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The Grammatical Effects of Nyanja on Pupils Learning English in Selected Junior Secondary Schools of Chongwe District, Zambia

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Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to investigate grammatical effects of Nyanja as first language (L1) on pupils learning English as a second language in Chongwe district. Chongwe district is home for people of different tribes (Soli, Chewa, Bemba, Tonga, Lozi, Lenje, Shona and Ndebele). As a result, the community is multilingual. This multilingual environment has sometimes negatively impacted on some children in the learning of English in areas such as syntax, semantics, grammar and vocabulary in English. The consequence of these negative effects has led to lack of full communication and understanding of topics taught in class and in school. The study is important in informing policy makers of the challenges that the first language (L1) creates in the learning of English. It may also act as a bridging document for existing gaps in line with the effects of Nyanja on pupils learning English language. The researcher interviewed 79 respondents that were systematically selected from each of the six different sites of Chongwe district namely kampekete, Mwalumina, Chilyabale, Lwimba, Lukoshi and Nchute primary schools. The current study employed triangulated method based on the grounded theory. It used the qualitative method for both collecting and analyzing data. The data was collected from teachers of English, other subject teachers and from basic school pupils of the six selected schools. The instruments used were questionnaires. The methods used to collect data were face to face interviews, group discussion and recordings. Thereafter data was analysed manually using descriptive explanation and narration. Among many things, the study found that learners with Nyanja background had problems in areas of spelling, pronunciation, translation, grammar, choice of register to use in correct contexts because English was introduced late to learners finding their brain optimal time to acquire language in good accent, pronunciation, fluency in English grammatical system already passed and learners brain were already anchored in Nyanja, a language with totally different stress, intonation and grammar. This assertion matches with Lundeborg (1967) when he established that brain lateralization finishes at puberty and that it leads to the end of brain's ability to acquire language with fluency and accuracy. Therefore, the study recommended i) the alignment of English language from pupil's first contact with the teacher in school and ii) English should be embraced as language of medium instruction in all the grades in schools.

Keywords: Grammar, stress, intonation, syntax, phones and semantics

1. Introduction

Zambia is a multilingual nation and is made up of about seventy-three languages and dialects. Because Zambia's history reflects its current state of multilingualism, the country has adopted seven (7) regional languages to be used as medium of instruction at lower primary level and as subjects at upper primary level. These languages include Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale and Kaonde. It is imperative to state that Nyanja is a Lusaka province regional language which incorporate Chongwe district. As such it is used as the language of initial literacy and medium instruction in grade one to grade four.

The Government feels that these 7 regional languages have influence in certain regions of the country (Marten and Kula, 2007). Moreover, there are many languages in Chongwe district but two, Nyanja and English, are used in schools. What is important to note is that languages used in school should facilitate easy learning of skills and knowledge in schools. At the time of conducting this research, what was obtained in schools showed English was the language which was facilitating learning in schools despite Nyanja being very common and adopted in Lusaka province as a Zambian Regional language.

Chongwe District is home to many ethnic groups as earlier mentioned. As a result, many languages are spoken in the region, including in schools. This environment has caused the region to use more than one language in the area and this has had a negative impact on the learning of English in schools. It should be noted that English has taken the lead in Zambian schools against other spoken languages. According to Mwila (2009), English is the most widely used language by

learners in schools as the language of instruction and it is especially learnt as a subject. But the new policy came to accentuate the need for learners to begin their first contact in schools with Nyanja and this pose a challenge for them to switch onto fluent English in upper primary classes.

It is often said that speaking two or more languages makes it difficult to learn English as a second language (Fernandez 2000). He continues saying that the phenomenon of local languages conflicting English is particularly prevalent in rural areas. Therefore, the desire of this study is to discuss the grammatical effects of Nyanja on pupils that are learning English language. It is also designed to take the necessary measures and strategies that facilitators should use to assist pupils learning English. For example, learners in school setting find it difficult to understand what is being taught in English as it is especially noticeable when it comes to language translation and meaning. This has sometimes contributed to learners' poor performance not only in English but also in other subjects taught in the same language.

