

Editor's Note

Welcome to the second edition of CLS News in 2009. As the editorial board promised last time, CLS News is committed to keeping you informed about work taking place at the Centre.

Among the milestones the Centre has achieved over the past three months are translation of **Fearless Fighter**, an autobiography of Vera Chirwa into Chichewa; the completion of the Ciyawo monolingual dictionary funded by the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) and the drawing of a language atlas for the Central and Southern regions of Malawi following the language mapping survey that was conducted between August and September, 2008.

Currently, the Centre is pre-occupied with the Malawi Lexicon (MALEX) Project. The project is on lexicography and it involves gathering vocabulary (lemma), defining the lemma and illustrating the definitions with language examples. These are entered on the web. The project is being funded by NUFU in Norway and is being done in three Malawian languages: Chichewa, Ciyawo and Citumbuka.

The next edition of CLS News will be out in July 2009. Meanwhile, CLS News editorial board would like to wish all readers a happy Easter season.

Mario S. Thodi **Arnold F. Mboga**
Editor **Assistant Editor**

CLS - WHAT IT OFFERS

The Centre for Language Studies was established on instruction from government on 1st April, 1996 to take over some of the responsibilities and facilities of the dissolved Chichewa Board. The Centre's main responsibility is to promote and develop Malawian languages. To do this, the Centre conducts research/consultancy in Malawian languages such as Chichewa, Citumbuka, Ciyao, Cisena, Citonga, Cilomwe etc. The Centre also recognises the Educational, Social,

Economic and Political importance of non-African languages like English, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish and others. It therefore, carries out research and consultancy in these areas as well.

Among the many services the Centre offers are:

- Translation of materials from one language into another.
- Interpretation of speeches
- Editing of materials in various languages.
- Conducting short courses in both Malawian and non- Malawian languages e.g. Intensive Chichewa courses for foreigners.

Collaborating with foreign research centres.

The Centre has professionally trained experienced and dedicated members of staff. For more information, please write to:

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MALEX PROJECT-WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

The Malawi Lexicon (MALEX) Project's main objective is to apply modern empirical methods from computational linguistics and lexicography to facilitate the creation of language tools designed to fit with

educational system in Malawi.

Language specimens are gathered from two main sources, i.e. from field work and from translation activities that are carried out at the Centre for Language Studies. These are processed into electronic resources in the form of language corpora from which lexical databases can be derived.

The linguistic resources are designed to accommodate scholarly research without losing sight of the practical goal of producing dictionaries and language aids for the multilingual situation in Malawi.

Specifically, the project aims at

- Creating an electronic lexical database for Chichewa, Citumbuka and Ciyawo
- Using electronic database to develop and compile dictionaries and technical terms in Chichewa, Citumbuka and Ciyawo.

The MALEX Project is funded by NUFU in Norway and is being conducted jointly by the University of Malawi, through the Centre for Language Studies and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Professor Pascal Kishindo is the Project coordinator at the University of Malawi, Centre for Language Studies while Professor Lars Hellan is the Project coordinator at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

As of mid April 2009, the status report of the three languages showed that Ciyawo had 5346 lexical entries, 5692 definitions and 1582 examples;

Citumbuka had 4168 entries, 2393 definitions and 711 examples while Chichewa had 9871 entries, 6190 definitions and 447 examples.

The project commenced in 2007 and will run up to 2011.

3rd NUFU PROGRAMME CONFERENCE HELD IN LILONGWE

The Dean of Humanities, Professor Chris Kamlongera and the Director of CLS Professor Pascal Kishindo attended the 3rd NUFU Conference at Sunbird Capital Hotel, Lilongwe, Malawi from 11th to 13th February, 2009. The conference's theme was 'Increasing the impact of higher education institutions in development processes.' Professor Lars Hellan and Dr. Daniel Ridings made oral and poster presentations of the MALEX (Malawi Lexicon) Project at the conference. The project is housed at CLS.

MALEX PROJECT NORTH PARTNERS

Dr. Daniel Ridings of Gothenburg University and Professor Lars Hellan of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), our North partners on the MALEX Project visited CLS before and after the NUFU conference in Lilongwe. Dr. Ridings gave a pep talk to the staff working on the project.

