

*Journal of Development and Communication Studies*

Vol. 2, Nos. 1/2, January-December, 2013. ISSN (Online): 2305-7432. <http://www.devcomsjournalmw.org>.

© *Journal of Development and Communication Studies*, 2013.

## **Discussion paper**

# **Role of Malawian languages in attainment of socio-economic development and MGDS<sup>4</sup>**

Pearson Nkhoma

PhD Researcher in Applied Social Sciences, Durham University, UK. Email: [pnkboma@gmail.com](mailto:pnkboma@gmail.com)



Wongani Mugaba

Rural and Participatory Development Specialist, Actionaid International (Malawi.) Email: [wongjewom@yaboo.com](mailto:wongjewom@yaboo.com)

### **Abstract**

*This paper argues that language can either hinder or accelerate development process of a poor country like Malawi, which ranks among the 10 most impoverished countries worldwide despite implementing many development programmes and policies since gaining political autonomy in 1964. The persisting under-development is often blamed on many factors such as deteriorating and unfair trade, corruption and poor economic governance. However, recent studies indicate that lack of people's participation in development projects that affect them and communication-related inadequacies could be the root cause of underdevelopment and persisting poverty in Malawi. While demonstrating that no meaningful participation at any development stage can be achieved if the language used by development experts is alien to the project beneficiaries, this paper argues that language has been a major barrier to Malawi's development. The use of foreign languages, such as English, stalls proper implementation of development projects because, despite possessing vast indigenous ideas, knowledge, experience and values different from those of development experts, the majority of ordinary people are not literate in these languages and, therefore, cannot and don't make meaningful negotiations and contributions pertaining to the nature of development they need. Use of English as a mode of communication in Malawi's parliament is an example of how a foreign language can limit the participation of the MPs in national development and law-making debates. Ironically, most development workers in Malawi also lack core local language skills to understand and involve the people development processes and projects.*

**Key Words:** Local languages, development, participation, Theatre for Development, MGDS, MDGs

<sup>4</sup> The original version of this paper was presented to the 7<sup>th</sup> National Language Symposium, Sun 'N' Sand Holiday Resort, Mangochi, Malawi, 12-16 November, 2007.

## Introduction

Malawi remains impoverished despite implementing many development programmes since gaining political autonomy in 1964. The persisting underdevelopment is accredited to several factors, which include deteriorating and unfair trade, corruption, poor governance systems and economic mismanagement among others. However, publications indicate that lack of ordinary people's participation in development activities is the main cause that make development projects unable to be effective (Chambers, 2005; Anyaegbunam *et al.*, 2004). Through this paper, we argue that participation of local people in both formulation and implementation phases of development projects and inadequacies in communication can be achieved if the language used is familiar to all stakeholders particularly the ordinary stakeholders.

With this understanding, this paper therefore seeks to assess the role that local languages can play in addressing the poverty situation and in promotion of socio-economic outlook in the country by promoting participation of the ordinary populace. Particularly, the paper will highlight how usage of local languages is crucial to the success of the current overarching development strategies like the Malawi Growth and Development Strategies (MGDSII) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As a case study, we will provide a brief synopsis on how Theatre for Development (TfD) has been a success story through the usage of vernacular languages in addressing development and social issues.

The paper is based on three main fundamental premises. Firstly, participation of the local masses in development programmes that affect them, their communities and country at large is the significant get-way in accelerating development. Secondly, language currently used in development strategies, which is English, hampers mass participation because most people do not understand or get the meanings and goals development interventions aim to achieve. Lastly, formulation of the strategies into local languages would accelerate mass participation since they will understand the strategies thoroughly. In return, this will accelerate the national development. In this regard, this paper aims to display the role that local languages play in development with Malawian examples.

The paper has been divided into four main sections. The first section provides a theoretical overview of the concepts of development and communication for development. In the second section, we will present a brief outlook of Malawi's economic status and development policies in usage thereby fore-grounding the thesis of the paper. Thereafter, the third section links underdevelopment of the country with the language factor. The third section then conceptualizes the role of local languages in sustainable development of Malawi and drawing from participatory research methodologies in communication for development which promotes participation of all development change agents en-route to sustainable development. Lastly, the paper provides concluding recommendations from the discussions on the significant impact that indigenous languages possess in socio-economic development.

