

LANGUAGE ECOLOGICAL REVIVALISM IN ZIMBABWE: THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN ACADEMIA

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Abstract

The article discusses the linguistic ecological revivalism of previously marginalised languages in Zimbabwe through their inclusion in the academe. Prior to the adoption of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe which promoted most languages spoken in Zimbabwe to an official status, indigenous languages were relegated to lower echelons of power. Ndebele and Shona languages were regarded as national languages while the rest were relegated to marginal statuses. The current inclusion of the once marginalised languages in the curriculum is a topical issue in Zimbabwe. The article examines how these once marginalised languages managed to find their way back in the academia where English, Ndebele, and Shona are already in use. Therefore, this study is primarily concerned with mapping and discussing the inclusion of selected indigenous languages: Sotho, Nambya, Kalanga, Tonga, Xhosa, Venda, and Shangani/Tsonga at primary, secondary, college, and university levels. The article also examines the growth and development of these languages because of their inclusion in the academe and suggests avenues for further development. This research uses the Catherine Wheel Model elements to map and critique the success of that inclusion. The data gathering tool that was used for this research was interview approach. Teachers, lecturers, and research assistants were interviewed. The findings of the study show that even though these languages are empowered through their inclusion in the Zimbabwean curriculum, the achievements made so far are insignificant to warrant their growth and development.

Key Words: Language ecology, indigenous languages, marginalised languages, inclusion, academe

1. Introduction

The language debate in Zimbabwe's education system has been triggered by the unfair use of languages across the curriculum, an asymmetry which is a function of the 1980 inherited constitution. In the education system, a hierarchy of languages was developed, with English occupying the apex since it is used as a medium of instruction across the curriculum and taught as a subject while Ndebele and Shona, which previously served as national languages, were only taught as subjects in their own languages. Formerly 'marginalised' languages were completely ignored in the education system. However, from 2008 the Zimbabwean experience in the education system seemed to change slowly as steps were made towards the promotion of most of the indigenous languages in the academe.

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The idea of including indigenous languages in the school curriculum in Africa is not new; it was first conceptualised by colonial ‘masters’ in the 1920s through the Phelps-Stokes Commission Report. This Commission recommended that vernacular be used as the medium of instruction in schools. These sentiments of the Commission, drawn from Roy-Campbell (2001:51), are vividly expressed as:

All peoples have an inherent right to their own language. It is the means of giving expression to their own personality. No greater injustice can be committed against a people than to deprive them of their own language (Jones, 1925, p. 19).

While the Commission’s statement ostensibly supported the use of the indigenous languages, it simultaneously denigrated the languages and the people who spoke them (Roy-Campbell, 2001, p. 51). The failure of the Phelps-Stoke Commission to walk their talk resulted in the formation of organisations that promoted the inclusion of indigenous languages in education. In the African continent, such an organisation was the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now known as African Union (AU). Zimbabwe, drawing her insights from the 1986 OAU’s ‘The Language Plan of Action for Africa’ Part III(h), has introduced most of her indigenous languages in the national education system right from primary to tertiary levels. Efforts of individual institutions in trying to revitalise indigenous languages are also visible. However, all these efforts have been thwarted by failure of individual states to formulate clear language policy documents which govern the use of languages in concerned countries.

Zimbabwe, just like her neighbouring countries (Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique), has no explicitly written, collated, and consolidated language policy. The country relies on a de-facto policy. The policy is enshrined in and inferred from other legislative instruments such as the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act, the 2019 Education Amendment Act, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Services Act as Amended in 2016, Public Health Act as Amended in 2018 and various Court Acts. Despite the failure of having a national language policy document in Zimbabwe, there are positive efforts made towards the development of languages in the country:

- (i) The promotion of most indigenous languages of Zimbabwe to an official status through the 2013 Constitutional close.
- (ii) The translation of the 2013 Constitution into 15 languages in the year 2014.
- (iii) The translation of the National Development Strategy in 2021 into 13 languages.
- (iv) The promotion of individual languages by institutions of higher learning like colleges and universities in Zimbabwe since 2008.
- (v) The proposed Zimbabwean Language Bill in 2020 that spells and guides the use of languages in Zimbabwe.

It is important to mention that prior to the 2013 Zimbabwean Constitution,

the 1980 Lancaster House Constitution, also known as the Constitution of Zimbabwe 1980, was exclusively in the English language. Despite the noted developments made in promoting indigenous languages in Zimbabwe, counteractive measures have set in. There are new trends in language planning politics that are advocating the acceptance of English as an African language (Jeyifo, 2018). These current trends seem to divert the attention of and water down the burning desire of Africans to further develop indigenous languages.

There are several key factors that necessitated the introduction of indigenous languages in the education system, and these are effects of language on accessing knowledge in education; language as an epitome of identity; and language as an ambassador of development. The effect of language on accessing knowledge has been a bone of contention for a long time in education circles. African linguists like Freire (1985), Ngugi (1987) and Roy-Campbell (2001) believe, after several experimentation studies, that African languages should be used as mediums of instruction in the classrooms as students understand better when taught in their languages as compared to English. Therefore, to maximise the comprehension of the African child in the classroom, African languages should be used for teaching and their use is beginning to feature in the school curriculum in Zimbabwe.

This article is divided into three main sections. The first section discusses the historical background of indigenous languages in Zimbabwe. This background is a focal cog and fulcrum to understanding the language situation in Zimbabwe. The second section maps and discusses the ecological revivalism strategies realised through the inclusion of selected indigenous languages; Venda, Tonga, Tsonga, Sotho, Kalanga, Nambya, and Xhosa in the Zimbabwean academe. This study uses the Catherine Wheel Model to measure the success of the implementation of the languages in question. The last section presents the findings and analysis. It is through these findings that the researcher examines the growth and development of the languages in question and suggests possible avenues for further development.

1.1 Objectives

1. To analyse the power dynamics of Zimbabwean languages in the 1980 and 2013 Constitutions.
2. To examine the ecological revivalism strategies of indigenous languages in the Zimbabwean academe.
3. To suggest methods of further growing and developing indigenous languages in the academe.

