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Campus repertoires: interrogating semiotic assemblages, economy, and creativity

Abstract: Framed within the broader theoretical context of social semiotics, we attempt to show how university students communicate using a variety of unique means, in particular social contexts. We privilege Pennycook and Otsuji's semiotic assemblages, Jimaima and Simungala's semiotic creativity, and the notion of semiotic economy as critical ingredients that conspire to give rise to the unique and complex coinages and innovations constituting students' repertoires. We argue that, born out of creativity, the students' repertoires are semiotically and economically charged discourses that generate extended narratives such that more is realized with less. We show that this reality undoubtedly constitutes a multi-semiotic meaning-making endeavor that enacts and sustains students' imagined and lived experiences in real sociocultural, historical, and political spaces in the multilingual landscapes of university campuses.

1 From language to repertoire: a new sociolinguistic order

Due to shifts in conceptual understandings of language, a new sociolinguistic order has been proposed as an attempt to move from language to repertoire, especially since the latter appears to be a more productive communicative resource amenable in spaces of the late modern age. Blommaert (2011: 1) observes how this creates a "sociolinguistic world made up of dynamic, mobile, unstable, yet ordered processes and phenomena, messy and unpredictable at the surface but understandable at a deeper level." This is why when Makoni and Pennycook (2007) disinvent and reconstitute language, they

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problematize its nature, conceptualization, production, and consumption. The salient insights they offer respond to a clarion call to unthink classical notions of language and, by extension, rethink the conceptualization of communication and representation in the late modern age (Blommaert 2010; Kress 2010; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). This clarion call arises from the widespread effects of globalization on language and language use and the need to move towards a semiotic view of meaning-making rather than a linguistic one (Kress 2010; Scollon and Scollon 2003).

The growing recognition of the need to conceive of social actors' communicative and representative abilities as repertoires has gained currency in the recent past (Banda and Bellononjengele 2010; Pennycook 2010) as it informs what ought to be perceived as a normative practice of the late modern age. In this regard, Blommaert and Backus (2013) have offered some very illuminating light, a nexus between language and communication by forefronting the idea that the real "language" we have and can deploy in social life is a biographically assembled patchwork of functionally distributed communicative resources and skills known as repertoires. Consequently, Mufwene (2010) has pointed out the new forms of individual and societal multilingualism produced by globalization and the need to conceive of speakers' repertoires dynamically. In this context, we believe that the students' repertoires at two universities, that is, the University of Zambia (henceforth UNZA) and the University of Malawi (henceforth UNIMA), can best be described as semiotic repertoires, the totality of semiotic resources that people use when communicating (Kusters et al. 2017).

According to Busch (2017), a repertoire can either take the biographical perspective that ties to an individual's life trajectory or spatial perspective that focuses on encounters in linguistically high diverse settings. However, we take exception to Busch's (2017) view when he argues that repertoires do not tell us about a geographical space (of origin) given that in the light of this undertaking, they do. This is because the biographically assembled patchworks of coinages and innovations that constitute students' communicative repertoires point to or associate with spaces of origin in real and/or imagined terms. In no uncertain terms should our view be taken as one pushing the agenda of speech community among the students as the notion of speech community has been overtaken by modern theorization about language practices. And if anything, the notion of speech community itself has never been a pivotal analytic tool in sociolinguistics (Rampton 2000). Rather, we argue for the constituent parts of repertoires on higher education multilingual landscapes, the resources we have located as coinages, and innovations born out of semiotic creativity and economy.

This paper's organization is such that the next section places the study in the broader sociolinguistic underpinnings of Zambia and Malawi to try and provide a basis for the languages we are to locate in the students repertoires. This is followed by an

exploration of social semiotics as a conceptual and theoretical base. Thereafter, the methodology employed in the study is presented and then a discussion of the study's findings. The last section presents a summary and conclusion drawn from the study.

