Scripted curriculum and the quest for improving reading for meaning: Conceptions of language and literacy in Malawi's Grade 4 English scripted curriculum and amongst Grade 4 English teachers.

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Abstract

Various scholars in education have argued that policy, practice and opinions about language and literacy teaching are consciously or subconsciously underpinned by particular conceptualisations of language and literacy (Ivanic, 2004). These conceptions about language and literacy teaching are usually reflected in curriculum documents and teachers' views and practices about the teaching of language and literacy. In the quest to mitigate dwindling standards in language and literacy in education, governments and their development partners have embarked on literacy projects/programs. A key feature of these programs, in recent times, is the quest to promote reading for meaning through the use of a scripted curriculum. Malawi's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, through its National Reading Program (NRP) has been implementing a scripted curriculum for Grades 1-4 English and Chichewa. My study aimed at exploring the conceptions of language and literacy which underlie the approach to the teaching of Malawi's Standard/Grade 4 English scripted curriculum and how the teachers conceive language and literacy, as they engage with the scripted lessons, and whether such conceptions promote the NRP's aim of 'reading for meaning'. The analysis of conceptions of language draws on Blommaert's 'artefactual ideology of language' (2008) and Makoe and McKinney's (2014) ideology of languages as bounded entities, while the analysis of conceptions of literacy draws on the concepts of autonomous and ideological models of literacy (Street, 1991). To explore the conceptions of language and literacy that underpin the scripted lessons and inform the teachers' views of language and literacy, the study focussed on the Standard/Grade 4 English Teachers Guide (TG) and Learners Books (LB), related documents of the Malawi's National Reading Program (NRP), and Standard 4 teachers of English's accounts of their conceptions and practices in relation to the Standard 4 English scripted curriculum. The study established that though the social nature of language and literacy is acknowledged by the NRP and teachers, both the TG and teachers' conceptions of language and literacy are strongly informed by the view of language as an abstract system that has forms independent of their social uses, and that literacy is conceived as consisting of decontextualised skills. Thus, despite the NRP's emphasis on and calls for a greater focus on reading for meaning, meaning is largely abandoned/neglected as the ideologies/conceptions of language and literacy do not allow teachers to teach reading for meaning. The implication is that if the social nature of language and literacy continues to be backgrounded, with the structural view of language and the view of literacy as decontextualised skills being foregrounded, efforts to improve education standards through promoting literacy levels might be futile and waste of resources.

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List of Acronyms

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

DEM: District Education Manager

DfID: Department for International Development

DI: Direct Instruction

EGRA: Early Grade Reading Assessment/Activity

ELL: English Language Learners

ESIP: Education Sector Implementation Plan

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

FPE: Free Primary Education

GRR: Gradual Release of Responsibility

GIZ: Gesellschaftfür Internationale Zusammenarbeit

LB: Learners Book

MANEB: Malawi National Examinations Board

MBTL: Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy

MERIT: Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity

MIE: Malawi Institute of Education

MoEST: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MSCE: Malawi Schools Certificate of Education

MTPDS: Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support

NRA: National Reading Assessment

NRP: National Reading Program

NRS: National Reading Strategy

NPC: National Primary Curriculum

PCAR: Primary Curriculum and Assessment Review

PIRLS: Progress in Reading Literacy Study

PSLC: Primary School Leaving Certificate

RTI: Research Triangle International

SACMEQ: Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SEGREM: Strengthening Early Grade Reading in Malawi

SL: Scripted Lessons

SMC: School Management Committee

TG: Teachers Guide

TTC: Teacher Training College

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Language and literacy education in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region has become a major concern for governments, and researchers specialising in education. Several studies on education in Sub-Saharan Africa have reported that education standards, especially in literacy, have declined. According to the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) reports II (2005) and III (2011), learners' performance at regional level was generally low. As for Malawi, learners' performance (tests focused on Grade 4 and 6) was either second from last (2005) or the 'worst' (2011) among the SADC countries that participated in the study. With regard to general education, Malawi Government reports and researchers have reported dwindling education standards since the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994, soon after the advent of multi-party democracy in Malawi. FPE resulted in high enrolment rates which put a strain on schools' human and material resources. This resulted in large classes, unqualified and insufficient teachers and inadequate resources which consequently negatively affected the quality of education (Chimombo, 2005). According to Malawi's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the said negative effect on quality of education was generally attributed to poor teaching approaches which were assumed to be associated with engaging unqualified and undertrained teachers (MoEST, 2014).

To mitigate the dwindling standards in literacy, government departments and researchers have embarked on projects and/or national programs to improve general education standards and literacy attainment. A common feature of such interventions, in the SADC region, is the adoption of the approach known as the scripted curriculum with its emphasis on use of Scripted Lessons (SL) (Piper et, al., 2018). According to Fitz and Nicolaidis (2020: 195), scripted curricula "refers to a wide variety of curricular materials or pre-packaged lesson plans that explicitly script out exactly what the teacher will say, show, and do—and often even how students are expected to respond". Shalem, et al., (2016) state that there are different types of scripting and that the nature of scripting reflects the purpose of scripting. They state that some scripts 'instruct' the teacher on what and how to teach, while others focus on providing teachers with the support they need on knowledge of subject matter and teaching approaches. This distinction of the nature of scripted curricula suggests that particular ideologies or conceptions

inform their nature and their preferred approaches to teaching. Despite the distinction in focus, both types of scripted curricula claim to aim at 'improving' education standards or specifically reading for meaning (Shalem, 2016; Carl, 2014). This is echoed by Malawi's National Reading Program's (NRP) Standard 1 scripted Teachers Guide (TG) which states that the "overall purpose of teaching children how to read is so that they can read with understanding" (MoEST, 2016: v). However, as noted by Carl (2014), in most cases, the nature of the scripted curricula and their associated programs/projects is inclined towards improving learners' test scores on set skills while neglecting meaningful engagement with texts. This is echoed by the Bua-lit Collective who state that "these interventions tend to conceive of literacy in a narrow way" (Bua-lit Collective, 2018: 2). This 'narrow' conception of language and literacy is associated with the emphasis on skills, such as decoding, while neglecting the situated nature of language and literacy, which focusses on meaning making.

Though the Bua-lit Collective (2018) acknowledge the role of skills, they argue that much as skills are important and should not be neglected in language teaching and learning, treating them as decontextualised items independent of their social and situated uses is a major contributor to the poor language and literacy attainment among most learners. Drawing on Freebody and Luke's (1990) Four Resources Model, they argue that when language and literacy are conceived in a 'narrow way', the likelihood of engaging with text (oral or print) beyond coding/decoding to meaningfully engage with text, is minimal. This suggests that how language and literacy is conceived directly informs the teaching and learning practices. Thus, in the case of the scripted language/literacy curriculum, it implies that the nature of scripting (Shalem, et al., 2016) and the teaching approaches are informed by particular conceptions of language and literacy. On the other hand, teachers' reactions to the nature of the scripted curriculum and its associated approaches to teaching, are informed by their conceptions of language and literacy and beliefs of what constitutes 'effective' teaching approaches. Studies in the SADC region have established that key conceptions that underlie most scripted language curricula are those that are associated with an emphasis on decoding/encoding despite the acknowledgement of the importance of meaning making by some of them (Shalem, et al., 2018; Bua-lit Collective, 2018).

In the case of Malawi's scripted curriculum, in 2016 the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) launched its National Reading Program (NRP) which aimed at improving the dwindling standards in education, and specifically in reading, in Chichewa and

English, among early grade learners (Grade 1-4). A key feature of the NRP is the use of scripted lessons. According to Malawi's National Reading Strategy (NRS), the Grade 4 English scripted curriculum's focus is on meaning making as it aims at helping learners "acquire skills to communicate to a wide range of audiences for different purposes" (MoEST, 2017: i). With regard to its main focus, reading, it states that learners will be helped to "read fluently and critically to understand and respond to different types of texts for information and enjoyment" (MoEST, 2017: i). These two quotes suggest that the Grade 4 English scripted curriculum emphasises meaningful use of language which implies that it is informed by use-based conceptions of language. Based on the view that all curricula are informed by ideologies or conceptions, this study aimed at exploring the conceptions of language and literacy which underlie the approach to the teaching of Malawi's Standard/Grade 4 English scripted curriculum and how the teachers conceive language and literacy, as they engage with the scripted lessons, and whether such conceptions promote the NRP's aim of 'reading for meaning'. Blommaert's (1998) concept of the artefactual ideology of language coupled with Makoe and McKinney's (2014) view of ideology of languages as bounded entities, and Street's (1991) autonomous and ideological models of literacy coupled with Freebody and Luke's (1990) four resources model, as adapted by the Bua-lit Collective (2018), were utilised as a framework for analysis.

As one of the members of a team involved as Standard 4 English TG and LB writers, my study was spurred by my quest to explore the extent to which claims that "recent approaches to literacy…. have come to focus upon the varied social and cultural meanings of the concept" (Street and Street, 1995: 72) are reflected in the conceptions of language and literacy of Malawi's Grade 4 teachers and Grade 4 TG's scripted lessons. Similarly, I also intended to examine whether Ivanic's (2004: 221) claim that "recent understandings about the social nature of language and literacy have not been taken into account in…. curriculum documents, and [that]..views of language and language learning underpinning the curriculum are thus narrow", holds in the context of Malawi's Grade 4 English scripted curriculum. Furthermore, the study was motivated by my experience as a research assistant in a study (Mattos and Sitabkhan, 2016) on how teachers used scripted lessons during the Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity (EGRA) project. I observed that some teachers were just following the text without critically engaging with the material as regards to whether learning was taking place or not. What seemed to matter was teaching the lesson and not causing learning. This observation, coupled with my reservations (as one of the people engaged as Standard 4 English TG and LB writers) on the

use of scripted lessons, let alone use of the same scripts across the country, was behind my wish to embark on a study of the conceptions of language and literacy that underlie the scripted curriculum and whether such conceptions and their associated practices could promote attainment of the desired learning outcome of 'reading for meaning'.

I should state that my conceptions of language and literacy, at the time of my involvement in the development of scripted lessons, was informed by the social nature of language which I had developed through my study as a post graduate student at the University of Cape Town. As I stated earlier, I had personal reservations on the use of scripted lessons on the basis that dictating how teachers across the country should teach is problematic. This was based on my belief that scripting takes away teachers' autonomy in their practice and that strict prescription of teaching and learning disregards the fact that learning is always deeply contextualised. My conviction was that such an approach could not bear its intended fruits in our context, Malawi. At this point, my reservations were based on the component of scripting and not conceptions of language and literacy. It was through my attendance in Masters' courses at the University of Cape Town that I developed the idea to study the conceptions of language and literacy which informs the NRP's scripted curriculum in order to conduct a systematic study to check whether my reservations could be partly supported by an academic/empirical study.

1.2 Background to the study

Language and schooling in Malawi

In Malawi, English is a second or third language to almost all learners in public primary schools. In Malawi's urban areas, like the city in which I conducted my study, urbanization has resulted in a multilingual population. However, the study area's lingua franca is Chichewa which is the 'national' language. Chichewa is also taught as curricular subject along with English. Thus, some learners will encounter English as a second language while others, whose first language is not Chichewa, will encounter Chichewa as a second language and English as a third language. Such a scenario has been shown to have a bearing not only on the acquisition of English, but also on how the children's first languages are viewed in relation to English; either as an obstacle or support to the acquisition of English (Bloch, 2002).

In Malawi, English is taught in schools as a second language and it is also the official language of the country. It is the language of learning and teaching in schooling from Standard/Grade 5 and a compulsory subject from standard/grade 1 to Form 4 (Matiki, 2001). Grade 4 is thus a

crucial year since it should lead to the learners being fluent enough in English to be able to make the switch to English as the language of learning and teaching in Grade 5. Furthermore, a pass in English is compulsory for one to qualify for an award of a Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) and the Malawi Schools Certificate of Education (MSCE) which is a requirement for progression to university/college education. Thus, the fact that a pass in English is a requirement for certification and that English is the medium of instruction, makes proficiency in English crucial for the academic achievement of the learners. However, several studies in Malawi have shown that acquiring proficiency in English as a second language is a challenge. It has been revealed that many learners in Malawi face difficulties in learning English as a second language and many perform poorly (Matiki, 2001; Presidential Enquiry, 2000). The poor performance in English is more pronounced among primary school learners and the failure among secondary and tertiary education students is usually attributed to the poor foundation of English in primary school. Among the skills cited to be a major challenge are print based literacy skills (reading and writing) (MIE, 2009).

Background to the NRP's scripted curriculum

From 1991 to 2007, Malawi's MoEST was implementing an 'objectives-based teacher centred' National Primary Curriculum. A key feature of this curriculum was that the teacher was provided with a teaching syllabus that consisted of topics, suggested methods, resources, and assessment activities. The teacher had the autonomy to decide the approach and pacing of the lesson or curriculum. The teaching and learning was generally based on teacher-centred practices and emphasis was on explicit teaching of formal language structures (grammar) and skills. A review of the curriculum conducted from 2001 established that, among other factors, the objectives-based curriculum was behind the dwindling standards of education because, among many factors, it was examinations oriented, promoted teacher centred methods of teaching and learning, and had 'many' subjects characterised by duplication of content across subjects which further contributed to the curriculum being overloaded, and that the content and teaching practices did not respond to national and global needs (Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014). To maximise active learning and make primary education relevant to national and global needs, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) then undertook what is commonly referred to as the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Review (PCAR). From the review, Malawi adopted the outcomes-based curriculum, which is referred to as The National Primary Education Curriculum Reform (PCAR), as its National Primary Curriculum (NPC) (Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014). According to Chirwa and Naidoo, "the key design features of the

new curriculum are outcomes-based education, learner-centred pedagogies, indigenous knowledge and continuous assessment" (2014: 342). Though the outcomes-based curriculum promoted participatory teaching and learning methods and did not dictate how the teacher should teach, its approach to language teaching, as seen in the Standard 4 English TG of the outcome-based curriculum, was still focussed on language skills and grammar, with linguistic items as topics (i.e. adjectives) while disregarding the role of the context in which the adjectives are used (MoEST, 2007).

Adoption of the outcomes-based curriculum was, among others, aimed at addressing the general lowering standards in the quality of primary school education which was attributed to human and material resources crises that resulted from the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994. Among the challenges of FPE was a huge increase in learner enrolment which put a strain on teacher-pupil ratios which resulted in employment of unqualified teachers and a lack of adequate teaching and learning materials (Kunje, Meke, and Ogawa, 2009). However, it was also established that implementation of the outcomes-based curriculum was not achieving its intended outcomes. A major concern was learners' attainment in both Chichewa and English literacy (specifically reading) as it was believed that the challenges in reading had a ripple effect on learners' performance in the other learning areas.

To mitigate the challenges in general, and specifically in reading, the Malawi Government, through the MoEST, partnered with several donor agencies to implement interventions in different areas of the primary school curriculum. As for literacy interventions, the major donor agencies who partnered with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology are United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom's (UK) Department for International Development (DfID), Save the Children, and Gesellschaftfür Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) which is an implementing organization of German Development Cooperation. Some of the projects which were implemented by these organisations informed Malawi's National Reading Program. The National Reading Strategy (NRS) states that:

> This programme [NRP] has incorporated good teaching and learning practices drawn from several literacy interventions conducted in selected districts across Malawi over the past years. Some of the notable literacy interventions since the implementation of the National Primary Curriculum (NPC) include the Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy

> (MBTL) [implemented by DfID), Read Malawi, Early Grade Reading Activity (EGRA) [USAID], Literacy Boost [Save the Children International], and Strengthening Early Grade Reading in Malawi (SEGREM) [USAID]. All these interventions aimed at improving literacy levels of the early grade learners. (MoEST, 2017: i)

Reports on these projects were generally positive and a positive attitude by MoEST authorities towards the approaches used in teaching, especially those associated with scripted lessons, was also reported (MoEST, 2014; USAID, 2013; USAID, 2010). It is from the basis of the reported 'successes' with the EGRA approach, the 'positive' attitude of the MoEST towards the EGRA approach promoted by USAID, the development of the NRS, and USAID/DfID's willingness to financially support MoEST to make it a national program, which led to the rollout of the NRP and the EGRA informed scripted lessons for early grade English and Chichewa subjects. The NRP is informed by NRS which "provides a framework for developing and implementing a cohesive, sustainable, reading program that can be implemented nationally with fidelity" and was developed in 2014 "to ensure that children master essential literacy skills by the time they complete Standard 4" (MoEST, 2014: iv). A discussion of the NRP and the scripted curriculum will be presented in Chapter 4.

1.3. Rationale

Literacy test results, teacher training reports and monitoring and evaluation reports on NRP mainly focus on quality of teaching and learning, effectiveness of teaching and learning resources (TGs and LBs), and impact in terms of test results. As one of the Standard 4 TG writers and part of NRP's CPD training monitoring team, I have not come across a report or study focusing on the language and literacy ideologies that underpin the NRP's scripted curriculum, or the teachers views about language and literacy as they negotiate and take hold of the scripted curriculum. I thus set out to explore the conceptions of language and literacy that underpin the Standard 4 English scripted curriculum and the teachers' views of language and literacy. This was on the basis that the language and literacy conceptions which inform a curriculum and the teachers' conceptions of language and literacy have a direct influence on the nature of teaching and learning practices, and by extension, effectiveness of the curriculum. Since the scripted curriculum was introduced to improve learners' language and literacy attainment, specifically learners' ability to read for meaning or 'reading to learn' (MoEST, 2016), I found it appropriate to study whether the conceptions of language and literacy that underlie the scripted lessons, and the teachers' views of language and literacy could be those

that research has suggested could lead to effective learning or, on the other hand, could fail to attain the desired learning outcome of reading for meaning.

1.4 Research questions

My study focussed on analysing the conceptions of language and literacy underlying the Standard 4 English TG and Learners Book (LB), and how the Standard 4 teachers conceive language and literacy as they engage with the scripted lessons in the Standard 4 English TG and the associated activities in the LB. The research questions that guided the study were:

1) What conceptions of language and literacy underlie the scripted lessons in Malawi's Grade 4 English Teachers Guides?
2) What conceptions of language and literacy underpin the Grade 4 English teachers' teaching/uptake of the scripted lessons in the NRP?

I analysed the Standard 4 English TG and Learners Book (LB), and I interviewed teachers, as well as the writers of the Standard 4 English TG to ascertain their underlying conceptions of language and literacy.

1.5 Outline of the Project

In Chapter 2 I present a review of the literature and discuss the theories that inform the study. I focus on what Blommaert (2008/2013) calls an "artefactual ideology of language", and Street's autonomous and ideological models of literacy as the main theoretical basis of the study. I also present a review of the literature on the use of scripted lessons in language and literacy education.

In Chapter 3 I present the research design, which is an exploratory case study. I describe the research participants of the study. I also present my data collection and analysis process, as well as ethical considerations in the research.

In the first data chapter, Chapter 4, I present my discussion of the conceptions of language that underpin the scripted lessons of the Standard 4 TG and the views of language held by the Standard 4 teachers of English and the TG writers. This chapter applies Blommaert's idea of the artefactual ideology of language to identify and understand these conceptions.

In Chapter 5 I discuss the conceptions of literacy that underpin the scripted lessons of the Standard 4 TG and the views of literacy held by the Standard 4 teachers of English and the TG writers. In this chapter, I dwell more on Street's distinction between the autonomous and ideological models of literacy to ascertain the extent to which the two models of literacy are reflected in the TG and in teachers and TG writers' views. I also utilise Street and Street's (1991) concept of the *pedagogisation* of literacy and Hall's (1998) 'modified' categories of the process of pedagogisation of literacy.

In Chapter 6, I conclude the research by discussing my findings and their implications and argue that though the social nature of language and literacy is acknowledged by the NRP and teachers, both the TG and teachers' conceptions of language and literacy are strongly informed by the artefactual ideology of language and the autonomous view of literacy to the extent that reading for meaning is neglected.

Chapter Two: Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1 Introduction

The research is theoretically grounded in two main frameworks – one focusing on language in general and the other on written language. The overall framework is that of language and literacy ideologies. My understanding of ideologies is informed by Blommaert's (2013) view of ideologies as sets of beliefs and values that have been shaped by contestations over periods of time through legitimisation processes that are deeply imbued with power relations. I take ideologies as being socially constructed and constructing of the way that phenomena are conceived and interpreted. Ideologies thus consist of certain conceptions that construct 'reality' and inform human perceptions of phenomena and their actions in relation to the phenomena. In this study, within the broader concept of language and literacy ideologies, I focus on Blommaert's (2008) concept of the artefactual ideology of language and Street's (1991) autonomous and ideological models of literacy. To appreciate the curriculum's and teachers' conceptions of *English as a second language* in Malawi, Makoni and Pennycook's (2011) conceptualisation of bilingualism is utilised in conjunction with Blommaert's artefactual ideology of language. The focus is bilingualism despite the fact that a small number of the children are developing multilinguals. This decision was made since almost all learners in the area of study are proficient in Chichewa, which is the lingua franca in the site of the study and that only two languages (Chichewa and English) are offered in primary school education.

Complementing the idea of the artefactual ideology of language, I also focus in more depth on ideologies of literacy. From the New Literacy Studies, I draw on Street's (1993) autonomous and ideological models of literacy which will be the central conceptual framework for understanding the approaches to literacy underlying the curriculum and the teachers' conceptions. Further, Luke and Freebody's (1990) Four Resources Model of language and literacy and the modified four resources model by the Bua-lit (2018) group are utilised to explain and analyse more detailed elements of the curriculum and the approaches that the teachers take in negotiating the curriculum. The Four Resources Model is helpful for understanding the conceptual orientation and views of language and literacy as either narrow or broad in relation to whether all four roles/sets of resources are appreciated.

2.2 Artefactual ideology of language

According to Makoe and McKinney (2014: 659) language ideologies "refer to the sets of beliefs, values and cultural frames that continually circulate in society, informing the ways in which language is conceptualised and represented as well as how it is used". Thus, language ideologies are conceptualisations of language that guide an individual or group's view of language in terms of issues like its nature, its relation to other languages, and how it is learned/acquired. Language ideologies are a major influence on the underlying conceptions of and the conceptions associated with language education. In relation to language ideologies in South Africa, Makoe and McKinney assert that "in considering the particular ideologies of language that inform current language policy in South Africa, the most significant is the conception of languages as stable, bounded entities clearly differentiated from one another" (2014: 661). Such an assertion is based on the fact that in South Africa, like other African countries like Malawi, the colonial legacy has exerted influence in the sphere of language which is characterised by the view of language as an artefact with features that can be studied and distinguished from each other and other languages. Much as such a distinction is generally at the level of linguistic features, a subtle implication of this view is that languages are value laden and that acquisition or failure to acquire a particular privileged language has a bearing on an individual's or society's socioeconomic standing and opportunities. In post-colonial Africa, such a scenario is a reality as the colonial language and standardised versions of local languages are valued for academic achievement and socioeconomic mobility. The

standardising and the viewing of languages as bounded and independent/distinct from each other is what Blommaert calls an "artefactual ideology of language".

Blommaert (2008: 292) defines an "artefactual ideology of language" as "an ideology in which particular textual practices can reduce language to an artefact that can be manipulated like most other objects". This ideology views language as consisting of finite forms and rules (grammar) that can be extracted from speech as the core abstract features of language, acquisition of which should be the goal of language education. The assumption is that acquisition of such features of language, like Chomsky's (1967) concept of universal grammar, is key to facilitating language acquisition and use. The artefactual ideology assumes that much as there are variations in speech behaviours or practices among members of a speech community, there are core linguistic features that form the basis for all the speech varieties and these are the ones that have become selected and codified as standard languages. It further claims that the acquisition of such features is key to language learning and that the study of such features should be the focus of language education. This belief is from the assumption that:

> …learning such stable and invariable 'core' features will enable one to produce every genre, style, and contextually appropriate form of speech. The pragmatics of language contains a stable linguistic core, and learning this linguistic core generates the full pragmatic richness of that language. (Blommaert, 2008: 292)

Thus, it is assumed that acquisition or knowledge of such features (grammar and vocabulary) will generate the communicative abilities in the learner, therefore suggesting that language education should focus on the 'core features' or structures of the language.

In bilingual/multilingual contexts, the artefactual ideology of language is linked to what is called 'separate bilingualism' or 'bilingualism through monolingualism' (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007). This concept conceives bilingualism as an individual's capabilities in two languages. However, the languages are viewed as separate, with the assumption that the individual has separate systems of thought associated with each of the languages and that the languages are bounded and clearly separated from each other in terms of cognitive and social uses and practices. Creese and Blackledge (2010: 105), proponents of this view of bilingualism, assert that there are "boundaries put up around languages that language varieties must conform to prescriptive norms and represents a view of the multilingual/bilingual student/teacher as

'two monolinguals in one body'". Such a view of language foregrounds the structural and cognitive aspects of language at the expense of the social aspects of language with an emphasis on treating languages as distinct and independent of each other. Thus, the focus is no longer language use but rather a study of language as a neutral artefact with emphasis on languages being different in terms of 'grammar' and socio-economic status.

2.3 Bilingualism

Bilingualism is a multidimensional concept which has multiple definitions based on the philosophical orientations that inform the one giving the definition. Researchers agree that bilingualism is one of the major features of modern society, partly due to mobility that has been influenced by globalization (Wei, 2000). In its basic form, bilingualism is viewed as the ability to use two languages in the sense that the individual "possesses a minimal competence in one of the four language skills, as listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing in a language other than the individual's mother tongue" (MacNamara, 1967: 6). This definition focusses on the individual aspect of bilingualism. In education, this perception of bilingualism has been associated with the practice of focussing on acquisition of skills in each of the languages, independent of each other. Thus, though the learners are exposed to two languages (in this case, Chichewa and English), the two languages are treated as distinct from each other. Such conceptions are what Makelela (2015) terms 'monolingual ideologies' of bilingualism. This practice is said to put multilingual/bilingual learners "under pressure to use a monolingual lens to make sense of the world and who they are" instead of using a bilingual lens to facilitate utilization of the cultural and linguistic resources of both languages (Makalela, 2015: 15). According to Makelela (2015:16), the "monolingual ideologies and practices are ineffective and do not provide positive school experiences as well as pedagogic and cognitive support needed for multilingual [bilingual] children".

Bilingualism is also viewed in a much broader sociocultural perspective where the individual is viewed in relation to contexts which are authentic domains that are affected by psychological and social factors. This view of bilingualism recognizes the interrelationship between first language (L1) and second language (L2) at both the cognitive and social level. It is believed that at the competence (psychological) level, languages of a bilingual are linked in the sense that the individual can draw upon (either positively or negatively) resources from one language to another. On the performance (social/communicative) level, effective bilinguals are said to be those who utilize resources from both languages according to contextual demands

(Cummins, 2008 & 1976). In support of the view that language systems of a bilingual are connected, Baker (2006:169), in reference to what Cummins calls Common Underlying Proficiency, states that "irrespective of the language in which a person is operating, the thoughts that accompany talking, reading, writing and listening come from the same central engine. When a person owns two or more languages, there is one integrated source of thought". Thus languages, in a bilingual setting, should not be viewed in a narrow sense that treats them as independent of each other. It is in this vein that Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 90) takes a broader view of bilingualism and defines a bilingual as an:

> individual who is able to function in two or more languages… in accordance with sociocultural demands made of an individual´s communicative and cognitive competence by these communities or by the individual herself…, and who is able to positively identify with both (or all) language groups (and cultures), or parts of them.

