

# **FULLER**

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## ***School of Intercultural Studies***

### **Dissertation Approval Sheet**

**This dissertation entitled**

**CONTEXTUALISED LANGUAGE CHOICE IN THE CHURCH IN  
KENYA**

**written by**

**John Ommani Luchivia**

**and submitted in partial fulfillment of the**

**requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Intercultural Studies**

**has been read and approved by the following members of the**

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**CONTEXTUALISED LANGUAGE CHOICE IN THE  
CHURCH IN KENYA**

By

John Ommani Luchivia

A Dissertation Presented to the  
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Requirements for the Degree  
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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the missiological opportunities, challenges and implications of growing multilingualism among people who are fluent in two or more languages. I look at the cognitive value of language and how languages shape people's world views. World views influence peoples' perceptions and way of processing and understand information. People's beliefs are reflected in their character and relationships in the community. Christians want to promote positive community relations in order for people to participate in the mission of God within their community.

I survey relevant literature on the role of language and its value, how language fits the plan of God, and its place in His mission to different peoples. I then survey current trends of language use and growing multilingualism, and the language practices within Kenya. I therefore focus on research factors behind language choice and use.

Methodologically, I use focus groups, participant observation, and personal interviews in four different socio-linguistic contexts in four different Christian denominations. I thematically analyse and code the data to establish my findings. The findings point to the factors that influence language choice.

Factors that determine choice of language go beyond the level of fluency in reading, speaking or understanding. These factors involve attitudes that go very deep in both positive and negative ways. Additionally, people's language choices are influenced

by other social factors. The factors include desire to communicate, social cultural pressure, economic advancement, political correctness, reading materials availability, leadership perception on language, institutional policy, religious values and proficiency in any given language. These factors were consistently displayed in all four research locations enabling me to demonstrate reliability of the data and validity of the findings.

Understanding how these factors influence people will assist Christians who desire to become good witnesses. To be witnesses, people need to be empowered. For purpose of language choice, all languages should be viewed as being appropriate for ministry. Language is a platform for effective participant contextualisation among the people of God. Through their actions and pronouncements people are able to utilize the multi-lingual environment of Kenya to better engage in mission and spread God's Word.

Mentor: R. Daniel Shaw

348 Words

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE DISCLAIMER**

I wish to inform the reader that I am writing in English as my third language. The reader may therefore find certain expressions that are a result of my worldview thinking and argument logic. I trust this will not hinder you to understand the point of the dissertation but give you a flavour of English language flexibility. Secondly, I am using UK English standard spelling. I appreciate the editorial assistance I have received from various individuals, but acknowledge that the responsibility for this work is entirely my own.

## **DEDICATION**

To my departed mother; Rhoda Ayuma who practiced teaching her  
children the commands of God,

To my wife Janet and our children Joy, Jed, and Jason who released me to  
undertake this study.

To God is the Glory.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to everyone who helped make this work a reality. Without the support of my family and many dear friends, workmates and scholars, my doctoral studies would not have been completed.

Special thanks go to my mentors, Wilbert Shenk, Elizabeth Glanville, Roberta King and Daniel Shaw. I also thank Sherwood Lingenfelter and his wife, Judith Lingenfelter who became my parents and hosts while on campus. I thank the all the members of cohort 10; Bettina Gottschlich, Andrew Mkwaila, John Clement, Richard Elofer, Robert Hamd, Rabih Sabra, Ted Vail, Rick McEdward and, George Butron who started with us but did not complete due to ministry demands but stayed in contact.

I am grateful to SIL International and Wycliffe Bible Translators, the organisations that took care of my financial costs and to my friends and workmates for their timely advice and moral encouragement. I wish to thank the various church leaders and members of the congregations that I undertook the research among: Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nairobi, Glory Tabernacle Church in Kilifi, St. Joseph Cathedral Diocese and Sawawa Kenya Assembly church in Kakamega.

I am very grateful to my research assistants, Carol and Elkana Kamau, John Magundo, Ayibu Omulanda, Janet Kayume, and Henry Isiongo. Without their help, it would have been impossible for me to make it to all the focus groups.

Last but not least, I am grateful to God for the opportunity to be called His child and take part in His work. I am thankful for the people whom He used to shape my life and guide my steps as I walked this road in seeking to recognise our linguistic uniqueness within the unity of the faith.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

MT	Native mother tongue language
LWC	Language of wider communication. In some cases people refer to this as lingua franca but for this paper will mean the language of wider communication, which is either English or Kiswahili or both.
SIL	In early writings this meant Summer Institute of Linguistics. With time, it has changed and the abbreviation has been retained because people are used to it but no longer carry the same meaning. This is therefore used here to refer to a linguistic organisation working among small languages to develop alphabets and translate the Bible as well as write other reading materials into those languages.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **CONSTRUCTING THE RESEARCH**

Within the Christian population of Kenya, many consider the Bible to be the main manual through which those who subscribe to the faith receive direction for their character and practice. Christians are expected to continually interact with the Bible on their own volition for personal growth and the good of the community. For groups that encourage people to use the Bible, all promotional programs are a response to the changing mission landscape in order to help the church stay relevant to emerging human needs. The patterns of Bible use, must be based on the Bible as its own authority as concerns its purpose and mission to humankind. As Christopher Wright has said, “Gods mission has many dimensions as we trace the theme of his saving purpose through the different strands of Scripture. But every dimension of that mission of God led inexorably to the cross of Christ. The cross was the unavoidable cost of God’s mission” (2006, 24). This statement has to be presented to Christians in a language relevant to them so that they can understand its impact. He summarises these as, “The God of mission, The People of mission, the arena of Mission, and the Bible and mission” at its centre” (Wright 2006, 26-32). Believers happen to be the main agents as ‘people of mission to carry out the mission of God. They need to be equipped and empowered for the mission. God’s mission is the source of mission, with Jesus Christ being the embodiment of mission. The Holy Spirit as the power of mission empowers the believers to carry out the mission’s mandate. The Church as the instrument of mission gives opportunity to all believers to take part in it, while Cultures are the context in which mission takes place. For this to

happen, the Bible which is in the centre of mission as its main reference manual has to be read or heard by all in a familiar language.

