observation and they represent what the researchers observed. Analytically, content analysis was used. Thus, the data was sorted, categorized and presented under themes.

## RESULTS

Researchers asked teachers about their experiences in handling diverse classes. The shared the following experiences.

### **Language Barrier**

Preschool headteachers were asked on the experiences they faced in handling diverse learners. Most of them mentioned language barrier as one of the negative experiences or challenge in multilingual classes. Teachers noted that the application of diverse languages in multilingual literacy class made the teaching and learning process difficult. The following are the voices from preschool headteachers and teachers. The first three voices are from head teachers.

*Luampa district is a multilingual district with learners coming from different linguistic communities. There are several languages spoken such as Mbunda, Lozi, Luvale, Luchazi, Chokwe, and Nkoya. Of all these languages, the majority language, which is widely spoken is Mbunda followed by Luvale while the language of instruction in schools is Silozi. For teachers to teach effectively, they make use of translation as they teach. They translate certain words in Silozi to children's home languages in order for them to understand.*

*The biggest challenge comes into the realization that some teachers cannot speak Mbunda fluently while others do not even know it as a result you would find that there is a language gap as learners first report for school especially with those who don't understand silozi. Learners find it difficult in the first days of schooling to effectively communicate with the teachers and the other way round.*

*Some children whose parents are here due to transfers of their parents in line with work speak English, Tonga and Nyanja. Such children also find it difficult in the first place to communicate with their friends and teachers during their first days of schooling.*

Preschool teachers also stated the experiences they faced in the application of diverse languages in a multilingual preschool literacy class. Most of them noted language barrier as one of the experiences. This is what they said.

*Regardless of being Lozi by tribe and silozi being the language of instruction I normally find Some silozi words to be too complicated to understand not only for learners but including myself as a teacher. Apart from that I have also realized that even when the government of Zambia chose Silozi language to be used as a medium of instruction in schools some children do not understand silozi language for they are not Lozi by birth but belong to a different ethnic grouping. This really makes my work difficult. There are times when I don't even know how to best teach my learners especially those children whose mother tongue or L1 is not the language of instruction"*

Most textbooks we are using for the preschool section are written in English language even when the language of instruction is Silozi. Before I start teaching, I need to *Translate English words to silozi language for the learners to understand and be in accordance with the language education policy of 2013. However, it becomes a challenge for me as I teach the learners because some words are too complicated when it comes to translation and that not all learners understand the language of instruction being Silozi.* Making matters worse some learners speak other languages other than Silozi as a result, to integrate their home languages so that I make their learning easy I need to translate schoolwork from English language to Silozi and later from Silozi to Mbunda and any other languages which are spoken by the learners.

*In my class, the moment I realize some of my learners are not understanding I ask those learners who I can tell they have understood what I said to explain to their fellow learners in a language they would understand to make learning interactive and enable all the learners learn. Sometimes this act does not yield good result for you would find that even a child fails to say a particular word in a different language spoken by learners. In such instances, I also consult on vocabulary of certain words of a given majority language from fellow teachers to help learners understand. However, by so doing most of my teaching time or children's learning time is consumed through language vocabulary consultations since preschool children have limited learning time since they only learn for three hours.*

*There are several learners in my preschool class whose home languages are different from the language of instruction. In trying to integrate children's home languages to help them understand, I am forced to make use of translanguaging and translation. However, I normally face a challenge of mismatch of words as well as having homogenous words.*

*I am Tonga by tribe who is just trying to learn Lozi for the sake of teaching learners. Most learners don't understand Silozi but Mbunda as a result am indirectly forced to learn Mbunda which am finding difficult but am progressing bit by bit. It would be better if the government brought back the use of English language as medium of instruction together with Silozi because some learners in my class neither do they understand Silozi nor any other language of the community of Luampa district. Their L1 is totally different from the languages of the Luampa community. English language can best work for such learners if it was to be used as medium of instruction.*

To supplement the voices from preschool headteachers and preschool teachers, classroom lesson observations were done by the researchers, and the observations were as explained below. Researchers observed the issue of language barriers as stated by teachers and headteachers above.

