



Research Article

Appraising the Effectiveness of Bilingualism in Preaching: the Experience of Living Water Baptist Church, Ibadan, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

Bilingualism in preaching is adopted by Living Water Baptist Church, Ibadan where Yoruba and English languages are used. In a heterogeneous congregation, is there usually a language barrier? This study appraised the data collected through questionnaires, whether bilingualism in preaching has effectively solved this problem. As practiced by Living Water, the forms of bilingualism in preaching are code-mixing, code-switching and the use of an interpreter. The highest factor responsible for bilingual preaching is to accommodate different tribes as attested by 98.7% of respondents. Challenges of bilingual preaching among others are lack of exact words in other languages to convey what a preacher intends as supported by 82.4% and 81.1% of the respondents agreed that most interpretations do not give details but a summary of the preacher's expression. On the effectiveness of bilingual preaching, 85.3% of respondents preferred the use of an interpreter to code-mixing or switching by 51.3%. Preachers should adopt bilingualism in preaching in a heterogeneous society, speak simple vocabularies and use an interpreter who is proficient.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Preaching, Code-mixing, Code-switching, Interpreter

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INTRODUCTION

Preaching is the task of conveying God's message to God's people so as to make the truth of God's word have a positive influence on their lives. God's message is given to human beings in their own language and God's messenger has a responsibility to convey the same message in that same human language. As a mouthpiece of God, the preacher should endeavour to communicate in language(s) which the audience can clearly understand. However, many of the 21st century Christian congregations are made up of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and languages. It is observed that the current reality in any community which in ideal situations used to be both culturally and linguistically homogeneous now tends to be more culturally and linguistically heterogeneous.² A heterogeneous congregation shows a significant degree of racial and ethnic diversity.³ Based on the heterogeneous nature of the current audience in preaching, language becomes a barrier to effective proclamation of the word of God and this necessitates bilingualism in preaching.

This study is aimed at achieving the following: to evaluate if bilingualism is a better option to monolingual preaching; to know what factors are responsible for bilingualism in preaching; to find out how bilingualism will effectively fit into preaching in a heterogeneous culture; to appraise how the use of bilingualism in preaching has solved language barrier in a heterogeneous congregation and identify the challenges that may affect effective use of bilingualism. The study will respond to the following research questions: What are the factors that will inform the use of bilingualism in preaching? What are the forms of bilingualism in preaching? How or where should a form of bilingualism be used? Can bilingualism remove language barrier in a heterogeneous culture? What are the challenges of bilingualism in preaching?

² Mobolaji Adekunle, "English in Nigeria: Attitudes, Policy and Communication Realities" in *New Englishes: A West African Perspective*, edited by Ayo Bamgbose, Ayo Banjo and Andrew Thomas (Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers, 1995), 65.

³ Alan Parker, "Towards Heterogeneous Faith Communities: Understanding Transitional Processes in Seventh-Day Adventist Churches in South Africa", A Dissertation Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch. March 2004, 14.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

BILINGUALISM

Bilingualism is a word that is derived from two Latin words, *bi* and *lingual*. “Bi” is a prefix which means two or twice while “lingual” means language or tongue. It is an act of writing or expressing an idea in two languages.⁴ Another simple definition of bilingualism is given as a speaker of one language who can speak in another language.⁵ This definition is considered simple because it accommodates all degrees of proficiency in another language either as the one who learns to speak it from infancy in the home environment or as language of instruction in schools. Taking into the account the degree of competency, Anthony Liddicoat defines bilingualism as having some ability to use two languages, one as native-like and the other as one who has just began to learn how to speak a language.⁶ Therefore, bilingualism is a regular and concurrent use of two languages in a communication.

Two types of bilingualism are identified in the work of Katja Cantone namely; compound and coordinate bilingualism.⁷ Compound bilingualism refers to an individual who learns to communicate with two languages in the same context and situation, so that “two words, one in each language, have one common meaning and representation in the brain, thus creating an interdependence of the two languages.”⁸ In coordinate bilingualism, however, an individual learns the two languages in different contexts, so that each word has its own specific meaning.