Bible translation movements worldwide seek to be a part of the empowering by ensuring the accessibility of the Word of God in people's heart languages: languages in which issues are better understood. How then should the church and various organisations carrying out scripture engagement demonstrate the nature of God who is reaching out to different groups of people in different places and different languages? This God speaks directly to His people without intermediaries. Wright has summarised it as follows, "The living Creator God of all flesh needs no permission, no translation, no cross-cultural contextualisation when he chooses to communicate with any person whom he has made in his own image" (2006, 422). If people can be presented with God and left to relate to Him directly, they will understand Him better. This happens within a language that captures the listeners heart and mind which is not necessarily mother tongue for people who are in multilingual contexts. My theory is therefore that people need to be provided an opportunity to hear and share the message of God using languages of the heart. This is language that goes beyond mother tongue. I suggest that we must look beyond the question of mother tongue, and ask what other factors influence the individuals' choice. There are over 6,912 living languages all over the world (SIL 2005). While some people speak only one language, other people are able to speak several languages. Some languages enjoy international status while others are only regional or limited to a few speakers. In most cases, those who are part of small languages are the ones who learn and speak multiple languages, often out of necessity. This has its advantages and disadvantages. How then should the church carry out its missiological mandate utilising the availability of several languages to further the purposes of God? This is not only a spiritual issue but also a cultural one, bearing on the modern day people

by reflecting on the way they live out the social, political, economical, and religious subsystems.

### ***Background of Researcher***

My interest in language and its use and impact on people's spiritual understanding, discipling, and ultimate impact has three sources of influence.

First, I grew up when divination in traditional religion was being practiced in my community, and the spiritual leaders always chanted in a language which participants could not understand. It was thought of as 'spiritual language' that only the leader could use to communicate with spiritual beings and translate the message to the people. In turn people acted in obedience to the leader probably without knowing why. They did it because they were told to and not because it had any significance to them, despite the fact that they were part of the socio-religious community.

At the same time, Christianity was beginning to spread and impact the community. One day my mother came back home with a copy of the small black book. The Word of God had come to us in our own language. Every evening she read a portion from this book in a language we spoke, and all of us present understood as if she was the one speaking to us. One evening remains very vivid in my mind to this day. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1979, my mother called us for prayer as she had always every other day. However, this time she spoke in a prophetic voice of which only she knew what was happening. She was very sick in her physical body and all of us knew it. No medication had been able to help. She read a portion and then prayed. She then handed me the book and said to us, "This is your inheritance". She then dismissed us to go and sleep without saying much. The following morning she went to be with the Lord. At this time in history, we were so poor that we daily depended on her to work for people to find food for us. Now all we were left with was the book; the New Testament in our mother tongue 'MT'. We

could not eat it. We however, started reading this book and it gave us direction in life. This happening shaped my character and passion for future ministry<sup>1</sup>. I learned and captured the value of understanding God's word for individuals.

The second influence on my life was my exposure to older Christians in my community who had been converted during the days of the famous East African Revival movement<sup>2</sup>. This group was primarily illiterate but was very effective in the use of mother tongue. They were so influential and contagious as witnesses of Jesus that their impact was present everywhere in the community.

While in college I participated in evangelising other communities. Most of the times we preached in English while the message was translated into the mother tongue. This had varying degrees of success, but I was able to see that God used us to reach out to His people even through a foreign language. I started realising it was not about language use but the message being shared that changed lives, although language played a role.

The third source is my involvement with Wycliffe Bible Translators. I have served for over eighteen years in different communities with different responsibilities working to provide God's Word in small languages. My service has not been in Kenya alone but across several countries in Africa. With time, I started asking myself how effective mother tongue may be among people who are multilingual. Most of these people are either fully or half fluent in many languages. In most of the communities, it was also those who seemed to speak languages of wider communication that were more evangelical and talked more about their faith.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Robert Clinton 1988, 57 describes how happenings in people's lives help shape their life and ministry and I strongly feel this is one of those moments for me.

<sup>2</sup>In early days of Christianity in sub Saharan Africa, those who became believers had the conviction that they needed to go to other tribes as witnesses. For example Ohenga Johana from Kenya who went to Congo, modern day Democratic Republic of Congo in 1910 (William Anderson 1977, 70). The result was a big revival that broke out in the late 1940s and the effects were felt into the mid 1970s.

This got me thinking of what would be the factors at play for the individual to decide to use a specific language for spiritual issues. The matter of choosing a language in which to communicate is apparently an issue for people who are mixed linguistically, depending on who is involved in the discussion. Language can be a two-edged sword in that on one hand it builds up while on the other hand it can destroy. The magic is concealed in the power of the human attitude and character, and intuition to know which language to use, when to use it, and how it enables effective communication.

### ***Purpose Statement***

The purpose of my study is to investigate and document the factors that influence choice of language for use among multilingual speakers within the Church in Kenya.

### ***Goal Statement***

The goal of my study is to present the church in Kenya with factors relating to choice of language among multilingual speaking church members and the resulting missiological implications for the church in Kenya. This will enable the church to put in place practical language choice and use strategies.

### ***Significance Statement***

The world and the church continue to become multilingual in nature due to several factors that cause people to migrate. Therefore through this study I hope that.

1. The findings will enable the church to come up with appropriate policy to allow and promote language choice that will empower people to use appropriate language as a missiological tool.
2. Bible translation organisations will be able to formulate and implement strategies that respond to feelings that lead multilingual people to make language choices they do. This will help the organisations to determine how

to empower people to have access and benefit from the Bible reading or hearing.

3. Bible colleges will begin considering how to equip the people they are training in order to take advantage of the opportunities multilingualism provides for ministry, in order to consider training pastors in a multilingual approach to sharing the Scriptures.

My hope is that this study will help Christians to recognise language as a gift from God. Further, I hope that Christians will recognise the demand placed on them to be faithful stewards of language and its use in order to further God's mission. I hope the result will be unity in diversity by helping people to know that each language has a contribution that will enable people to understand God better.

### ***Central Research Issue***

The central research issue is to discover factors that influence language of choice among multilingual speakers in the Church in Kenya.

### ***Research Questions***

Through this research, I will seek to find answers to the following questions.

1. How does intermixing of languages enable people to participate in church life?
2. What structures does the church have to empower people in order to help them make appropriate choices when deciding which language to use?
3. How do multilingual people choose languages of use?
4. How do multilingual speakers use different languages?
5. How does language used empower people to engage with Scripture?
6. How does the language of choice impact people's spiritual life?

### ***Definitions***

The key terms I will use in this paper with specific meaning to my work include the following:

1. Factors: This term will be used to refer to variables that determine how people choose one language over the other for use within their context.
2. Impact: This term is used to mean transformational experiences in the individual and the resulting involvement and influence in the community as a result of their applying the teachings of the Bible.
3. Scripture engagement: is the process that enables people to encounter God through personal, thoughtful interaction with God's Word so they may come to faith in Jesus Christ, grow in Christian maturity, and become both committed members of the Body of Christ and servants of a world in need<sup>3</sup>.
4. Ministry: I will use this term to refer to any activity Christians do in their endeavour to influence other people positively with the Good News.
5. Appropriate language: Refers to a language one is comfortable to communicate in.