For a bilingual learner to effectively function in both languages, there is a need to explicitly utilize the languages as resources to the attainment of competence in each language. One way in which research suggests this can be facilitated is the development and use of L1 in the acquisition of L2. This is based on the Developmental Interdependence hypothesis which states that "a child's second language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language. The more developed the first language, the easier it will be to develop the second language" (Baker, 2006: 173). In this study, I attempted to establish the extent to which elements of authentic engagement with and use of language were reflected, whether and how sociocultural factors were taken into consideration, and how the relationship between L1 and L2 is reflected in the curriculum and the teachers' views. My study does not take a stand on a specific definition of bilingualism, rather it just highlights the two major perceptions of bilingualism in order to utilize them as the lens through which I analysed the conceptions of language and literacy.

The concept of bilingualism also plays a crucial role in acquisition of second language literacy. Two main issues that stir debate in this field are the role of the second language (oral) in the development of second language literacy and the role of the first language in the development of second language literacy. A general trend in second language literacy instruction in schools is the focus on skills which are unrelated to the broader contexts of the uses of language. This is noted by Manyak (2008: 450) who observes that "literacy instruction for English language

learners (ELLs) tends to focus on drill and practices of decontextualised skills". Conceptions related to this view of ELL's literacy put communicative competence in the background while foregrounding acquisition of skills in a decontextualised manner. Manyak proposes two ways in which English as a second language learners can effectively be taught literacy; namely use of scaffolding in the L2 and use of learners' out-of-school linguistic and sociocultural resources.

On scaffolding, Manyak (2008: 451) proposes that teachers should provide "learners with comprehensible input in the target language and of scaffolding their output by providing consistent routines, frequent modelling, familiar and enjoyable topics for discussion, and feedback that causes learners to elaborate on their utterances". Such a view of the role of language is believed to effectively promote acquisition of second language in general and literacy in particular because the learners will have more exposure to a comprehensible target language. However, Manyak also notes that some hold the view that for one to acquire literacy in a second language, he/she must first develop the oral skills of the language, thereby treating language as being composed of separate skills that can be isolated and taught and studied independently. Such views have led to some programs to delay literacy instruction in the second language by emphasizing the verbal (oral) elements during the early stages of instruction. It has been suggested that such a view is based on an "incorrect assumption that language is an object, or a static body of knowledge to be mastered. It denies the reality that language use, like literacy, is deeply related to context of use, purpose and audience" (Bua-lit, 2018: 16). Manyak also dispels the claim of beginning with oral skills before introducing literacy as a 'myth' and states that "children can acquire initial literacy in a language they are just beginning to speak" (Manyak, 2008: 450). Thus, my research aimed to identify the conceptualisations (both curriculum and teachers) of the role and place of oral English in the teaching of literacy in English and the views on the relationship between literacy and language; whether it is viewed as a decontextualized or contextualized phenomenon.

On the role of L1 in the teaching of L2 literacy, children's first language and its related sociocultural knowledge are now seen as crucial resources for developing L2 literacy, for example, Hunt (2007: 81) emphasises the role and importance of L1 development in acquisition of L2 literacy by stating that "there is sound evidence that the most effective foundation for such [English/L2] mastery is the prior achievement of robust oral and literacy skills in the student's first language". The 'robust' oral and literacy skills are viewed in the context of their

associated out-of-school practices which must be valued if they are to support acquisition of L2. Citing Moll & Gonzales (1994), Manyak (2008: 451) emphasizes the role of children's home and out-of-school experiences in learning L2 literacy by stating that:

> Research has revealed that students from culturally and linguistically diverse families possess a wealth of cultural knowledge and experiences that can be used to enhance their literacy development …. Instruction that brings together the official school curriculum and these students' out of school knowledge, activities and purposes often generates deep engagement in significant meaning-making processes.

One of the emerging concepts proposed for facilitating effective L1 use to promote bilingualism and learning is called translanguaging (Garcia and Wei, 2014). Translanguaging focuses on meaningful use of both languages for purposes of achieving meaningful communication. It is viewed as a way of doing or communicating and not just translating lists of words or expressions in a decontextualized way. Such a concept promotes bilingual development in that both languages are used to achieve communication in a communicative event. To distinguish translanguaging from other forms of use of first language in second language classrooms, Garcia et al. (2011: 35) states that translanguaging;

> Builds on the concept of languaging, as it focuses on the discourse practices of multilingual speakers from the point of view of what speakers do and perform with them. Although translanguaging encompasses code-switching and other features of language practices that social linguists often study as 'language contact', it differs in that the starting point is not language as an autonomous skill.

Thus, the study analysed the extent to which children's first language and their out-of-school/home experiences are reflected or valued in the curriculum and teachers' conceptions of language and literacy.

2.4 Literacy: The autonomous and ideological models of literacy and the four resources model

Literacy is defined in different ways based on how one conceptualizes it. The definitions range from a basic psycholinguistic skills-based view, which conceives literacy as the ability to read and write to a sociocultural one which views literacy as going beyond mere ability to read and

write to encompass what people do with different forms of literacy like print, digital, media, etc. (Baynham, and Prinsloo, 2009; Barton, 1994). The different views of literacy led to Street's conceptualization of autonomous and ideological models of literacy. Street (1993: 5) states that the autonomous model of literacy views "literacy in technical terms, treating it as independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character". This model conceptualizes literacy as a neutral, predominantly psychological concept which apart from having universal social consequences to an individual or society that possess it has a significant effect in 'individual cognitive processes.'

Hall (1998), basing on Street and Street's (1991) work, presents six main features of the autonomous model in education. The features are distancing, the development of curriculum genre, unproblematicity (neutrality), privileging, individualism and system-immanence. He states that distancing "manifests itself in language being separated from normal usage by being put on chalkboards, in worksheets, in workbooks, on flash cards, in exercises, and generally framed in lesson contexts that hold language up as an object for analysis rather than use" (Hall, 1998: 9). This suggests that in the autonomous view of literacy, instruction is an exercise where literacy is learnt as a cognitive skill in a decontextualized way and not for and through meaningful use. The second feature, the development of curriculum genre, states that a curriculum informed by the autonomous view is associated with the development of curriculum genres. These are said to be characterized by "patterned activities in which text related tasks come to have nontextual significance, with particular procedural rules for teachers and pupils, which serve more to maintain power and control than teach literacy" (p. 9). Unproblematicity (neutrality) is said to be a feature of the curriculum which presents the conceptions associated with literacy in a way that they be accepted by both teachers and parents (or other stakeholders) as the only view and that it must be accepted as is dictated. Privileging is a feature that involves the determination of which curricular or language and literacy skills, conceptions are valued, and which ones are not. Individualism on the other hand is a feature in which "literacy practices are mostly performed as individual exercises rather than as cooperative endeavors" (p.10). Lastly, system-immanence deals with the relevance to their lives (during the time of learning and after schooling) of what students are made to learn. Hall (1998: 10) observes it is generally irrelevant and states that "schools as a whole, and literacy education in particular, is directed toward some future state of competence or literacies; as a consequence, what does not get recognized …is children's use of literacy within their lives as children". These features of an

autonomous view of the curriculum informed the analysis of the curriculum and teachers' conceptions about literacy in terms of the extent to which they hold an 'autonomous model' of literacy.

In contrast to the 'autonomous' model, Street's 'ideological' model views literacy as comprising of practices which are "inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society and recognize the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts" (Street, 1993:7). On this, Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) argue that for literacy teaching to produce desirable results, there is a need to treat it is as being intricately intertwined with sociocultural factors and practices since it is those factors that determine quality and nature of acquisition and use. Thus, they state that "the nature of the practices [associated with literacy] including the scripts, languages and media used, would determine the balance of skills learnt and the ensuing consequences that could be associated with literacy" (Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009: xxvii). They further suggest that for this to be possible "all literacy pedagogical approaches should be contextualized and start with the language and literacy resources that children bring to school" (p. xxxiv). My study has been informed by these social views on literacy to establish the extent to which the social views of literacy are reflected in the curriculum and the teachers' conceptions/views.

Building on the social approach, Freebody and Luke's (1990) Four Resources Model stipulates four literacy resources or roles that a learner needs to draw on or needs to play in engaging with literacy. The resources or roles of the reader are code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. The code breaker role involves the reader's engagement with the written text in terms of awareness and understanding of "the nature of the relationship between spoken sounds and written symbols, and the contents of that relationship" (Freebody and Luke, 1990: 8). It thus acknowledges the importance of skills. The text participant role positions the reader as an active participant in the construction of meaning. This role suggests that making meaning from text is not a passive bottom-up process but rather the reader draws "inferences connecting textual elements and background knowledge required to fill out the unexplicated aspects of text" (Freebody and Luke, 1990: 9). On the other hand, the reader's role as text user focusses on the reader's understanding of the social uses of reading and use of reading for social purposes. Reading is perceived as going beyond mere decoding and comprehending text to encompass meaningful interaction with and use of a variety of texts for social purposes. Thus, what matters in reading is "not just a matter of transmitting the skills of decoding or the

processes of comprehension but is as well a display to students of what counts as reading in the here and now of the classroom and what reading more generally is thus about" (Freebody and Luke, 1990: 11). Lastly, Freebody and Luke, (1990) discusses the role of the reader as a text analyst. This perceives reading as a critical activity in which the reader encounters discourses and ideologies that subtly create and project ideologies that position the reader or the topic in particular ways to promote particular ideologies. Thus, the role of the reader is to uncover or understand the ideological positions of texts, how the text presents those ideologies, and how the ideologies may influence the reader and society. This role calls for critical thinking in reading. Freebody and Luke (1990) indicates that the roles are not necessarily incremental but rather complementary and thus teaching needs to enable learners to engage in all four of these roles.

Researchers have noted that among the model's shortfalls is its emphasis on reading and not on both reading and writing (Bua-lit Collective, 2018). Citing the case of South Africa's current literacy programs, the Bua-lit Collective (commenting on the situation in South Africa) state that "we take issue with current emphasis …on reading as something separable from writing. This separation, we believe, is also a contributing factor to the failures in early literacy development" (Bua-lit, 2018:6). They propose expanding the four resources or roles to include writing. The proposed resources or roles are code breaker, text participant and meaning-maker, text user and producer/designer, and text analyst and critical producer. The code-breaker role involves decoding and encoding of language, with a focus on phonics and phonemic awareness related skills. Text participant and meaning-maker role involves the construction of meaning from texts on performing communicative activities with writing. Text user and producer/designer includes writing a variety of texts for different social purposes while role of text analyst and critical producer includes writing to achieve a particular effect on the audience, such as convincing or manipulating audience.

The Four Resources Model (Freebody and Luke, 1990), in conjunction with the modified/adapted 'four roles of the reader and writer' model (Bua-lit, 2018), is utilized in this thesis to study the extent to which the curriculum and teachers enable learners' a wider repertoire of practices with which learners can engage with written language. What's key here is the issue of whether they go beyond the usual "Big 5" which as Janks (2010) shows only covers the first two roles – the code-breaker and text participant. These two roles are also compatible with Hall's main features of an autonomous model of literacy in teaching since they

do not enable the engagement with real-world texts and critical engagement both of which would be central in social approaches.

2.5 A narrow view of literacy: Direct instruction and scripted lessons

Several developing countries, including Malawi, have realized the language and literacy problems facing their school going children and have consequently implemented projects and programs to address the problems. However, such programs have been criticized for being informed by a narrow view of literacy. One element of this is the programs' reliance on testing and assessment results. Citing the case of use of PIRLS and EGRA in South Africa's interventions, the Bua-lit Collective observes that the programs are "underpinned by a view of literacy as a measurable and quantifiable set of skills and an essential competency, developed in stages along a clearly defined trajectory which corresponds with age bands as set out in schooling" (Bua-lit Collective, 2018: 2). This narrow view of literacy results in the programs' failure to achieve expected outcomes because the practices associated with the programs have a narrow, skills-based view of literacy and thus do not provide the children with "the opportunity to connect literacy to the broader world and to substantive content…. This diminishes opportunities for poorer learners to engage with the world beyond the classroom and to extend their knowledge" (Bua-lit, 2018: 8). A common feature of the literacy interventions associated with the EGRAs is their adoption, partly or in full, of principles of Direct Instruction. The influence of Direct Instruction is further acknowledged in the NRS where it is stated that "the direct instruction model … is an approach that is skills-oriented and teacher directed…. Although originally conceived for children experiencing learning difficulties who were taught in small groups, the approach has been used at the whole class level effectively" (MoEST, 2014: 24). Thus, the emphasis is on skills instead of use, and that there is a deficit view of the learners as implied from the adoption of an approach meant for learners with learning difficulties and thus requiring 'direct instruction'.

Direct Instruction (DI) was developed by Bereiter and Engelmann in the 1960s as a method meant to improve literacy skills of children who were perceived to be struggling with literacy. According to Stockard, et al. (2018: 2) "Direct Instruction builds on the assumption that all students can learn with well-designed instruction. When a student does not learn, it does not mean that something is wrong with the student but, instead, that something is wrong with the instruction". Thus, DI foregrounds pedagogy in the process of learning while putting societal

influences on learning and individual learner characteristics in the background. Stockard, et al. (2018: 2) further indicate that the backgrounding of an individual learner and societal factors in the teaching and learning process puts DI "in opposition to developmental approaches, constructivism, and theories of learning styles, which assume that students' ability to learn depends on their developmental stage, their ability to construct or derive understandings, or their own unique approach to learning". Thus, with DI, the emphasis is on controlling teaching with the assumption that there is a particular approach to teaching which has universal benefits and success regardless of context. Among the major principles of DI and characteristics of DI-informed curriculum is the use of scripted lessons. This is acknowledged by the NRS which states that "the direct instruction model … has a systematic curricular design and includes implementation of a prescribed script" (MoEST, 2014: 24).

A scripted curriculum is characterised by structured lesson plans with explicit instructions on what and how the teacher is to teach. Piper, et al. (2018: 5) distinguish two main types of scripted curriculum/lessons by stating that there are "fully scripted teachers' guides, which write out the entirety of what teachers should teach on a daily basis, and structured teachers' guides, which may include some scripted lessons, but are not necessarily fully scripted for the entirety of the guides". The level of scripting is said to reflect how a project or program positions the teacher and constructs the teaching and learning process. A scripted curriculum is associated with issues of power in that in most cases they are implemented with the recommendation and probably support from government and Non-Governmental donor funded agencies. Such programs are said to leave "teachers feeling powerless and overwhelmed… [because] they are often caught between what they are asked to do and what they know is right for their students" (Dresser, 2012: 71). Where such feelings are strong on the part of the teachers, it is unlikely that the program will attain the desired learning outcomes. However, research has shown that teachers' conceptions, beliefs and knowledge are not necessarily right or appropriate and thus do not guarantee effective results. In a PhD study titled 'Preschool Teachers' Views of Literacy Instruction', Kimmy (2017: 4) found that "teachers perceived themselves as effective in both literacy instruction and knowledge of literacy concepts, but less efficacious in their ability to diagnose and provide successful interventions to students struggling with literacy". Thus, teachers might have or might think they possess appropriate conceptions of language and literacy but still be engaged in ineffective practices.

The conceptions that the teachers hold are constructed through their experiences as learners, student-teachers and the period of professional practice, including exposure to different schools of thought on what literacy is and how it is best taught. Bliem and Davinroy (1997: 1) have shown that such conceptions can either hinder or promote teachers' motivation in implementation of programs "depending on whether and the extent to which their existing beliefs overlap with the philosophical underpinnings of proposed changes to their practices". Thus, some programs put mechanisms, such as constant monitoring and supervision, in place to make sure that teachers conform to the dictates of the program. However, such over-scripting and enforcement of strict observance to the script has been found to have led some teachers to become too mechanical in their teaching. In their study titled 'Overly Scripted: Exploring the Impact of a Scripted Literacy Curriculum on a Preschool Teacher's Instructional Practices in Mathematics', Parks and Bridges-Rhoads (2012) observed that teachers transferred the practices associated with scripting in the language curriculum to their mathematics lessons which were characterized by a narrow view of learning. They further observed that "the curriculum's highly structured scripts made it less likely that the teacher would engage in innovative practices in mathematics, which reduced opportunities for children in the classroom to reason and problem solve mathematically" (Parks and Bridges-Rhoads, 2012: 308). This observation suggests that where teachers are deprived of their agency through patronizing administrative mechanisms, they become uncreative since they lose their autonomy which consequently results in poor learning outcomes. Piper, et al. (2018: 1) acknowledge the effect of scripting on teacher autonomy when they state that the scripted lessons are criticized by some scholars for "their potential to stifle teacher creativity and reduce teacher autonomy".

Despite the negative dimension of use of scripted curriculum, some studies conducted in South Africa have argued that the nature of and underlying ideologies that inform the scripting, and not scripting itself, is what makes the difference between success and failure. Shalem, et al., (2016) distinguish two approaches of scripting with one emphasising on 'scripted instruction' and the other focusing on provision of 'Educative Curriculum Materials' (ECM). They state that where the purpose of scripting is to provide scripted instruction, the approach is usually top-down as teachers are dictated to on what to say or do. They argue that this type of scripting, has a deficit view of the teacher and is usually informed by a narrow view of literacy and generally "used for phonics programs" that aim to "remediate the decoding and phonemic awareness difficulties" (Shalem, et al., 2016: 19). As for scripting informed by ECM, they state that scripting is based on understanding that teachers are active players in the teaching and

learning process and that to be successful, they require support to help them experiment critically instead of being restricted in their practice. They state that ECM informed scripting values the active and critical role of the teacher as it is "designed to develop the multiple knowledge bases needed to enact the curriculum. The conception of ECM intends to engage teachers in "the ideas underlying the writers' decisions and suggestions"" (Shalem, et al., 2016: 19). Shalem, et al., further (2016: 19) argue that, when properly designed, scripted lessons act as "curriculum resources which can possibly deepen teachers' subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of how student thinking develops, in particular in disadvantaged communities with poorly qualified teachers". This argument is further highlighted in Shalem, et al., (2018) where they argue that scripted lessons can be successful if the materials are well designed to support teachers, the system values the creative role of teachers and respect and support their autonomy.

Much as there is this positive aspect of use of scripted lessons and its potential to bring meaningful teaching and learning, Carl (2014: 30) argues that despite all good efforts and promising aspects of scripting, the education systems "seems to ignore the idea that learning should be rich and significant … or pose problems …. Instead, it operates in an environment that values preparation for a test over experiential and more meaningful forms of learning". This suggests that the skills-view of language and literacy still dominates the language curriculum and, specifically, the scripted curriculum.

Research on use of scripted lessons in Africa in general, and Malawi in particular, has shown that despite strict scripting teachers sometimes do not follow the script. A study by Piper, et al. (2018) on the nature/quality of Teachers Guides and how teachers used the guides in Kenya, Malawi, and Ethiopia, revealed that teachers made modifications to the TG. Some were deemed to be positive while others were negative. The design of their study is like the one conducted in Malawi by Mattos and Sitabkhan (2016). Despite the two studies working on different projects (Piper, et al. focused on the NRP implemented under Malawi's Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity-MERIT, and Mattos and Sitabkhan focused on the Early Grade Reading Assessment- EGRA) the results of the two studies are similar. Mattos and Sitabkhan (2016: 3) also observed that teachers made modifications to the TG "to suit their needs in the classroom, even if those changes run contrary to the training they have received". They thus propose that a "detailed understanding of the types of modifications teachers are making, as well as why they are making these modifications, can help us understand how features of a program, such

as training and curricula, are enacted in the classroom and why certain aspects of training and curricula are taken up and others are not" (2016: 3). Among the issues requiring a 'detailed understanding' in the use of scripted language curriculum are the conceptions that underlie the approaches to the teaching of language and literacy.

2.6 Conclusion

In this Chapter I have discussed the theoretical framework of my study. I have further presented a review of the literature on language and literacy in education and the use of scripted lessons in language and literacy programs. I have shown that most language and literacy education programs have a narrow conception of language and literacy which puts an emphasis on skills and not meaningful use of language. On use of scripted lessons, I have shown that much as some form of scripting has been seen to be effective in supporting teachers, the scripting in most of the programs and projects in Sub-Saharan Africa usually instructs teachers on what and how to teach, instead of providing the content and pedagogical support the teachers need. I have further shown that such type of scripting falls short of the use of scripted lessons' aim of promoting reading for meaning or meaningful use of language. In the next Chapter I outline the design of my study.

Chapter Three: Research design

3.1 Introduction

What spurred my study was my reservations (both as a teacher trainer and a person who participated in the development of the scripted lessons) on implementation of a scripted language curriculum in Malawi's early grade (Standard 1 to 4). My view has been that prescribing scripted lessons across the country disregards the idea that teaching and learning is a situated activity which is affected by contextual issues and thus prescription of a 'one size fits all' approach compromises enactment of meaningful teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, my study in the post-graduate courses at University of Cape Town gave me a different perception on the phenomena of scripted curriculum as I began to go beyond having just reservations on prescribing a one size fits all approach to looking at the conceptions of language and literacy in regard to how the conceptions underlying the scripted curriculum impact on the intended outcome of promoting reading for meaning. Scripting is therefore viewed not just an instrumental attempt to solve a problem which leads to measurable outcomes but is a result of choices made by programme providers about how to theorise literacy itself.

As indicated above, my study aimed at analysing the conceptions of language and literacy underlying the Standard 4 English TG, how the Standard 4 teachers conceptualise language and literacy as they engage with the scripted lessons in the Standard 4 English TG, and whether the conceptions inform teaching that promotes meaningful use of language. Since the study was exploratory in nature, I adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a broad term used to describe research that is focused primarily on human experience through exploring attitudes, beliefs, values and experiences (Creswell, 2007). It is an approach that

recognizes the social aspect of phenomenon and thus aims at exploring phenomenon and not testing theory on the phenomenon. Flick (2018:4) presents this feature of qualitative approach by stating that qualitative research "makes use of inductive strategies: in the process 'sensitising concepts' are required for approaching the social contexts to be studied. Thus, knowledge and practice are studied as local knowledge and practices". Thus, in qualitative research, theoretical concepts are not tested but rather used as a lens or framework through which the phenomenon can be explored or studied.

Qualitative research is said to be in-depth and holistic, generating rich material on which to base the findings of a piece of research. Sandelowski (2000) asserts that qualitative descriptive studies present a comprehensive summary of an event in everyday terms of those events or phenomenon. Given the main purpose of this study which was to explore teachers' conceptions through their accounts of experiences and practices as expressed in their discourses, qualitative research was the most appropriate research design to be used.

The study was an exploratory case study which was influenced by various key tenets of the ethnographic approach and linguistic ethnography (Dornyei, 2007). Linguistic ethnography is helpful as a tool for unpacking or understanding ideologies/conceptions in language use. According to Creese and Blackledge (2010: 106) this is the case because "within every utterance there are traces of the social, political, and historical forces that have shaped it". Thus, linguistic ethnography aims to 'uncover' such 'traces' in utterances through a detailed analysis of linguistic choices interlocutors make, their intentions and how they use words/language to achieve their objectives. In the case of my study, linguistic ethnography was utilised to establish the conceptions of language and literacy that informed the scripted lessons and teachers' and TG writers' views. I did this through a close examination of the statements made in the TG and related NRP documents, and teachers' and TG writers' opinions during interviews.

Thus, linguistic ethnography helped to understand the language and/or discourses as situated in contexts which inform and affect use (Lillis, 2008; Hammersley, 1994). In social research an 'ethnographic perspective' involves "analyzing the choice of words and actions that members of a group use to engage with each other within and across time, actions, and activity" (Gee & Green, 1998: 136). The ethnographic approach which was utilized in this study is what Lillis calls, ethnography as method. This decision was made because such an approach focusses

on understanding the contextual issues surrounding texts, in this case the scripted curriculum and teachers' views. Lillis (2008: 355) states that "*ethnography as method* (talk around text) usefully directs the researcher's attention beyond the written text towards a consideration of some elements of writers' [or readers'] perspectives about texts". Thus, through interviews, the study sought to understand the curriculum developers and teachers' conceptions of language and literacy and those outlined in the scripted curriculum.

Furthermore, the study adopted a case study design. A case study is a strategy in which the researcher explores in depth a programme, an event, activity, and process involving one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007). The intention was to obtain a deep and detailed understanding of the curriculum developers' and the teachers' beliefs and views, in relation to the curriculum. In a case study, the researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data generation methods and the aim is to understand the case or cases in their context (Flick, 2018; Creswell, 2007).

3.2 Research participants and the NRP documents

There are three focus areas in this study. Firstly, I focused on the NRP curriculum developed for the teaching of English in Grade 4, examining the overall curriculum as well as going into detail on one unit within the curriculum. Secondly, in order to probe more deeply what conceptions of language and literacy that informed the curriculum, I focused on the views of three of the curriculum writers who were involved in the writing of the Standard 4 English TG and LB and were also involved in conducting and monitoring NRP trainings for teachers. These curriculum writers were among twenty-seven 'writers' who were selected from public education institutions by the MoEST in conjunction with the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE). Four of the writers were teacher trainers from higher education institutions specialising in language education, one from MIE, two from the MoEST's Directorate of Inspectorate and Advisory Services, one from Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB), and nineteen were primary school teachers selected from schools across the country. The choice of the writers was said to be based on expertise (on the part of the teacher trainers, MoEST and MANEB officials) and outstanding teaching performance (on the part of the teachers). The inclusion of more primary school teachers in the team was an attempt to maximise their input so that the product conforms to their needs. However, since the teams were just involved in the writing of texts and lessons and not on the decision on whether to use scripting or what form of scripting was to be done, their input on such matters was not sought. Such crucial decisions

were already made by the MoEST and Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity (MERIT) (an RTI arm implementing the NRP).

With the three participants, I was interested to explore how they adopted the new frameworks introduced by RTI which were based on the EGRA, and how they reconciled this with their experiences in teaching in Malawi. One of them is a tutor at a Teacher Training College (TTC), another a subject specialist at a curriculum development institute, and the other one a primary school teacher. Thirdly, I focused on four teachers who teach in schools in Zomba, which is a city in Malawi's southern region. The purpose of engaging the teachers was to establish their conceptions of language and literacy within the new curriculum and examine how they negotiate or take hold of the conceptions of language and literacy that underpin the scripted lessons.

With regard to the curriculum, I sourced what I argue are the key curriculum texts in the NRP for Grade 4. The Standard 4 Teachers Guide (TG) was the main text since it is the document that operationalises the NRP's conceptions of language and literacy through the scripted lessons that it contains. However, to contextualise the analysis, I also analysed related documents like the Standard 4 Learners Book (LB), Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MPTDS); EGRA National Report (2010), the Malawi National Reading Strategy (2014-2019) (NRS), the Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP) II (2013-2017), the Malawi National Reading Program Baseline Assessment report (2018), and The National Reading Assessment- YESA report (2019). The LB was used to understand the nature of texts and exercises with regard to the view of language and literacy underlying them. The other documents are reports and policy documents which provided the background to the NRP and an evaluation of the NRP's impact. These reports and policy documents gave me the social, political, economic, and educational information which helped me to conduct my analysis of the TG and teachers' conceptions of language and literacy.

The teachers and their schools

The teachers were drawn from two schools in the city of Zomba in Malawi's southern region and are under the Zomba urban zone. The main research participants were four Standard 4 female[1] teachers of English, with 3 from one school and the other one from an adjacent school.

[1] There was no male teacher teaching in the early grades at both schools.

The initial plan was to have all Standard 4 teachers from each of the schools as I had based my decision on the assumption that the two schools would have two streams of Standard 4 classes. However, there were three streams at one school and two at the other. All three teachers from School A accepted to take part in the study while one of the two from School B accepted to take part. Standard 4 teachers were selected since they were teaching a transitional class from early grade which has Chichewa as a medium of instruction in the other subjects to upper primary school where English becomes the language of learning and teaching from Standard/Grade 5. This is believed to be a crucial class regarding the teaching of English as it is the class in which learners are supposed to be adequately prepared for the challenge of using English for academic and social purposes.