2 The sociolinguistic contexts of Zambia and Malawi

The multilingual nature of language use in the dispersed localities of Zambia (Southern-Central Africa) has been well established and documented, with well over 72 ethnic groups representing between 15 and 20 distinct (non-mutually intelligible) language groupings (Nkhata and Jimaima 2020; Simungala and Jimaima 2021a; Spitulnik 1998). Studies on Zambia's language situation can be traced to Kashoki and Ohannessian (1978), who laid the foundation for understanding what would be referred to as the first wave of the sociolinguistics of Zambia. Using to some degree the work of Kashoki and Ohannessian (1978) to foreground their undertakings, Haynes (1984), and Moody (1985), among others, have acknowledged the agency of multilingualism in Zambia (see Banda and Bellononjengele 2010 for a detailed discussion). However, Jimaima (2016) problematized the first-wave sociolinguistic studies arguing that Zambia's indigenous languages were never studied in their own right but rather, in reference to the English language to determine, among other things, language attitude, contact phenomena, and error analysis among school-going children. In the second wave, multilingualism is seen as a seeming problem that raises sociolinguistic realities of minor and major languages on one hand, and/or superior and inferior languages on the other. These studies include among others, Kashoki (1990) and Marten and Kula (2008), who, in addition to this, grappled with just how many languages are indigenous to Zambia, subsequently culminating in a decade long debate on which ones are dialects and which ones are languages. The present wave prides in Zambia's multilingualism (Simungala and Jimaima 2021b; Simungala and Jimaima 2023) as a semiotic resource amenable in place, a social practice that is fundamentally fulfilling as it breeds cultural and linguistic diversity (Banda and Jimaima 2017; Jimaima et al. 2019; Mambwe 2014; Simungala et al. 2022a; Simungala and Jimaima 2023).

Equally, Malawi (Southeastern Africa) is linguistically heterogeneous, with approximately eighteen languages that are spoken across the country (Centre for Language Studies 2010). This makes the country multilingual and multiethnic with ten tribal groups that use Chichewa as a lingua franca (Kamwendo 2016; Kayambazinthu 1995). Like Zambia and most African countries, Malawi is characterized by a form of multilingualism in which there is an asymmetrical co-existence of English,

the official language, and Chichewa, the national language. However, this does not restrict the use of other languages in the various spaces of the country. Malawi has always fought to strike a balance between English and the many local languages. After independence, Kishindo (2005) notes that only the print media was allowed to publish in the local indigenous languages. In 1986, English and Chichewa were set to enjoy equal roles, however, English was favored and ended up having hegemony over Chichewa (Kayambazinthu 1998; Matiki 2002). The coming of multiparty democracy saw the promotion of multilingualism with other local languages gaining status. Languages such as CiYao, CiTumbuka, CiTonga, CiLlomwe, and CiSena started to be used in adverts and news bulletins even though these were mostly translations of the English newscasts (Kayambazinthu 1998). This was mainly done so that the audience of different languages could understand and be up to date with the happenings in the country (Kishindo 2005). However, for two decades, the national agenda has failed to include minority languages even with several attempts to revive them for a multilingual balance in the country. Therefore, English and Chichewa remain the two languages that enjoy status in Malawi.

While studies on multilingualism abound in Africa, as well as in Zambia and Malawi in particular, we note with interest that multilingualism studies in both countries tend to ignore and thus fail to account for the diverse peculiarities of higher education spaces. Using a translanguaging angle, Simungala et al. (2022b) considered students' linguistic repertoires as lexical innovation and as communicative practices from the margins. In the present undertaking, we use the same data to argue for semiotic economy predicated on Pennycook and Otsuji's (2017) semiotic assemblages and Jimaima and Simungala's (2020) semiotic creativity. We show how campus repertoires are crafted, produced, and consumed by students to the point that they are mixed with their diverse, multilingual repertoire to become a complex communicative system.

3 Social semiotics: the contextual and material conditions for meaning-making

The semiotic assemblages, creativity and economy we notice in the campus repertoires of students are to be theorized within the broader framework of social semiotics as it provides for a variety of means through which meaning-making can be occasioned, including the manipulation of language. Social semiotics is an approach to communication that seeks to understand how people communicate by a variety of means, in particular social contexts (Kress 2010; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). For Morgan (2006), social semiotics emphasizes how language functions in our

construction and representation of our experience and of our social identities and relationships. A social semiotic theory, adds Kress (2010: 59) "attends to general principles of representations: to mode, means, and arrangement." The recognition of "all socially organized resources that social actors use in meaning-making" in a social semiotic framework lays emphasis on materiality, context, and sociocultural knowledge, all of which are critical ingredients in producing and consuming meaning. In this connection, semiotic economy is conceived as a structural feature of a semiotic system that allows infinite meaningful combinations to be generated using a small number of low-level units.

