

# 16

## Zambia: 'One Zambia, One Nation, Many Languages'

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### 16.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to give the reader an idea about the linguistic situation in Zambia, and how language relates to national identity in the Zambian context. Zambia lies in the heart of central Africa and shares borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to the north, with Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique in the east, with Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Namibia in the south, and with Angola in the west. Zambia has no direct access to the sea, but the Zambezi, one of Africa's largest rivers, runs through Zambia for about 1,000 kilometres. Zambia also lies in the centre of the Bantu-speaking area. Historically, Bantu languages became widely spoken in sub-Saharan Africa from around 300 BC, and present-day Zambia's Bantu languages are the result of several linguistic developments which introduced the languages spoken today through gradual processes of migration, language contact, and language shift over the last two millennia. From the late nineteenth century onwards, different European languages were introduced into what is now Zambia through missionary activities, in particular in education, and through colonial governance as a British colony. As a legacy of this period, English plays an important role in the current language situation, a role which was affirmed after independence in 1964, when English became the official language. After the change from a one-party system to multiparty democracy in 1991, emphasis has shifted towards the promotion of Zambia's seven national languages, Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, and Kaonde, and contemporary Zambia is an explicit example of a multilingual country.

Questions of language and identity have played an important role throughout modern Zambian history, particularly after independence, when the question of the national identity of the new state took centre stage. Language in Zambia is important for national, political, and ethnic identities, for communication, education, and popular culture. The language situation in Zambia is in some respects similar to those in other African countries, but has its specific, local characteristics. In particular, the

chapter shows that a specific system of multilingual structures and traditions, which has its roots in the period before contact with Europeans, is constitutive of Zambian linguistic identity.

The chapter is arranged as follows. In section 16.2, we provide background information about the languages, language situation, and use of language in Zambia in different domains. Section 16.3 provides a historical account of language distribution, use, and policies in Zambia and how these are related to the formation and negotiation of different identities. Section 16.4 provides a discussion of the contemporary situation in light of the historic background provided, and addresses specific topics which are important in the Zambian context. Finally, section 16.5 summarizes some of the major points of the chapter in its conclusion.

## 16.2 Languages and Language Use in Zambia

The seemingly easy question of how many languages are spoken in Zambia is actually not an easy question to answer, and numbers vary from about twenty to over eighty. The reasons for this are, on the one hand, the notoriously difficult question of what is a language as opposed to a dialect, and on the other hand, in the Zambian context,



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**Table 16.1** Language groups and dialect clusters of Zambia

Group	Dialect Clusters and Location
<b>A</b>	Aushi, Chishinga, Kabende, Mukulu, Ngumbo, Twa, Unga, Bemba, Bwile, Luunda, Shila, Tabwa (Northern province) Bisa, Kunda (border of Northern and Eastern provinces) Lala, Ambo, Luano, Swaka (Eastern and Central provinces) Lamba, Lima (Copperbelt and Central provinces)
<b>B</b>	Kaonde (North-Western province)
<b>C1</b>	Lozi (Western province)
<b>C2</b>	Kwandi, Kwanga, Mbowe, Mbumi (Western province) Simaa, Imilangu, Mwenyi, Nyengo, Makoma, Liyuwa, Mulonga (Western province) Mashi, Kwandu, Mbukushu (Western province)
<b>D</b>	Lunda, Kosa, Ndembu (North-Western province)
<b>E</b>	Luvale, Luchazi, Mbunda (border of Western and North-Western provinces) Chokwe (North-Western province)
<b>F</b>	Mambwe, Lungu (Northern province) Inamwanga, Iwa, Tambo, Lambya (border of Northern and Eastern provinces)
<b>G</b>	Nyiha, Wandya (border of Northern and Eastern provinces)
<b>H</b>	Nkoya, Lukolwe (or Mbwela), Lushangi, Mashasha (North-Western and border of Western and Southern provinces)
<b>I</b>	Nsenga (Eastern province)
<b>J</b>	Chewa (Nyanja) (Eastern province)
<b>K</b>	Tonga, Toka, Totela, Leya, Subiya, Twa, Shanjo, Fwe (Southern and border of Western and Southern provinces) Ila, Lundwe, Lumbu, Sala (border of Southern and Central provinces) Lenje, Twa (Central province) Soli (Central province)
<b>L</b>	Tumbuka, Fungwe, Senga, Yombe (Eastern province)
<b>M</b>	Goba, Shona (Central province)
<b>N</b>	Chikunda (Central province)
<b>O</b>	Swahili (Northern and Copperbelt provinces)

the relation between language and tribe (cf. Kashoki 1978). Ethnic identification as tribes, with a chief as leader and focal point, has a long tradition in Zambia and was explicitly manipulated under colonial rule. Today, tribal affiliation is important for both cultural identity and political coalition building (Posner 2005), with the total

**Table 16.2** Language by numbers of speakers (based on 2000 census)

Language	Use as Predominant Language (%)	Use as Second Language (%)	Language	Use as Predominant Language (%)	Use as Second Language (%)
Bemba	30.1	20.2	English	1.7	26.3
Nyanja	10.7	19.5	Luvale	1.7	1.9
Tonga	10.6	4.4	Lenje	1.4	1.5
Lozi	5.7	5.2	Namwanga	1.3	0.8
Chewa	4.7	2.3	Ngoni	1.2	1.2
Nsenga	3.4	1.6	Mambwe	1.2	0.9
Tumbuka	2.5	1.3	Bisa	1.0	0.4
Lunda	2.2	1.3	Ila	0.8	0.8
Lala	2.0	1.0	Lungu	0.6	0.4
Kaonde	2.0	1.8	Senga	0.6	0.2
Lamba	1.9	1.4			

number of tribes given as seventy-two in both the 1990 and 2000 censuses. However, tribal identity does not correspond directly to linguistic distinctiveness, and there are fewer languages than tribes. In their major survey of language in Zambia, Ohannessian and Kashoki (1978) distinguish eighty-three varieties (excluding European, Indian, and Khoisan languages) which are grouped, based on lexical and grammatical similarity as well as on mutual intelligibility, into twenty-six dialect clusters or 'languages', which in turn are grouped into sixteen groups as represented in Table 16.1, adapted from Ohannessian and Kashoki (1978) (see also Chanda 1996, 2002; Kula 2006, Bickmore 2006).