Language barrier was observed in all the six classes of six different preschools of Luampa district. It was noted that learners who did not know the familiar language which was used by the teacher opted to be quiet, not as active as those who knew the language not until the teacher made efforts of asking them in their home languages did, they become active. Some learners were seen to have language experiences because they would only be seen freely expressing themselves when it was time to interact with friends be it learning corners or play time.

Apart from that the schools faced a challenge of shortfall of preschool teachers. This was noted through having preschool children of different age groups learning under one roof or class and at the same time especially instances where the other teacher is sick or is on leave.

It was observed the teacher used a teaching strategy known as translation to integrate children's home languages in the teaching and learning process. In stances where the teacher was unable to translate due to not knowing the language of the learner assistance to translate was sought from pupils who knew their friends' language to bridge the gap created by language barrier. If learners failed to translate what the teacher said another teacher was consulted so to help learners understand. Some preschool teachers who did not know the language of instruction being Lozi opted to use one of the languages they knew and was being spoken by the majority of the learners in this case being Mbunda. By so doing the government education language policy was tempered with by not being fully adhered to.

In as much as language barrier was noted to be a challenge in teaching multilingual classes while trying to integrate children's home languages some teachers avoided the use of strategies such as translanguaging, codeswitching, translation since they looked at them to be time consuming and would have led to confusion in the class especially when it came to trying to explain on words which are homogenous.

### **Limited classroom space**

Another shared experience which preschool headteachers and teachers brought out which they were facing was limited classroom space. Lack of classroom space made it difficult

for them to integrate children's home languages in the teaching and learning process. The preschool headteachers' voices on this are below:

*The school only has one permanent classroom specifically meant for ECE learners. Preschool children aged 3-4 and 5-6 all learn under one class and at the same time which is not supposed to be the case. There is need to have atleast two permanent classes for ECE children. The preschool section of this school does not have even a play park for the pupils.*

*The school does not have a permanent class meant for ECE learners as a result learning for ECE children only takes place when other primary school grades have knocked off. This is due to inadequate classroom space.*

Preschool teachers also added their voices which were similar on the challenge of classroom space which schools of Luampa district were facing. Some of the voices are as below.

*The school only has one permanent class meant for ECE learners, and don't have a play park. As a result, they all learn under one roof regardless of age groups.*

*The school only has one classroom specifically meant for ECE learners as well as one office. The play park does not have most of the required equipment.*

*Our school does not have a class for ECE learners. For learners to learn at this school they must wait until other primary grades have knocked off so to have a class where to learn from. This hinders the effective integration of children's' home languages in the teaching and learning process because the time they also come to learn plays a very important role. In this case time is not well managed for the learning of the learners.*

### **Lack of preschool teachers**

The challenge of not having a lot of preschool teachers was also noted by preschool headteachers. Below are their voices.

*At our school the preschool section faces several experiences such as lack of preschool teachers so they can attend to preschool groupings or categories according to their age groups effectively. There are times when the other teacher goes on vacation leave, falls sick and the other one falls ill. Handling preschool learners becomes a challenge. At the end of it all we end up assigning any teacher from the primary section who may not really know the learners as well as their home languages to teach them.*

*We have a challenge of understaffing when it comes to ECE teachers at this school for we only have two. When you have a lot of ECE teachers then you are assured of having teachers who can speak several languages different from each other which can be to the benefit of the*

*learner as they team teach. Unlike a situation where you only have one or two who may be both Lozi and don't know other languages spoken by the learners.*

### **Lack of teaching and learning materials**

Preschool Headteachers and teachers of Luampa district also noted the challenge of lack of teaching and learning materials in schools.

*At our school the preschool section faces several experiences such as inadequate teaching and learning materials like textbooks the school only has limited numbers. Apart from that the school does not have a playpark for the learners for it also help provide learners with learning space to help them develop creative thinking and social interaction only to mention a few among others*

*The school does not have enough teaching and learning materials needed for both categories of preschool children. The school play park is not well established.*

*Our school only has few copies of the required textbooks and does not have a play park. When it's time to foster social interaction, creative thinking, psychomotor skills which may require a lot of space I take the children to the school football field.*

*The preschool section is less stocked in terms of teaching and learning materials. The school does not have a playpark.*

### **Lack of professional support to Handle Diverse Classes**

Preschool teachers noted that they faced multiple challenges in helping diverse learners and they had no idea of where to go for help. Here are their voices.