The social semiotic perspective, therefore, thrives on contextual and material conditions. Caffarel (2006) observes that communication cannot be dissociated from the situational, cultural, and social spaces in which it unfolds. This entails that meaning-making is a shared project among social actors that have shared socio-cultural knowledge and history, as the case is for students in institutions of higher learning who, with time, enact and sustain a culture in the material spaces of the universities. Thus, social semiotics acknowledges the role of human agency – such as the agency with which social actors become active manipulators of language to suit their communicative interests. For example, this is seen in the deployment of semiotic remediation, which showcases how an activity or process is (re)-mediated and deployed anew to serve a different function (Bolter and Grusin 2000; Prior and Hengst 2010). This entails the use of available semiotic resources, putting them to present use and thereby producing transformed conditions for future action. Additionally, it entails the use of resemiotization, which addresses how meaning shifts from context to context, practice to practice, and one stage of practice to the next (Iedema 2003).

The concept of semiotic assemblages (Pennycook and Otsuji 2017) finds its full expression within the broader framework of social semiotics. Jimaima and Banda (2019) detail how Pennycook and Otsuji (2017) examine the different meanings arising from the interactions of fish, onions, and phone cards, and associated objects in two Bangladeshi-run stores in Sydney and Tokyo. Pennycook and Otsuji (2017) then introduced the notion of assembling artifacts to illustrate how, for example, "fish drew the attention of customers to the freezers where they are stored and to discussions of bones, taste, size and 'cleanliness'" (Pennycook and Otsuji 2017: 446). Since the various artifacts come together with other goods and services constituting material objects in the shops, Pennycook and Otsuji (2017) refer to them as semiotic assemblages, which enter new and momentary relationships. This involves re-aligning of a "range of linguistic, artefactual, historical, and spatial resources … in particular assemblages in particular moments of time and space" (Pennycook and Otsuji 2017: 448) for meaning-making. Insights into semiotic assemblages are privileging for the present undertaking as they seek to uncover the various materialities that inform the coinages and innovations. Jimaima and Banda (2019) demonstrate this when they account for the

semiotic transformation of space in an election period in Zambia. They show that the semiotic product resulting from the rallies and campaign material conflates in one micro-space, artifacts in the display of party colors, slogans, song, dance, unique symbols, gestures, and multilingual discourses.

Like Pennycook and Otsuji's (2017) semiotic assemblages, Jimaima and Simungala's (2020) semiotic creativity is deeply enmeshed in social semiotics. In their conceptualization, Jimaima and Simungala's (2020) use semiotic creativity to address the emergence of creative and innovative communication codes and representation amenable on the online semiotic landscapes. They refer to communicative codes such as G9t (goodnight), B4 (before), 2moro (tomorrow), and 4wd (forward) among others, which have emerged in the context of technology-driven globalization processes with reference to mobile texting codes popularly known as Short Messaging Systems (SMS) as well as instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp. They argue that it is the younger generation, who are behind the creation of these social semiotic codes and these have rules that are strictly normative despite operating in an unstable and flexible domain. They conclude that human agency breeds semiotic creativity by arguing that the manipulation of language by social actors on "virtualscapes" is not new. This understanding is critical in capturing the creativity that foregrounds the coinages and innovation that constitute the students' multilingual repertoires at the two universities.

4 Materials and methods

The study employed a case study research approach as it examined the material spaces of two Southern African Universities, UNZA in Lusaka, Zambia, and UNIMA in Zomba, Malawi to understand students' repertoires. While UNZA has several campuses, the Great East Road Campus was the research site for UNZA, and UNIMA formerly known as Chancellor College was the research site. The two universities were conveniently chosen since the researchers were from the said institutions and usable data was available and within reach. Having attended (undergraduate and postgraduate) in these spaces, and further having associated with students from these spaces, the researchers were better placed to understand the repertoires in these spaces since they also used the them in their communicative repertoires.