In addition to these twenty-six clusters of indigenous Bantu languages, the 1978 survey noted European and Asian languages spoken in Zambia, in particular English, which is the official language, as well as Gujarati and, as spoken by less than 1,000 speakers each, Italian, German, Hindu, French, Urdu, and Portuguese. Small communities of Kxoe (San) speakers live in western Zambia, having fled the civil war in neighbouring Angola, numbering approximately 300–400 speakers (Robins et al. 2001).

In terms of language use and numbers of speakers, Zambian languages differ considerably. With respect to these criteria, the main languages of Zambia are Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, and English as shown in Table 16.2, where language use as predominant language (as percentage of the whole population) and as second language (as percentage of those who claim to speak a second language) is given.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 8,702,932 was the total number considered for first-language speakers excluding infants and those with speech impairment. 3,385,745 were considered as second-language speakers, making up 34 per cent of the total population. This relatively low number of second-language speakers is probably a reflection of the fact that census data record people's own estimation of their linguistic behaviour and not their actual behaviour.

**Table 16.3** Dialect clusters language use (based on Census 1980–2000)

Language Group	Percentage of Total Population					
	1980		1990		2000	
	1 <sup>st</sup> lge	2 <sup>nd</sup> lge	1 <sup>st</sup> lge	2 <sup>nd</sup> lge	1 <sup>st</sup> lge	2 <sup>nd</sup> lge
<b>Bemba</b>	39.7	24.4	39.7	27.5	38.5	24.1
<b>Nyanja</b>	19.0	18.0	20.1	25.5	20.6	25.0
<b>Tonga</b>	13.3	7.8	14.8	8.1	13.9	7.7
<b>Lozi</b>	8.0	7.5	7.5	8.4	6.9	6.4
<b>English</b>	4.6	0.8	1.1	17.8	1.7	26.3

The data in the table show that Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, and English are spoken by more than 10 per cent as either first or second language. The table also shows that even a number of the smaller languages are used as second language, and that languages like Luvale and Lenje are spoken by more speakers as second language than as first language, or have as many second-language speakers as first in the case of Ila, even though in all cases they are spoken by less than two per cent of the population. This indicates the widespread use of multilingual practices which will be discussed in more detail below. The data in Table 16.2 are based on the level of dialect clusters. However, often language in Zambia is discussed at the group level, rather than at the cluster level, that is, including a number of related varieties. When language use is compared by language groups, the importance of Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, and English becomes even more apparent, as Table 16.3, comparing data over three decades, shows.<sup>2</sup>

As Table 16.3 shows, Bemba (as a language group) is the largest Zambian language spoken as a first language. Nyanja and English have seen the greatest increase in second-language speakers from 1980 to 2000. Bemba, Nyanja, and Tonga are spoken by more than 10 per cent each of the population as first language, comprising together almost 75 per cent of the population. Bemba and Nyanja, together with English, are spoken by more than 70 per cent of second language speakers. Lozi is spoken both as first and as second language by just under 10 per cent of speakers, while for English, there is a significant difference between use as first language and as second language: in 2000, less than two per cent of Zambians spoke English as first language, but its use among second-language speakers was over 25 per cent. The data in the table also shows that the use as second-language of the five languages increased in the decade from 1980 to 1990. In contrast, from 1990 to 2000 use as a second-language decreased in all cases (even though Nyanja remains fairly stable) except for English which saw a significant increase. While the decrease in 2000 of the Zambian languages

<sup>2</sup> The 2000 census recognizes seven language groups (excluding English) that coincide with broad ethnic groups: Bemba, Tonga, North-Western, Barotse (Lozi), Nyanja (or Eastern), Mambwe, and Tumbuka. We present four of these in Table 16.3.

as second-languages can be attributed to the increase of English, it is interesting to note that smaller languages that were recorded as having no second-language speaker in 1990 have in 2000 shown figures for second-language speakers. Thus while Bisa, Lungu, and Senga had no second-language speakers in 1990 they recorded 0.4, 0.4, and 0.2 per cent, respectively, in 2000 (see Table 16.2). The picture which emerges from the data is one of a complex and dynamic multilingual situation, where language use changes quite significantly over a comparatively short time-span.

Another important factor in the linguistic situation in Zambia is the social and political status different languages have. English is the official language of Zambia, and the only language so identified in the 1991 Constitution. In addition, seven African languages are designated as national languages: Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Kaonde, Luvale, and Lunda.<sup>3</sup> English is widely used in the media, in government and business, in education, and in many formal and semi-formal contexts, especially in urban settings. The three major daily newspapers, the *Times of Zambia*, the *Post*, and the *Daily Mail* are all in English, and print media in other languages are restricted to weekly or monthly magazines.<sup>4</sup> Television programmes by the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) are predominantly in English, with only short news programmes in the national languages. In addition, programmes on satellite and cable TV, mainly provided in the urban areas by South African broadcasting companies, are in English, or indeed in any of the South African national languages, but not in the languages of Zambia. English is also widely used on the radio, but here the indigenous Zambian languages are also heard, in programmes produced in one of the national languages, covering a range of topics from more serious political and economic issues to more light-hearted 'phone-in' programmes where callers comment live on various issues of general interest.<sup>5</sup> English also plays an important role in education in Zambia. After independence, English became the dominant language at all levels of education, and was used as the medium of instruction throughout, while national languages were taught as subjects. However, this situation has changed more recently, as the use of national languages as languages of instruction in primary schools has been adopted more widely (Carmody 2004). However, at secondary and tertiary level English is still used almost exclusively. As in the media and education, English is the dominant language in government, administration, and business. The majority of government publications, as well as government and official websites, are in English, as is the language of parliament, and the Constitution states that any person wishing

<sup>3</sup> Henceforth the terms 'official language' or 'official national language' will be used to refer to English, 'national languages' to the seven nationally recognized African languages, 'Zambian languages' to indigenous Zambian languages (therefore excluding European languages) and 'local languages' to Zambian languages spoken in a specific area.

<sup>4</sup> Notable are *Imbila* (Bemba), *Intanda* (Tonga), *Liseli* (Lozi), *Tsopano* (Nyanja), *Lukanga* (Bemba, Lenje), and *Ngoma* (Kaonde, Lunda, Luvale).