### ***Delimitations***

I seek to look at how the use of many languages enhances individuals' understanding of scriptures and helps people to become more effective members of the community. This work is not about ethnocentrism or attitudes towards certain languages and communities. Neither is it about the quality of translation. It is about use of the Bible in languages an individual can speak, read and listen to in multilingual setting. My main criteria for choosing a research site was a church that had more than two languages represented either in the city or village and ministry was conducted in two or more languages, either in the same worship meeting or separately.

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<sup>3</sup> As defined by SIL Scripture engagement team 2012.

### ***Assumptions***

To determine the factors affecting language of choice I sought to find factors that lead people to choose specific language in specific circumstances. I sought to find how various languages enhance understanding. Thus I make the following assumptions.

1. Language is the basic tool for human interaction and knowledge sharing.
2. Translation in local languages is a process of contextualising the message.
3. Bible reading and hearing is a means for believers to grow spiritually and witness to other people.
4. In multilingual communities where many people are primarily oral communicators the mother tongue is the language of choice for many.

### ***Overview of the Dissertation***

In the Introduction I introduce the rationale for the study and give the layout of my research. This dissertation is presented in eight chapters. In Chapter 1 I present the socio-linguistic context in Kenya today and set the background for why the research is important. In Chapter 2 I present the literature review which informed my research design and theoretical construct.

In Chapter 3 and 4 I lay out the methodology used to collect and analyse data, and the findings that came out of the research. In Chapter 5 I present biblical foundations, and emerging theological issues, and missiological implications for the Church in Kenya that arise from the findings.

In Chapter 6 I present the missional factors derived from my findings and demonstrate why the Church in Kenya needs to live out the realities raised in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 7 enables me to present my recommendations based on the research and findings. I present a change model that I believe, if followed, will tremendously improve Scripture engagement in communities throughout Kenya.

In the Conclusion I demonstrate the value of my research and findings for clarifying both a leadership model and a change model that will help people in multilingual settings make informed choices concerning the language of use. I will present the value of variety of choices for multilingual speakers. This has both biblical and missional implications as suggested by my significance statement.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE SOCIAL-LINGUISTIC CONTEXT: KENYA IN TRANSITION

In this chapter I will present the country context and the linguistic shift that Kenya is operating under from the time when missionaries came until now. This will help my reader understand why I found this research necessary within the Kenyan church.

#### *Country Background*

History books about Kenya show that the people who form the state of Kenya came from several parts of Africa and settled in specific regions due to their lifestyle or socio-economic factors. Later on the Arabs came followed by the Europeans, during the scramble for Africa. It was then colonised by the British. The first missionaries came early in the 1840s (Osotsi Aloo Mojola 1999, 1-3).

Kenya gained its independence from the British colonial government in December, 1963. As a country, Kenya has changed tremendously--geographically, economically, socially and religiously --since the arrival of the first missionaries.

Kenya has a total of fifty three<sup>1</sup> spoken languages, and out of these, at least eighteen have either the whole or part of the Bible. The church in Kenya has endeavoured to see to it that as many people as need the Word of God in the language that speaks to them best, have it. Diverse ethnic cultures have produced a vibrant community that like any other has its challenges. Some of these challenges are linguistic in nature as people seek to understand and to be understood when they interact. Most communities can only

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<sup>1</sup> Bible Translation and Literacy; Kenya, promotion materials <http://www.btlkenya.org> accessed 20<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Map 1 presents the details of the languages.

access the whole Bible through Kiswahili and English, of which a majority in the communities may be illiterate in or not very fluent. Therefore, multilingualism is growing very fast, especially in towns.

The people of Kenya overwhelmingly voted in a new constitution of the Republic of Kenya which the people voted for overwhelming on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2010, which was ratified by the president on 27<sup>th</sup> August of that same year. According to the new constitution, English and Kiswahili are Official and National languages respectively. What is more, Chapter 2 subsection 7 of the constitution states;

The state shall, (a) Promote and protect the diversity of language of the people of Kenya; and (b) Promote the development and use of indigenous languages, Kenyan sign language, Braille and other communication formats and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities (Republic of Kenya 2010, 14).

This means that the state would endeavour to enable people to use their native languages in addition to the lingua franca of English or Kiswahili for purposes of communication. One way for this to happen is to foster an environment where people are trained to read and write their mother tongue. People will be encouraged to use it and no longer define who they are by their language of choice. They will become proud of the language and linguistic communities they belong to. That the government will enable people to make their native languages be of choice is yet to be seen since experience on the ground since late 1970s demonstrate quite the contrary. There are no resources to facilitate development of reading materials in native languages and the logistics of identifying teachers and sending them to their rural homes appears to segregate others (Nabea Wendo 2009, 121-138).

The early missionaries to Kenya recognised the value of mother tongues in spreading the gospel. They taught people to read their own mother tongue, and were themselves expected to learn these languages in order to evangelise. The missionaries

undertook the learning of the local languages and carried out the work of translation. The missionaries recognised the value of Scripture translation into local languages as soon as they started work in the newfound lands. Translation into MT started with Ludwig Krapf in 1844 (Mojola 2006, 1315). The translations brought about tremendous changes within the community. The extent of these changes varies regionally within the country. However, as times have changed the use of the Bible in local languages needs to be evaluated in light of new trends of migrations and linguistic change in every community.

Learning to read and write the local language was so much a part of the teaching that Christians received, people began to refer to them as “readers” (William B. Anderson 1977, 112-117). Reading the mother tongue as a subject was taught alongside the lingua franca and both contributed to the growth of the church. This growth came about as the natives who became believers started going out to evangelise people who were their neighbours. The believers were the early teachers in schools and one of the main texts for reading was the Bible. Many other people also read the Bible on their own and responded to the message of the Good News. The Bible reading and hearing in mother tongues contributed to the growth of the Church in the early days. The converts later on learned English and Kiswahili and received more new knowledge. The new languages brought with them knowledge and power. The mother tongues were seen as languages for those who were yet to embrace the new linguistic power.

Politically, socio-economically, and religiously English and Kiswahili have become the key to power and success enabling trading across linguistic boundaries within the region but may not take the role of the mother tongues. “English as additional language is more learned than used and more used than liked” (Joshua A. Fisherman 1989, 254). This social, economical, and political use of languages of wider communication is the most notable change that stands out.

In the early days of independence, the education system had a lesson for teaching how to read and write local languages at the lower primary school level. Learning materials were therefore developed in several languages. Economically this was not viable. Also practically, teachers who were from other regions could not teach languages in other communities, so the project became unsustainable and was dropped in most parts of the country. As a result Kiswahili and English became the entry language for learning in all schools.