The two schools are about three kilometers apart and both are government schools and share the same catchment area for learners. The three teachers, who will be referred to Mrs. Nyumba, Mrs. Nyambalo, and Mrs. Mphonda, are from school A. School A is close to the main town of Zomba city and generally caters for children from backgrounds of low socio-economic status. The total school enrolment for the second term was 2497 (1212 boys and 1285 girls) and for Standard 4 was 331 (151 boys and 180 girls spread across three classes). The school had a total of 66 teachers (7 male and 59 female). Standard 4 had three classrooms (4A, 4B, 4C). Each class had two teachers who shared subjects making a total of six teachers for Standard 4. The teachers who were part of the study were those who were teaching English.

School B is situated in a township next to school A and had a total enrolment for the school of 1723 (811 boys and 912 girls) and a total enrolment for standard 4 of 203 (104 boys and 99 girls). The school had 46 teachers. Standard 4 had two classrooms, each with two teachers who shared subjects. Mrs. Khama is the teacher from school B who was teaching Standard 4 English.

Mrs. Nyumba has been teaching various lower and upper primary classes as a qualified T2 certificate[2] teacher for 25 years (since 1995). She has been teaching Standard 4 English since 2014 (6 years). She has taught through the three major changes of the curriculum (the objectives based, the outcomes based, and the current NRP approach - refer to Chapter 1). She therefore

[2] The main professional certification offered by Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) for primary school teachers in Malawi.

is expected to have well developed conceptions of language and literacy due to her long service and experience with different types of curricular. She had 87 learners in her class.

Mrs. Nyambalo has taught various lower and upper primary classes as a qualified T2 certificate. She has been teaching for 8 years and all those years she has been teaching English. Since she has experienced the PCAR curriculum for about 4 years before introduction of the NRP, she was also considered to have likely developed her own conceptions of language and literacy. She had 75 learners in her class.

Mrs. Mphonda is also a qualified primary school teacher, the youngest of the four and least experienced. She has taught for 5 years and for 4 of those she has been teaching English. Unlike the other participants, in her class she alternates subjects with her teaching partner every term which means that she does not teach English consistently. She has the least experience of teaching the previous curriculums as she joined the teaching profession in the final year before implementation of NRP. She had 67 learners in her class.

Mrs. Khama is from school B and has been teaching various lower and upper primary classes as a qualified T2 certificate. She has been teaching for 10 years and for 2 of those she has been teaching Standard 4 English. She has enough experience from teaching the outcomes-based curriculum and the NRP and thus was assumed to possess her own conceptions of language and literacy. She has 130 learners in her class.

Curriculum developers/writers

To substantiate/triangulate my textual analysis of the TG, I interviewed three curriculum (TG/LB) developers who were also involved as facilitators and monitors of CPD trainings. This decision was based on Luke's criticism of exclusive textual analysis (2002: 102), who citing Pennycook (2000), states that "what texts 'do' in the world cannot be explained solely through text analysis or text analytical language". This suggests that a fair analysis of a text requires engagement with the producers (and in some cases, the consumers) of the text. One of them, Mr. Dzuwa, was the team leader of the Standard 4 team and his role was to lead and supervise writing activities such as discussions and drafting. He was thus involved at book, TG and Learners Book (LB) design level meetings but not at NRP conception level. He was a teacher trainer at one of Malawi's Teacher Training Colleges (TTC). The second one, Mr. Mwanga, was involved at the design level but was not involved in actual development of the

TG and LB. During the writing process, he was the overall supervisor of all the three teams (Standard 2-4) as the materials for the three grades were written simultaneously at the same venue, but in different rooms. He was a language specialist at Malawi's curriculum development institute (MIE). Mr. Dzuwa and Mr. Mwanga were also involved in facilitating and monitoring the NRP CPD's for teachers. The third one, Mrs. Masiye, was a primary school teacher and she was involved as a writer. I decided to include her in order to get her evaluation of how teachers are negotiating the scripted curriculum since, being a teacher, she has some form of insider knowledge.

3.3 Data collection methods

Document analysis and interviews were the main data collection methods for this study.

Document analysis

Since the TG is a big document (352 pages) and with time constraints, I did a general review of the TG and the documents cited above to analyse the conceptions of language and literacy that inform the NRP. The general analysis of the documents was mainly a thematic analysis where I looked at the organisation and structure of the TG and the lessons in the TG Units, the language or terms used in the lessons, nature of activities in terms of how the teacher is positioned (how and what the teacher is instructed to do) and the view of language and literacy reflected in the nature of the activity and suggested teaching approaches.

For a detailed analysis of the TG, I 'sampled' Unit 16 for a thematic and discourse analysis. I chose this Unit as it was the Unit that the teachers were teaching during the week in which the interviews were conducted and that it was the one where they gave an account of how they taught the lessons. Thus, it was ideal for an analysis as the textual analysis of the TG was undertaken with regard to the teachers' accounts of how they taught the lessons and their views about them. In my analysis, I did a thematic analysis of each lesson and categorised activities, in some cases whole lessons, with regard to the conceptions of language or literacy underlying them. I then conducted a language analysis of the lessons in conjunction with the teachers'

accounts of the lesson to analyse how their linguistic choices and expressions reveal a particular conception of language and literacy.

Interviews

A total of seven (7) interviews and one (1) focus group discussion (FGD) were conducted. There were 4 (four) interviews (conducted on separate days) with teachers and three (3) with curriculum developers and one FGD with all the four teachers. Interviews with teachers were conducted to ascertain the teachers' conceptions of language and literacy, their general experiences of language and literacy teaching in English and their accounts of implementing the scripted lessons, in particular, the ones from Unit 16 which they were actually teaching at the time. The FGD was conducted after the interviews and was meant to gather more information and clarification and to triangulate what was established during the interviews.

The interviews and FGD were audio recorded using a smart phone. The recordings of the teachers' interviews and FGD were later transcribed verbatim and translated from Chichewa to English. This was necessary as the teachers were asked to choose to do the interview in a language that they would feel comfortable to express themselves freely, and all chose Chichewa. Those of the curriculum developers were also translated and there was no need for translation as they were in English.

3.4 Data Analysis

The study utilised linguistic ethnography and thematic analysis as an analytical framework. With regard to linguistic ethnography, I utilised the concept of the 'ethnographic perspective' to analyse mainly the TG data (Gee & Green, 1998). The ethnographic approach which was utilized in this study was what Lillis calls, 'ethnography as method'. This decision was made because such an approach focusses on understanding the contextual issues surrounding texts, in this case the scripted curriculum. Lillis (2008: 355) states that "*ethnography as method* (talk around text) usefully directs the researcher's attention beyond the written text towards a consideration of some elements of writers' [or readers'] perspectives about texts". In my study, in the case of the TG, the "elements of writers' perspectives about texts" that I focused on were the conceptions of language and literacy that underlie the scripted lessons' statements, activities and 'content'. Thus, the first step was to read/study the scripted lessons in terms of language and content (topics, activities, and instructions) and then conduct an analysis of the nature of activities and instructions on what and how to teach language and literacy. From this, I

generated themes about conceptions of language and literacy that underlie the approach to the teaching of language and literacy. Blommaert's (1998) artefactual ideology of language, including concepts of language as structure and as bounded entities, and Street's (1991) autonomous and ideological models, including conceptions of literacy as skills or situated practice emerged as key themes related to conceptions of language and literacy.

Thematic analysis was also employed to analyse the interview data. To do this, I utilised Walcott's (1994) three steps of data analysis namely, description, analysis, and interpretation. On description, I focused on getting familiar with what was said to understand what the interviewee was saying. At the level of analysis, I tried to make sense of what the interviewees were saying through an explanation of what their statements meant and implied, thereby generating minor themes from the data. From this level I moved to the interpretation level where I generated major themes from the analysis I conducted to come up with conceptions of language and literacy that underlie the TG writers and teachers' views. As was the case with the TG data analysis, I also drew on Blommaert (1998) and Street's (1991) conceptions of language and literacy.

The themes generated from the TG and interview data were then compared to generate major themes on the conceptions of language and literacy underlying the scripted lessons and teachers' approach to language teaching. I focussed on statements in the curriculum documents and those made by teachers and TG writers and examined what conceptions of language and literacy they reflect or promote.

3.5 Ethics

According to Dornyei (2007: 63) "social research- including research in education- concerns peoples' lives in the social world and therefore it inevitably involves ethical issues". He goes further to indicate that ethical issues in social research are supposed to be handled carefully because social research is "inherently interested in people's personal views and often targets sensitive or intimate matters" (p.64). Thus, to avoid legal complications on the part of the researcher and the institution the researcher is affiliated to, and to protect research participants, researchers are required to take into consideration potentially sensitive elements of their study. The main aspects that researchers take into consideration are negotiation of access, informed consent and anonymity (Creswell, 2007). Negotiation of access involves getting permission from relevant authorities to conduct the study. Ethics clearance was sought from the University

through the Dean/Chair of the School of Education at University of Cape Town. In Malawi, permission to interview teachers was sought and granted through the District Education Manager (DEM) for Zomba Urban who oversees Zomba City Educational District. Informed consent involves making research participants aware of what they are going to be engaged in and their rights in the process (see Appendix 4 for a blank copy of the letter of consent). Research participants were informed of the purpose of the study and their right to either participate or not (voluntary and not coerced activity) and even decide to discontinue their participation (see Appendix 3 for the letter of information). Anonymity involves nondisclosure of identities of research participants. Anonymity of study participants has been achieved through use of pseudonyms/codes for the schools, curriculum developers and teachers who took part in the study. The participants were further asked to vet if the interview transcriptions are a true reflection of what they said.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research design and methodological choices I made and how I operationalised them. In the next two data chapters, I draw on the analysis of the curriculum documents and interview data, which I have presented above, to discuss the findings of my study. In Chapter 4, I present conceptions of language that underly the scripted lessons, with a focus on Unit 16, and teachers views of language and how they negotiate the curriculum's conceptions of language. In Chapter 5, using the same approach as in Chapter 4, I focus on conceptions of literacy.

Chapter Four: Conceptions of language

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conceptions of language underlying the Standard 4 English TG, and how conceptions of language are expressed by the Standard 4 English TG writers and the Standard 4 teachers that were interviewed. With the aid of a content analysis of Lessons in Unit 16 of the Standard 4 English TG and a thematic analysis of interviews with Standard 4 teachers and TG writers, I argue that what Blommaert (2008) calls the "artefactual ideology of language" is dominant in the TG and in the views of the teachers and TG writers. To demonstrate my argument, I discuss two main features of this ideology namely, the structural view of language (Saussure, 1917; Chomsky, 1965), and the view that sees languages as "stable, bounded entities clearly differentiated from one another" (Makoe & McKinney, 2014).

Regarding the structural view of language, I discuss three main features characterising this, namely, the view that languages consist of core components or building blocks; the view that grammar and/or syntax are key to language learning and use, and the view that in second language teaching and learning, oral language should precede print-based language. Regarding the view that languages are bounded entities, I discuss the relationship between English and Chichewa with a focus on the place of English in the curriculum, and the role of local languages, like Chichewa, in the teaching and learning of English. Before I discuss the conceptions of language, I first present a brief description of the NRP and structure of the Standard 4 Teachers Guide and Learners Book. In my discussion of the TG and LB, I will focus on Unit 16 as it is the one that my analysis dwells on.

4.2 The NRP's scripted curriculum

The NRP is a USAID/DFID funded nation-wide 5 year reading intervention implemented by RTI International's Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity (MERIT) with the aim of 'improving reading skills among early grade (Standard 1-4) learners in Malawi' (MIE, 2016). It was implemented in 2016 starting with Standard 1 with a plan to implement it incrementally. However, due to time constraints resulting from delays to finalising development of teaching and learning materials, it was deemed that incremental implementation will not be practical. Thus, in 2017 NRP was simultaneously implemented in Standards 2-4. This is a problem with external interventions and their funding cycles which do not correspond with the cycles of schooling, and a number of problems have arisen from this decision which are touched on in what follows.

To achieve what it views as effective implementation of the program, the NRP outlines four interlinked components, namely, high quality teaching and learning materials, improved reading instruction and teacher preparation, assessment, and family and community involvement. With regard to provision of high-quality teaching and learning materials, it recommends that apart from just exposing learners to a variety of texts, the selected texts should be 'appropriate [to learners], consider text difficulty, text genre and text topic" (MoEST, 2014: 8). However, it is tricky as to how texts appropriate to contexts of children across diverse parts of multicultural/multilingual country like Malawi and the associated socioeconomic backgrounds can be achieved. On families and communities, the NRP reflects the social aspect of language and literacy by acknowledging the role of the home/community in learning.

The instruction component focusses on standardisation of teaching and learning through provision of scripted lessons and conducting regular trainings for teachers on how to effectively implement the EGRA approach. On this component, the NRS states that 'to ensure that children acquire the reading skills they need, instruction will focus on the five components of reading. Time will also be allocated to oral language development and writing. These two skills will help children develop reading skills and will be instrumental when they begin to read in a second language" (MoEST, 2014: 10). According to the NRS 'the five components of reading' are 'phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehensions' (p.10). The quote above and the description of what constitutes the 'five components of reading' reveals that the focus is on the cognitive aspects of reading and that reading is viewed as the main component with the other language components as support for the development of reading. On assessment, the NRP emphasises the importance of continuous assessment. The NRS states that in the NRP "classroom level assessment is an important component of the teaching and learning cycle…… Results will provide [the] teacher the information they need to plan and adjust instruction" (MoEST, 2014: 21). There seems to be a contradiction here when one tries to relate how the teacher is expected to 'plan and adjust instruction' in the context of strict scripting.

As for teaching, the NRP has adopted the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) approach which utilises the 'I Do', 'You Do', and 'We Do' cycle. The NRS describes the approach as one which "emphasises teaching in small steps, guiding students during initial practice, and ensuring that all students experience a high level of successful practice. This approach has been labelled explicit teaching, active teaching, or direct instruction" (MoEST 2014: 24). Thus, in this approach, for each main lesson activity the teacher must 'instruct' the learners through modelling, then do the task together with the learners, and lastly let the learners do the task/similar task independently.

To ensure that the scripted lessons are delivered effectively, the NRP emphasises the components of school-based coaching sessions and national workshops (held during end of term holidays at zone levels) on how to teach the main components of the program. During these coaching sessions and national workshops, the focus is generally on "skills and knowledge of teachers of reading in Standards 1- 4…. common set of skills and knowledge related to the teaching of reading, the theory and practice of teaching English as a second

language in the early grades, and that are aligned with standards and curriculum" and that such training "will be provided to both pre-service and in-service teachers" (MoEST, 2014: 28).

4.3 Structure of the Standard 4 TG and LB

As regards to organisation of the scripted 'curriculum', it is stated that both the TG and LB:

> …contain a total of 33 units. Of these, 27 are teaching units which have central themes or topics to be covered. The other 6 are review and assessment units. It is also important to know that the units in this teacher's guide correspond to the units in the learner's book. Each unit is divided into 10 lessons to be taught in a week. The ninth lesson is meant for more independent practice in reading through the reading of supplementary readers. In this lesson learners will be required to read a text of their choice. The tenth lesson, which marks the end of a unit, is a review lesson or unit assessment in which no new work is taught" (MIE, 2017: iv).

Each lesson is allocated 30 minutes and has 3 to 4 activities with each activity having its stipulated time. The TG has "fully-scripted lessons" (Units 1-6) which are aimed at helping teachers to get used to using the 'I Do, You Do, We Do' approach. In the fully scripted lessons, this is done through a detailed scripting of the words that the teacher should say and the teaching and learning steps the teacher must follow. An example is Activity 5.4.1 found in Unit 5 of the Standard 4 TG. It instructs the teacher to say "In one of the previous lessons, we learnt how to read groups of words that make sense with good speed. This is called chunking. Now we will read the story… using chunking again" (MoEST, 2017: 65). On the other hand, Units 7-33 have what are termed 'compact lessons' which are partially scripted in order to "provide guidance and expect the instruction to follow the *I Do, We Do, You Do,* teaching approach as used in Units 1-6" (MoEST, 2017: x). In these units, the teacher is given general instructions on how and what to teach, like, "Follow *I Do, You DO,* and *We Do,* to teach meanings of the following words using appropriate strategies…" (MoEST, 2017: 177).

Each Unit bears the title of a story/text which is assigned to the unit (see 'Table of contents' in Appendix 6). It appears that the story/text is there to give content, or a theme to the lesson, but I will explore this issue further below. Examples of some of the titles are:

> Unit 1: My New Friends
>
> Unit 2: Taking Care of The Body

Unit 3: School Rules

The content of the stories is usually on themes/topics related to learners' experiences (like Unit 1 above) or informative/educative (like Unit 2/3) on the assumption that when stories have meaning, language learning using such stories becomes meaningful and consequently leads to effective learning. The stories are usually accompanied by a 'drawn' image depicting a scene which is assumed to be 'local' or 'Malawian'. This assumes that texts and images should depict 'local' scenes/issues to relate with learners' experiences and situate learning of language in familiar contexts. The stories/texts are then followed comprehension questions and exercises which are usually on vocabulary, grammar and writing.

Unit 16 is called 'Meeting with the counsellor' where this is also the title of the story in the LB's Unit 16. Below is the text/story for Unit 16:

UNIT 16 Meeting with the counsellor

counsellor **matters** **damage**
disbelief **develop**

Mr Mwalilino is a youth counsellor for Bowe Zone. Each village in the zone has a youth centre. This is where young people meet to discuss different matters. He meets the youth at the youth centres.

One day, Mr Mwalilino visited Kalikongwe Youth Centre. Many boys and girls came to the meeting. He spoke on many things. He said, "Don't smoke and don't drink beer." Chikondi raised his hand.

"Why should we not smoke?" He asked. "Smoking is dangerous. It can damage your lungs and you may die," Mr Mwalilino explained.

We looked at one another in disbelief. There were some youths in the meeting who smoked. We learnt that our friends were putting their lives in danger by smoking.

"You must also work hard in school," Mr Mwalilino continued. "We need people who can read and write to develop our country." After his speech, we asked him many questions about our health. Others asked what they should do to live a happy life. At the end, we asked the counsellor to visit us again.

Answer the questions.

1 Where do the youth meet in Bowe Zone?

2 What two things did the counsellor advise the youth not to do?

3 Why did Mr Mwalilino advise the students to work hard in school?

4 Why did the youth ask the counsellor to visit them again?

5 If you were the counsellor, what other advice would you give the youth?

Figure 1: Unit 16 LB story and comprehension

The story is about a youth counsellor who visits the 'youth' at the village youth centre to give them advice about avoiding bad behaviour and working hard in school. Youth counsellors are a component of some NGOs who are implementing their various projects in Malawi's rural areas. Their role is to engage with the youth in their catchment area to inspire, motivate and advise them on academic, moral, and career issues. In most cases, the role of the counsellor is played by a public official/civil servant such as a policeman or health worker for purposes of acting as a role model to the youth. As will be seen in the sections below, the text is designed in a way that it contextualises the teaching of the language structures of giving and taking advice. Furthermore, the text was also designed to situate the teaching of vocabulary and grammar. However, as it will be shown in the sections below, there was hardly any meaningful attempt to situate teaching and learning in the context of the story or learners' experiences.

Furthermore, each Lesson in the Unit has the title of the story as the first part of the lesson heading/title, like Lesson 16.7 'Meeting with the counsellor: Comprehension'. Unit 16 (see Appendix 6), like all teaching units in this TG, consists of 10 lessons with 8 teaching lessons while 9 and 10 are for 'supplementary reading' and 'review and assessment', respectively. Each Unit is meant to be taught in a five-day week where 2 lessons are taught in a day. Unit 16 is one of the lessons that is not fully scripted as in the earlier lessons. By this time it is expected that the teachers have developed the routines from following the earlier fully scripted lessons. The table below presents the 'weekly lesson components' for Standard 4 English and the 'content' of each lesson.

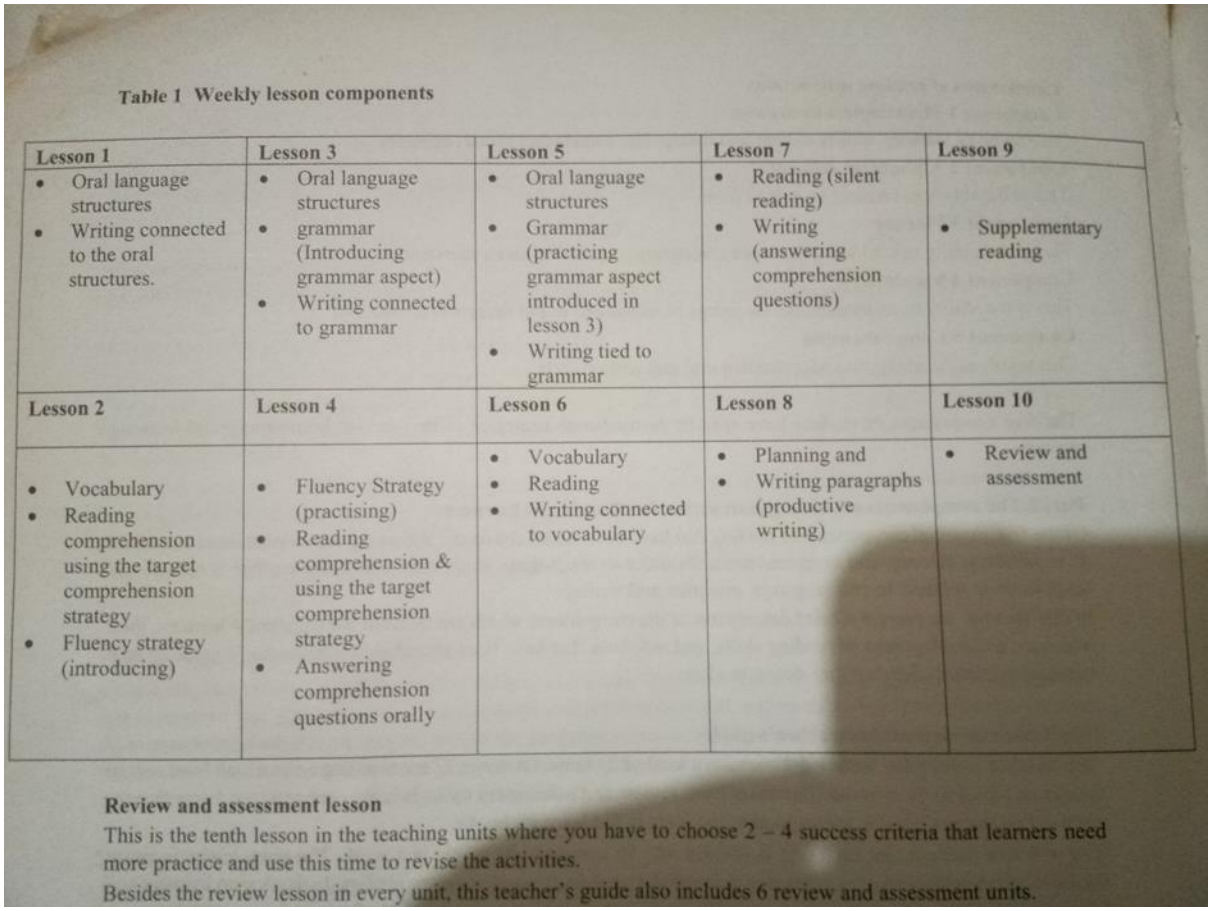

Table 1 Weekly lesson components

Lesson 1	Lesson 3	Lesson 5	Lesson 7	Lesson 9
• Oral language structures • Writing connected to the oral structures.	• Oral language structures • grammar (Introducing grammar aspect) • Writing connected to grammar	• Oral language structures • Grammar (practicing grammar aspect introduced in lesson 3) • Writing tied to grammar	• Reading (silent reading) • Writing (answering comprehension questions)	• Supplementary reading
Lesson 2	**Lesson 4**	**Lesson 6**	**Lesson 8**	**Lesson 10**
• Vocabulary • Reading comprehension using the target comprehension strategy • Fluency strategy (introducing)	• Fluency Strategy (practising) • Reading comprehension & using the target comprehension strategy • Answering comprehension questions orally	• Vocabulary • Reading • Writing connected to vocabulary	• Planning and • Writing paragraphs (productive writing)	• Review and assessment

Review and assessment lesson

This is the tenth lesson in the teaching units where you have to choose 2 – 4 success criteria that learners need more practice and use this time to revise the activities.

Besides the review lesson in every unit, this teacher's guide also includes 6 review and assessment units.

Figure 2: Weekly Lesson Components (Standard 4 TG, p. v)

As shown in the 'Weekly Lesson Components' of this unit, five of the lessons (2, 4, 6, 7 & 9) are mainly focussed on reading while oral language and grammar have two (1, 3 & 5), and Lesson 8 is focussed on writing. Having more lessons on reading suggests that Standard 4 English is focussed on reading, and a closer look at the reading lessons suggests that the focus is on the three components of reading, namely, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, which are three of the "big five" stipulated by the NRP as being crucial. Despite this being the focus, the units have lessons which integrate oral language, grammar and writing components. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate in the sections that follow, the assigning of language components to each lesson shows very clearly that the focus is on structure as opposed to meaning. There is no "content" in this, no meaning other than that of language as system. The titles and stories supposed to bring content to each unit are forgotten in the matrix of tasks, exercises and activities which are broken into minute chunks of time, like 2 minutes.

The LB's Unit 16 (see Appendix 7), like all Standard 4 LB Units, starts with a text/story titled 'Meeting with the counsellor' followed by 5 comprehension questions. The 'story', as I will discuss in the subsequent sections (see above), is mainly used for teaching the reading

components of vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Furthermore, the Unit has four exercises which are linked to the lessons in the TG.

4.4 The structural view of language/language as an artefact

Blommaert's artefactual ideology of language resonates with but is also a critique of Saussure's (1917) and Chomsky's (1965) structural views of language which views language as a system of signs and their signifiers that operate at two levels, namely *langue vs parole* (Saussure) or *competence vs performance* (Chomsky). This distinction about language is based on the view that languages have two levels; the abstract level (langue/competence), which consists of linguistic features universal to all languages, and the actual use of language (parole/performance), which varies based on sociocultural factors. To many structuralist linguists the focus should be on what they claim to be the abstract, universal, and pure nature of language and not on concrete, context-dependent actual speech. Saussure and Chomsky, like most linguists, work on the assumption that language (at the level of langue or competence) is an ideal entity that exists in an abstract form, and has a system consisting of related parts which can be studied to understand their structure and how they operate. It is this view of language as consisting of structures that can be distinguished from each other and be studied that links Blommaert's artefactual ideology of language to the structural view of language. Both view language as an abstract entity that exists independent of its social uses and thus can be studied out of its context of use.

Language as consisting of components or building blocks

One feature of the artefactual ideology reflected in the TG is the structural view of language which views language as consisting of key linguistic structures and features which are the core of a language and that acquisition of such will enable the individual to communicate in a variety of communicative situations. According to the artefactual ideology of language, this structural view of language assumes that languages have "stable and invariable 'core' features" whose acquisition "will enable one to produce every genre, style, and contextually appropriate form of speech" (Blommaert, 2008: 292).

