TOWARDS THE STANDARDIZATION OF CHIYAO ORTHOGRAPHY

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO GTZ/MIITEP

Centre for Language Studies
University of Malawi
Zomba

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Centre for Language Studies would like to acknowledge the generous financial assistance it received from GTZ/MITEP/to enable it carry out this important Research Project. GTZ/MIITEP has over the past couple of years shown a considerable amount of enthusiasm towards the development and successful implementation of sound language policy in primary education in Malawi focusing primarily on the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction project.

We would like to thank them profoundly for this level of commitment particularly, Dr Wilfred Goertler and Dr Joachim Pfaffe for their personal interest and involvement in the mother tongue instruction project.

Professor AI D. Mtenje

Director, Centre for Language Studies
TOWARDS THE STANDARDIZATION OF CHIYAO ORTHOGRAPHY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the survey, the results of which are reported here, was to establish the most commonly used forms of certain Chiyao words. This was made necessary by the fact that extant materials in Chiyao, most of which date back to the missionary era, reveal numerous inconsistencies in spelling either by the same author or different authors. The determination of the commonly used forms will assist in establishing a standard orthography for Chiyao. The survey took place in Mangochi district between the 16th and 29th April, 2000. Mangochi was chosen because, by popular account, it is where the “best” Chiyao is spoken. (Refer to Kishindo et al, 1997)

2.0 GENERAL OBJECTIVE
The main objective of the study was to standardize the current orthography which is bedeviled by inconsistencies. Problem areas will be identified and proposed solutions will be given on the basis of rational linguistic principles. However, a field study was required to determine forms which are in current usage.

2.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Specifically the objectives of the survey were:

(i) to determine the form of the negative marker whether it is nga, nge, ngi or ngu.
(ii) to determine which phoneme should be adopted between l and d in certain Chiyao words.
(iii) to determine which phoneme should be adopted between b and w/ŵ in certain Chiyao words.
(iv) to determine the most commonly used form for the Chiyao conjunction ‘and’ whether it is na, ne, ni or no.
(v) to determine the most commonly used form for the present habitual tense whether its kasa, kusa, kisa or kasaa.
(vi) to make relevant recommendation to the ministry of Education (MOE) and GTZ/MIIPEP about the way forward.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Chiyao is a Bantu language spoken in Central and Southern parts of Malawi, specifically in Machinga, Mangochi, Zomba, Chiradzulu, Blantyre, Nkhotakota and Salima (Kishindo et al 1997). It is the third largest language after Chichewa and Chilomwe. As of now, there are no accurate statistics about speakers of Chiyao given that the last head count was done during the 1966 population census.

Writing in Chiyao began in the nineteenth century with the arrival of Christian missionaries, who realizing that the success in their task of evangelization would depend
much on the use of indigenous languages, began reducing the local languages to writing. One of the language’s so reduced was Chiyao. Schools were established so that the new converts could be taught to read and write and then preach to others. But since the primary aim for writing of Chiyao was evangelization. As a result extant materials show inconsistencies in the spelling of Chiyao words. Studies done by Mtenje (1995) and Kishindo (1999) highlight some of these inconsistencies and suggest solutions.

The Malawi government’s plan to introduce mother tongue education in junior primary schools makes the harmonization of the Chiyao orthography a priority. The implantation of the policy has several implications, one of which will be for the teaching and learning materials in Chiyao such as primers, grammars, teachers guides etc. To avoid the pitfalls of the current orthography and facilitate teaching and learning in Chiyao, there is an urgent need to formulate a standard orthography.

4.0 METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

A number of Traditional Authorities (TAs) were visited in Mangochi. These TAs were Mponda, Jalasi, Chimwala, Katuli and Makanjira. Data was collected using a questionnaire. 404 fluent Chiyao speakers randomly chosen were interviewed. The data was analyzed using the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The research team comprised five persons: three principal researchers and two research assistants. The five researchers worked hand in hand collecting the data. However, the principal researchers had additional tasks of supervising data entry and analysis as well as report writing.

5.0 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE SURVEY

In the planning stage it was envisaged that 1,000 subject would be interviewed. In the event only 404 subjects were actually interviewed. There were two main reasons for this state of affairs.