A review of the literature makes it clear that local languages may also include the mother tongue (Nyanja and Soli), have effects to the learning of English language. It is the fact that pupils in Chongwe are learning English as a second language after the acquisition of Nyanja and other various local languages. These pupils who have developed Nyanja and their mother tongues extensively before coming to the school system are forced to learn English because of the role it could play in their lives. Therefore, most of these pupils find it much easier to use Nyanja and their mother tongue more often than English even in schools. As a result, some pupils appear to be lacking in oral and written contact with teachers and fellow classmates when it comes to communication in English language. Therefore, the research work undertaken is aimed at investigating the grammatical effects of Nyanja on pupils learning English-language in Chongwe District by identifying whether there is any links between learning English and Nyanja at basic school level.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Discussing negative effects that mother tongues may have on second languages, Mackay (1967) says that allowing multilingual resources in the classroom reduces students' exposure to the target language (English). The author meant that only the target language should be used to impart knowledge. If many languages are used in a classroom, the learner may not assimilate the target language with fluency. Going by this theory, therefore, Nyanja as a mother tongue was likely to have negative grammatical effects on English as a target language in areas such as spelling, pronunciation, syntax, semantics, grammar, and vocabulary in English language. The consequence of these negative effects could be lack of full communication skills in class.

In his turn Mulenga (2016) investigated the role and effects of introduction of Zambian local languages on provision of quality education in selected Primary Schools in Lusaka District. The study ascertained that children should be taught in the language they are conversant with as it helps them to comprehend easily the concept taught. Using Nyanja as medium of instruction in primary schools and in literacy in Chongwe is more advantageous to pupils because it not only promotes easy learning but also maintains culture and easy interaction (socialization). However, despite researchers conducting investigations on the effects of first language on the second language elsewhere, no study has been conducted to find out the grammatical effects that Nyanja has on pupils learning English in Chongwe district; hence carrying out this study whose findings are discussed herein.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To identify grammatical errors made by Nyanja speaking pupils when they learn English language in selected basic schools of Chongwe District
- To determine syntactic theories that were not followed for the errors made
- To investigate the effects that these errors have on the learning of English
- To establish measures which can address the grammatical effects of Nyanja on pupils learning English in basic schools

1.3. Research Questions

- What are the grammatical errors made by Nyanja speaking pupils when they learn English language in selected basic schools of Chongwe District?
- Which syntactic theories were not followed for these errors to be made?
- What effects do these errors have on the learning of English language?
- What measures can be taken to address the grammatical effects of Nyanja on pupils learning English in basic schools?

2. Literature Review

Freire (1972:59) reveals that it is important to express the idea of 'learning language as a zero-sum game'. The revised literature shows that, closely related to the above ideology is the belief that allowing multilingual resources in the classroom will reduce students' exposure to the target language. That belief is based on zero-sum perspectives or language learning perspectives: the ability to measure the individual's processing capacity will be gradually distributed across most linguistic systems if more than one language is allowed in the classroom. This means the ability to speak a language fluently and accurately reduces by virtue of accumulating more words in different languages. Consequently, ambiguity would be seen to be the mode of the day in such speaker.

Moreover, language learning under this belief seems to be understood within the 'bank' model (knowledge is presented as a gift bestowed by teachers who consider themselves knowledgeable upon learners whom they consider

nothing and that they must memorize and repeat what was taught) which Freire (1972) has long presented as challenge. Learners are figuratively viewed as limited capacity 'containers' and if exposed to different languages, it becomes very stressful for them. Therefore, from the above ideology, the multilingual aspect refers to Nyanja, Soli, Tonga, Lamba, Lenje, Bemba, Shona and Ndebele. These have a major impact on the learning of English grammar among pupils in Chongwe District.