In another view, compound bilingualism relates to what Hamers and Blanc called “balanced bilingualism” and “coordinate bilingualism” to “dominant bilingualism.”⁹ A balanced bilingual is an individual who is equivalently competent in each language, whereas a dominant bilingual is someone who possesses superior competence in one language than the other. Mathematically, balanced bilingualism is illustrated to be “ $L1=L2$ ” but for a dominant bilingualism “ $L1 > L2$ or $L2 > L1$ ”¹⁰ as the case may be.

Furthermore, bilingualism can feature as a code-switching, code-mixing and also as translation in preaching. Code-switching and code-mixing are said to be well-known traits in the speech pattern of the average bilingual in any human society in the world.¹¹ Code-switching and code-mixing are two manners of language usage among the bilingual speakers, unlike translation which requires a bilingual intermediary who relays a message to a monolingual or someone whose language of understanding differs from the original speaker’s language.

Basically, there are three types of bilingualism which are code-switching, code-mixing and translation. Code-switching is defined as a “process where the initiator of speech or the speaker switches from one code or language to another as conditioned by the situation, audience or subject matter.”¹² This also means the alternating use of two or more languages within one conversation.¹³ This term describes the process of “swapping” between languages¹⁴ which is done at different rates and sentences interjection. From the social benefit perspective, code-switching is viewed as a practice that is used not only as a conversational tool, but also as a way to establish, maintain and delineate ethnic boundaries and identities.¹⁵ Whereas, code-mixing refers to the mixing of two or more languages or language varieties in speech.¹⁶ Code-mixing is the combination or intertwining of two languages while code-switching is the situation where only one language is activated at a time in communication.

Meanwhile, the words translation and interpretation are somewhat used interchangeably or synonymously. Although they are different, they have come to mean the same thing to many people. To translate is to express something in another language or dialect,¹⁷ or to express the meaning of speech or writing in a different language,¹⁸ whereas to

⁴ “Bilingualism” in Collins English Dictionary, 4th Edition, Edited by Diana Treffry (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1998), 154.

⁵ Vivian Raithel, *Bilingualism: Introduction to Applied Linguistics* on <https://www.scribd.com/document/326389448/Bilingualism> accessed on 21/05/2020, 3.

⁶ Anthony Liddicoat, “Bilingualism: An Introduction” (Occasional Paper, ResearchGate, 1991), <https://vulms.vu.edu.pk/Courses/ENG512/Downloads/Liddicoat1991Bilingualism.pdf>.

⁷ Katja F. Cantone, *Code-Switching in Bilingual Children* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Publishers, 2007) 24.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Josiane F Hamers and Michael H.A. Blanc, *Bilinguality and Bilingualism*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25.

¹⁰ Elin Arnarsdóttir, *The Importance of Being Bilingual: The Effects of Bilingualism on Cognitive Development and the Role of Language Valorization*, B.A. Essay in the Department of English, Iceland University, April 2012, 6.

¹¹ M.O. Ayeomoni, “Code-Switching and Code-Mixing: Style of Language Use in Childhood in Yoruba Speech Community” in *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 15(1), 2006, 90.

¹² Ezekiel Tunde Bolaji, Omowunmi Mopelola Adebajo, and Rifqat Opeyemi Sanni, “Patterns of Codeswitching in Mixed Yoruba-English” in *Journal of Cognitive Science* 15: 2014, 261.

¹³ Peter Auer, “Bilingual Conversation revisited” in *Code-Switching in Conversation: Language, Interaction and Identity*, edited by Peter Auer (New Fetter Lane, London: Routledge, 1998), 3.

¹⁴ Raithel, 28.

¹⁵ Rosamina Lowi, *Code switching: An Examination of Naturally Occurring Conversation* (Somerville, M.A.: Cascadilla Press, 2005), 1.

¹⁶ “Code mixing” on <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code-mixing>, accessed on 01/08/2016.

¹⁷ “Translate” in *Collins English Dictionary*, 4th Edition, Diana Treffry, ed. (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1998), 1624.

¹⁸ “Translate” in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 8th Edition (Oxford: University Press, 2010), 1588.

interpret is to clarify or explain the meaning of written or spoken words respectively. Preaching in bilingualism can take the form of translation which is herein referred to as translation or interpretation in a Nigerian context.