MALEX PROJECT ASSESSED

The local NUFU Projects Assessment team led by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Leonard Kamwanja visited

CLS on 16th March 2009 to assess the activities of the MALEX Project during the 2008 period. During their visit, CLS Director Professor Pascal Kishindo briefed the team on the progress of the project. This was followed by a demonstration on how lemmas are entered and defined on the web. The demonstration was conducted by Mr. Francis Botha Njaya of Citumbuka language section with the assistance of Mr. Ahmmardouh Mjaya of Ciyawo language section.

MOZAMBICAN DELEGATION VISIT

A Mozambican delegation of curriculum developers from the Ministry of Education there visited CLS ON 10th March 2009. The delegation comprised Rafael Chambele, Celeste Matavele, Vicente Bisgue and Carlos Chaguala. Their visit was aimed at learning more about the Centre's activities, particularly the development and implementation of the mother tongue policy.

HARMONIZATION OF ORTHOGRAPHIES

On 19th February, 2009 CLS in conjunction with the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) held a one day orientation workshop on the harmonized orthographies for cross-border languages at Chancellor College. Participants to the workshop included linguists, language experts, curriculum developers, teachers, teacher educators and representatives of Malawi Writers Union. The workshop covered three main areas, namely the historical

perspective of orthographic principles in general, a detailed presentation of the unified orthographies and how the orthographies would benefit adult literacy programmes in Malawi. At the end participants were called upon to write monographs and submit them to CASAS through CLS for publication. Three participants per language were identified to write primary school textbooks. The languages involved are Chichewa, Cilomwe, Ciyawo, Cisena and Citumbuka.

VISITOR FROM MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (MSU)

Professor Peter Limb, the African Bibliographer at Michigan State University (MSU) visited CLS on 2nd March, 2009. He discussed with CLS's Director Professor Pascal Kishindo on the possibility of linking up with MSU's Africa Oral Narratives Project.

CIYAWO LANGUAGE SPECIALIST VISITS CASAS

At the CASAS workshop that was held at Chancellor College on 29th January 2009, participants expressed their displeasure at the tendency of encouraging people to write materials that are in the end shelved in offices. The general feeling among the participants was that the monographs that CASAS publishes carry valuable information that can empower communities. Hence there is need to make the monographs available to the people through

programmes such as adult literacy. In view of this, participants identified Mr. Ahmmardouh Mjaya, and entrusted him with the responsibility of coordinating the CASAS adult literacy initiative. Mr. Mjaya, who is Ciyawo language specialist at CLS, is also an adult literacy expert. A trip to CASAS was therefore arranged for Mr. Mjaya to go to Cape Town to discuss the modalities of the initiative with CASAS management. The visit took place between 11th and 14th February 2009. The CASAS adult literacy initiative has three main objectives:

- to provide adult learners with an opportunity to read other materials apart from their primers,
- to encourage adult learners develop a reading culture,
- to help adult learners gain knowledge and help them sustain their literacy.

The initiative is underway in three centres in Domasi zone in Zomba district. It commenced on 6th April 2009 and is expected to run up 31st July.

CIYAWO MONOLINGUAL DICTIONARY IN PRESS

CLS has now completed the compilation of the Ciyawo monolingual concise dictionary. The dictionary, which has more than five thousand words, was completed on 31st January 2009 and has now been handed over to the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) who are funding it, for publication. It is envisaged that once published, this dictionary shall be useful to learners of Ciyawo.

LANGUAGE ATLAS FOR

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN MALAWI

Following the Language mapping survey that was conducted by CLS in Central and Southern Malawi between August and September 2008, language atlases have now been drawn. This means that every district in the two regions has its own language map and from these, language maps for the two regions have also been drawn. The survey revealed that languages spoken in the Central region of Malawi are:

- Chichewa
- Ciyawo
- Citumbuka
- Cinsenga
- Citonga

For the Southern region, the survey revealed that the following are the languages spoken:

- Chichewa
- Ciyawo
- Cilomwe
- Cisena
- Citumbuka

A report of this survey together with the maps will be released in due course. A similar survey was also conducted by CLS in Northern Malawi in 2006. From these surveys, a national language atlas for Malawi will now be drawn. The surveys were funded by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA).