

# Re-Oralizing the Word for Empowerment: A study of re-translation in Chichewa, with special reference to Psalm 124

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Chichewa is a major Bantu language widely spoken as a primary or secondary mode of communication in many areas of SE Africa. Three major translations of the Bible were produced in this language during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Protestant *Buku Lopatulika* (1922), the Catholic *Malembo Oyera* (1966), and the Interconfessional *Buku Loyera* (1998). The present study briefly investigates the different methods of translation that were employed by these Bibles in order to suggest how the most recent, ecumenical version has served to greatly “empower” the people, readers and hearers alike, in some crucial respects, namely, with regard to their language, culture, theology, and a broader sense of Christian community. To illustrate this, selected aspects of the short Psalm 124 in these three versions are comparatively analyzed. This leads to a consideration of several additional strategies that might be implemented in order to further improve this version’s essential comprehensibility on the one hand, and its oral-aural quality, or audience-engaging popularity, on the other. In conclusion, some possible implications of this research for preparing a future enhanced, multimodal re-translation of the Chichewa Bible will be proposed.

*(key words: Bible translation, orality, performance, empowerment, Chichewa)*