This section argues that the structural view of language is reflected through the TG, TG writers, and teachers' view of language, and seen as consisting of independent and decontextualised components whose acquisition automatically facilitates language use in various contexts. The TG highlights the concept of language as consisting of components by stating that to facilitate systematic teaching, the TG has been designed in such a way that "the instructional materials are aligned so that the *language components* to be taught should progress from simple to

complex" (p. iii, *italics mine*). The quote suggests that the components are regarded as independent and atomised items which are hierarchically organised with some regarded as 'simple' and others 'complex'. This view of language as consisting of components that can be separated and studied in a specific and linear order based on growing complexity, is typical of the structural view of language "in which particular textual practices can reduce language to an artefact that can be manipulated like most other objects" (Blommaert, 2008: 292).

This view of language as an artefact that consists of components which must be studied and/or 'manipulated' (Blommaert, 2008) is reflected in some of the TG's Lesson activities. In this section I consider language components to be the patterns of language or linguistic features or structures, which are presented in the TG as formulaic elements which learners are supposed to master to be competent in the language. Such features of language teaching and learning are common in the TG's oral language lessons and are characterised with the lesson activities' emphasis on language structures and prescription of the form of language. A good example is Lesson 1 of Unit 16. The lesson is the first in the Unit and thus the first lesson to be taught in the week. Its focus is on oral language structures, specifically on the language structure of giving and taking advice.[3] Below is the extract of the lesson.

[3] This lesson has an 'error' on the issue of time allocation as it has 50 minutes instead of the official 35 minutes. This could have been missed by the editors.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language	Lesson 1

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- give advice
- take advice
- write sentences on giving advice

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

Chart with sentences about pieces of advice

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to say any piece of advice they receive at home.

Activity 16.1.1 **Oral Language: Giving and taking advice** **(15 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to give and take advice using *should*. For example: *You should work hard in school. Yes, I will.* Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.1.2 **Oral Language: Giving and taking advice** **(15 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to give and take advice using *should not*. For example:*You should not drink beer. Okay, thank you.* Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.1.3 **Writing connected to Oral Language structure: Writing sentences on giving advice** **(15 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to write sentences on giving advice. For example: *You should listen to your teacher.* Let learners write pieces of advice for different situations in groups. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion **(3 minutes)**

Ask learners to say any piece of advice they receive at home.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

Figure 3: Lesson 16.1 (Std 4 TG, p. 162)

From the extract above, the lesson, through its 'success criteria' which states that 'learners must be able to give and take advice and write sentences on giving advice', aims at teaching learners to master the language function of giving and taking advice. It could be said that the lesson attempts to bring out the social, communicative, and functional aspects of language as it asks learners to share their experiences of language use and simulate language use in real, outside the classroom contexts. This attempt to bring out the social aspect of language is reflected in the lesson introduction which instructs the teacher to "ask learners to say any piece of advice they receive at home", and in the main lesson activities which asks the teacher to "let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations". This feels like a rather token attempt however, as there is no time for responses to the situations that the learners might raise, nor for any elaboration of the meaning they may try to be making through language. As per structural and functional views of language, where emphasis is on prescription of language with a focus on form rather than meaning, the lesson activities in 16.1.1 and 16.1.2 rapidly move on to prescribe both the function of language (giving and taking advice) and the language form (use of *should* or *should not*) to be learnt. In addition, there is no context for the learners to situate the notion of 'advice' in. Advice is usually given in relation to a problem, but no such problems are suggested here so the language used is not contextualised but becomes rote. Although the Lesson attempts to bring out the social and communicative aspects of language it omits the most important contextualising element – the problem in relation to which the advice will be given and hopefully received. The actual lesson thus reflects a structural and artefactual view of language. This view of language can be seen in activity 16.1.1 whose instruction to the teacher is 'Follow I do, We do and You do to give and take advice using *should*'. Two features of the artefactual view of language come up in this instruction.

Firstly, the view that language is made up of structures which must be isolated, studied, 'understood' and practiced before meaningful use of the language. In the case of Activity 16.1.1, the structure or component of language that is 'put up as an object of study' (Blommaert, 2008) is how to give and take advice using the modal verb 'should'. This structure is isolated from meaningful language use as the focus is on correct expression of the specific structure without working with the problems for which advice would be given, or the pieces of advice which the learners indicate 'they receive at home' or letting the learners give and take advice using a variety of expressions (not just situations) that could achieve the same purpose. Thus, despite asking learners to share their experiences on the subject matter or asking the teacher to use 'different situations' during the lesson, which could have facilitated meaningful use of

language, the focus of the lesson becomes the correct language forms through modelling and imitating correct expressions, and not meaningful use. The focus on form is associated with the belief that use of language components or structures must be modelled to learners for them to imitate so that they develop correct use of the language, and thus, equates language learning to habit formation with its echoes of behaviorist approaches. In addition, with the context of the problem being omitted, the language structures feel much more like instruction or exhortation rather than the giving of advice and seem to suggest that the curriculum aims at the development of learners as 'docile citizens'. This view of language is reflected in the TGs modelling approach with its I do, We do, You do lesson structure and the teachers' belief that explanation of language components is key to language learning, learning which emphasises imitation and accuracy of isolated elements at the expense of meaningful communication or use.

This very artefactual view of language and language learning focusing on atomised elements is reflected in the difficulties Mrs. Nyumba, one of the teachers, raises in her account of how she negotiates Lesson 16.1. She implies a critique of the supposed communicative approach with which the lesson starts out but it gets more complex as she goes along. She states:

> It (Lesson 16.1 presented above) just starts with 'can you say any piece of advice you receive at home?' Thus, a teacher just comes to class, in the introduction he says it's time for English. Then you just ask the learner, and *the learner doesn't even know the meaning of advice.* Here (points at the TG), they are not telling you to first tell the learners the meaning of advice but that you just ask the learner 'Can you mention any advice you receive at home?' Consider a Standard 4 learner in Malawi. Can he respond to this question or this *same question - a Standard 8 learner cannot answer unless you do it the way we used to do where we had to first write the difficult words on the board, you write 'receive', you write 'advice' you write 'a piece' then you explain to the learners the meaning of the words.* In this way the learner knows what the teacher expects from him.
>
> (**Interview with Mrs. Nyumba, italics mine for emphasis)**

In general, Mrs. Nyumba faults the way the lesson is conceived and structured. She tries to explain that the scripted lessons are based on an incorrect assumption about the English language abilities of the Standard 4 learners. By stating that the lesson 'just starts with…' and the teacher 'just comes to class…. just asks the learner…' the teacher implies that a crucial

step, in this case that of checking whether the learners know the meaning of the word 'advice', is skipped and could hinder learning. The teacher advances this assumption by stating that 'the learner doesn't even know the meaning of advice'. Without resorting to a discussion of the term in Chichewa to mediate the new term or being able to draw on translanguaging, the teacher is forced to view learners as empty slates and infantilise them as helpless beings. She thus implies that the scripted lesson's language or content is way above the competence of the learners and that the way the activity has been framed (assuming the learner knows the key words) is not appropriate for her learners. She therefore suggests that a better way to approach the lesson was to first 'explain' the meanings of the words *"the way [they] used to do where [they] had to first write the difficult words on the board, you write 'receive', you write 'advice' you write 'a piece' then you* ***explain*** *to the learners the meaning of the words"* (From the quote above). By suggesting that the lesson should have been structured in 'the way it used to do' which involved writing 'difficult words on the board' and 'then explain to the learners the meaning of words', the teacher reveals that she is also used to, and comfortable, with the artefactual ideology-informed practice of treating language as an object of study that must be 'explained' to learn. Much as it could be considered that by faulting the Lesson instructions the teacher aimed at suggesting an appropriate use-based approach which values pre-requisite knowledge for the activity, the teacher's suggestion of isolating the words from their context of use to 'write the difficult words on the board' with an emphasis on explaining the meanings to the learners, exhibits the same artefactual view of language which views language as consisting of components and as an object of study. Thus, what is viewed by the teacher as teaching for meaning is superficial as the focus is meaning of decontextualised items instead of making meaning from text.

This focus on language components and 'explaining' language reflects Blommaert's (2008: 292) opinion that with the artefactual/structural ideology of language "particular textual practices can reduce language to an artefact that can be manipulated like most other objects". In this case the 'textual practices' that 'reduce language to an artefact' are the decontextualization of language components (writing words on the board) and the focus on explaining their meanings to foster 'understanding' at the expense of meaningful use of language. Thus, the issue that the teacher has with the scripted lesson could be said to be about feeling forced to change her 'usual' approach to teaching vocabulary in a decontextualised way. Therefore, both the TG and the teachers reveal an artefactual view of language showing that their preferred teaching practices are informed by such a view.

In relation to the first feature of the structural view of language, that language is made up of components or structures, the second feature of the structural view of language exhibited in Lesson 16.1 is the view that language learning is about understanding or knowing language components and not the use of language in meaningful communicative contexts. This is reflected in the lesson instructions' focus on the structure of the language through limiting learners to practicing structures which use the word 'should' in the advice that they give and take. This is further noted in Activity 16.1.2 where the learners are asked to change the language structure from 'should' to the negative 'should not'. Much as these two lesson activities instruct the teacher to 'let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations' and that in Activity 16.1.3 more practice is provided through giving the learners an opportunity to write sentences on what was covered in Activity 16.1.1 and 16.1.2, the focus on the language structures 'should' and 'should not', and the use of I do-You do- We do approach, which promotes learner imitation of the teacher's model, divorces language from its context of use thereby putting it up as an object of study (Blommaert, 2008). As an object of study, language teaching is generally associated with teacher centred methods such as explanation. This is reflected by Mrs Nyambalo's conclusion that the reason for her learners' failure to 'learn' in Lesson 1 *"could be that [she] did not explain well"* **(Interview with Mrs Nyambalo).** Thus, the teacher is of the view that were her explanations properly done, the learners could have learnt. Language is thus not viewed as a means of communication and of meaning making but rather an object of study consisting of linguistic components whose learning requires elaborate explanations by a knowledgeable individual.

Gee (2002) faults this decontextualised practice of teaching and learning language which is characterised by direct instruction of language structures or components. He posits that language should not be viewed as an object meant to be studied in a decontextualised way but rather as a socio-cognitive phenomenon which must be learnt through meaningful social interaction. He states that "both inside and outside school, most social languages and genres are clearly not acquired by 'direct instruction.' While some form of (appropriately timed) scaffolding, modelling, and instructional guidance by mentors appear to be important, immersion in meaningful practice is essential" (Gee, 2002:35). Thus, much as the scripted lessons provide some form of scaffolding (teachers are instructed to provide feedback where necessary as learners are working in pairs or groups), modelling (I Do, We Do, You Do routines in every activity), and explicit statements of 'instructional guidance', there is barely any form of 'immersion in meaningful practice' as the focus is on 'understanding' and knowing linguistic

structures and not necessarily meaningful use of language. Gee further argues that language teaching and learning should foreground the social/communicative aspects of language instead of focussing on making learners get the correct form of the language. He emphasises this point, by stating that "it is a mainstay of child language development that the acquisition of a function often precedes the acquisition of a fully 'correct' form" (Gee, 2002: 39).

According to Land (2008), what Gee calls the 'acquisition of a function' occurs in meaningful and interesting situations to the child, associated with play-like activities, and not the rigid, drill-based modelling activities presented in the scripted lessons through the 'I Do, You Do, We Do' approach. Land suggests that learning should not be rigid but be an enjoyable, playful activity for learners and states that among children "play is one of the most powerful and overlooked ways of learning" (Land, 2008: 55). This is supported by Heath (2013: 194) who states that "only through play do individuals learn to explore the environment, manipulate artefacts and use tools, identify problems and try out solutions, and discover unknowns and new ways of using knowns. As play happens, language learning expands".

Grammar seen as key to language learning and use

This section discusses the view that the study of grammar is key to language teaching and learning and that knowledge of grammar automatically enables the learner to communicate in various contexts. According to the TG, among the components that are regarded as central to language and 'can be manipulated like most other objects' (Blommaert, 2008) are 'grammar and syntax'. The TG indicates that "when learners have a good understanding of *grammar and syntax* of a language they are learning, they acquire skills to communicate to a wide range of audiences for different purposes" (p. i, *italics mine*). The emphasis on 'grammar and syntax' as the core of language reflects the structural view of language which posits that language consists of structures or rules (grammar/syntax) whose acquisition or understanding is central to language learning and use (Blommaert, 2008).

Furthermore, by stating that in the school context the ability to communicate is acquired "when learners have a *good understanding* of grammar and syntax of a language", the quote reflects the structural view of language which regards language and language learning as solely a cognitive phenomenon. The focus on 'understanding' suggests that language learning is viewed as a cognitive, and not a social, process, where understanding of the components of language is central to language learning. This cognitive view of language is associated with the view of language as an artefact that is meant to be studied and understood at the level of its features or parts, before it is used. Such a view is expressed in the TG as it assumes that language use for

purpose of "communicat[ing] to a wide range of audiences for different purposes" will automatically occur when '*understanding'* is achieved (MIE, 2017: i).

The artefactual ideology of language and its associated emphasis on studying grammar independent of meaningful language use is mainly reflected in Lessons 3 and 5 of each Unit. Below is Lesson 16.3.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language and Grammar	Lesson 3

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- give advice
- take advice
- identify adjectives with suffix -less
- form adjectives with suffix -less

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

Chart listing adjectives with suffix-less, word cards

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to say what advice they have ever given a friend.

Activity 16.3.1 **Oral language: Giving and taking advice** **(8 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to give and take advice using *should* and *should not*. For example: *You should not make noise in class. Okay, I will not make noise in class.* Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.3.2 **Grammar: Identifying adjectives with suffix –less** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach adjectives with suffix-less. Use these sentences:

1 *Mr Mbewe is a careless driver.*
2 *Homeless people are staying in a camp.*
3 *He is drinking tasteless juice.*
4 *Many young people are jobless.*

Explain that careless and homeless in the first two sentences are adjectives formed by the suffix *-less*. Ask learners to identify adjectives from the last two sentences. Make sure learners understand the meaning of adjectives with the suffix –less. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.3.3 **Grammar: Forming adjectives with suffix –less** **(12 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to form adjectives by adding suffix -less on Exercise A at page 78. Tell learners to write the exercise in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion **(3 minutes)**

Ask learners to form adjectives with suffix –less from nouns on word cards.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

Figure 4: Lesson 16.3 (Std 4 TG, p. 164)

This lesson focusses on 'oral language and grammar'. However, emphasis is on grammar as two of the three main activities are focussing on grammar and have moved away from the focus on 'giving and receiving advice'. The artefactual ideology of language is first reflected in the lesson's success criteria for grammar which focusses on language forms rather than meaning. Blommaert (2008:291) states that a major feature of the artefactual ideology in 'modern linguistics' and by extension, language education, is that "the idea that language needs to be seen primarily as a limited collection of ordered forms – grammar – and of words – lexis. The assumption is, then, that modern linguistics [or learners] has to find, identify and codify these things in 'grammars', 'dictionaries' and similar textual artefacts of scholarship". The success criteria and activities of Lesson 16.3 reflects Blommaert's idea.

The two grammar success criteria's use of the words 'identify' and 'form' in relation to what the learners should do with the adjectives, and prescription of the form of adjectives (with the adjective -*less*), conveys the view of language as an object of study whose components can be distinguished and separated (identifying) and manipulated (forming adjectives using -less). Such a view of grammar puts the role of grammar in language use in the background while foregrounding the linguistic structures to be noted when identifying the adjectives (*-less at the end*) and the grammatical operations that must be learnt to help them 'form' such adjectives (adding *-less at the end of the word*). Such a view of grammar usually leads to cognitive-based practices and exercises associated with memorisation and rigid application of rules to perform decontextualised grammatical operations, while neglecting the communicative aspects of grammar. Consequently, performance of tasks associated with grammar may promote guessing of correct forms while excluding meaning. This, as presented below, is evident in Activity 16.3.2, 16.2.3 and the corresponding grammar exercises in the Learner's Book.

A look at activity 16.3.2 shows how easy it would be for a learner to guess the correct answer without understanding what the sentence is saying. If the teacher follows the Activity's instructions and 'explain[s] that *careless* and *homeless* in the first two sentences are adjectives formed by the suffix *-less'*, the learners could easily underline the remaining two without understanding what the sentence, let alone the word, means. They could do this by just looking for a word that ends with the suffix *-less* in the sentences. Despite the activity further instructing the teacher to 'make sure that learners understand the meaning of adjectives with suffix *-less'*, the meanings will probably be lexical meanings detached from the context of the sentence as the focus is on an individual word. Such emphasis on form rather than meaning leads to

formulaic understanding of language at the expense of language use in real communicative contexts.

This scenario is further exhibited in grammar exercises that are in the Learners Book, as shown below. I focus on Exercise A:

Exercise A **Form adjectives by adding the suffix -less to the given nouns.**

Example

fruit fruitless

1 job
2 hope
3 care
4 help
5 use

Exercise B **Complete the sentences by changing the words in brackets into adjectives with the suffix -less.**

Example

Do not be _____ (care) with your money.

Do not be careless with your money.

1 The football match ended in a _____ (goal) draw.
2 This chicken is _____ (life).
3 The children were _____ (help) in the rain.
4 The fun in the game is _____ (end).
5 My car battery is _____ (power).

Figure 5: Unit 16 Exercise A (Std 4 LB, p. 78)

Exercise A is linked to Activity 16.3.3 and requires learners to form adjectives from the listed five words using the suffix -less. In this exercise, it is very likely that learners will not bother to understand or know the meanings of the words and the sentences – in fact the way it is constructed seems almost designed to discourage engaging with meaning. If they got the teacher's explanation, they would just add -*less* at the end of the word and get it right, in a sense 'gaming' the exercise and no doubt pleasing their teacher. Thus, in this exercise, what matters is getting the structure or form right and not the meaning of the language or meaningful use of the language forms.

As for Lesson 16.5, which is also on 'oral language and grammar', on face value its grammar success criteria suggest a move from the artefactual view of language to a view of language as a social practice. Below is Lesson 16.5.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language and Grammar	Lesson 5

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- give advice
- take advice
- use adjectives with suffix -less
- complete sentences using adjectives with suffix -less

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

a list of adjectives

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to say some pieces of advice they are given at school by teachers

Activity 16.5.1 **Oral language: Giving and taking advice** **(8 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach giving and taking advice using *should* and *should not*. Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.5.2 **Grammar: Using adjectives with suffix –less** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach making sentences with adjectives **colourless** and **fearless**. For example:

1 The water in the bottle is colourless.
2 My dog is fearless.

Ask learners to be in pairs and make their own sentences using **helpless** and **useless**. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.5.3 **Grammar: Completing sentences using adjectives** **(12 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to make sentences using adjectives in Exercise B at page 78. Make sure learners understand the meaning of the adjectives with the suffix –less. Tell learners to write the exercise in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

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Figure 6: Unit 16 Lesson 5 (Std 4 TG, p. 167)

The first grammar success criterion, with its use of the verb 'use' suggests that teaching and learning of grammar in this lesson will go beyond the focus on form associated with identifying and forming adjectives to involve application of their knowledge of adjectives in meaningful situations. This attempt to facilitate meaningful use of language (grammar) is further reflected in Activity 16.5.2 where the teacher models making sentences using adjectives 'colourless' and 'fearless' before asking 'the learners to be in pairs and make their own sentences using '*helpless'* and '*useless'*. Much as meaningful use at sentence level could be achieved in Activity 16.5.2 through learner-learner interaction and teacher support, limiting the learners to the two adjectives hinders learners' ability to create their own, experience-based, uses of the language structure. Thus, the activity could be said to be focussed on drilling the learners on the type of sentences which use the target linguistic structures and not meaningful use of the structures. This claim could be supported in that the nature of Activity 16.5.3 and its corresponding Exercise B (see below) do not reflect meaningful use of the grammar items. Much as Activity 16.5.3 attempts to focus on meaningful use of adjectives by asking the teacher to model making 'sentences using adjectives in Exercise B' and that the teacher should 'make sure learners understand the meaning of the adjectives with the suffix -less', the nature of the activity's corresponding exercise, Exercise B, reveals that though the activity attempts to focus on meaning, the exercise focuses on form rather than meaning. This disjuncture between the lesson activity and its corresponding exercise is evident in that Activity 16.5.3 instructs the teacher to make and help learners 'make sentences using adjectives in Exercise B', while Exercise B is not about making sentences but rather 'complet[ing] sentences'. Below is an extract of Exercise A and B, which was presented above but I reproduce here for clarity of discussion. I focus on B.

Exercise A

Form adjectives by adding the suffix -less to the given nouns.

Example

fruit fruitless

1 job
2 hope
3 care
4 help
5 use

Exercise B

Complete the sentences by changing the words in brackets into adjectives with the suffix -less.

Example

Do not be _____ (care) with your money.

Do not be careless with your money.

1 The football match ended in a _____ (goal) draw.
2 This chicken is _____ (life).
3 The children were _____ (help) in the rain.
4 The fun in the game is _____ (end).
5 My car battery is _____ (power).

From the extract above (Exercise B) and contents of Activity 16.5.3, use of sentences could entail a desire to facilitate learners' application of the skill of forming adjectives with suffix -*less* (which they learnt in Exercise A) in a meaningful context. However, as was the case with Exercise A, this exercise could be completed by a learner without understanding what the sentence is saying as they could just be adding the suffix -*less* at the end of the word in the bracket, thereby defeating the exercise's intended purpose of meaningful use. Meaningful use of the 'skill' they 'learnt' in Lesson 16.3 and Exercise A could have been achieved had the words been put on top so that the learners could pick the appropriate adjective, based on their understanding of the sentence. The way these two exercises are formulated, and their corresponding lesson activities, clearly exhibits that the lessons view grammar as a language component that must be studied and understood and not as a feature of meaningful use of language.

In addition, the sentences being suggested in Exercise B are highly stilted examples of language practices. The word "goalless" is seldom used in everyday language. The sentence feels constructed to sustain the idea of 'language as system'. The same could apply to the sentence "this chicken is lifeless", which is not a sentence one would often hear in everyday life, as is the sentence "the children were helpless in the rain". These types of sentences, which are there simply to demonstrate the supposed logic of language as system, provide a rich example of Blommaert's description of the artefactual ideology of language at work.

The teachers' accounts of their grammar lessons also reflect the artefactual ideology of language which views grammar a core element of language and as an object of study. In an account of how she taught Lesson 16.3, Mrs. Khama said:

> I started with *explaining to them the difference between a noun and an adjective*, considering that they are young children. After *I explained the characteristics* of a noun and an adjective, I then *told them* that today we are going to learn about adjectives that end with the suffix -less. And *that -less is used to make the opposite of an adjective* for example, like 'he is powerful' it will be 'powerless. The *learners understood* the lesson well that even *when I gave them an exercise they did very well because they knew what they were doing*. So, the lesson was easy to the learners because I started from the basics of explaining the difference between noun and adjective and how opposites are formed. (**Interview with Mrs. Khama, italics for my emphasis**)

The quote above reflects the view of language as consisting of components (i.e. grammar) and that language (grammar) is an artefact that is meant to be studied. The teacher brings out the view that language consists of independent components by her act of 'starting' with distinguishing grammar items through 'explaining...the difference between a noun and an adjective'. Her use of the phrases 'explaining to them' and 'told them' suggests that the teacher views language as object that must be explained and that learners are mere recipients of the knowledge that the teacher is to impart to them. The knowledge that the teacher imparts through explanation is not necessarily of the language but rather 'characteristics of a noun or adjective'. By focussing on characteristics and not language use, the teacher reveals that she holds the view of language as form and that language (grammar) teaching and learning is all about the study of the features or structures of the language. The teacher further exhibits the artefactual view of language through her focus on the cognitive aspects of language through her focus on facilitating understanding. She states that her "learners understood the lesson well". As evidence for the claim that the learners understood 'the lesson', she states that when she "gave them an exercise they did very well because they knew what they were doing". From my discussion of the nature of the exercise that she is referring to (Exercise A), it is clear that what the teacher could be celebrating about her learners "doing very well' and knowing "what they were doing" is not about meaningful understanding and use of the language structures but rather mere application, probably through guess work, of the grammar rules and thus their own internalisation of the artefactual ideology of language which requires them to demonstrate that they understand that language is a game of parts.

Thus, in general, the teacher suggests that language consists of components (nouns, adjectives) which must be understood by, among other ways, explaining and comparing them and that when well understood, the learners can successfully accomplish related tasks despite not been exposed to language as a whole.

Blommaert suggests that such an approach to language is a major feature of practices informed by the artefactual ideology of language. He states that;

> When a language is learned, it is learned by methodical attention to grammar (understanding the generative potential of these forms and their combinations) and by studying the lexicon; blending forms-in-combination with words will result in 'speaking the language'. Indeed, the target of learning becomes 'a language' when textual artefacts exist that allow such efforts (Blommaert, 2008: 292).

In relation to the quote above, in my discussion of Activity 16.5.3, I indicated that on face value and its corresponding success criteria of 'use adjectives…', it attempts to bring out the social aspect of language. I further demonstrated that the nature of the Activity's corresponding Exercise B reflects the artefactual ideology of language. My argument is supported by Mrs. Mphonda's account on how she taught Activity 16.5.2 and 16.5.3.

> I started with writing sentences on the board; 'Mr Mbewe is a careless driver,' 'Homeless people are staying in the camp' 'He is drinking a tasteless juice', Many young people are jobless'. --*You are supposed to tell them--- that all these have -less*. You *tell them* that 'careless', 'homeless', 'tasteless', 'jobless' *have been formed by putting -less at the end*. The words are 'care', 'home', taste' and 'job'. Then *you tell* the learners to give other words that have the suffix -less. They said, and then came time to write. In their book (Learners Book) there is something to do with the same then you discuss the answers with them and how they should write it. (**Interview with Mrs. Mphonda, italics for my emphasis)**

From Mrs. Mphonda's account, the artefactual ideology of language is reflected through 'methodical attention to grammar' (Blommaert, 2008) by "writing sentences on the board" to be analysed. The teacher further exhibits the methodical attention to grammar in that despite the TG asking her to 'make sure learners understand the meaning of the adjectives', she only focusses on explaining the 'characteristics' of the language forms. On this she states that "you are supposed to tell them--- that all these have -less". Thus, her focus is on 'telling' the learners the structure and how to form the words and not meaning or use. Furthermore, the use of the word 'tell them' (three times) by the teacher suggests that she views learners as passive recipients of knowledge and that language consists of core components whose acquisition requires explicit study of its forms. Thus, on the part of the teacher, the emphasis on 'telling' or explaining could be a form of resistance to change her practice from the focus on form to focus on meaning (despite the TG instructions attempt to direct focus on meaning), or that the nature of the exercises, as presented earlier, implicitly compels the teacher to focus on form rather than meaning. The teacher's focus on 'telling' the learners the formula (adding suffix -less at the end of the word) and the belief that such would lead to language acquisition and use could be influenced by what Blommaert (2008) calls the 'generative potential' of language. In this case, it is the potential to form an infinite number of adjectives when one knows that such is possible by adding the suffix -less at the end of certain words. The teacher reveals that her practice may be influenced by the belief of the generative potential of language when she states

that "you *tell them* that 'careless', 'homeless', 'tasteless', 'jobless' *have been formed by putting -less at the end*…. Then *you tell* the learners to give other words that have the suffix -less". Thus, to her, explaining grammatical operations facilitates their use by learners. However, since the assumed generative potential of language is at a lower level of lexical items and at a decontextualised technical level, use of such knowledge in meaningful contexts can hardly be achieved.

