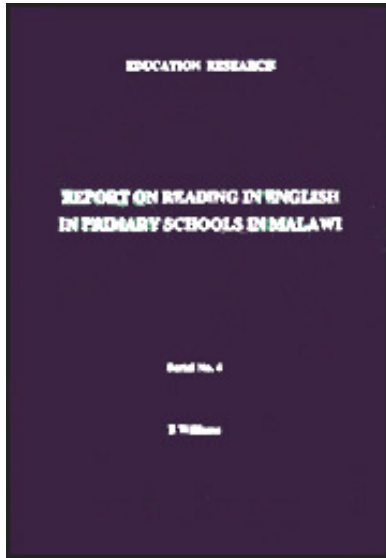


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## **Report on reading in English in primary schools in Malawi - Education Research Paper No. 04, 1993, 56 p.**

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## Summary and recommendations

### 1. The aims of this project were:

- (i) to collect data on the reading proficiency in English of primary school children in Malawi.
- (ii) to report on methods used by teachers in primary schools in the teaching of reading
- (iii) to describe conditions in schools in terms of class size, books, and teacher qualifications
- (iv) to characterise the approach to reading in teacher training colleges

English is taught as a subject for the first four years (standards) and is the medium of education for the last four years in the primary schools of Malawi.

**2.** Following an initial preparatory visit to Malawi, it was decided to assess reading proficiency by means of two tests. The first was a specially prepared modified cloze test of 60 items, graded into three subtests aimed at years 3, 4 and 6 of primary schools. The second test was an individual read aloud test with comprehension questions, again graded into subtests for years 3, 4 and 6. In both cases all testees were to attempt all subtests.

**3.** In the main data collection visit (May 1992) the group reading test was administered to 480 primary pupils in 5 schools (2 urban, 3 rural). The individual read aloud test was administered to 60 pupils in the same 5 schools. In addition a 60 item group reading test in Chichewa (the language of instruction and the home language of most children tested) was administered to the same 480 pupils to help establish whether pupils had a reading problem or a language problem in their English reading.

- 4.** Data on the approach to reading in teacher training was obtained through examination of teacher training syllabuses and interviews with training college staff from 2 teacher training colleges.
  
- 5.** Observation of reading lessons was carried out in 15 classes.
  
- 6.** Data was collected on teachers, class numbers, books and general educational provision in the 5 schools where testing took place. Further data at a national level was taken from Ministry of Education publications.
  
- 7.** The results of the group reading tests indicate that there is inadequate comprehension of English texts judged to be at their level in the five schools tested on the part of:
  - approximately 65% of year 3 pupils
  - approximately 89% of year 4 pupils

- approximately 78% of year 6 pupils

The majority of year 6 pupils seem to have adequate comprehension of material at year 3 and year 4 levels. However, this is unlikely to be sufficient to allow them to read English to learn in other subjects at Year 6 level. It is also unlikely that the majority can improve sufficiently to achieve a reasonable performance in the Primary School Leaving Certificate in Standard 8.

**8.** The pupils gained good scores on the mother tongue (Chichewa) test. Standard 6 pupils overall achieved a mean score of over 75%, suggesting that for these pupils in particular low achievement in the English test may come from weakness in English, rather than weakness in reading. There was a moderately positive correlation between results in English and in Chichewa.

**9.** The results of the individual Read Aloud tests, although

more impressionistic, confirm the result of Word Find, in that they suggest the majority of pupils in Standards 3, 4 and 6 have difficulty with material aimed at their year level, although again most standard 6 pupils seem to cope well with material below their level. In addition, many pupils at all levels have difficulty in answering inference questions from reading. This may be a function of the preponderance of "plain sense" direct reference questions that they are given in class.

**10.** Examination of teacher training syllabuses and interviews with training college staff indicated that the teacher training syllabuses have hitherto given too much prominence to "look and say" methods which stress accuracy of reading aloud, rather than promoting reading as a process of acquiring meaning from text.

**11.** Classroom observation indicates that much teaching of reading proceeds through repetition of the text with insufficient attention being paid to the presentation of

meaning and checking of understanding.

**12.** The conditions for learning in the primary schools appear to be unfavourable. Mean class size for the schools visited was 99.3. The provision of English coursebooks was generally poor, although variable. There are generally far fewer books than pupils at all standards in urban and rural schools. As far as trained teachers are concerned, only one of the five schools visited had untrained teachers.

**13.** In the five schools there was no apparent link between Word Find test scores and:

- (a) books per pupil in standards 1 to 6
- (b) type of teacher qualification, or qualified versus unqualified teachers

There was, on the other hand, a suggestion that smaller classes are linked to higher test scores. However, these

findings should not be regarded as in any way indicative of general trends. First, the book per pupil proportion at all grades tested was very small; larger differences would be needed to produce clearer effects. In terms of teacher qualification most teachers approached the teaching of reading in the same way irrespective of type of qualification.

While one would expect smaller classes to be associated with higher scores, there was a notable exception where one school had small classes and a very low score. A larger sample of schools would be needed to come to firmer conclusions.

**14.** If reading proficiency in English is to improve, attention should in my view be given to the following:

(i) More teachers should see reading as a process of meaning making, and not as a process of "barking at print". The present approach in most



classes observed appears to be a barrier to the pupils' progress. Teachers should pay more attention to presenting meaning and checking understanding.

(ii) More reading material should be provided for learners; one course book between two pupils would appear to be a minimum target.

(iii) Coursebooks and teachers should ask fewer "plain sense" questions on texts, and a greater number of inference questions, together with other reason-related activities.

**15.** There is a new 8 year English course book series currently in preparation entitled *Activities with English*. The standard 1 book is being introduced in 1992-93. The introduction of this course, which is a more meaning-based series than the previous *English in Malawi*, provides

opportunities for improving the methodology partly through the material itself, partly through the training associated with it.

**Recommendation 1:** That regular inservice sessions be organised in connection with the new coursebooks, and that those responsible for the content of the sessions should ensure that a "meaning making" approach to reading is integrated into the sessions.

**Recommendation 2:** That when pre-service teacher training is taking place in the colleges, staff should ensure that a "meaning making" approach to the teaching of reading is given prominence, and that trainees are equipped with appropriate techniques for presenting meaning and checking understanding.

**16.** An important priority is to make sure that pre-service and in-service trainers themselves appreciate the importance of

reading as a meaningful activity. It is vital that they should be able to communicate this message to the teachers and trainees. A more appropriate methodology seems crucial for Malawi's classrooms, in my view more important than new books or smaller classes, for these can be undermined if a teacher insists on unsuitable methods.

**Recommendation 3:** If the Ministry of Education assesses that future inservice training requires a larger cadre of specialists in the teaching of reading than is currently available, then the Ministry should consider the preparation of such specialists through short courses (about 10 weeks) which should take place entirely, or at least partly, in Malawi.

**17.** Pupils can "learn how to read" from the blackboard. Nevertheless they will not become fluent readers by only reading from the blackboard. It is widely agreed that people become good readers through reading - there is no short cut. An ample supply of reading material is therefore essential.

**Recommendation 4:** That the Ministry of Education should consider providing large numbers of simple English readers to primary schools for self access extensive reading through a "book box" system. The books would have to be appropriate in terms of linguistic level and content. Given that literacy in Chichewa is being established in the first four years, standard 5 and 6 might be considered as appropriate starting points.

**18.** The English component of the Standard 8 Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination will need to be changed to bring it into line with the new syllabus. The reading comprehension section in particular will need to be amended, and appropriate information needs to be sought to guide those amendments, bearing in mind the provisions of the new syllabus.

**Recommendation 5:** That specialist research be carried out into:

(a) specifying for the end of primary school the reading comprehension abilities which are:

- relevant to current real life situations, as well as to likely future needs in Malawi;
- relevant to reading to learn in other school subjects;
- relevant to the majority of pupils who will end their schooling at Standard 8.

(b) investigating test item types which lend themselves to the assessment of the selected reading abilities (in addition to the existing open-ended questions), bearing in mind the practicalities of production and marking.

**19.** To monitor reading achievement standards in English over time requires the development of a more basic reading test than the standard 8 leaving examination. Such a test could

form part of a national assessment system.

**Recommendation 6:** That a feasibility study be initiated into instituting on a sample basis a reading achievement test for Malawi primary schools to be administered at regular (not necessarily annual) intervals. The study would look into the practical and academic aspects.

**20.** Obviously there are other improvements that could be recommended such as refurbishing schools, providing desks for pupils, reducing the size of classes to a maximum of 50 etc. All these would arguably have a beneficial effect on the learning of reading, which does not take place in a vacuum. The recommendations that have been made however, are those that seem to focus upon reading, and to provide relatively inexpensive and practical help to the teachers and children of Malawi.



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## 1. Introduction: English and primary education in Malawi

In Malawi, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa a knowledge of English is of crucial educational importance to individuals, since it is the medium of much of primary and all of secondary schooling. Pupils have to move swiftly from a position of learning to read in English, to one of reading English to learn.

Official statistics (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1989)

suggest that the Malawi primary school system, the foundation of formal education for the few, and the only formal education for the great majority, is in a less than satisfactory condition. There have been suggestions for some time that levels of literacy in English in Malawi's primary schools are low (Heyneman, 1980; Mwanza, 1988; Mchazime, 1989). This means that the education of many primary school children in Malawi is suffering since reading in English is the very skill which pupils are supposed to deploy from Standard 5 onwards to gain knowledge in other fields.

This project report attempts to document how reading in English is taught in primary schools in Malawi, and how well the pupils read in English. Because of time constraints, it is a descriptive survey based on five schools, and not on a national sample. Its results may serve as a contribution to the information base of those who are developing strategies to provide a better educational foundation for the country's schoolchildren.





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## 2. Malawi: Primary education

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### 2.1 Structure

There are 8 years of primary schooling in Malawi, followed by 4 years of secondary schooling (see Appendix A). Children start school at the age of 6. However there is considerable variation in age within any year and children over 16 may occasionally be found in the first year, while some 40% of pupils in the eighth year are over 16.

## **2.2 General background**

Some 93.4% of primary school children attend government assisted schools. Conditions in unassisted schools are overall marginally better (MOE, *Education Statistics*, 1989). Fees for primary schooling vary according to year and rural/urban location but in assisted schools do not exceed K7.5 (less than £2 pounds sterling) per year. In 1992-93 fees were abolished for Year 1. There are school examinations at the end of each primary year for promotion to the next year. Those who fail may repeat the year. At the end of primary school there is a national examination to select those who will continue to

secondary school.

The transition rate from the last year (standard 8) of primary school to the first year (form 1) of secondary school is low. In 1988-89 it was 6.3% (MOE, *Education Statistics*, 1989: 33).

The medium of education is officially Chichewa for the first four years, with English taught as a subject (although the primary textbook *New Malawi Arithmetic* (n.d.) is in English from year 3, according to Mchazime, 1989: 3). From year 5 onwards English is the medium, and Chichewa is taught as a subject. According to the 1977 Malawi Population Census 77% of the Malawi population speak Chichewa (Government of Malawi, 1980 quoted in Chawani 1986). (It is not necessarily the mother tongue of all 77%.)

## **2.3 Statistical information**

(Data source: MOE, *Education Statistics*, 1989)

Number of assisted primary schools: 2,041

Total number of pupils enrolled: 1,123,306

Between 14% and 25% of all primary school years consist of "repeaters", except for year 1 (46%). Girls make up 48% of pupils in year 1, falling to 33% by year 8.

In 1989 approximately 30% of the total enrolment was in year 1. (In the five schools visited in this project the percentage of pupils in year 1 was 27.76%.)

### Primary Teachers in Assisted Schools:

	Male	Female	Total
Number of qualified teachers:	9658	5183	14841
Number of unqualified teachers:	1144	558	1702
Total numbers:	10802	5741	16543

The pupil-teacher ratio is 69.6 to 1.

## 2.4 Teacher training

Trained teachers in primary schools have for the most part been trained according to one of the following:

- i) Teacher training colleges which offer a two year full-time course. There are seven such colleges.
- ii) an intensive one-year full time programme (only offered at Domasi TT: scheduled to end in 1993, but may continue)
- iii) a three-year sandwich course (vacations only) entitled Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme (MASTEP) run by Teacher Training Colleges during vacations.

Teachers gradings/qualifications are as follows:

T4: Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) + 2 years TT  
(phased out 1970)

T3: Junior Certificate (JC, 2nd year secondary exam) + 2 yrs  
TT

T2: Malawi Certificate of Education (MCE, 4th yr exam) + 2  
yrs TT

T1: (promotion grade especially for head teachers)

Diploma: from various sources (in 1989 there were only 30  
such teachers in primary schools).



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## 3. Reading and language learning

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### 3.1 Definition of reading

The definition of reading adopted for this report is that it is a deliberate process of looking at and understanding written language. The focus of enquiry is therefore at the basic level (often referred to as functional literacy), and examines the extent to which pupils understand relatively simple texts. The

nature of understanding is contentious but I shall take it to be the understanding intended by the writer and likely to be agreed on by a consensus of informed readers.

Such a definition is compatible with the current research-based view of reading, namely that it is a complex interactive process whereby the reader obtains meaning from the text. In order to generate meaning the reader must bring to bear on the text relevant types of knowledge, among which are:

- knowledge of the relevant language
- knowledge of the relevant script and orthographic conventions
- relevant knowledge of the world (eg knowledge appropriate to the topic, to the cultural context and knowledge of relevant text types).



The implications of this view for the teaching and learning of reading are:

- that learners' language development should be adequate to cope with the text that they are faced with
- that they should be able to relate to the content of the text;
- that they should have an understanding of the nature of the relevant script and orthographic conventions

### **3.2 Second and foreign language learning**

Language learning is a process that takes place over time. The extent of learning depends on the duration, amount and richness of the input (ie what the learner hears or reads). Learning is mediated by the motivation and degree of engagement of the learner, and the type of language

activities that the learners undergo (ie whether they are repeating phrases, singing songs, listening to the teacher, etc.). No distinction is made in this report between second and foreign language learning.

The initial stages of language learning will not be error-free, but characterised by deviancies due in large measure to deficiencies in input, false generalisations, and interference from the mother tongue. At any stage in learning "fossilisation" may occur - in effect, learning ceases, and the learner's language remains at a level below that of fluent users of the language.

While the implications of these views for English language teaching, and particularly the teaching of reading, in terms of what is the best practice, are not entirely agreed upon, there would be general agreement that the following factors play a role:

- (i) teacher's English language proficiency
- (ii) appropriacy of materials
- (iii) amount of time devoted to the language
- (iii) quality of teaching methodology
- (iv) degree of learner motivation
- (v) class size and general material provision

These factors are further mediated by situational factors that might be crudely summarised as the congruence of the educational operation with socio-cultural norms.

### **3.3 Learning to read in a foreign language**

The definition of reading provided above (3.1) indicates that knowledge of the language of the text is essential in helping the learner to learn to read. Such knowledge enables learners to identify words from partial graphic clues, and to guess words through understanding of context, particularly in the early stages. (While it is now widely recognised that

fluent readers have automatic recognition of written words, and therefore do not need to guess or "sound out" words, automatic recognition obviously assumes understanding of what is recognised). The attribution of meaning to the written words is clearly an integral part of reading.

A particularly careful approach is therefore needed with learners who have little knowledge of English if they are to learn to read successfully in the language. The methods of teaching initial reading outlined in Appendix B assume the learner knows the language and these methods therefore focus upon decoding (ie identification) of the written words. In initial reading of a foreign language (where the learner may not know the language) this can degenerate into mere "transcoding" ie converting the written form into a spoken form without understanding.

### **3.4 The testing of reading**

The testing of reading is difficult, since in reading in "real life" there is normally no observable response. Test techniques are unsatisfactory to the extent that they yield indirect measures of text comprehension. Furthermore all reading test formats tend to interfere with the process of reading. For a discussion of these issues, see Appendix C.

After classroom observation and initial piloting the test techniques decided upon for this project were a combination of (a) modified cloze for group administration, and (b) read aloud plus oral questions, for individual administration (see 4.4). These are techniques that are used in many different countries for the assessment of reading ability.



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## 4. Description of the project

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### 4.1 Aims of the project

The aims of the project were:

(i) to investigate reading proficiency in English in

primary schools in Malawi. Data for this was collected through two reading tests.

(ii) to report methods used by teachers in rural and urban primary schools in the teaching of reading. Information was gathered through recorded observation of classes.

(iii) to describe resource levels within schools (qualified teachers, class sizes and number of English books). Data was gathered through structured interviews with teachers.

(iv) to characterise the approach to the teaching of reading in teacher training colleges. The information was collected through interviews with college staff and examination of syllabuses.

## **4.2 Project timetable outline**

- (i) planning and background research (October, 1991)
- (ii) initial field trip of one week (November 1991)
- (iii) the preparation of data collection instruments and planning for main visit (March-April 1992)
- (iv) the main data collection trip (May, 1992).
- (v) analysis and writing up (June & November, 1992)

The total time allocated to all the phases listed above was 9 weeks.

### **4.3 The initial field trip**

During the initial field trip in autumn 1991 visits were made to one urban and one rural school. Visits were also made to the Ministry of Education, two Teacher Training Colleges (Lilongwe and Domasi), the Malawi Institute of Education and the University of Malawi (Chancellor College).



### **4.3.1 Pilot Data Collection Instruments used in the Initial Trip**

**Classroom Observation:** Direct observation of classrooms was used to collect information on classroom teaching. A number of classroom observation schedules were considered but they were abandoned as not appropriate to the conditions. Instead, a running record of teacher and pupil behaviour was made and the lessons were also recorded on audio tape.

**Reading Tests:** The MIRA test (Vincent & de la Mare, 1990) was administered to two pupils (one boy, one girl) in a selection of classes. In MIRA a pupil reads aloud a series of graded passages, each followed by questions. This test is intended for British schoolchildren, and while it is not appropriate for other countries it was felt that it would serve as a guide to the preparation of final test instruments. The MIRA sessions were recorded.