1.2 Problem Statement

From the language ecological perspective, there should be a balance ensuring the survival of all languages in each context. The questions that immediately arise are how and to what extent? These questions are difficult to answer if they are directed at the education context, especially in Zimbabwe. In the

context of the above, the article therefore investigates the co-existence and interaction of indigenous languages in the Zimbabwean academic context. The aim of this article is to examine the ecological revivalism strategies and suggest methods for further growing and developing indigenous languages in question in the Zimbabwean academe.

2. Methodology

This study is qualitative in orientation and has used a hermeneutic phenomenology research design. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the interpretation of lived experiences of a certain occurrence under study. In this design the inquirer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon in question. Accordingly, this research is indigenous languages speaker-centered and is driven by a truism that the true understanding of speakers must consider their own descriptions of their actions, interpretations, and motivations among other considerations. The population of study consisted of all indigenous language representatives in influential positions, that is, who work as teachers, research assistants and lecturers of the indigenous languages in question. Key informant sampling was used to select the participants, for a formal interview, with the required expertise in the field of interest. Interviewing is whereby the interviewer asks the interviewee questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the study. Punch (2011, p. 168) opines that interviewing is a very good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. The study used two types of interviews: onsite and online interviews. Onsite interviews were conducted with participants who were within physical reach of the interviewer while online interviews, carried out through telephone calling and WhatsApp, were used with participants who stayed far away from the researcher in other provinces. The researcher explored revivalism of indigenous languages through their inclusion in the Zimbabwean academe with eight participants of influential positions, most of them being language representatives.

3. The Historical Background of Indigenous Languages in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a multilingual society. It has a complex ethno-linguistic composition owing to migration and immigration in search of employment and the careless partitioning of Africa by European imperialists. Explaining the presence of many different ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, Mlambo (2014, p. 4) avers that:

Like most African countries, Zimbabwe was an artificial creation of Western colonialism which drew its present boundaries without any real understanding of the demographic/ cultural realities on the ground; as such, it lacked a homogenous precolonial ethnic or cultural united entity and instead brought together different cultures and ethnicities into an imagined country, to be called Rhodesia.

Inferences drawn from the above citation show that the complex ethno-

linguistic situation in Zimbabwe was a colonial creation. This partitioning of Africa resulted in the division of ethnic groups with some groups falling in two or more countries, thereby creating cross-border languages. If a larger part of the ethnic group fell in a particular country, it was given a national language status while the smaller part was given a marginal status. In other words, during the colonial era and through the 1980 constitution, the assigning of a status of official, national, or marginalised language was usually determined by the numerical and political power of a particular ethnic group.

Language, by its nature, carries political power and the allocation of a status to language(s) is politically driven; it is not a purely social consideration (Heine & Nurse 2000, p. 300). In the same vein, Roy-Campbell (2001, p. 3) states that language choice cannot be divorced from the question of power and knowledge production in a society. The decision about which language should be the medium of instruction in the education system in a particular country is embedded in issues of power relations. In 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a constitution which was a result of a negotiated settlement at Lancaster House in London (Ndulo, p. 181). This Lancaster Constitution, also known as the Constitution of Zimbabwe 1980, is silent on Zimbabwean languages but inferences from its several clauses show that English is given an official status: 82(1)(a) and (b), and 87(4)(b). The allocation of language statuses is seen in the 1987 Education Act, where English is given an official status while Ndebele and Shona are offered at regional level. The rest of the languages are accorded marginal status. A survey of the then marginalised languages was carried out by Hachipola in 1998. Hachipola (1998) identifies and documents nineteen Zimbabwean languages which are Ndebele, Shona, English, Kalanga, Hwesa, Sotho, Shangani (Tsonga), Tonga of Mudzi, Venda, Tonga (of Binga, Gokwe and other areas), Chikunda, Doma, Chewa/Nyanja, Khoisan (Tshwawo), Barwe, Tswana, Fingo/Xhosa, Sena and Nambya. In Zimbabwe, English, Ndebele, and Shona dominate thus subordinating other languages. From the inception of colonialism, English enjoyed a lot of privileges in the country as it was made an official language which is taught as a subject and serves as a medium of instruction across the curriculum. Ndebele and Shona on the other hand were given national language status only and are taught as subjects in their languages. The rest of the languages were marginalised since they were not given any official role to play.

It is important to note that all the marginalised languages were once taught during the colonial era save for Chikunda, Hwesa, Sena and Doma (for more information see Hachipola 1998). However, a myopic view regards the Ndebele language as imposing its hegemonic power over all former marginalised languages located in the Matabeleland region, namely Tonga, Nambya, Sotho, Kalanga, Khoisan, Tswana, Xhosa, and Venda while Shona is also viewed in the same light over all former marginalised languages located in the Mashonaland region, namely Shangani/Tsonga, Chibarwe, Sena, Hwesa, Chikunda, and Doma. It is advisable that before one declares Ndebele and Shona as dominating languages over formerly marginalised languages one

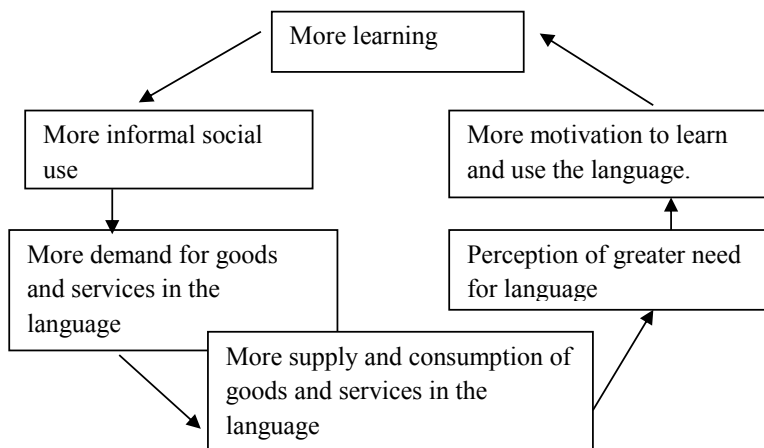
should check the politics surrounding their placement as regional languages, that is, Ndebele in Matabeleland and Shona in Mashonaland. Clement Doke is responsible for the placement of Ndebele and Shona as regional languages in Zimbabwe. His legacy is observed in his very first recommendation in his 1931 report where he opines 'that there be two official native languages recognised in Southern Rhodesia, one for the main Shona-speaking area, and one for the Ndebele-speaking area' (1931, p. 76). This recommendation was a strategy to eradicate other languages which were spoken within the borders of the Zimbabwean territory. The promotion of Ndebele and Shona to regional language statuses while peripherising other indigenous languages may be interpreted as a colonial policy to foment divisions and seal off one ethnic group from another, a strategy commonly known as divide and rule politics.