In addition, let it be known that the negative impact and influence of mother tongue on second language learning is undeniable. Mackay (1967) reveals that the concept 'Mother tongue negative influence' has been widely debated by scholars and linguists for decades. However, the effects of the mother tongue on the second language can be seen from mere pronunciation to even the grammar and vocabulary of the language. It is in this order that an error in pronunciation, for instance, may be due to a transmission from the original language (Nyanja) or lack of accuracy in conveying a specific message and language skill are also a result of indigenous Zonal language, Nyanja.

An error analysis by Oniemayin (1985) revealed that about forty-five percent of the errors made by Nigerian Secondary School learners are the result of the first language interference. This is the exact situation that Chongwe learners found themselves in. The difference with the Nigerian case is that Nyanja is not part of that country's local languages hence different approaches and applicability in terms of grammatical errors that learners may make in English. The researcher learnt that a local language affected the learning of a second language in Nigeria. He noted a gap of knowledge in Chongwe district since it is not known whether Nyanja can negatively affect the learning of English language in this district.

According to Lado (1985) on his role in first language interference, from the point of view of many cases that local language grammar structures are often transferred to a foreign language, these distinct structures will be difficult. Lado's view was shared by Mifula (1988) who considers the status of a first language as one of the major sources of difficulty for a second language learner. He also said that the greatest difficulty for second language learners should be found in those places where the foreign language is very different from the native language. The first language interference is reflected in the lexis, syntax and semantics levels.

Moreover, growing in the context of the first language, as it is the case of Chongwe pupils, is an uncommon thought for the second language user to acquire equal mastery with native speakers. The literature also states that the misuse of the rules of the target language often leads to errors in a particular language such as English.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This study totalized 78 participants all of them belonging to the same society from within selected primary schools in Chongwe District. The researcher targeted six (6) teachers (teachers of English and those who teach other subjects) and seven (7) pupils per school. The sample size was enough in gathering data because even if the bigger was the number, they would give the same answers on the topic under investigation. The researcher used a purposeful method sample which helped to deliberately select participants, especially when it came to teachers as to who could be the target of providing information the researcher expected to collect on the topic of investigation in selected basic schools.

3.2. Data Collection

Data was collected using observations, focus group discussions and interviews. The study used pupils' exercise books to spot errors they make. It also adopted a list of questions, a checklist framework which guided the researcher center into interviews that aimed at collecting specific data. These data collection tools helped the researcher to keep track on what was being researched and in line with specific research objectives and purpose of the study. A self-administered questionnaire was provided to specific respondents (teachers of English and pupils) who had specific questions related to the research topic under investigation. A handwritten review schedule helped guide the researcher in understanding the global situation in relation to the needs of the research topic. The researcher used the observation guide and schedule to collect qualitative data based on what was found and learnt during the data collection.

3.3. Data Analysis

The study adopted a data analysis approach known as the thematic analysis approach. Therefore, data was analysed qualitatively because there would be explanations, narrations, descriptions and in some cases some direct quotations from respondents would be were used, explained and processed in a systematic analysis. Thematic means that the data was analyzed and presented according to themes from specific research objectives. The reason why this method of data analysis was used is that it was adopted and well suited to qualitative research because its focus was based on the analysis of themes or meaning patterns within the data and further continues to promote coherence during data presentation. However, this method of data analysis was used because it had the great potential to facilitate the orderly and rich interpretation of pre-defined data set as well as the interpretation of meaning.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses findings of the study in line with the objectives.

4.1. The Grammatical Errors Made by Nyanja Speaking Pupils When They Learn English Language in Selected Basic Schools of Chongwe District

The study found that pupils in the study areas made a number of errors speaking and writing English sentences arising from Nyanja interference. The following discussions centre on types of such errors pupils were making.

4.1.1. Errors of Structure Made by Nyanja Speaking Pupils

Nyanja uses noun class prefixes in nouns, compound nouns and titles. One type of noun class prefix they use expresses respect. In English respect is not expressed, at least not using a noun prefix. This study found that many pupils with Nyanja background added the prefix of respect to English nouns, compound nouns and titles, thereby making the English expressions wrong.