### 4.3.2 Initial Field Trip: Observation and Testing

A total of 8 different classes were observed (7 in English and 1 in Chichewa). Tests were carried out in 5 of them. The years (standards) involved were as follows:

Year	Schl 1 (urban)	Schl 2 (rural)
1	-	-
2	Observe	Observe (2)*
3	-	Observe + Test
4	Observe + Test	-
5	-	Observe + Test
6	Observe + Test	-
7	-	-
8	Observe + Test	-

## \* 1 Chichewa reading lesson

### 4.3.3 Conclusions from the Initial Visit

The conclusions drawn from the initial visit were:

(i) that recording classroom methodology through keeping a running record and audio recording was entirely adequate.

(ii) that a modified form of cloze testing would be the most appropriate form of group test.

(iii) that a culturally appropriate version of a "read aloud" test should be devised.

(iv) that it would be desirable to test reading in the children's own language as well as in English. The reason for this was that poor performance in an

English language reading test could be attributed either to low ability in English or low ability in reading. The practical implication of this decision was that the testing would have to be carried out in areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the pupils was known to be Chichewa.

(vi) that testing of reading should be carried out at years 3, 4 and 6. Testing at years 1 or 2 would be inappropriate since very little achievement would be registered in those years (this does not, of course, mean that no learning is going on in those years). Year 6 was selected as a point by which pupils should be recording reasonable progress.

#### **4.4 Final test instruments**

(i) a new series of "Read Aloud" passages was prepared. They consisted of five graded passages based upon

language from the course books *English in Malawi* followed by questions (see Appendix D).

(ii) for group testing a modified 60 item cloze test was produced. This test is referred to in this report as Word Find (see Appendix E for extracts). Pupils are familiar with the gap-filling technique from the tests and exercises used by their teachers. In addition the test administration included a practice section which the whole class did together. The texts in which the Word Find items occur were based on language appearing in *English in Malawi* as follows:

Texts for items 1 - 20: Year 2 or below.

Texts for items 21 - 40: Year 3 or below.

Texts for items 41 - 60: Mainly Year 6 or below.

It should be noted that control of supposed English language input is difficult, particularly after Standard 4, as the whole

curriculum is then taught through English. Pupils were allowed 45 minutes to complete the test (this did not include completing personal details or the Practice Section).

(iv) a 60 item test similar to Word Find was prepared for Chichewa (see Appendix E for an extract) with the help of Chichewa speakers from Reading University. The text for this test was a rough translation of the English texts, although no claims for equivalence of difficulty are made. The test was subsequently examined by two language experts from the Malawi Institute of Education, one of whom was an expert in Chichewa, and it was judged to be acceptable.

## **4.5 Sample of schools**

As noted above, the tests were administered in two urban schools and three rural schools (two on-road, one off-road). Time constraints (the field visit could not last more than 2 weeks), meant that there was insufficient time to cover more

than three rural schools. All schools were selected by the Malawi Ministry of Education. The small number of schools involved meant that urban/rural differences do not attain statistical significance.

This is not a representative sample as it is estimated (various personal communications) that at most only some 15% of the primary school population of Malawi may be categorised as urban. Testing was carried out in only two of the three provinces (Central and Southern) as the time constraints again did not allow for testing in the Northern province.

In terms of sample categories, it might also be claimed that the categorisation urban/rural in Malawi is an oversimplification, and that a four-fold categorisation, namely urban central, urban peripheral, rural roadside, and rural off-road would be more valid. Again time constraints would have precluded data collection from isolated off-road schools even if the relative proportion of such schools had been known.

The lack of representative sampling in terms of provinces and school categories is to be kept in mind in the interpretation of the results.

## 4.6 Data structure for tests

### 4.6.1 Word Find

Tests were administered to intact classes in cases where classes had fewer than 34 pupils. In cases of larger classes a representative sample of 34 or 40 pupils was requested. Wherever possible equal numbers of girls and boys were used. Schools M and S are urban schools, while schools N, P and W are rural. Data from the test was in this way collected from the following numbers of pupils:

Yr	Sex	Urban Schools			Rural Schools				Total
		M	S	(Total)	N	P	W	(Total)	
3	Boys	18	20	(38)	17	17	11	(45)	83



3	Girls	21	20	(41)	17	17	11	(45)	86
4	Boys	20	14	(34)	16	16	10	(42)	76
4	Girls	19	16	(35)	19	13	10	(42)	77
6	Boys	21	22	(43)	14	22	13	(49)	92
6	Girls	21	18	(39)	11	13	3	(27)	66
<b>Total</b>				<b>(230)</b>				<b>(250)</b>	<b>480</b>

### 4.6.2 Read Aloud

Read aloud tests were administered to four pupils from each class and recorded. In each case the class teacher was asked to select a high ability boy and girl, and an average ability boy and girl from the class.

### Schools

		<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	
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Year	Sex			Total
		M, S	N, P, W	
3	Boys	4	6	10
3	Girls	4	6	10
4	Boys	4	6	10
4	Girls	4	6	10
6	Boys	4	6	10
6	Girls	4	6	10
Total		24	36	<b>60</b>



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## 5. Resources in schools visited

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### [5.1 Overall impression](#)

### [5.2 Descriptions of individual schools](#)

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#### 5.1 Overall impression

The following data refer only to the five schools visited: 1 urban school in Lilongwe urban, 2 rural schools in Lilongwe rural, 1 urban school in Zomba urban, and 1 rural school in Zomba rural. Detailed information for the whole country is provided in MOE, *Education Statistics*, 1989.

The general impression is of extreme paucity of resources. Few schools have intact windows, and many have never had windows or doors. Most classrooms have few desks or chairs. The teacher is often the only person with a book. A

number of classes in both urban and rural schools take place out of doors. A striking feature of many primary schools in Malawi is the enormous size of the classes. Classes of over 100 are common. The largest class I saw had 167 pupils.

### **Mean Class Sizes in Schools Visited** (to nearest whole number)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Urban	131	97	90	80	108	123	109	75
Rural	141	115	113	87	86	59	54	41
All Schools	136	104	98	83	99	95	86	60

The overall mean size for all classes in schools visited is 99.3 and the pupil/teacher ratio is 70.8 to 1 (nationally 69.6 to 1: MOE, *Education Statistics*, 1989).

### **English Books per Pupil**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Urban	0.25	0.31	0.31	0.69	0.83	0.40	0.35	2.28
Rural	0.43	0.30	0.54	0.18	0.64	0.76	0.58	0.70
All	0.34	0.31	0.40	0.49	0.77	0.50	0.41	1.80

The corresponding figures nationally (based on MOE, *Education Statistics*, 1989) in government assisted schools are:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
	0.68	0.38	0.40	0.45	0.40	0.51	1.03	1.02

Two further points may be noted concerning books. The first is that there are a few pupils, mainly in urban schools, who bring their own personal copies. Precise data was not available, and in the schools I visited it I would estimate the maximum proportion of such pupils at around 10% and

generally much lower. The second point is that if instead of considering the number of books per pupil at each year, we consider the number of books per pupil for average class size, the picture becomes more favourable. Thus in 13 out of the 40 instances (5 schools x 8 grades) the number of books is greater than the average class size at that grade, and in a further 10 instances the number of books would allow at least 1 book per 2 pupils. Thus, for over half the classes in the schools visited, books could be moved from one class to another enabling a higher proportion of books per pupil than appears if one simply divides the number of books by the number of pupils. The main reasons why this does not occur appear to be first the organisational problems, and secondly the desire of teachers to husband their stock of books. Here it should be noted that since there are few desks, the books are either on the floor or held by hand whenever they are in use.

## **5.2 Descriptions of individual schools**

### **5.2.1 School S (Urban)**

A large urban school in Lilongwe. Classrooms are in brick-built blocks with corrugated roofs; floors are concrete. Doors intact but almost all glass in window frames is broken. The classrooms are in a very poor state of maintenance; there are desks for some 10% of pupils, and these are in very bad repair. In November 1991 4 classes were taking place outside next to the road. The school operates 2 sessions per day.

Telephone: Yes

Electricity: in the administration block and 3 classrooms

Water: piped supply; several taps.

Teacher accommodation: house for headmaster

**Enrolment:**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>
Boys	495	281	275	173	178	195	123	123	1843
Girls	456	307	263	251	216	173	202	91	1959
Total	951	588	538	424	394	368	325	214	3802
No/classes	7	6	6	5	3	2	2	3	
AvClassSize	136	98	90	85	131	184	166	71	
NoEngBks	100	150	150	300	350	150	89	800	
Tchrs	2xT1	6xT2	3xT2	3xT2	2xT2	3xT2	1xT1	4xT2	
	5xT3	5xT3	5xT3	5xT3	5xT3	2xT3	4xT3	5xT3	

**5.2.2 School M (Urban)**

Brick buildings, large and well lit classrooms, doors and windows all intact. Desks in reasonable condition and



adequate for the numbers.

Telephone: Yes, but out of order

Electricity: Yes

Water: Piped supply; several taps.

Accommodation: House for head teacher

Enrolment:

<b>Standard</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>
Boys	123	94	86	68	77	62	58	98	666
Girls	108	96	94	70	68	60	54	62	612
Total	231	190	180	138	145	122	112	160	1278
NoClasses	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
AvClassSize	116	95	90	69	73	61	56	53	

EngBooks	200	92	70	85	95	45	62	52	
Tchrs	2xT3	2xT2	2xT3	2xT3	2xT3	1xT2	2xT2	2xT2	
						1xT3		1xT3	

### 5.2.3 School P (Rural)

Although classified as a rural school, this school was in fact close to an urban area and approximately 60% of pupils reported that their fathers were not subsistence farmers. The MOE official accompanying me felt it was not a typical rural school.

Telephone: no

Electricity: none

Water supply: Bore hole, but very little due to drought

Accommodation: 9 burnt brick houses. Insufficient for the teachers

Enrolment:

<b>Standard</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>
Boys	381	185	157	140	100	64	50	66	1143
Girls	403	179	145	105	85	52	45	38	1052
Total	784	364	302	245	185	11	695	104	2195
No/Classes	4	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	
Av Class Size	196	121	151	123	185	116	95	52	
No Eng Bks	415	148	240	461	411	21	80	95	
Tchrs	4xT3	2xT3	1xT3	1xT3	1xT3	1xT3	2xT3	2xT2	
		1xT2	2xT2	1xT2	1xT2	1xT2		2xT1	
(+ 1xT3 & 1xT2 not assigned to a class)									

## 5.2.4 School W (Rural)

An isolated rural school. Smearred mud interior (including seats; no desks). Two classes taking place outside. One temporary (bamboo frame) classroom. A new block was under construction. Meantime the boys were building a further temporary classroom.

Telephone: no

Electricity: none

Water supply: Well

Accommodation: 9 brick houses; 2 teachers housed in village

Enrolment:

Standard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total

<b>Standard</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>
Boys	90	50	60	35	12	17	11	20	295
Girls	48	42	10	5	12	5	5	6	133
Total	138	92	70	40	24	22	16	26	428
No/Classes	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Av Class Size	69	92	70	40	24	22	16	26	
No Eng Bks	60	8	6	6	6	5	7	6	
Tchrs	2xT3	1xUT	2xUT	1xT3	1xT3	1xT3	1xT3	1xT3	
(UT=untrained)									

### 5.2.5 School N (Rural)

An on-road rural school, consisting of three brick blocks with corrugated roofs, peppered with holes. No windows or doors; very dilapidated. Smearred mud interiors (including seats; no

desks). One of two schools in this village.

Telephone: no

Electricity: none in school, but neighbouring village has it

Water: Stand pump

Accommodation: houses for all 9 teachers

Enrolment:

<b>Standard</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Total</b>
Boys	150	70	60	35	40	23	34	24	436
Girls	60	50	20	28	10	17	18	8	211
Total	210	120	80	63	50	40	52	32	647
NoClasses	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
AvClszSize	105	120	80	63	50	40	52	32	

NoEngBks	20	20	0	10	20	10	8	12	
Tchrs	1xT21xT3	0*	1xT21xT21xT21xT32xT2						
	1xT4								

\* Other teachers taught this class 1 period each daily



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## 6. Approaches to reading in Malawi primary schools

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## **6.1 The current syllabus**

The current syllabus in Malawi primary schools is embodied in *English in Malawi (Books 1-8)* together with the associated Teachers' Books. The series was first published in the mid-sixties, and revised in the late seventies. It is structurally organised, increasing fairly steeply in difficulty from Book 3.

In the first year of primary school, the children are taught to



read in Chichewa, with the only reading in English being reading of name-cards. Reading in English effectively starts in Year 2 with the "look and say" method which appears to be the only approach for the first term. The language used has "already been used and learned in language lessons" (Teacher's Book 2). The "phonetic" approach (which would normally be called the phonic approach in this context) is introduced from the second term of year 2 onwards (see Appendix B for an outline of these initial reading methods).

Although attention is given to meaning in Teacher's Book 2, an important aspect of the reading work seems to be the correct pronunciation of written words, and the unqualified term "reading" normally refers to reading aloud (eg "the children will imitate whatever sounds you make, good or bad, so the quality of your reading and pronunciation is of the greatest importance" "many of the (word) lists contain sounds which the children may find difficult to make correctly and which should be given special practice") "much of the reading

will be oral reading - "reading aloud" - so that the pronunciation and meaning of the words become surely fixed in the children's minds" (Teacher's Book 2). Silent reading is suggested as a supplement to "look and say" from about half-way through Book 2.

In Teacher's Books 3 and 4 more attention is given to silent reading, although reading aloud is still retained. In the upper half of primary school (Book 5 onwards) the official approach is that silent reading of a text should be the norm, followed by oral questions and answers; however, some reading aloud is still suggested in the Teachers' Books.

## **6.2 The new revised syllabus**

Revised syllabuses were prepared from 1988 to 1990 by various subject panels. The new syllabus for English was published in 1991. The general Subject Objectives with respect to English are:

*By the end of Standard 8 pupils will be able to:*

- Read with understanding different types of narrative and non-narrative material (eg short stories, notices, instructions, newspapers, booklets on farming methods, health care, etc appropriate to their age, interests and ability)*
- Use various reading strategies (eg extracting factual information or reading for pleasure)*
- Extract the main ideas from a variety of narrative and non-narrative materials*
- Follow the logical development of ideas in a variety of reading materials using reference items and signaling devices*
- Make simple critical judgements (eg distinguish*

*fact from fiction, fact from opinion) on what they read.*

*- Read for pleasure*

*- Read at a speed appropriate to the purpose and nature of the reading text (eg 150 words per minute for reading for pleasure).*

(Primary School Teaching Syllabus, 1991:  
3)

The main points in the new syllabus on a year by year basis are as follows:

Year 1: pre-reading activities (shape matching, sorting out shapes, matching letters). These are to be combined with analogous pre-writing activities, and developed in conjunction with Chichewa and

mathematics.

Year 2: the "look and say" technique is employed, using flash cards. This is combined with the "phonic" technique.

Year 3: reading aloud and reading silently; scanning

Year 4: reading silently for information and pleasure; guessing word meaning from context.

Year 5 and 6: as for 4, plus reading for attitudes and opinions; predicting content, re-ordering sentences.

Years 7 and 8: as for 5 and 6, plus skimming, making simple critical judgements and re-ordering paragraphs.

A new English language course based upon the new syllabus and entitled *Activities with English*, is currently in preparation. Material for the course is being trialled in 15 schools (5 in each province), with Book 1 being introduced in 1992-93. The approach to initial literacy of the old *English in Malawi* course is compatible with the new syllabus. On the other hand, some reading skills advocated in the new syllabus (eg scanning, word guessing, critical reading) for Standard 3 and upwards do not feature in *English in Malawi*.

### **6.3 Time allocation to English**

Old syllabus:

Standard 1: 5 x 30 mins.

Standard 2: 7x30 mins.

Standards 3 to 8: 9 x 35 mins.

New syllabus proposals (introduced in 1992):

Standards 1 & 2: 5x30 minutes

Standards 3 & 4: 7x35 minutes

Standards 5 to 8: 8 x 35 minutes

In both cases English is the medium of instruction from Standard 5 onwards.

## **6.4 Reading in teacher training colleges**

The Primary Teacher Education Syllabus (Malawi Institute of Education, 1990), which is used in the colleges running two-year Teacher Training courses, has 3 out of 15 topics in the first year devoted to training in the teaching of reading. In the second year 1 out of 11 topics are devoted to the teaching of reading. No data was available on precisely how much time is spent on the topics in the two year course. However, the one year intensive course (Domasi TTC) devotes 16 hours to the teaching of reading, compared to 17 on oral skills, 15 on writing and 9 on grammar.

The Primary Teacher Education Syllabus for English is closely tied to the *English in Malawi* coursebooks used in primary schools, the only difference being that the former alludes to the syllabic method ("as in Chichewa") as a reading method.

There is relatively little overt attention to reading English with understanding according to the Primary Teacher Education Syllabus in the first two years of primary school. This view was supported by a teacher trainer who said that there was little comprehension work in year 2, and that this resulted in a great deal of reading aloud with little understanding of the text. Emphasis on understanding the text came in year 3.

## **6.5 Reading in Chichewa**

The main emphasis in terms of time in the first two years of primary school is on Chichewa as opposed to English. Initial literacy in Chichewa is taught largely through a syllabic



approach which incorporates a phonic dimension (eg nga-, nge, ngi-, ngo- ngu- are presented in contrast, then exemplified in words). It is likely that there is transfer and reinforcement of certain letter-related skills (eg letter discrimination, approximate sound values) between Chichewa lessons and English lessons. Since Chichewa speakers already know the language and therefore understand what they are reading, the fact that teachers may not attend to meaning is not crucial.