*There are times when I run out of ideas of what to do to help those children that do not understand silozi, the official language of instruction. I try involving fellow teachers, pupils and whatever I think may work. If all goes to the worst, I just stick to the official language.*

*The school administrators know preschool learners are supposed to learn according to their age grouping that is 3-4 and 5-6 years but there is nothing they are doing about it other than letting children of different age learn under one class. Teaching is hectic in the sense that different work must be prepared for each age group. Due to pressure of work involved we stop paying attention to experiences learners have such as language barrier and as result the integration of children's home languages would not be effectively done for learners to acquire emergent literacy skills.*

*Many are times when school administrators are reminded on the importance of having an established playpark as well as having two or*

*more permanent classrooms for preschool learners as cardinal in the development of children's literacy skills but opt to give it a deaf ear.*

*When it comes to the teaching of preschool children a teacher must be eclectic, resourceful and creative. However, in order to integrate children's home languages children, need an interactive environment. The moment I am seen going outside with my learners for an interactive environment through play it becomes an issue with my supervisors. School administrators will deem the practice as time wasting and tell you to take the learners back to class and teach them from there. Some language practices which would help integrate children's home languages are not encouraged by school administrators who feel they are time wasting.*

*Schools now receive grant from the government which is money to be used in the running of the school. Despite government effort school administrators fail to support the preschool section by procuring the required materials for learners.*

Teacher's experience was that they had limited options of where to go for support on issues of multilingualism. They hoped they had a support group or professionals to help them manage diverse challenges in multilingual literacy classes.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

When meeting learners from culturally and linguistics backgrounds, the beginning of these classes can be a disaster to say the least, as some learners cannot understand each other, and some opt to keep quiet. This situation is made worse when the teacher has no idea on what to do with diverse classes. This demand that multilingual teachers need exceptional support to manage and handle diverse classes (Mkandawire et al., 2023). The experiences of teachers of Luampa district are not an exception as they faced diverse challenges in their classes. As noted by Banda and Mwanza (2017) that even when preschool teachers believed that using local languages to teach early literacy is effective, teaching children coming from a diverse linguistic background while using local language as medium of instruction for initial literacy comes with tensions that need serious attention.

The application of diverse languages in most preschools of Luampa district has faced several experiences such as lack of multilingual teachers, teachers who can fully use translanguaging, translation as well as code-switching effectively for the betterment of learners who are of a diverse linguistic community and may not fully understand the language of instruction. This is evident in several studies.

The integration of children's home languages in preschools is a complex issue that requires careful consideration of various factors, including teacher training, language policy, and community engagement (Cummins, 2000; García, 2009). Lack of multilingual teachers can hinder the integration of children's home languages, leading to language barriers and decreased academic achievement (Mwanza 2017; Nyimbili 2018; Wakumelo et al., 2016; Banda, 2005; Kapambwe, 2013; Iversen & Mkandawire, 2020). In as much as (Garcia 2009;

Lewis, 2013) noted that translanguaging and code-switching are essential pedagogical strategies for promoting language learning and academic achievement in multilingual classrooms, teachers need training and support to effectively use these strategies, particularly in contexts where children's home languages are diverse and complex (Kapambwe, 2013).

Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) noted that teachers do not have guidelines on how to use or support multiple community languages in their classrooms.

A study by Garcia and Lin (2016) reported that the lack of clear multilingual policy implies that schools and teachers do not have guidelines on how to use or support multiple community languages in their classrooms. Teachers do code-switch, but they are not trained to do so appropriately for educational purposes. A lack of explicit policy also makes it difficult for teacher educators to train teachers in appropriate methods to teach in multilingual contexts.

What studies revealed is in accordance with Ruiz's theory of three language orientation which states that Policies play a role in the teaching and learning of language. The language as problem orientation is a set of values that stem from a monolingual ideal and assimilationist mindset. Linguistic diversity is viewed as a threat to national unity which is best achieved with a single, common language. The vitality of linguistic minority languages, in turn, weakens the status of a national language by competing with it in various domains of society. Policies following this orientation aim to limit or eliminate multilingualism in society in favor of encouraging the development of the dominant majority language. This theory well informed this study in the sense what Ruiz reviewed under language as a problem orientation is the exact situation happening in the Zambian education system where the language education policy borders on one minority language there by failing to embrace multilingualism.