In Zimbabwe, the year 2013 saw a development in the language statuses, that is, from their recognition as national or marginalised languages to officially recognised languages. This development of languages was spelt in the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe in Chapter 1:6(1) which recognised only 16 languages as official in Zimbabwe and these are Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Koisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda, and Xhosa. It is interesting to note that the varieties of Tonga which Hachipola (1998) unbundled into two different languages are bunched into a single language in this constitution. It is, however, worth recognising that the 2013 constitution is silent on Doma, Chikunda, Hwesa, and Sena languages. The marginalisation of these four languages in Zimbabwe maybe justified on the pretext that there are very few people who speak these languages (for more see Hachipola, 1998). These four marginalised languages are threatened with extinction due to the diminishing number of their speakers and the fact that there are no prospects for teaching them in schools since they have no orthography and published reading materials. It is, however, interesting to note that of the four languages which did not receive an official status recognition by the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe, Chikunda language is gaining more ground as it is regarded as a 'new official language on the cards'. The Parliament has implored the Government to amend the Constitution to include Chikunda as one of the country's official languages by June 30, 2021 (for more see Kafe, 2021). It is worth mentioning that up to now, the inclusion of Chikunda in the constitution has remained mere rhetoric.

4. Theoretical Framework

The Catherine Wheel Model (henceforth CWM) used in this study offers the steps to be implemented by consumers who wish to revitalise a marginalised language. This study examines, through the CWM's six elements, the implementation strategies adopted by government, schools, tertiary institutions, and related stakeholders to ecologically revive the once marginalised languages of Zimbabwe in the academe, and possibly suggest methods for their further development. This model was developed

by Strubell in 1996. The basic tenet of the CWM, according to Strubell (1997, p. 165), is that there is a functional relationship between competence in a language, its social use, the presence and demand for products and services in or through the language, and the motivation to learn and use it, which in turn enhances competence; it works like a wheel. The rationale behind its functioning mechanism is for such a dynamic relationship to fuel itself and gain sufficient momentum to continue rotating. The CWM is made up of six elements illustrated below:



Source: Adapted from Strubell (1997, p. 166)

The model focuses on the individual as a social being, and a consumer. The model implies, as Strubell (1997, p. 166) puts it, that the larger the number of speakers the greater the demand for products and services available through the language, and the greater the pressure on organisations of all kinds to use the language. In a more complex version, the latter will increase the number of jobs for which language competence is a requirement. In addition, the model argues that the greater the demand for goods and services through the language, the greater the supply and range of such goods and services in that language. Strubell contends that both trends, large number of speakers and greater demand for products and services will act upon a collective perception of the usefulness of the language, and of the need to use it.

Although the CWM is applauded for mapping the implementation strategies of reviving a language, it fails to provide recommendations for stabilising the language. Language stabilisers like positive attitude, government intervention and external forces are of vital importance because if they are not taken into consideration, they have the power to overturn the wheel. These sentiments resonate well with Mumpande (2020, p. 42) who vouches that the Catherine Wheel Model has six stages of which all focus on the development of the endangered language, ignores the changes that must occur to the speakers of the affected language and the transformation

of the language shift causal factors outside the speech communities. Despite these noted drawbacks, the model is pertinent to this study as identified weaknesses can be taken care of at lower or local levels.

5. The Offering of Selected Indigenous Languages in the Zimbabwean Academia

In the academic circles, for a language to be only taught and never examined is not a reasonable benchmark for its inclusion; the inclusion of a language is realised if that language is examined at national level in any academic level. This section discusses when selected indigenous languages were first examined at Grade 7, 'O' Level and 'A' Level national examinations in Zimbabwe as well as their introduction in tertiary institutions. Focus is also on checking the effectiveness of their implementation and the associated implications for their growth and development. Examinations are a set of questions written at a specific place and time under strict supervision meant to measure one's capability in a particular subject which one has studied for a period. This section discusses the inclusion of seven once marginalised languages which are Nambya, Sotho, Kalanga, Tonga, Xhosa, Venda, and Shangani/Tsonga right from primary school up to tertiary institutions. The first six languages are spoken by communities located in the Matabeleland region, save for Tsonga whose speakers are in Mashonaland region.

5.1 The Inclusion of Indigenous Languages in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions vis-à-vis the Catherine Wheel Model Elements

In Zimbabwe, the first step that marked the recognition and promotion of formerly marginalised languages of Zimbabwe was through the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act 2013 in Chapter 1:6(1), where these languages were accorded official statuses. In this close, 16 languages of Zimbabwe are promoted to official status, and these are Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Koisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda, and Xhosa. The promotion was a great improvement towards the empowerment of these languages in Zimbabwe. This significant move is seen to be in line with the Catherine Wheel Model (henceforth CWM) element of 'perception of greater need for language'. One might argue that it may be the 'perception of greater need for the language' that might have influenced those in power to come up with this ecological philosophy of preserving and strengthening all the once marginalised languages under study. Besides empowering these languages through a constitutional pronouncement and translating the same into 14 languages as well as the NDS1 document, the government made sure that these languages were taught in schools. The teaching of these languages in schools was spelt in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education – Zimbabwe Education Blueprint (2015-2022) (henceforth curriculum framework). This ecological thought of allowing the survival of almost all languages in Zimbabwe through registering their presence in education is a major stride in empowering marginalised languages. This becomes a way

of improving the educational comprehension, instilling identity as well as ensuring the development of the concerned citizens. The CWM element of 'perception of greater need for language' just discussed above propels the wheel to the next element, that is 'more motivation to learn and use the language' that is discussed in the following section. It is, however, worth noting that although this curriculum framework emphasises the inclusion of languages in the academe, it is completely silent on the implementation practice of these languages in schools; a major setback that resulted in staggered-and-unfair implementation exercise across the country. The implementation might have worked better if the steps were clearly spelt out in this curriculum framework. It is the researcher's hope that since the year 2022 may be the last year of its use, the renewed document will investigate that to enable a smooth implementation exercise across the country.