## 6.6 Observations of reading lessons

**6.6.1** On the second visit a further 7 English classes were observed, which together with the 8 observations (7 English, 1 Chichewa) of the initial visit make a total of 15 observations, distributed as follows:

### **Year Urban Rural Total**

1	0	2	5
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2	1	3	4*
3	0	2	2
4	1	1	2
5	0	1	1
6	2	1	3
7	0	0	0
8	1	0	1
Totals:	5	10	15

\* including 1 Chichewa

Due to time constraints imposed by testing and travel, and also the nature of the timetabling it was not possible to observe classes at all grades in both urban and rural schools.

A record was kept on the spot of teacher and pupil behaviour in all cases, and 13 of the 15 lessons were recorded. The

observations will not be described in detail here, but a transcript of one lesson appears in Appendix G. The month and year of the observation is provided for each school.

### **6.6.2 Year 1 Classes (Schools P and W: both May 92)**

School P (Teacher grade: T3): Here there was a high degree of repetition of sentences by teacher and pupils. One girl was kept in front of the class for almost twenty minutes while the class chanted after the teacher "I am washing my face" "She is washing her face" "I am washing my hands" "She is washing her hands". The result of this appeared to be confusion on the part of many learners as to the difference between "I" and "she", "her" and "my". Despite ample evidence of this confusion, the teacher made no attempt to clarify the differences, but merely told those who committed errors to sit down, whereupon the chanting resumed. There seemed very little evidence of preparation, and the teacher went backwards and forwards over the same sentences.

New words ("basin" and "soap") were written on the board but no attempt was made to check on understanding, or draw attention to their spelling. The number of pupils present was 86, although the average class size for the first year is 196.

School W (Teacher grade: T3): This lesson was a notable exception to the general methodology. Here the teacher took advantage of the fact that the classroom had no furniture. Having clearly presented "Where are you going?" "I'm going to the door/window/corner/blackboard" he then allowed the children to walk around giving questions and answers to whichever of their classmates they happened to come across. The ease and sense of naturalness with which they did this suggested it was not a show put on for my benefit. He then wrote the sentences on the board, and the children read them aloud and copied them. Although simple, this lesson had a sense of direction and one felt that most children had learned something. The number of pupils was 54, and the average class size for the first year 69.

### **6.6.3 Year 2 (schools S, N (Nov 91) and P (May 92))**

School P (Teacher grade: T2): Here a long section describing a shopping episode was copied from the book onto the board (Book 2, p 46: see Appendix F). Chanting after the teacher ensued, with variations in grouping - eg boys, girls, back row, front row etc. There was no attempt at presenting meaning and little checking of understanding of the text. Although the teacher asked questions, if they were wrongly answered there was no explanation from the teacher (eg when a pupil misinterpreted "where" as "wear" the teacher did not explain the issue). The teacher occasionally aided understanding of her own questions by translating them into Chichewa. Some children were asked to spell words on the board; a child who made a mistake was simply dismissed. There were 128 children in this class (see transcript of this lesson in Appendix G). The predominant impression is that the children spent too long in repetition. When not repeating, they were being, in effect, tested rather than taught.

School S (Teacher grade: T2): First the teacher wrote on the board: *In the him him (sic) her house*". The words were read by the teacher and repeated by the pupils. The teacher then read single sentences from the book (Book 2) which the class repeated. They appeared to have little coherence eg "In the house." "Yes, I can." "I can see him in the house." The books were then given out (approximately 1 book for 4 children) and the class chanted after the teacher. They then read aloud in groups, many pointing with their fingers at entirely the wrong place in their books, and some simply mumbling. This continued for nearly ten minutes. On two occasions boys who got restive were threatened with the stick. Flashcards with the words that had been written on the board were then produced, and used as prompts for group or individual responses. The class ended with pupils being told to look at the words on the board. These were then rubbed off and various children asked to stand up and spell them. There were 74 children in this class.

School N (Teacher grade: T3) This lesson was recorded by written notes only. It followed the same pattern as the others. Words and sentences were written on the board as follows (from Book 2):

*Under the tree.*

*under Can you see the cow?*

*cow Yes, I can.*

*goat The cow is under the tree.*

*tree Can you see the goat?*

*them Yes, I can.*

*The goat is under the tree.*

*Can you see the cow and the goat.*

*Yes, I can.*

*I can see them under the tree.*

First the teacher read all the sentences. Then he read them

one at a time and the pupils repeated as a whole class. Then pupils came out singly (3 girls, 3 boys) and read individual sentences. If they read correctly the class clapped. If they made an error, the class as a whole corrected them by reading the relevant sentence, and the pupil repeated it. On some occasions the teacher provided the correction. Pupils pointed with a stick at the words on the board that they were reading aloud. Two out of 6 readers pointed at one sentence while saying another. (The giggling from the rest of the class suggested that most had noticed the error.) The teacher's response was to say, on both occasions "Ah, that was very bad." Next the teacher read individual words from the list, and children came out one by one to point at the word. Four children did so, all correctly. At the end of the lesson, the whole class read the passage in chorus, then the girls in chorus, and finally the boys. There was no presentation or checking of meaning at any point. The number of pupils was 117 (average 2nd year class size 120).



### **6.6.4 Year 3 (School N (Nov 91 and May 92: different teachers))**

Both these lessons and most of those at higher standards follow a similar pattern. The text is written on the board, a few new words are repeated, the text is chanted in various combinations, (by the whole class, boys only, girls only, different rows etc) questions are asked and answered orally, and pupils may be asked to write answers or copy words afterwards. Both these lessons were characterised by complete absence of attention to meaning.

Nov 1991: Bk 3. Teacher grade: T2 (substituting absent untrained teacher). See Appendix F for text of this lesson.

May 1992: Bk 3. Teacher grade: trainee. In this class the word "caught" was drilled at length with a flashcard (the text title was "River Fishing"). However, questioning a group of 8 girls in Chichewa at the end of the lesson revealed that they

did not know what "caught" meant. Their lack of response did not appear to be due to shyness, as they readily answered personal questions.

### **6.6.5 Year 4 (Schools S (Nov 91) and N (May 92))**

School S (Teacher grade: T1) This class took place outside, a few yards from a dusty road, with vehicles passing at intervals. In contrast to most other lessons observed, this one gave attention to the presentation of the meaning of words. The teacher was skillful in this area, and used the fact that the class of 118 was being taught outside to demonstrate "tyre" and "rolling", words which both occurred in the text (Bk 4; see Appendix F). The text of some 170 words had been entirely written out on the blackboard. The teacher kept up a fairly lively pace, but paid attention consistently to the presentation of meaning, though there was little checking of understanding.

School N (Teacher grade: trainee). Again there was an attempt to present the meanings of a list of words (cinema, show, group, row, verandah, hall) at the beginning of the class. This was done by means of a rather elaborate visual aid - a cut-out representation of a cinema. However not all the vocabulary which had been written on the board was presented, and there was little checking of understanding of what was presented. The visual aid was very under-utilised. The text of some 150 words (Bk 4) had already been copied onto the board. After the presentation of the words, the text was read in various combinations of pupils. Two comprehension questions were asked at the end of the reading. "When did Mr Kapezi take the 4 children to the cinema in his car?" and "Who are the names (sic) of the four children?" Given the amount of text that had been copied onto the board, it seems the teacher could have asked rather more, and more probing, questions.

### **6.6.5 Year 5 (School N, Nov 91)**

(Teacher grade: T2) There were 24 pupils in this lesson. The teacher had written on the board:

*That's funny-funny*

*Don't be silly - silly*

*look what I have got - get got*

The meanings of *funny*, *silly*, and *got* were presented by asking one or two children to make sentences with them. It was not at all obvious that the remainder of the class had understood the words. This was followed by the teacher reading aloud, and the class repeating in various combinations, as in other lessons. There were between 2 and 5 pupils to a book. There was no silent reading. Finally there were questions from the book. Attention to meaning was minimal (although the teacher did translate some of the questions into Chichewa). Although there was correction of error by the teacher or other pupils, there was no clarification provided for the pupil who had made the mistake. Pupils

were often asked the question "Do you understand?" to which the response was always a choral "Yes".

### **6.6.7 Year 6 (Schools S (Nov 91 & May 92), and N (May 92))**

School S, 1991 (Teacher grade: T2): This was a language class, rather than a reading class. There were 143 children. On the board was written:

#### *Uses of like*

##### *1. like as a verb*

*I like drinking tea.*

##### *2. like as a preposition*

*James walks like a cat.*

The teacher explained and exemplified the different uses of "like". Then pupils gave further examples and the teacher

then provided yet more examples, with the pupils required to state the function of "like" in them. A revealing exchange was the following:

Teacher: *Do you like frogs?*

Pupil: *No.*

Teacher: *I don't want you to answer the question. Tell me how "like" is used.*

Given the relatively low level of English of many of the pupils, one wonders whether it was worth spending a whole lesson on this distinction, especially as most pupils seemed able to use "like" appropriately, even though they could not give it the correct part of speech label.

School S class in 1992 (Teacher grade: T3): This class was reading a particularly difficult text on trawler fishing in the North Sea (Book 6. See Appendix F). The lesson followed the standard practice of reading words aloud, then reading

the text. Again there was minimum attention to meaning.

School N (Teacher grade: T2): The progression was as in many other lessons. Reading of words by the teacher and class, reading aloud of the text by the teacher, followed by the pupils reading aloud, then answering a few questions. Rather more time was spent on individual pupils reading aloud than on choral reading aloud. There was again little attention to meaning.

### **6.6.8 Year 8 (School S (Nov 91))**

Teacher grade: T2. The text was fairly difficult (Bk 8). There were 87 pupils, sharing about 60 books (despite the fact that there were said to be nearly 4 times more English books than pupils at this Grade). The teacher copied the new words as listed in the book onto the blackboard (*channel, irrigate, irrigation, fast-flowing, continue, success*). Pupils were asked to make sentences with these words. If a pupil did not

already know the word, no help was given by the teacher. Pupils were then asked to read silently. There was no reading aloud by the pupils in this class. After some minutes the teacher asked the pupils the questions from the book which they answered orally. Pupils were then asked to write in their exercise books the answers to questions 6 to 10. While they were doing so, the teacher went around the class looking at the work of individual pupils. The impression given here was that the teacher was testing, rather than teaching.

## **6.7 Comments on lessons observed**

It appears that, irrespective of the problems of lack of material and of large classes, one of the most obvious ways in which teaching could be improved in Malawi would be if teachers could give more attention to the careful presentation of meaning and employ adequate techniques to check on understanding. Judging by these lessons, the predominant methodology for the teaching of reading in the first five years



of primary school would seem to be drilling of words and sentences through repetition. The principles behind this methodology are those of the "look and say" approach to teaching reading, allied to the behaviourist "pattern drill" approach to foreign language teaching.

The approach devotes minimum attention to meaning, first because "look and say" reading was intended for learners who were learning to read in their mother tongue; second because the behaviourist "pattern drill" approach to the learning of foreign language was primarily intended to reinforce structural patterns rather than to attend to the meaning of those structural patterns or to the meaning of lexical items (indeed one teacher trainer referred to this as "pattern reading"). However, in fairness to the textbook writers, it should be pointed out that the Teachers Books advocate more attention to meaning than I generally saw carried out in the lessons observed.

The approach to reading in most lessons paid very little attention to presenting meaning or checking understanding of what was read. The main occasions on which understanding is acknowledged is when pupils do not understand questions which the teacher asks them; in these cases the questions are often translated into Chichewa. Otherwise there is little attention given to the meaning of the texts, with the result that the reading lesson seems, for the majority of the pupils, especially in the lower primary school, to be a ritual that is mystifying and eventually, stultifying. Many give the impression of floundering in a miasma of incomprehension. This impression is confirmed by the low scores obtained by pupils in Standards 3 and 4 on the reading tests. The reading lesson tends often to degenerate into "reading aloud" without understanding.

I would not condemn reading aloud out of hand. There may be roles for it in the early stages, possibly as far as Standard 3, and in certain cases beyond. However, teachers need to

ask why it is being done on each occasion. Purposes put forward by those in favour of reading aloud include:

(a) in the case of individual reading aloud:

- (i) to check that the individual is able to decode
- (ii) to give the individual practice in decoding

(b) in the cases of individual and group reading aloud:

- (iii) to practice pronunciation
- (iv) to reinforce grammatical patterns
- (v) to reinforce recognition of written words

(c) in the case of group reading aloud

- (vi) to enable the individual to carry out (ii) to (v) without being the focus of the teacher's attention
- (vii) to carry out (ii) to (v) more economically
- (viii) to provide variety in the classroom

The only purpose where reading aloud is crucial is (i). In all other cases there are ways other than reading aloud of achieving the same object. Reading aloud may have a role in these other functions, but should not be the exclusive means used. Furthermore, whatever the purpose of reading aloud, pupils should always understand what they are saying. A synchronised reading performance by a class is no guarantee of understanding or of learning. At its worse excessive choral repetition is a "reading-like" activity rather than reading itself; the children say appropriate words from memory - the same words as they would have said if they had really been able to read - but for many pupils this performance masks a lack of

real competence. Reading aloud should be kept within limits and used for clear purposes, rather than merely a time filling device.

However, the main point to be made is that irrespective of the degree of reading aloud in a class, attention to meaning and understanding is essential. It is to be hoped that the new *Activities with English* materials will help to reintegrate reading and understanding into the classrooms of Malawi.

There are of course other teacher issues which need attention, such as the pace and direction of the lesson, having a clear objective to the lesson, and allowing pupils genuine opportunities to express themselves and ask questions if they do not understand. These may be part of a complex of socio-pedagogic culture which it is not the aim of this study to unravel; however, attention to explaining meaning and checking understanding of meaning is a crucial and manageable issue to which the attention of teachers and

teacher trainers should be urgently directed.

In addition to methodological issues of course, the situation would be helped by smaller classes, and more books. However, in terms of what is short-term and relatively cheap, a change of focus from accurate parroting to a concern for meaning is in my view essential irrespective of other improvements.

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## 7 Results of English reading test "Word Find" and

## **Chichewa test**

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### **7.1 The interpretation of results of Word Find**

The results of Word Find are difficult to interpret in an

absolute evaluative sense. One cannot say whether the results indicate that the pupils concerned are "good" readers or "bad" readers relative to any external standard since there are no standardised tests of reading available for the population. It would, obviously, be inappropriate to assess pupils in Malawi on tests standardised in Britain.

One approach to establishing guide lines for the interpretation of results is to ask the pupils' class teachers to examine the tests and to estimate what they feel the average pupil will get (not should get). This was done, with the following results:

**Pooled Teacher Judgements on Word Find** (maximum score: 60)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Urban Number of Teacher Judgements: 9</b>	<b>Rural Number of Teacher Judgements: 10</b>
	<b>Mean Judgement</b>	<b>Mean Judgement</b>
2	22	10



3	20	19
4	31	26
6	48	44

While such a procedure indicates the teachers' judgement of the pupils' ability it does not establish any relationship between score and degree of comprehension. Indeed any attempt to establish such a relationship would be subjective. However, while it would be wrong to arbitrarily fix a test score below which there is no comprehension, and above which there is comprehension, it is permissible to identify a score below which there is inadequate comprehension. (Such a procedure does not necessarily imply that scores immediately above the point selected constitute adequate comprehension.)

Since the three 20 item subtests in Word Find are aimed at three different years (3, 4 and 6) and each subtest is based on the language in the relevant course book (and accepted

as such by the teachers), then I would suggest that to score less than 40% on a subtest (ie less than 8 out of 20 items) indicates inadequate reading on that subtest. Obviously setting criterion measures in a subjective manner may be criticised, but an "inadequate comprehension" point of 7 or less out of 20 for these subtests appears to be a generous judgement (and one supported by all British colleagues and Malawi teachers who saw the tests). It would seem difficult to maintain that a person who scores 7 or less out of 20 in these subtests has adequately comprehended them.

In examining the results then, we need to bear in mind the different sources of the scores (in other words which of the three subtests, namely items 1-20, 21-40, 41-60 the correct items come from). The reason for this is that random completion of the items would yield by chance a score of two and two thirds on each of the three 20 item subtests, making a total of 8 for the test as a whole (Department of Applied Statistics, Reading University). For pupils scoring close to 8

then, one should look at where those correct items come from. If they are concentrated in the first twenty items, then we might imagine a slow reader, but one who is giving some evidence of comprehension. If the correct answers are randomly scattered throughout the 60 items, then it is likely that the pupil is guessing. A full breakdown of results appears in Appendix I.

## 7.2 Results by school and year

Results by School and Year: Word Find

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	M	39	10.3846	5.9321	25	2	9.0
3	N	34	5.1176	2.7935	12	1	5.0
3	P	34	7.7059	3.3713	15	2	7.0
3	S	40	6.3250	4.3817	21	0	5.0
3	W	22	8.7727	2.7591	14	3	9.5

4	M	39	20.8718	7.7330	37	7	20.0
4	N	35	7.2571	3.1747	18	2	7.0
4	P	29	16.8966	7.3307	39	7	17.0
4	S	30	14.6333	5.9043	27	5	14.0
4	W	20	14.6000	6.3693	28	6	13.5
6	M	42	32.6667	8.9243	53	17	30.5
6	N	25	21.0000	7.8156	42	11	21.0
6	P	35	27.1429	9.1656	54	12	25.0
6	S	40	29.9500	7.1034	47	17	29.0
6	W	16	35.2500	12.4177	53	8	36.0

Comparing the actual means with the pooled teacher judgements reveals considerable overestimating by the teachers (results to the nearest whole number):

<b>ESTIMATES</b>	<b>ACTUAL MEAN SCORES</b>
------------------	---------------------------

	Urban	Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural	Rural
	Tchrs	Tchrs	Sch S	Sch M	Sch N	Sch P	Sch W
Year							
3	23	19	6	10	5	8	9
4	31	26	15	21	7	17	15
6	48	44	30	33	21	27	35

From this one may conclude either that teachers are not aware of their pupils' limitations, or that, despite the instructions, they estimated what the pupils should, rather than would, score.