There is a need for teacher training programs that focus on multilingual education, translanguaging, translation, code-switching and some other language practices which would in turn help in the development of language learning. The Ministry of Education should consider revising the language education policy to promote the use of children's home languages in preschools. Multilingual education should be promoted to support language learning and academic achievement in diverse linguistic communities.

Inadequate teaching and learning materials are another challenge preschools faced in Luampa district. Preschools did not have enough textbooks to be used in the teaching and learning process. When an analysis was done on the documents each of the six sampled preschools had less than three copies of the required textbooks in literacy meaning they were only meant for the school and teachers. The lack of adequate teaching and learning materials are reported in multiple studies (Mkandawire & Tambulukani, 2017; Iversen et al., 2020; Kafusha, et al., 2021; Mkandawire et al., 2022; Lungu & Mkandawire, 2022). In real situations learners are supposed to have a feel of their textbooks especially literacy. As they look at the book and peruse through, they would be able to identify letters of the alphabet including some phonemes as well as be exposed to various prints other than that which are pasted on the walls of the classroom. The direct contact of the print rich environment can make learners be good readers and develop their linguistic competency in each language quickly.

Several studies concur with what was discovered in preschools of Luampa district. The inadequacy of teaching and learning materials is a perennial challenge facing many preschools in developing countries, including Zambia (Mwanza, 2017; Mkandawire, 2017). Studies have also highlighted the importance of textbook availability and quality in promoting literacy and academic achievement. Lack of textbooks and other instructional materials can hinder the quality of education and academic achievement (Tambulukani, 2020). Ntumi (2016)

noted that preschool teachers are faced with a lot of experiences in implementing the early childhood curriculum and a notable one among them are that most pre-school teachers do not understand the early childhood curriculum for they do not have enough teaching and learning materials to help them implement the Early childhood curriculum. This makes teaching and learning difficult. Mkandawire (2010) noted that there were several experiences in the implementation of the school curriculum, one of them being lack of teaching and learning materials. Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) also established that there were insufficient literacy books for grade one in the school as schools were supplied few copies of the Zambian language books. Zimba (2011) also revealed that children had poor emergent literacy skills because it was uncommon for them to receive regular reading sessions including shared reading experiences which were due to lack of textbooks as well as poor teaching methodologies exemplified by teachers.

However, the findings of this study suggested that preschools in Luampa district faced significant experiences in accessing textbooks, because if it was not so the preschools visited were going to have several copies of the required textbooks enough to cater for all the learners. Finding each preschool having less than three copies of the required textbooks is something which needs serious attention. Hence, there is a need for policy intervention to address the shortage of textbooks and other instructional materials in preschools.

It was also discovered that in preschools of Luampa district some teachers were not for the idea of using translanguaging as a teaching strategy to help integrate children's home languages in preschools because they lacked the language competency in the language of instruction as a result, they decided to use English language while deviating from the education language policy. While others opted to use a local language in which they are fluent other than the familiar language. While others were discouraged from using the mentioned teaching strategies for, they felt that the act of translanguaging, codeswitching and translation was time consuming since preschool learners only had a few hours of learning for most of their time is characterized with play.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the failure to translanguaging by teachers was also attributed to the fact that some Silozi words were too complicated for the teachers to translate them to the learners. Learners who are Lozi by tribe also found it difficult to understand certain Silozi terminologies due to the language having terminologies which are so complicated. In some schools where the preschool teacher was Mbunda by tribe, the moment he or she found some Silozi words to be so complicated they opted to code switch and teach the learners in Mbunda all because he or she as a teacher had failed to explain or teach certain language practices such as phonics in Silozi.

Apart from words being difficult to translate they found that a word maybe similar in structure both languages or in another language but with different meanings (homonyms) as they tried to make learners understand it brought about confusion in the learning process and consumed time.