The offering of indigenous languages under study in the academe, especially in communities where they are spoken, seemed to be in line with the CWM element of 'more motivation to learn and use the language'. Learning an indigenous language at school is an effective method of empowering it. The administration of the Grade 7 National Examinations in Zimbabwe for once marginalised languages started in 2011 with the Tonga language (Participant 1, full interview transcripts are presented as Appendix A), followed by Nambya and Venda in 2012 (Participant 7, and Participant 5, full interview transcripts are presented as Appendix G and E respectively), Tsonga in 2013 (Participant 2, full interview transcripts are presented as Appendix B), then Kalanga in 2015 (Participant 4, full interview transcripts are presented as Appendix D) and finally Sotho in 2019 (Participant 3, full interview transcripts are presented as Appendix C). Xhosa is yet to be examined at any level (Participant 6, full interview transcripts are presented as Appendix F). This shows that Xhosa is at its nascent stage of development in the school classrooms. However, it is laudable to note that it is beginning to mark its presence in the primary school corridors, a commendable step towards its development in Zimbabwe. It is also important to note that most of the indigenous languages under study are offered at secondary level in communities where they are spoken and have since been examined.

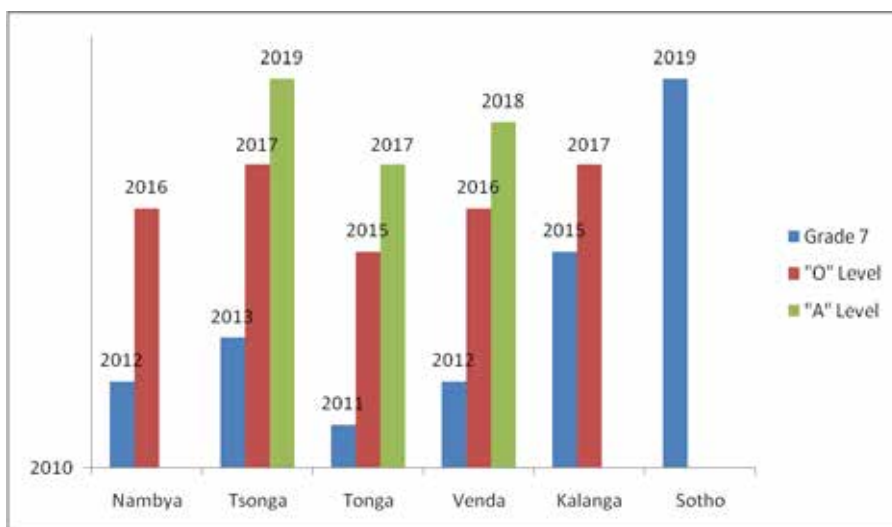
Participant 1 states that Tonga was examined in 2015 at 'O' Level and 2017 at 'A' Level. Nambya 'O' Level examinations were written in the year 2016 and are yet to be written at 'A' Level (Participant 7). Participant 5 stated that 'O' Level students first wrote Tshivenda in 2016 and 'A' Level in 2018. On the other hand, Tsonga was first examined at 'O' Level in 2017 and 'A' Level in 2019 (Participant 2). Participant 3 said the Sotho language is yet to be written at 'O' Level, not to mention 'A' Level since the pioneers were in Form 2 in the year 2021. The Xhosa language is also experiencing the Sotho fate since it is yet to be written at both 'O' and 'A' Level and has just begun to be offered at primary level. Participant 4 averred that Kalanga was first examined at Grade 7 in 2015, and two years later, it was written by 'O' Level candidates in 2017 and is yet to be written at 'A' Level. The reason

offered by Participant 4 for not introducing the teaching of Kalanga at ‘A’ Level is unavailability of literature in Kalanga; a key component required in the teaching of the subject at this level where both language and literary components are examined.

A keen observer notes that the indigenous languages under study were examined in various schools located in communities where they are spoken, in different years. The writing of these examinations at primary level began in 2011 and was staggered through 2019, with the Xhosa language yet to be examined at any level. The administration of these languages at ‘O’ Level started in 2015 through to 2017, keeping a four-year-pattern of learning progression from Grade 7 to Form 4. However, that is not the case with the Kalanga language. Kalanga was first written at Grade 7 level in 2015 and two years later was written at ‘O’ Level. This shows that this is a rushed exercise that mirrors the fact that the implementation was not effectively planned. Only three indigenous languages have been written at ‘A’ Level so far and these have followed a two-year-pattern of learning progression from Form 4 to Form 6. In addition, the curriculum framework is applauded for identifying languages (indigenous languages included) as one of the learning areas at both primary and secondary schools. This curriculum has, however, failed to provide clear, concise, fair, and effective implementation strategies.

The multiple bar graph below summarises the information discussed above showing the years when selected indigenous languages were first examined at Grade 7, ‘O’ and ‘A’ Levels in the Zimbabwean curriculum. The graph makes the discussed information above easy to analyse as it has a clear visual impression and makes it easy to compare variables under examination.

Figure 1: Commencement Years of public examinations administration for various indigenous languages by Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC)



Note that the Xhosa language does not feature in the graph above since it is yet to be examined at any level. The graph shows that both Nambya and Kalanga are yet to be examined at 'A' Level, while Sotho is yet to be examined at both 'O' and 'A' Levels. According to the graph, there are only three indigenous languages that have been examined up to 'A' Level and these are Tsonga, Tonga, and Venda.