### 7.3 Subtest scores

Rather than dwelling on overall means, where it will be recalled, random completion may result in a score of 8, it is more useful to look at the scores subtest by subtest, on the

assumption that within each subtest of 20 items a score of 7 or less indicates inadequate comprehension.

### 7.3.1 Items 1-20

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	M	39	8.3590	4.40984	17	1	7.0
3	N	34	4.6765	2.70488	11	1	4.0
3	P	34	7.0588	3.40179	14	1	7.0
3	S	40	5.1250	3.63873	16	0	5.0
3	W	22	6.5455	2.73822	12	2	7.0
4	M	39	12.6923	3.94804	19	5	13.0
4	N	35	6.3429	2.89972	14	1	6.0
4	P	29	9.4828	4.53259	18	1	9.0
4	S	30	9.2667	3.23700	16	3	9.0
4	W	20	8.8000	4.88392	17	2	8.0

6	M	42	16.5476	2.46143	20	10	17.0
6	N	25	12.0400	3.06159	17	7	13.0
6	P	35	14.3429	2.57754	18	9	15.0
6	S	40	15.5750	2.37387	19	9	16.0
6	W	16	15.4375	3.55844	19	5	16.5

At year 3, inspection of the individual scripts reveals that 60 pupils out of 169 have scored 8 or over in this subtest. This suggests that some 65% of the pupils in Year 3 are not comprehending adequately at this level.

In year 4, 94 pupils out of 153 have scored 8 or over, suggesting that approximately 40% are not comprehending adequately at this level.

All the Year 6 classes have means well over 8 on this subtest. Notice that 3 schools have minimum scores of more

than 8. In fact, at this level, only 2 pupils out of 158 have scores of 7 or less, suggesting that fewer than 2% had comprehension problems at this level.

### 7.3.2 Subtest 2: Items 21-40

YEAR	SCHOOL	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	M	39	1.8205	2.10102	8	0	1.0
3	N	34	0.4412	0.85957	3	0	0.0
3	P	34	0.6471	0.84861	4	0	0.5
3	S	40	1.1750	1.69293	6	0	0.0
3	W	22	1.7273	1.24142	5	0	1.0
4	M	39	5.7179	3.77630	17	0	5.0
4	N	35	0.8857	1.36708	5	0	0.0
4	P	29	4.8966	2.78189	15	1	5.0
4	S	30	3.3667	2.56614	8	0	3.0



4	W	20	4.0500	2.43818	9	0	4.0
6	M	42	10.8333	4.28222	20	0	10.5
6	N	25	5.8800	3.53930	15	1	6.0
6	P	35	8.7714	4.94729	19	1	8.0
6	S	40	9.7500	3.51371	18	3	9,5
6	W	16	11.1250	5.51211	19	0	12.0

Year 3 fall away suddenly here. Only 1 pupil has achieved a score of 8 in this section. From observing the pupils taking the test, I feel that one reason (other than lack of English) is that the Year 3 pupils seem to read very slowly in English, and many of them simply did not have time to get on to this section. Year 4 pupils too seem to have had more difficulty here, with all means well below 8, and only 17 out of 153 obtaining a score of 8 or over (9 in School M), suggesting that about 89% do not have adequate comprehension of this section.

Year 6 classes in all schools with the exception of school N have means of over 8. 100 pupils out of 158 have scores of 8 or over on this subtest suggesting that about 36% were not comprehending adequately.

### 7.3.3 Subtest 3: Items 41-60

YEAR	SCHOOL	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	M	39	1.8205	2.10102	8	0	1.0
3	N	34	0.4412	0.85957	3	0	0.0
3	P	34	0.6471	0.84861	4	0	0.5
3	S	40	1.1750	1.69293	6	0	0.0
3	W	22	1.7273	1.24142	5	0	1.0
4	M	39	5.7179	3.77630	17	0	5.0
4	N	35	0.8857	1.36708	5	0	0.0
4	P	29	4.8966	2.78189	15	1	5.0
4	S	30	3.3667	2.56614	8	0	3.0

4	W	20	4.0500	2.43818	9	0	4.0
6	M	42	10.8333	4.28222	20	0	10.5
6	N	25	5.8800	3.53930	15	1	6.0
6	P	35	8.7714	4.94729	19	1	8.0
6	S	40	9.7500	3.51371	18	3	9.5
6	W	16	11.1250	5.51211	19	0	12.0

Years 3 and 4, as expected, have given no evidence of comprehending this. The vast majority probably did not have time to attempt it. Only 3 pupils in Year 4 scored 8 or above.

In year 6, 34 pupils out of 158 at this level achieved scores of 8 or over, suggesting that some 78% did not achieve adequate comprehension with material deemed to be at their level.

## 7.4 Overall comments on word find results

Overall the results suggest that well over half the pupils at Year 3 have problems of comprehending English reading material supposedly at their level. Only a minority of Year 4 pupils have problems with reading material that is below them, but the vast majority (89%) appear to have difficulty when faced with text at their level. Year 6 pupils, again, seem for the most part to be able to cope well with material aimed at Year 3 and 4, although over three quarters seem to have difficulty with material aimed at their own level.

It is difficult to see how such low English reading proficiency permits the pupils in standard 6 to use reading in English to learn in other subject areas, as they are meant to be doing. It is also highly likely that most pupils will not be able to improve sufficiently over the next two years to perform reasonably on the Primary School Leaving Certificate which appears to be much more difficult than the Word Find test (see Appendix H for extracts from the 1990 certificate examination).

## 7.6 Results of Chichewa reading test, Chewa V.01

As Chichewa is the mother tongue of most pupils who did the test and the medium of instruction until Year 5, one would expect the pupils to perform reasonably well. The pooled teacher judgements, together with actual means for the five schools, to the nearest whole number, are as follows:

	<b>ESTIMATES</b>	<b>ACTUAL MEAN SCORES</b>					
	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Rural</b>
	<b>T chrs</b>	<b>T chrs</b>	<b>Sch S</b>	<b>Sch M</b>	<b>Sch N</b>	<b>Sch P</b>	<b>Sch W</b>
<b>Year</b>							
3	33	36	22	14	9	20	15
4	45	44	32	35	20	28	31
6	55	53	47	48	40	44	49

The actual scores are again below those predicted by the teachers, but do not display such great differences as for English score estimates. There are no great differences between rural and urban, and the main feature of the mean scores is the consistently weaker performance of School N, which was also the weakest overall in English. (See Appendix J for results.)

Examination of individual scores reveals a number of strong performances from Year 3 upwards, although again years 3 and 4 fall away in successive subtests. However, the results generally indicate good comprehension by most pupils in Years 3 and 4 on the first two subtests, while in Year 6 a considerable majority have scored over 66% on the test as a whole. It seems safe to suggest that most Year 6 pupils can read adequately in Chichewa.

One may go on from this to suggest that in the case of Year 6 any weakness in the English results is likely to arise from a

weakness in English language rather than a weakness in reading per se.

## 7.7 Correlation of English test results with Chichewa test results

Product moment correlations for all years are generally positive but not high. Those for Year 6 are as follows:

School M (urban):	0.56	( $p < 0.0001$ )
School S (urban):	0.40	( $p < 0.0110$ )
School N (rural):	0.42	( $p < 0.0368$ )
School P (rural):	0.40	( $p < 0.0191$ )
School W (rural):	0.73	( $p < 0.0022$ )

This suggests a slight tendency for relative performance in English to correlate with that in Chichewa. Certainly it does not suggest that competence in English is acquired at the

cost of competence in Chichewa, or vice versa. These results indicate that those who are good at Chichewa are also good at English, although of course no causal relationship can be inferred.

## **7.8 Significance of Sex, Urban/rural, School Year, And Home Language**

The statistical analysis of sex differences, urban/rural differences, home language effect (for the Chichewa test) and year effect (for the different standards) appear in Appendix K. An interpretative account of the statistics is provided in the following paragraphs.

### **7.8.1 Sex differences**

Overall there is a slight difference with boys estimated to score 1.95 points more than girls in English and 1.25 points more in Chichewa. Only the difference in the English score is



statistically significant however. There was no immediately apparent reason from classroom observation as to why this should be the case. However personal communications suggested that girls are less likely to have books bought for them than boys, and girls may also miss school more to help at home. Further investigation would be needed to investigate causes.

### **7.8.2 Urban/rural differences**

The estimated differences in score between urban and rural schools are large (3.3 points for English and 4.7 for Chichewa), but they are not statistically significant because of the small numbers of schools involved in this study. It is possible that real differences between urban and rural schools do exist but a larger sample of schools (not pupils) would be needed to confirm this.

### **7.8.3 Year differences**

Differences between years 3, 4 and 6 are large and strongly significant, indicating a progressive improvement in ability with age both for English and Chichewa. This is reassuring in that it clearly indicates that pupils are actually learning more the longer they stay in school.

#### **7.8.4 Language differences**

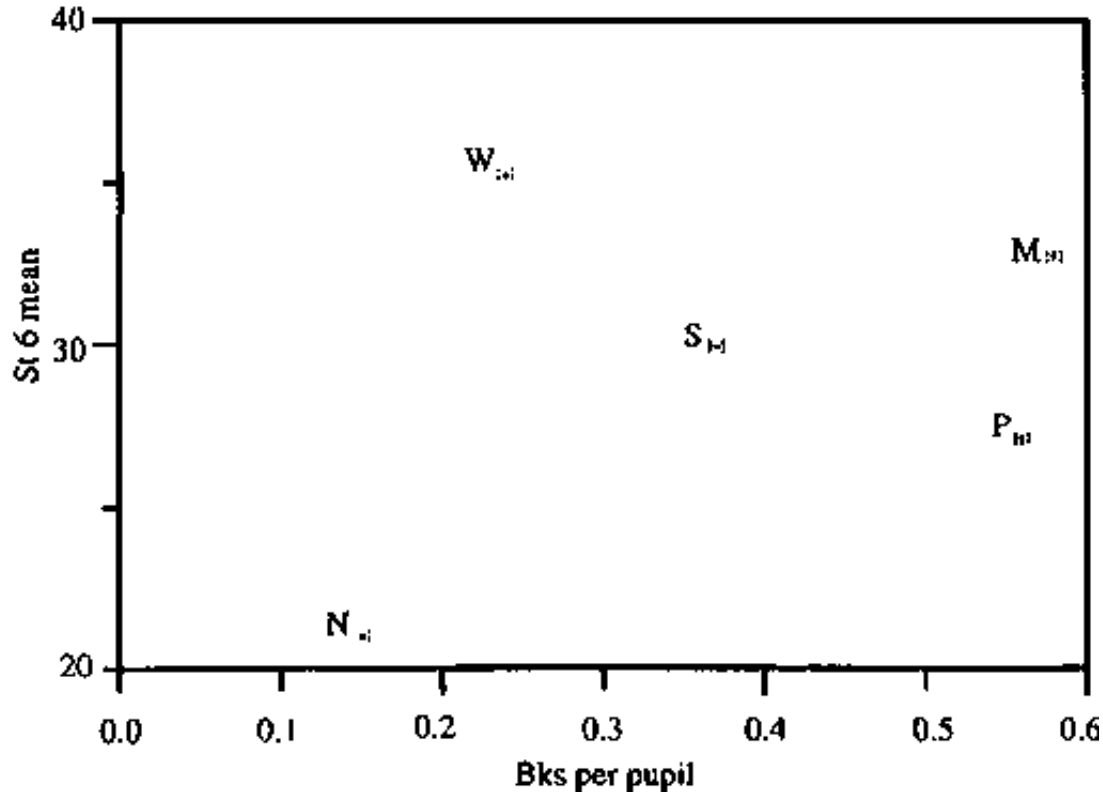
In the Chichewa reading test, there is a difference of 1.4 points in favour of Chichewa home language speakers as compared to non-Chichewa home language speakers. However, this difference is not statistically significant. The small difference suggests that in the schools tested the minority of children from a non-Chichewa background have in fact learned Chichewa (probably from their peers as well as their teachers).

### **7.9 Relationship between factors in educational provision and scores**

The factors that are considered here are books per pupil, class size, and teacher qualifications. The results are illustrated through scattergrams which relate the factors to the mean score. Results generally are not very conclusive, partly because of the small number of schools, partly for factor-specific issues.

### 7.9.1 Relationship between Books per Pupil (Standard 1 to 6) and mean scores in Standard 6

Sch	St 6 Mean Word Find Score	Books per Pupil
W	35.25	0.24
M	32.67	0.58
S	29.95	0.37
P	27.14	0.56
N	21.00	0.15



Schools N, S and M demonstrate a positive relationship with higher scores corresponding to more books per pupil. Per

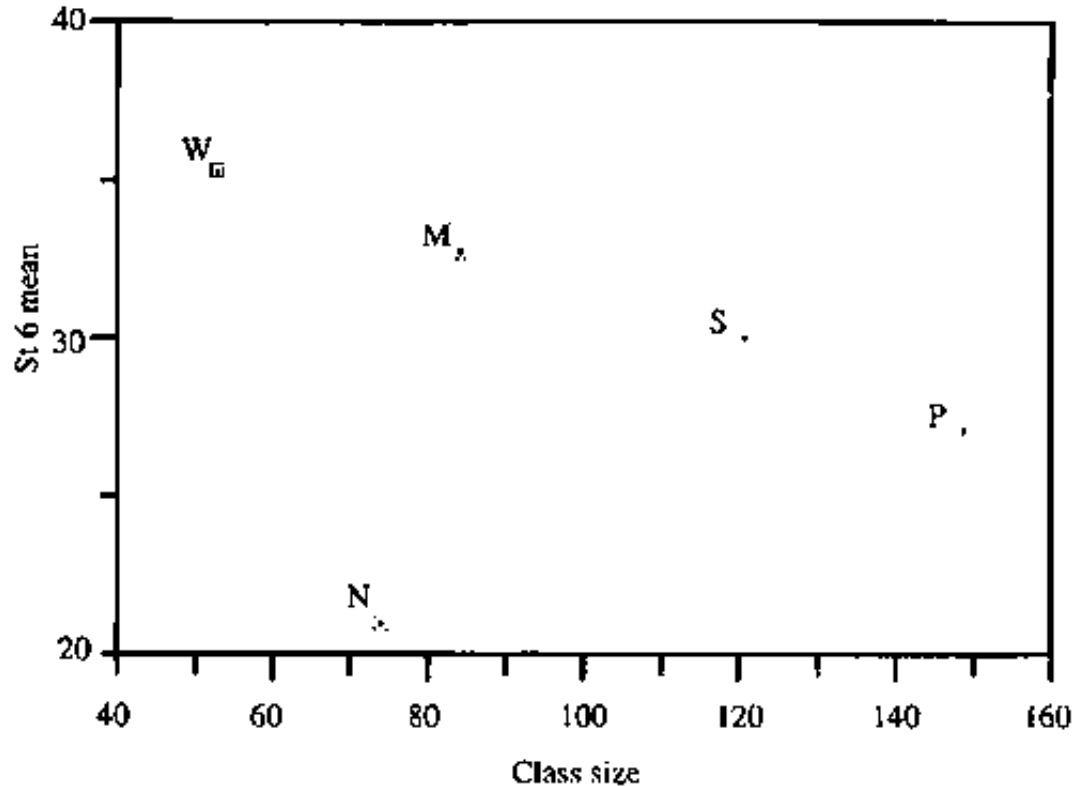
pupil however School W has a higher score but fewer books per pupil than schools P, M and S. Greater variation in book provision would be needed for clearer differences to emerge.

The issue is complicated by the fact that even if the books are in the schools, they may not always be used, and that some pupils own their own books which are not recorded. In addition, other factors may compensate for lack of books. School W judging from the observation had at least one very good teacher (see 6.6.2), while School M had many pupils from a relatively socially favoured background.

### **7.9.2 Relationship between Mean Class Sizes and Mean Score at Standard 6**

<b>Schl</b>	<b>St 6 Mean Word Find Score</b>	<b>Mean Class Sizes (yrs 1-6)</b>
W	35.25	52.83

M	32.67	84.00
S	29.95	120.67
P	27.14	148.77
N	21.00	74.17



Obviously, it is not simply the size of the current Standard 6 class which is relevant, but also the size of the classes that

the children have previously been in. An approximate idea of relative size may be obtained by calculating the current mean class size from standards 1 to 6 for each school. This was done for the above calculations, and a remarkably consistent relationship emerges where, (taking school W as the starting point) an increase of class size by roughly 12 pupils correlates with a decrease in mean score of roughly 1 mark. The exception is School N which again appears to be underperforming. Larger numbers of schools would be needed to confirm this tendency.

### **7.9.3 Relationship between Teacher Qualifications and Mean Score**

Visual inspection of mean scores and the teachers' qualifications suggests no positive relationship between teacher qualifications from Standards 1 to 6, and mean score at Standard 6. For example, School W with untrained teachers at Standards 2 and 3, and all the other teachers at



T3 (T4 being the lowest, T1 the highest qualification) has the best mean score at Standard 6.