Oral language to precede written language

Another feature of the artefactual ideology of language related to the view of language as consisting of linguistic components is the view that, in schooling, the teaching and learning of oral language structures or components should precede print-based language. Clay (1972: 33), in her study of how to support struggling readers, alludes to the view that in language development the oral precedes the print by stating that "while learning to read children match the text to what their ear remembers of the language. Much later they learn to understand a range of forms specific to written language". The first part of the quote implies that there is an incremental relationship between the oral and the written language in the sense that understanding of the written language is supported by knowledge of the oral language. The last sentence of the quote goes further to suggest that apart from the view that the oral precedes the print, the two have specific forms distinct from each other and that understanding of some of the written forms happens 'much later' as compared to oral forms.

The NRP is also of the view that the oral must precede the written language. The Standard 1 TG presents this incremental view of language and literacy development.

> In Standard 1, since English is a second language for most Malawian children, English instruction is focused mostly on the development of oral language. Building their English vocabulary and ability to use and understand English so that when they begin reading in English in Standard 2, the English itself will hold meaning for them (MIE, 2016: vi).

The view that the oral should precede the written language is further reflected in a comment by one of the TG writers who suggested that the level of oral language development has a bearing on level and quality of written language development. He states that:

> If you are very good in speaking, obviously you should be able to listen. That will give you an edge over reading and writing. If you are lacking in one skill, obviously that will impact the others. (**Interview with Mr. Mwanga**)

In the quote above, Mr. Mwanga views language as consisting of components which are independent of each other, but also dependent on each other, in a way that knowledge of other components (in the case of the quote above, the oral language) "will give [the learner] an edge over reading and writing" and that if the oral is not well developed, it will negatively "impact the others" (in this case reading and writing). By stating that knowledge of oral skills will give the learner '*an edge over reading'*, Mr. Mwanga suggests that language is made up of components which are hierarchically organised and must be studied or acquired in an incremental process; in this case, the oral should precede the print-based language.

This 'oral to precede print' conception of language is also reflected in all the Units of the TG as the first lesson of each Unit is an oral language lesson with an emphasis on developing oral language skills before introducing the other language skills. Furthermore, in the lessons that have oral and other activities related to grammar or writing, like Lessons 1, 3, and 5, the oral activities precede the print-based ones. This 'oral to precede print' organisation of lessons is shown in the 'Weekly Lesson Components" for the Standard 4 TG presented earlier on, but I present again here for clarity of discussion.

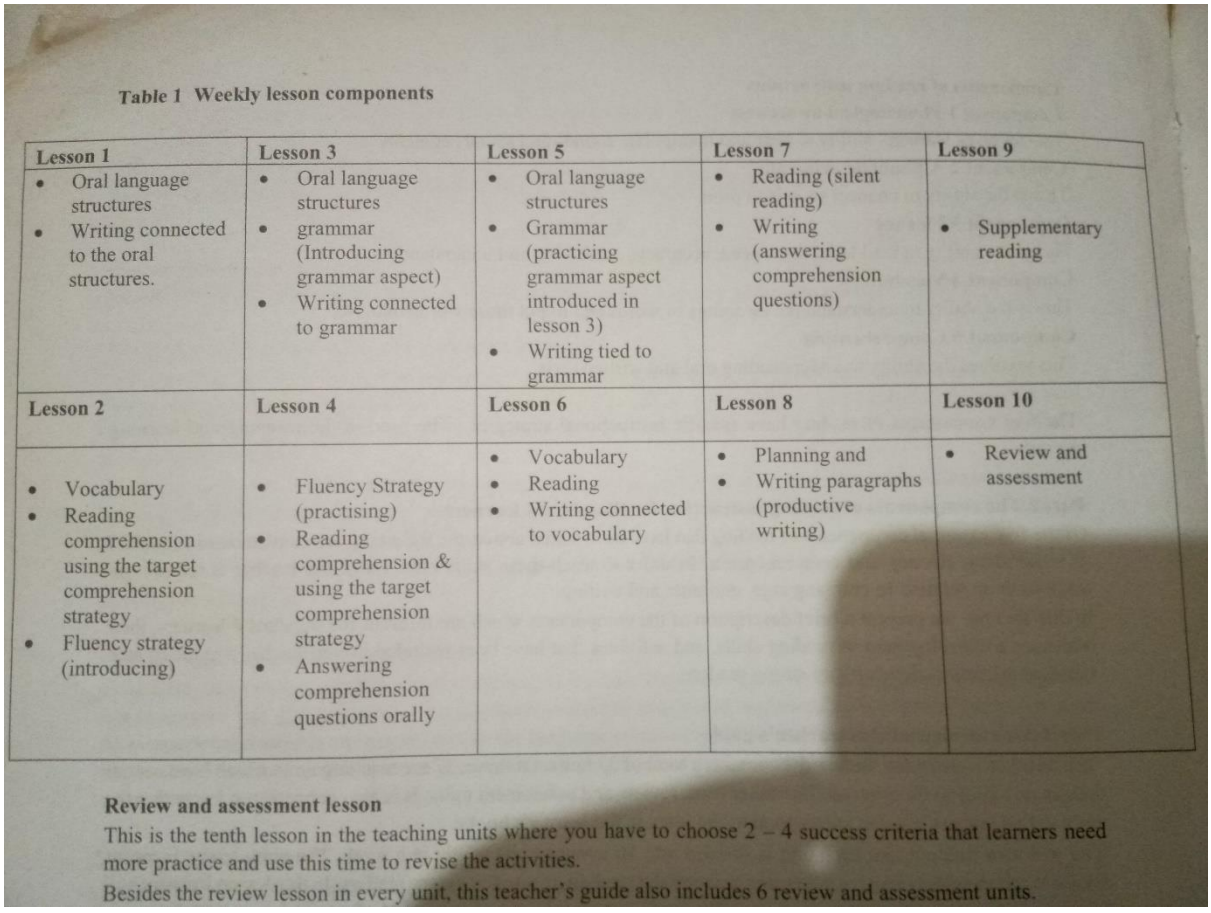


Table 1 Weekly lesson components

Lesson 1	Lesson 3	Lesson 5	Lesson 7	Lesson 9
• Oral language structures • Writing connected to the oral structures.	• Oral language structures • grammar (Introducing grammar aspect) • Writing connected to grammar	• Oral language structures • Grammar (practicing grammar aspect introduced in lesson 3) • Writing tied to grammar	• Reading (silent reading) • Writing (answering comprehension questions)	• Supplementary reading
Lesson 2	**Lesson 4**	**Lesson 6**	**Lesson 8**	**Lesson 10**
• Vocabulary • Reading comprehension using the target comprehension strategy • Fluency strategy (introducing)	• Fluency Strategy (practising) • Reading comprehension & using the target comprehension strategy • Answering comprehension questions orally	• Vocabulary • Reading • Writing connected to vocabulary	• Planning and • Writing paragraphs (productive writing)	• Review and assessment

Review and assessment lesson

This is the tenth lesson in the teaching units where you have to choose 2 – 4 success criteria that learners need more practice and use this time to revise the activities.

Besides the review lesson in every unit, this teacher's guide also includes 6 review and assessment units.

From the table above, it is noted that Lesson 1 is predominantly an oral language lesson. On the other hand, Lessons 3 and 5 which are grammar lessons start with an oral language activity. In all these lessons the 'oral language to precede print' view in reflected in their success criteria (Refer to Figure: 2, 3 and 5). In lesson 1, the first two 'success criteria' of the lesson focus on oral language learning before introducing writing in the third and final activity. Furthermore, since the writing is based on the same linguistic structures 'giving and taking advice' which were the focus of the oral activities, it suggests that the writing activity is simply to reinforce the oral component of language. As for Lesson 3 and 5, oral activities precede grammar activities. These lessons' success criteria also emphasise my earlier argument that language is taught as atomised 'features', for example, a list of adjectives. But they also demonstrate that the TG is organised on the assumption that oral language development precedes print-based language.

Apart from Lessons 1, 3 and 5 which explicitly show the view that oral language should precede print, interviews with teachers suggested that in almost all lessons, the oral precedes the print. In her account of how she taught Lesson 2, which is a reading lesson, Mrs. Nyambalo reflects this view. Below is an extract of Lesson 16.2.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Reading	Lesson 2

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- give meanings of words
- read a story using radio reading
- summarise a text

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

Word cards, pictures

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to mention different people who have ever given them advice. (*teachers, parents, guardians, religious leaders, siblings)*

Activity 16.2.1 **Vocabulary: Giving meanings of words** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach meanings of the following words using appropriate strategies: **counselor, matters, damage, disbelief** and **develop.** Help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.2.2 **Fluency: Reading a story using radio reading** **(13 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach reading the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76 using radio reading. Let learners read the story using radio reading. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.2.3 **Comprehension: Summarising a text** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach summarising the story *Meeting the counsellor* at page 76. Show learners how to include the main idea and only the most important details in the story. Let learners read the story and summarise after reading. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion **(3 minutes)**

Ask learners to give the meaning of the following words: **counsellor, damage, disbelief** and **develop**.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

Figure 7: Unit 16 Lesson 2 (Standard 4 TG, p. 163)

The lesson focusses on the reading skills of vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, in that order (a detailed discussion of this lesson will be done in Chapter 5 when discussing conceptions of literacy). The instruction for Activity 16.2.1 does not explicitly state that the vocabulary should be taught using oral language-based strategies, but just instructs the teacher to use 'appropriate strategies'. Regarding how she taught Activity 16.2.1, Mrs. Nyambalo states that "*we start with oral. For example, the reading here we may start with the words, we discuss them orally and make sentences using the words to show them the meanings of the words. When they start reading the passage, they will know the words that they will encounter in the passage"*. Mrs. Nyambalo states that the activity started with oral activities which involved discussion of meanings of words and making (orally) sentences with the words. In the second sentence of her quote, she presents the view that oral language should precede print through her belief that knowledge of the words, through the oral activities before actual reading of the text, will enable learners to successfully accomplish the reading task that follows.

On the other hand, her stating that these activities are done "*to show* [the learners] the meanings of the words" before they read the text, suggests a top-down approach to teaching vocabulary where the teacher 'imparts' knowledge by explicitly giving the learners the meanings of the words. The top-down approach with a focus on imparting knowledge in the reading lesson's oral activities is also acknowledged by Mrs. Khama who states that "*when we are teaching comprehension, we first do the new words with the learners. We do it with the learners using I Do, We Do, You Do…… which helps the learners to understand the lesson"*. **(Interview with Mrs. Khama)**. The modelling associated with the I Do, We Do, You Do approach suggests that the learners are not given an opportunity to engage with the text in meaningful ways that will enable them to effectively learn the language and suggest the rote chanting approach that has been so often criticised in language teaching. From Mrs. Khama's quote, what is emphasised is 'help[ing] the learners to understand the lesson' and not necessarily to acquire and use the language.

Similarly, in Mrs. Nyambalo's class, the discussion of the meanings of the words outside the context of the text to be read, apart from reflecting the view that oral language precedes print, reveals the artefactual view of language practices where language forms are uprooted from their context of use to be studied as independent objects. The artefactual ideology-informed assumption that learning of components will automatically lead to language use is alluded to by Mrs. Nyambalo where she states that "*when they start reading the passage, they will know the words that they will encounter in the passage"*. This suggests a linear and incremental

relationship between oral and written language. Further, her use of the words 'they will know' shows her certainty regarding the learners' success in the reading task, and belief that mastering language components leads to or precedes language learning and use.

The view that, in second language teaching and learning, oral language should precede written language has been criticised by several scholars. Manyak (2008: 450) calls this view a myth and states that research has shown that "children can acquire initial literacy in a language they are just beginning to speak". Similarly, the Bua-lit Collective argues that the oral language first view is based on an "incorrect assumption" about language where language is viewed as "a static body of knowledge to be mastered". They state that such a view "denies the reality that language use, like literacy, is deeply related to context of use, purpose and audience" (Bua-lit, 2018: 16). Thus, the view that oral language should precede print disregards the idea that language is context-bound and that its use, and choice of language resources to be used, is not neutral but rather influenced by 'purpose and audience'. The views expressed by Manyak and the Bua-lit Collective suggest that language and literacy should not be viewed as decontextualised artefacts but rather "in their full array of cognitive, cultural, institutional, and historical contexts" (Gee, 2002: 30). Such a view conceives language as a social practice that foregrounds the role of language in all aspects of human activity, acknowledges the simultaneous use of multiple language resources, and views language teaching and learning as an activity in which members should engage in purposeful and meaningful interaction, instead of 'studying' components of language. Thus, simultaneous acquisition and use of available language resources is possible if contexts conducive to such a process is nurtured. It is in this vein that Janks (2000: 177) proposes that "students have to be taught how to use and select from all the available semiotic resources for representation in order to make meaning, while at the same time combining and recombining these resources so as to create possibilities for transformation and reconstruction".

4.5 Languages as stable, bounded entities

A second theme in my analysis of the artefactual ideology of language is the view of languages as distinct and independent of each other and the belief that as much as possible languages should be treated as different and pure, and avoid contaminating each other (Blommaert, 2008; Makoe and McKinney, 2014). Makoe and McKinney (2014: 661) state that "in considering the particular ideologies of language that inform current language policy in…. Africa, the most significant is the conception of languages as stable, bounded entities clearly differentiated from one another". Related to this view of language is the idea that languages are

ideologically/socially valued based on their spheres of influence. In most developing countries like Malawi, a foreign language (colonial legacy) is usually the valued language of the major socio-political spheres of society (Makoe and McKinney, 2014). In Malawi, English is such a language. The TG states that:

> English is the business language in Malawi and also an international language. Hence, learning to read and write in English is one of the cornerstones of providing learners with quality education (p. i).

Thus, English is valued more than the local languages as it is viewed to be key to socio-economic mobility. This view relates to the concept of linguistic dominance and anglonomativity which views some languages, in this case English, as intrinsically dominant over local Malawian languages and that acquisition of a pure, standard English is the desirable norm (McKinney, 2016). Thus, mixing of linguistic codes is viewed as linguistic contamination and a sign of poor learning. Such a view is promoted by the separate bilingualism view of language where a bilingual is viewed as a person who can operate with different languages in different, separate occasions or contexts (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007). This view suggests that where there should be contact, the languages should not be used as communicative resources in an event but rather as a resource to aid the learning of the target language. This view is highlighted in the TG as it directs that "maintain English as the language of instruction but use Chichewa to help learners understand new words and concepts in English" (p. i). The fact that the local language is said to be used to 'help learners understand new words and concepts' suggests the influence of the artefactual ideology of language as the focus is not the social aspect of use of language in meaningful contexts but rather a cognitive, skills-based exercise of language learning; understanding.

The TG writers expressed strong views around the bounded nature of languages and purist attitudes towards language. The following quotes on the relationship and use of Chichewa language in English lessons reflect such a view:

> Translating is not necessarily allowed because you can see that there are so many ways of teaching a concept, you can use, aaaa, real objects, you can use context, drawings, whatever. So, a teacher should at least try to use these things but what happens is that, the rule is clear that when giving instructions and you see that learners are not following instructions, you can code switch. (**Interview with Mr. Ludzu**)

> The NRP initially, it, it, said teachers need to teach in English. When that became an obvious challenge they came back to say, where learners don't understand, teachers are free to code-switch but then that was not received well with other stakeholders because there is a policy that all instruction should be in English except Chiche.. in Chichewa. There was a ministerial, I think an announcement some time back, to say all instruction from Standard 1 to around 4 should be in mother tongue but the policy is still there. So other officials within the ministry are of the view that teachers teaching English need to teach it in English so we still have that confusion. But I am aware of the Standard 1 Teachers Guide that was revised to incorporate instructions telling the teacher to code-switch where learners don't understand. Where English proves a failure, they can code-switch so that learners understand but that should only be done on... on classroom discourse on instruct..., classroom instructions and not necessarily the content. (**Interview with Mr. Mwanga**)

The two quotes clearly bring out the bounded and separate/independent nature of the languages and indicates that a lot of effort must be put in to ensure that there is minimal contact or use of another language in contexts/domains where the other is used. This perception is further influenced by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's policy which, in 2014, through a ministerial directive, changed the language policy in primary school from what it calls mother tongue to English as a medium of instruction in all subjects except Chichewa (MoEST, 2014).

However, interviews with teachers and their accounts of lessons suggests that much as they view the languages as bounded, and considering the current language of instruction policy, their conception of languages as pure is weak as they have a positive perception of use of Chichewa in English lessons. On the requirement to as much as possible avoid use of Chichewa in English lessons, one of the teachers stated that:

> As I already said that in some cases we use real objects, for example a wooden spoon, dealing with home objects….like in the past they started by showing us pictures, we learn about the pictures and then we would say that at home we call this object 'chipande' or we call this 'mphika' (pot). This happens before going to the second language. (**Interview with Mrs. Phiri**)

The use of real objects explained by the teacher can be said to be denotational in nature as the focus is simply to give a Chichewa equivalent outside meaningful use of language. This could

be based on the teacher's assumption that simply accumulating enough vocabulary and their denotational meanings may help learners get to a point where they have sufficient vocabulary to communicate in meaningful contexts. This assumption reflects the artefactual view of language as vocabulary is regarded as a list of components which must be learnt in a decontextualised way with the belief that when enough of the list is acquired, communication will occur.

The quote further suggests that, based on her experience as both a learner and teacher, use of vernacular is indispensable even where other 'appropriate' strategies are available. The advantages and purpose of use of Chichewa in English lessons is further stated in the quote below;

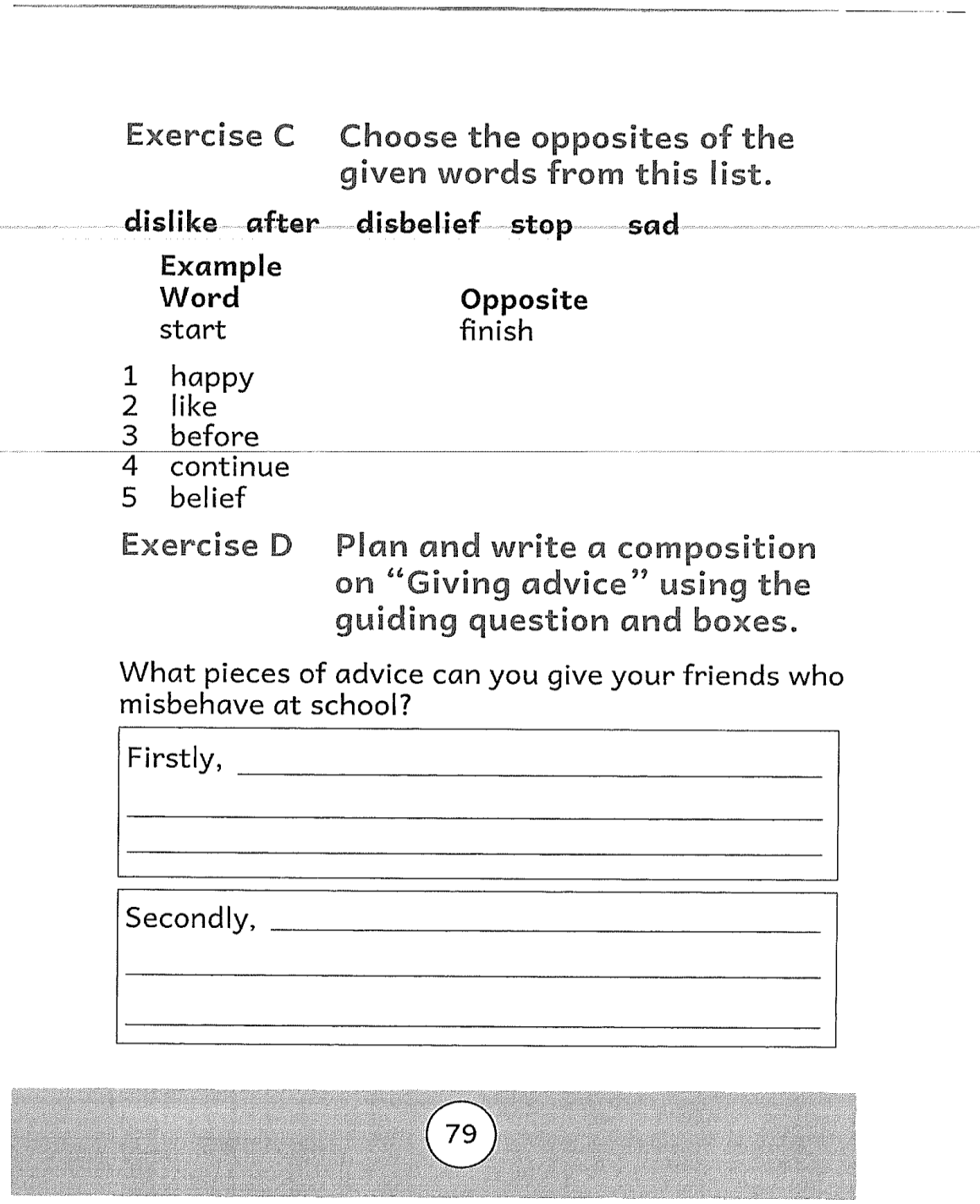
> When you use the local language, the learners understand what you are talking about and realise what you want to communicate to them. When this happens, normally no one is left behind. (**Interview with Mr. Nyambo**)
>
> The rule is clear that when giving instructions and you see that learners are not following instructions; you can code switch. **(interview with Mr. Dzuwa)**

The quotes above suggest that the use of Chichewa is not for communicative purposes but rather as a resource in the teaching of a separate bounded language. One language, in this case Chichewa, is used in the learning of another language and not as a resource in a communicative event. Mr. Dzuwa's statement that 'the rule is clear' in reference to when teachers can 'code switch' suggests that there is strict regulation that put in place the separation of languages. The same can also be said about the use of real objects stated by Mrs. Phiri, above. She focusses on use of real objects to teach meanings of vocabulary as decontextualised 'bits' of language. The focus is therefore aiding understanding of words and not use of the words for meaning making. Such practices are further promoted by the fact that vocabulary activities are mainly on giving meanings and that the meanings are 'discussed' out of context before the text is read, as shown in Lesson 16.2 (refer to Section 4.2 above).

From lesson 16.2's success criteria, (give meanings of words, read a story using radio reading, and summarise a text) it is noted that the task only requires giving meanings of the words and not using them in a meaningful context. Furthermore, 'giving' the meanings of the words before they read the text suggests that the meanings will most likely be lexical or denotational meanings of the words, not their contextual meanings as they are used in the text. Thus, despite the instruction for Activity 16.2.1 asks the teacher to use 'appropriate strategies', the exclusion

of the text in which the words have been used suggests that very little will be done to bring out connotational meanings of the words. It is very likely that the strategies that were brought out by the teachers in the quotes above, mainly teacher 'telling', use of real objects and Chichewa equivalents, could dominate the lessons. This may result in learning vocabulary as lists of words independent of context instead of language items that convey meanings in contexts of use.

This emphasis on accumulating lists of words is further reflected in Unit 16's Exercise C, as shown below.



Exercise C Choose the opposites of the given words from this list.

dislike after disbelief stop sad

Example Word	Opposite
start	finish
1 happy	
2 like	
3 before	
4 continue	
5 belief	

Exercise D Plan and write a composition on "Giving advice" using the guiding question and boxes.

What pieces of advice can you give your friends who misbehave at school?

Firstly, _____

Secondly, _____

79

Figure 8: Unit 16 Exercise C (Std 4 TG, p.79)

Exercise C, with its focus on 'choosing opposites of given words' among the English words provided in the exercise, suggests that the learners are not allowed to use their linguistic resources from other languages, but be confined to English. Thus, if the learner, in the process

of learning, provides opposites from Chichewa, regardless of such words being true opposites, such responses will be categorised as incorrect and impure use of language. This, as indicated above, reflects the TG writers and teachers' belief that use of vernacular languages generally negatively impacts on effective learning of English. Such exercises and classroom practices reinforce the view of language as bounded, pure and 'self-contained', consisting of categories of linguistic features which may be studied based on their differences or similarities; in this case opposites of certain words.

Thus, the focus in Exercise B is mainly on letting learners acquire more words, through the relationship with known words as opposites, thereby increasing the list of words in the target language. In the case of this Lesson 16.2 and Exercise C, the artefactual ideology is exhibited since the goal of the lesson seems to just be the accumulation of a list of words belonging to the language and understanding of meanings of vocabulary independent of context and meaningful use. Such a lesson and exercise could be said to match the teachers' view of teaching as cognitive activity dominated by providing and explaining linguistic aspects.

The view of languages as bounded entities has been said to marginalise bilingual children in that their mother tongue linguistic resources are not acknowledged in their learning of the official language. On this, Creese and Blackledge (2010: 105) states that in most educational institutions situated in multilingual contexts, "boundaries [are] put up around languages that language varieties must conform to prescriptive norms and represents a view of the multilingual/bilingual student/teacher as 'two monolinguals in one body'". This practice is said to put multilingual/bilingual learners "under pressure to use a monolingual lens to make sense of the world and who they are" instead of using a bilingual lens to facilitate utilization of the cultural and linguistic resources of both languages (Makalela, 2015: 15). According to Makelela (2015:16), the "monolingual ideologies and practices are ineffective and do not provide positive school experiences as well as pedagogic and cognitive support needed for multilingual [bilingual] children". Thus, to maximise learning of the target language, language resources (local or English) learners bring to school should be valued and utilised in meaningful activities to facilitate development of the target language. Baker (2006:169) justifies the need to value learners' different languages by stating that "irrespective of the language in which a person is operating, the thoughts that accompany talking, reading, writing and listening come from the same central engine. When a person owns two or more languages, there is one integrated source of thought".

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that the artefactual ideology of language dominates the TG, TG writers, and teachers' conceptions of language as a system independent of use and that there is hardly any form of teaching language for meaningful use. To demonstrate this, I have utilised Blommaert's (2008), and Makoe & McKinney's (2014) views of language as artefact and that languages are stable entities. On the artefactual view of language, I have demonstrated that the TG, TG writers and teachers conceive language as consisting of core components, that grammar and/or syntax are key to language learning and use, and that in second language teaching and learning, oral language should precede print-based language. On the view that languages are bounded entities, I have demonstrated that English is viewed as a dominant language in comparison with Malawi's local languages, like Chichewa, and that emphasis is on separation of English and Chichewa as independent of each and that, where it is done, use of local languages is both minimal and is viewed at most, as not helpful to language teaching and learning.

In the next chapter, I present the TG, TG writers, and teachers' conceptions of literacy. From the New Literacy Studies, I draw on Street's (1993) autonomous and ideological models of literacy which will be the central conceptual framework for understanding the theoretical foundations of the teachers' literacy discourses and practices and those outlined in the curriculum. Further, Bua-lit Collective's (2018) modified Four Resources Model (based on Luke and Freebody, 1990) of language and literacy is utilised to analyse the nature of the teachers' literacy practices and those outlined in the TG.

Chapter Five: Conceptions of literacy

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I draw on Street's (1993) concepts of autonomous and ideological models of literacy and the Bua-lit Collective's (2018) modified Four Resources Model (based on Luke and Freebody, 1994) of language and literacy to analyse the conceptions of literacy underlying the Standard 4 English TG, and how conceptions of literacy are expressed by the Standard 4 English TG writers and the Standard 4 teachers that were interviewed. I argue that, much as the social nature of literacy is acknowledged in the National Reading Strategy (NRS) and the TG, and that the interviewed TG writers and teachers reflected the social nature of literacy during the interviews, the autonomous view of literacy dominates the TG, TG writers, and the teachers' conceptions of literacy. To demonstrate this, I utilise Street and Street's (1995) concept of the 'pedagogisation of literacy', especially as expounded by Hall (1998) to show how the processes/features associated with "the construction and internalization of the autonomous model of literacy" (Street and Street, 1995: 76) are reflected in the TG and views of the TG writers and the teachers. I further demonstrate that the autonomous view-informed practices of literacy presented in the TG and reflected in the views of the TG writers and the teachers, hardly incorporate practices beyond the first two roles of the reader/writer (code breaker, and text participant/meaning maker) (Bua-lit Collective, 2018; Luke and Freebody, 1994). I thus argue that the neglect of the other two roles of the reader/writer (text user and produce/designer, and text analyst and critical producer) is influenced by the autonomous view of literacy. The chapter develops three main themes: social aspects of literacy, the view of literacy as skills and incremental, and the place of writing in literacy.