These findings of the experiences of translanguaging in a multilingual class agree with several studies. Research has shown that teachers' lack of language competency in the language of instruction can hinder their ability to use translanguaging effectively (Tambulukani, 2020). The complexity of certain languages, such as Silozi, can also pose experiences for teachers who may struggle to translate complex terminologies (Mwanza, 2017; Mkandawire et al, 2023) this can in turn lead to confusion among learners and hinder the learning process (Nyimbili, 2018).

The result of failure by the teacher to translate complex terminologies from a local language of instruction to a child's home language may lead to a lack of confidence in using translanguaging as a pedagogy, particularly in preschools where learners may not have the cognitive ability to understand complex language structures (Mwansa, 2017). The practice of code-switching among preschool teachers in Zambia is a common phenomenon, particularly when teachers are faced with complex language practices such as phonics (Mkandawire, 2022). However, this can lead to lack of consistency and coherence in language instruction, as well as lack of support for learners who may not be proficient in the dominant language (García, 2009)

The time constraints faced by preschool teachers also hindered their ability to use translanguaging effectively (García, 2009; Lewis, 2013). With limited instructional time, teachers may feel that translanguaging is too time-consuming, particularly when learners are still developing their language skills (Mwanza, 2017). Arocena et al., (2015) also alluded that realizing the learner's language in class is time wasting since the teacher gives more time to learners to participate in the lesson which creates confusion. Arocena et al (2015) is like Mwanza (2020) who found out that teachers believed that learner participation through their local languages was time consuming and impractical to language learning situation. In view of these negative monolingual language ideologies, Mwanza (2020) suggests that decolonizing the curriculum and the minds of the teachers should be the first step into democratizing literacy classrooms in Zambia and sub-Saharan Africa. Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) noted experiences such as the mismatch between the language of instruction and dominant learner's familiar languages that existed in the classroom, rigidity of the language policy which was based on monolingual language throughout the learner's learning process, strict monolingual-based assessment which only tested skills in the regional language and inadequate teaching and learning materials which supported monolingual language learning.

The theory by Ruiz' three language orientations is against the monolingual ideology of language learning instead it brings on board the aspect of diversity in the classroom during the learning process. The theory believes in the power of exposing a child to diverse languages for them to make meaning of what is being taught as far as acquiring literacy skills is concerned. He looked at embracing multilingualism as a resource in the teaching and learning process. In this case a teacher has to find a way of integrating children's home languages in the learning process.

There is need for preschool teachers to be trained on how to effectively use translanguaging as a pedagogy to embrace multilingualism in classes, particularly in preschools where learners are still developing their language skills. Apart from that preschool teachers also need language support to help them develop their language competency in the language of instruction. There is great need for teachers to collaborate with the Curriculum Development Center as well as enhancement of Continuous professional Development meetings for simplification of complex terminologies. It is during such meetings that discussions can be tendered in line with the curriculum or the learning of the children. Complex terminologies in languages like Silozi can be simplified to make them more accessible to learners and teachers when heads are put together to brainstorm over them before going to teach. Preschool teachers in public preschools need flexible instructional time to accommodate the needs of learners who may require more time to develop their language skills unlike the situation which prevailed in preschools of Luampa district where only three hours was allocated as learning time for preschool learners.

Preschools in Luampa district have inadequate learning classrooms and because of these learners all learn under one roof and at the same time regardless of age. Those who are 3 to 4 years old are supposed to learn separately from those who are 5 to 6 years old because their learning abilities are different. Since learners all learn under one room and only for 3 hours most of the teachers deem translanguaging as a strategy used to integrate children's home languages to be time consuming. As the teacher integrates children's home languages through translanguaging a lot of time is being consumed and so most of the day's activities are not done as far as teaching and learning is concerned.

Moreover, apart from lack of enough classroom space, preschools in Luampa district do not have play parks. The ones which are found in some of the preschools are just a skeleton example of how a preschool play park must look like. Since a play park is a place where children can go and interact with their friends as well as their teachers thereby facilitating the integration of home languages they are of great importance in the learning of preschool children. Therefore, play parks create a very good environment for the integration of children's home languages. It is through interactions during play that learners interact freely. Play cannot be successfully done in the classrooms since classrooms seem to be congested due to having two groups of learners learning under one roof. In the teaching of literacy to preschool children there are language practices which are supposed to be taught to help in the development of language. Language practices such as writing, reading, playing, sounds, picture reading, sounds and storytelling. The syllabus for ECE does not provide teachers with stories so revealed the findings. Teachers are made to come up with their own educative stories and then translate the stories into a local language which learners will understand with minimal difficulty. To the teachers this is more work and quite challenging.