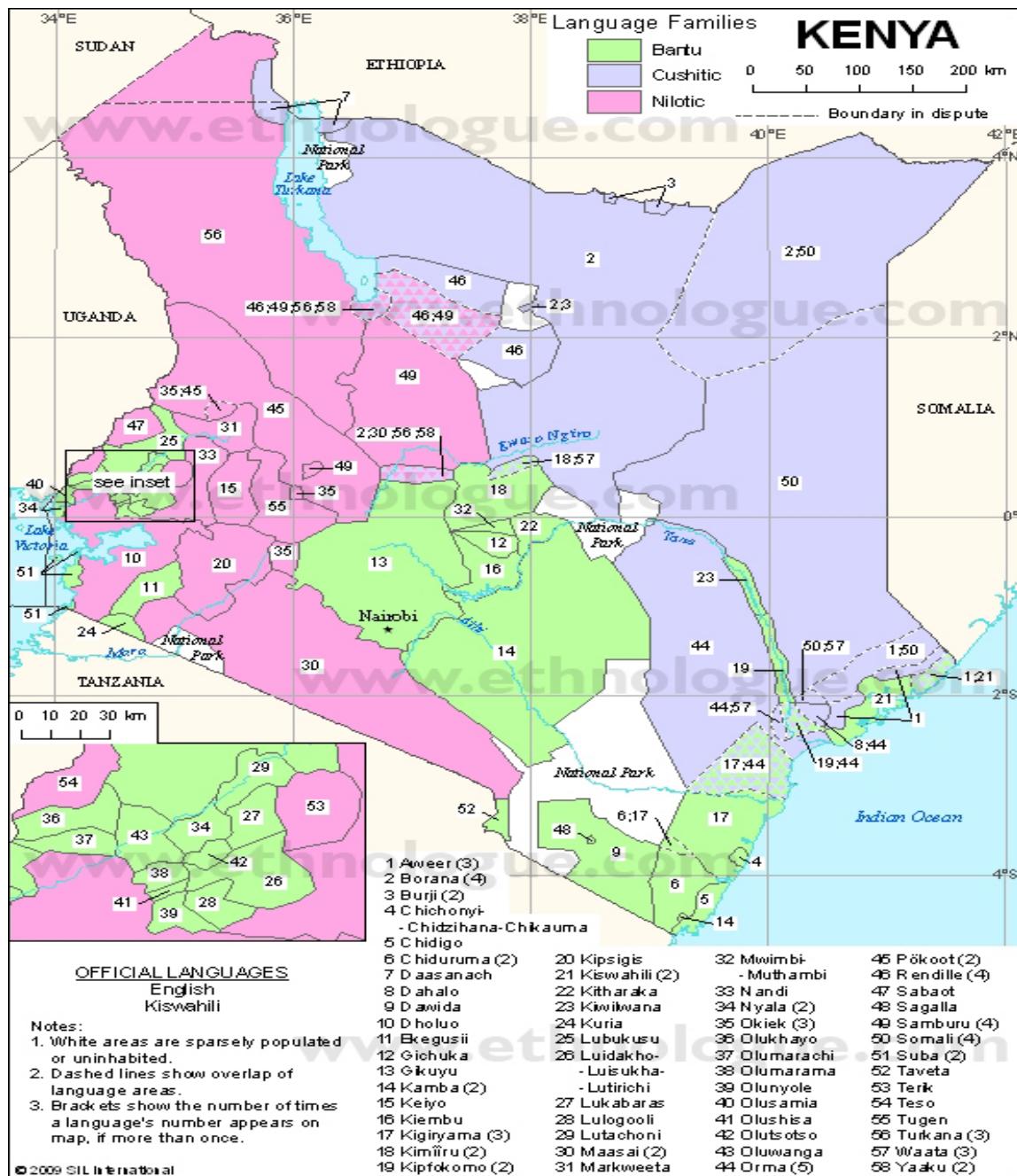
### **Language Politics in Kenya**

The colonial authority realised earlier on in history that language situation was a complicated, difficult one, which needed careful handling. By the early 1900, it had been decided that Kiswahili should be promoted as the national language for nation building. Their view was to establish a nation that is united. Use of one language was seen as a strong means of destroying tribalism and uniting the people. Mother tongues were seen to be leading to division that hampered development, so with time it was later disallowed for use in schools. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania used this view to enforce Kiswahili in the country and many leaders in the region looked to him as an example. Kenya adopted both English and Kiswahili as languages of wider communication ‘LWC’. They are national and official languages respectively. This decision was made in order to avoid any of the vernacular languages being considered superior to others.

Establishing English and Kiswahili as the “official” languages of Kenya created a feeling of language inferiority among some. Those who spoke their mother tongue in school were punished in front of other children. This view of the mother tongues was seen by people who support the use of local languages as colonisation of the mind (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1986). Now the same negative attitude is held by the native speakers today in the name of modernisation.

In recent times, as people move to towns, languages of wider communication have become the media of communication within the cities. Churches operate in such an environment and have to remain relevant too. Languages of wider communication are used in public. However, when people from same linguistic community meet, no matter how learned they are, the tendency to speak in the native mother tongue is prevalent. This fall back to the native languages is a common phenomenon. The demographic of language use in Kenya shows that before colonial times, the mother tongue was used in the home while regional dialects were used for trade within the region. Later the colonial government introduced and enforced Kiswahili as lingua franca for purposes of administration.

Whatever was western in terms of education, commerce, religion and even language were presented as superior to the indigenous alternative. This is what Paul Hiebert calls, the “...superiority of western cultures” (1987, 104), This lead people to look at their native language as inferior and tended to identify with the people whose language they use as observed by Nyaga (2005, 54). It is important to note that with time, there are those in Kenya born within cities that view English or Kiswahili as their MT. On the other hand, there are those who do not have an opportunity to become fluent in any language of wider communication. Various languages have continued to exist and people can use them as they find appropriate within their social meetings. These would be considered to be same in all social settings including the Church.



## MAP 1

## KENYA LANGUAGE SPREAD

Source: Ethnologue 2002

## Code Switching

Due to the existence of many languages in one place and the desire to communicate effectively to all who speak the languages, in certain circumstances there is a considerable amount of code switching<sup>2</sup>. As a result, another language is slowly but surely developing which people refer to as “*Sheng*<sup>3</sup>”, a mixture of English, Swahili and any other native language one speaks. Words are carefully joined as appropriate. The language structures follows after the local form. Language is more than words, so there is a hidden culture and transfer of culture in the words being used. Words communicate more than the intended meaning. Many Kenyans are now attempting to use *Sheng* as a developing language. Use of ‘*Sheng*’ is very prevalent in social places and not in the church although it seems to be gaining ground in some churches. The use of sheng in the church is gaining favour because there is a conscious knowledge on the speakers that they need to communicate effectively. Christians need to embrace the use of this developing language. Some of the people within the church, although they may communicate in English, may not be fluent enough, to deduce meaning from certain vocabulary.

The church, within the city needs to find ways of promoting the use of all the languages which are available to the majority of the people. In doing so, the church will enable people to benefit spiritually, just as they benefit in social issues through use of several languages. This would include emphasising the use of one’s mother tongue when appropriate. By appropriate, I mean that the speaker is comfortable to speak and another person will translate for others, or that all those present can understand without needing a translation. When leaders use their mother tongue in public effectively, it portrays a

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<sup>2</sup>Code switching is a term used in social linguistics when multilingual speakers choose to change from one language to another within the same context, in order to have access to the appropriate lexicon. In such situations, the speaker is aware that the hearers understand the languages being used for communication

<sup>3</sup>*Sheng* is a mixture of as many available local languages as possible with English, Kiswahili and other local languages. However, there is not just one version of *Sheng*. Rather, it is as diverse as the regions in Kenya where it is spoken, and the social and age groups who use it. Therefore, *Sheng* continues to mutate and never standardise. Map one show the various languages of Kenya.

positive value of the language and gives support for choice of the language for use. However, when leadership portrays an image of MT not being worthy to be used, people shun from the mother tongues. Lack of use results leads the leaders to ask missiological questions that have linguistic implications on how the church is ministering to people (McKinney 1990, 279-280).

Due to the preceding changes, there is a need to document how much people understand. Otherwise, those who may not be very fluent may be losing out in understanding the gospel message in this multilingual setting. Communication demands that people be able to understand concepts with little strain. The understanding is enhanced as they engage their brains with little effort. The brain engages better when the benefits outweigh the cost of processing the message. “Processing effort is a negative factor: other things being equal, the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance” (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 124).

### **Church Setting and Language Use**

Most believers in churches in towns in Kenya have come from the rural villages as adults, and their native language is what some people may consider the heart language. When some of these people go back to the villages, they want to use more than one language as a sign of changed status or for some other reason. For most of them, English and Kiswahili were languages of the school.

Most of these people grew up when Kiswahili was viewed negatively in certain parts of the country. It was seen as a language of conmen who wanted to hide their identity from the masses so as to commit felony.

There is now another category of those born within cities who regard English or Kiswahili as their mother tongue, and rightfully so. Interestingly, this group still

identifies with local ethnic or tribal communities. Therefore, language cannot be used as a marker for ethnic identity.

In recent days, there are a number of local FM radio stations in specific languages. Besides there are cultural nights organised where people from given linguistic communities come to have an experience of the community life in the city. Many people from other communities attend these cultural nights and find no offense but pleasure and acceptance. As it has been in the past, people are appreciating each other's culture and language. All these many languages have continued to coexist and those who understand and speak these languages choose to use them as they find appropriate within their social meetings. I will seek to explore factors that necessitate the phenomenon of choice of language and what the perceived practical benefits are for the choices made.

### ***Population Studied***

The research population involved four different denominations of the church; a Pentecostal church in town of Kilifi within the coast region of Kenya, a Presbyterian church of East Africa in Nairobi, a Catholic church and a Pentecostal church in Kakamega from Western Kenya<sup>4</sup>. The two churches in Western Kenya were fifty kilometres apart. Both Western Kenya and Kilifi were at least 450 Kilometres away from Nairobi. The distance presented some challenges but the joy was the anticipation of what the data findings would reveal. The only common denominator was that these churches were multilingual in setting and had scripture in at least three of the native languages represented.

Those who took part in the research were members of these particular congregations irrespective of the language in which they choose to hear the word of God.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Tables 1 and 2 on pages 34 and 36 for details of the number of people involved and the different linguistic speech communities.

I chose to look at all the four congregations as one church; the body of believers. As shown earlier in introduction chapter, my assumption, for language of choice for Bible reading or hearing is a fact that applies to most Christians who are multilingual. It is a factor that cuts across denominational differences although it may play itself out differently among different denominations.

Assumptions are taken to apply to a cross section of respondents. It is a common theory in social sciences. This theory is referred to as nomothetic (Graham Gibbs 2009, 5). The difference in its display is what could be looked at as the behavioural component of attitude. It can be different among people of the same denomination within the same locality as well. The population sample was taken from school children to the oldest person who was available.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter, I have attempted to describe the language scenario in Kenya and how people are navigating it today. These growing trends need to be looked at in the light of globalisation and migrations. The spread and growth of FM stations in local languages is something to be studied to document the drive and dynamics of how the people are doing as they navigate the language scenario in Kenya.

In the next chapter, I present the available literature I surveyed to inform my research questions and design.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

Here I present the literature review that informed this research. I will present this material focusing on communication and transformation, language and spiritual experience, expressing shared experience, seeking fresh experience, language and identity, language mutating trends, enriching understanding, and universal gospel in village language. Finally I will look at what available literature about multilingualism points to.

In this chapter I seek to help my readers' link what is happening in my context as demonstrated in the previous chapter with the observed language of choice and use trends. Through the survey of available literature, I will determine the gaps within my context, for which more research is necessary.

#### *Communication and Transformation*

People give or receive information in order to confirm or dispel certain views. This is what relevance theory presents (Sperber and Wilson 1995; Hill 2000). The application of gained knowledge brings transformation. This could be individual or communal transformation. Transformation comes when people acquire the correct knowledge. People want to understand God and His teaching. When people do not understand the Bible in their heart language, there is no way for them to gain full knowledge of God's truth. The people remain, as most have always been, piecing together a Western grown Christianity that neither matches nor responds to their

questions, nor addresses their cultural issues. The result is a lack of understanding due to the language barrier. Change happens very slowly and even an outside appearance of change often contradicts the inward experience. Consequently, the church remains weak. But then what is heart language? There are times when people who understand and speak more than one language may benefit from thinking through certain issues in one of the many languages. It is possible that even people who are multilingual may understand and express certain ideas in each language slightly differently. The use of different languages will definitely aid their understanding of certain spiritual concepts. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 13:12 that those who have will gain more seem to work in this linguistic context. Those who understand more languages will have a better chance to gain more culturally and spiritually from the Word of God.