First, in the planning stage, not enough time was allocated to travelling to the research areas and actual field work. It was assumed that travelling would be relatively easy. In the event it was discovered that the roads were in a state of disrepair. Thus more time was spent negotiating the roads hazards than doing actual field work.
Secondly, in the planning stages, the number of research assistants was seriously underestimated. It was assumed that both the Project Coordinator and his Deputy will only play a role of data collectors underplaying the fact that they will be administering the project as well. This dual role reduced their effectiveness in data collection.

### 6.0 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

#### 6.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Areas of interest were age, sex and education. The age ranges in this survey were demarcated between those who were below 40 years old age and those who were above 40 years of age. The highest concentration of respondents, 87.1%, were those below the age of 40 years. The remaining 12.9% were above years of age.

The respondents were also marked for sex. 49.3% were females and 50.7% were males. These sexes were just about evenly balanced.

As regards education the respondents ranged from those with no formal education at all to those with a secondary education. The statistics were as follows: 21% had attended junior primary school (classes 1 -5); 27.5% had attended senior primary education and 39.4% had no education at all.

### 5.1 GENERAL QUESTIONS

#### 5.1.1 CHIYAO AS MOTHER TONGUE

Subjects were requested to state whether or not Chiyao was their mother tongue. An overwhelming 93.8% stated that it was their mother tongue and 6.2% said it was not their mother tongue. The 6.2% who said Chiyao was not their mother tongue were asked a further question about how they learned the language. All of them reported that they learned the language from their Chiyao-speaking colleagues/friends.

#### 5.1.2 LITERACY IN CHIYAO

The survey also wanted to establish the level of literacy in Chiyao. With regard to reading 46.3% of the respondents said they could read Chiyao and 53.7% said they could not read chiyao.
A corollary question sought to establish whether or not the respondents could write in Chiyao. 41.6% said they could write in Chiyao and 58.4% said they could not.

These low literacy levels in Chiyao should not come as a surprise. They reflect the historical reality in Malawi. Historically education was the province of Christian missionaries. Its primary objective was to convert the heathens to christianity. The WaYao were essentially muslims. As such, muslims avoided mission education during the colonial era. This trend has continued to the present time as shown in the Chiyao Sociolinguistic survey of 1996 (see Kishindo et al 1997) and the present one. In addition, Chiyao is not taught in schools as a result there are no relevant reading materials to sustain a reading culture.

5.1.3 VARIETIES OF CHIYAO

Subjects were also asked whether or not they knew that Chiyao was spoken differently in different areas. An overwhelming 97.8% of the respondents said they did and a mere 2.2% said they did not.

5.1.4 PROBLEMS IN WRITING IN CHIYAO

A further question sought to elicit information on whether or not respondents had any problems writing in Chiyao. 21.8% were uncertain; 17.6% said they had problems; 60.6% said they did not.

A corollary question wanted the respondents to specify the nature of the problems they had writing in Chiyao. The following were the responses:

Table 1: NATURE OF PROBLEMS IN WRITING IN CHIYAO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE OF PROBLEMS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spelling</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not specific</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixing of dialects</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronunciation</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of books</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not applicable</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The variety of the answers unrelated to writing reflect the lack of understanding of the question. This should not be entirely surprising since in the absence of any education in Chiyao and the lack of literacy the question was somewhat abstract. This also explains the overwhelming 83.2% of the non-applicable responses.

Of the 11.9% who mentioned spelling as a problem, an additional question was put to them to state how they themselves currently write/spell the words. All of them 11.9% could not say how they spell the problematic words.

### 6.0 SPECIFIC LANGUAGES PROBLEMS

#### 6.1 THE NEGATIVE FORM

In this section we focus on specific questions that dealt with Chiyao as a language.

The first question sought to establish how the negative form is pronounced among the Yaos of Mangochi. The results are as in Table 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>FREQUENCY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ngatulya</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngetulya</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngitulya</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngutulya</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that the most commonly used form for the negative marker in Chiyao is nga. This is the unmarked form since it is used by an overwhelming 93.3% of the speakers. This suggests that is the easily recognized form among the Yao. The nga form should therefore be adopted as the standard.
A second question sought to establish the most commonly used or unmarked form of the Chiyao conjunction. The results are as in Table 3 below:

### Table 3: THE CONJUNCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>FREQUENCY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that ni is the most commonly used form for the Chiyao conjunction since it was used by an overwhelming 98.8% of the respondents. This form should, therefore, be adopted as the standard.