In the context of this paper, *bilingualism* refers to the use of one of the Nigerian major native languages such as Yoruba, Hausa or Igbo and the nation's official language which is English language in preaching. For instance, in the South-western part of Nigeria where Yoruba is the predominant language spoken, bilingualism will be the use of Yoruba and English languages concurrently in preaching either by using an interpreter alongside a preacher or a preacher using code mixing or code switching to relay a God's given message to the church.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a questionnaire was administered among the teens, youth and adult members of Living Water Baptist Church, Ibadan on the use of bilingualism in preaching. Eighty questionnaires were distributed but seventy-nine were returned. Having collated the returned questionnaire, the data were tabulated according to the order of the questions for statistical analysis and interpretation.

RESULTS

The summary of the responses to the questionnaire on bilingualism in preaching is presented in the tables below. "Strongly Agreed" (SA) and "Agreed" (A) imply, at least agreed (SA+A). The data for "Disagreed" (D) and "Strongly Disagreed" (SD) are not included, while "P" implies positions according to percentage:

Table 1.

S/N	FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR BILINGUAL PREACHING	SA	A	SA+A in %	P
1	To accommodate different tribes within the church.	54	22	98.7	1 st
2	To encourage inter-tribal unity within the church.	44	27	93.4	2 nd
3	To meet the needs of the teens and youths who are not accustomed to their native language.	38	29	88.2	3 rd
4	Prominence of English as an official language in Nigeria.	25	35	80.0	5 th
5	To accommodate the elites and elderly members in the church.	34	30	86.4	4 th

Table 2.

S/N	FORMS OF BILINGUAL PREACHING	SA	A	SA+A in %	P
1	When the preacher does the interpretation by himself (Code mixing/switching), the sermon comes clearer.	19	20	51.3	5 th
2	Involvement of an interpreter brings excitement while I listen to pastor preaching.	27	37	85.3	2 nd
3	Switching of codes/languages between the preacher and interpreter makes the audience to be attentive to the duo.	32	32	85.4	1 st
4	Irrespective of the preacher's competence in bilingual preaching, the interpreter's dialect/accent determines the quality of the preaching.	23	24	61.9	4 th
5	Simultaneous/concurrent interpretation is preferable to alternating interpretation.	23	32	74.3	3 rd

Table 3.

S/N	CHALLENGES OF BILINGUAL PREACHING	SA	A	SA+A in %	P
1	Where a preacher interprets for himself the sermon becomes boring.	18	23	54.0	5 th
2	The use of an interpreter prolongs the preaching than the preacher doing the two (code mixing/switching).	14	30	58.7	4 th

3	At times there is a lack of exact words in other languages to convey what a preacher intends.	29	32	82.4	1 st
4	Most interpretations do not give details but summary of what a preacher has said.	25	35	81.1	2 nd
5	Generally, bilingual preaching requires a longer duration for the delivery of a sermon.	18	35	71.6	3 rd

Table 4.

S/N	EFFECTIVENESS OF BILINGUAL PREACHING	SA	A	SA+A in %	P
1	Bilingual preaching is only interesting if I understand the two adopted languages.	23	31	71.1	3 rd
2	I enjoy bilingualism when the preacher speaks in language I understand rather than the interpreter.	34	22	74.6	2 nd
3	Would the church have had this population if the preaching is monolingual (only one language)?	9	14	31.1*	4 th
4	It will be better if the church operates separate English and Yoruba sections.	12	23	47.3	5 th
5	In the case of relocation, I will prefer to join another bilingual preaching church.	31	30	81.3	1 st

*Note that 31.1% means positive in serial number 3 and it implies that 68.9% of the respondents agreed, at least, that the church population would not have been that much if the preaching is monolingual.

DISCUSSION

Diversity in languages is one of the factors that will necessitate bilingualism in preaching in Nigeria, as it has about 400 native languages.¹⁹ Suppose a church is made up of at least five out of those 400 native languages and the pastor has to preach effectively. The first thing to settle is the issue of which language does the majority of the congregation speak, depending on the geographical location and then combine with a national or official language which is English in order to be able to communicate to other minority groups. From the research carried out, Living Water Baptist Church comprises people from different socio-cultural backgrounds who speak and understand the following seven languages which are arranged according to their frequency- Yoruba, English, Igbo, Hausa, French, Batonum and Edo.²⁰ Apart from English, which is a prominent foreign language, and French, the other five are Nigerian native languages. Hence, Yoruba-English bilingualism is adopted in preaching in any of the Church's worship services by the preacher and his translator usually known as the interpreter.