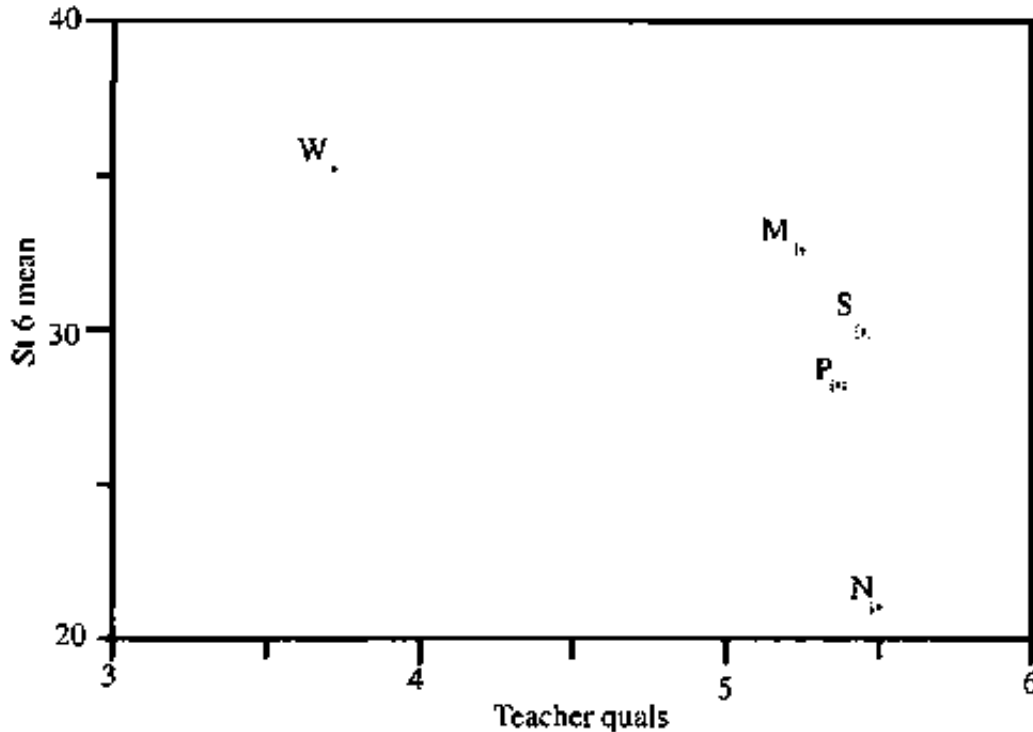
In order to attempt a more objective basis for correlation, one may convert teacher qualification to points as follows:

Untrained = 2 T4 = 4 T3 = 5 T2 = 6 T1 = 7

A mean teacher qualification score for teachers currently in standards 1 to 6 may then be computed, and compared with the mean score for pupils in standard 6 on Word Find. Rather surprisingly this indicates a tendency towards a negative correlation, with School W having poorly qualified staff but achieving the highest standard 6 Word Find mean, and school N with overall best qualified staff achieving the lowest standard 6 mean.

<b>Schl</b>	<b>St 6 Mean Word Find Score</b>	<b>Teacher Mean Qualification Score</b>
-------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------------

W	35.25	3.88
M	32.67	5.25
S	29.95	5.45
P	27.14	5.37
N	21.00	5.5



Again, one would not wish to make much of this finding, since, apart from factors already mentioned, the differences between the computed mean scores on teacher qualification

are very small; furthermore one class in school N has (temporarily) no teacher; this did not enter into the computation. Again it is not known how long all these teachers had been in the schools.

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## 8. The read aloud tests

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## **8.1 Procedure**

In each of classes 3, 4 and 6, the class teachers were asked to select four pupils to read, two girls (one good, one average) and two boys (one good, one average). Only average and above average pupils were tested, since it seemed destructive to risk subjecting weak pupils to what would certainly have been a demoralising experience.

Since the pupils had also done the Word Find test, it was possible to check the teacher's choice against the Word Find results. In over 80% of cases one of the pupils selected

occupied one of the three highest scoring ranks for their sex group. It therefore appears that in most cases teachers know who are the most able pupils, whether male or female. However in 68% of cases the weaker pupil in the pair (presumably the "average" one), was also in the top half of the rankings according to Word Find. It therefore seems likely that the Read Aloud test does not adequately feature "average" performance, and this is to be borne in mind in considering the results.

The Read Aloud test consists of five passages based upon the course book *"English in Malawi"* and graded as follows:

Passage 1, 2 and 3: for year 3

Passage 4: for year 4

Passage 5: for year 6

The type face and size of the test corresponded to their text books. Each passage is followed by questions which are

asked immediately after that passage has been read (see Appendix D). Pupils could look at the passages while they answered the questions.

## **8.2 Administration**

Pupils were tested by the researcher individually. The sessions generally took place in an empty classroom, store room, or office. The session opened with a few simple questions about the pupil's name and age, and continued with some questions about the picture accompanying the first reading text. Pupils began with the first text, and continued to the fifth.

If at any point it appeared that pupils were experiencing severe problems, then the session would terminate at that point. All readings were audio-recorded.

The first passage and questions were intended to be very

easy so as to give the pupils confidence, and for the most part proved to be so.

### **8.3 Describing reading performance**

The reader's performance on this test is judged on the basis of accuracy of reading, plus comprehension as judged by the response to the questions.

As far as accuracy of reading is concerned, the reader's accent is disregarded, since the immediate aim is to see whether the pupils can convert the written words into a spoken form accurate enough to be understood. Clearly in the case of second language readers it is dangerous to infer comprehension from reading aloud. Indeed one of the problems in judging the reading is that there are some readers who appear to read reasonably accurately, but with little evidence of understanding as judged by answers to questions, while others may make mistakes in accuracy, but



have clearly understood.

Thus a child who reads "Muno is playing with a ball" as "Muno is playing a ball" and answers the question "What is Muno doing?" in the same way has almost certainly understood. What such a testee is doing, however, is "transforming" the text and the answer in terms of the stage of language development that he or she has reached. Although such utterances do not represent standard English, our concern in these tests is not to assess the testees' speaking ability in terms of standard English, but rather their comprehension of written text.

Such deviancies from the text (and from standard English) indicate that the child has almost certainly understood the text, but is demonstrating comprehension through a system which is still at a developmental stage. These deviancies may be compared to an English child who reads "John isn't going" as "John ain't going" where the non-standard pronunciation is

in itself evidence that the child has understood, but "translated" as it were, the written sentence into his own variety of English. This type of transformation in reading (which can only result from comprehension), may be contrasted with the case of pupils who read accurately word by word, but do not comprehend what they read because their language development is inadequate. The latter rely entirely on the text for what they say; the former "transform" the text in terms of their own language system. Thus, certain meaning preserving slips and systematic errors may, paradoxically, constitute evidence that the reader has understood the text. Since the aim of this testing was to investigate reading comprehension and not accuracy in terms of standard English, errors which are judged to be developmental are not penalised.

On the other hand a child who reads passage 2 accurately, but answers the question "What does Mary like to eat?" by "They are red" may well not have understood the text. (Of

course it is possible that they have not understood the question.) Again, a child who answers the question "Why did Robert go to the hospital?" by reading out "When Robert was a little boy he was very sick, so he went with his mother to the hospital" may or may not have understood the text. Certainly the answer is not appropriate to the discourse. Such answers make clear decisions about the pupils' comprehension rather difficult.

For the above reasons precise objective quantification of comprehension on the basis of reading aloud is difficult. Standard miscue analysis (eg Goodman, 1973) or modified versions (Vincent & de la Mare, 1990) have been developed for native speaker readers. They are inappropriate in the context of Malawi in that they do not readily allow for language learners in a developmental stage.

## **8.4 Rationale for the questions**

The questions which follow each passage practice various operations which are considered relevant at this level, and which are fundamental to reading with comprehension. They are:

(i) obtaining information through understanding direct reference made in the text. Thus the first question in passage 3 (*Who is Miss Moyo?*) requires the student to make direct reference to the relevant sentence in the text (*Miss Moyo is a teacher.*) and produce the answer. Clearly such direct reference questions may result in testees providing the correct answer through "matching" without necessarily understanding what they are saying.

(ii) obtaining information through recovery of an element in the text which is referred to indirectly, typically by means a pronoun, although other parts of speech may be used. An example occurs in

question 2 of passage 3 (*Where did Miss Moyo put the flowers?*). In this case the reader must realise that "*them*" in "... *she put them on her table*" refers to "*flowers*".

(iii) obtaining information through making appropriate inference. Here the reader infers a relationship (that is not explicitly stated) between two parts of a text. Question 3 of passage 3 (*Why was Miss Moyo happy?*) requires the reader to infer from the text the most likely reason why Miss Moyo was happy (...*they gave her some flowers. She was very happy and...*). It may be that in some cases appropriate knowledge of the world facilitates the appropriate inference. Indeed there was a suggestion that pupils in Malawi would be unlikely to bring flowers to the teacher.

The three operations (direct reference, indirect reference and inference) were distributed in the 18 questions as follows:

Passage 1: 1, direct reference. 2, indirect reference.

Passage 2: 1, direct reference. 2, indirect reference.  
3, indirect reference.

Passage 3: 1, direct reference. 2, indirect reference.  
3, inference

Passage 4: 1, indirect reference. 2, indirect reference.  
3, indirect reference. 4, indirect reference.

Passage 5: 1, direct reference. 2, indirect reference.  
3, inference. 4, inference.  
5, indirect reference. 6, direct reference.

Pupils who are unable to obtain the relevant information in answer to a question that involves one of the above

operations are unlikely to be reading with comprehension. However, there is a possibility that pupils could indeed understand the text, but were not able to demonstrate comprehension either because:

(i) they could not understand the question. (Here it should be noted that the question was spoken by me, and pupils were also shown the written form of the question.) or because:

(ii) they were not able to produce an answer in English (although they understood both text and question).

However, for all 18 questions all the language necessary for the answers is in the text. It is therefore probable that pupils who cannot answer these questions are not failing simply because of insufficient productive proficiency in English, but rather because they have not understood the text or the

question. Nevertheless, the possibility always remains that asking and answering questions in the child's mother tongue might have yielded different results.

## 8.5 Example of read aloud transcript

To illustrate the issues discussed above, an example of a read aloud transcript is provided below. The transcription is restricted to the reading and to the questions and answers; the introductory, linking and concluding remarks are omitted. The transcript is of a Standard 3 boy in School P who scored 7 out of 60 in Word Find and was ranked 16 out of 34 (ie an "average" pupil. He appears as 16B in the Read Aloud result table in 8.7).

### Notes on Transcription Conventions

Miscues which consist of misreadings in the pupils' readings have been underlined.



Miscues which consist of repetitions in the pupils' readings are transcribed but not underlined.

R = Researcher

Numbers in brackets { } indicate the mark awarded (either 2, 1, or 0 for the reading or question: see next section, 8.6)

Numbers in round brackets ( ) preceded by Q indicate the question number for the passage

### **School: P Standard: 3 Pupil: 16B Passage 1**

16B: (reads) Munro is playing with a ball. He is playing under the tree. {2}

R (Q 1): What is Munro doing?

16B: Munro is playing a ball. {2}

R: Good. Good boy. (Q 2) Where is Munro playing?

16B: Muno is playing under the tree. {2}

**Comment:** *"with" omitted in Q 2 answer, but comprehension is assumed.*

## Passage 2

16B: (reads) Mary is holding some tomatoes. They are red. She likes to eat them. {2}

R: (Q 1) What is Mary holding?... What is Mary holding?

16B: Mary is holding a tomato. {2}

R: Good. (Q 2) What does Mary like to eat?

16B: Mary like to eat tomatoes. {2}

R: Good boy. Well done. (Q 3) What colour are the tomatoes?

16B: Tomato colour - tomatoes is colour - a red. (2)

**Comment:** *"a tomato" instead of "some tomatoes" for Q 1;*

*"like" for "likes" for Q 3; difficulty in phrasing the answer to Q3, as he wants to "mirror" the vocabulary of the question and use the word "colour". In all cases comprehension is assumed and full marks are awarded.*

### **Passage 3**

16B: (reads) Mrs Moyo is a teacher. Sara and Miriam - Miriam - Miriam - Miriam are in Mrs Moyo class. One day they give her some following (?). She was very happy and she put them on his table. "Thank you, girls," she said. {1}

R: (Q 1) Who is Miss Moyo?

16B: Mrs Moyo is teacher. {2}

R: (Q 2) Where did Miss Moyo put the flowers?

16B: Mrs Moyo is putting them on her table. Thank you girls - {1}

R: Good, good. That's it. She put them on her table. Well

done. Good. (Q 3) Why was Miss Moyo happy? Why was Miss Moyo happy?

16B: Mrs Moyo... Mrs Moyo is teaching the children. {0}

**Comment:** *"Mrs" for "Miss"; "Moyo class" for "Moyo's class"; "give" for "gave"; "his" for "her". None of the foregoing are considered to evince lack of comprehension. Indeed those miscues suggest that the reader is comprehending, but has "transformed" the text according to his own interlanguage (see 8.3). Such a process can only take place if some degree of comprehension has taken place. However "following (?)" for "flower" is so deviant that it suggests lack of comprehension.*

## Passage 4

16B: When Robert was a little boys boy he was very sick, so he went with his mother to the hospital. A nurse took Robert and his mother to a big room and she put him into a bed.

"You - oh you you oh soon soon be train (?)." he say. {1}

R: (Q 1) Where did Robert go?

16B: Robert is sick. {0}

R: OK. (Q 2) Where did the nurse put Robert?

16B: A nurse took took the took Robert and he (?) mother.  
{0}

R: OK. (Q 3) What did the doctor say?... What did the doctor say?

16B:..... The nurse..... {0}

**Comment:** *The penultimate line of the passage ("Later the doctor came and looked at Robert") was omitted. The pupil does not appear to have understood the last line ("You'll soon be better!" he said.") There is no evidence of comprehension in the answers to the questions (though one cannot tell whether the problem is due to difficulty with the questions, the text, or both). The session terminated at this*

*point.*

## 8.6 Findings of the read aloud testing

Although only the better pupils were tested the general pattern which emerges (see 8.7 below, and Appendix L) suggests that there is not a great deal of difference between year 3 and year 4 pupils. Year 3 experience difficulty with Passage 3, which is meant to be at their level. Year 4 also experience difficulty with Passage 3, and 13 out of 15 (the other 5 having terminated on passage 3) have problems with Passage 4 which is meant to be at their level. (But most standard 3 and 4 pupils cope reasonably with the first passage, intended to be well within their range.) Only 5 out of 20 of the Standard 6 children cope reasonably with the *questions* of Passage 5 (intended for their level). However, 18 out of 20 cope with the *reading aloud* of that passage, which again indicates the problem of relying on reading aloud as a guide to comprehension in second language reading. As

with the Word Find test, the majority of Standard 6 pupils seem to be able to cope with the passages intended for Standards 3 and 4.

In terms of question types the direct reference questions are handled fairly easily. However, the indirect reference questions were frequently answered by the Year 3 and Year 4 pupils by repeating the pronoun. Thus the question "What does Mary like to eat?" (passage 2) was answered by "She likes to eat them". It is not clear whether this answer stems from lack of comprehension of the text, or is simply an inadequate piece of communication by readers who are excessively text-bound.

Among the question types which proved the most difficult are the inference questions (notably passage 3, q. 3), particularly for Standards 3 and 4. Passage 3 question 3 was answered satisfactorily by only 2 out of 40 pupils from those standards, and only 8 out of 20 from standard 6. It was suggested that

this was due to cultural differences - that pupils in Malawi would be unlikely to bring flowers to their teacher. It is also possible that they did not know the word "happy" although it is taught in standard 3. A further possible reason is that the pupils are not accustomed to being asked inferential questions, typically beginning "Why?". Mchazime (1989: 40) notes that 76% of questions in books 2, 4, 6 and 8 of "English for Malawi" are "plain sense" questions (ie do not require inference) and that all the questions in books 2 and 3 are "plain sense".

The general conclusions drawn from the read aloud exercise are:

- (i) That the findings confirm the performance of pupils in the Word Find written test, namely that most pupils have difficulties with passages at their level, but most standard 6 pupils can read standard 3 and 4 texts with comprehension.



(ii) That pupils' ability to read aloud outstrips their demonstrable comprehension and that reading aloud alone is not a reliable indicator of comprehension.

(iii) That developmental errors in reading aloud are best treated as evidence of comprehension rather than as misreadings.

(iv) That pupils need more practice in answering inferential questions.

The twelve pupils (4 from standards 3, 4 and 6) from School P gave a representative performance. The assessment scores for that school are provided in 8.8 below. A clear pattern emerges, as one would expect, of higher marks in the top right hand section (results of standard 6 pupils reading easy passages) shading into lower marks, or none, in the bottom left hand corner (results of standard 3 children reading difficult passages). For the complete set of results

see Appendix L.

## **8.7 Reading aloud: Assessment sheet, School P**

### **Key to abbreviations:**

15B: boy number 15; 15G: girl number 15

Pass 1: Passage 1; Ques 1: Question 1

T: test terminated at this point

na: question not asked

### **Assessment of Overall Reading of Passages: key to numbers:**

2 = clearly comprehensible; has read aloud adequately

1 = incomprehensible in places; could not read aloud everything

0 = experienced severe problems

## Assessment of Answers to Comprehension Questions: key to numbers:

2 = clear evidence of comprehension

1 = partial evidence of comprehension

0 = no evidence of comprehension

	Standard 3				Standard 4				Standard 6			
	15B	16B	10G	15G	12B	2B	5G	13G	1B	10B	4G	7G
<b>Pass 1</b>	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 1</b>	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 2</b>	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	1	2	2	2	2
<b>Pass 2</b>	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 1</b>	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 2</b>	1	2	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 3</b>	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2

<b>Pass 3</b>	2	1		1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 1</b>	2	2		2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 2</b>	0	1		0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
<b>Ques 3</b>	0	0		0	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	2
	T					T						
<b>Pass 4</b>		1		1	1		2	1	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 1</b>		0		0	1		1	2	2	2	0	1
<b>Ques 2</b>		0		na	1		2	0	2	2	0	2
<b>Ques 3</b>		0		na	2		1	0	2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 4</b>		0		0	0		0	0	2	2	0	2
		T		T	T							
<b>Pass 5</b>							1		2	2	2	2
<b>Ques 1</b>							2		2	0	1	0
<b>Ques 2</b>							0		2	na	1	0

<b>Ques 3</b>							0		2	2	0	2
<b>Ques 4</b>							1		na	2	0	na
<b>Ques 5</b>							1		2	2	1	2
<b>Ques 6</b>							1		2	2	0	1



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## 9. Testing reading in Malawi primary schools

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### [9.1 The Standard 8 primary school leaving](#)

## [certificate](#)

### [9.2 Monitoring reading achievement at national level](#)

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Two areas will be considered here. One is the nature and effect of the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination at Standard 8. The other is the monitoring of reading achievement at national level.