In addition to diachronic dimensions, we take a synchronic approach by understanding repertoires based on the communicative practices of the moment. Therefore, the study is qualitative since qualitative studies rely on narrative, discourse, and content investigations (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). In this regard, the study is aligned with both discourse and content. The data for the study was collected through recall by the researchers of the most common terms on these two

campuses. Additionally, consultations were made with current students of the universities through which word lists were created. This was specially done to see if the terms are still being used since we realized that with time, some terms may not be used as before and new terms are always being (re)created. To this end, a collection of unique and defining terms that consititute campus repertoires, together with their meanings were assembled. In what follows, we discuss the findings of the study under key thematic areas that define the repertoires of students at UNZA and UNIMA.

5 Semiotic creativity across intergenerational timelines

Creativity is inherent in students' discourses as they are seen to (re)shape and (re)create their means for meaning-making. For instance, at UNZA, a female student is referred to as "moma" while a male student is called a "monk." Instead of describing an individual as "a female student," students in the spaces of UNZA coined the term "moma" to say so much, with very little. We look upon such instances of language use in which social actors manipulate language by (re)creating it as semiotic creativity that produces economy in discourse presentation. Note that "moma" and "monk" refer only to UNZA students, such that if a reference was made to a student at another higher learning institution, these terms would not be used. In this regard, if a reference is made and it is indicated that one is a "monk" or "moma," the intended meaning is that one is studying at UNZA. This way, multiple semiotic materialities such as UNZA, student, and gender are assembled and conflated in one micro-space of meaning-making through these terms. At UNZA, there are general terms for food stuffs such as "Kambiz" for relish, particular food items such as eggs are called "moma sauce," while "Kapenta," which is relish liked by male students, is called "monk sauce." While the coinages and innovations are under a continuous semiotic process, they are part of the students' oral tradition, since they have been passed orally across generations of students. While there are terms which are historical and unchanging, there is constant semiotic activity such that a former student of the university who returns might have to be (re)oriented to some terms.

Let it also be noted that these two terms are peculiar in their reference, since, for example, if someone used the word monk somewhere other than at UNZA, it would generate a different meaning altogether (for instance, one meaning being a religious man that lives in isolation but mostly in prayer and meditation). We are therefore able to appreciate how students recreate and recontextualize words in their own spaces. However, there are no coined terminologies at UNIMA about male and female

students as is the case with UNZA. There are, however, other intergenerational terms that have been modified and repurposed. For example, the term "malume" translated as 'uncle' in English is a case in point for UNIMA. In its ordinary usage in an African cultural setting, the term refers to the brother of one's father or mother or the husband of one's aunt. However, at UNIMA, the term is decontextualized and repurposed to refer to male caretakers (these are social actors who work on campus in various places such as the cafeteria, the dormitories, and even cleaning around the university). Therefore, the term carries innovation and economy in its coinage as it assembles semiotic materialities of UNIMA, male, campus caretaker in a micro-space of meaning-making.

6 Semiotic economy and the blending of multiple morphemes

To argue for semiotic economy, we note that it should be considered a structural feature within a semiotic system that allows infinite meaningful combinations to be generated using a small number of low-level units. In this regard, blending morphemes from different sources and trajectories creates lexical items that compress discourses such that more is said with less. For example, from Table 1, the coinages and innovations represent the year of study in the University. At UNZA, a first-year student is called a "fresher" and a "yearo" at UNIMA. The coinages have links with the term "freshman," which has long been used for first-year students in universities across the globe. The term carries negative undertones of immaturity and lack of experience. For UNZA, a second-year student is referred to as "Matusa" while UNIMA identifies them as "conti." In the coinage of the word "matusa," notice that the

Table 1: Terms relating to year of study.

S/N	Meaning	University of Zambia	University of Malawi, CHANCO
1	First year student	Fresher	Yearo
2	Second year student	Matusa	Conti
3	Third year student	Masad	Associate
4	Fourth year student	Mafosa	Finale
5	Fifth year student	Mafifi	–
6	Graduating student	Mapwisha	Finale
7	Mature Student/a grown-up who is still in college	Chuwi	Tchuwa

morpheme (tu) in the penultimate position corresponds to the digit "2," which implies second year at UNZA. At UNIMA, "conti" denotes a second-year student. Essentially, "conti" follows "yearo," which implies that one has completed the first year of study and they are "continuing" in their second year of study. In this way, continuation is truncated into "conti," which assembles continuation and UNIMA in one micro-space for meaning-making. This then means that once a social actor is referred to as a "conti" in the spaces of UNIMA, the understanding is that they are in the second year of study.