The third question sought to establish the form of the present habitual tense which, like the other forms, has been variously represented in the extant literature. The forms to be considered were –kusa-, -kasa-, and –kisa-. The results were as follows:

### Table 4: THE PRESENT HABITUAL TENSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>FREQUENCY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>akusawinaga</td>
<td>87.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akasawinaga</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akisawinaga</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that –kusa- is the most commonly used form. It was used by 87.1% of the respondents. The other forms were marked forms. The –kusa- form should, therefore, be adopted by the standard.

Some notable dialectal variations were also observed in the pronunciation of certain words. For example, an earlier survey had noted that in certain areas of Mangochi ı and w/ŵ are replaced by d and b respectively. The survey sought to establish the extent of this alternation. First the results of ı/d alternation are shown in Table 5 below:
TABLE 5: l/d ALTERNATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>FREQUENCY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amwali</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amwadi</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wadi</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wali</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likoko</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dikoko</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dikata</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likata</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liso</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diso</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 5 above, it is clear that l in the above forms is the unmarked form and d is the marked form. This means that l was the most commonly used form as it was used by an average 99% of the respondents. It is suggested, therefore, that l should be adopted as the standard symbol.

As regards the variation between w and b the results were as shown in Table 6 below

TABLE 6: b/w ALTERNATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>FREQUENCY %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m’wale</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m’bwale</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m’bweni</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m’weni</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m’wutuche</td>
<td>m’butuche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m’buleje</td>
<td>mwuleje</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although it is clear from the results that the majority of the respondents, an average of 67.68% use the w form in the above words, a sizeable group of an average 31.6% of the respondents use the b forms. This suggests that it is not as marked as the d form. However, for purposes of the orthography, the w forms should be adopted as standard.

### 7.0 CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, a number of conclusions can be drawn:

(i) Forms in Chiyao do not vary drastically in terms of pronunciation.
(ii) There is a very high degree of uniformity in the usage of forms such as the negative in Chiyao.
(iii) In relation to (i) and (ii), efforts should be made to harmonize Chiyao with the aim of producing a standard orthography.

### 7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO MOE AND GTZ/MIITEP

If indeed the mother tongue education policy is going to be effected in Chiyao speaking areas, the following steps should be taken:

(i) A workshop should be convened to discuss the findings of this survey and make appropriate revisions in the light of the results of the survey.
(ii) A committee of experts should be established and be given mandate of devising a standard Chiyao orthography.
(iii) Since Chiyao shared by Malawi and Mozambique, efforts should be made by the two countries to collaborate in the development of Chiyao teaching/learning materials.
8.0 REFERENCES


Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH VERSION)

SECTION A

1. Name of Researcher_______________________________Date__________

2. Address of Researcher_______________________________

   (a) T/A_______________________________

   (b) Village_______________________________

3. Sex male [ ] female [ ]

4. Age Below 40 [ ] Above 40 [ ]

5. Highest qualification_______________________________
SECTION B. GENERAL QUESTIONS

6. Is Chiyao your first language?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]

7. If no, how did you learn it?

(a) ____________________________

(b) ____________________________

(c) ____________________________

(d) ____________________________

(e) ____________________________

8. Can you competently read in Chiyao?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]

9. Can you competently write in Chiyao?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]

10. Are you aware that Chiyao is spoken differently?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]

11. Do you have any problems writing in Chiyao?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If yes, what are they?

(a) ____________________________

(b) ____________________________

(c) ____________________________
(d)______________________________

How do you write them now?

(a)______________________________
(b)______________________________
(c)______________________________
(d)______________________________

SECTION C

The questions below contain different forms of the same term in Chiyao. Expressions containing the different forms will be read out to respondents for them to chose the forms they use.

1. Which of the following negative tense markers do you use?

(a) Ngatulya mboga.
(b) Ngetulya mboga.
(c) Ngitulya mboga.
(d) Ngotulya mboga.
(e) Ngutulya mboga.

2. Which of the following forms for the term ‘and’ in Chiyao do you use?

(a) Ajigale mpini na liwago.
(b) Ajigale mpini ne liwago
(c) Ajigale mpini ni liwago
(d) Ajigale mpini no liwago
3. Which of the following habitual tense markers do you use?

(a) Che Wailesi akusawina manganje.
(b) Che Wailesi akasawina manganje
(c) Che Wailesi akisawina manganje.