## Human Development and Communication for Development: A definition

### Human Development

It is important that we understand the meanings (or lack thereof) of human development in order to have a foundational basis for the role that local language can in development initiatives. In the first place, it is necessary to state that the concept of development is highly contested with scholars not agreeing to one definition. Tambulasi and Kayuni (2007:2, 3-4) assert that this is so because "development is multidimensional [and hence] a topic of massive disagreements" among scholars.

However, most of these scholars agree that development can be understood as the process of enlarging the capabilities, choices, and opportunities of people, especially rural populations and the poor,

to enable them to lead a long, healthy and fulfilling life (Sen, 2005). As a working definition, this paper adopts this notion since development process includes the expansion of people's choices, capacity and skills for gaining access to and control over the factors that affect the basic needs essential to their lives (See Townsend, 2010; Sumner, 2007; Sen, 2001; 1985; Chambers, 1997; Freire, 1972) among other commentators who offer interesting, detailed debates on poverty and development). Among the basic needs include: poverty reduction, food security, availability of safe drinking water, improved sanitation, access to primary health care, and basic education as well as opportunity to participate effectively in the social, economic and political affairs of their societies and nations (See also Anyaegbunam, 2004).

### **Communication for Development**

The contemporary epicenter of development is empowering people to meaningfully participate in development plans by enabling them to come up with solutions to development challenges they face in their communities. This results from the realization that many projects implemented in the past which ignored the ordinary peoples participation failed (Burkey, 1993). The problem, however, is that the rural population, who are supposed to be active actors in their own development, are often not easy to reach and are generally *illiterate* (Anyaegbunam *et al.*, 2004). Yet the language used in most forums of development and the mainstream development strategies are versed in English.

Communication for development refers to the spectrum of communication process, strategies and principles within the field of development which are participatory in nature. It involves organized efforts to use communication processes to bring social and economic improvement in development (World Bank, 2007). It includes notions of sharing ideas, interaction among all stakeholders in development. Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004: 6-8) critically define communication for development as

“the systematic design and use of participatory activities, communication approaches, methods and media to share information and knowledge among all stakeholders in rural development process in order to ensure mutual understanding and consensus leading to action”.

Thus, the aim of communication for development is to find strategies for mobilizing people and consequently resources needed for development. It facilitates people's participation at all levels of development efforts from problem identification to solution implementation and evaluation (Kamlongera, 2005; 1987; Chambers, 1997; Burkey, 1993). Through communication for development, development beneficiaries are protagonists of the projects as they come up with solutions that aim at improving the conditions and quality of life of people struggling with underdevelopment and marginalization in a sustainable way (Sen, 2001; Chambers, 1997; Freire, 1972). Communication for development is a liberatory sort of education that stresses dialogue with communities about their actual needs rather than one-way, top down approach (Freire, 1972). The framework thus addresses poverty alleviation through a holistic approach in the context of participation, equal gender opportunities and the sound management of the environment and natural resources in order to improve people's livelihood.

The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) outlines some key propositions which are relevant to the communication for development raised above. It asserts that development activities and proponents need to recognize that the individual is at the centre of development (Kayambazinthu, 2003). It is through involving the local people that causes of particular development challenges can be known. This is why it is further argued that lack of participation by local beneficiaries in development programmes that affect them crosscuts all the other factors that have been stimulated as the reasons why development projects have not yielded sustainable results.

People's participation in development activities that affect them and their community is therefore a very significant element to achieve sustainable development (Anyaegbunam *et al.*, 2004; Chambers, 2007; Burkey, 1993). Since it is the people who are in poverty, it follows that to understand the causes to their

particular development problem, they must be consulted. Development projects need to involve the target beneficiaries from problem identification to implementation of programs. This will make it possible to identify the causes of their inefficiencies (Burkey, 1993; Anyaegbunam *et al.*, 2004). This is one reason why some development proponents have criticized the IMF and the World Bank for implementing projects (like SAPs) that do not empower the target countries' peoples to air out their views on how development challenges in those individual countries can best be achieved (See Chilowa, 1991, 1994).

However, there is a common problem that needs to be tackled if communication for development is to effectively involve the local people in development activities. The rural population, who are supposed to be active actors in their own development, are often not easy to reach and are generally illiterate (Anyaegbunam *et al.*, 2004) yet the language used in most forums of development and the mainstream development strategies are versed in English. But before we look at the problem in greater detail, let us have a brief overview of Malawi's economic status.

### **Malawi Economic status: brief history**

After decades of independence, with massive development put in place, Malawi still lags far much behind in as far as development is concerned. The country is categorized as one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world (United Nations Human Development, 2013). On either development indicators and measures used and applied, the country remains desperately poor. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US\$ 166 and Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.387 in 2001, ranked the country at 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> from bottom of the development indexes. The average income as of 2004 was only at US\$ 160 per year with purchasing power parity of over US\$ 7 billion. The country's Third Integrated Household Survey (IHS3) estimates that over half of Malawi's population lives in dire poverty (Malawi Government. National Statistics Office, 2012). If we take a poverty line of US\$150 per annum, which represents less than US\$0.50 (50 cents) per day, about 80 percent of total Malawians would be rightly classified as chronically poor.

Just like most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Malawi is one of the countries "where per capita income...has declined over extended period of time" (Ahmed and Cleeve, 2004:14). Development in general has stagnated or moving in reverse and poverty in the country is by far increasing, wide spread and deepening (United Nations Human Development, 2013; Malawi Government. National Statistics Office, 2012).

### **Why Development Strategies don't work**

Desirous to remove the country from its poverty trap and address socio-economic problems, the country has formulated and continues to formulate and implement development strategies since time immemorial. Some of the notable strategies include Statements of Development Policies (1&2), Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), Vision 2020, MASAF, Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) and the just launched Malawi Growth and Development Strategies (MGDS). On the same line, since 2000 the country started to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All these strategies, in brief, have had as their overall objective the leading of the country into attaining sustainable growth and social development through multifaceted activities proposed by individual strategies.

However, despite these interventions carried so far, the country, as already asserted, still lags far much behind to the point that socio-economic underdevelopment is not only wide-spread but also increasing and deepening. This has tempted other scholars like Burkey to pose a question on why this is so despite several interventions to remove the countries from underdevelopment. Burkey (1993) critically asks:

“We have now seen over three decades of so-called development programmes and thousands of development projects designed and implemented [in the Third World]...yet everyone who has any familiarity with the Third World knows that poverty is well and thriving, that the numbers of poor are not only increasing but their poverty is deepening. What is wrong?” (Burkey, 1993: xvi).

With the case of Malawi, it is indispensable that the country is in great economic crisis in as far as economic development is concerned partly because of inadequacies in participation and inefficiencies in communication. From above, Malawi is poor because, among other things, factors that lead to underdevelopment are mostly not addressed by the so called development strategies and plans. They unknowingly focus on symptoms than causes. Only when the causes of poverty are known, can strategies address them. Up to this far, development strategies have failed the country.

### **Significance of Participation in development**

The question that needs to be asked would therefore be: how can the causes of socio-economic development be known? On this, Burkey (1993) discloses that participation by the target people of development can assist in identifying the causes of particular development challenges. The concept's significance dates back to Freirean writings on combating economic oppression. According to Freire (1972:1,2&11), strategic moves to combat any form of oppression such as underdevelopment and deepening poverty in third world previously failed because the oppressed were not central and did not lead the fight on their own. Freire stresses that if there is improper participation, the oppressed are led “to a pit fall” (Freire, 1972:11). Strikingly, Freire unambiguously stresses that participation requires dialogue, which apparently demands effective communication and language which people can fully understand.

Apart from offering a conducive environment for constructive resolutions, Freire underscores that participation implants conscientization and morale among the economically oppressed to engage in various liberation efforts on their own (Freire, 1972:11). Burkey, writing later, accepts that participation is very critical in development. However, Burkey dwells much on conscientization, which he expounds as the gaining of confidence in the poor themselves and realizations of their ability to fight and combat poverty on their own (1993:53) as the critical benefit of participation. The generation of conscientization and derailment of dependency syndromes in Malawi are well known problems which stem from colonial legacies

It is thus not surprising to see scholars like Chambers (1997) and Anyaegbunam *et al.* (2004) and Freire (1972) among others disclosing that one of the major factors that has slowed human development is the lack of participation by the target development beneficiaries in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that affect their lives. Development plans that are not a result from participation of the beneficiaries tend, to address symptoms and not causes.

### **Language and Development**

People's participation can be hampered in a number of ways. However, this paper only focuses on the language which we believe is very important aspect in bringing effective communication which can then lead to participation of people. Participation can only be effective if there is effective communication. In turn, effective communication results into effective participation and hence, effective solutions to development. On the other hand, effective communication is only possible if the language used is understandable by all parties in development.

### **Role of Local Language in Promoting Development**

The implementation of overarching development policies has been a major hurdle in Malawi. Over 40 years of independence, with numerous development initiatives carried in the country, Malawians still lag in poverty. A common fact with these strategies is that they have been formulated in English. This limits their understanding and accessibility to technocrats as a majority of the educated, who have achieved Primary School Leaving Certificate, as per World Bank definition, finds it difficult to capture and meaningfully digest them. This population does not make Malawi's illiterate population pegged at about one third (United Nations Human Development, 2013).

Currently, with the realization of how people's participation in development is essential in achieving the intended objectives of sustainable development, development proponents in the country are now advocating for strategies that can empower Malawians to actively participate in development activities of their particular communities. However, no effective participation can be achieved if there is no effective communication between the development technicians and target beneficiaries. In other words, if there is communication hindrance between development experts and intended beneficiaries, local people will not be empowered to ably know the benefits of development activities that would result into attaining the objectives of overarching strategies like the MGDS. Language used between these stakeholders matters most as it aids communication amongst them. With this background, let's now look at the role that language plays in aiding participation, which in turn will result into development projects addressing the realistic problems not symptoms as it has been the case.

Participation, admittedly can take place using any form of language. However, meaningful participation for effective communication demands the usage of a language which is accessible to the majority. Since most Malawians are illiterate, it is therefore a necessity to address them in the language they understand better. Quite surprisingly, as revealed by Mtenje (2002), English usage is not well versed even among the educated elite pushing the national literacy rates in official documents (United Nations Human Development, 2013). The SADC Communication For Development Handbook (Anyaeibunam *et al.*, 2004) critically accords that meaningful participation only occurs where people understand each other through language usage. Some local scholars have also put an emphasis on the argument that foreign languages derail participation and effective communication by local development beneficiaries.

Communication for development strategies have recognized the importance of involving community members as partners at the inception of the project and not as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge (Melkote, 1991). They have also emphasized the need for dialogue before any attempts to 'solve' villagers' problems. According to Kamlongera (2005), dialogue, which is the essence in any development work demands that people communicate in languages understood by both parties. Folk media, which should be understood within their context, have quickly been recognized as one way of ensuring such a dialogue. Kamlongera (2005) further stresses that such an understanding should start with the language of the people in its broadest sense, followed by that of the social-cultural matrix within which the media operate.

This must be done to ensure that efforts aimed at improving the lives of people in developing countries are sustainable. It is important to note that dialogue is only made possible by language. For example, it is not possible to hold meaningful discussions about community development initiatives in a language that is not understood by the facilitator or other discussants, because the results are likely to be biased or otherwise problematic. Fordham *et al.*, (1995) have argued that there are few societies where literacy does not bring more power (both personal and social), more ability to take part fully in society, and more opportunities for personal and social development of all kinds. There is some evidence to show that there are times when people are unable to contribute to development conversation because the languages are carried in a second language which they do not understand. The section below gives practical examples with the cases of parliamentary discussions and Theatre for Development (TfD). The parliamentary deliberations provides a case study in which the language used in development deliberations hinders development while TfD provides one in which language promotes development.