<sup>5</sup> Chanda (1996) reports radio air coverage in hours per week for local languages on the multilingual Radio 1 of ZNBC as: 23 each for Bemba and Tonga, 21 each for Nyanja and Lozi, and 15 each for Kaonde, Luvale, and Lunda.

to stand for parliament has to be fluent in the official language, that is, English. The predominant use of English in the media, government, and education, in addition to the widespread use of English as the language of business and administration, means that knowledge of English is extremely important for finding employment, at least in the 'formal' sector, and English thus has a relatively high social status in Zambia.

The seven Zambian national languages are used alongside English in a number of contexts. We have already mentioned their increasing use in primary education and on the radio. They are also used to disseminate specific government policy or health information (e.g. in cholera alerts). Furthermore, the national languages are the main mediums of wider communication in particular in spoken language and in less formal contexts, although they are also used in the lower ranks of formal administration. Local court proceedings are, for example, conducted in a local national language although the legislating judicial law is in English.<sup>6</sup> Another example is that of police interrogations which are also usually carried out in the local or regional language. Each language has a specific regional base, where it is predominantly used. Bemba is the main language of the Northern, Luapula, Copperbelt, and, to a lesser extent, Central provinces, Nyanja is the main language of the Eastern province as well as of Lusaka (alongside Bemba and English), Tonga of the Southern province, and Lozi of the Western province. Lunda, Luvale, and Kaonde are spoken in the North-Western province which does not have one dominant language (see Map). Throughout all provinces, the national languages play a greater role as languages of wider communication in rural areas, while they are used together with English in urban areas. Looking back at the language use data presented above, we can say that English is an important lingua franca in Zambia as it is not geographically restricted and is used anywhere in the country (albeit more in urban than in rural areas), while Bemba and Nyanja are used by more people than English as a means of communication, even though the majority of them live in the centre, north, and east of the country (cf. Kashoki 1978: 31).

As we have seen above, there are many more languages in Zambia than English and the seven national languages. We have already seen as well that many languages of Zambia in addition to the national languages are spoken both as first and second-languages. Often these languages are only spoken in a limited area and by a smaller number of speakers, although, as the data presented above show, this is not always the case. Tumbuka, for example, is used by more speakers than the national languages Lunda, Luvale, and Kaonde. The reason why the latter languages have become national languages has to do with their relative importance in the North-Western province, whereas in the Eastern province, where Tumbuka is spoken, Nyanja is the main language of wider communication, and thus has become a

<sup>6</sup> The local court is the lowest court of law in a hierarchy dominated by the magistrate, high, and supreme courts.

national language. As pointed out above, in many cases the relation between ethnic grouping and linguistic grouping is complex, and more detailed work on Zambian languages is necessary to fully understand their distribution and interaction. However, what can be said is that in many parts in Zambia there exists a complex situation of language use, multilingualism and code-switching, where speakers employ a number of different languages in different contexts. For example, speakers may use Nsenga as the home language and local language of communication, but also use Nyanja and English as languages of wider communication. Furthermore, if a Nsenga speaker subsequently takes up a job on the Copperbelt she would in most likelihood add Bemba to her linguistic repertoire, thus choosing between four different languages.

In this section, we have introduced the languages of Zambia, numbers of speakers, and language use in some detail, to show the complexity and the dynamics of the situation, and also the problems of describing linguistic reality in Zambia, for example the choice between calling a variety a dialect or a language, and the difficulties of assessing language use and degree of multilingualism in spoken, informal contexts. In broad outline, though, the language situation in Zambia is well documented and understood: following Ohannessian and Kashoki (1978), we can say that just over thirty languages are spoken in Zambia. English is the official language of the country and is widely used in the public domain. However, in terms of numbers of speakers, Zambia's seven national languages – Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Kaonde – are the more important languages of wider communication, and especially the first four account for a large majority of first and second-language speakers. Zambia is a linguistically complex and dynamic country, with a range of different languages playing different roles in different contexts, and where language plays an important role in the construction and negotiation of social and national identities.

### 16.3 Historical Settings

Many aspects of the present-day language situation in Zambia are the result of historical developments over a comparatively long time.<sup>7</sup> The basis for today's distribution of languages in Zambia was laid during an extended period of slow processes of migrations and language shift beginning with the earliest introduction of Bantu languages in Zambia from around 300 BC. Subsequent movement of peoples, language contact, local and long-distance trade, colonial rule, and finally independence in 1964 shaped the language situation in the following centuries. It is sometimes assumed that the current language situation is mainly or even exclusively a result of colonial politics. This is certainly true for the introduction of English and its present position

<sup>7</sup> The main sources of historical information made use of here are Ehret (1998, 2002), Roberts (1976), Rotberg (1966), and Vansina (1990, 1995).



as one of the main lingua francas. However, we will suggest in this section that several aspects of the language situation of contemporary Zambia can be traced to pre-colonial times and that there is, despite many developments and changes, an element of continuity which characterizes the situation today. It will be suggested that the particular multilingual practices characterizing the language situation in Zambia today have historical roots pre-dating contact with Europeans. This provides an important backdrop for the mutually enhancing relation between multilingualism and national identity which has slowly developed in Zambia after independence. It is thus useful to place the language situation in Zambia today into a historical perspective.

### *16.3.1 The Language Situation Unfolds: Zambia up to the Eighteenth Century*

Virtually all languages spoken in Zambia today belong to the Bantu family, except, of course, the more recent European and Indian languages and the small number of Khoisan languages. Bantu languages began to spread from the area of the Nigeria–Cameroon borderland in West Africa through more or less small processes of migration, language contact, and language shift southwards and eastwards and eventually became spoken in eastern, central, and southern Africa, in an area from just north of the equator all the way to southern Africa (see e.g. Nurse 2006). Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests that Bantu languages reached Zambia, together with knowledge of iron technology, agriculture, and domestic animals, during the last centuries BC and the first few centuries AD in a gradual process of economic, social, cultural, and linguistic innovation. This was followed by several periods of subsequent change from around the middle of the first millennium during which new technologies and farming methods were introduced together with new Bantu languages which became widespread throughout northern, eastern, and central Zambia. These innovations, among which are distinct pottery designs and iron smelting techniques, did not extend to the far western parts of Zambia, where aspects of cultural continuity can be traced back to the fifth century AD. In broad outline, the linguistic situation in Zambia today results from this period, and was established during the first half of the second millennium. The main centres of innovation during this and subsequent periods often lie to the north, in what is now the southeastern DRC, where the Lunda and Luba states exerted strong influence on Zambia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although other links existed, the major periods of contact in particular with southern and western neighbours became relevant only from the eighteenth century onwards. It is regularly said that prior to the arrival of Europeans in central Africa, communities were organized in small groups with little contact beyond each village and without much economic, social, or linguistic development (e.g. Wilson 1941: 11, Mulford 1967: 2, Posner 2005: 57). However, the evidence available suggests that such a characterization is likely to be quite incorrect. In most of what is today Zambia the ‘middle ages’, from around the turn of the millennium to the 1700s, was a period of trade, interchange,