5.2 Social aspects of literacy within the autonomous view of literacy

In this section I argue that though the TG, TG writers and teachers acknowledge the social aspects of literacy, their acknowledgement is informed by conceptions of literacy as an autonomous entity, and thus has a reductionist conception of the social nature of literacy which is also compatible with the artefactual ideology of language. As regards to the social nature of literacy, literacy is viewed "as the social practices of reading and writing" (Street and Street, 1995: 75) where "literacy is not something one acquires; instead literacies are sets of social events and practices involving written language in which one participates" (Bloome and Ryu, 2017: 287). Unlike the autonomous view which focusses on reading and writing skills, the social view of literacy foregrounds what people do with literacy and how they participate through their engagement with texts in socially situated literacy events. Since social contexts

differ, literacy is thus viewed as being multiple and ideological, and that literacy practices vary according to the contexts and purposes of the literacy event.

The TG, TG writers, and the teachers' conceptions of literacy, to some extent, acknowledge the social aspects of literacy and the view that becoming literate requires participation in social activities. One way in which the TG reflects acknowledgement of the social nature of language is that it recognises the role of family and community members in children's development of literacy beyond the classroom. The TG states that:

> The MoEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) also recognises that apart from the teachers, family and community members are important in nurturing a culture of reading in the learners. Hence, the NRP has a component of community mobilization and engagement to ensure that the School Management Committees (SMCs) and the wider community at village level collaborate in developing the learners' literacy skills at home (MIE, 2017: iii).

The recognition of the family and community members' role 'in nurturing a culture of reading in the learners' suggests that the curriculum recognises that literacy development does not only occur in the school context but also in out-of-school contexts where family and community members engage in literacy events with the children. Furthermore, stating that 'the wider community at village level *collaborate',* suggests a social interactive process between members of the community and the learners. Such a view of the role of community participation could be said to be informed by the view of literacy as a social practice that is situated in a social context. However, the fact that the focus is on 'developing literacy skills' suggests an autonomous view of literacy and reflects a reductionist view of parental or community participation which assumes that such home 'support' improves literacy scores in the school. The view that parental and community participation improves literacy scores is further reflected in the National Reading Assessment Report for the NRP where it was indicated that higher reading scores in the assessments/tests were, among others, associated with "reading outside school, including being read to at home, taking books home from school, having non-school books at home, and participating in afterschool reading activities; receiving help with homework" (USAID, 2019: 6). Since the report presents literacy results based on EGRA assessment, which assesses literacy skills and not practices, the parental or community participation could thus be informed by skills-based practices which replicate school-based practices that focus on literacy skills. Such practices are common where literacy activities are

sanctioned for purposes of assisting learners to improve their literacy skills. Street and Street (1995) calls such practices 'school literacy practices' as they are informed by the autonomous view of literacy which is dominant in schools. Thus, despite the literacy events taking place outside the school, the practices are those of the school. On this, Bloome and Ryu (2017: 288), citing Street and Street (1995), state that such literacy practices involve:

> …the objectification of language and an emphasis on metalinguistic practices. What gets foregrounded… is not what students learn to do with written language, but their display of fidelity to a particular model of written language and their explicit display of a particular discourse for referencing engagement in written language. Students are held accountable for identifying, producing, and displaying the appropriate forms, genres, and structures of written language.

The 'model of written language' that the children are expected to 'display' with 'fidelity' is that of literacy as decontextualised skills where instead of meaningful engagement and use of written language, focus is on 'forms, genres, and structures of written language'. We have already seen this in Chapter 4 very clearly. The emphasis on the forms and structure of language is typical of EGRA assessments (Bartlett, Dowd, & Jonason, 2015) which Malawi's NRP has adopted as literacy assessments. Thus, much as the social aspect of literacy is acknowledge by the NRP and TG, the practices that could be enacted may be conceived and implemented based on the conception of literacy as an autonomous skill.

The social aspect of literacy was also reflected in a response by Mr. Dzuwa, one of the TG writers. In a response to a question on whether the use of scripted lessons was appropriate or not in the teaching of reading, he stated that to some extent it was not appropriate as "it denies teachers the ability of being creative, …. they are glued to these already made lessons, instead of being creative and come up with their own lessons". Mr Dzuwa's mentioning of teacher creativity and the implicit suggestion that teachers should 'come up with their own lessons' instead of being 'glued' to the scripted lessons suggest that he conceives the teaching of literacy as a social activity in which the teacher has to make teaching and learning decisions based on local, contextual factors and not some prescribed approach universally implemented across varying sociocultural contexts.

The idea that reading could involve meaning making for learners was further acknowledged by teachers. Mrs. Phoya, in a response to a question on how she helps her learners who are struggling to read in English, stated that "*sometimes I put them in groups so that they should*

teach each other. The knowledgeable helping the others in tasks like answering comprehension questions on a given passage…. So that they should be reading and teaching each other". Mrs. Phoya's use of group work consisting of knowledgeable and 'struggling' learners suggests that she views literacy as an interactive/social-cognitive activity in which learners work together to accomplish tasks with the 'knowledgeable helping others'. She therefore negotiates her own way through the scripted lessons by drawing on her own teaching practices, which are not specified in the lessons. However, the focus on 'answering comprehension questions' as the goal of the reading activity in the group tasks suggest an autonomous view of literacy which considers reading as an act of getting meaning from a text. Such a view and practice usually put social uses of literacy in the background and foregrounds the acquisition and display of knowledge and skills (Bua-lit Collective, 2018).

Another way in which the TG attempts to reflect the situated aspect of literacy is through an attempt to situate literacy instruction in the context of texts/stories and teaching 'reading in relation to' other language skills. Regarding the teaching of reading, the TG states that to teach the reading skills "effectively, the teacher is required to teach them in relation to oral language, grammar and writing" (MIE, 2017: iv). From this quote, the TG attempts to acknowledge the view that literacy is integral to language and it must be learned in relation to other language skills. However, the quote also reflects the artefactual view of language and literacy as written and oral language are separated as independent components with one, the oral, viewed as support skills for the acquisition of the written language components.

As for the attempt to situate literacy instruction in the context of texts/stories, all teaching Units of the TG are based on a story (refer to TG table of contents in chapter 4). This could be on the assumption that the learners are to use the texts as a context in which they are to learn the Unit's assigned reading and writing skills. The title of each Unit is the title of the story assigned to that Unit. Thus, the TG attempts to present the situated nature of literacy by highlighting the text or contexts of language learning instead of literacy or language skills. The Unit's text/story is framed in a way that it provides the context for learning the Unit's target vocabulary and practicing fluency and comprehension skills (refer to Section 4.2). In the actual Units, all Lessons' titles/headings start with the title of the story and then the language or literacy component that is the focus of the lesson. The following are some of Unit 16's (the focus of my analysis) lesson titles: Lesson 1: Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language; Lesson 2: Meeting with the counsellor: Reading; Lesson 5: Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language and grammar; Lesson 8: Meeting with the counsellor: Productive writing. Despite this attempt

to situate literacy instruction in meaningful contexts using selected texts, the activities outlined in the TG, and the views of the TG writers and the teachers, as will be shown in the following section, reflect a decontextualised, skills-based view of literacy compatible with the artefactual ideology of language. I now move to discuss how this can be understood within the framework of Street's autonomous and ideological models of literacy and present some of the mechanisms by which this takes shape in the curriculum and teachers' accounts.

5.3 The autonomous model of literacy: Skills-based and incremental

Street and Street (1995) state that the autonomous model (as discussed in Chapter 2) of literacy in schools is associated with what they call "the pedagogisation of literacy". They state that the pedagogisation of literacy "is achieved by a number of means" which are "the distancing of language from subjects, … 'metalinguistic' usages, … 'privileging', ….and 'philosophy of language' (Street and Street, 1995: 76). Hall developed what he calls 'categories' (1998: 9), stating that "Street and Street identified a range of ways in which schools operate to construct an autonomous model of literacy." and that his "categories.... derive from that list and have been modified and extended". Hall extends the 'means' or categories from Street and Street's four to six. His categories are distancing, the development of curriculum genre, unproblematicity (neutrality), privileging, individualism, and system-immanence. In this section, I utilise the concept of distancing[4] to demonstrate that the conceptions that underly the conceptions of literacy in the TG and the views of the teachers are informed by the autonomous model of literacy, while also weaving in some discussion of the other categories. For purposes of focus in my presentation, the data I present in this section will mainly be on the reading aspect of literacy while the next section will focus on writing.

The skills-based and incremental view of literacy is, among other features, reflected through 'distancing'. Distancing "manifests itself in language being separated from normal usage …. and generally framed in lesson contexts that hold language up as an object for analysis rather than use" (Hall, 1998: 9). One of the major features of distancing is the view of literacy as an artefact separated from language use. On this, Hall (1998: 9) states that, "literacy itself is treated as an autonomous object, one that has a life-world of its own, unconnected to the ways in which it is actually used by people in their lives".

[4] Due to word limit of my project, I will utilise one feature/process (distancing) in this section and one more (privileging) in the next section.

This feature of the autonomous view of literacy is reflected in Unit 16, Lesson 2 (refer to Figure 6) which is a 'reading' lesson with the following success criteria; "give meanings of words, read a story using radio reading, summarise a text". Firstly, distancing is reflected through how vocabulary is 'taught'. As shown in Activity 16.2.1, words are taught out of the context/text in which they are used. Meanings of the words are taught before the students are exposed to the text. Secondly, distancing is reflected through the tasks performed with the text. Activity 16.2.2 is on fluency and focusses on the teaching strategy of 'reading a story using radio reading'. Radio reading is a reading 'strategy' for teaching fluency in which learners are asked to read a text while imitating a radio news presenter they idolise or any that they have listened to. The normal procedure is that learners must do it in a playful and competitive way where they evaluate each other as to who best represents/imitates the chosen radio news reader. The 'presenter' either reads to the whole class or a small group, where they take turns. The assumption is that in such an activity focus will not be on decoding skills but on a meaningful social practice with its accompanied fun.

However, in this activity (16.2.2), its instructions, like 'teach reading the story', distance literacy from meaningful use as no ideas are provided for the teachers to negotiate the meaning of the text. The focus is on the decoding-related skill of fluency with an emphasis on accuracy and speed, and not meaning making. The text is simply a vehicle which carries all the weight of both the artefactual ideology of language and the skills deemed important within the autonomous model.

Similarly, Activity 16.2.3 foregrounds teaching the skill of 'summarising a text' instead of meaningful engagement with the text. The activity instructs the teacher to 'teach summarising the story *Meeting with the counsellor…* Show learners how to include the main idea and only the most important details in the story'. Stating that the teacher should teach summarising reflects the focus on skills associated with the autonomous model's feature of distancing as emphasis is on what the reader is to do to, and not with, the text. In this case, the reader is supposed to develop a skill of dissecting a text to identify 'main idea and … most important details in the story' and not necessarily to engage with the text as a transactional meaning-making activity. Thus, the focus is learning about literacy and developing skills, and not actual use of literacy for meaningful purposes. This resonates with Hall's claim that such a view of literacy leads to practices where literacy "is studied as an object in its own right rather than as a piece of text deriving its meaning from a particular social situation and having all the attendant complexities typical of the social usage of written language" (1998: 9).

Further, Unit 16 Lesson 2 shows that vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are learnt in a decontextualised way as there is no attempt to engage with the lesson's text beyond decoding and denotational meaning. Thus, focus is generally on the role of text decoder (Luke and Freebody, 1990) and the preoccupation with the text is on using it as a resource to gain the skills of decoding words and their meanings, accurate reading, and summarising skills. The preoccupation on skills is further reflected in Activity 16.4.2 which is a reading lesson. Below is Lesson 16.4

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Reading	Lesson 4

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- read a story using radio reading
- answer comprehension question orally
- summarise a text

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

Word cards

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to read the following words from the word cards: **counselor**, **damage** and **develop**.

Activity 16.4.1 **Fluency: Reading a story using radio reading** **(12 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach reading the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76 using radio reading. Let learners read the story using radio reading. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.4.2 **Comprehension: Answering comprehension questions orally** **(8 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach answering comprehension questions at page 77 orally. Show how to answer questions in full using details from the story. Let learners answer comprehension questions orally. Help struggling learners. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.4.3 **Comprehension: Summarising a text** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach summarising a text on the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76. Show learners how to include the main idea and only the most important details in the story. Let learners read the story and summarise a text. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion **(3 minutes)**

Ask some learners to read their summaries.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

Figure 9: Lesson 16.4 (Std 4 TG, p. 165)

Much as the teacher is instructed to ‘let the learners answer comprehension questions’ the focus of the activity is to explicitly teach the learners ‘how to answer questions in full using details from the story’ while employing the ‘I Do, We Do, You Do’ model. Thus, despite the comprehension exercise having questions that go beyond the role of text decoder to cover the role of meaning maker (Luke and Freebody, 1990), with questions like “If you were the counsellor, what other advice would you have given the youth?” (refer to Section 4.2), the focus on teaching and modelling how to answer questions, and not necessarily how to construct meaning, suggests a skills-view of literacy.

The skills-view of literacy is further reflected in Lesson 16.6 which is exclusively a ‘vocabulary’ lesson. The fact that vocabulary has been extracted from language to be the focus of an entire lesson reflects a feature of the processes associated with the construction of an autonomous view literacy which Street and Street call ‘metalinguistic uses’. This is associated with isolating language from its social context of use to be studied as an independent object. Below is Lesson 16.6.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Vocabulary	Lesson 6

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- identify words they do not know
- give meanings of words
- write opposites of given words

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

word cards

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to make sentences with the following words: **counselor** and **develop**

Activity 16.6.1 **Vocabulary: Identifying words they do not know** **(8 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to identify words that learners do not know from the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76 through silent reading. Remind them to write the words as they are reading. Help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.6.2 **Vocabulary: Giving meanings of words** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to teach the meanings of the identified words. Write down the unfamiliar words identified by the learners on the chalkboard. Discuss the meanings of the identified words using appropriate strategies. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.6.3 **Vocabulary: Writing opposites of given words** **(12 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to choose the opposites of the given words in Exercise C at page 79. Ask learners to write the exercise in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion **(3 minutes)**

Ask learners to make sentences using the words they identified.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

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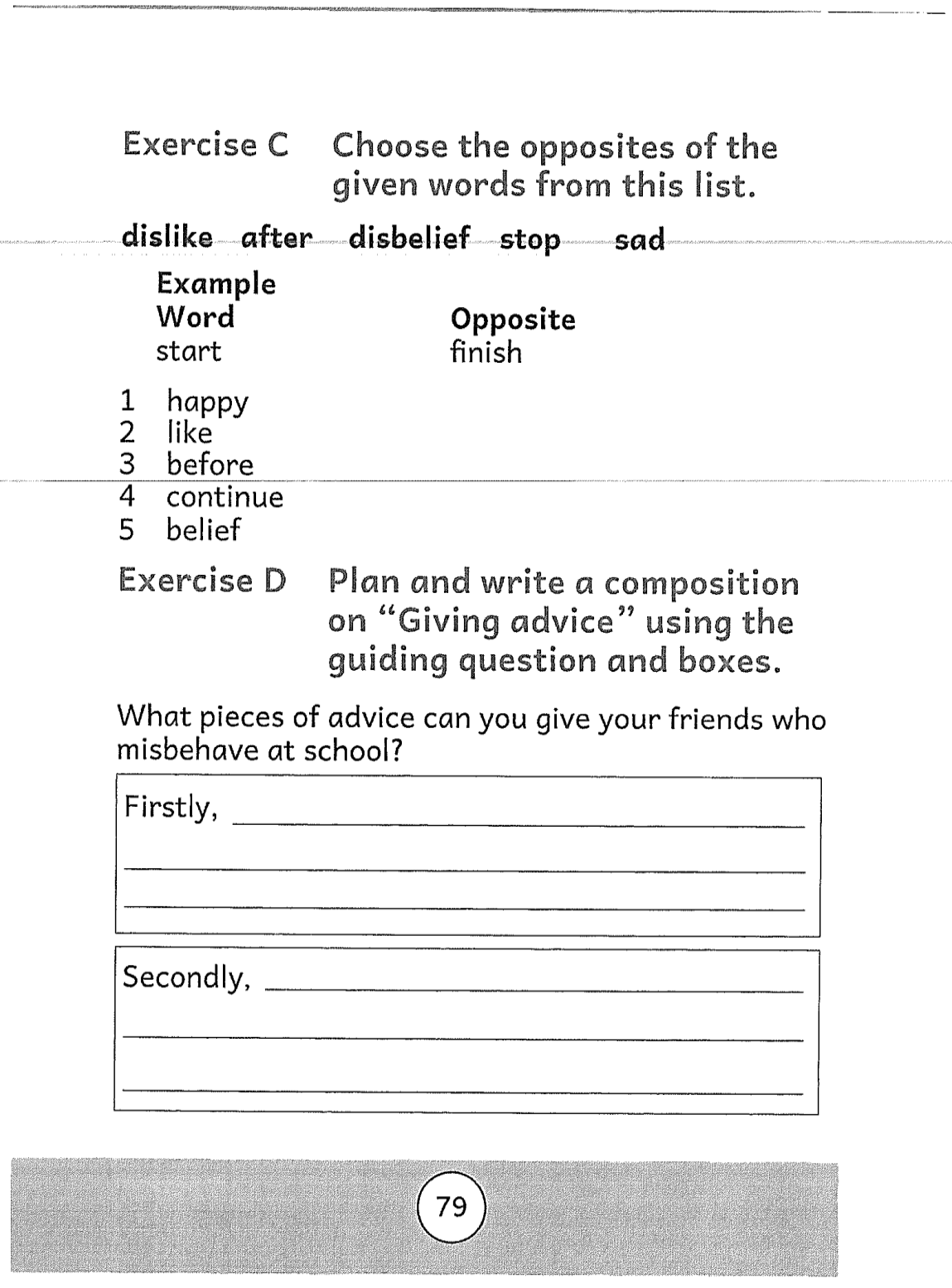
Figure 10: Lesson 16.6 (Std 4 TG, p. 168)

The Lesson's success criteria use of the verbs identify, give, and write, presents an artefactual view of language and/or literacy the emphasis is on the parts of the language (words) and not use. This is supported by the fact that Activity 16.6.1 only uses the text for purposes of identifying words but not getting their meanings from how they have been used in the text. Though it might be argued that Activity 16.2.2's instruction to 'discuss the meanings …. using appropriate strategies' may include use of text, extracting the words from the text by writing them 'on the chalkboard' to be discussed, and failure to explicitly instruct the teacher to use the text in giving meanings suggest a metalinguistic approach to literacy. Thus, vocabulary is not viewed as language in use but rather as an object to be studied in a decontextualised way. The decontextualisation of literacy is further reflected in Exercise C, below.



Exercise C Choose the opposites of the given words from this list.

dislike after disbelief stop sad

Example Word	Opposite
start	finish

1 happy
2 like
3 before
4 continue
5 belief

Exercise D Plan and write a composition on "Giving advice" using the guiding question and boxes.

What pieces of advice can you give your friends who misbehave at school?

Firstly, _____

_____

_____

Secondly, _____

_____

_____

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Figure 11: Exercise C and D (Std 4 LB, p.79)

The exercise is linked to Activity 16.6.3 which asks the learners 'to choose opposites of given words' to a list of words. The decontextualised approach to vocabulary is shown by the fact that of the ten (10) listed in the exercise only two, 'disbelief' and 'happy' are used in the story /text for this Unit. It would have been a bit more contextualised if one list could have been of words that have been used in the text.

The practices presented above may be attributed to the incremental view that decoding and giving meanings of words (vocabulary), and reading strategies for fluency and comprehension, are a pre-requisite of reading and thus must be taught explicitly in a decontextualised way before learners engage in actual meaning making activities with authentic texts. This assumption could be behind the NRP's emphasis on explicit instruction of literacy skills and is part of the general rationale behind scripted lessons (Shalem, et al., 2016). In the TG it is stated that:

> Effective reading instruction includes a focus on teaching reading in an explicit and systematic way. Explicit means that a concept is directly taught and modelled. As for the systematic means, the instructional materials are aligned so that the language components to be taught should progress from simple to complex (MIE, 2017: iii).

This explicit and systematic teaching of literacy suggests that literacy is conceived of as having 'components' which are hierarchically organised and 'to be taught should progress from simple to complex'.

This incremental view of literacy development, which foregrounds decoding, is further reflected through the teachers' view that there cannot be meaningful engagement with text if there is no decoding. This could have been influenced by the teachers' observation that the learners, much as the learners were said to have attained decoding skills in Chichewa, were struggling in English. On this, all four teachers indicated that not more than 20 learners (two indicated less than 10) in their classes could 'read' an English text. No wonder then that three of the four teachers stated that they skip or modify lessons that involved silent reading because their learners are struggling with decoding and that they are of the view that they should first teach decoding skills before they engage the learners in silent reading activities. The teachers stated that:

> In all cases where there is silent reading, we try to start with reading aloud and may ask the learners to read the passage silently on the following day because we know that they

cannot understand what they read when they read silently. **(Interview with Mrs. Nyumba)**

Reading is a challenge because as I said the TG has silent reading activities which are not appropriate for the standard 4 learners. That is why we try to substitute silent reading activities with reading aloud with the learners. **(Interview with Mrs. Khama)**

Like this [points to Lesson 16.7, presented below] which says that 'learners should read silently', right! 'Talk about the story they read, answering comprehension questions'. Let us start with silent reading. With silent reading, it means that if the reader doesn't know how to read then he will miss out on this. As I stated earlier that there are a lot of challenges. In this case the learner will just be making noise, since he does not know how to read, thus silent reading has no meaning to him and he will preoccupy himself with other irrelevant things. Similarly, when it comes to explaining what the story is about, he will not be able to say because he did not understand the story. Same as answering comprehension questions, his ability to answer comprehension questions depends on understanding the story and that if they can't understand, they cannot answer questions, as I already stated only a few are able to read. (**Interview with Phoya)**

Mrs. Nyumba's practice of 'starting with reading aloud' before engaging in silent reading reveals her belief that literacy learning is incremental and that decoding precedes construction of meaning. The script itself requires that she needs to infantilise the learners by stating that the learners 'cannot understand what they read' if they have to engage in silent reading activities. Her views could be influenced by a belief that reading is just a decoding process where meaning is retrieved from a text, and not a transactional process where meaning is constructed using a range of resources. Mrs. Khama goes further in critiquing the scripted lesson and infantilising the learners, putting across the idea that decoding should precede construction of meaning by stating that silent reading activities are 'not appropriate' for the learners and that they 'are substituted with reading aloud' activities. On the other hand, Mrs. Phoya suggests that anything outside decoding print does not qualify as reading. She states that since the learners cannot decode text, 'the learner will just be making noise, *since he does not know how to read*, thus silent *reading has no meaning to him* and he will *preoccupy himself with other irrelevant* things'. What she calls 'irrelevant things' here could be learners' discussion of the images in the texts or other text related issues, but the teacher dismisses those

to focus on decoding as a skill that should precede meaning making. This incremental view of literacy was faulted by Street who stated that the claim that "literacy' can be 'given' neutrally and then its 'social' effects only experienced afterwards" is not valid (Street, 2006, 2).

The teachers' conceptions of literacy presented above display a bottom-up view of literacy which considers reading as a process where meaning is assumed to reside in texts and that the reader must decode, taking and receiving the meaning from the text, rather than bringing any meaning to it. The assumption is that if the readers cannot decode the print, then they cannot understand what the text 'contains', a deeply 'textualist' understanding of literacy. This view was further echoed by Mrs. Mphonda who, when explaining the competence of her learners in reading in English and what fraction of the class can read, stated that "*some can read, but here I am talking about understanding things. That they grasp things to the extent that we can proceed learning. With that there are not many*". Mrs. Mphonda distinguishes reading from understanding and suggests that there can be reading without understanding, that decoding precedes meaning making, and that reading with understanding is required so that the learners 'can proceed learning'. Mrs. Mphonda's views and those of the other three teachers presented above, suggest a bottom-up view of reading which holds that "skilful readers visually process virtually every individual letter of every word as they read, and this is true whether they are reading isolated words or meaningful connected text" (Adam, 1995:409). In their own negotiation of the scripted lessons, they thus cast serious doubts on the main premise on which the entire NRS is founded – the premise that the scripted lessons will lead to a greater ability to "read for meaning".

This emphasis on decoding is also extended, at text level, to the view of a text as having meaning independent of context. This view is reflected in Lesson 16.7 which is on comprehension and focussing on silent reading, the one the teachers indicated is a challenge to teach. Below is Lesson 16.7.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Comprehension	Lesson 7
	Success criteria Learners must be able to: • read a story silently • talk about a story • answer comprehension questions **Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)** Word cards	

Introduction	(2 minutes)
Ask learners to read words from the word card raised, for example: **develop** and **disbelief.**	

Activity 16.7.1	Comprehension: Reading a story silently	(12 minutes)
Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to read the story at page 76 and find answers to the following pre-questions: 1 How is smoking dangerous? 2 What advice did Mr Mwalilino give to the youth about school? Let learners read the story silently. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.7.2	Comprehension: Talking about a story	(8 minutes)
Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to talk about the story they have read. Use these questions: 1. Where is the story taking place? 2. What do you like about the story? 3. What have you learnt about the story? Encourage learners to answer the questions in full using details from the story. Walk around and help struggling learners. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.7.3	Comprehension: Writing answers to comprehension questions	(10 minutes)
Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to write answers to comprehension questions at page 77. Tell learners to write answers to the comprehension questions in their exercise books. Help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Conclusion	(3 minutes)
Ask some learners to read answers to their work.	

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Figure 12: Lesson 16.7 (Std 4 TG, p. 169)

The guiding questions for Activity 16.7.1 and 16.7.2 are all text based as there are no questions or activities that ask the learners to bring in their experiences to the text, relate the text to other texts, or manipulate the text in some way. Thus, the conception of reading is that it draws mainly on the resources of text decoding (Activity 16.7.1) as it focuses on getting meaning direct from text, and partly on the resources of meaning making (16.7.2) as questions 2 and 3 focus on learners' opinions based on their understanding of the text. Furthermore, this conception of literacy is reflected in the disjoint between Lesson 16.7's choice of the reading strategy (radio reading) and the reading passage. The nature of the text, which is a first-person point of view narrative, is not appropriate for a reading that mimics a radio news reporter. Since that learners are supposed to use radio presenters as a model in this reading exercise, it is very likely that the learners, who may be familiar with the reported speech model of radio news presentation, may find such type of reading with the narrative text unusual and senseless. This may lead the activity to be centred on decoding instead of bringing out the pleasurable, cultural aspect of reading, as intended. This scenario could promote the view of literacy as an autonomous skill that must be learned thereby equating reading to decoding text.