#### **9.1 The Standard 8 primary school leaving certificate**

**9.1.1** It is widely recognised that nationally set examinations have a powerful washback effect upon teaching. In Malawi the Standard 8 examinations are especially important as they control entry to secondary schools. An exhaustive analysis of the examination would be out of place here (and would in any case require an investigation of results) but brief consideration of the English part of the examination is worthwhile, and in particular the nature of the reading

comprehension component. The following comments are based on July 1990 and July 1991 papers.

**9.1.2** The English examination (Paper 2) consists of 6 sections:

Section 1: Structures (15 marks). Pupils are asked fill in blanks in sentences (requiring structural words, eg prepositions)

Section 2: Punctuation (5 marks).

Section 3: Comprehension (10 marks). A text plus questions (discussed in more detail below).

Section 4: Vocabulary (10 marks). Pupils are asked to write sentences to show the meaning of 5 different words.

## Section 5: Grammar (30 marks),

(i) Completing the rewriting of given sentences, through transforming words from one part of speech to another. eg *He sent the letter by post.* > *He \_\_\_\_\_ the letter.*

(ii) Clause analysis. This involves identifying subordinate clauses in sentences, and identifying their type and function.

Section 6: Written composition (15 marks), with guidance cues.

The time allowed is 90 minutes (for extracts see Appendix H).

**9.1.3** In terms of its washback effect on teaching it may be noted that Structure and Grammar sections take up 45 marks



out of 85, while Reading Comprehension takes up only 10. It is highly likely therefore that in the final years of upper primary a significant amount of time is given to grammatical accuracy and to identifying parts of speech and clause analysis rather than improving what the children are actually able to do with the grammar they know in reading and writing.

While a case can be made for attending to grammatical accuracy, the analysis of parts of speech and clauses is distinctly questionable in circumstances where the majority of pupils have great difficulty in producing and comprehending fairly simple language. To refer again to the Standard 6 incident (see 6.6.7), it is more important for pupils to be able to use "like" appropriately, than to be able to say whether it is being used as a verb or preposition. Furthermore the latter is not a precondition for the former. If the examination is to have a more positive effect on teaching, and be more relevant to the pupils' future needs, it should put more emphasis on

testing their ability to use English (through reading and writing tasks), and less emphasis on manipulating English forms for their own sake (although there may be a place for testing grammatical accuracy in meaningful contexts). I would suggest that sentence/clause analysis should be dropped completely from this level.

**9.1.4** The reading comprehension section (6) consists of a passage of 250 to 300 words, followed by 5 open ended questions.

Language level: The 1990 comprehension section seems difficult relative to the performance of Standard 6 children in the Word Find tests. The 1991 paper seems easier but again it is hard to see how the *majority* of children who were tested in Word Find at Standard 6 could improve sufficiently in the intervening 2 years (given the conditions for learning) to achieve reasonable comprehension of this passage. The apparently high difficulty level could be verified by

investigating past results. Presumably the difficulty derives from the examination's function as a selection device for secondary school with its concomitant need to discriminate only at the top end.

Text types: one weakness of the current examination is that it only contains one passage for comprehension. In both 1990 and 1991 the passage is expository. While pupils should certainly be tested on expository text, there is room also for a greater variety of text types, some of which could be more relevant for the majority of pupils (eg forms, instructions, etc). Text types used in other areas of the primary curriculum (eg simple diagrams) could be considered.

Answer format: open-ended questions have the advantage of allowing for personal conclusions (compared to multiple choice, for example). However, there are only 5 such questions, carrying a total of 10 marks; this does not seem a very heavy weighting for reading comprehension, given its

practical importance. Adding another text (or two) would enable reading comprehension to be more heavily weighted, and also give the opportunity for other text types to be introduced.

Reading skills: While the comprehension questions in the examination are not confined to "factual" reference from the text, there is clearly a limit to the other skills that can be addressed in only 5 questions.

**9.1.5** It may be assumed that in due course the examination will be amended so as to be in harmony with the new English syllabus (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1991 - see paragraph 6.2 above). This new syllabus includes the following general Subject Objectives:

*By the end of Standard 8 pupils will be able to:*

*- Read with understanding different types of*

*narrative and non-narrative material (eg short stories, notices, instructions, newspapers, booklets on farming methods, health care...)*

*- Use various reading strategies (eg extracting factual information...)*

*- Follow the logical development of ideas in a variety of reading materials...*

*- Make simple critical judgements (eg distinguish fact from fiction,....)*

(Malawi Primary School Teaching Syllabus,  
1991: 3)

In view of the all the above points, I would suggest that modification of the reading comprehension component should be focussed on:

(i) extending the range of reading ability assessed, so that the examination could more adequately show what average pupils can do, and not only what they cannot do. In principle it should be possible to do this while still attending to the top end of the ability range, and without sacrificing the discriminatory power of the examination.

(ii) extending the range of text types along the lines suggested by the new syllabus.

(iii) giving more attention to a wider range of reading skills, which would necessitate more test items. This would be necessary if more text types were included.

**9.5.6** Clearly it would be unfair on pupils and teachers for any changes to be effected in advance of appropriate materials and teacher training being made available. In the meantime,

however I would recommend that specialist research be carried out into:

(a) specifying the reading comprehension abilities which are:

- relevant to current real life situations, as well as to likely future needs in Malawi;
- relevant to reading to learn in other school subjects;
- relevant to the majority of pupils who will end their schooling at Standard 8.

(b) investigating test item types which lend themselves to the assessment of the selected reading abilities in addition to open-ended questions, bearing in mind the practicalities of production and marking.

This would involve a consideration of topics and text types for such pupils. It should also consider relevant reading skills and degrees of fluency in reading. Such work would clearly need to be integrated with the material preparation for the last years of the new *Activities in English* material.

## **9.2 Monitoring reading achievement at national level**

This study has indicated that the level of reading in English in Malawi primary schools is low, and that in particular it is difficult to see how the majority of children are able to read to learn from Standard 5 onwards when the medium has switched to English. Given the importance of reading in English in the current system, then it might be worthwhile to set up a system for monitoring achievement in reading in English on a national scale and at regular intervals. This could be part of a national assessment system for primary education, or organised apart from such a system.



By monitoring achievement levels over time such reading tests in English would indicate the success of new curricula, teacher training etc. They could be carried out on the basis of a small but scientific sample, and would therefore not be excessively costly. They would not necessarily need to be carried out annually. The tests would be concerned with basic reading in the sense of recognition and understanding of simple written English. The most appropriate point at which to administer the English reading tests would probably be early in the latter half of the primary course after the medium of instruction has switched to English. I would accordingly recommend that a study be carried out into the feasibility of instituting a reading achievement test for Malawi primary schools. The study would look into both the practical aspects (costs, appropriate Standard, sample size) and academic aspects (content, test format, etc).

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## 10. Conclusion and suggestions for improvements

**10.1** This conclusion will summarise the findings of the tests, and review syllabuses and classroom methodology relevant to reading in English. There are also some recommendations which, with help from donor agencies, could prove feasible.

**10.2** The results of the Word Find group reading tests and the Read Aloud individual reading tests administered to standard 3, 4 and 6 pupils suggest that the reading ability in English of most pupils is lower than that needed to cope with

their English coursebooks, and lower than their teachers estimate it.

**10.3** Analysis of the Word Find subtests suggests that there is inadequate comprehension of English texts judged to be at their level in the 5 schools tested on the part of:

- approximately 65% of year 3 pupils
- approximately 89% of year 4 pupils
- approximately 78% of year 6 pupils

Year 6 pupils have adequate comprehension of material at year 3 and 4, but this is not likely to be sufficient to allow them to read to learn in English in other subjects at Year 6 level.

**10.4** The findings of the individual Read Aloud tests, although more impressionistic, confirm the result of Word Find, in that they suggest the majority of pupils in Standards 3 and 4 have

difficulty with material at aimed at their year level, although again most standard 6 pupils seem to cope well with material below their level. In addition, many pupils at all levels have difficulty in making appropriate inferences in reading. This may be a function of the preponderance of "plain sense" direct reference questions that occur in their books.

**10.5** As far as methodology of teaching reading is concerned, the teacher training syllabuses have hitherto given too much prominence to "look and say" methods which stress accuracy of reading aloud, rather than promoting reading as a process of acquiring meaning from text. Although some attention to comprehension appears in the training syllabuses, it does not appear to work through to classroom teaching, where teachers seem overwhelmingly concerned with accurate reading aloud, and largely ignore the presentation of meaning and checking of understanding.

**10.6** To compound the problems engendered by the

predominant classroom methodology, the class sizes are frequently too large for the teacher to give any personal attention. In addition the provision of course books is quite inadequate, so that even those children who learn to read from the blackboard are unable to acquire the practice necessary to make them even moderately fluent readers. However, in the five schools tested there was no apparent link between Word Find test scores and (a) book provision, or (b) type of teacher qualification, or qualified versus unqualified teachers. There was a suggestion that smaller classes are linked to higher test scores. However, none of these findings should be regarded as indicative of general trends. A larger sample of schools, with larger differences between factors investigated, would be needed to come to firmer conclusions.

**10.7** Although disquieting, the situation in Malawian primary schools is not entirely gloomy. There is a small proportion of pupils who do seem to read adequately at their level, despite

the odds against them. If more of their colleagues are to achieve satisfactory standards however, attention should be given to the following:

First, more teachers should see reading as a process of meaning making, and not as a process of "barking at print". The approach in most classes that I observed appears to be a barrier to their pupils' progress. A more meaning-oriented approach would also require teachers to attend to the presentation of meaning of new language and to develop techniques for the checking of the understanding of meaning.

There are implications here for teacher trainers. They too need to appreciate the importance of seeing reading as essentially concerned with meaning. It may well be that the first priority in inservice courses should be to provide the trainers themselves with courses that expose them a variety of meaning-oriented approaches to reading.

This change of approach may be helped by the new teaching material *Activities with English* (currently being introduced; see 6.2) which is said to embody a methodology encouraging teachers and pupils to think of reading as a process of obtaining information and as an opportunity to be communicated with, rather than a process of parroting the book or the teacher.

**Recommendation 1:** That regular inservice sessions be organised in connection with the new coursebooks, and that those responsible for the content of the sessions should ensure that a "meaning making" approach to reading is integrated into the sessions.

**Recommendation 2:** That when pre-service teacher training is taking place in the colleges, staff should ensure that a "meaning making" approach to the teaching of reading is given prominence, and that trainees are equipped with appropriate techniques for presenting meaning and checking

understanding.

**Recommendation 3:** If the Ministry of Education assesses that future inservice training requires a larger cadre of specialists in the teaching of reading than is currently available, then the Ministry should consider the preparation of such specialists through short courses (about 10 weeks) which should take place entirely, or at least partly, in Malawi.

**10.8** Pupils can "learn how to read" from the blackboard. The fact that the children tested were able to read in Chichewa is confirmation of this. Nevertheless pupils will not become fluent readers if they only read from the blackboard, or even if they only read texts from a coursebook presided over by the teacher. It is widely agreed (and supported by research) that people become fluent readers through doing a lot of reading - there is no short cut. Providing primary school classes with large numbers of different titles of simple readers in English to be used in self-access library mode



would be a potentially beneficial step. However, simply providing schools with books is not enough. The books have to be appropriate in terms of linguistic level, so that learners can read them without undue difficulty. They should also be appealing in terms of content so that pupils want to read them. If the Ministry of Education were in a position to implement such a scheme, then it would be advisable to pilot it in selected schools for at least one term, in order to find out the types of books that have appeal, to practise book management schemes, and to ascertain the years at which it should operate. (Given that literacy in Chichewa is being established in the first four years, standards 5 and 6 might be considered appropriate.)

**Recommendation 4:** That the Ministry of Education should give consideration to providing large numbers of simple English readers for primary schools, to be used for self-access extensive reading through a "class book box" system. The books would have to be appropriate in terms of linguistic

level and of content, and the scheme should first be piloted in selected schools.

**10.9** The English component of the Standard 8 Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination will need to be changed to bring it into line with the new syllabus. The reading comprehension section in particular will need to be amended, and appropriate information needs to be sought to guide those amendments. The following recommendation is therefore made.

**Recommendation 5:** That specialist research be carried out into:

(a) specifying for the end of primary school the reading comprehension abilities which are:

- relevant to current real life situations, as well as to likely future needs in Malawi;

- relevant to reading to learn in other school subjects;
- relevant to the majority of pupils who will end their schooling at Standard 8.

(b) investigating test item types which lend themselves to the assessment of the selected reading abilities in addition to open-ended questions, bearing in mind the practicalities of production and marking.

**10.10** To monitor reading achievement standards in English over time requires the development of a basic reading test. Such a test could form part of a national assessment system, should Malawi decide to pursue such a programme.

**Recommendation 6:** That a feasibility study be carried out into instituting a reading achievement test for Malawi primary schools. The study would look into the practical aspects

(costs, appropriate Standard, sample size) and academic aspects (content, test format, etc).

**10.11** There are other improvements that could be recommended such as refurbishing schools, providing desks for pupils, reducing the size of classes etc. All these would arguably have a beneficial effect on the learning of reading, which does not take place in a vacuum. The recommendations that have been made however, are those that focus upon reading, and provide relatively inexpensive, and practical help for the primary schools of Malawi.



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## Appendix A: Structure of education system, Malawi

### [Structure of education system](#)

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## **Appendix B: Methods of teaching initial reading**

The principal approach to initial reading in countries where English is the mother tongue of the majority of children generally involves one, or a combination of the phonic, whole word, whole sentence or "language experience" approaches. A brief characterisation of these terms follows:

### **Phonic**

This method proceeds from the conventionalised "sound values" of letters - the letter "C" being given the value "kuh", for example, and the word "cot" being analysed to "kuh" "oh" "tuh" and then synthesised to "cot". The main advantage of this approach is that it enables learners to "build up" by sounding out, and hopefully recognising, words that they have not met previously in printed form. It is sometimes referred to as the "phonetic" method, although phonetic symbols are not used with the learners.

One obvious disadvantage of the method is the lack of consistent letter-sound relationships in English spelling. Another disadvantage is that there is often a difference between the pronunciation of letters in isolation and the sounds represented by the same letters in a word. Thus in the previous example, neither "c" nor "t" are pronounced in the same way in isolation as they are in the word "cot". In order to make an appropriate synthesis, native speakers of English who are learning to read will be helped by already knowing the word "cot". Thus clues gained from the "sounding out" of "kuh" "oh" "tuh" can help learner readers to identify the written word with the item "cot" which is part of their linguistic competence, and whose meaning they will already know.

Clearly if the reader does not know the word, arriving at an appropriate synthesis of the "sounded out" letters will be difficult. Even if the synthesis is appropriate however, this alone will not help the reader to understand the word.

## **Whole Word and Whole Sentence**

Here learners are presented with the written versions of whole words, phrases or sentences, which are read aloud by the teacher, often through the use of flash cards or words written on the blackboard. Pupils are expected to memorise them through repetition, and recognise them as wholes. The claimed advantage of this is that it facilitates rapid recognition of whole units, rather than depending on a laborious letter-by-letter strategy, and as such, that it approximates more closely to the fluent reading of a proficient reader. The disadvantage is that it does not help learners to work out for themselves words that they have not already met in print.

A further point to note is that for native speaker readers attention to meaning will not normally be crucial, or even necessary, since such learners will by definition understand what they are repeating. In a second/foreign language situation however, there is a clear danger that learners will

simply repeat without understanding.

The method is sometimes referred to as the "look-and-say" method, or the "global" method.

## **The Language Experience Method**

This is an integrated approach to both reading and writing which exists in different versions, of which the best known in the UK is *Breakthrough to Literacy* (Mackay et al, 1979) which has been adapted for use with indigenous languages in various Southern African countries. The basic components, however, are that the learner tells the teacher what he or she wants to say (often only one sentence). The teacher writes this down and the child reads it - facilitated, of course, by the fact that the child created the sentence in the first place. The child then copies the sentence. Both the phonic and whole word methods may be incorporated into this approach.

The advantage of this method is that the child will immediately be able to attribute meaning to what he or she says. The disadvantage is that the approach may be cumbersome to use with a large class, although it can be adapted to such situations. The method assumes the child knows enough language to be able to express itself, as would normally be the case with native speakers for whom the approach was developed.

## **A Note on Pre-Reading Experience**

A further point concerning initial reading, is research evidence (eg Bradley and Bryant 1983) that appreciation of the phonemic structure of spoken words is a causal factor in learning to read. In crude terms this means that initial readers are helped if they already have an idea that words are made of sounds. Such appreciation is probably fostered by rhymes, songs and word play which through minimal pairs (eg shells, bells) or contrastive addition (eg row/grow) alert learners to

the phonemic system. Thus, irrespective of the language concerned, the development of initial reading skill is partly a function of pre-reading experiences, not connected with written language. (One may hypothesise, again in crude terms, that knowing that spoken words are made up of different sounds, helps learners to appreciate that letters in written words represent sounds.)

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## Appendix C: The testing of reading abilities

Reading is a difficult skill to test, since the product of reading in "real life" is usually not an observable response, but a change in cognitive structure (ie the reader has acquired some information). In a **test** of reading, however, the reader has to provide an observable response according to the test format.

A reading test is an indirect measure of comprehension of text. The reasons are:

- (i) the test items might not adequately represent the text.
- (ii) the testee might understand the text, but fail to understand the test items themselves.
- (iii) the testee might understand the text and the test items but not have the productive ability to answer the test items.



Additionally, there is the general point that all reading tests interfere with the process of reading, though to different degrees. Some of the most common group test techniques (ie those which permit a group of individuals to be tested simultaneously) are listed below, together with the principal drawbacks:

(i) wh- open-ended questions

- require written production, therefore less than reading

(ii) yes/no questions

- limited in scope; answers may be guessed

(iii) true/false

- limited in scope; answers may be guessed

(iv) multiple choice

- the options offered distract from the text, and may confuse readers who have actually understood the text

(v) identifying main points

- not very sensitive; requires writing; difficult to assess objectively

(vi) summary writing

- a very indirect measure of reading; requires writing; difficult to assess objectively

## (vii) cloze test

- see next section below.