From the respondents interviewed, it was proved that the listed English nouns below, which were in singular form, when translated in Nyanja seem not to carry respect to the elders in society because of the influence from their L1; hence they opted to adding the honorific noun prefix *ba* before every word to enforce respect as it was the case in local language and *ma* for the plural of some nouns, compound nouns and titles. In the illustrations given below the expression in italics presents the mistake pupils make, while the one in bold shows the source of the error and the expression put in gloss shows the correct English expression and meaning.

Expressing Plurals and respect using noun class prefixes in English nouns and titles

Titles

- *ba Sir (ba njonda) 'The Sir'*
- *ba President (batsogoleri) 'The President'*
- *ba Chairman (bakulu a mpando) 'The Chairman'*
- *ba Teacher (baphunzitsi) 'The Teacher'*
- *ba Pastor (babusa) 'The Pastor'*
- *ba Minister (banduna) 'The Minister'*
- *ba Driver (woyendetsa) 'The Driver'*
- *ba Boss (ba bwana) 'The Boss'*
- *ba Guard (ba mlonda) 'The Guard'*
- *ba Judge (boweruza) 'The Judge'*
- *ba Accountant (bosunga chuma) 'The Accountant, etc.'*

Names of Things

- *ma rules (malamulo) 'rules'*
- *ma windows (ma dzenera) 'windows'*
- *ma flowers (maluwa) 'flowers'*
- *ma families (ma banja) 'families'*
- *ma bags (ma thumba) 'bags'*
- *ma mangoes (ma mango) 'mangoes'*
- *ma tables (ma gome) 'tables'*
- *ma papers (ma pepala) 'paper'*
- *ma discussions (ma kambirano) 'discussions'*
- *ma trousers (mabulukulu) 'trousers'*
- *ma phones (ma lanya) 'phones', etc.*

The above listed words were sometimes used in English language approaches by the pupils for the sake of amplifying respect to title owners and enforce plural form of words as demonstrated in Nyanja nouns above in brackets followed by the correct titles and nouns.

5. The Use of -ed form of Past Tense on Irregular Verbs

Respondents made the researcher point out some past tenses of irregular verbs that were a challenge for learners with Nyanja background. In Nyanja the past tense is expressed using the morpheme -na- '-ed'. This morpheme is added to all verb forms in Nyanja, as it does not have regular and irregular verb forms. Some pupils who have Nyanja background add the past tense morpheme '-ed' to all English verb forms in line with the Nyanja practice. These pupils do not apply the rule stating that only regular verb forms do use the morpheme '-ed' and not the irregular verbs. The examples given below indicate the wrong version with a star and the correct one following it:

i) *We *putted* our bags on the table

We put our bags on the table

ii) *She *eated* nshima with fish

She ate nshima with fish.

iii) *They *drived* us to town

They drove us to town.

iv) *John *builled* a big house

John built a big house (past simple).

v) *He *keeped* repeating what the teacher said

He kept repeating what the teacher said.

- vi) *Mwansa beated me yesterday
Mwansa beat me yesterday (past simple), etc.

6. Replacement of Past Tense with the Simple Present

The other challenge this study noted was that some pupils with Nyanja background replaced the past tense with the present simple tense. For instance, the pupil would say:

- *'I move to another school'
'I moved to another school'
- *'I send the message with James'
'I sent the message with James'.

6.1. Subject Verb Agreement Problem

The current study also found that some pupils with Nyanja background had problems with subject-verb agreement in English. It was observed that such pupils mixed up singular subjects with plural verbs and vice versa. Most pupils say:

- *She eat avocado
She eats avocado.
- *He go to school
He goes to school.
- *Neither Chanda nor Tembo are pupils
Neither Chanda nor Tembo is a pupil.
- *Either one or the other pupil were expelled because of beer drinking
Either one or the other pupil was expelled because of beer drinking, etc.

In the first two examples above, learners make those errors frequently because there is no rule in Nyanja structure (the language of initial literacy) which states that the present simple tense of third person singular verb form has always an S at the end as it is the case in English. Look for instance at the conjugation of verb Write which is Lemba in Nyanja.