The previously discussed CWM element of 'more motivation to learn and use the language' propels the wheel to the following element of 'more learning'. More learning of the language is born out of realising the value of the language. It is this value that highly motivates consumers to learn and use more of the language in various spheres. The continued and persistent learning of the language might be triggered by the same drive that motivated the teaching of the indigenous languages under study in various schools in communities where they are spoken. There are quite a few primary and secondary schools which offer formerly marginalised languages in communities where they are spoken in Zimbabwe. Participant 2 proffers the names of schools that offer Tsonga at primary level. These include Chikombedzi, Mhlanguleni and Chilonga, while at secondary level they are Alpha Mpapa, Malipati, and Mhlanguleni. Schools that offer Tshivenda at primary level, according to Participant 5, include Dulivhadzimu, Beitbridge Mission, and Madaulo while at secondary level, they are Nuli, Zezani, and Tongwe High Schools. Conversely, Participant 3 states that primary schools in Matabeleland South that offer Sotho are Mapate, Nhwali, and Hunga while secondary schools are Manama High, Halisupi, and Kafusi Secondary Schools. Participant 4 stated that at primary level, Kalanga is taught in schools like Tjehanga, Hingwe, and Nguwanyana while at secondary level, it is offered in schools like Sanzukwi, Madlambudzi, Tokwana, and Tahangana secondary schools. Further, Participant 7 stated that Nambya is offered by primary schools like St Mary's, Gurambira, and Lwendulu while at secondary level, they are Mashake, Marist Brothers and Hwange High schools. Tonga has already registered its presence in both primary and secondary schools where it has been examined at Grade 7 in schools like Mulindi, Kariyangwe Mission, and Sinampande Primary and has been examined at both 'O' and 'A' Level in schools like Lubimbi, Siabuwa, and Binga High (Participant 1).

The teaching of the identified indigenous languages both at primary and secondary schools is a commendable step towards the development of these languages. It should, however, be noted that their implementation was not strict as schools located in concerned communities still had a choice to opt to teach them or not. A case in point is the Kalanga language. Participant 4 asserts that there are schools in Matabeleland South that fall under Bulilima and Mangwe Districts (where Kalanga is spoken) that opted to teach Kalanga only and those schools which opted for Ndebele only. The Kalanga fate is also experienced by Tsonga in Chiredzi areas. Participant 2 observes that 'some school heads are resisting teaching the Tsonga language in favour of Shona'. On the other hand, schools located in Tonga communities have a different

experience. Participant 1 states that almost all schools in the Binga district offer Tonga language only; that is, the participant said 98% of schools in Binga no longer offer Ndebele.

The failure of the curriculum framework to clearly address the implementation strategies of the said languages in schools led to problems in the drawing up of the Grade 7 national examinations timetable. Participant 7 said that in 2019, the ZIMSEC drew up a rigid National Grade 7 November examination timetable that had a provision for all indigenous languages to be written on the same day and at the same time. This rigidity can be seen as a 'smart' way of scratching off the writing of Ndebele and Shona languages which previously served as regional languages. These former regional languages were used by colonisers as tools to suppress the teaching of once marginalised languages in their communities. Thus, the rigidity of the 2019 National Grade 7 examination timetable precluded the writing of former regional languages since pupils were left with very little choice save to write the exam in their mother-tongue as they were also taught in their languages. The rigidity also made teacher representatives (Participant 7 being part of the team) to go to Harare to the Ministry offices and lodge a petition for flexibility in the following National Grade 7 examinations timetable. Their petition was accepted as the year 2020 witnessed some flexibility in the National Grade 7 examinations timetable – although language subjects were written on the same day, they were written on different sessions, with languages that previously served as marginalised languages being written mostly in the morning and those that served as regional languages being written in the afternoon. This flexibility offered the candidates a choice to write two language subjects (their mother-tongue languages in the morning and a regional language in the afternoon) or to write one language subject of their choice (their mother-tongue or a regional language). Despite the 2020 timetable flexibility, it is important to note that the 2019 timetable rigidity fate repeated itself in 2021 and 2022 National Grade 7 November examinations timetables.

The CWM element of 'more learning' discussed above which has seen the teaching of the indigenous languages under study in various primary and secondary schools propels the wheel to the next element; 'more informal social use'. Once a language is included in the school curriculum, pupils gain confidence in it. They start speaking the language both inside and outside of their classrooms. This results in more informal social use of the language which might even tempt non-speakers of the language to join in the conversations and speak it. This resonates well with Mumpande's (2006, p. 1) idea that 'language is a living entity, and its oral lifespan is wholly dependent on the existence of its speakers; without them it can only survive in written form'. Inferences drawn from this idea informs that the existence of a language is secured by both the existence of its speakers and written forms. Considering this situation, Zimbabwe is in a sorry language state. Some indigenous languages of Zimbabwe like Xhosa survive in their

oral forms since they experience a severe dearth in literature; this implies that if speaker-numbers do not grow and literature is not developed, these languages may be easily pushed to extinction - a move tantamount to their death. Language is propagated through its intensive use in both formal and informal settings. It is in the informal use, just as is the case in its formal use, that language speakers realise the gaps in their language and see the need to deepen their language vocabulary to cover a range of things they need to conceptualise. Such a scenario makes the language gain more momentum to reach the next level and to power it as well. This discussed element of 'more informal social use' of the language kicks the wheel to the next element which is 'more demand for goods and services in the language'.

The CWM element of 'more demand for goods and services in the language' seems to match the drive for the responsible authorities to see the need for the provision of both teaching and human resources for the implementation exercise to be a success. Both the teaching and human resources are key factors in the smooth teaching of 'new' indigenous languages in the education system. The availability of material resources is discussed first and then, later, the human resources in the subsequent paragraphs as the latter propels the wheel to the next and last element of the CWM element, 'more supply and consumption of goods and services in the language'. Material production in a language is invaluable to the growth of that language. Mumpande (2006, p. 1) observes that languages that exist only in oral form, as Crystal (2003) argues, are easily pushed into extinction. It is interesting to note that most participants in this study have contributed some teaching material, in their indigenous languages, for use in various levels of the academe. Almost all indigenous languages under study have teaching materials for primary education in place save for Xhosa which relies on materials obtained from the local people as well as translating Ndebele teaching material into Xhosa. The participants representing other languages indicated that they have home-grown literature for use at primary level.