As gathered from the responses, the factors responsible for bilingual preaching are to accommodate different tribes within the church; to encourage intertribal unity within the church; to meet the needs of the teens and youths who are not accustomed to their native language; prominence of English as an official language in Nigeria; and to accommodate the elites and unschooled folks in the church.

Also, the respondents acknowledged that there are challenges in bilingual preaching. The greatest challenge as revealed is lack of exact words or expressions in other languages to convey what a preacher intended to say; for instance in the use of idioms, proverbs and figures of speech. More so, it is affirmed that most interpretations do not give details but a summary of what a preacher says. Therefore, some salient parts of the message are missed out during interpretation. Generally, bilingualism in preaching requires a longer duration for the delivery and can be boring if not carefully managed by the preacher and the interpreter.

People become members of bilingual preaching churches because irrespective of their tribal, racial and cultural differences they can be accommodated and preached to in English which is a Nigerian official language especially when they cannot find a local church where their mother tongue or native language is being spoken. Bilingualism in

¹⁹ B. Rotimi Badejo, "Multilingualism in Sub-Sahara Africa," *The African e-Journals Project*, Vol. 3 No. 2. (1989): 43, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e0e4/b62fd1c43b23d507564affbbfca69da77b63.pdf>

²⁰ Favour O. Ogundiran, "Appraising The Effectiveness of Bilingualism in Preaching at Living Water Baptist Church," Ibadan. Master of Divinity Thesis in the Department of Theology, Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, June 2017, 33.

preaching bridges language and intertribal barriers in the church. This encourages the universal nature of the church. In the contemporary age where teens and youths are not fully accustomed with their local language, bilingualism in preaching plays a vital role in helping to understand the sermon and improve on their mother tongue or second language. Both elites and unschooled folks can come together in worship without communication barriers in preaching to the heterogeneous audience.²¹

Involvement of an interpreter in bilingual preaching rather than code mixing or switching by the preacher is found to be more exciting to the audience. Both the preacher and interpreter will perform effectively if they can speak the two languages adopted and switch languages between themselves. This will attract complete attention from the audience who is eager to listen to the two on the pulpit and the one preaching can guide and correct the interpreter when he or she is not precise. This is possible if only the preacher understands the two languages.

There are a number of challenges associated with bilingual preaching such as boredom when the preacher is code mixing or code switching; elongation of sermon delivery period; lack of exact words in other languages to convey what a preacher intends and missing out of some details while interpreting a sermon. However, both the preacher and interpreter should work hard to avoid boredom, and digression that can prolong the sermon and communicate in simple language for the ease of interpretation. The preacher and their interpreter should be familiar with each other and operate at a common level.

Careful study of the congregation's tribal and cultural makeup should be carried out to choose what two languages will be used in bilingualism in preaching. Yoruba and English languages adopted by Living Water Baptist church were justified by the members' tribe, mother tongue, first language and preferred language of communication. Since 92.6% of the respondents held the view that bilingual preaching is effective as against the negligible minority of 1.5% respondent who is uncertain of its effectiveness and 5.9% respondents who claimed it is not effective at all, then it can be established that, going by the majority claim of 92.6%, bilingualism in preaching is effective at Living Water Baptist church which is obtainable in any other similar congregation.

Respondents' Complementary Expression

In section C of the questionnaire the respondents were given freedom to make personal comments on why they chose to be a member of a bilingual church, what and how bilingual preaching effectiveness within their church is. Table 5 shows their responses to why they chose to be a member of a bilingual church:

Table 5.