4. Which of the following pairs of words corresponds well to the way you pronounce the word? (a) amwali (b) amwadi

(a) wali (b) wadi
(a) likoko (b) dikoko
(a) litaka (b) ditaka
(a) liso (b) diso
(a) ugali (b) ugadi

5. Which of the following pairs of words corresponds well to the way you pronounce the word?

(a) m’bwale (b) m’wale
(b) m’bweni (b) m’weni
(c) m’butuche (b) m’wutuche
(d) m’bulaje (b) m’wulaje
(e)

Appendix II

QUESTIONNAIRE (CHIYAO VERSION)

MAWUSYO GAKUWUNGUNYIRA KULEKANGANA KWA MALAMUSI PA ULEMBE WAMBONE WA CHIWECHETO CHA CHIYAO

1. Lina lya Jwakungunya_________________________ Lisiku________________

2. Adilesi ja mundu jwkwanga______________________________

   (a) T/A____________________________

   (b) Musi____________________________
3.  Jwamkongwe  [ ]  Jwamlume  [ ]

4.  Yaka:  Yangakwana 40  [ ]  Yakupeleta  [ ]

4.  Pañalechele majiganyo________________________

MAWUSYO

6.  Ana Chiyao chili chiwetcheto chawo chakupagwa nacho?  [ ] elo  iyayi  [ ]

7.  Naga iyayi, mwachimanyi uli? (a)______________________________
    (b)______________________________
    (c)______________________________

8.  Ana mpakana aplanje chenene m’Chiyao?  elo  [ ]  iyayi  [ ]

9.  Ana mpaka alembe chenene m’Chiyao?  elo  [ ]  iyayi  [ ]

10. Ana akumanyilila kuti chiwetcheto cha Chiyao Chikuwechetegwa mwakulekanganalekangana?  elo  [ ]  iyayi  [ ]

11. Ana pana yakusausya iliyonse yakuyiwona Pakulemba m’Chiyao?  elo  [ ]  iyayi  [ ]

12. Naga pana, ayikolane.(a)______________________________
    (b)______________________________
    (c)______________________________

13. Akulemba uli sambano?
M’mausyo gali pasipa mwana kawe cheta kakulenganalengana kakusala chindu chimo m’chiyao. Iganisyo yayikwete ku kwe cheta kwakulenganalekenganaku tichiwalanjigwa kwa wandu wakwangawo kuti asagule mwakusawechetela.

(1) Ana mwa iganisyoyi, chiganisyo chapi chikukamulana ni kawe chete kawo?
   a) Aji mbogaji ngatulya.
   b) Aji mbogaji ngetulya
   c) Aji mboga ngitulya
   d) Aji mbogaji ngotulya.
   e) Aji mbogaji ngutulya.

(2) Ana mwa iganisyoyi, chiganisyo chapi chikukamulana ni kawe chete kawo?
   a) Ajigale chipula na liwago
   b) Ajigale chipula ne liwago
   c) Ajigale chipula ni liwago
   d) Ajigale chipula no liwago

(3) Ana mwa iganisyoyi, chiganisyo chapi chikukamulana ni kawe chete kawo?
   a) Che Wailesi akusawinaga manganje mowa gosope.
   b) Che Wailesi akasawinaga manganje mowa gosope
   c) Che Wailesi akusawinaga manganje mowa gosope.
(4) Ana lilołat lyapi mwa malołat gawiligağıli gali pasipa likulandana ni käwechete kawo?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) amwali</th>
<th>b) amwadi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>ñwadi</td>
<td>ñwali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>likoko</td>
<td>dikoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>ditaka</td>
<td>litaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>liso</td>
<td>diso</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Ana lilołat lyapi mwa malołat gawiligağıli gali pasipa likulandana ni käwechete kawo?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) m’wale</th>
<th>b) m’bwale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>m’bweni</td>
<td>m’wensi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>m’wutuche</td>
<td>m’butuche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>m’buleje</td>
<td>m’wuleje</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III

RESEARCH PERSONNEL

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHERS

Professor AI D. Mtenje (Director, Centre for Language Studies)
Gregory H Kamwendo (Senior Research Fellow, Deputy Director, Centre for Language Studies)
Pascal J Kishindo (Associate Professor of African Languages and Linguistics, Chancellor College)

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Stella Kachiwanda, Chiyao Language Specialist, Centre for Language Studies

Frank Nantongwe, Chiyao Research Assistant, Centre for Language Studies

DRIVERS

E Alli, Centre for Language Studies
L Chitenje, (Centre for Language Studies)
J D Kamwendo (GTZ/MIITEP)

SECRETARIAL SERVICES

Chrissie Mwenye, Center for Language Studies