## Case Studies

### Deliberations by Members of Parliament

The situation about the use of foreign languages in parliament provides a very good example in which people are unable to participate in development because of the language of instruction. Research has shown that some parliamentarians are unable to contribute to debates because they are carried in English, a language which they are not conformable with.

Matiki (2001 cited in Mtenje, 2003:14) in his observation of parliamentary proceedings analytically show that participation in debates is often limited to those who are very proficient and fluent in the English language (See also Mugaba, 2007). Communication in the English language is thus problematic even in cases where the speech is read from a 'prepared-speech'. This follows that most Members of Parliaments (MPs) who lack competencies in the language refrain from contributing to debates.

Exclusive use of English language in debates means that the majority of the population is left out from contributing to decisions made. The members who do not have a full mastery of the language used are obliged to discuss bills in a language they feel comfortable to do so. This deprives their democratic right to express their views in the house. Furthermore, this also affects the outcomes of such decisions. It might be true that their ideas could change the whole outcome for the benefit of the country but such is not the case. This also affects the representation of the people in particular areas. People in constituency areas of such MPS are also not represented. And where such MPs are able to participate in such debates, the people are left out because they do not understand what their MPs are articulating in the House.

Undoubtedly, such MPs would feel freely and more comfortable to use their mother tongue when discussing businesses. For example, if Chichewa and other widely used languages were allowed in parliament, MPs would be more active during business debates and be able to say more sensible things than is the case at the moment (see Matiki, 2001 cited in Mtenje, 2003). Lifting restrictions on the use of English would thus broaden the democratic base on that more Malawians will participate in decision making. Given the obvious importance of the decision made in parliament like national budgets, language of instructions in development is very crucial.

As Mtenje (2003) rightly puts it, no country in the world has achieved sustainable development while using a foreign language. Major economic powers of the world-the US, Britain, China, Germany, Japan and Taiwan show that none of them uses a foreign language as its official language. Even well to do countries in Africa like Egypt, South Africa and Tanzania give witness to this.

It should therefore be appreciated that development in general cannot be realized to its fullest if Malawi designs its development plans and agendas without taking into account consideration the use of our indigenous languages, the languages of the masses, the majority of whom face English for the first time. For it is only through proper communication with such masses that development messages can be meaningfully appreciated. Since more than 57% of the literate group is somehow *illiterate*, it means that development strategies in foreign languages like the MGDS alienate more than half the population that represents the agents of development.

Development decisions affecting the communities are made by a handful of learned individuals yet we claim to be democratic where the decisions are made by the majority population. It is further interesting to note that the titles/names of development strategies in Malawi are in English as if they were produced only for the donor communities and/or technocrats. As a result, most Malawians do not know what the strategies are. Furthermore, the strategies are written in English. This entails that most people can not streamline their day to day projects in line with the goals. It is thus not surprising to see the country having difficulties in achieving some MDGs to do with people in communities (See MDGsII; Ahmed and Cleeve, 2004). No wonder, other previous development policies like PAP and Malawi Poverty

Reduction Strategy Paper performed unsatisfactorily. The people could not access the strategies and no capture meaningful understanding of the language employed by these strategies. The MGDS if not accessed by public, through its sole availability in English will trot the same line and fail to fully achieve its aims.

It is also fascinating to note that in developed countries, important national events are not conducted in a foreign language. However, in Malawi during anniversaries and other events of national interest like parliamentary sessions are conducted in English, which is given prominence while Chichewa, the [national] language comes second. Other local languages are further relegated to more junior treatment during such events.

### **Theatre For Development (TfD)**

Malawi, like most developing countries, is very much concerned with rural development. This is a very tough task indeed and for it to be successful, several points have to be taken into consideration. First and foremost there has to be a good communication system between the concerned parties. The development has to ensure that his/her ideas and intentions are carefully explained and that they are fully understood to be accepted or not. Lack of communication in any development activity can lead to unfortunate result like active opposition. Communication is the process by which human beings share information, ideas, explore ideas and motivation.