- singular
 - First person singular : Ndi-lemba (I am writing) or 'I write'
 - Second person singular: U-lemba (You are writing) or 'You write'
 - Third person Singular: A-lemba (S/he is writing) or 'S/he writes'
- plural
 - First person plural : Ti-lemba (We are writing) or 'We write'
 - Second person plural : Mu-lemba (You are writing) or 'You write'
 - Third person plural : Ba-lemba (They are writing) or 'They write'

6.2. Effect from Poor Background in the Use of Numbers in English Language

Other teachers of Mathematics and Social Studies' responses made it clear that pupils were unable to perform well in Mathematics and Social Studies respectively because of their poor background in the use of numbers in English language. The fact that pupils at lower levels of education were not fully prepared (baked) in terms of fluency in English communication, they were unable to get Mathematical language well; hence their failure in mastering numbers in Mathematics because pupils tended to translate English numbers in Nyanja hence getting it wrong. While some Nyanja numbers are obtained through addition. For example, makumi atatu (three tens) which means thirty. Other numbers in Nyanja are obtained through multiplication. For instance, makumi asanu ndi ziwiri ndi mphambu zinai 'fifty-two, four fives and two' which makes seventy-two. This background made learners to have difficulties in basic Mathematics topics such as 'Place Values'. Similarly, a Social Studies teacher at Chilyabale Primary School alluded to the fact that learners failed to read maps because of the same misunderstanding in numbers. He gave an example of reading mileage as 'Twelve and half meters' in English being 12.50 meters contrary to Nyanja which is 10+2.50 (ma mita kumi ndi ziwiri ndi mphindi makumi asanu). This confusion from the learner is not due to a lack of mathematical understanding but a miss-representation of linguistic knowledge in numbers which emanate from Nyanja (The first language learnt).

6.2.1. Choice of Register (Vocabulary) to Use in a Correct Context

From teachers of English who were interviewed, we could deduce that a child with Nyanja background experienced some problems in choice of registers to use in certain contexts. Instead of having selection of words that could accurately put across their views, they mostly used misplaced registers or vocabularies that were not fit to convey the proper meaning of what they wanted to say as a true message.

The following were errors committed by learners with local language background as observed in their interaction with teachers. The correct structures follow the wrong ones.

- Jane was reprimanded by her mother, instead of
*Jane was almost beaten by her mother.
- Kabaso is intelligent in Mathematics, instead of
* Kabaso is bad news in mathematics. [Kabaso is fierce (mkali) in Mathematics],
- The carpenter made a big table, instead of
* The carpenter did a big table.

- Kelly told the driver that he was disembarking at city market bus station, instead of
* Kelly told the driver that he was dropping at city market bus station.'
- I had a strange dream last night, instead of
* I saw a strange dream last night.
- Did you watch the news? instead of
* Did you follow the news?
- We harvested the maize in the field, instead of
* We removed the maize from the field.
- What do you call this in English? instead of
* How do you call this in English?
- My friend has absconded the class, instead of
* My friend has banked the class.
- Chela beat his wife yesterday, instead of
* Chela bullied his wife yesterday (from Nyanja word Kubula).
- He came late because of other works, instead of
* He came late cause of other works.

6.2.2. Substance Errors

Other teachers of English alluded to the fact that substance errors, which dealt with spellings, were rampant in pupils with Nyanja background because there was no such a representation in Nyanja. For example, the rule of when to double or not to double consonants in making words in English was a grammatical error that a child with local language background experienced because most of words in Nyanja have, in most cases, single consonant spellings. This kind of errors were called substance errors. To this effect many pupils wrote:

- *beginning, instead of beginning (substance error),
- *stopping, instead of stopping (substance error),
- *wedding, instead of wedding' (substance error),
- *hiting, instead of hitting (substance error),
- *droped, instead of dropped (substance error),
- *siting, instead of sitting (substance error),
- *planed, instead of planned (substance error),
- *swimimg, instead of swimming (substance error),
- *robers, instead of robbers (substance error),
- *chating, instead of chatting (substance error),
- *Writen, instead of Written (substance error),
- *kidnaped, instead of kidnapped (substance error),
- *droped, instead of dropped (substance error).