S/No	Reason for Membership	No of Respondent
1	For a better understanding of the sermon	31
2	I love it; it is interesting and makes service dynamic.	18
3	It accommodates different tribes.	8
4	It improves my language skills.	8
5	It gets me involved.	2
6	By location.	1
7	Just find myself there.	1
8	Most churches are bilingual nowadays.	1
9	To grow spiritually and academically.	1

As to whether bilingualism in preaching at Living Water Baptist church is effective, 63 respondents who make 92.6% claimed that bilingualism in preaching at Living Water Baptist church is effective, while 1 respondent who makes 1.5% claimed it has a potential to be effective, whereas 4 respondents who make 5.9% held the opinion that it is not effective at all. If 92.6% making 63 respondents hold the view that it is effective as against the negligible minority of 1.5% making 1 respondent who is uncertain of its effectiveness and 5.9% making 4 respondents who claimed it is not effective at all, then it can be argued and established that, going by the majority claim of 92.6%, bilingualism in preaching is effective at Living Water Baptist church.

The respondents also identified what makes bilingual preaching effective. This, they opined, is when both the speaker and the interpreter can speak both adopted languages. It is also effective because the two languages adopted

²¹ This is not an excuse, however, for not promoting an understanding and usage of local Nigerian languages. While there is an effort to help people enjoy their worship through bilingualism, a more needed effort is a campaign for worship and preaching in indigenous language, if colonial hegemony will not continue to be affirmed and Africa will not continue to bear the brunt of colonialism or neo-colonialism. This should be the subject of further research.

in the church are Yoruba and English which allows the preacher and interpreter to switch languages. The effectiveness of bilingualism in preaching is attributed to the fact that it aids the understanding of the message because if one misses what the preacher says, one can recover or get it from the interpreter's interpretation. Furthermore, it accommodates different tribes and cultures, responds to preacher's ability to code mix or code switch, and the preacher's competence and interpreter's skillfulness in communication. Lastly, it leads to increase in the church's population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The use of an interpreter is far preferred by the audience to code-mixing or code-switching; therefore a bilingual preacher should look for a suitable, eloquent and articulate interpreter to avoid the use of code mixing or code switching.
- ii. An interpreter should be trained either formally or informally in basic communication art in order to be better equipped and for the purpose of flowing with the preacher. Better still, it may be of greater advantage to use a person who has undergone Bible school or theological training.
- iii. Preachers should consider adopting bilingualism in preaching to make the church receptive to the people other than native language speakers of their domain.
- iv. A careful study of the congregation's tribal and cultural makeup should be carried out in order to choose what two languages will be suitable for bilingualism in preaching at a particular setting. At times, rather than a combination of a native and foreign language like Yoruba and English, it may have to be Yoruba and Hausa in some locations depending on the church's heterogeneous make up.
- v. Both the preacher and interpreter should be able or learn to speak the two adopted languages in bilingual preaching to allow for effective switching between the duo; and in case the interpreter is not given a precise interpretation, the preacher can then make corrections for effectiveness in bilingualism.
- vi. Since the interpretation of a sermon by an interpreter is a spontaneous action, the preacher who uses an interpreter should use simple vocabularies which an interpreter can easily find exact words to interpret or translate.
- vii. There should be a prior meeting, before appearing on the pulpit, between the preacher and the interpreter for prayer and to have a familiarization talk on the topic, text, content of the sermon and vocabularies to be used.
- viii. Due to cultural and language diversity in Nigeria, theological institutions in Nigeria should sensitise their students in Christian Preaching classes on the art of bilingualism in preaching by exposing them to forms, challenges and factors of effective bilingual preaching.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to evaluate if bilingualism is a better option to monolingual preaching and to discover what factors are responsible for bilingualism in preaching. It aimed at finding out how bilingualism will effectively fit into preaching in a heterogeneous culture, appraise how the use of bilingualism in preaching has solved language barrier in a heterogeneous congregation and identify the challenges that may affect effective use of bilingualism.

Bilingualism is discovered to be one of the most effective approach to preaching in any heterogeneous church gathering or community. It bridges language and intertribal barriers in the church. While code mixing or switching by the preacher could be adopted, involvement of an interpreter is found to be much more exciting and meaningful to the audience. There are challenges associated with bilingual preaching, but both the preacher and interpreter can work hard to take care of these challenges.

A study like this is not intended to disparage the call for proficiency in the use of indigenous language as instrument of worship and preaching. This should indeed be the direction of the African church as it seeks to reassert its originality and divorce itself from vestiges of colonialism, at the same time not forgetting its role within the realities of globalism and globalisation. This calls for further research.

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