As shown with the coinage "matusa" above, similar internal structures exist up to the fifth year of study. All these highlight the notion of the semiotic economy in discourse presentation. The coinage of these words creatively utilizes resources from indigenous language (which could be either Bemba or Nyanja, which are among the most popular lingua francas in Zambia) as well as English, albeit recreating and manipulating them. Notice that all the years of study have the prefix prefix "ma" as word-initial, which blends with an urban rendering of the year of study such as "tu" for second year in "matusa," "sad" for third year in "masad," "fo" for fourth year in "mafosa," "fi" for fifth year in "mafifi." This shows the semiotic productivity of indigenous languages in aiding the semiotic economy in coinages and innovations as end products.

For UNIMA however, all the terms for years of study appear to have been recreated from the English language. All the terms for UNIMA in the table are singular; they refer to one student. So as noted above, a first-year student at CHANCO is a "yearo," a second-year student is a "conti," a third-year student is an associate, and then "finale" for the fourth-year student. Unlike UNZA, UNIMA does not have year 5. Undergraduate degrees at UNIMA are four years. So, when these terms are used to refer to a class of students of a certain year, the plural morpheme "ma" is attached to the beginning of the terms. For example, first-year students are called "mayearo," second-year students are "maconti," third-year students are "maassociate," and fourth-year students are "mafinale." Just like UNZA, the "ma" is a plural marker used for several Chichewa nouns; in this case, its attachment to the English coined words makes the term more local.

7 Coinages and innovations as assemblages

At UNZA, some coinages and innovations seem to subscribe to a pattern. This is a peculiar phenomenon; for some words, as in Table 2, the university's abbreviation, that is, UNZA, is retained. Consider the coinages "UNZA Blue," "UNZA Brown," and "UNZA Open," among others. "UNZA Blue" is used in reference to security officers clad in blue uniforms. These keep vigil around campus. Their attire becomes an

Table 2: Terms bearing UNZA.

S/N	Coinage	Meaning
1	UNZA Gym	A student who goes to the gym
2	UNZA Security	Where the security offices are
3	UNA Blue	Security officer (s) in blue uniforms
4	UNZA Brown	Security officer (s) in brown uniforms
5	UNZA Chargy	A+ student
6	UNZA Jobby	A student who is always studying
7	UNZA Open	A female student with a multiple boyfriends
8	UNZA Kiss	A place near the post office where students bump into each other
9	UNZA Pushi	Cats found at UNZA
10	UNZA Veggie	Vegetable sellers in UNZA
11	UNZA Washa	Women who do laundry for students at a fee

artifact assembled and drawn upon in constructing their name, reference points, and identity. "UNZA Brown" refers to security officers clad in brown uniforms only seen during sessional examinations executing invigilation duties. At the mention of "UNZA Brown," the idea of the sessional exam is brought into this junction of meaning-making as color of the uniform together with sessional exams are semiotically and creatively assembled for meaning-making. "UNZA Brown" like "UNZA Blue," entails semiotic economy, as we see color undergoing semiotic remediation as it is repurposed for new uses. In this way, color is now used to refer to and identify security officers together with their material purposes on campuses.

Some of the terms carry UNZA and an English-coined term. While one would have expected cats to be referred to as "UNZA Cat," they are rendered as "UNZA Pushi," drawing on a Bemba word *pushi* for a 'cat.' Aside from the use of "UNZA," there is a sense in which the coinages often defy expected norms and subsequently destabilise a formation of a pattern in the coinages and innovations. The assembling of artifacts in this regard makes use of multiple resources from indigenous languages. In this scenario, as was for number 8, the resource is drawn from Bemba, an out of place language (Banda and Jimaima 2017) and this attests to its vitality and productivity beyond its legislated environs. The term "UNZA Kiss," a semiotic, economically charged coinage that refers to a material and physical space located near the post office, which is a blind outlet leading to the New Residences. The term UNZA Kiss emerges out of the social actions in this space where, as a result of being a blind spot, unsuspecting social actors would often bump. As a result of these happenings, the social actions necessitated by this space are the assemblages and creatively drawn upon in the coinage of UNZA Kiss.