Some indigenous languages under study like Nambya, Sotho, Kalanga, and Xhosa, save for Tonga, Venda, and Tsonga, have a teaching material handicap at secondary school level. However, it should be quickly mentioned that even for those languages that have teaching material at secondary level, Participants 1 and 2 asserted that they supplement these teaching materials from neighbouring countries like Zambia and South Africa, where the languages are more developed than in Zimbabwe. The chief stumbling block proffered by Participant 7 for the delayed examining of Nambya at 'A' Level is the unavailability of teaching material for the language as teachers rely on Nambya manuscripts which were written and submitted some time ago to the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) and which are still awaiting approval. This Nambyan handicap is also experienced by Kalanga teachers at secondary school level (Participant 4). In addition, Participant 7 asserted that this dearth of teaching materials at secondary schools compels teachers to rely on translations they make from English textbooks to the Nambya language.

The scarcity of teaching material in secondary schools brings its own set of problems. The scarcity of Nambya and Kalanga material resources, according to Participant 7 and Participant 4, has made students to be examined on language aspects only and not on literary aspects. Another setback that has severely hampered the successful implementation of Nambya is the continued teaching of Ndebele in schools that fall within the Nambyan communities in Matabeleland North.

Participant 3 stated that the Sotho teaching materials at secondary education level is a challenge since they do not have home-grown literature and so teachers rely on translations as well as importing some teaching materials from South Africa. At tertiary institutions, it seems that the common trend with all indigenous languages including former regional languages – Ndebele and Shona - is that lecturers translate the material that is available in English to any indigenous language of choice. However, material is also supplemented through importing them from neighbouring countries. A pertinent example is Kalanga where Participant 4 stated that ‘upon the realisation of material scarcity, UCE once imported literature material in Kalanga from Botswana’. It should be noted that the curriculum framework is silent on how material resources of teaching indigenous languages are to be availed. This explains why the resources written in the said languages are scarce or even unavailable. The publishing houses which are supposed to be instrumental in the publication of the submitted manuscripts take ages to approve them. This scarcity of resources is a chief stumbling block that severely hampers the implementation of the languages in question. Government intervention is therefore desirable.

The curriculum framework identifies human resources as one of the key factors in teaching and learning (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education- Zimbabwe Education Blueprint 2015-2022, p. 57). With regards to human resources, most participants applaud the government for the availability of qualified teachers and lecturers who are mainly graduates from various institutions of learning in Zimbabwe. Graduates from polytechnic and teachers’ colleges are diploma holders while those from universities are degree holders. In addition, besides employing personnel with requisite skills, teachers have been redeployed to teach formerly marginalised languages in various schools located in areas where they are needed most. As discussed above, the CWM element of ‘more demand for goods and services in the language’ seems to be gratified by the provision of both material and human resources. It is interesting to note that although both material and human resources drive the wheel to the next and final element of ‘more supply and consumption of goods and services in the language’, the human resources have an upper hand.

The inclusion of indigenous languages at tertiary institutions of learning in Zimbabwe might be seen as satisfying the next and last CWM element of ‘more supply and consumption of goods and services in the language’. It is the continued supply and consumption of goods and services in the language

that motivates the offering of indigenous languages in tertiary institutions of learning like polytechnics, teachers' colleges, and universities. The graduates of these institutions are the backbone of imparting knowledge through the teaching and material production in the languages under study. There are no significant developments in the Xhosa language made so far concerning its inclusion in tertiary institutions. Xhosa was added in 2021 in the basket of languages offered by Great Zimbabwe University (henceforth GZU) in the School of Education (Teacher Capacity Development Programme National Coordinator (henceforth TCDPNC), personal communication, July 21, 2021). Participant 1 stated that quite a few tertiary institutions in the country offer Tonga language and these are GZU which introduced it in 2014, University of Zimbabwe (henceforth UZ) in 2016, United College of Education (henceforth UCE) in 2014, Hillside Teachers' College in 2021, Hwange Teachers' College in 2019, Midlands State University (henceforth MSU) in the Faculty of Education in 2016 while the Faculty of Arts first offered it in 2018. This participant also observed that Tonga language was once offered at Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Polytechnic College (henceforth JMNP College) and was not able to gather reasons for its abandonment. Concerning the introduction of Kalanga in tertiary institutions, Participant 4 said that JMNP College was the first to introduce Kalanga in its curriculum in 2013, while GZU introduced it in year 2014. This participant also said that the year 2015 saw the introduction of Kalanga in different institutions like UCE and MSU.

Another participant, Participant 3, averred that Sotho was first introduced by JMNP in 2013, followed by MSU in 2015, and then finally GZU in 2016. On the other hand, Participant 7 stated that Nambya was introduced in 2014 at GZU, MSU in 2015 and Hwange in 2021. Furthermore, Venda and Tsonga were first introduced at GZU in 2008 in the then Faculty of Arts, now known as Simon Muzenda School of Arts, Culture and Heritage Studies (for a more detailed implementation of Venda and Tsonga at GZU, see Lantern, 2012). In addition, Venda and Tsonga were introduced in 2014 in the same institution but in the Faculty of Education now known as Robert Mugabe School of Education. JMNP College is another tertiary institution that offers Tsonga and Venda languages in Zimbabwe; these two languages were both introduced in 2013. Venda is also offered by Hillside Teachers' College and was introduced in 2021.