and innovation. In the northeast, a major innovation was in the expansion of millet cultivation by the so-called *citemene* system which involves clearing woodland and using ash as fertilizer. In the south, which is free of tsetse flies, people started to herd cattle. Trade involved salt, iron, and copper. While iron and iron products were useful for tools used in agriculture and food production more generally, the softer copper did not have any specific use and was traded as jewellery in the forms of bangles, crosses, bracelets, etc. Archaeological records show that salt, iron, and copper works generally produced more than could have been usefully employed locally, and their products are found far from the centres of production, indicating a more or less organized trade network. Copper mining in Kansanshi mine near Solwezi, for example, had started by the fifth century and was part of a trade network which seems to be linked to saltworks in present-day southern DRC and up to Lwena and Ndembu communities in northwestern Zambia and eastern Angola from the 900s onwards (Vansina 2003). Local and regional contact not only involved the exchange of goods, but also new concepts and ideas, linking people across wider regions in which distinct traditions emerge. For pottery design, for example, archaeologists distinguish three main traditions, called Luangwa, Lungwebungu, and Tonga Diaspora, in the northeast, centre, and south of present-day Zambia. Similarly, different regional musical traditions can be distinguished today: along the north, music of the Cokwe/Lunda/Luba/Bemba belt employs harmony in thirds rather than fourths, which is used in most of the rest of Zambia (Baird 2004). This musical tradition cross-cuts more modern cultural regions and thus probably reflects pre-colonial contact. Trade and cultural traditions across these large regions of wider cultural affinity could not result from isolated and static communities, but presuppose ongoing change and innovation in most people's lives and active interchange and contact between different communities and speakers of different languages. In addition to this, probably the strongest evidence for the interactive nature of central Africa's societies during the last two millennia comes from comparative linguistics. When different groups of speakers of a language live in relative isolation from each other, their linguistic varieties will, due to the inevitability of language change, become different over time, and eventually develop into distinct languages. Historical linguists speak of divergence in this case. On the other hand, convergence effects occur when languages become, in certain respects, similar over time. Since any language can and will change in an infinite number of ways, convergence effects can only be explained by contact between the speakers of the languages. The Bantu languages of Zambia are all related and are thus all similar at some level. However, if speakers of early Bantu languages when entering Zambia about 2,000 or so years ago had remained largely in isolation, we would expect a fairly neat division of a number of different languages as a result of linguistic divergence. However, the main large-scale study of Bantu comparison (Bastin et al. 1999) concludes that the Bantu area as a whole is characterized by criss-crossing of local innovation (divergence) and diffusion of innovations by contact (convergence). This also holds true of the Bantu languages of Zambia at the heart of the Bantu area, indeed, it is part of the reason

why boundaries between different dialects and languages of Zambia are so hard to draw, as discussed in section 16.2. So, while pre-colonial Zambia arguably saw the development of culturally and linguistically fairly homogeneous societies, for example the Bemba in the north or the Luyana in the west, and while some communities may have entertained fairly little contact with their neighbours, quite generally it seems that many Zambians before the nineteenth century were engaged in one way or the other – for example through trade, marriage, or migration – in interaction with people outside their immediate cultural and linguistic sphere. Although it is true that many important aspects of the language situation in Zambia are a result of much more recent history, which we return to consider in the next section, the basis of today's linguistic distribution, as well as practices of language contact, in itself a form of multilingualism, can be assumed to have been established in a gradual and extended process throughout the last two millennia.

### *16.3.2 Recent Modifications and Migrations: From the Eighteenth Century to 1964*

From the eighteenth century onwards, Zambia's contact with outsiders increased dramatically, through migration movements from the south, the beginning of international trade in ivory, slaves, and guns, colonialism, and industrialization. Linguistically, three main languages became part of the linguistic scene – Kololo, a Sotho language which became known as Lozi; a group of Nguni languages; and English – while the use of languages already present changed through new forms of education and labour movement.

With increasing colonial activity away from the coasts, and rising international demand for gold, ivory, and manpower along trade routes and in large-scale plantations in the new world, Zambia became involved in international trade and many Zambians suffered from slavery, forced labour, and the increasing violence and destabilization brought about by European and local 'traders' outside of official traditional or European control. The main lines of trade and contact ran from the East African coast in the north along old Swahili trade routes, in the south through Mozambique from what was then Portuguese territory, and in the west to Portuguese traders in Angola. However, despite the scale of economic and political changes and human suffering brought about during this period, more lasting effects came later through contact with the south.

In the early part of the nineteenth century Zulu nationalism led to a period of fighting in southern Africa which spilled over into countries much further north. In the aftermath of the *mfecane*, Zulu for 'crushing, scattering', groups of speakers of Southern African Nguni and Sotho languages fled from their original South African homelands northwards and settled among the people they found. In Zambia, groups of displaced Nguni fighters known as Ngoni moved into the Eastern province and into Malawi, while in the west the Kololo, a Sotho-speaking group of people, conquered

the Luyi kingdom and changed its linguistic identity in particular. Different groups of Ngoni arrived in southeastern Zambia from the 1840s onwards. They were essentially groups of guerrilla fighters retreating from Zulu armies set to conquer new lands. Their linguistically and culturally heterogeneous structure allowed them to absorb conquered peoples comparatively easily into the elaborate military structures they had developed. After some vicissitudes, they settled among the peoples of the Eastern Province, the Chewa, Nsenga, and Tumbuka, and adopted the language of these groups. Thus while many of their customs and cultural traditions, including music, poetry, and ceremonies have high visibility in contemporary Zambia, and frequently contribute to the maintenance of a Ngoni ethnic identity, no Nguni language is actually spoken in Zambia today.

An almost opposite case occurred around the same time in western Zambia when Sotho-speaking Kololo people, similarly *mfecane* victims, crossed the Zambezi at Kazungula at the present-day Botswana–Zambia border point. The Kololo conquered the Luyi kingdom which by that time had been established with fairly well-defined political and administrative structures. Although their rule was ended in the 1860s, their language remained and the Lozi (the Kololo term for Luyi) language of today has close similarities to Sotho, while Luyi is only used as a ceremonial language (Gowlett 1989).

A third influence from the south brought English into the picture. Following colonial expansionist interests, and so as to forestall other Europeans from establishing themselves in the area, Rhode's British South Africa Company took control of the territory named Northern Rhodesia in 1890. From 1924 to independence, Northern Rhodesia was run by the British Government as a colony, and was part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, comprising Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi), from 1953 to 1963. British rule on the whole was a dreary affair. With the territory of Zambia initially being mainly taken over to secure strategic interests, the emphasis then turned to exploiting the area as a reservoir of cheap labour and to making profits from the copper mines which initiated large-scale production in the 1930s. For most of the period, it seems to have been a take-the-money-and-run affair and spending on public welfare, health, education, and infrastructure was minute compared to the dividends made from the extraction and sale of copper. Up to the 1920s and beyond education was almost exclusively provided by various mission stations and outposts of the eighteen missionary societies active in the territory (Küster 1999). The missions had a huge impact on the development of African languages and it was partly the activities of the missions which resulted in the growth of modern Zambia's lingua francas, through their use of the African languages as the medium of instruction in the schools they established – sometimes against the wishes of the pupils who preferred English as this provided access to better jobs – and through the introduction of written varieties in the course of Bible translations and early written literature (Carmody 2004). Previously, Bemba, Nyanja, Lozi, and Tonga had been used as languages of wider communication, but now they also came to be

used widely in the new systems of formal education. Conversely, in the northwest there was no strong mission activity, and no modern education, and this contributed to the absence of any widely used lingua franca in the area (Posner 2005). A second impact of the colonial rule was large-scale labour movement and the advent of urbanization. While many Zambians had to move south of the border to Southern Rhodesia and South Africa for salaried labour, from the 1930s onwards, copper production on the Copperbelt increased and large numbers of labourers were needed. Partly as a result of company policies, the majority of mineworkers on the Copperbelt were Bemba-speakers from the Northern Province, and thus Bemba became established as the lingua franca in the mines, where a distinct variety, sometimes called 'Town Bemba', developed, reflecting the high degree of language contact in the multilingual situation on the Copperbelt (see Spitulnik 1998). Finally, of course, the introduction of English as the language of politics, administration, and business is a colonial legacy. The number of white settlers in Zambia was never as high as in South Africa or neighbouring Zimbabwe, but still there were a number of English speakers both before and after independence, some of them farmers, but many employed in government, administration, health, and education sectors. Africans learned English in schools, where it was used next to regional languages, and acquired high prestige as it gave access to better paid jobs, first mainly as teachers and later in shops and offices when white collar jobs became available for Africans towards the end of the colonial period. The main growth of English as a lingua franca, however, came only after independence.

Opposition to British colonial rule grew constantly during the twentieth century and was driven by three interrelated aims: full participation of all Zambians in the political process, use of the country's resources for its own people, and political autonomy from both the colonial power and the racist white regime in Southern Rhodesia. Economic participation was especially demanded on the Copperbelt and the collective action in the miners' strikes in 1935 can perhaps be regarded as an early antecedent of Zambian national identity: the striking miners explicitly rejected negotiation through so-called tribal elders, who were appointed by the mining companies to discourage inter-ethnic political consciousness as part of a wider colonial strategy to invent and manipulate tribal identities. The miners used traditional Mbeni dance groups, thought of as 'harmless' by the white administrators, as effective means of communications and coordination between different mines, and posted messages detailing their aims in Bemba, the African language of wider communication on the Copperbelt, which the administration had to have translated (Matongo 1992). The main and final driving force of the independence movement, however, was the Federation with the 'white' South which lasted from 1953 to 1963. While African stakes in colonial Northern Rhodesia were not valued especially highly, many Zambians at the time thought that the state of affairs in the north was better than in the south. Miners in the north had better political organization and their salaries in 1960 were about twice as high as those of mineworkers in the south. Copper was booming, and race relations

were, as far as race relations go in colonial contexts, moderately good, and certainly better than under the new Apartheid regime in South Africa, which was eagerly being copied south of the border. There were no pass-laws in Northern Rhodesia, and Africans were represented, admittedly through representatives for African affairs appointed by the colonial office, at the Legislative Council. Furthermore, it became clear very quickly that the north was paying more into the federal budget than it got out of it: by 1963 Northern Rhodesia had made a net loss of £97 million and had seen another £260 million of mining profits leave for London, Salisbury, and Johannesburg, with very little of this money coming back into the country. The silver lining of this situation was that it led to the political alliance between black and white Zambians (or at least those which identified with the new independent Zambia), the former outraged in general, the latter outraged by the sell-out of their country, giving rise to the credible and successful implementation of a policy of non-racialism after independence.

On the eve of independence, then, Zambia had gone through almost two centuries of tumultuous events and much of the country had changed. Copper mining had been industrialized and had become the main source of income; the 'line-of-rail', connecting Livingstone in the south with Lusaka and the Copperbelt in the north, had become a major socio-geographical feature; and Zambia had become one of the most urbanized countries in the region. Both inward migration from the south and from Europe, and labour migration of Zambians to Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, the DRC, and Tanzania had brought Zambians into contact with new people, new ideas, and new ways of life. Education had changed from informal traditional acculturation and training to formal schooling, Christianity had become a major religion, and English had been established as the main language for commerce, government, and administration. With all these new developments and changes, it is probably easy to miss the wider continuities. But a number of things did not change dramatically. Copper had been mined for more than a thousand years, sometimes at the very same spots where the modern mines had been built in the twentieth century, although, of course, on a pre-industrialized scale. More significantly, probably most people in Zambia had been in the area for centuries. Chiefs and tribal organization had often been invented and reinterpreted by colonial administrators and anthropologists, based on their own interests and preconceptions. On the other hand, a number of Zambians had been identified as tribes before European contact, and groups like the Bembas and Lozis (or Luyis at the time) had multi-layered structures of allegiance to chiefs and paramount chiefs (the Bemba *Chitimukulu*) or kings (the Lozi *Litunga*) which were often adopted from the political systems of the Luba and Lunda kingdoms to the north. Truly international trade only began with European contact and through Western market forces, but regional trade had been established for centuries, often through well-developed trade routes and through established traders. Though comparatively little is known for sure about language use in pre-colonial Zambia, given the existence of different forms of social organization and different ethnic groups with varying forms of identity, contact

through trade and other causes, and the existence of larger regions of cultural affinities, it seems likely that patterns of multilingualism have a long tradition in Zambia, and that the linguistic changes triggered by European contact, that is, the introduction of English and the development of African languages as lingua francas, were absorbed into an established system making use of different languages in different contexts.

### 16.3.3 Zambia Today: 1964 to the Present

The Republic of Zambia was officially founded on 24 October 1964. Independence celebrations were held at the new Independence Stadium in Lusaka, attended by both old and new political leaders: the Princess Royal and the last Governor, Evelyn Hone, for the outgoing colonial power, and the new president and vice-president, Kenneth Kaunda and Simon Kapwepwe. Proceedings were harmonious; the Colonial Office had been the lesser of two evils compared to Company rule at the beginning of the century, and had given support for Zambia's fight against the Federation and subsequent independence (though this support was perhaps also somewhat lacklustre). The independence movement was largely conducted as a non-violent civil disobedience campaign, the so-called *Cha-cha-cha* campaign, and the main political party, Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP), had tried to build a large, non-racial, non-ethnic platform. The two main causes which had fuelled the independence movement, the control and distribution of the copper revenues and the fight against the Federation, also became dominant in the early years of the new republic. Increasing copper profits and using the money generated to provide jobs, education, health care, housing, and higher standards of living for all Zambians was the main aim of domestic policies, while foreign policy was determined by the struggle to end colonialism and white rule in Southern Africa. At independence, Zambia had four unfriendly neighbours: the Portuguese colonies Angola and Mozambique, South African-occupied Namibia, and Southern Rhodesia, which after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 became Rhodesia under white minority rule and turned from unfriendly to positively hostile. Since virtually all trade links with the outside world at the time ran through Rhodesia, the first few years of independence saw a concerted restructuring programme to find new ways of importing oil, machinery, and most other goods, and of exporting the vital copper which involved air links and the improvement of transport infrastructure to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and the Benguela railway to Lobito in Angola. Politically, Zambia became, with Tanzania, the most active 'frontline' state, supporting the total liberation of the continent. Many politicians involved in independence movements in southern Africa passed through Lusaka at some stage or other, and many spent many years there; many independence organizations had offices in Zambia, including the South African ANC, and Zambia's role in supporting the eventual liberation of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, and South Africa is an important piece of the history of the region (see e.g. Mbeki 2004).

Zambia's national identity was thus formed essentially on economic and political, especially foreign policy, lines. In addition, the early years of the republic were closely associated with the integrating figure of Kenneth Kaunda and his national philosophy of 'African Humanism' which embodied a number of Christian-informed ethical principles, but was less politically relevant than the Ujamaa policies in neighbouring Tanzania. Yet, despite these strong points of national identification, 'tribalism' and centrifugal tendencies were seen as a threat to the new country and the establishment of 'national identity' became a paramount task: the national motto adopted after independence was 'One Zambia, One Nation'. It is against this background that English became the national and official language of Zambia, which was based on the view that English would help integrate the different Zambian people, while African languages were seen as promoting factionism and tribalism: 'One Zambia, One Nation, One Language' could thus have been the appropriate continuation of the national motto at the time. English was also seen as providing the only means for both national and international communication, a view based on the colonially inherited assumption that African languages (and African cultures) are essentially static, backward, isolated, and linked to tribal identities, and thus would not be able to serve as languages of wider communication or affinity – a view which is, as we have shown in the preceding section, clearly contrary to fact (cf. Kashoki 1990).

Fear of tribalism also played a part in the establishment of the 'second republic' in 1972/73, when multiparty democracy was ended and Zambia became a 'one-party participatory democracy'. The move effectively strengthened the ruling UNIP party under Kaunda and removed it (and him) from voter control, but was triggered by the establishment and electoral success of two opposition parties which were seen by Kaunda as tribally based: the African National Congress, associated with Ila and Tonga people of the Southern Province, and the United Progressive Party under former vice-president Kapwepwe, which was seen as a Bemba party. Whether the charge of tribalism is in fact true, or whether the two parties could equally be seen as regionally based, and, indeed, whether in either case, this warrants the abolishment of political parties, is a different matter (see e.g. Meyns 1995). In any event, UNIP became the only party, and Kaunda sought to have more or less ethnically 'balanced' governments (Posner 2005). During the second republic, conditions in Zambia deteriorated. Political decision making was restricted to UNIP and to the president and often political offices were not seen as representing the interests of society but as lucrative career options. Meanwhile, the economy stalled, inflation rose and foreign debts soared, to about US \$ 7 billion at the end of the 1980s, so that unemployment and economic hardship became the reality for many Zambians. Political and economic dissatisfaction, together with the rapid political changes in Eastern Europe, provided enough motivation for a demand to change the system, and after a period of some unrest, the first multiparty elections of the third republic were held on 31 October 1991. Kaunda stood as presidential candidate of UNIP, was defeated, and power came to the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), which campaigned with the slogan 'The Hour has Come', under



Frederick Chiluba, the former president of the Zambian Congress of Trade Unions. Whatever else one may think about Kaunda's achievements, to be a president in power and to lose an election and step down gracefully is remarkable in African politics, and this has certainly contributed to Kaunda's renaissance as elder statesman in the 2000s.

Chiluba's main agenda was economic reform and he ran a course of privatization and liberalization of the economy, partly under heavy protests, which it seems too early to judge. He was re-elected in 1996 and was succeeded as president in 2002 by Levy Mwanawasa, a former vice-president, of the MMD. At the beginning of the millennium Zambia can look back at forty years of independence in which the nation has developed largely peacefully in the absence of major violence, war, or civil unrest. This is all the more remarkable in view of the difficult circumstances in the wider region after independence. Also, today, all of Zambia's neighbours have ended colonialism and there is hope for a democratic and peaceful future in southern Africa. Economically, there is hope as well, as Zambia qualified for full debt cancellation under the World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in 2005 which will allow more resources to be invested in human development. However, many areas of public life have declined in the last decades, including school enrolment and health, and it will take some time until levels of the 1970s are reached again. One of the main threats to Zambian well-being at present is the HIV/AIDS pandemic which affects 'all aspects of social and economic growth in the country, weakening the public sector and threatening long-term national development' (WHO 2005).