6.2.3. Errors of Omitting and Adding Content

The responses from teachers of languages from Lwimba Primary School led to state that omissions and additions of some English words in a sentence make the structures wrong. These were very rampant in pupils with Nyanja background because they intended to suit local language utterance. Examples of such errors are given below. Included are causes for such errors and their correct versions:

- *I am asking talk time.
Error: omission of proposition 'for' before the word talk time, making the sentence having discourse error. The pupil was supposed to say: I am asking for talk time.
- *What are you laughing.
Error: omission of proposition 'at' after the word laughing. The pupil was supposed to say: What are you laughing at?
- *I am listening the radio.
Error: omission of proposition 'to' before radio. The pupil was supposed to say:

I am listening to the radio.

- *Banda asked my book.

Error: omission of proposition 'for'. The pupil was supposed to say:

Banda asked for my book'.

- *Belita explained me the matter.

Error: omission of proposition 'to' The pupil was supposed to say:

Belita explained the matter to me.

- *A chicken's egg is different from an eagle.

Error: omission of the apostrophe 's' after the word eagle to show possession of the egg by the eagle. The pupil should have said:

A chicken's egg is different from an eagle's'.

- *You understood the problem?

Error: omission of proposition the supporting word 'Did' at the beginning of the question. The student should have said:

Did you understand the problem?

- *I have never seen such a thing.

Error: omission of proposition the adverb of time 'before'. The pupil should have said:

I have never seen such a thing before.'

- *Alex is stronger than everybody.

Error: omission of comparative word 'else' at the end of the sentence. The pupils should have said:

Alex is stronger than everybody else'.

- *Stella is thirteen years.

Error: omission of the word 'old' at the end of the sentence. The pupil was supposed to say:

Stella is thirteen years old'.

- *This banana is dirty, throw it.

Error: omission of the word 'away' at the end of the sentence. The sentence should have been said as:

This banana is dirty, throw it away'.

- *She stood outside of the door.

Error: addition of the preposition 'of'. The pupil was supposed to say:

She stood outside the door.

- *The group discussed about Corona Virus.

Error: the addition of the word 'about'. Discuss means 'talk about', meanwhile verb discuss does not allow the preposition 'about' but 'talk and speak'. The pupil should have just said:

The group discussed Corona Virus.

- *We have returned back to school.

Error: repetition of the word 'back'. Omission. The word return means 'go back' or 'come back'. Meanwhile, the expression return back means 'go back Belia'. The pupil is supposed to simply say:

We have returned to school'

- * He is going to go after two days.

Error: The use of the word 'go' twice in the same expression (going to go). The pupil should have said:

He is going after two days.

On the other hand when a teacher from Kampekete Primary School who sought anonymity was interviewed, she explained that her old school, Bimbe primary school which is approximately 10 km to Kampekete (within Chongwe district), has been recording good results in the district since Bililian Private School pupils started using their centers to write their grades 7 and 9 final examinations. She explained reason being that pupils from that private school begun with English as medium of instruction from reception classes upward. For this reason their pupils used the language correctly in both spoken and written form. In short they understood and used English very well, the teacher added.

All these errors mentioned above come into existence because of lack of foundation in English in early grade of their education.

6.3. The Effects That These Errors Have on the Learning of English Language

The effects that these errors have are orchestrated by two sources:

- Syntax
 - i) Framing questions. E.g., You are eating? And Are you eating?
 - ii) Paying respect to elders in society. E.g. Ba Daddy, Ma Books
 - iii) Substance errors (spellings). E.g. writting, begining, etc

Syntax deals with the arrangement of words in the sentence to give proper meaning. With disarrangement of words, the sentence loses the title of a question and will become affirmative sentence instead of a question. E.g. you are eating? (No). Are you eating? (Yes). Similarly the addition of plural Nyanja morphemes 'ba, ma' on English subsequently give them other connotations and meanings.