Studies have shown that the inadequate learning environment in preschools, including the lack of separate classrooms for different age groups and play parks, can hinder the effective integration of children's home languages as noted by (Mwansa, 2017; Tambulukani, 2020). Play-based learning is essential for language development, particularly in preschools where children are beginning to develop their language skills (García, 2009; Lewis, 2013). Generally, the teaching of literacy in preschools requires a range of language practices, including writing, reading, playing, sounds, picture reading, and storytelling (Hall, 2012; Comber, 2015). However, lack of resources, including stories, can hinder the effective teaching of these language practices (Maala & Mkandawire, 2022).

There is a need for infrastructure development in preschools, including the construction of separate classrooms for different age groups and Play Park. Preschool teachers need to be trained in how to effectively integrate children's home languages, including the use of translanguaging and play-based learning. The curriculum Development center needs to develop teaching and learning resources, including stories as they come up with school curriculum to make work easy for the implementers as well as support the teaching of language practices in preschools.

The study also established that teachers found the planned and prepared work for preschool learner's shallow. One teacher cited an example of Literacy in Silozi as a learning area 'Literacy Mwasilozi' textbook for ECE p.41 for learners aged 5 to 6 where the whole of term 1 teachers are meant to teach on vowels, "a, e, i, o, u." and then sounds for the whole year. Teachers feel the content is too shallow and become boring teaching the same things for a period which they deemed as too long.

The findings of this study resonate with existing research on the experiences faced by preschool teachers in developing countries, including Zambia. (Mwansa, 2017; Mkandawire, 2019) noted that teachers often found the curriculum content for preschool learners to be shallow and inadequate, leading to lack of engagement and motivation among learners (García, 2009; Lewis, 2013). The curriculum content for preschool learners in Zambia, as cited in the study, appears to be overly simplistic and focused on basic literacy skills, such as vowels and sounds in Silozi. This can lead to a lack of challenge and engagement among learners, as well as a lack of autonomy and agency among teachers as noted by (Tambulukani, 2020). They are needed to give preschool teachers more autonomy and an agency to develop their own language teaching practices and materials unlike a situation where any language specialist can design a curriculum for early childhood learners.

The study also reviewed that whenever teachers were teaching using Silozi as a language of instruction they experienced mother tongue or home language of the children interference in the classroom. When this was not given proper attention, it distorted the conducive learning environment due to an interaction in different home languages making it difficult for the teacher to grasp what each learner is saying at that moment.

Several studies agree with this research finding. The phenomenon of mother tongue or home language interference in the classroom is a common challenge faced by teachers in multilingual settings (García, 2009; Lewis, 2013). When teachers use a language of instruction that is different from the learners' home language, it can lead to language interference, which can distort the conducive learning environment (Mwanza, 2017; Nyimbili, 2018). Moreover, Language interference can manifest in various ways, including code-switching, code-mixing, and language convergence as observed by (García, 2009). When learners interact with each other in different home languages, it can create a chaotic learning environment, making it challenging for teachers to grasp what each learner is saying (Lewis, 2013). Finally, this can lead to a breakdown in communication, which can hinder the learning process. Banda, (2010), Sichone (2017); Tambulukani (2020); Kapambwe (2013); and Mumba K. (2015) highlighted the importance of language policy and language education in promoting effective communication and academic achievement.

Teachers need training on how to effectively integrate children's home languages, including the use of translanguaging, translation, and code-switching.

## REFERENCES

- Arocena, E., Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2015). Teachers' beliefs in multilingual education in the Basque country and in Friesland. *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*, 3, 169-193.
- Banda, F. & Mwanza, D.S. (2017). Language-in-education policy and linguistic diversity in Zambia: An alternative explanation to low reading levels among primary school pupils. In Banja, Madalitso Khulupirika (ed.). *Selected readings in education*, 109-132. Lusaka: University of Zambia Press.
- Barone, D., & Xu, S. H. (2008). *Literacy instruction for English language learner's Pre-K-2*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Banda, F. (2005). Language policy and language use in Zambia. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 4(1), 1-15.