#### 16.4 Contemporary Themes in Language and Identity in Zambia

As we have shown in the previous section, the establishment of national identity in Zambia occurred first and foremost on the political level, through foreign and domestic policies, and identification with the new president Kaunda. African languages did play a role in the political movements leading up to independence, but only a small one, for example in the miners' strikes in the 1930s, and possibly also through radio broadcasting in African languages from the late 1940s onwards (Roberts 1976: 210). However, the main language of political and official discourse in Zambia became English. Since African languages did not play a significant role in the establishment of national unity (in contrast to, for example, Swahili in Tanzania), there soon ensued a national debate about the role of language in Zambia. As noted earlier, English became the official language and was seen as the only 'non-tribal' alternative available to serve as a vehicle of national unity, an argument often made in post-colonial African language policies. English also became the language of prestige and was linked with modernization and access to international communication. However, this policy was not without its critics. In particular the Zambian linguist Mubanga Kashoki pointed out a number of problems with this approach, in essays mainly dating from the 1970s and collectively published in Kashoki (1990). Kashoki argues that all languages are

dynamic systems, and that African languages can be associated with modernity as well as English can. While it is true that English is a major international language, Kashoki points out that the main function of national languages ought to be national communication, and that the demands of international communication can be met by English as second-language as is done in many European countries. In terms of national communication, Kashoki argues that African languages – especially Bemba and Nyanja, as established languages of wider communication – serve this function better as they are understood more widely. Finally, Kashoki points out that English is neutral only in a certain sense (i.e. not associated with any ethnic group), but that, especially when used as the only medium in education, it is not neutral, but favours children who already speak English at home, usually those of urban, educated, and well-to-do parents. Having queried the alleged practical advantages of English, Kashoki then asks whether language, and in particular one language, ought to play a role in national identity? Since Zambian national identity has been established politically, the familiar European ‘one language, one state’ argument applies rather differently: whereas in many countries of western Europe (simplifying somewhat) the use of one language became important for defining the nation-state, the Zambian nation-state was defined without any prior unification of language, so that language, and in particular one language, did not fulfil the integrative role in nation-building in Zambia as it often did in Europe. In view of this, it might be argued that the nation can serve as a feasible political unit in which many languages are spoken, and that national identity is constituted by patterns of multilingualism. Thus, Kashoki concludes, Zambian languages should be developed and be fully employed in the building of the nation and her national identity. In retrospect, Kashoki’s position can be seen in many ways as foreshadowing discussions about the role of languages in Zambia from the 1990s onwards.

#### *16.4.1 Changing Perceptions of Zambian Languages*

The perception of language, and of Zambian languages in particular, has undergone change in Zambia since the beginning of the third republic. Academic interest in language questions is high and attractively packaged grammatical sketches of Zambian languages can be found in the bookshops of Lusaka’s flashy new malls. Government officials now address audiences in regional and sometimes local languages as opposed to English which was the norm some twenty years ago. There is as yet no change in legislation, but in a recent paper Kashoki (2003) has argued – with reference to South Africa and Zimbabwe, but probably equally applicable to Zambia – that legislation ought to acknowledge the country’s linguistic diversity and provide for constitutional coding of linguistic rights. Public opinion certainly seems to favour more recognition of Zambia’s linguistic heritage and multiplicity. There are a number of reasons for this trend. It is part of a more general, regional and international trend and mirrors similar discussions in, for example, South Africa. It is related to the change from second to

third republic and the MMD's philosophy of plurality, of 'multi' as opposed to 'single', and to the end of centralist forms of societies more widely. It can also be seen as an answer to defining a new sense of national identity. During the 1990s, the main cornerstones of Zambian national identity disappeared: Kaunda's presidency, the front-line status, and economic advancement through nationalization and industrialization. This is now being replaced by a new long tradition, exceptionally long in the region, of relative stability, rule of law, and democracy. Democratic language rights fit well into this new mark of identification. A particular interpretation is given by Posner (2005). He proposes that increasing interest in linguistic identity in Zambia is linked to the change of political ground-rules from the second to the third republic, and to voters' basic assumption that they will profit if political power is given to someone in their tribal or linguistic group. In the second republic elections were local, with a choice among different local UNIP candidates, and coalition-building proceeded along tribal lines: too often all candidates belonged to the same, bigger linguistic group. However, with multiparty elections, coalitions have to be large enough to have a reasonable chance of attaining national majorities, and tribal identities are too small to achieve this. Hence, in the third republic, voters build alliances with others of the same language, not tribal group. One has to add to this, though, that culturally, as opposed to politically, tribal identity remains important, and has probably become more important over the last decade, reflecting, like the increased awareness of multilingualism, a trend towards a more pluralistic society. All these different points show that the change in perspective on languages is embedded in a wider change in public conceptions of identity.

#### 16.4.2 *Multilingualism*

One of the main points of the current discussion is Zambia's multilingualism, which is now seen as an asset, rather than an impediment to national development. However languages are counted, it is clear that, as we have shown above, Zambia is a multilingual country. The majority of Zambians have more than one language in their linguistic repertoire and can choose from among these languages, both for communication and for ethnic and linguistic identities. Furthermore, there are different languages within the boundaries of the state which are used by a large number of speakers in most situations, and different languages are increasingly recognized in public life through legislation and institutions. Multilingualism plays an important role in the construction of contemporary Zambian identity. In urban centres, especially in the capital Lusaka, many Zambians routinely employ three or four languages: English as the language of many official contexts and also as the predominant written language; Bemba and Nyanja as the city's publicly most dominant languages of wider communication which are used in many (and for some speakers in most) informal and semi-formal contexts; and also often a further, different home language within the family (Chisanga 2002). Although the various languages can be associated with different

functional domains as outlined above, actual linguistic reality is frequently characterized by code-switching involving two or more languages. The choice between different languages available in many Zambian contexts is an important aspect of speakers' linguistic repertoire and is employed to construct and negotiate social and ethnic identities. For example, a study reported by Banda (2005) shows how code-switching between educated Zambian English, colloquial Zambian English, and Nyanja is used to establish and alter social roles and relationships in the environment of a Lusaka office. Both the change from and into the different varieties, and the specific structures made available by the varieties – especially the formal marking of respect in African languages – are used to negotiate age- and gender-based relations throughout the discourse. Similarly, Siachitema (1991) shows how language choice is related to the social relations of discourse participants, and in particular that use of English is more acceptable when speaking to younger people or people of the same age, while when addressing older people African languages are seen as expressing more adequately the respect commonly accorded to older people in African society. Examples of code-switching involving African languages, principally Nyanja and Bemba, are also found in contemporary Zambian popular music, which has undergone a recent rejuvenation and is now widely embraced by all generations. Various artists (e.g. k'millian 2004) use both languages in the lyrics of their songs, expressing the multilingual reality of contemporary Lusaka.