There are wide ranges of techniques used in Malawi to deliver messages on rural development. Theatre for development (TfD) is one of the tools used established to be effective in facilitating dialogue and communication for development. Scholarly work also suggests that TfD speaks to the majority because it uses the idiom and language of the non-elite's (Kamlongera, 2005). TfD is nothing other than a method of non-formal development education meant to develop the consciousness of the rural population. It presents a praxis of development problems and mobilizes people to seek action in order to generate people into action (Kamlongera, 2005; Freire, 1972). TfD mediates development messages and involve the masses in development of their communities through use of theatre which uses local languages as a mode of instruction (and communication).

TfD in Malawi can be emphasized as one method which brings about what Freire calls critical and creative participation of the masses in their development. There are so many cases that TfD has resulted into positive developments. Historical evidence illustrates that Chancellor College Traveling Theatre in the 1980s visited places like Mbalachanda in Nkhatabay, Mwina in Mangochi among other areas with an intention to share knowledge through dialogical and participative discussions as with community members to tackle health, agriculture and domestic violence topics. At the end, problems of underdevelopment which were being left to flourish by the extension workers whose language of instruction was at times English were being addressed by community members. In these areas, TfD registered positive results. People actively participated in discussions that were improvised by the artists on sketches because the language which was used made them understand the development problems and solutions that needed to be put in place. The language used promoted the participation of all age-groups and all stakeholders in those development activities. Resolutions to development problems were reached on the same places of performances (see Hara, 1988; Kamlongera, 1985;1987).

### **Challenges of Participation**

However, involvement of people in development is not without challenges. Cooke *et al.* (2001) have argued that participation, as an ambiguous concept, can be manipulated by practitioners with promises of empowerment and transformation. Likewise, other proponents of participatory approaches (Kondon, Pain and Kesby, 2007) are of the view that practitioners may deliberately under-theorise power differences which may reinforces the power and other structural inequalities with the possibility of marginalization resulting from the participatory processes while striving for consensus and collective action. Thus, it is the



duty of development practitioners to make sure that community members fully understand the purpose of any development projects affecting their lives (Bessette, 2004). But above all, it is the duty of practitioners to ensure that people are protagonists of their own development initiatives. And we are of the view that this can be realized if people and experts speak a common language-the language of the people. Experts, without the involvement of local people, might come up with solutions to problems. However, those interventions, as already stated, only address symptoms and not causes. The problems are left unsolved. A lot more resources are put to solve the same problem even if it comes in similar symptoms. As a result, development plans, without involving the participation of the target beneficiaries, are in fact more expensive and time consuming (Bessette, 2004; Chambers, 1997).

### **Recommendations**

From the discussion raised here, Malawi's development is seen as being derailed because people do not fully appreciate development programmes implemented. The rationale behind this remains the fact that the use of English in all development plans which ironically most people even the educated elite find hard to fully express themselves or grasp the significant issues at hand, bars the participation of development change agents in development activities. There are insurmountable indications from our essay that many projects have not been successful due to inadequacies in communication and participation hatched by use of an alien language.

Mtenje (2003) adds that usage of vernacular languages are greatly limited and considered backward in Malawi which affects effective participation and communication. However, this validity of this argument is further questioned (see Mtenje, 2002, 2003). The role of local languages in social economic development should not be understated. Local languages, if critically used, can prove crucial to Malawi's development efforts including the MGDSII. When the development policies are designed, the belief is that all development stakeholders, including the ordinary public members will streamline and harmonize their policies in line with them. Development needs to involve everyone in the communities.

It commonly agreed that in any socio-economic development endeavor, the sustainability of projects can be achieved if all stakeholders, and in particular the benefiting ordinary members understand how the projects will be implemented. Using English in projects prevents local people from streamlining their day to day activities with overarching development plans. Additionally, planning interventions in the language which is unfamiliar to the majority of Malawians means that the majority are unable to capture the aims of such plans. As a result they shun away from participating.