### **Cloze Formats**

In the "standard" cloze deletions are made every *n*th word, and testees have to fill the gaps from their own knowledge, with no options provided. This format was piloted, but rejected on the grounds that:

(i) *n*th word deletion can generate a large proportion of items with largely syntactic function. Speakers of Bantu languages learning English often have difficulty with such elements in English, particularly the pronoun system, determiners, and prepositions. Although learners can generally interpret these elements in context, it is probable that a test where a significant proportion of items consists of syntactic

elements will under-represent the reading comprehension of children in Malawi.

(ii) "standard" cloze requires testees to be able to produce words from their own knowledge to fill the gaps. Since learners generally are believed to recognise more words than they can produce, then a reading test which aspires to construct validity should require testees to produce as little as possible.

(iii) marking of standard cloze tests poses problems. Marking on an "exact word" basis (ie accepting only the word originally deleted as correct) tends to generate very low raw scores at low levels, which gives rise to insufficient discrimination between testees, while marking on an "acceptable word" basis is subjective.

However, the cloze format can be modified so as to overcome the difficulties mentioned above. After piloting of two cloze formats it was decided to construct a modified version in which deletions were manipulated so that there was a low proportion of syntactic elements in the test items. In addition the correct answers were provided in jumbled order in a box above each paragraph. The box also contained an extra 50% of distractors, so that the last item could not be completed by elimination. To avoid overloading the testee's memory no passage had more than 6 deletions.

The technique is best understood by looking at an extract from the Word Find test, for example 'Mseka's father' (see Appendix E)

A test of this type requires not simply reading aloud, but understanding of the text. It also requires no production of language, but simply identification and copying from the box. In order to fill the gaps successfully the testee has to

understand the immediate sentence context, and in some cases the inter-sentence context. Providing the correct answer is thus sometimes a matter of sensitivity to discourse, rather than a matter of grammatical acceptability. Thus in the case of the first item above "white" would be a grammatically acceptable response, but "seven" is preferred as demonstrating awareness of the sentential context. Again "trees" is grammatically acceptable for item 3, but demonstrates a lack of awareness of the previous discourse, and furthermore means that there is no sensible referent for "They" which begins the following sentence.

It is obviously not "natural" reading, in that a gapped text is not a "natural" text. Nevertheless it seemed to be the group test format that did least violence to the process of reading a text, while at the same time yielding a reasonable number and proportion of items per line of text. It is also a format that is similar to the exercises that children would be familiar with from exercises and tests that the teachers set them.

## **Read Aloud as a Testing Technique**

This is a widespread technique whereby children read aloud a text individually and are then often asked to answer questions or talk about what they have read. Elaborate systems of analysing deviancies from the text (or "miscues") have been constructed (eg Goodman 1973), and standardised texts based on this technique are used in the United Kingdom (eg Vincent and de la Mare, 1990). The testee is assessed in terms of the reading and also the answers to the questions.

The main problems with this techniques are:

- (i) that the correlation between accuracy of reading aloud and degree of comprehension is difficult to establish particularly in second/foreign language teaching

(ii) answering the questions depend on first understanding the questions, and second having the productive capacity to formulate an answer. They are therefore indirect measures of comprehension.

Having pointed out those objections, however, the read 'aloud plus questions formal can, assuming the testee has adequate language knowledge, be indicative at the extremes of reading proficiency. For example if, when faced with a very simple text, a testee says nothing, or something quite unrelated to the text, then this could suggest that the child can not read that passage, and possibly can not read. On the other hand, if a testee reads a text fluently and accurately, and answers all the questions correctly, then it is reasonable to assume that he or she can read. If a testee's performance is between these two extremes, however, as is most often the case, then assessing reading comprehension can be a rather subjective process, especially if the testee is reading in a foreign or second language.





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## Appendix D: Read aloud test

### Passage 1



**Muno is playing with a ball.**

**He is playing under the tree**

## Passage 2



**Mary is holding some tomatoes.**

**They are red.**

**She likes to eat them.**



**Miss Moyo is a teacher.**

**Sara and Miriam are in Miss Moyo's class.**

**One day they gave her some flowers.**

**She was very happy and she put them on her table.**

**"Thank you, girls," she said.**

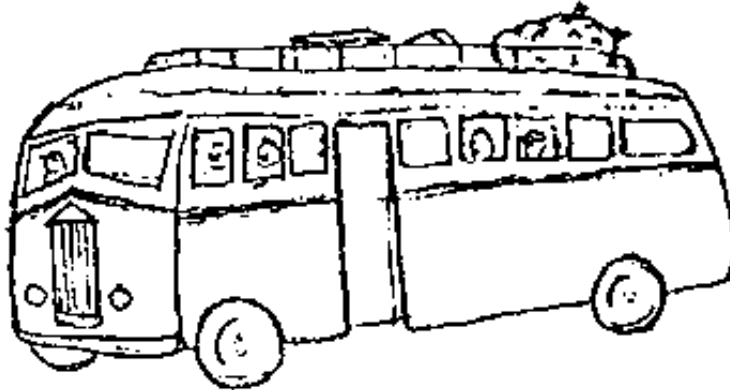
## **Passage 4**



**When Robert was a little boy he was very sick, so he went with his mother to the hospital. A nurse took Robert and his mother to a big room and she put him**

**into a bed. Later the doctor came and looked at Robert.  
"You'll soon be better!" he said.**

## **Passage 5**



**Simon and his sister Ruth went by bus to visit their  
uncle. As the bus was going over a bridge they heard a  
loud noise. The driver stopped the bus and got out. A  
large sack of potatoes had fallen from the roof. It had**

**burst open, and there were potatoes everywhere on the road. Simon and Ruth helped to pick them up and put them back in the sack. The sack was so heavy that two men had to help the driver to lift it onto the roof of the bus.**

## **READ ALOUD QUESTIONS**

### **Passage 1**

1. What is Muno doing?
2. Where is Muno playing?

### **Passage 2**

1. What is Mary holding?
2. What does Mary like to eat?
3. What colour are the tomatoes?

## **Passage 3**

1. Who is Miss Moyo?
2. Where did Miss Moyo put the flowers?
3. Why was Miss Moyo happy?

## **Passage 4**

1. Where did Robert go?
2. Why did Robert go to the hospital?
3. Where did the nurse put Robert?
4. What did the Doctor say?

## **Passage 5**

1. Did Simon and Ruth go in a car?
2. Where were they going?
3. Why did the driver stop the bus?
4. What made the loud noise?



- 5. How did Simon and Ruth help?
  - 6. Why did the two men help the driver?
- 



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## Appendix E: Word find reading test: Extracts

### WORD FIND V.01

Surname .....

Today's

date.....

First name..... Date of

	<b>birth</b> .....
<b>Grade or Standard</b> .....	<b>Sex (boy or girl)</b> .....
<b>School</b> .....	<b>Age</b> ..... <b>years</b> ..... <b>months</b>
<b>Mother's work</b> .....	<b>Father's work</b> .....
<b>Language(s) you speak at home</b> .....	

## Practice Section

### The Ball

and	ball	the	red	like	cow
-----	------	-----	-----	------	-----

Three children are playing with a *red* ball. Siwa is throwing the *ball* to Simon. He catches it *and* throws it to Maria. They *like* playing with the ball.

## Sifo's father

garden	helps	dog	early	tomatoes	all
--------	-------	-----	-------	----------	-----

Sifo's father is a farmer. He has a big garden. It is near his village. Every day he gets up \_\_\_\_\_ and walks to his \_\_\_\_\_. He grows a lot of beans and \_\_\_\_\_ and maize. Sifo \_\_\_\_\_ him in the garden.

**Do not turn over until you are told**

**FROM ITEM 1 - 20 (YEAR 3)**

## Mseka's father

water	teacher	white	them		trees	eat
	seven	goats		go		

Mseka's father has three cows and \_\_\_\_\_ goats.

The cows are black and \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ are brown. They \_\_\_\_\_ grass and drink \_\_\_\_\_ from the river. On Saturday, when Mseka doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ to school, he looks after them.

### FROM ITEMS 21-40 (YEAR 4)

finished	Tortoise	ran	easily	looked	started
----------	----------	-----	--------	--------	---------

The race \_\_\_\_\_. Kalulu ran very fast. After a few minutes he \_\_\_\_\_ behind. He couldn't see \_\_\_\_\_. "I am going to win this race \_\_\_\_\_," he said to himself.

### FROM ITEMS 41-60 (YEAR 6)

#### In the Cave

left	explore	arrived	played	lamp	mountain
------	---------	---------	--------	------	----------

Simon and his sister Maria decided to \_\_\_\_\_ a cave in a \_\_\_\_\_ near their town. They took some oranges, a candle and a box of matches and \_\_\_\_\_ early the next morning. At midday, they \_\_\_\_\_ at cave and went in.

## Chichewa Reading Text: Extracts Chichewa V.01

**Dzina..... Mwezi ndi Chaka Chobadwa.....**

**Kalasi..... Mnyamata/msungwana.....**

**Sukulu..... Chilakhulo  
chanu.....**

## Ndime Yophunzirira

### Mpira

ndi	mpira	wofiira	nsima	amakonda	ng'ombe
-----	-------	---------	-------	----------	---------

Ana atatu akuponya mpira *wofiira*. Siwa akuponyera *mpira*

Simoni. Wawakha *ndi* kumponyera Mariya. Iwo *amakonda* kusewera *ndi* mpira.

## Bambo a Themba

kumundako	mudzi	nsalu	mmawa	kugwa	mati-mati
-----------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-----------

Bambo a Themba *ndi* mlimi. Ali *ndi* munda waukulu. Mundao uil pafupi *ndi* \_\_\_\_\_ wao. Amalawirira \_\_\_\_\_ kupita \_\_\_\_\_ pansu. Amalima nyuemba zambiri, \_\_\_\_\_ *ndi* chimanga.

C/1

## FROM ITEM 1 - 20

## Bambo a Mseka

madzi	zitatu	zoyera	nsipu	Iwo	mitengo
	sapita	Mbuzi		kupita	

Bambo a Mseka ali ndi ng'ombe \_\_\_\_\_ ndi mbuzi zisanu ndi ziwiri. Ng'ombezo ndi \_\_\_\_\_ ndi zakuda. \_\_\_\_\_ zao ndi zofira. Ziwetozi zimadya \_\_\_\_\_ ndi kumwa \_\_\_\_\_ ku mtsinje. Pa chiwelu Mseka \_\_\_\_\_ ku sukulu ndipo amaziweta.

## Muno ndi njinga

sitolo	akupita	wakwera	imodzi	kukagula	akuwerenga
--------	---------	---------	--------	----------	------------

Muno \_\_\_\_\_ njinga mumseu. Akupita \_\_\_\_\_ shuga ku \_\_\_\_\_ Pa nyumba \_\_\_\_\_ ya pafupi ndi mseu pali galu wamkulu.

yagwa	basiketiyo	wayamba	galuyu	mbuziyo	thumba
-------	------------	---------	--------	---------	--------

Pomuona Muno galuyu \_\_\_\_\_ kumuthamangitsa. Basiketi ya Muno \_\_\_\_\_. Amai atuluka mnyumba ndi

kumuletsa \_\_\_\_\_ . Amai atola ndi kumpatsa  
Muno \_\_\_\_\_ .

C/2



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## Appendix F: Extracts from "English in Malawi"

**From: English in Malawi, Revised Edition Pupils'  
Book 2**





**Timve and Tsala are inside the store.  
They are buying things for mother.**

**Are they buying matches?  
No, they are not.  
They are not buying matches.**

**Are they buying bottles?  
No, they are not.**

**They are not buying bottles.**

**Are they buying tins?**

**No, they are not.**

**They are not buying tins.**

**They are buying sugar.**

**They are buying tea.**

**They are buying sugar and tea.**

**They are buying things for mother.**

**(Note: this text was copied onto the board by the school  
P teacher.)**

**From: English in Malawi, Revised Edition Pupils'  
Book 3**

**TIMVE'S BIG SHOES (*UNIT 4*)**



## 1 shoes try laughing feet

One day Timve's father buys some new shoes. He puts them inside the door of his house and goes out. Timve sees the shoes. He puts them on. The shoes are very big. Timve tries to walk in them. He cannot walk very well.

Tsala, Zion and Tinyade are walking along the road outside. They are all together. Tsala is carrying a basket on her head.

Zione is carrying a bottle on her head. Tinyade is carrying some books on her head. They are laughing. They are looking at Timve's shoes and they are all laughing together.

Timve has the big shoes on his feet. They are not his shoes. They are his father's shoes. He cannot walk very well in them. His feet are coming out of them. The girls are laughing at him.

Tsala says, "Look, Timve's trying to wear father's new shoes. He can't run after us. He can't run after us in his big shoes. He can't run after Zione. He can't run after Tinyade. He can't run after me. He can't run after any of us."

**From: English in Malawi, Book 4 (revised edition)**

They went into the garden, then round to the back of the house. Timve wanted something to play with. He pointed to

an old motor-car tyre. "Let's play with that," he said. "It's old. Uncle Maloni doesn't want it. Let's roll it across the garden."

"We can't," Tsala told him.

"Yes, we can." Timve rolled the tyre across the garden. He ran after it and hit it with his hand. The tyre rolled faster. He hit it again.

"Stop it! Stop it!" Tsala shouted.

But Timve could not stop the tyre. It was rolling down a hill and he could not catch it. It rolled into the garden of the next house.



**From: English in Malawi, Revised edition. Pupils'  
Book 6**

The North Sea is far to the north of Africa. Fishermen go there because the water is full of many different kinds of fish. The favorite way of catching them is by trawling with a net. A big net is dropped into the water and pulled along by a boat called a trawler. After some time, the net is brought up to see if there are any fish in it.





There are two points onto the hook, one going up and one going down. When a fish bites the hook, the top point goes into the flesh of its mouth. The bottom point stops the hook from coming out again.

Once a fish has taken a hook into its mouth, it usually can't escape. But it must be made to bite the hook in the first place. Fishermen do this by using bait. They stick on the hook something which fish like to eat, perhaps a worm. A fish sees the worm, tries to swallow it, and is caught by the hook. The bait doesn't have to be worms. Some fishermen use grasshoppers. Others use small fish. Others use pieces of



meat or bread. Others don't use food at all, but pieces of coloured thread. Anything which will make a fish bite is good enough to use as bait.

### **3 Words: eagle Japan cormorant**

When they use nets, traps and hooks, men put something into the water and wait for the fish to come to it. That is not the only way to catch fish. In some parts of the world, men shoot fish. They stand on a rock beside a river, or on the shore of a lake. When they see a fish in the water below, they shoot it with an arrow. Other men do the same thing with spears. It is a natural way of fishing, which they may have learned from birds. Have you ever seen a fish eagle? It lives on the shores of lakes, or on the banks of rivers. Every day the eagle flies over the water, watching for fish below. When it sees one, it folds its wings and falls into the water like an arrow or a spear. When men saw eagles and other

birds fishing in this way, they may have decided to try it themselves with spears and arrows.



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## Appendix G: Lesson transcript

School P, Grade 2 Class

T: Now it's time for English. Class, who can remember to read this word?... Yes?

P: Any

T: Any. Very good. Clap hands for him.

(Clapping)

T: What about this word. What does it say?

P: Tins.

T: Very good. Clap hands for... her.

(Clapping)

and everybody say "tins".

Class: Tins.

T: Tins.

Class: Tins.

T: Who can read this word?... Yes?

P: Bottle.

T: Bottles. Very good. Clap hands for her.

(Clapping)

T: Now everybody read.

Class: Bottles.

T: Again.

Class: Bottles.

T: What does this say? Yes, Danzani?

D: Matches.

Y: Matches. Very good. Clap hands for him.

(Clapping)

T: Everybody, say after Danzani.

Class: Matches.

T: Again.

Class: Matches.

T: Now look here. Look on page 46. Everybody can see it?

(repeat in Chichewa)

Class: (Yes: in Chichewa)

T: (Right: in Chichewa). Now, what can you see? What can you see? Yes, Kenneth?

K: I can see Timve.

T: You can see Timve. Yes. Now, where is Timve? Where is Timve? Yes, Makanso?

P:???

T: No, no. Yes, you.

P: Timve is wearing a shirt and shoes.

T: I said, I said, where is Timve? (repeat in Chichewa) Where is Timve? Yes?

P: Timve is in the store.

T: Yes, Timve is in the store. Clap hands for her.

(Clapping)

P: Now everybody say after her.

Class: Timve is in the store.

T: Again.

Class: Timve is in the store.

T: Now, who is that man? Who is this man? He's a.. He's...  
finish it... Yes?

P: That is a storekeeper.

T: Yes. That is a store keeper. Very good. Now this is a  
storekeeper. Now, what is his name? What is his name?  
Yes?

P: (indistinct)

T: Speak loudly.

P: (indistinct)

T: Speak loudly.

P: Can you hear her?

Class: His name is...

T: (Chichewa: Did you hear what she said)

Class: (Chichewa: Yes)

T: Say it loudly. Yes, speak it loudly. (Chichewa: Say it  
loudly)

P: His name is Mr Gondwe.

T: Very good. Say after him.

Class: His name is Mr Gondwe.

T: Now here I have written some words. Now the first words reads. "Buying, buying, buying. No, no no. Buying buying. No". Now class, read after me "Buying".

Class: Buying.

T: Again.

Class: Buying.

T: Again.

Class: Buying.

T: Now Botolan read it.

P: Buying.

T: Stand up and read it.

B: Buying.

T: Very good. You stand up. Read it.

P: Buying.

T: Everybody read it.

Class: Buying.