The inclusion of indigenous languages under study at tertiary institutions is a giant stride towards their growth and development. Although not all indigenous languages are offered in all higher institutions of learning, it is pleasing to note that at least one indigenous language is offered in more than two institutions, save for Xhosa which is only offered at GZU. The government observed that to effectively implement the curriculum framework, there is need for personnel with requisite skills to teach and develop teaching materials. The government launched a teacher capacity development programme at GZU in 2014 in order 'to capacitate human resources for curriculum implementation and innovation. The thrust is

to encourage and structure progression of teacher status from diploma to a minimum first degree in Education’ (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education - Zimbabwe Education Blueprint 2015-2022, p. 73). This government initiative explains the teaching of all indigenous languages under study at GZU which were mostly introduced in 2014 save for Sotho which was introduced in 2016 and finally, Xhosa in 2021. This programme also had an implication on trainee numbers. For example, the GZU teacher capacity development programme has seen high numbers of trainees as compared to other tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe because they are sponsored by the government right from tuition fees, food, and accommodation (TCDPNC, personal communication, June 21, 2021). This same participant (TCDPNC, personal communication, October 7, 2022), provided the following statistics of trainees who enrolled in 2015, 2016 and 2022 for this programme:

Table 1: Teacher Capacity Development Programme Trainee Statistics at Great Zimbabwe University

Language	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2022
Tonga	12	16	82
Tsonga	23	9	18
Sotho	Not yet implemented	41	32
Venda	30	14	46
Kalanga	21	5	28
Nambya	17	19	24
Xhosa	Not yet implemented	Not yet implemented	8

This table shows that numbers are still low. However, it is a refreshing start although ‘we anticipate more numbers in order to heal the wounded communities that have been overlooked and despised in the past’ (TCDPNC, personal interview, October 7, 2022). The issue of low enrolment numbers is worrying many participants and there is need to grow them to promote the learning of these languages.

In terms of the growth and development of the languages in question, TCDPNC (personal communication, October 7, 2021) stated that the offering of indigenous languages in the education sector is a very important variable in improving their visibility in the public domain, hence the need to ensure their growth and development. This provides a good foundation for affording them an opportunity to be used as mediums of instruction in education and in official circles and day-to-day business which will enhance their participation in national development. Not all participants share this same view; however, Participant 4 sees the Kalanga language growth as insignificant as it ‘has not yet penetrated all public domains as a language of discourse or instruction’. Participant 3 is also not satisfied with the growth and development of these languages, especially Sotho. This participant bemoans the absence of

government intervention in terms of funding, and poor teacher deployment patterns. In addition, Participant 3 said 'the current situation whereby teachers are trained in Sotho and deployed in areas where the language does not exist is a thorn in the flesh'. The participant suggested that monitoring and evaluation, where responsible authorities check and ensure that the language is taught effectively and taught by relevant people was key. The participant said this could assist authorities to identify the existing gaps and employ corrective measures.

The language of instruction in teaching these languages in identified tertiary institutions varies. In most institutions, the indigenous languages under study are taught in their languages save for MSU and UZ. At MSU, the language of instruction used in the teaching of the indigenous languages offered was not decided before the implementation and this resulted in shifting around the use of English first and then teaching indigenous languages in their languages later. A case in point is the teaching of Tonga at MSU. Participant 1 asserted that a student that was enrolled in the first Tonga intake at MSU in 2016 was taught Tonga through the medium of English; however, in the second intake in August and subsequently, the medium of instruction changed from English to Tonga. At UZ, Tonga is taught using both English and Tonga. According to Participant 4, the Kalanga language is taught in Kalanga in all other tertiary institutions except for MSU which offered Kalanga in the medium of English during its inception year in 2015 but has since reverted to Kalanga medium in the streams that followed.

Generally, the teaching material used at tertiary institutions is translated from English texts to any indigenous language of choice. On material resources, Participant 5 said that some of the teaching material comes from South Africa although they usually translate from English to Venda. As a trend, Participant 4 confirmed that Kalanga lecturers also use translated material from English texts, and these are supplemented by a few available books in Kalanga used in Tertiary institutions like Kalanga Morphology, novels and poetry anthologies written by individuals; the latter two types are still in manuscript form pending publication.

Below is a table that serves as a summary of the discussions made above on indigenous languages as well as their years of implementation in various tertiary institutions of Zimbabwe.

Table 2: Indigenous languages offered by various tertiary institutions of Zimbabwe

UNIVERSITIES					TRS' COLLEGES			POLY-TECH-NIC
GZU		MSU		UZ	UCE	HWANGE	HILLSIDE	JMNP
School of Arts	School of Education	Faculty of Arts	Faculty of Education	Faculty of Arts	Languages and Humanities Department			
	Tonga (2014)	Tonga (2018)	Tonga (2016)	Tonga (2016)	Tonga (2014)	Tonga (2019)	Tonga (2021)	Tonga *
	Kalanga (2014)	Kalanga (2015)	Kalanga (2019)		Kalanga (2015)			Kalanga (2013)
	Sotho (2016)	Sotho (2015)						Sotho (2013)
	Nambya (2014)	Nambya [2015]				Nambya (2021)		
Tsonga (2008)	Tsonga (2014)							Tsonga (2013)
Venda (2008)	Venda (2014)						Venda (2021)	Venda (2013)
	Xhosa (2021)							

***Tonga was once offered at JMNP College and the reasons for its abandonment are unknown to the participant.**

6. Analysis and Findings

This study examined the language ecological revivalism of former marginalised languages through their inclusion in the Zimbabwean academia. This section presents the key findings of the study which are based on the interviews carried out with key informants who work as teachers, lecturers, and research assistants.

The findings indicate that the power dynamics of the Zimbabwean indigenous languages have significantly changed for the better. Although the 1980 Constitution of Zimbabwe is silent on Zimbabwean languages, the 2013 constitution saw the promotion of most indigenous languages to official status. This resulted in the mushrooming of the teaching of once marginalised languages in many teacher-training institutions like UCE, JMNP College, and Hillside Teachers' College. Universities like GZU, MSU and UZ are meant to capacitate teachers to be experts in the teaching of these languages and in turn to be able to teach school pupils and students. It is these language experts that are expected to be responsible to produce teaching materials. This language acquisition strategy is aimed at getting more people to use the languages and become experts in the languages concerned.