Even though urban multilingual situations such as in Lusaka are not the norm, the use of different languages is widespread throughout the country. In section 16.3.1 we have suggested that the present-day language situation in Zambia is not so much a product of the colonial era, but is instead based on a dynamic system of multilingualism which has developed over several centuries. A number of the languages which play a part in the contemporary set-up have been spoken – in older forms – in the area since the middle of the last millennium. Others, like Lozi, and indeed English, have entered the system at a later stage. Throughout much of the country's history, linguistic identity has been expressed and negotiated with reference to several languages fulfilling different functions, as languages of the home or as languages of wider communication, as languages of insiders or newcomers. The industrial and political transformations of the last century have contributed to an expansion of the linguistic system in scale, but not significantly in kind; even though urban multilingualism in Lusaka or on the Copperbelt is a new phenomenon, the underlying practices are not. Zambian linguistic identity is constituted by this specific multilingual system, involving Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, and English as the main languages of wider communication, all of which are related to a net of regional, social, and ethnic identities. With respect to language and national identity, we have argued that Zambia's national identity after independence was mainly referenced to political and economic events, and that in contrast to the rise of many European nation-states, language did not play a unifying role in the establishment of Zambian identity. After initial attempts to put English into the role of official national language, contemporary Zambia is developing a new

model of language and identity, where nation-building and multilingualism are not only compatible, but where the specific multilingual language practices in Zambia are seen as part of the country's national identity, so that now 'One Zambia, One Nation, Many Languages' would be a more appropriate continuation of the national motto.

### 16.4.3 *Some Practical Consequences*

The change in perspective on African languages since the 1990s has also led to more practical consequences, two of which are the use of languages in education, and the effort to harmonize the standardization of cross-border languages. While African languages were used in primary education in mission and government schools under colonial rule, English became the sole language of instruction after independence. Although several studies even in the 1970s have shown that this practice had adverse effects on learning and literacy, as pupils were confronted with a language with which they were not familiar, it was not until 2000 that a nationwide reform began to be implemented, in the Basic School Curriculum Framework. The idea presented in the Framework is to use the seven national languages as mediums of instruction from the first grade, and only gradually introduce English from the second grade on (Carmody 2004, Manchisi 2004). The implementation of this scheme is on a regional basis and is particularly encouraged in rural areas where children have little or no contact with English before formal education.

For cross-border languages, the practical outcome of the increase in positive status of African languages is a new, integrative perspective on languages shared with neighbouring countries, reflected in increased work on this issue. Due to Zambia's artificial boundaries, many Zambian languages are also spoken in neighbouring countries. While this has been known for a long time, it is only in the recent climate of promotion of African languages that this question has been addressed from a linguistic perspective. In particular, as elsewhere in Africa, projects have begun to assess the situation and to propose standardized written versions of languages across the Zambian–Malawian border in the east (papers in Banda 2002), of Lozi across the Namibian–Zambian border in the west (Kashoki et al. 1998), and of Bemba across the border between Zambia and the DRC (Kamwangamalu 1997).

### 16.4.4 *Small Languages*

Looking back at the data on language use in Zambia presented in section 16.2, we can now highlight certain of the developments there against the background of the discussion in this section. Of the five main languages in terms of numbers of speakers, Bemba and Nyanja are being used by a large number of second-language speakers as important languages of wider communication in the east, north, and central parts of the country, with Nyanja showing an increase particularly in urban areas. Use of English has also dramatically increased probably owing to general higher levels of

formal education. Lozi and Tonga remain widely spoken in the south and the west with a slight dip reflecting wider use of the smaller languages in both areas. The three national languages of the North-Western province remain small in terms of numbers of speakers but fare quite well as a language group with 7.7 per cent and 6.8 per cent of first- and second-language speakers, respectively. Although the increase in numbers in the 'other' category reflects an increased use of smaller languages both as first and second-language, the census data do not say very much about the remaining majority of Zambian languages, and more work is needed in this area. Two trends would seem to be likely. On the one hand, increasing use of the national languages could lead to language shift and language loss of smaller languages – Swahili in Tanzania provides a parallel for this. On the other hand, the new emphasis and more positive attitudes towards Zambian languages may lead to the improvement of the situation of the smaller languages. The latter seems to be indicated in some cases. One example of this is provided by Nkoya (van Binsbergen 1994). Nkoya speakers live in the eastern part of the Western province and have historically been dominated by the Lozi. Although Nkoya music forms part of Lozi culture, the group's linguistic and cultural identity is seen as threatened by Lozi domination. However, since the 1990s, Nkoya-speakers have profited from the new political climate, in which government officials publicly acknowledge Nkoya, and plans to use Nkoya in some form of education are more realistic than before. Thus, while official emphasis is being placed on the national languages, and demographic trends indicate relative growth of Bemba and Nyanja, Zambia's new multilingual tradition can work to promote the linguistic identity of smaller languages and linguistic complexity more widely.

## 16.5 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the language situation in Zambia with particular attention to questions of language and national identity. After providing an outline of the languages spoken in Zambia and their use, we contextualized the present-day situation historically. Our aim in this was to show generally that Zambian history does not begin with European contact, and more specifically, that patterns of language contact and multilingual practices were most likely established in Zambia long before the 1800s. Indeed we proposed that contemporary multilingualism in Zambia has its historical roots in pre-colonial times, and that during the period of British rule an existing system was simply extended and modified. Another important reason for introducing a historical context was to show how modern Zambian national identity was primarily politically and economically informed, and that language was not an important factor for national identity at independence. In the wake of nationalism and out of fear of centrifugal tendencies, English was made the national language of the new republic, on the assumption that a national language was needed to build national identity. It was only during the 1990s that this perception changed, and more emphasis was placed

on the importance of African languages for the construction of Zambia's identity. The main argument we have presented in this chapter is that the particular patterns of multilingualism in Zambia, involving all languages to varying degrees, with specific status for the national languages as major regional languages, and Bemba, English, and Nyanja as languages of trans-regional communication, are jointly constitutive of Zambian contemporary national identity, which is, furthermore, built on a long historical tradition.