- Semantic
 - i) Choice of register
 - ii) Past tense
 - iii) Direct translation

Semantics is the study of the relationship between words and how they draw meaning from those words. In this order if registers (vocabularies) are not well chosen, the meaning of the sentence will be different to what was intended to be conveyed. E.g. 'If you are man enough do it' and 'If you are man enough do it now'. The two sentences have same meaning but different time of action occurrences. On the other hand, direct translation has been proved by pupils in Chongwe to be the best way to communicate in English because they begin their first three grade with Nyanja. That is the reason why they make a lot of mistakes in English. For example, Ndidzaenda ndi mendo (I will go home with my legs), sabata lapita, ndinali kupita ku munzi masiku onse (Last week, I was walking to the village every day), these sentences are wrong because of direct translation

These phenomena have positively impacted the learning of English in areas such as syntax, semantics, grammar and vocabulary in English. The consequence of these negative effects led to lack of full communication and understanding of topics taught in class and in school.

6.4. Measures to Address the Grammatical Effects of Nyanja on Pupils Learning English in Basic Schools

Taking into consideration points given by teachers of English language during interviews, we could clearly state that the reason why pupils were unable to speak English well in Chongwe was due to late introduction of English to pupils (grade five). This assertion was validated by Lundeberg (1967) when he established that brain lateralization finishes at puberty and that it led to the end of brain's ability to acquire a language in good accent, pronunciation, fluency, especially the grammatical system of English. The ability to acquire a language was biologically linked to age (critical period). Therefore, adequate preparation at critical or sensitive period of the learner was essential to address the challenges that a child with Nyanja background faced if taken seriously. Sensitive or critical period was defined as the optimal time for tuning that part of the brain best suited to acquire the language. Therefore, the ideal window period for a child to acquire English language in a linguistic environment was 5 to 12 years as suggested by Lundeberg (1964). So in Zambia and Chongwe in particular, this period passes when the child was still taking Nyanja in the first four grades of education.

That was the reason why some points by interviewed teachers brought us to say that if English language was to be assimilated well by pupils they would start learning it at their first contact into school as it was the case with private schools where most leaders of our country take their children to acquire basic linguistic knowledge before they come to secondary schools in public institutions.

Considering points from the respondents, it was also true to mention that school learning time in public institutions was not sufficient for learners to practice English language effectively as they took five hours in school compared to nine to ten hours in private schools. The study proposed that learning time would be increased if the demand of practicing English language was to be improved.

As said with respondents, the study further suggested that spoken English language would be made compulsory to all the pupils if accuracy in language was to be achieved because learning a language was a practical activity and it needed pupils to be fully involved most of the time. In an event where there was no proved interaction, it became difficult to help a child with Nyanja background. It was very important to realize the dangers it posed if pupils were not involved. Therefore, it was important to suggest that meaningful interaction between teachers and pupils could be enhanced so that pupils are helped.

Many pupils who were interviewed also proved that there was a gap left on language policy making in education sector. The challenges faced were attributed to the new policy of learning Nyanja in their early classes and urged strictness on English as language to be used.

The above paragraphs provided solutions that should be taken into consideration if effects of local languages on pupils learning English language at junior secondary schools in Chongwe district were to be addressed.

7. Conclusion

From the study, we can conclude that one of the biggest challenges facing language teaching and learning in Chongwe is language transfer. Language transfer gives rise to multilingual translation errors based on the concept of interference. The transfer of a learner's first language patterns from that of second language is one of the foundations of Nyanja interference to English in Chongwe District. The Nyanja introduced in early grades of learner's education contribute massively to pupils failing to set a concrete foundation for the junior secondary pupils English language use.

8. Recommendations for Further Research

The study recommends the following:

- Policy makers should look forward to align or harmonise English language from pupil's first grade of school to University.
- Future investigation should be done to assess whether other Zambian local languages have similar effects on English learning so that actions to improve English on learners with local language background countrywide could be attained.

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