- Chanda, V. M. and Mkandawire, S. B. (2013). *Speak Zambian Languages: Phrase Book in Bemba, Kaonde, Lozi, Luvale, Lunda, Nyanja and Tonga, All in One*. Lusaka: unza press
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011). Code meshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of Translanguaging. *The Modern Language Journal* 95(3): 401–17.
- Garcia, O. (2009). *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: Global Perspectives*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Garcia, O, Li W (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Garcia, O, Sylvan CE (2011). Pedagogies and practices in multilingual classrooms: *Singularities in Pluralities*. *Modern Language Journal* 95(3): 385–400.
- Hall, K. (2012). Preschool literacy: A review of the literature. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 12(2), 155-175.
- Iversen, J. Y. & Mkandawire, S. B. (2020). Comparing Language Ideologies in Multilingual Classrooms Across Norway and Zambia. *Multilingual Margins: A Journal of multilingualism from the Periphery*,7(3), 33-48.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14426/mm.v7i3.218>
- Kafusha, M. M., Mwelwa, J., Mkandawire, S. B., & Daka, H. (2021). Reading Culture in Zambia: Perspectives of Selected Households of Zambia on their Reading Practices. *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology*, 5 (2), 80-106
- Lewis, G. (2013). Translanguaging: A new perspective on language learning. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 12(1), 1-15.
- Lungu, D. & Mkandawire, S. B. (2022). The Contribution of the Physical Environment to the Teaching and Learning of Literacy in Selected Primary Schools of Lusaka District of Zambia. *Zambia Journal of Education*, 7(1), 47-62.
- Maala, A. & Mkandawire, S. B. (2022). Factors Contributing to Low Performance in English Reading Comprehension in Selected Secondary Schools of Lusaka District. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Language and Social Sciences Education*, 5(1), 111-132.
- Mkandawire, S.B., Zuilkowski, S.S., Mwansa, J.M., & Manchishi, P. C. (2023). Instructional strategies used by teachers in multilingual classes to help non-speakers of the language of instruction learn initial reading skills in Zambia. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 17(3), 93-118.  
DOI: [10.1080/19313152.2023.2255777](https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2023.2255777)
- Mkandawire, S. B. (2022). A Comparative Assessment of Grade One Learners' Reading Achievements Between Speakers and Non-Speakers of the Language of Instruction in Multilingual Classes of Lusaka Vis-À-Vis Monolingual Classes of Katete District of Zambia [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis]. The University of Zambia in Association with Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences.
- Mkandawire, S.B., Mukonde-Mulenga, E., Simwinga, J., Musonda, B.L, Mwansa, J.M., Mwendende, B., & Muyangana, A. (2022). English versus Zambian Languages: Exploring some Similarities and Differences with their Implication on the Teaching of Literacy and Language in Primary Schools. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies: English Language, Teaching, Literature, Linguistics & Communication*, 3(2),1-20.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0037>
- Mkandawire, S. B. (2019). Selected Common Methods and Tools for Data Collection in Research. In: M. K. Banja (Ed.). *Selected Readings in Education Volume 2*. (Pp.143-153). Lusaka: Marvel Publishers.
- Mkandawire, S. B. (2015). *The State of Affairs of Cultural Literacy in Zambia's Multicultural Education System*. In Jotia A.L. and Dudu J. (Ed.), *Multicultural Education*