It is from this skills-based and bottom-up view of literacy that "literacy instruction for English-language learners (ELLs) tends to focus on drill and practice of decontextualised skills" (Manyak, 2008: 450). The focus on drill, together with the 'I Do, We Do, You Do' model, is associated with explicit and incremental teaching of literacy components outside their contexts of use, like, as discussed above, emphasis on decoding. The emphasis on decoding words and understanding their meanings, and decoding meaning from text, suggests a skills-based view of literacy which views literacy as consisting of components (building blocks) for meaning making. Focusing on these components as a sole source of meaning distances literacy as it objectifies and decontextualises a text instead of viewing it as "deriving its meaning from a particular social situation" (Hall, 1998: 9). One such 'social situation' where learners could construct meaning from the text without over-reliance on decoding print is use of the visual images in the Unit's text (see Figure 1 above). However, in all the reading lessons, there is no instruction to the teacher or activity that involves the reading passage's image (see Appendix 6). This suggests that the skills view of literacy, which values print and decoding, and downplays the other semiotic modes of literacy, informs the TGs conceptions of literacy. Levy (2009: 77) argues that, instead of excluding other semiotic modes and decontextualising literacy, "print-literacy skills need to become embedded within a broader discourse of reading, which values all sign and symbol systems in texts". She further argues that literacy instruction

should tap from learners' out-of-school knowledge and interests. In this case, the practice which is starting to become more widespread as the result of the activities of NGOs in Malawi, of a counsellor coming to address the youth, is one that could be discussed. The story/text, however, presents it as a very top-down practice reminiscent of the kinds of texts and "suffocating tendencies" that Mkhize (2016) critiques in conservative narratological traditions in South Africa, which are heavily bent towards "cultural pride, propriety and identity" – "a literature that speaks to 'Good Bantus'".

5.4 The autonomous model of literacy: The place and conception of writing in literacy

In this section, I utilise the concept of 'privileging' (Street & Street, 1995; Hall, 1998) to demonstrate that the autonomous model of literacy is reflected in the TG, TG writers, and teachers' conceptions of the place and nature of writing.

The place of writing

According to Hall (1998) privileging is a feature that involves the determination of which language and literacy skills are valued, and which ones are not. In literacy, privileging is usually exhibited through the valuing of reading over other language skills. In such cases, writing is backgrounded. One of the Bua-lit Collective's adaptations to Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model is their emphasis on the importance of writing. They posit that among the major mistakes that are made in literacy programs is the tendency to treat reading and writing as separate literacy skills. They recommend that literacy programs, apart from treating reading and writing as two sides of the same coin, should treat writing as a social and meaningful communicative practice and not a technical skill (Bua-lit Collective, 2018).

The NRS acknowledges the view of writing as a social communicative process and recognises the crucial place of writing in literacy by stating that,

> Writing instruction should focus on composition, writing for different purposes and using variety of genres. Reading and writing have a reciprocal relationship. Therefore, aligning reading and writing tasks will help children become better readers and writers.
>
> (MoEST, 2014: 16)

In the quote above, writing is viewed to be at par with reading and that they complement each other. Furthermore, the quote suggests that writing is a social, communicative activity used 'for different purposes'. The use of the word 'purposes' suggests that writing is used to perform purposeful communicative tasks meaningful to the writer and/or society.

The TG writers also acknowledged that the NRP values both reading and writing. Mr. Mwanga stated that,

> Literacy has been defined in NRP as the ability to read and write, and I think that's the general definition of literacy that's how many people view it and NRP is here with the purpose to make learners fluent readers and, and fluent writers, that's their role. **(Interview with Mr Mwanga)**

Mr. Mwanga indicates that literacy encompasses and values both reading and writing and that NRP aims to 'make learners fluent readers and … writers'. The valuing of writing is further reflected in the number of writing activities in each Unit and the integration of writing with oral language, reading, and grammar. The table below presents a retyped version (for original/scanned see Chapter 4) of the TG's Lesson components with those of writing highlighted in bold and those of reading in .

LESSON 1	**LESSON 3**	**LESSON 5**	**LESSON 7**	**LESSON 9**
• Oral language structures • **Writing connected to the oral structures**.	• Oral language structures • grammar (Introducing grammar aspect) • **Writing connected to grammar**	• Oral language structures • Grammar (practicing grammar aspect introduced in lesson 3) • **Writing tied to grammar**	• *Reading (silent reading)* • **Writing (answering comprehension questions)**	• *Supplementary reading*
LESSON 2	**LESSON 4**	**LESSON 6**	**LESSON 8**	**LESSON 10**
• Vocabulary • *Reading comprehension using the target comprehension strategy* • *Fluency strategy (introducing)*	• *Fluency Strategy (practising)* • *Reading comprehension & using the target comprehension strategy* • *Answering comprehension questions orally*	• Vocabulary • *Reading* • **Writing connected to vocabulary**	• **Planning and** • **Writing paragraphs (productive writing)**	• Review and assessment

In the TG's Lesson components, valuing of writing is reflected in that six (6) of the total ten (10) weekly lessons have writing activities while reading has five (5). Furthermore, the complementary nature of reading and writing is reflected in two of the lessons (6&7) which integrate reading with writing. Apart from linking writing to the language skills in the other

lessons, the whole of Lesson 8 was planned for composition with focus on the process of writing through highlighting planning and composing.

The teachers also indicated that the NRP has placed more value on writing than was the case in the previous curriculum. It was stated that in the previous curriculum:

> Composition was done in the upper levels (meaning Standard 5 above). In the lower level it was not emphasised (obscured) as it mainly took the form of rearranging jumbled sentences, making sentences from a box (substitution table) while now it is clearly emphasised and guidelines for writing a composition are presented. **(Interview with Mrs. Nyumba)**

The quote suggests that in the current Std 4 curriculum, writing is viewed as going beyond the mechanical/technical aspects to include composition, which, previously was reserved for upper primary classes. This was corroborated by the TG writers as they indicated that attempts were made to make writing meaningful through attaching writing to the themes in a particular unit. It was stated that:

> Compositions, according to the plan (structure and development of the TG), were based on the themes that they were reading in that particular book (the stories in the corresponding LB Unit). So that book has got themes that are packed in different genres. For example, we have poems, whatever, whatever, but in those there is a message. But mostly these themes are based on the types of messages that are based on the main theme for that particular unit, not necessarily a genre. **(Interview with Mr. Dzuwa).**

The use of themes assumes that the learners' composition writing, which comes on a Thursday (Lessons 7&8 are planned for Thursdays), will be meaningful as they will be writing about something they had been reading and talking about in the preceding three days. Such an assumption suggests that learners will be provided with an opportunity to engage in creative writing on content that is familiar and meaningful to them. Thus, NRP does emphasise the role of writing as a crucial component of literacy and that writing is a communicative activity.

However, much as the discussion above suggests that writing and reading are equally valued in the language curriculum, a closer analysis of the data suggests that reading and writing are viewed as separate components of literacy and that reading is valued more than writing. As was presented in Section 5.2, most literacy programs that are informed by the autonomous

model usually view literacy/language as consisting of components that can be separated from each other, in literacy, the separation is further exhibited through reducing literacy to reading, at the expense of writing (Bua-lit, 2018). This is true with the NRP as reading is the focus of the language curriculum. The NRS stipulates that "although all four communicative skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) will be addressed, reading will be emphasised (MoEST, 2014: v). Furthermore, the name National *Reading* Program reveals that much as the role of writing, and other language skills, is recognised, reading is valued more than the other aspects of language or literacy. Even more, the national reading assessments exclude writing to only test reading skills (USAID, 2019). Thus, what is valued as indicators of literacy is reading and not writing skills.

Conceptions of writing

In this section I argue that, despite the recognition of the communicative aspect of writing, the autonomous model of literacy informs the nature of writing activities and practices. The writing activities presented in the Weekly Lesson components, like 'writing connected to oral language structures', 'writing tied to grammar', and 'writing connected to vocabulary', suggest that writing is situated in meaningful contexts in which the learners have been exposed to language either in oral or print form. Furthermore, Lesson 8's focus on 'productive writing' with an emphasis on 'planning and writing paragraphs' suggests a view of writing as a process and an interactive, communicative activity.

On the view of situating writing in language the learners have been exposed to and its importance, Mrs. Masiye, one of the TG writers, stated that:

> After learning, for example changing aaah simple present tense to past tense or knowing auxiliary verbs, learners can be able to make sentences on their own using those words so they can be able to write simple sentences on their own… not only sentences but they can be able to write even a simple paragraph on their own. **(Interview with Mrs. Masiye)**

Thus, Mrs. Masiye suggests that exposing learners to language that they are to write about, in this case grammar, enables them to apply the knowledge in 'productive' writing tasks. She further explains that situating writing in such a way enables the learners to write, not just at the basic level of a sentence but 'even a simple paragraph on their own'. This suggests that writing is viewed as an activity in which the learner produces a meaningful text.

However, as was shown in Chapter 4, a look at the exercises A, B, and C in Unit 16's LB (refer to Appendix 7) shows that the type of writing, with tasks like 'form adjectives by adding suffix -less', 'complete the sentence…', and 'choose the opposites of words…' is hardly communicative as it is at the level of coding and very technical in nature. There is no form of construction of meaningful texts as the focus is on performing operations on individual words. Thus, the assumption that the learners are to utilise the language or literacy they are exposed to, to construct meaningful texts, is not realised in the first three writing exercises. Furthermore, the instructions provided in the TG's writing activities suggests a view of writing as a product as there is an element of copying or reproducing what was done with the teacher during the lesson. This is reflected in the instructions for Activity 16.3.3 which states, "Follow *I Do, We Do, You Do* to form adjectives by adding suffix -less on Exercise A at page 78. Tell learners to write the exercise in their exercise books". Thus, the first three writing activities are influenced by the autonomous model influenced view of writing as a product which views writing as involving encoding, copying and imitation of an accurate model. Such a view of literacy and its associated writing activities was faulted by the Bua lit Collective who are of the view that writing, at all levels of education, should be viewed as a meaning producing activity. They argue that instead of focusing on the mechanical and technical skills of writing, learners should be helped to realise, through appropriate practices, that writing "can be used to represent their own meanings so that they become producers of text" (Bua-lit Collective, 2018: 9). Thus, focus should be on productive writing where skills will be acquired in the context of meaningful writing activities.

On meaningful writing, Lesson 8's title 'Productive writing' and its focus on planning and composing, suggests that learners are expected to engage in creative writing beyond the sentence level. Below is lesson 8.

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Productive writing	Lesson 8
	Success criteria Learners must be able to: • plan a composition • write a composition **Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)** Word cards	

Introduction	(2 minutes)
Ask learners to share some pieces of advices.	

Activity 16.8.1	Productive writing: Planning a composition	(10 minutes)
Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to plan a composition on *Giving advice* using the guiding question and the boxes on Exercise D at page 79. Let learners write the composition in their exercise books. Help struggling learners. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.8.2	Productive writing: Writing a composition	(20 minutes)
Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to teach writing a composition on *Giving advice*. Show how to write a sample composition using the guiding question and boxes. Ask learners to write a composition in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Conclusion	(3 minutes)
Select a well written paragraph and ask the learners to read it to the class.	

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

Figure 13: Lesson 16.8 (Std 4 TG, p. 170)

The success criteria of the lesson suggest a view of writing as a process as it emphasises planning and writing a composition, which imply a creative process. However, the lesson activities suggest a view of writing as a product. Both activities use the modelling approach of 'I Do, We Do, You Do' before letting the learners do the same activity in their exercise books. Thus, what could be said to be learners' independent writing, could be mere regurgitation of what they had done with the teacher. Therefore, what the learners could be engaged in, may not necessarily be a productive process but rather a passive imitative activity. Thus, despite Exercise D (refer to Figure 10) suggesting provision of room for independent production of text by just providing the structure of the 'composition' and space to generate own ideas, the model that the teacher provides in Activity 16.8.2 will likely stifle learner creativity and freedom. Furthermore, the instructions in the TG reinforce the product view of literacy and thus promote teacher-centered practices that emphasise explanation, accuracy/correctness, and provision of models by the teachers. The following quotes from teachers, on how they taught/teach the composition reflect the product view of writing and the associated teacher-centered practices.

> I started with introduction, then paragraph 1 where you explain may be 2 points, then paragraph 2 **(Interview with Mrs. Nyumba)**
>
> As regards to composition, the Teachers Guide most of the time says that we can bring a sample of a composition. So, we write the sample at home and when the day to teach composition comes, we say 'I should have to take this sample' for the learners to see. We ask them questions first or maybe show them the sample and ask them to say what a composition is, based on the sample. Then the learners would say things like 'composition it's just like a story'. Then I tell them that 'yes this is a sample of a composition, now composition is about such, such. And that the first thing you should know is that a composition must have a title or subject, are we together?' When you tell them this they understand, after that you skip a line and you show them the sample the features you are talking about, then do it together. In most cases after doing it together there is usually a task in the Learners Book for them to do. We first do it together then afterwards they write individually. **(Interview with Mrs. Khama)**
>
> They can write since we do it together with the learners. We discuss the composition with the learners then write it on the board or chart paper, so they just observe how you have written it. Sometimes we are busy and the learners just copy what we have written.

> So even though they copy appropriately, we cannot say that they know. **(Interview with Mrs. Phiyo)**

The use of the words/phrases 'I start with' and 'explain' by Mrs. Nyumba suggests that she is the one who performs the task and that the learners are passive recipients of the model she is explaining to them. The use of a 'sample composition' by Mrs. Khama reveals the product view of writing where the focus is not creative writing but conforming to conventions of writing. Her use of the word 'tell them' in several instances further suggests her view of writing as a skill which learners must be told and not acquire in meaningful creative writing activities. Mrs. Phiyo's quote reveals the passive role of the learner in the composition lessons when she starts that 'they just observe how you have written it'. Furthermore, making the learners copy the composition suggests that despite the program's aim of composition lessons being to promote creative writing, the literacy events and practices are predominantly at the coding/coping-related text decoder/encoder level (Bua-lit, 2018). The discussion above shows the dominance of the view of writing as a product where the focus is the produced text and not the composing process, and that learners are perceived as passive recipients of information (Goodman, 1984).

Furthermore, Mrs. Khama's statement that "as regards to composition, the Teachers Guide most of the time says that we can bring a sample of a composition. So, we write the sample at home and when the day to teach" suggest that she does not reflect on how best to teach but rather follow or act out the script to conform with the dictates of the scripted lessons. This acting out of the scripts coupled with the nature of the writing task (as discussed above) may likely result in mechanical teaching of writing where skills, and not communicative aspects of writing, is emphasised.

Studies on children's literacy learning have established that literacy instruction is generally a challenge because school literacy fails to tap on the creative nature of learners and their lived experiences. On this, Heath states that in schools the "creative pursuit of project work [has] declined sharply. Learning in school …[is] tied closely to direct instruction regimented in time and task with an orientation toward raising test scores" (Heath, 2013:187). The stifling of creativity in children's writing, which in this case is exhibited through limiting the scope of learners' exploration or imagination, and resources that they can draw upon, is a huge disservice to the children. Citing the New London Group (1996), Janks reiterates the need to cultivate the creative spirit in learners and their exposure to, and granting them liberty to, utilise

a variety of cultural resources they bring to class. She states that "students have to be taught how to use and select from all the available semiotic resources for representation in order to make meaning, while at the same time combining and recombining these resources so as to create possibilities for transformation and reconstruction" (Janks, 2000: 177).

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that much as the social nature of literacy is acknowledged in the National Reading Strategy (NRS) and the TG, and that the interviewed TG writers and teachers reflected the social nature of literacy, the autonomous view of literacy, which values skills instead of 'reading for meaning', dominates the TG, TG writers, and the teachers' conceptions of literacy. I have further demonstrated that the autonomous view-informed practices of literacy presented in the TG and reflected in the views of the TG writers and the teachers, hardly incorporate practices beyond the first two roles of the reader/writer that the neglect of the other two roles of the reader/writer (text user and produce/designer, and text analyst and critical producer) is influenced by the autonomous view of literacy. I have further demonstrated that though there is an attempt to show that reading and writing are equally valued, reading is privileged. I have also demonstrated that the product view of writing, and its associated teacher-centred practices, informs the writing activities and practices.

In general, the discussion has shown that the TG's conceptions of literacy and teachers' views of literacy are informed by the autonomous view of literacy; that literacy is a set of skills. The view of literacy as skills that have to be separated and studied resonates with the artefactual ideology of language (discussed in Chapter 4) which views language as stable and bounded entities composed of components which can be distinguished from each other and can be studied independent of their context of use. Thus, both the autonomous model of literacy and the artefactual ideology of language could be said to draw from the view that language/literacy is a psycholinguistic phenomenon, and its related assumption that the study of language or literacy should focus on the individualised and cognitive aspects and not social uses of language/literacy. This is reflected, as presented in Chapter 4 and 5 above, through the TG's lessons and lesson activities, and the teachers' views focus on the structural elements of language and literacy.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

My study focussed on analysing the conceptions of language and literacy underlying the Standard 4 English TG, how the Standard 4 teachers of English conceive language and literacy as they engage with the scripted lessons in the Standard 4 English TG, and whether the conceptions promote reading for meaning. The research questions that guided the study were:

1) What conceptions of language and literacy underlie the scripted lessons in Malawi's Grade 4 English Teachers Guides?
2) What conceptions of language and literacy underpin the Grade 4 English teachers' teaching/uptake of the scripted lessons in the NRP?

My findings were presented in two broad categories of conceptions of language and conceptions of literacy. Under each of these broad categories, I had major themes which were further into sub-themes. In general, my findings are that both the TG and teachers' conceptions of language and literacy are informed by the view of language as abstract system that has forms independent of their social uses, and that the autonomous model of literacy informs the conceptions of literacy. Thus, the main conception of language and literacy is that, like any artefact, language/literacy can be put up as an item of study or manipulation while disregarding its social uses. Below, I discuss the main findings.

6.2 Conceptions of language informed by the artefactual ideology of language

From an analysis of the teachers and TG writers' interview data, and the Standard 4 TG, the study established that their conceptions of language were informed by what Blommaert (2008) calls the artefactual ideology of language. The structural view of language (Saussure, 1917; Chomsky, 1965), and the view that languages are "stable, bounded entities clearly differentiated from one another" (Makoe & McKinney, 2014) were the main themes that were established.

Structural view of language

Under the theme of 'structural view of language' my findings were grouped in three sub-themes namely, the view that languages consist of core components or building blocks, the view that grammar and/or syntax are key to language learning and use, and the view that in second language teaching and learning, oral language should precede print-based language.

The study established that the influence of the artefactual ideology of language is exhibited in the TG and interview data through the emphasis on language structures at the expense of

meaningful language use. The language lessons in the TG focus on presenting language components or structures, such as vocabulary and formulaic language expressions, to be studied independent of their contexts of use. The focus is on isolating language features for purposes of understanding them and manipulating them by performing some linguistic operations on/with them. This presentation of language in the TG's scripted lessons binds the teachers to practices that treat language as consisting of independent and atomised parts that need to be studied. Consequently, teachers also conceive language as consisting of structures that must be taught, mainly through explanation and modelling/imitation. Thus, both the TG and teachers view language as consisting of key features that must be studied at a metalinguistic level while backgrounding meaningful language use.

Another feature of the language as structure theme within the overall framework of the artefactual ideology of language that I established from an analysis of the TG and teacher interviews is the view that among the language structures, grammar/syntax is key to language learning and use. Although there are some attempts to introduce a communicative approach these are quickly overshadowed by the easier to deal with focus on grammar. The TG has lessons focussing on grammar and oral lessons focus on grammatical features. All four teachers indicated their belief in equating language teaching to the teaching of grammar, as they stated that they prefer teaching grammar lessons. It was established that grammar teaching practices in both the TG and teachers' accounts of how they taught the lessons, were teacher centred and treated grammar as independent of language use. The study further established that the general assumption for the TG and teachers is that learning of grammar in a decontextualised way will automatically lead to 'correct' language use in communicative situations.

The third feature of the artefactual ideology of language and my theme of the structural view of language established in the study is the view that, in second language education, oral language should be taught before written language is introduced. It was established that the organisation of the TG Units and scripted lessons was that oral lessons and oral activities preceded print-based ones. Teachers also had a similar view as they attributed their learners' failure to read English texts to their underdevelopment of oral English language.

Languages as stable, bounded entities

The study established that both the TG and teachers view languages as pure and bounded entities. This was exhibited through TG's cautioning statements on the use of other languages when teaching English and stating rules on when to code-switch. The teachers and TG writers also exhibited the view of languages as stable, bounded entities in that, though they

acknowledged the positive role of use of the local languages in English lessons, their acknowledgement was on use of one language to aid teaching another independent language and not necessarily to use local languages as part of learners' linguistic repertoire in meaningful communicative events. The idea was often expressed that code-switching could be used for explaining tasks and instructing learners in what to do, rather than on negotiating meaning. Furthermore, the view of languages as bounded entities was exhibited through the TG and teachers' views which valued English more than the local languages, seeing it as essential for economic success and 'development'.

6.3 Conceptions of literacy informed by the Autonomous Model of literacy

The study established that though social aspects of literacy are reflected in the TG and the TG writers' and teachers' views, the autonomous model of literacy dominates the TG and teachers' conceptions of literacy. The social nature of literacy is exhibited through the TG's acknowledgement of the role of the out-of-school engagement in the development of literacy and an attempt to situate literacy activities in meaningful and locally appropriate stories/texts. On the other hand, the teachers attempted to exhibit the social nature literacy through use of collaborative/group work during activities. However, it was established that the stated acknowledgement and efforts were informed by the view of literacy as a skill, as they focussed on acquiring skills and not language use. Thus, the attempt to bring out the social nature of language was superficial and reductionist.

It was further established that the autonomous model was reflected in the TG and teachers' conceptions of literacy through the view of literacy as skills that must be learned in a decontextualised way. This view was reflected through the distancing of literacy from its contexts of use. For Standard 4 English, the emphasis is on reading components of vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. It was established that these components were explicitly taught as skills instead of letting learners acquire them in the process of their meaningful engagement with text. Such a view, it was established, resulted in literacy practices that did not go beyond the roles of text decoder and meaning maker.

The study further established that much as the TG and teachers acknowledges that reading and writing are 'two sides of the same coin', reading is privileged. This was reflected through the name of the program in which the TG is situated (the National *Reading* program), having five lessons specifically for reading with only one dedicated to writing, and that in the other lessons where writing is included, it is used as a resource to reinforce the main lesson's language focus, such as oral skills, reading, and grammar. It was further established that, much as the TG

indicates that the intention is to focus on meaningful writing and the process of writing, the writing activities and exercise focus on writing as a product and that the role of writer does not go beyond that of text encoder.

6.4 Implications of findings

The TG states that "in an attempt to find solutions to the lowering standards in reading achievements, government with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department for International Development (DFID) is implementing a literacy intervention in the primary schools across the country" (MIE, 2017: i). The scripted curriculum is one way in which the Malawi Government attempts to address the 'lowering standards in reading achievement'. As stated in Malawi's National Reading Program's (NRP) Standard 1 scripted English Teachers Guide (TG) the attempt to address lowering standards in reading achievement is linked to the NRP's "overall purpose of teaching children how to read is so that they can read with understanding" (MoEST, 2016: v). Reading 'with understanding' in this case implies reading for meaning. The Standard 4 English TG outlines an encouraging prospect of the success of the intervention as it states that the teaching and learning practices that have been adopted have "incorporated good teaching and learning practices drawn from several literacy interventions conducted in selected districts across Malawi over the past years" (MIE, 2017: i). This statement could imply that the said 'good teaching and learning practices' reflect current understandings of language and literacy and effective language and literacy instruction. Several literacy scholars who hold a social perspective of language and literacy (as cited in Chapter 2) have suggested that, in general, literacy projects/program have failed to achieve intended outcomes due to their overemphasis on the structural view of language and the autonomous view of literacy, while disregarding the social nature of language (Bua-lit Collective, 2018; Makoe and McKinney, 2014; Prinsloo, 2004; Blommaert, 2008; Street, 1993).

As per my discussion in chapters 4 and 5 both the Standard 4 English TG and the teachers' conceptions are informed by the artefactual ideology of language with its emphasis on language components. The view of languages as bounded entities is extended to the privileging of English in relation to local languages. This results in practices that restrict communicative uses of local languages in English lessons' activities. Such practices could negatively affect learning of English as the local language resources the learners possess, are barred from acting as resources for English language learning (Makoe and McKinney, 2014).

As for literacy, I have demonstrated that the TG and the teachers' views and practices are informed by the autonomous model of literacy. I suggest that the likelihood of the achievement of the NRP's intended outcomes is slim, based on my findings that the nature of activities and exercises outlined in the TG and the teachers' accounts of practice reveal that they focus on the text-decoder/encoder level and rarely the meaning maker level (let alone the text user and text analyst roles), despite the focus in the policy and curriculum documents, and more generally in the EGRS approach, on "reading for meaning". It is thus unlikely that, through such activities and practices, the learners may engage in meaningful reading and writing activities in and outside the classroom, let alone read at the set 'grade level'. It is little wonder then, all four teachers indicated that most of their learners cannot 'read and write' in English.

It was further established that, in some cases, the teachers tried to negotiate the teaching approaches or activities outlined in the TG by modifying how they teach the activity or abandoning the activity in favour of another which they deemed appropriate for their learners or context (case of radio reading and silent reading activities and use of vernacular in the teaching of English). In these cases of teacher negotiation of the scripted lessons, I established that the teachers' modifications were based on their failure to engage in meaning making activities as they assumed their learners were not competent at the level of general English language development and development of reading skills enough to engage in the activity, and not necessarily to engage learners in meaningful activities. I established that the modifications they made were informed by the skills-view view of language and literacy as they emphasised on decoding-related activities in place of meaning-making activities. Thus, it could be said that how the teachers negotiated the scripted curriculum is informed by the skills-view of language and literacy which is reminiscent of the curricula prior to the NRP. Furthermore, it was established that, in some cases, due to the demands of the system to 'stick to the script', the teachers disregarded their role to ensure learning as they, in some cases, resort to 'acting-out the script'. In this case the teaching was mechanical thereby disregarding meaning making associated with the constructive, social nature of the teaching and learning process.

Thus, if the social nature of language and literacy continues to be acknowledged but still be put in the background while foregrounding the structural view of language and the view of literacy as decontextualised skills, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technologies' efforts to improve education standards through promoting literacy levels, might be futile and a waste of resources.

6.5 Conclusion

Despite the NRP and Standard 4 English TG claim that it has incorporated recent innovations and 'good practices', I have established that the conceptions of language and literacy that have dogged 'unsuccessful' literacy projects inform both the TG activities and teachers' practices. I have established that despite emphasis on and calls for a greater focus on reading for meaning, meaning is completely abandoned/neglected as the ideologies/conceptions of language and literacy do not allow teachers to teach reading for meaning. This finding resonates with Ivanic's (2004: 221) claim that "recent understandings about the social nature of language and literacy have not been taken into account in…. curriculum documents, and [that]...views of language and language learning underpinning the curriculum are thus narrow". My take is that if the literacy programs/projects, in this case the NRP, continue to disregard the social nature of language and literacy, gains of such programs/projects will not live up to the promises they are claiming.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Ethics clearance

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dr. Joanne Hardman

University of Cape Town, Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701
Physical address: Humanities Graduate School Building, University Ave South, Upper Campus
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 3920 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 3489
E-mail: JoanneHardman@uct.ac.za Internet: www.uct.ac.za/depts/educate

EDNREC20191103

28 November 2019

P. Kapito
KPTPAT001
University of Cape Town

RE: Ethical Clearance for Masters Research Project

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been granted by the School of Education Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your academic Match or Mismatch: Malawi's early grade teachers' discourses and practices about language and literacy and the discourses and practices outlined in early grade English curriculum.
We wish you all the best with your research.