Be that as it may, although the languages under study are empowered through their inclusion in the Zimbabwean academe, the findings show that a lot still needs to be done to ensure their development. There is a need to grow numbers of human resources in other tertiary institutions since they record very low numbers; the government should provide sponsorship as the case with GZU or at least introduce vocational training loans to all would-be instructors in all institutions across the country. Besides financial constraints, the issue of attitude might be a contributing factor to low numbers as potential students lack confidence in securing employment after completing these linguistic studies since it is a truism that the education industry may not absorb all graduates. In this regard, the government should consider revamping the possible markets to squash negative attitudes and encourage people to vie for the programme.

Another finding of the study is that the inclusion of an indigenous language in schools located in communities where this language is spoken should not be left to headmasters to decide; instead, the government should enforce the exercise. In addition, there is need for government intervention in the production of material resources in these indigenous languages at secondary and tertiary levels as there is very scarce teaching material; teachers or lecturers rely on manuscripts pending approval, importing as well as translating from English to any indigenous language of choice. Manuscripts and translations compromise the quality of the taught material. To alleviate that, a publishing company that could publish relevant literature for use in schools for all once marginalised languages could be established.

The findings indicate that the inception of the teaching of once marginalised languages in some primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe began long before the publication of the 2013 constitution and the curriculum framework. This might be an indication that the language speakers were very instrumental in the inclusion of their languages in school curriculums and that the government was receptive to the idea and legalised it through the identified standing bodies of the law. Further, the researcher also observed that most of the indigenous languages that are now taught in various levels of the academe have language committees that spearhead the struggle for linguistic redemption (for more on language committees see Mumpande, 2006, p. 13). This desire to see indigenous languages included in the curriculum augurs well with the CWM element of 'perception of greater need for the language'.

In addition, the study found that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was involved in 'the relegation of Ndebele and Shona languages in favour of the once marginalised languages by drawing up a rigid National Grade 7 Examination Timetable as discussed above. It should be noted that although this situation was relaxed for a year, the government reverted to rigidity schemes. The underlying truth is that very few, if any, pupils are likely to sit for the regional language examination in the afternoon after writing the examination in their mother-tongue in the morning. Thus, it might be that

both government and individual schools reinforce the total replacement of regional languages (Ndebele or Shona) with the once marginalised languages spoken in their communities.

Of all the once marginalised languages discussed in this article, Tonga seems to be the most developed. It is offered in many tertiary institutions and was the first language to be examined at Grade 7, 'O' and 'A' levels. The study gathered that although most of these previously marginalised languages have announced their presence in academia, Tonga included, they are all currently taught as subjects in their own mediums while the whole curriculum is still offered in English. Although most of the marginalised languages have been empowered through their inclusion in the academe, their development status is still at a nascent stage since some languages like Kalanga, Sotho and Nambya still do not have dictionaries. In addition, all indigenous languages of Zimbabwe, except for Ndebele and Shona, have no newspapers written in their languages. This means there is a need for further development and enrichment of these languages through the compilation of dictionaries and circulation of newspapers in these languages. The positives made so far towards the growth and development of these once marginalised languages are still rendered marginal when evaluated using the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). The GIDS scale shows that all these languages are endangered since they fall in the unsafe category and are still prone to extinction. This means that the true development of these languages will only be realised if they are used as mediums of instruction across the curriculum in communities where they are spoken.

7. Recommendations

The inclusion of these once marginalised languages in the Zimbabwean curriculum has served as an eye opener to the otherwise closed field of neglected courses of action. As a result, there are several courses of action that can be pursued, and these are as follows:

- ***Funding indigenous languages teacher and lecturer trainees across the country***

Lack of funding of indigenous languages teacher and lecturer trainees explains the low uptake of indigenous language studies by prospective students. The funded teacher capacity development programme at GZU saw the massive implementation of all indigenous languages under study and with high language takers. This was not so with most tertiary institutions in the country which mostly saw the inclusion of few indigenous languages in their curricula and with very few takers. Thus, to massively grow human resource numbers, the government must fund indigenous language teachers and lecturer trainees across the country.

- ***Reading material alleviation***

Although there are efforts of educated personnel who speak the languages under study who have improved the scarcity of the reading materials of the concerned languages, these materials are just inadequate. Reading material

alleviation is a necessary step that will see these languages taught government should therefore oversee the process of mass reading material production through the establishment of writers associations, funding translators, and the establishment of publishing houses which would see the timely publication of relevant literature which had been neglected by established publishing companies. Alternatively, the VETOKA Publishing Company which was registered in 1985 (for more on VETOKA see Mumpande, 2006, p. 16-17) could be revived. The establishment of a publishing company would see the mass publication of material resources which would strengthen and power the CWM element of 'more supply and consumption of goods and services in the language'.

- ***The creation of an accommodating National Language Policy***

The formulation of an accommodating national language policy is a commendable step that will see many problems related to language becoming a thing of the past. Things that are likely to fall in place if an accommodative national language policy is formulated include the cultivation of positive attitudes towards once marginalised languages, establishment of teacher training institutions in these languages or at least funding the teachers training in these languages across the country, and mass production of relevant literature.

8. Conclusion

It is a common phenomenon in many countries to relegate to a marginal status language which have a weak political representation and numerical scale. Such languages are usually pushed to the verge of extinction and most of the time they breathe a new life only after recognition by the government, like in the Zimbabwean case discussed in this article. This article mapped and discussed the inclusion of once marginalised languages in the Zimbabwean academe after reflecting on the hegemonic tendencies of English, Ndebele, and Shona over them. The Catherine Wheel Model was used as a yardstick to measure the success of the inclusion of formerly marginalised languages in the academe. The findings of the study, among other things, showed that even though these languages are empowered through their inclusion in the curriculum, the achievements made thus far are insignificant considering the poor teaching material resource mobilisation, and low numbers of indigenous languages takers in many tertiary institutions in the country. In addition, when these developments are evaluated against the GIDS Scale, all indigenous languages fall in the unsafe category. This implies that although there is some noted development, these are insignificant to warrant the growth of the languages under discussion. This calls for further development of the languages under study to the level where they can be used as mediums of instruction across the curriculum, especially in communities where they are spoken.

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