It, therefore, follows that if the MGDS (and other yet to be formulated plans) is not translated into the indigenous languages, it is also on the verge of falling into an unsuccessful abyss. The concrete action that government can take to ensure that people take full ownership of homegrown development strategies and taking full ownership of its economy and destiny is to make sure they are understood by the beneficiaries - Malawians. One critical issue, therefore, is the need to examine and re-conceptualize the nature of development to ensure greater participation of local people in decision-making and to locate the issue of language rights within the context of development. This demands translation of the policies into the indigenous languages which most Malawians feel conformable to discuss ideas. Educated elites, as Mtenje (2002) calls them, argue that it is impossible to devise scientific concepts in local languages. However, it is possible to devise terminologies of specialized concepts in local languages. Bamgbose (1987), Akambadi (2001), Kishindo (1987), and Kishindo & Kazima (2000) among others have critically and thoroughly indicated how terminologies of high specialized disciplines like health, mathematics, agriculture can be devised in local languages. Kaphesi (2001) empirically demonstrates that contrary to fears engulfing the education scholarship in Malawi, mathematics and science can be taught in Chiyao and other local languages. However, some might even argue that some documents of other development strategies have been translated into some local languages, yet nothing seem to be achieved. This is because

the planning of such documents was solely left to experts and local languages were pushed to an inferior position.

We, therefore, recommend that from the initial stage, local Malawians must be involved in the planning of such interventions, while using the language they understand better. Thereafter, the strategies need to be prepared in local languages. Translation for English languages should come second. This is to say, English versions of such documents should sorely come second and only for donors and those who claim to be educated enough-the educated elites, to read it local languages. Several scholars like Kishindo (2000) and Mtenje (2003) have shown that one of the major reasons for persisting underdevelopment on the African continent and the failure of development programmes to eradicate poverty is the Africans' over dependence on foreign languages. But since damage has already been done on the MGDS, it is high time that it is translated into most local languages of Malawians. Unless the concepts and terminology of development are rooted in the indigenous language of the people, the much-expected fruits of development will remain alien, unnaturalized by the people whom they are meant to assist (Kishindo, 2000:15; Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005). The use of English leaves the majority out, yet we claim to be a democratic nation.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper has given what others may call subjective opinions revolving on the usage of Malawian languages as the premise of development. The crux of the matter is that the continued usage of English as a mode of instructions condemns the overwhelming majority of the populace of Malawi on serious development issues of national interest. This rules out potentially competent development agents to discuss matters that affect their communities.

The essay has shown that the best way to communicate to people or indeed understand them is through a language which is closest to their culture, a familiar language, which in other words is usually their mother tongue or lingua franca. It is the local people who are the main agents of development and if development messages and strategies by the government come in a language which they cannot understand, the very much people who are needed for development will be left out. Usage of local languages will remove the barrier to participation. Effective communication is a critical step to rooting out abject poverty and accomplishment of sustainable development as expressed in the MGDS and the UN MDGs. We can not talk about development without talking about the participation of the local masses. But we must concede here that much more needs to be done. For example, there is need for up to date empirical evidence to either support or challenge our claims.

### References

- Ahmed, A. & E. Cleve (2004). Tracking the Millennium Development Goals in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Social Economics*. Vol., 31 (1/2), 12-29.
- Akambadi, D. (2001). The Internal Resources Principle: A Priority for Developing Properly Harmonized Terminologies of Cross-border Mother Tongues. In Ptaffe, J. F. (ed). *Proceedings of the Third National Symposium on Language Policy Implementation*, Lilongwe and Zomba: GTZ and Centre for Language Studies.
- Ansu-Kyeremeh, K. (2005). *Indigenous communication in Africa: Concept, Application and Prospects*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Anyaegbunam C. et al. (2004). *Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal Handbook*, SADC Centre of Communication for Development, Harare: Zimbabwe.