Regards

Signature Removed

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JOANNE HARDMAN

ETHICS CHAIR

Appendix 2: Information letter and consent form for Curriculum Developers/Writers

To whom it may concern

Re: Match or Mismatch: Malawi's early grade teachers' discourses and practices about language and literacy and the discourses and practices outlined in early grade English curriculum

I, Patrick Kapito, am a master's student at the University of Cape Town, in the School of Education. I would like to ask you for your permission to conduct an interview with you and have access to your schemes and records of work and lesson plans. My research is focused on exploring the extent to which Grade 4 English teachers' discourses and practices about language and literacy are congruent with the discourses and practices outlined in Malawi's Grade 4 English curriculum. The interview seeks to understand your views related to early grade English language and literacy. Furthermore, the interview and the analysis of your schemes and records of work and lesson plans seek to establish your practices regarding early grade language and literacy instruction in English.

Briefly, the research is concerned with establishing the extent to which teachers' practices, views, beliefs/conviction about early language and literacy instruction in English matches those outlined in the Standard 4 Teachers Guide. The study is premised on the assumption that teachers' discourses (understanding, views, beliefs/conviction) and practices (what happens during teaching and learning) about the subject they teach and how it should be taught are a major influence in their practice and that effective curriculum implementation depends on obtaining a match between teachers' discourses and practices and the ideologies which underpin the curriculum.

Data will be collected through a discourse analysis of the TG, interviews with teachers, and interviews with curriculum developers. The interviews with curriculum developers are aimed at triangulating the findings or claims made from the discourse analysis of the TG and to gain a general understanding of the ideological basis of the NRP, and also the curriculum developers' evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the NRP. The interviewees will only be required to answer a short series of questions, designed to get their insights on the selected topic. The interview will take approximately 40-50 minutes of your time.

If you are willing to be interviewed, as part of this research project, please complete the attached consent form. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have

regarding the research, either by email or telephone: kptpat001@myuct.ac.za/pkapito@cc.ac.mw or at 0999046669. You are also welcome to contact my supervisor on the following email address; Professor Catherine Kell at catherine.kell@uct.ac.za.

Thank you.

Patrick Mavuto Kapito

Participant Consent form

Name:

Signature:

I consent to	Yes	No
be interviewed		
the interview being audio recorded		

Appendix 3: Information letter and consent form for teachers

To whom it may concern

Re: Match or Mismatch: Malawi's early grade teachers' discourses and practices about language and literacy and the discourses and practices outlined in early grade English curriculum

I, Patrick Kapito, am a master's student at the University of Cape Town, in the School of Education. I would like to ask you for your permission to conduct an interview with you and have access to your schemes and records of work and lesson plans. My research is focused on exploring the extent to which Grade 4 English teachers' discourses and practices about language and literacy are congruent with the discourses and practices outlined in Malawi's Grade 4 English curriculum. The interview seeks to understand your views related to early grade English language and literacy. Furthermore, the interview and the analysis of your schemes and records of work and lesson plans seek to establish your practices regarding early grade language and literacy instruction in English.

Briefly, the research is concerned with establishing the extent to which teachers' practices, views, beliefs/conviction about early language and literacy instruction in English matches those outlined in the Standard 4 Teachers Guide. The study is premised on the assumption that teachers' discourses (understanding, views, beliefs/conviction) and practices (what happens during teaching and learning) about the subject they teach and how it should be taught are a major influence in their practice and that effective curriculum implementation depends on obtaining a match between teachers' discourses and practices and the ideologies which underpin the curriculum.

Data will be collected in five stages/steps. Firstly, I will conduct textual analysis of the standard 4 TG and other NRP documents. This will focus on establishing the discourses and practices outlined in the TG. The second part will be audio-recorded interviews with teachers of English and curriculum developers of the Standard 4 TG. On the part of teachers, the interviews will focus on the teachers' discourses/views related to language and literacy in early grade education. Interviews with curriculum developers are meant to get clarification of the claims I will make from my analysis of the TG and related documents. The third step will be interviews with teachers on their practices based on a sampled TG unit. The fourth step will be a content analysis of teachers' documents (Schemes and Records of Work and Lesson plans). The final

step will be a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with teachers. These interviews and FGD will be used as a basis for understanding the teachers' discourses and practices and their views on the discourses and practices outlined in the TG. The interviews and FGD are crucial for producing unbiased and credible data which will also be used to explore the extent to which the ideas expressed match those of the TG. The interviewees will only be required to answer a short series of questions, designed to get their insights on the selected topic. The interview and FGD will take approximately 40-50 minutes of your time.

If you are willing to be interviewed, as part of this research project, please complete the attached consent form. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have regarding the research, either by email or telephone: kptpat001@myuct.ac.za/pkapito@cc.ac.mw or at 0999046669. You are also welcome to contact my supervisor on the following email address; Professor Catherine Kell at catherine.kell@uct.ac.za.

Thank you

Patrick Mavuto Kapito

Participant Consent form

Name:

Signature:

I consent to	Yes	No
be interviewed		
take part in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with other teachers		
the interview and FGD being audio recorded		
My schemes and records of work and lesson plans to be photocopied		

Appendix 4: Letter to District Education Manager (DEM) for access to schools

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING STUDIES DEPARTMENT

To **:** The District Education Manager
Zomba Urban

From : Mr. Patrick Kapito
Chancellor College

Date **:** 17th December 2019

REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO SCHOOLS TO CONDUCT A MINI-RESEARCH PROJECT

I, Patrick Kapito, am a Lecturer of language and Literacy Education in the School of Education at Chancellor College, University of Malawi. I am currently a Post-graduate student at the University of Cape Town (RSA), in the School of Education. I would like to ask you for your permission to conduct a mini-research study in selected Zomba urban schools as part of my programs research study with the University of Cape Town. My research is focused on exploring the extent to which Standard 4 English teachers' discourses/views and practices about language and literacy are congruent with the discourses and practices outlined in Malawi's Standard 4 English curriculum. The study seeks to understand views related to early grade English language and literacy.

Briefly, the research is concerned with establishing the extent to which teachers' practices, views, beliefs/conviction about early language and literacy instruction in English matches those outlined in the Standard 4 Teachers Guide. The study is premised on the assumption that teachers' discourses (understanding, views, beliefs/conviction) and practices (what happens during teaching and learning) about the subject they teach and how it should be taught are a major influence in their practice and that effective curriculum implementation depends on obtaining a match between teachers' discourses and practices and the ideologies which underpin the curriculum.

Data will be collected in five stages/steps. Firstly, I will conduct textual analysis of the Standard 4 TG and other NRP documents. This will focus on establishing the discourses and practices outlined in the TG. The second part will be audio-recorded interviews with teachers of English and developers of the Standard 4 TG. On the part of teachers, the interviews will focus on the teachers' discourses/views related to language and literacy in early grade education. Interviews with TG developers are meant to get clarification on the claims I will make from my analysis of the TG and related documents. The third step will be interviews with teachers on their practices based on a sampled TG unit. The fourth step will be a content analysis of teachers' documents (Schemes and Records of Work and Lesson plans). The final step will be a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with teachers. These interviews and FGD will be used as a basis for understanding the teachers' discourses and practices and their views on the discourses and practices outlined in the TG. The interviews and FGD are crucial for producing unbiased and credible data which will also be used to explore the extent to which the views/ideas expressed match those of the TG. The interviewees will only be required to answer a short series of questions, designed to get their insights on the selected topic. The interview and FGD will each take approximately 40-50 minutes.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have regarding the research, either by email or telephone: kptpat001@myuct.ac.za/pkapito@cc.ac.mw or at 0999046669. You are also welcome to contact my supervisor on the following email address; Professor Catherine Kell at catherine.kell@uct.ac.za.

Thank you

Patrick Mavuto Kapito

Appendix 5: Interview guide for teachers and curriculum developers/writers

Teacher Interview Questions

General Questions

1. For how long have you taught English in standard 4?
2. Why do think scripted lessons were introduced in Malawi? (If they don't know, then tell them the reasons/basis and ask); What is your opinion about the reasons behind introduction of scripted lessons?
3. What is your opinion about the effectiveness of scripted lessons in the teaching and learning of Early grade English language? Why? (probe in relation to delivery of lessons and children's learning).
4. What do you think is the best way of teaching early grade English? Why?

A. Language/Bilingualism

1. What is your evaluation of your learners' competence in English? Why do you say so? (probe on both print-based and oral-based competencies/skills).
2. From your experience, which aspects of English do your learners not struggle with? Why do you think they do not struggle?
3. Which aspects/skills do they struggle with? Why do you think they struggle?
4. What do you think can minimize the learners' struggling with those aspects? (treat each one by one)
5. What features do you associate with a grade 4 learner who is competent in English (what are qualities of a learner who has attained desirable outcomes for English language)? Explain.
6. Which activities outlined in the TG do you think are effective in promoting your learners' acquisition of English language? Why?
7. Which activities outlined in the TG do you think are not effective in promoting your learners' acquisition of English language? Why?
8. Which activities do you think would be effective in helping learners learn English language but are not promoted in the syllabus? Why?
9. In your opinion, do you think your learners' first language supports the learning of English? Why?
10. Do you think the first language can support learning of English? Why? How?

11. Do you think the curriculum/TG promotes valuing first language in the teaching of English? How?
12. Which specific areas/sections of the Curriculum/TG reflects the valuing of first language in the teaching of language? In what way is the valuing shown? (Refer to any Unit of their choice).
13. Are you satisfied with how the curriculum/TG values first language in the teaching of language? Why?
14. If not satisfied, how should it be addressed? Why?

B. Literacy

1. What is your understanding of literacy or what constitutes literacy or what is view about literacy-what is it and what is it made of? (will try to solicit views and not definitions. Will probe their views on whether songs, games, play are viewed as forms of literacy)
2. What views of literacy does NRP/the TGs promote? (probe for examples or reference to TG or other NRP related documents like training manuals, monitoring tools, etc.)
3. Are your views of literacy similar to those reflected in the curriculum/TG? How?
4. Is/are the view/views of literacy presented in the curriculum/TG appropriate for learners to be literate in English? How/why?
5. What important aspects of literacy do you think are missing in the TG?
6. What features do you associate with a grade 4 learner who is literate in English (what are qualities of a learner who has attained desirable outcomes for literacy in English)? Explain.
7. Which features of the curriculum do you think are important in helping learners become literate in English? Why?
8. What are your suggestions of a better view of literacy that should inform instruction in early grade literacy in English? Why?
9. Which activities outlined in the TG do you think are effective in promoting your learners' acquisition of literacy in English? Why?
10. Which activities outlined in the TG do you think are not effective in promoting your learners' acquisition of literacy in English? Why?
11. Which activities do you think would be effective in helping learners become literate in English but are not promoted in the syllabus? Why?

12. Do you think it is appropriate to start teaching children literacy in English before they have adequately developed speaking and listening skills in English? Why?
13. Does the curriculum/TG promote early or delayed instruction of literacy in English?
14. What other forms of literacy do you think the TG should include?
15. What is your evaluation of your learners' competence in literacy in Chichewa in comparison to literacy in English?
16. Do you think the learners' competence in Chichewa literacy can affect development of literacy in English? Why? How?

C. Instruction approaches

1. What approach of teaching language and literacy in English is promoted by NRP/the TG?
2. What are the main features of the approach? (should be asked to refer to TG or related documents)
3. Do you think it is an effective approach for teaching your learners? Why?
4. What do you think is the most appropriate approach for teaching your learners? Why?
5. Do you follow the script as it is, or you make modifications? Why?
6. If you make modifications, which aspects of the lessons do you modify? How? Why?
7. Should Chichewa be used in English lessons? Why? How?
8. Does the syllabus promote use of Chichewa in English lessons? How? Why?
9. What TG activities or suggested resources do you think promote the learning of English language? Why?
10. Which ones do you think do not promote the learning of English language? Why?
11. Which activities and/or resources do you think are appropriate for helping your learners learn English language? Why?
12. What TG activities or suggested resources do you think promote the learning of literacy in English? Why?
13. Which ones do you think do not promote the learning of literacy in English? Why?
14. Which activities and/or resources do you think are appropriate for helping your learners learn literacy in English (or which ones do you suggest)? Why?

D. TG Unit Discussion (based on a unit the teacher had already taught. Use these questions for each of the ten lessons in the unit-one by one)

1. Which features of the lesson do you like? Why?

2. Which ones don't you like? Why?
3. Do you think the lesson can help learners acquire the desired competencies? Why?
4. What features or aspects do you suggest would help learners acquire the desired competencies? Why?
5. Did you make any modification in this lesson?
6. If yes to 5, which modifications did you make and why?

Curriculum Developers' Interview questions

General Questions

1. Why were scripted lessons introduced in Malawi?
2. What is your opinion about the reasons behind introduction of scripted lessons?
3. What is your opinion about the effectiveness of scripted lessons in the teaching and learning of Early grade English language? Why? (probe in relation to delivery of lessons and children's learning).
4. What do you think is the best way of teaching early grade English? Why?
5. Are teachers allowed to make modifications to the script? Why?
6. If yes to 5, which modifications are they allowed to make and which ones are they not allowed to make? Why?

A. Bilingualism

1. What is the level of English language competence expected for a standard 4 learner? (what are qualities of a learner who has attained desirable outcomes for English language)? Explain.
2. What is your evaluation of Malawi's Standard 4 learners' competence in English? Why do you say so? (probe on both print-based and oral-based competencies/skills).
3. From your experience as a curriculum developer, teacher trainer and NRP monitor, which aspects of early grade or standard 4 English do teachers and learners not struggle with? Why do you think they do not struggle?
4. Which aspects/skills do they struggle with? Why do you think they struggle?
5. What do you think can minimize the learners' struggling with those aspects? (treat each one by one)

6. Does the curriculum/TG recognize the role of learners' first language in the learning of English? How?
7. Do you think the first language can support learning of English? Why? How?
8. Do you think the curriculum/TG promotes valuing first language in the teaching of English? How?
9. Which specific areas/sections of the Curriculum/TG reflects the valuing of first language in the teaching of language? In what way is the valuing shown? (Refer to any Unit of their choice).
10. Are you satisfied with how the curriculum/TG values first language in the teaching of language? Why?
11. If not satisfied, how should it be addressed? Why?

B. Literacy

1. What views of literacy does NRP/the TGs promote? (probe for examples or reference to TG or other NRP related documents like training manuals, monitoring tools, etc.)
2. Is/are the view/views of literacy presented in the curriculum/TG appropriate for learners to be literate in English? How/why?
3. What important aspects of literacy do you think are missing in the TG?
4. What features do you associate with a grade 4 learner who is literate in English (what are qualities of a learner who has attained desirable outcomes for literacy in English)? Explain.
5. Which aspects of TG do you think are important in helping learners become literate in English? Why?
6. Does the curriculum/TG promote starting teaching children literacy in English before they have adequately developed speaking and listening skills in English? Why? What other forms of literacy do you think the TG should include?
7. Does the curriculum promote the use of Chichewa or local languages in teaching literacy in English? Why? How?

C. Instruction approaches

1. What approach of teaching language and literacy is English is promoted by NRP/the TG?
2. What are the main features of the approach? (should be asked to refer to TG or related documents)
3. Do you think it is an effective approach for teaching Malawi's learners? Why?
4. What do you think is the most appropriate approach for teaching Malawi's learners? Why?
5. Does the syllabus promote use of Chichewa in English lessons? How? Why?
6. Do the TG activities or suggested resources promote the learning of English language? How?
7. Are the activities and/or resources appropriate for helping Malawi's learners learn English language? Why?
8. What TG activities or suggested resources do you think promote the learning of literacy in English? Why?
9. Which ones do you think do not promote the learning of literacy in English? Why?
10. Which activities and/or resources do you think are appropriate for helping your learners learn literacy in English (or which ones do you suggest)? Why?

Appendix 6: Focus Group Discussion guide for teachers

FGD questions for teachers

1. Do you think NRP is bearing its intended fruits?
2. Do you think use of scripted lessons is appropriate in your context?
3. What are the characteristics you look for to categorise a learner as competent in English? (explore more on each of the four language skills together with critical reading and use of songs and games)
4. During the interviews all of you indicated that you modify lessons. Do you think it is appropriate to do so?
5. Based on your experience and despite what you learnt at TTC, what do you think is the better way of helping learners to learn English? (probe for use of local languages and approach to teaching reading and writing)
6. How do you use the two lessons of remediation and assessment to help the learners learn?
7. What should be changed to improve the current situation where, as you indicated during the interviews, learners' performance is still poor?

Appendix 7: TG Unit 16 (TG's Table of contents and Unit 16 Lessons)

Contents

Conclusion	(2 minutes)
Ask the learners to say which of the stories they listened to they liked the most and why.	

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 15	The train ride: Revision	Lesson 10	(35 minutes)
In this lesson, choose 2-4 success criteria that were not understood by most learners and review them.			

Success criteria	Lessons	Activities

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language	Lesson 1
	Success criteria Learners must be able to: • give advice • take advice • write sentences on giving advice **Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)** Chart with sentences about pieces of advice	

Introduction	(2 minutes)
Ask learners to say any piece of advice they receive at home.	

Activity 16.1.1	Oral Language: Giving and taking advice	(15 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to give and take advice using *should*. For example: *You should work hard in school. Yes, I will.* Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.1.2	Oral Language: Giving and taking advice	(15 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to give and take advice using *should not*. For example:*You should not drink beer. Okay, thank you.* Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.1.3	Writing connected to Oral Language structure: Writing sentences on giving advice	(15 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to write sentences on giving advice. For example: *You should listen to your teacher.* Let learners write pieces of advice for different situations in groups. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Conclusion	(3 minutes)
Ask learners to say any piece of advice they receive at home.	

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Reading	Lesson 2
	Success criteria Learners must be able to: • give meanings of words • read a story using radio reading • summarise a text **Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)** Word cards, pictures	

Introduction	(2 minutes)
Ask learners to mention different people who have ever given them advice. (*teachers, parents, guardians, religious leaders, siblings)*	

Activity 16.2.1	Vocabulary: Giving meanings of words	(10 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach meanings of the following words using appropriate strategies: **counselor, matters, damage, disbelief** and **develop.** Help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.2.2	Fluency: Reading a story using radio reading	(13 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach reading the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76 using radio reading. Let learners read the story using radio reading. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.2.3	Comprehension: Summarising a text	(10 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach summarising the story *Meeting the counsellor* at page 76. Show learners how to include the main idea and only the most important details in the story. Let learners read the story and summarise after reading. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Conclusion	(3 minutes)
Ask learners to give the meaning of the following words: **counsellor, damage, disbelief** and **develop.**	

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language and Grammar	Lesson 3
	Success criteria Learners must be able to: • give advice • take advice • identify adjectives with suffix -less • form adjectives with suffix -less **Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)** Chart listing adjectives with suffix-less, word cards	

Introduction	(2 minutes)
Ask learners to say what advice they have ever given a friend.	

Activity 16.3.1	Oral language: Giving and taking advice	(8 minutes)

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to give and take advice using *should* and *should not*. For example: *You should not make noise in class. Okay, I will not make noise in class.* Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.3.2	Grammar: Identifying adjectives with suffix –less	(10 minutes)

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach adjectives with suffix-less. Use these sentences:

1 *Mr Mbewe is a careless driver.*
2 *Homeless people are staying in a camp.*
3 *He is drinking tasteless juice.*
4 *Many young people are jobless.*

Explain that careless and homeless in the first two sentences are adjectives formed by the suffix *-less*. Ask learners to identify adjectives from the last two sentences. Make sure learners understand the meaning of adjectives with the suffix –less. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.3.3	Grammar: Forming adjectives with suffix –less	(12 minutes)

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to form adjectives by adding suffix -less on Exercise A at page 78. Tell learners to write the exercise in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion	(3 minutes)

Ask learners to form adjectives with suffix –less from nouns on word cards.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Reading	Lesson 4

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- read a story using radio reading
- answer comprehension question orally
- summarise a text

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

Word cards

Introduction	**(2 minutes)**
Ask learners to read the following words from the word cards: **counselor, damage** and **develop.**	

Activity 16.4.1	**Fluency: Reading a story using radio reading**	**(12 minutes)**
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach reading the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76 using radio reading. Let learners read the story using radio reading. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.4.2	**Comprehension: Answering comprehension questions orally**	**(8 minutes)**
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach answering comprehension questions at page 77 orally. Show how to answer questions in full using details from the story. Let learners answer comprehension questions orally. Help struggling learners. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.4.3	**Comprehension: Summarising a text**	**(10 minutes)**
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach summarising a text on the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76. Show learners how to include the main idea and only the most important details in the story. Let learners read the story and summarise a text. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Conclusion	**(3 minutes)**
Ask some learners to read their summaries.	

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Oral language and Grammar	Lesson 5

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- give advice
- take advice
- use adjectives with suffix -less
- complete sentences using adjectives with suffix -less

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

a list of adjectives

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to say some pieces of advice they are given at school by teachers

Activity 16.5.1 **Oral language: Giving and taking advice** **(8 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach giving and taking advice using *should* and *should not*. Let learners practice giving and taking advice using different situations in pairs. Walk around, listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.5.2 **Grammar: Using adjectives with suffix –less** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach making sentences with adjectives **colourless** and **fearless**. For example:

1 The water in the bottle is colourless.
2 My dog is fearless.

Ask learners to be in pairs and make their own sentences using **helpless** and **useless**. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.5.3 **Grammar: Completing sentences using adjectives** **(12 minutes)**

Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to make sentences using adjectives in Exercise B at page 78. Make sure learners understand the meaning of the adjectives with the suffix –less. Tell learners to write the exercise in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Vocabulary	Lesson 6

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- identify words they do not know
- give meanings of words
- write opposites of given words

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

word cards

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to make sentences with the following words: **counselor** and **develop**

Activity 16.6.1 **Vocabulary: Identifying words they do not know** **(8 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to identify words that learners do not know from the story *Meeting with the counsellor* at page 76 through silent reading. Remind them to write the words as they are reading. Help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.6.2 **Vocabulary: Giving meanings of words** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to teach the meanings of the identified words. Write down the unfamiliar words identified by the learners on the chalkboard. Discuss the meanings of the identified words using appropriate strategies. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.6.3 **Vocabulary: Writing opposites of given words** **(12 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to choose the opposites of the given words in Exercise C at page 79. Ask learners to write the exercise in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion **(3 minutes)**

Ask learners to make sentences using the words they identified.

Teacher Reflection

Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Comprehension	Lesson 7

Success criteria

Learners must be able to:

- read a story silently
- talk about a story
- answer comprehension questions

Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)

Word cards

Introduction **(2 minutes)**

Ask learners to read words from the word card raised, for example: **develop** and **disbelief.**

Activity 16.7.1 **Comprehension: Reading a story silently** **(12 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to read the story at page 76 and find answers to the following pre-questions:

1 How is smoking dangerous?
2 What advice did Mr Mwalilino give to the youth about school?

Let learners read the story silently. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.7.2 **Comprehension: Talking about a story** **(8 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to talk about the story they have read. Use these questions:

1. Where is the story taking place?
2. What do you like about the story?
3. What have you learnt about the story?

Encourage learners to answer the questions in full using details from the story. Walk around and help struggling learners. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Activity 16.7.3 **Comprehension: Writing answers to comprehension questions** **(10 minutes)**

Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to write answers to comprehension questions at page 77. Tell learners to write answers to the comprehension questions in their exercise books. Help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.

Conclusion **(3 minutes)**

Ask some learners to read answers to their work.

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Productive writing	Lesson 8
	Success criteria Learners must be able to: • plan a composition • write a composition **Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)** Word cards	

Introduction	(2 minutes)
Ask learners to share some pieces of advices.	

Activity 16.8.1	Productive writing: Planning a composition	(10 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to plan a composition on *Giving advice* using the guiding question and the boxes on Exercise D at page 79. Let learners write the composition in their exercise books. Help struggling learners. Listen and give feedback. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.8.2	Productive writing: Writing a composition	(20 minutes)
Follow *I do, We do* and *You do* to teach writing a composition on *Giving advice.* Show how to write a sample composition using the guiding question and boxes. Ask learners to write a composition in their exercise books. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Conclusion	(3 minutes)
Select a well written paragraph and ask the learners to read it to the class.	

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Supplementary readers	Lesson 9
	Success criteria Learners must be able to: • read supplementary readers • retell stories **Suggested resources (in addition to the learner's book)** Supplementary readers	

Introduction	**(2 minutes)**
Ask learners to share interesting stories they read or heard about.	

Activity 16.9.1	**Reading supplementary readers**	**(20 minutes)**
Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* to show learners how to summarize a story. Using a story they have chosen, show them how to include the main idea and only the most important details. Let learners read the story. Walk around and help struggling learners. Repeat *I do* and *We do* if necessary.		

Activity 16.9.2	**Retelling stories**	**(10 minutes)**
Follow *I do*, *We do* and *You do* in retelling the story that has been read by saying where the story took place, who is involved and what is happening in the story. Ask some learners to retell their stories. Help struggling learners. Listen and give feedback.		

Conclusion	**(2 minutes)**
Ask the learners to say which of the stories they listened to they liked most and why.	

Teacher Reflection
Write your observations in the evaluation section of your lesson plan by answering questions as in fully scripted lessons.

UNIT 16	Meeting with the counsellor: Revision	Lesson 10 (35 minutes)
In this lesson, choose 2-4 success criteria that were not understood by most learners and review them.		

Success criteria	Lessons	Activities

Appendix 8: LB Unit 16 (LB Table of contents and Unit 16 text and exercises)

Contents

UNIT 16 Meeting with the counsellor

counsellor **matters** **damage**
disbelief **develop**

Mr Mwalilino is a youth counsellor for Bowe Zone. Each village in the zone has a youth centre. This is where young people meet to discuss different matters. He meets the youth at the youth centres.

One day, Mr Mwalilino visited Kalikongwe Youth Centre. Many boys and girls came to the meeting. He spoke on many things. He said, "Don't smoke and don't drink beer." Chikondi raised his hand.

"Why should we not smoke?" He asked. "Smoking is dangerous. It can damage your lungs and you may die," Mr Mwalilino explained.

We looked at one another in disbelief. There were some youths in the meeting who smoked. We learnt that our friends were putting their lives in danger by smoking.

"You must also work hard in school," Mr Mwalilino continued. "We need people who can read and write to develop our country." After his speech, we asked him many questions about our health. Others asked what they should do to live a happy life. At the end, we asked the counsellor to visit us again.

Answer the questions.

1 Where do the youth meet in Bowe Zone?

2 What two things did the counsellor advise the youth not to do?

3 Why did Mr Mwalilino advise the students to work hard in school?

4 Why did the youth ask the counsellor to visit them again?

5 If you were the counsellor, what other advice would you give the youth?

Exercise A

Form adjectives by adding the suffix -less to the given nouns.

Example

fruit fruitless

1 job
2 hope
3 care
4 help
5 use

Exercise B

Complete the sentences by changing the words in brackets into adjectives with the suffix -less.

Example

Do not be _____ (care) with your money.

Do not be careless with your money.

1 The football match ended in a _____ (goal) draw.
2 This chicken is _____ (life).
3 The children were _____ (help) in the rain.
4 The fun in the game is _____ (end).
5 My car battery is _____ (power).

Exercise C Choose the opposites of the given words from this list.

dislike after disbelief stop sad

Example	
Word	**Opposite**
start	finish

1 happy
2 like
3 before
4 continue
5 belief

Exercise D Plan and write a composition on "Giving advice" using the guiding question and boxes.

What pieces of advice can you give your friends who misbehave at school?

Firstly, _____

_____

_____

Secondly, _____

_____

_____