Scripture shared, understood and applied in any language brings change that contributes to church growth. It is however evident that when it is done in the mother tongue, the growth is faster, deeper and wider (Anderson 1977; John Karanja 1999; Ype Schaaf 1994, 183). Karanja has very convincing evidence of how the Church among the Kikuyu people grew when Scriptures became available in the local language and people engaged with it after reading (1999, 153-156). This freedom to engage, to acquire religious knowledge and release from traditions and mission centre teaching of the time led to church growth.

In places where the Word of God remained completely foreign due to lack of Bible translation in native language that the Church either did not grow or was very weak. This was witnessed in most parts in North Africa (Calvin E. Shenk 1993). With emphasis on use of mother tongue, it is assumed that people understand God's Word better and therefore find transformation as they begin to internalise the teachings from the Bible.

In Kenya, life revolves around social groups. However, other aspects of community are shaped by many factors like class. Language is not just for communication. It defines social groups and determines events and situations in which people take part. Fasold has observed, “Language is a guide to social reality” (1990, 50). Although life in Kenya seems to be changing very fast, there is a part of people’s lives that is still controlled by social rules of which, language plays a big role. Language shapes and develops people’s worldview.

### ***Language and Spiritual Experience***

All languages have equal value as far as usage and transfer of meaning is concerned, however small the sphere of use maybe. For religion all languages are capable of communicating the concepts of God in their respective socio-linguistic contexts.

Language of worship shapes how people interpret spirituality and live their faith. Christian experience should bring about transformation in the individual. The transformation is reflected in numerical growth and quality of life among the Christians. Church growth could be measured by membership, Bible study attendance, prayer meeting attendance, how often people refer to scripture in their normal casual talk, witness to others about Christ and how the church trains people for evangelism (McGavran and Arn 1974). Measuring spiritual growth in a context that is highly religious is not a straight forward. I will seek to know how language of choice has contributed to spiritual growth.

### ***Seeking Fresh Experience with God***

Corporate and individual learning helps to inform and bring change to people. People take part in devotion because they want to gain information and grow. Devotion or worship at church is not just an exercise to pass time. People engage in it because they

want to have a fresh experience with God and become transformed, and not remain conformed to their present state. Unless learning brings change, then it is a waste of time (Parry and Gregory 1998, 10). Learning equips people to solve the problems they face. It is therefore important that people who have spent time reading the Bible are able to find spiritual solutions and have the confidence that God is with them as promised in His word.

This is not always so in the church in Africa. The church is growing in numbers, but when faced with problems that need prayer, church members will seek the pastor at the middle of the night because they think God only hears the pastor. This teaching comes from their traditional teachings following cultural practices that have shaped community beliefs and values. The teachings have been presented in the mother tongue. The new teaching in English and Kiswahili have not helped them comprehend that all believers have the power to ask and are priests who can go to God without needing a second mediator. If ministry in English and Kiswahili would be reinforced with ministry in mother tongues as a shared language for some, it may help some members to discuss and get a better understanding of the teaching. This has to be done in a context where the listener is able to infer the correct meaning from what is said. Communication that does not transfer information remains as an un-cracked egg. No one can eat and enjoy it no matter how sweet and nutritious it may be. It has no effect to anyone. The language that is used should be one that transfers the information and makes it easy for the listener to process the meaning.

### **Expressing Shared Experience**

As much as English and Kiswahili languages have been instrumental in the spread of the Gospel especially among the young and elite, to some degree it has caused the Church's teaching to remain foreign concepts, such that they are not relevant to people

who are not fluent enough in these languages. Therefore, there is need to teach people with the aim of helping them understand. This means choosing the appropriate language for the audience. If this is not taken care of, many come to church, listen to the Word but go away with little understanding of the Good News. As a result many lapse back to what they know in their traditional religion. This religion is practiced in the mother tongue and it is better analysed in the language of the heart. Only true and biblical theologising will transform people's world views and values.

Failure to theologise and engage people within their world view cause some to practice double faiths; traditional and Christian faith. "The failure to understand folk religions has been a major blind spot in missions, and is, in part, the cause for the split-level Christianity found around the world" (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tinenou 1999, 29). Use of the mother tongue in theologising helps people understand and reduce chances of syncretism. Language is the medium through which people express their experience.

Through language people gain new information. The language one learns as a child has a big role to play in the way the brain develops. Philip N. Johnson-Laid (2003b, 41) says, "language limits our worlds". This causes people to do things in a certain way because their world is as wide as the language knowledge received and shared. When people do not understand key concepts because of the language they are using, they struggle to know what is expected of them in terms of response. The easy way out is to ignore the whole message or get what is perceived as surface meaning whereby the main message is lost.

Failure to understand the Good News well because of the language used, affects the faith and growth of the people. When learners cannot make sense of what they hear, and link the words with what they know, they ignore the new information (Sylvia Scribner and Michael Scribner and Cole 1981, 239). Communicators have therefore to

find ways of retaining their listeners so that they may communicate meaningfully. Use of multiple languages would aid listeners to understand better.

### ***Language and Identity***

In Africa, as may be the case elsewhere, people feel a sense of belonging when they hear their language spoken, especially when they are in an unfamiliar setting. This sense of identifying with and feeling as one with others is part of a spiritual experience that people seek. Kwame Bediako gives examples of such language use among the Akan and Twi of Ghana (2000, 8-9). When people use a shared language which has been developed in their upbringing and has shaped the way in which they view the world, it is easy for them to look at new concepts and deduce meaning that is relevant to them. They can then together think of how to apply the new concept to their situations. In fact, Carolyn Saarni (1999, 132), seems to indicate that language helps to develop personality and identity which then guides people in linking actions and events, individuals and emotions.

Studies on how the brain works show that people learn best from shared knowledge. What they learn in adulthood is separated from what they learned in native language as children (Souza 2001, 182). The developed brain capacity determines how people apply the acquired information. In this context language is useful when people comprehend knowledge to solve their daily challenges (Parry and Gregory 1998, 10). People with a shared background and language find it easy to engage and help one another, socially and spiritually. Churches are beginning to take this very seriously. In order to promote people's cultural expressions in a way that is consistent with God's Word, some churches schedule times when songs are sung in several languages, and cultural days and other cultural activities are organised. This leads people to appreciate their own and other peoples' cultures. It also equips people to be witnesses among their

own kin who may not hear the message any other way. Indeed, the work of the pastor is to equip the people for the work of God according to Ephesians 4: 12.

### *God's Language*

The landscape in which language is used is rapidly changing with globalisation. More and more people are learning and becoming fluent in more than one language. The gospel too is becoming part of every community as its message is translated. The God introduced by the missionaries was for a long time a foreign God. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and not one of our ancestors. This God spoke and could only be spoken to in a foreign language: English. The language communicated foreign concepts and demands. In Kenya, English is no longer a foreign language to many but one of their heart languages. It is their second or third<sup>1</sup> mother tongue. For the people like me who belong to this category, reading the Bible in each language enriches understanding of Scripture.