The pattern of drawing on the abbreviated form of the university "UNZA" and attaching it in the coinages as seen above is social culturally construed in these spaces and is adhered to in the constant semiotic construction of coinages. The addition of "UNZA" becomes a peculiar feature of the coinages as it is used to refer to "belonging to," "found at," and "originating from" the spaces of the university. This is why "UNZA Open" refers to a "moma" with multiple partners or one who is available for promiscuous activities. A near-synonym for "UNZA Open" is a prostitute but in these spaces, the term coined uses the word "open" in a literal sense. In this way, the productivity of the semiotic assemblages brings into the spotlight the term "prostitute," which is assembled and recontextualised in meaning by the adopted and repurposed word "open," which is accompanied by the word "UNZA." Unlike UNZA, where the abbreviation "UNZA" is placed to show that such terms are peculiar to UNZA students, UNIMA does not have such terms.

8 Meaning-making through repurposed global emblems

From Table 3, terms such as Berlin Wall have been transported from the global spaces and replicated in meaning and use in the local spaces. The use of the term Berlin Wall is an assemblage of a global emblem domesticated through repurposing. The coinage refers to the wardrobes that divide a room in the halls of residences. The Encyclopedia Britannica historicizes that the Berlin Wall was a barrier made of a series of concrete walls (up to 15 feet [5 m] high) topped with barbed wire. These walls surrounded West Berlin and prevented access to it from East Berlin and adjacent areas of East Germany between 1961 and 1989. Thus, the term Berlin Wall has been

Table 3: Repurposed terminologies.

S/N	Coinage	Meaning
1	Chuwi/Tchuwa	Old/matur student
2	Diving	Eating other people's food
3	Divee	A student who always goes out to eat from friends
4	Deck 15	The Goma Lakes
5	Bengist	School of Engineering students
6	Exile	Giving space to someone for them to be with their lover
7	Berlin Wall	The two wardrobes which divide a rooms at halls of residences
8	Landy	An accommodated student, the owner of the bed space

semiotically mediated and injected to resonate with the wardrobes in the middle of rooms dividing the two-bed spaces so that each social actor can assume ownership of their space. This means that the historicity behind the term Berlin Wall comes alive as it is injected in place. The term Berlin wall has been repurposed, resemiotized, and semiotically assembled to serve a function of the semiotic economy in the meaning-making practices of students.

Another word semiotically injected in place is the word "exile." The picture of an exile, as in the case where an individual, often a prominent critic of a ruling government may be sent away or exiled from their place of abode – often their country – is injected in this space with semiotic undertones. In this fashion, when a student says they are on exile, the meaning is localized to refer and indicate that for some time, mostly for a night or more, a student should not go back to their room as the owner of the bed space called a "landy" ('landlord') is with their lover. In this way, the term exile is an assemblage of ideas that serves the purpose of the semiotic economy. A student therefore does not have to explain in a sentence or two what has happened to them as the term exile has been semiotically domesticated and is understood in these spaces. For UNIMA, being in exile essentially means someone has vacated their room for the night because their roommate has brought in a "lover." Here we can appreciate that both UNZA and UNIMA seem to use the same term for the same meaning. The meaning of exile and how it has been repurposed is the same in both spaces. This suggests that there is something similar in how students from the two institutions of higher learning (re)create terms.

As Table 4 illustrates, the term "peri" refers to anyone who is not a student of UNIMA or has never studied at UNIMA. The coinage is traceable from the word 'peripheral' meaning the outer area. In this case, the word was coined after truncation and repurposed to refer to the outer area of the university. Being an institution of higher learning, the focus is on the students. So the word does not merely refer to the people outside this institution but rather students who are not students of UNIMA or those who have never studied at UNIMA. "Despa" has been coined from

Table 4: English induced coinages.