- Discourses: Breaking Barriers of Exclusion in Selected African Contexts (PP. 190-204). Windhoek, Namibia: Zebra publishing (Pty) LTD ISBN: 978-99945-84-99-4
- Mkandawire, S.B. (2017). *Familiar Language-based Instruction Versus Unfamiliar language for the Teaching of Reading and Writing Literacy Skills: a focus on Zambian languages and English at two primary school in Lusaka: importance of local familiar languages for literacy instruction*, the University of Zambia Press.
- Mkandawire, S.B. (2010) Impediments to Curriculum Implementation in Learning Institutions. *African Higher Education Review*. Vol 8, Issue 2, University of Zambia.
- Mkandawire, S. B. and G. K. Tambulukani (2017). The Role Played by the Neganega Literacy Programme and Local Languages to the Development of Sustainable Adult Literacy Programming in Zambia. *Zambian Journal of Language Studies*, 1(1), 53-82.
- Mwansa, P. (2019). Experiences and opportunities of implementing mother tongue-based education in Zambia: *Journal of Multilingual Education*, 9(1), 1-18.
- Mwanza D. S & Bwalya, V. (2019). Democratization or Symbolic Violence? *An Analysis of Teachers' Language Practices in Selected Multilingual Classrooms in Chibombo District, Zambia*. In F. Banda (2019). *Theoretical and Applied Aspects of African Languages and Culture: Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS)*, University of the Western Cape.
- Mwanza, D.S. (2020). In search of High Literacy Levels in Zambian Primary Schools: Does Duration of Mother Tongue Instruction before Transitioning into a Second Language Matter. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 8 (2): 119-134.
- Mwanakatwe, J. (1994). Language policy and language use in Zambia. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 3(1), 1-12.
- Mwanza, D. S. (2017). Implications of Teachers' Attitudes Towards un-official Languages on English Language Teaching in Multilingual Zambia. *Journal of Language Studies*, 1 (1): 101124.
- Mwanza D. S & Bwalya, V. (2019). *Democratisation or Symbolic Violence? An Analysis of Teachers' Language Practices in Selected Multilingual Classrooms in Chibombo District, Zambia*, University of Zambia.
- Banda F. (2019). *Theoretical and Applied Aspects of African Languages and Culture: Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS)*, University of the Western Cape.
- Mwanza, D.S. (2020). *Critical Reflections on the Zambian Education System and the Teaching of English in Post-Colonial Zambia*. *English Literature and Language Review*. 6 (2): 15-23.
- Mumba M. & Mkandawire S. B. (2020). Reading Achievements of Pupils with Pre-school Background and those Without at One Primary School in Lusaka District of Zambia; *Malcolm Moffat Multidisciplinary Journal of Research and Education*, Vol. 1. No.1. 2020. ISSN: 2706-6029
- Ntumi S. (2016). *Experiences Pre-School Teachers Face in the Implementation of the Early Childhood Curriculum in the Cape Coast Metropolis Department of Educational Foundations*, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, and Ghana.
- Ntsoaki, T. M., Lihotetso, G. M., Soyiso, G. K. & Mamamello A. N., (2022). *The Impact of Multilingualism in Teaching and Learning: Lesotho, South Africa*.
- Nyimbili, F., Namuyamba M., Chakanika W.W. (2017). *The Usage of Learner Centred Techniques in the Teaching of English Language in Selected Secondary Schools of Lundazi District*. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 5(3) pp. 143-149.



- Nyimbili F. & Mwanza D. S. (2021). "Translanguaging Experiences faced by Teachers and Learners in First Grade Multilingual Literacy Classrooms in Zambia" *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, April, 9 (3) DOI: 10.20431/2347-3134.0903003
- Nyimbili, F. and Mwanza, S. D. (2021). Translanguaging Experiences faced by Teachers and Learners in First Grade Multilingual Literacy Classrooms in Zambia. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 9(3), PP 20-31
- Simwinga, G. (2004). Language policy and literacy education in Zambia. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 3(1), 1-15.
- Tambulukani, K. G., & Bus, A. G. (2011). Linguistic diversity: A contributory factor to reading problems in Zambian schools. *Applied linguistics*, 33(2), 141-160.
- Tambulukani, K. G. (2015). *First language teaching initial reading: blessing or curse for the Zambian children under primary reading programme?* Doctoral thesis, the University of Zambia.
- Wakumelo, M., Mwanza, D.S & Mkandawire, S. B. (2016). The Toponymics of Post-Colonial Zambia. Street Naming Patterns in Lusaka. In G. Mheta (ed). *The Postcolonial Condition of Names and Naming Practices in Southern Africa* (pp. 270-288). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Zimba, R. (2011). Language and literacy practices in Zambian preschools. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 11(2), 147-165.