William Cameron Townsend as a young man went to sell Spanish Bibles to the Cakchiquel people in Guatemala in 1917-18. They told him, "If your God is so great, why does He not speak our language?" (SIL 1999; Smalley 1998, 677). He abandoned his attempts to sell Bibles and began living among the Cakchiquels in order to translate a Bible for them in their mother tongue. Today, there may be some among the Cakchiquels who consider both Spanish and English as their heart languages.

The Gospel has been presented and accepted in the Kenyan community. Those who have accepted the message need to be discipled. The church has to do the discipling through Kenyan languages, of which English has become one of the languages. God is now presented to people in every way possible so that people can understand His

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<sup>1</sup> Some people will argue that it is not possible for someone to have more than one mother tongue. I think for me definition of a mother tongue for a person is based on the level of proficiency and fluency the person has in the language. However, this is not my subject for now.

teaching better. When people learn a language, it comes with cultural elements that are part of it. These people then begin to operate in new social and cultural dimensions that have to be considered when communicating to them. Tippet says,

If the gospel is to be universal and eternal, it must have the ability to operate in all kinds of social structures. It must speak to the national situations of all kinds of communities at each period of history and be meaningful within the limitations of all social units (1970, 28).

Christians should understand who they are, what they believe in, and are able to explain why they believe and share the good news with others. They should be able defend and explain their actions from what the Bible says. By this, I do not mean to propose that members should be disrespectful to leadership or should not follow in the leaders' vision and teaching, but the Scripture has to be above any human authority. In times of hardships, Christians who do not fully understand what they believe and why they believe can easily be led astray. Many Christians in Africa have been parrots for far too long. They cannot defend what they believe and give an answer to those who question their faith and position. This is the situation that some theologians have referred to in a very common dictum that, "the church in Africa is an inch deep and a mile wide". This is better put by Adeyemo in the introduction to the African Bible Commentary in which he justifies why Christian leaders and theologians thought of putting the commentary together. He says,

They recognised that the Church in Africa was a mile long in terms of quantity, but only an inch deep in terms of quality. The Bible needed to be interpreted and explained to the people in familiar language, using colloquial metaphors, African thought-forms and nuances, and practical applications that fitted the African context. After all, God is closer to the people when he speaks their language as St. Augustine of Hippo once said (2006, viii).

Several passages in Bible<sup>2</sup> record when leaders had to send messages in the language of a specific people. The church has the privilege and opportunity to help people hear God's Word in their heart languages. Language choice and use policy has to be promoted by the leadership. Both mother tongues and languages of wider communication have the potential to unlock many human minds as to the importance of communicating the message effectively.

### ***Language Shift in Urban Areas***

The challenge of illiteracy and language use is growing in the city as more and more people come in to seek for jobs. These migrations of people bring with it communication dilemma. On one hand is the desire to communicate in appropriate language and on the other hand wanting not to be seen as tribal by using any of the available mother tongues. Even if the minister is fluent in any one mother tongue, they want to remain neutral. In such situations English or Kiswahili becomes the obvious choice. This negates the principle of communication which is to transfer information with the aim to be understood. However, there are examples where several languages and linguistic communities can have services at different times for the glory of God. There are models that have worked. The church has to be innovative and have programmes that different people will belong. "We need churches today that function like hospitals and supermarkets and police stations. They have to be open twenty-four hours, which means we need day pastors and night pastors all speaking different languages" (Conn, Ortiz, and Baker 2002, 36). For the Kenya church context, it may mean several services at different days or time of the day.

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<sup>2</sup> Some examples where we find reference to different languages in order to communicate include Ezra 4:7, 10:3, Nehemiah 8:8-9, John 19:19-20, Acts 2:8, 21:40, 26:14. The various languages were used to enable people to understand the message.

Asking relevant questions as to how the church can do mission in a manner that glorifies God in the context of multilingualism will help leaders to decide on future strategies. World trends are changing, and “the once common homogenous populations now face issues of multiculturalism little known in previous generations” (Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnel 2005, 55). The church seeks to reach people of all social levels and linguistic backgrounds so that they are discipled to be witnesses. New ways of doing missions within the challenges that arise will enable the church to remain relevant. To have effective focused missions, the church should ask relevant questions that result in effective strategies concerning language choice. Language choice should lead to better comprehension of the message by the listeners. This kind of understanding is referred to as dynamic equivalence (Nida and Taber 2003). The listeners hear and feel same weight of the message as those who heard it first. However, this theory as much as it added a lot of value to translation, it almost negates the social and cultural world people operate in and reduce communication to words and meaning (Hiebert 2009, 96). Besides language choice, the way ministry is done has to consider the context that people live in.

### ***Diverse Expression***

In any given culture, people refer to things with specific vocabulary that has unique implication to them. Alec Bassom considers language to be “the expressive part of culture” (2006, 29) and the main tool through which the human being is developed and reflects on life issues. Why should language be the ‘expressive part of culture’? People mostly express their cultural values and demonstrate why they do what they do through language. However, we do know that music and art is another strong way people express their culture. Biblical contextualisation in a given culture has to take place in the context of the culture and consider all this aspects of culture; the heart language, music and art. This process of contextualisation will help the people reflect positively on what takes

place within the cultural and social setting. Contextualisation has the listener in mind considers the language of choice. Without considering language, the story of how God has revealed Himself to other people is not heard. The church in Africa has an opportunity to minister to people of different cultures, traditions and linguistic settings daily. As everywhere else, the church operates in “diversity of languages” (Milne 2007, 100). The diversity that exists offers a unique opportunity for ministry for the church. When believers accept this diversity they learn how to appreciate the differences that come from other linguistic and cultural communities. In such manner, they express true love for one another, including those perceived to be enemies. The Bible tells us in Revelation 7:9 that there will be people from every, nation, tribe, and language standing before the Lamb. The beauty of diversity will be crowned and displayed before God forever in worship.

When people take the Bible message to be authentic, they will obey the message and be witnesses within their locality. The Bible states that people need to seek God within the geographical area they live in. They can only do so in the language or languages God has given them. A study done among the Luhya people of Western Kenya showed that it is possible to be diverse linguistically and co-exist harmoniously (Rachel Agongo Kanyoro 1983). The attitude of belonging and knowing that one person is different from other people brings richness within the culture and community that is also expressed in worship. People come to know that they are all children of God but each child is different in the way they do things. They learn to appreciate each other as they are; knowing that God values each one equally.