- Bamgbose, A. (1987).  
*A Guide to Terminology for African Language Education*, Dakar: UNESCO.
- Bessette, G. (2004).  
*Involving the Community: A Guide To Participatory Development*, Ottawa: IDRC.
- Burkey, S. (1993).  
*People First: A Guide to Self Reliant Participatory Rural Development*, New York: Zed Books.
- Chambers, R. (1997).  
*Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last*, London: ITDG.
- Chambers, R. (2005).  
*Ideas for Development*. London. Earthscan.
- Chilowa, W. (1994).  
SAPs in Malawi: Perspective on Private and Public Sectors. Paper Presented at the *World Seminar on Adjustment in Africa*. May 23-24. Harare. Zimbabwe.
- Chilowa, W. (1991).  
SAPs and Poverty: The Case of Malawi. A Working Paper D1990:3 for DERAP.
- Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (2001).  
*Participation: The New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books.
- Freire P. (1972).  
*Pedagogy of the oppressed*, London: Sheer and Ward Limited.
- Hara, C. (1988).  
*Theatre for Development as a Means of Communication in Rural Development Work in Malawi*. Dissertation Presented to the FPA Dept. Chancellor College, University of Malawi.
- Kamlongera, C. F. (2005).  
Theatre for Development in Africa, Chapter 28. In Hemer, O. and Tufte, T. (eds) *Media and Global [sic] Change: Rethinking Communication for Development*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO. 435-452.
- Kamlongera, C. (1987).  
*Theatre for Development in Africa with Case Studies from Malawi and Zambia*, Zomba: University of Malawi.
- Kamlongera, C. F. (1982).  
Theatre for Development: The Case of Malawi, *Theatre Research International*. 7 (3) 207-222.
- Kaphesis, E. (2001).  
Effects of Home Language on Pupils' Performance in Mathematics: A focus on IEQ/Malawi Project. American Institutes for Research,  
[http://www.ieq.org/pdf/Effects\\_Home\\_Language\\_Mathematics.pdf](http://www.ieq.org/pdf/Effects_Home_Language_Mathematics.pdf)
- Kindon, S., Pain, R. and Kesby(eds). (2007).  
*Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place*. London: Routledge.
- Kishindo, P. & M. Kazima. (2000).  
Use of African Languages in Teaching Mathematics. In Ptaffe, J. F. (ed). *Proceedings of the Second Language Symposium on Language Policy Formulation*. Zomba: Centre for Language Studies.
- Kishindo, P. (2000).  
Language and Development. In *The Lamp*, No.25, Sept-Oct. pp.14-15.
- Kishindo, P. (1987).  
The State of Scientific Terminology in Chichewa. In *International Symposium of Professional Terminology in African Languages: Theory and Practice*. Logos (7) 2, pp. 103-113.
- Lora-Kayambazinthu, E. (2003).

- Language Rights and the Role of Minority Languages in National Development in Malawi. *Current Issues In Language Planning Vol. 4 (2)*, 146-159.
- Malawi Government (2012).  
*Malawi Growth and Development Strategy Paper II*. Lilongwe: Malawi Government.
- Malawi Government. (2012).  
*Integrated Household Survey 2010-2011*. Zomba. National Statistical Office.
- Melkote, S.R. (1991).  
*Communication for Development in Third World. Theory and Practice*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Mtenje, A. (2003).  
Language and the Future of Our Country. *Together*, April-June, pp.14-17.
- Mtenje, A. (2002).  
The Role of Language in National Development: A Case for Local Languages. Inaugural Lecture. Chancellor College, University of Malawi.
- Mugaba, W. (2007).  
No need for Senate. *The Sunday Times*, 9 September 2007.
- Tambulasi, R. & H. Kayuni (2007).  
An analysis of the Sustainability of the Third Phase of Blantyre City Fuel Wood Project in Malawi using the Sustainability Matrix. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology. Vol.14 (3)*, 235-242.
- Sen, A. (2005).  
Human Rights and Capabilities. *Journal of Human Development. Vol.6 (2)* 151-166.
- Sen, A. (2001).  
*Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (1985).  
“A Sociological Approach to the Measurement of Poverty: A Reply to Professor Peter Townsend,” *Oxford Economic Papers, New Series*, Vol. 37 (4), 669-676.
- Sumner, A. (2007).  
Meaning versus measurement: why do ‘economic’ indicators of poverty still predominate? *Development in Practice. Vol.17(1)*, 4-13.
- Townsend, P. (2010).  
The Meaning of Poverty. *The British Journal of Sociology. Vol.61*, 85-102
- United Nations Human Development .(2013).  
*Human Development Report*. New York: United Nations.