T: Here. Read after me. No.

Class: No.

T: No.

Class No

T: No.

Class: No.

T: Now, who can read it. Kanyada.

P: No.

T: Speak loudly.

P: No.

T: Yes,???

P: No.

T: No. Very good. (Writes) What does it say? Yes?

P: No.

T: Very good. Clap hands for him. (Clapping) Yes. Juvis?

P: Buying.

T: Buying. Yes. Very good. Now you listen, I am going to read (Chichewa: I am going to read) "Timve and Tsala are



inside the store.

They are buying things for mother.

Are they buying matches?

No, they are not.

They are not buying matches.

Are they buying bottles?

No, they are not.

They are not buying bottles.

They are buying sugar.

They are buying tea.

They are buying sugar and tea.

They are buying things for mother."

Now class, read after me.

T: Timve and Tsala are inside the store.

Class: Timve and Tsala are inside the store.

(Class continue repeating text after the teacher, as far as:

"They are buying things for mother.")

T: Now I would like boys to read after me. Girls, keep quiet.

"Timve and Tsala are inside the store."

(Boys repeat the text after the teacher.)

Now I would like that line at the back. Stand up.

Quickly. Now read after me. And that one. (Chichewa: That one) Mmhmm.

Line: Timve and Tsala are inside the store.

T: No. Timve and Tsala are inside the store.

Line: Timve and Tsala are inside the store.

(The line read the whole text after the teacher.)

Good, sit down. Now, everybody read. I would like you to read alone (?). Start.

Class: Timve -

T: Everybody, girls and boys. Start reading.

(Class read the text, as far as "Are they buying bottles?")

T: Listen, "Are they buying bottles?"

C: Are they buying bottles?

T: Are they buying bottles?

C: Are they buying bottles?

(Class continue to end)

T: Children, now who can read for me? Yes, Konda.

P: Timve and Tsala are inside the store. They are buying things

T: Things.

P: Things.

T: Things.

P: Things. (Continues text to "They are buying matches.")

T: Very good. Clap hands for... him.

Now girls. Yes. Start from here.

G: Are they buying bottles. No they are not. They are not buying bottles.

T: Very good. Clap hands for her.

(Clapping)

T: Next. Yes.

P: They are buying sugar. They are buying tea. They are buying sugar and tea. They are buying things for mother.

T: Very good. Clap hands for him. (Clapping)

T: Now. Questions. What is Timve and Tsala buying? What is Timve and Tsala buying? Yes.

P: Timve and Tsala are inside the store.

T: Wrong, no. What are they buying? Or let me ask you this way. What are they buying? What are they buying? Yes?

P: They are buying some tea and sugar.

T: They are buying sugar and tea. Say it again.

P: They are buying sugar and tea.

T: Very good. Say it again.

T: Now, say after him. They are buying sugar and tea. Say it.

Class: They are buying sugar and tea.

T: Now, are they buying bottles? Are they buying bottles.

Yes?

P: No, they are not.

T: Very good. Clap hands for her. (Clapping)

T: Are they buying matches? Are they buying matches? Yes?

P: No they are not.

T: Very good. Clap hands for her.

(Clapping)

T: Now, who can come and write the word "buying"? Who can come and write the word on the chalk board. Violet. Yes, you? Take a piece of chalk.

P: (Writes)

T: Is he correct?

Class: No.

T: Now, who can come and correct it? Who can come and correct it? Yes? Come in. Yes, come in front. You.

Write "buying". Is she correct.

Class: Yes.

T: Clap hands for her.

T: Now, who can come and write "No, no, no". Yes,?

Danfreda. Write "No". Is he correct?

Class: Yes,

T: Clap hands for him.

END OF LESSON



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## **Appendix H: Standard 8 primary school leaving certificate examination (extract from 1990 paper)**

Section III (10 marks)

COMPREHENSION

Instructions

*Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow, using complete sentences.*

The important message from the doctor was that all children

under five in Malawi should be vaccinated against the six killer diseases. These diseases are: measles, polio, tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria and tuberculosis. Each year many children are killed or crippled by these diseases. However, many people are not aware that common diseases can be prevented by immunising children.

In order for all children to be vaccinated, all community members and local leaders have to play a part in educating parents. Local leaders should organize meetings to discuss points of interest with parents, for example the importance of taking children to under five clinics. At these under five clinics, children receive vaccinations free of charge. The children should be vaccinated five times in their first year to ensure that they are well protected. There is need, therefore, to mobilize the participation of all parents to bring their children for immunization./...

## QUESTIONS

1. What is it that many people don't know about common diseases?

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2. Why should children be vaccinated against the six killer diseases?

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## Appendix I

### Malawi - Descriptive Statistics for total score in English Word Find

YEAR	SCHOOL	SEX	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	M	B	18	11.1111	6.6323	23	2	11.0
3	M	G	21	9.7619	5.3470	25	2	9.0
3	N	B	17	6.5882	2.9381	12	2	7.0
3	N	G	17	3.6471	1.6934	7	1	4.0
3	P	B	17	9.2353	3.6147	15	2	10.0
3	P	G	17	6.1765	2.3247	11	3	6.0
3	S	B	20	6.5500	4.1482	17	1	5.5
3	S	G	20	6.1000	4.7005	21	0	5.0

3	W	B	11	9.4545	2.8762	14	4	10.0
3	W	G	11	8.0909	2.5867	12	3	7.0
4	M	B	20	19.3500	7.7682	35	7	19.0
4	M	G	19	22.4737	7.5672	37	9	22.0
4	N	B	16	7.5000	4.1473	18	2	6.5
4	N	G	19	7.0526	2.1467	11	3	7.0
4	P	B	16	18.1250	7.6059	39	8	17.5
4	P	G	13	15.3846	6.9706	29	7	16.0
4	S	B	14	13.5714	6.3575	24	5	14.0
4	S	G	16	15.5625	5.5132	27	8	14.0
4	W	B	10	18.5000	6.6542	28	6	18.0
4	W	G	10	10.7000	2.7508	15	6	11.0
6	M	B	21	32.6667	8.9852	53	17	31.0
6	M	G	21	32.6667	9.0848	5]	19	30.0
6	N	B	14	19.2143	7.9921	36	11	16.0

6	N	G	11	23.2727	7.3088	42	14	22.0
6	P	B	22	29.1818	10.2569	54	12	26.5
6	P	G	13	23.6923	5.7791	34	16	23.0
6	S	B	22	32.5000	6.6744	47	17	32.0
6	S	G	18	26.8333	6.4830	40	17	27.5
6	W	B	13	39.3077	9.1596	53	25	44.0
6	W	G	3	17.6667	9.0738	26	8	19.0

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	M	39	10.3846	5.9321	25	2	9.0
3	N	34	5.1176	2.7935	12	1	5.0
3	P	34	7.7059	3.3713	15	2	7.0
3	S	40	6.3250	4.3817	21	0	5.0
3	W	22	8.7727	2.7591	14	3	9.5
4	M	39	20.8718	7.7330	37	7	20.0

4	N	35	7.2571	3.1747	18	2	7.0
4	P	29	16.8966	7.3307	39	7	17.0
4	S	30	14.6333	5.9043	27	5	14.0
4	W	20	14.6000	6.3693	28	6	13.5
6	M	42	32.6667	8.9243	53	17	30.5
6	N	25	21.0000	7.8156	42	11	21.0
6	P	35	27.1429	9.1656	54	12	25.0
6	S	40	29.9500	7.1034	47	17	29.0
6	W	16	35.2500	12.4177	53	8	36.0

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	B	83	8.4819	4.6653	23	1	8
3	G	86	6.7791	4.3098	25	0	6
4	B	76	15.4211	7.9737	39	2	15
4	G	77	14.5065	7.8264	37	3	13

6	B	92	30.6848	10.2763	54	1 1	30
6	G	66	27.0606	8.4996	51	8	26

YEAR	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	169	7.6154	4.55522	25	0	7
4	153	14.9608	7.88727	39	2	14
6	158	29.1709	9.71255	54	8	29

## Malawi - Descriptive Statistics for score on items 1-20 in English Word Find

YEAR	SCHOOL	SEX	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	M	B	18	9.0000	4.69042	17	2	8.5
3	M	G	21	7.8095	4.19069	17	1	6.0
3	N	B	17	6.1176	2.75868	11	2	6.0
3	N	G	17	3.2353	1.75105	7	1	3.0

3	P	B	17	8.4118	3.75930	14	1	9.0
3	P	G	17	5.7059	2.41777	10	2	5.0
3	S	B	20	5.4500	3.85903	15	0	5.0
3	S	G	20	4.8000	3.47321	16	0	4.5
3	W	B	11	6.3636	3.04213	12	2	7.0
3	W	G	11	6.7273	2.53341	10	2	6.0
4	M	B	20	12.1000	4.19147	18	5	12.5
4	M	G	19	13.3158	3.68258	19	6	13.0
4	N	B	16	6.2500	3.56838	14	2	5.0
4	N	G	19	6.4211	2.29288	11	1	7.0
4	P	B	16	10.6250	4.96488	18	1	10.5
4	P	G	13	8.0769	3.63917	17	5	6.0
4	S	B	14	9.2857	3.58262	16	5	8.5
4	S	G	16	9.2500	3.02214	16	3	9.0
4	W	B	10	11.9000	4.65355	17	2	14.0

4	W	G	10	5.7000	2.71006	10	2	5.5
6	M	B	21	16.4762	2.80391	20	10	17.0
6	M	G	21	16.6190	2.13251	20	12	17.0
6	N	B	14	11.3571	3.38792	17	7	10.0
6	N	G	11	12.9091	2.46798	16	9	14.0
6	P	B	22	14.5000	2.59578	18	9	15.0
6	P	G	13	14.0769	2.62874	18	10	14.0
6	S	B	22	16.5000	1.53530	19	14	17.0
6	S	G	18	14.4444	2.74874	18	9	15.0
6	W	B	13	16.6154	2.06311	19	12	17.0
6	W	G	3	10.3333	4.61880	13	5	13.0

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	M	39	8.3590	4.40984	17	1	7.0
3	N	34	4.6765	2.70488	11	1	4.0

3	P	34	7.0588	3.40179	14	1	7.0
3	S	40	5.1250	3.63873	16	0	5.0
3	W	22	6.5455	2.73822	12	2	7.0
4	M	39	12.6923	3.94804	19	5	13.0
4	N	35	6.3429	2.89972	14	1	6.0
4	P	29	9.4828	4.53259	18	1	9.0
4	S	30	9.2667	3.23700	16	3	9.0
4	W	20	8.8000	4.88392	17	2	8.0
6	M	42	16.5476	2.46143	20	10	17.0
6	N	25	12.0400	3.06159	17	7	13.0
6	P	35	14.3429	2.57754	18	9	15.0
6	S	40	15.5750	2.37387	19	9	16.0
6	W	16	15.4375	3.55844	19	5	16.5

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
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3	B	83	7.0843	3.93299	17	0	7
3	G	86	5.6512	3.44970	17	0	5
4	B	76	10.0132	4.64613	18	1	9
4	G	77	8.8961	4.13771	19	1	8
6	B	92	15.2500	3.07998	20	7	16
6	G	66	14.6212	2.99109	20	5	15

YEAR	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	169	6.3550	3.75333	8	0	6
4	153	9.4510	4.41877	19	1	9
6	158	14.9873	3.04946	20	5	16

## Malawi - Descriptive Statistics for score on items 21-40 in English Word Find

YEAR	SCHOOL	SEX	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
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3	M	B	18	2.0556	2.41252	6	0	1.0
3	M	G	21	1.6190	1.82965	8	0	1.0
3	N	B	17	0.4706	0.87447	3	0	0.0
3	N	G	17	0.4118	0.87026	3	0	0.0
3	P	B	17	0.8235	1.01460	4	0	1.0
3	P	G	17	0.4706	0.62426	2	0	0.0
3	S	B	20	1.1000	1.51831	4	0	0.0
3	S	G	20	1.2500	1.88833	6	0	0.0
3	W	B	11	2.3636	1.36182	5	1	2.0
3	W	G	11	1.0909	0.70065	2	0	1.0
4	M	B	20	5.2500	3.90512	17	0	5.0
4	M	G	19	6.2105	3.67543	16	2	5.0
4	N	B	16	1.1875	1.47054	5	0	1.0
4	N	G	19	0.6316	1.25656	3	0	0.0
4	P	B	16	5.1875	3.08153	15	1	5.0

4	P	G	13	4.5385	2.43637	8	1	4.0
4	S	B	14	3.0714	2.89467	8	0	3.0
4	S	G	16	3.6250	2.30579	7	0	3.0
4	W	B	10	5.0000	2.66667	9	2	4.0
4	W	G	10	3.1000	1.85293	5	0	4.0
6	M	B	21	11.2381	4.58154	20	0	11.0
6	M	G	21	10.4286	4.03201	19	3	10.0
6	N	B	14	5.3571	3.47756	13	1	4.5
6	N	G	11	6.5455	3.67052	15	2	7.0
6	P	B	22	10.0000	5.20988	19	2	9.0
6	P	G	13	6.6923	3.79440	15	1	7.0
6	S	B	22	10.3636	3.49892	18	3	10.5
6	S	G	18	9.0000	3.48104	16	4	8.5
6	W	B	13	13.1538	3.67074	19	8	14.0
6	W	G	3	2.3333	2.08167	4	0	3.0

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	M	39	1.8205	2.10102	8	0	1.0
3	N	34	0.4412	0.85957	3	0	0.0
3	P	34	0.6471	0.84861	4	0	0.5
3	S	40	1.1750	1.69293	6	0	0.0
3	W	22	1.7273	1.24142	5	0	1.0
4	M	39	5.7179	3.77630	17	0	5.0
4	N	35	0.8857	1.36708	5	0	0.0
4	P	29	4.8966	2.78189	15	1	5.0
4	S	30	3.3667	2.56614	8	0	3.0
4	W	20	4.0500	2.43818	9	0	4.0
6	M	42	10.8333	4.28222	20	0	10.5
6	N	25	5.8800	3.53930	15	1	6.0
6	P	35	8.7714	4.94729	19	1	8.0

6	S	40	9.7500	3.51371	18	3	9.5
6	W	16	11.1250	5.51211	19	0	12.0

YEAR	SCHOOL	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	B	83	1.2892	1.67135	6	0	1.0
3	G	86	1.0000	1.44711	8	0	0.5
4	B	76	3.9474	3.34622	17	0	4.0
4	G	77	3.6104	3.17124	16	0	3.0
6	B	92	10.1087	4.72416	20	0	10.0
6	G	66	8.2879	4.16123	19	0	8.0

YEAR	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	169	1.14201	1.56333	8	0	1
4	153	3.77778	3.25298	17	0	3
6	158	9.34810	4.57343	20	0	9

## Malawi - Descriptive Statistics for score on items 41-60 in English Word Find

YEAR	SCHOOL	SEX	N	MEAN	SD	MAX	MIN	MEDIAN
3	M	B	18	0.05556	0.23570	1	0	0.0
3	M	G	21	0.33333	0.85635	3	0	0.0
3	N	B	17	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
3	N	G	17	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
3	P	B	17	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
3	P	G	17	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
3	S	B	20	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
3	S	G	20	0.05000	0.22361	1	0	0.0
3	W	B	11	0.72727	0.90453	3	0	1.0
3	W	G	11	0.27273	0.46710	1	0	0.0
4	M	B	20	2.00000	1.94666	7	0	2.0

4	M	G	19	2.94737	2.69719	9	0	3.0
4	N	B	16	0.06250	0.25000	1	0	0.0
4	N	G	19	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
4	P	B	16	2.31250	2.57472	9	0	1.5
4	P	G	13	2.76923	2.35067	6	0	3.0
4	S	B	14	1.21429	1.52812	4	0	0.5
4	S	G	16	2.68750	2.44182	8	0	3.0
4	W	B	10	1.60000	1.95505	6	0	1.0
4	W	G	10	1.90000	1.59513	5	0	2.0
6	M	B	21	4.95238	4.45507	14	0	3.0
6	M	G	21	5.61905	4.18899	12	0	5.0
6	N	B	14	2.50000	2.13937	6	0	2.5
6	N	G	11	3.81818	2.99393	11	1	3.0
6	P	B	22	4.68182	4.89301	18	0	4.0
6	P	G	13	2.92308	2.36155	8	0	2.0

6	S	B	22	5.63636	3.44405	13	0	6.0
6	S	G	18	3.38889	2.40438	8	0	3.0
6	W	B	13	9.53846	4.89243	17	0	9.0
6	W	G	3	5.00000	3.46410	9	3	3.0

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	M	39	0.20513	0.65612	3	0	0.0
3	N	34	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
3	P	34	0.00000	0.00000	0	0	0.0
3	S	40	0.02500	0.15811	1	0	0.0
3	W	22	0.50000	0.74001	3	0	0.0
4	M	39	2.46154	2.36026	9	0	2.0
4	N	35	0.02857	0.16903	1	0	0.0
4	P	29	2.51724	2.44395	9	0	3.0
4	S	30	2.00000	2.16556	8	0	1.5



4	W	20	1.75000	1.74341	6	0	2.0
6	M	42	5.28571	4.28432	14	0	4.0
6	N	25	3.08000	2.58070	11	0	3.0
6	P	35	4.02857	4.18320	18	0	3.0
6	S	40	4.62500	3.19204	13	0	4.0
6	W	16	8.68750	4.90875	17	0	8.5

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	B	83	0.10843	0.41355	3	0	0.0
3	G	86	0.12791	0.48011	3	0	0.0
4	B	76	1.46053	1.95578	9	0	0.5
4	G	77	2.00000	2.34521	9	0	1.0
6	B	92	5.32609	4.51154	18	0	4.0
6	G	66	4.15152	3.30148	12	0	3.0

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>
3	169	0.11834	0.44743	3	0	0
4	153	1.73203	2.17039	9	0	1
6	158	4.83544	4.08018	18	0	4

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