S/N	Coinage	Meaning
1	Peri	Anyone who is not a student of CHANCO
2	Despa	A woman who throws herself at men so that they ask her out
3	Mafrus	Frustrations from exams or being refused a proposal
4	Tradi	Primitive person in dress and language (lifestyle)
5	MaYo	Sophisticated person in language and dress.

the word 'desperate.' This was therefore recreated to specifically refer to a lady so desperate for affection that she throws herself at the mercy of men with the hope that they will ask her out. In this way, the creativity in the term is seen in how the coinage assembles aspects of gender, female as well as desperation for love and affection. The term is narrowed so that it does not refer to all situations where desperation is seen, but only the desperation for love and affection. Therefore, we appreciate the semiotic economy that the coinages bring. The coinage "mafrus" is another case that undergoes the clipping process. It comes from the English word 'frustrations.' In its coinage, however, "mafrus" blends the Chichewa plural prefix "ma" and the morpheme "frus" clipped from the English word. Just like UNZA, this illustrates how students blend the two languages into one innovative coinage.

9 Summary and conclusion

The study has shown how students draw on a variety of languages as well as truncated bits and pieces, the built environment, global emblems, food, color, clothing, and kinship terms among others as semiotic assemblages that conflate in time and space to bring into the spotlight economy and creativity in one junction of meaning-making. The notion of repurposing has been demonstrated through the students' coinages and innovations as a critical ingredient in meaning-making as it fosters creativity and economy. This is because repurposing takes a word, activity, or process from everyday usage of a language, then (re)-mediates and deploys it anew to serve a different function. In other words, the semiotic assemblages enmesh the re-use of other people's words in talk, frequently re-perform others' gestures and actions, redesign objects, represent ideas in diverse media, and thus restructure both the environments and the subsequent repertoires, which are bred in these multilingual landscapes (Prior and Hengst 2010). Since there are constant coinages and innovations of the terms at both UNZA and UNIMA, the study follows after Banda and Jimaima (2015), who argue that the system of signage transcends the limitations of the material conditions as memory, objects, artifacts, and cultural materialities can potentially be redeployed in place to new uses, and for extended meaning potentials.

The study has shown the urgency and productivity of multilingualism in the two institutions by highlighting firstly, the tolerance of multilingualism, as multiple languages are drawn upon in coinages and innovations, and secondly, the unique feature of innovations and coinages that constitute the multilingual repertoires of students such that only they, or their associates and/or former students, can deploy in meaning-making instances. This has been evidenced through several innovations and coinages that have shown that for UNZA, English, Bemba, and Nyanja seem to have a greater influence on innovations and coinages even though Zambia is a highly

multilingual and multicultural nation with between fifteen to twenty languages and about 72 ethnic groupings. The use of these languages in the coinages and innovations through the creative blending of resources and morphemes relates to the affordances of semiotic productivity (Jimaima and Simungala 2020), which breeds creativity and economy in discourse presentation. For UNIMA on the other hand, it was seen that English co-existing with Chichewa as official and national languages have been favored over the other indigenous languages that are available in the country. These two languages have been adopted and used for a much longer time such that they are common and familiar and it is not a wonder to see that even the innovations and coinages that the students make center around these two languages and not the rest of the local indigenous languages.

The study has shown that the students are economical in the way they use various terms. Some of the terms that are used are already in use in everyday language but students have reshaped, recreated, and repurposed these terms to mean something that only they and their associates in the spaces can understand and relate to. The (re)shaping and (re)creating of language shows that it is both a local and social practice (Heller 2007; Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Pennycook 2010), which does not subscribe to boundedness and immobility (Blommaert 2010). This has already happened for both terms in local spaces or even global emblems. This shows that language is indeed fluid and that terms can acquire new meanings in various contexts (Jimaima and Banda 2019). Through decontextualization and recontextualization, students can shift meaning to a meaning they can associate with, which is passed down orally to new students. This makes the use of these terms in these spaces peculiar to them and not to the rest of the world as they coin them in ways consistent with the social-cultural environs. This is what Kress (2010) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) refer to when they argue for social-cultural orientation in meaning-making. This not only shows the students' cultural heritage but also demonstrates a linguistic and semiotic innovation and creativity like never before. Since it cannot be traced as to who came up with individual terms used in these spaces, the findings indicate a close oral tradition in these higher learning institutions.

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