### ***Which Way***

From Chapter 1, one can see that my context as a community has both oral and literate speakers. Most people will become more multilingual orally. Most can speak their

native mother but cannot read it. So they will be more comfortable reading Scriptures in LWC and explaining it in MT. This should be encouraged as long as it helps promote understanding. This may be one reason why there is a surge of music in local languages and FM radio stations. People enjoy listening to their languages. However, it is recognized that multilingualism is continuing to grow as, "...in monolingual village the school system introduces national languages and therefore promotes multilingualism" (Gottschlich-Modibale 2012, 23). In certain communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, people who are monolingual have little knowledge of basic Scriptural concepts as was the case of Jju people in Nigeria (McKinney 1990, 283). This would scare off those who want to make a policy in favour of native MT as it would not be expected to bear much fruit. It therefore would appear the only way to go is multilingualism. With or without policy language choice is drifting that way. As much as this is what is happening, native MT is not going to die easy. Growth of multilingualism and seeming understanding of certain concepts in those languages does not mean lack of use of MT. The scale may keep shifting for some time, especially with the older and rural generations.

The situation will keep shifting among the old and rural generation due to language attitudes. Factors creating the attitudes include, "existence of multilingualism, dominance of official colonial languages, official neglect of indigenous languages by the leaders, link with colonial nations, existing socio-political network, and growing pan-Africanism", according to (Adegbija 1994, 14-15). It can only be hoped that these factors will change as people continue to migrate and intermingle as a result of globalization and its demands. Urban dwellers who are fast being globalized seem to be having their attitudes shaped positively towards multilingualism. The challenge is to remove the stigma that. Lack of resources to develop the writing systems for local languages to be used in education has caused the languages to be considered incapable and undeveloped so they are not used in Education. Education becomes a killer of native languages.

“Foreign languages have been assigned this role and the expense of native languages” (Adegbija 1994, 114). This can lead to a complex sociolinguistic situation which has to be navigated with care.

As much as people are drifting towards multilingualism, native languages have a role they play and this will remain for a long time to come. Key among them according to Angelina Kioko and Margaret Muthwii is that it, “gives a user a sense of security and confidence” (2004, 47). As much as LWC gives people social, academic and economic class, MT has a major role it plays, that of self confidence. In fact Felix Banda reflecting on his situation in South Africa says for East Africans, “Positive attitude towards English and Kiswahili does necessarily translate into negative attitudes towards African languages” (Muthwii and Kioko 2004, 29). This means that the languages will continue to co-exist as each has a role and function in the ‘language ecosystem’ of community. Languages are basically carriers of inter and intra community communication to build cohesion. As much as we have a growing number of local FM stations, Paul Musau has observed that there is a growing bias in favour of English even on the local language FM stations (Muthwii and Kioko 2004, 63). This language choice scenario has been established over time through history and cannot be reversed overnight, the church therefore needs to prepare to minister effectively in a growing multilingual context.

The above situation leads to the issue of language of choice being a matter of local practice and individual preference. A midst all the growing multilingualism and language policy setting, each context regulates itself as the people find it appropriate to use and be served by a given language in a transformational and positive manner. Looking at language as a local practice means that we have to consider factors within the locality of the speakers that determine how the people use language. These could be negative as well as positive factors or may be external factors influencing language

choice and use. Due to migrations, multilingualism is a factor that any given locality and the speakers must respond to it by having to choose a language based on several factors.

There is a relationship between language choice and the world around the speaker. The surrounding will always have some influence on language choice and use. “Language practices are much more than simply using given languages in context” (Pennycook 2010, 108). To this extend, language is used to shape values and morals, guide community decision and transform lives of individuals and communities. Therefore language choice should be a matter of that which will build confidence in the speaker, inspire people to take action, and result in shared understanding in the manner people relate. Then legislation or policy will cease to be an issue but what language performs at local level that counts. To this end, Pennycook sees language as, “A product of the deeply social and cultural activities in which people engage” (2010, 1).

The above situation leads to language as an identity tag. Some people are of the view that language choice defines who someone is in the world. Carmen Llamas and Dominic Watt says, “In reality, our very sense of who we are, where we belong, and why, and how we relate to those around us, all have language at their centre” (2010, 9). However, in modern day, there are many things that could identify and define who one is. A multilingual speaker may choose a given language not to identify with a group but to exclude themselves from another group. This means the person will therefore will be identifying with a certain social group. True, a language one speaks gives them identity. However, both language and Identity are always changing as people move around and find more things that define who they are other than just language. People now belong to more social groups based on education, economy, job, dress, food, religion, urban or rural setting and many more criteria. As observed by Tope Oponyi in Nigeria, “In Sub-Saharan Africa, multilingualism is the increasing new linguistic identity” (Llamas and Watt 2010, 244-245). This situation at times results in code switching. Norman Mendoza and Dana

Osborne, say, “language choice and code switching is a result of, brought-along meaning and brought-about meaning’ approaches” (Llamas and Watt 2010, 115). It means every language has some new meaning it brings along with its use. This may be due to the cultural meaning or connotation each language has. It also means, every time another language is used or code switching takes places, it generates new meaning. The participants have to be in a position to understand this new brought along and brought about meanings to be able to act upon the message. One’s identity is therefore not just in the language choice but the meaning transferred through use of that language. It demands proper and good navigation of language policy and use.

This navigation becomes complex for education policy makers in a multilingual education system. In most cases, policy setters allow the language usage to determine its own course. In that situation, silence seems to promote multilingualism while putting the native languages to the periphery. We need a fresh look at language policy. Currently, “Language policy is conceived as a response to a problem” (Helot and Laoire 2011, xiv). This should not be so. Not making a policy is a saying something for the one being used and against the one not being used. It will be best for a policy that promotes positive multilingual use to be put in place. By saying the above statement Helot seems to suggest that a policy is not easy so the users make their own choice. In other words a policy in place is likely to fail as people may not always go by it.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter, I have looked at literature on language and communication. I have sought to find out from available literature how people in multilingual settings use language in general and specifically in religious experience. I sought to consider expected results of reading or hearing Scripture in any given language. I have looked at what current literacy on multilingual says. It is simply a growing trend that no one knows when

it will stop. People have to prepare to live with it and practise it positively to enrich each others understanding.

Out of the literature, drawn mainly from relevance theory, I formulated my six research questions that I hope will enable me to find adequate data to shed more light on this subject through the methodology I present in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

In the preceding chapter I presented the theoretical assumptions that guide this study. Additionally, I provided an integrated literature review that established a framework for the study. Through the review, it is evident that there are a number of factors that determine choice of language use in a multilingual setting. Multilingualism has either grown due to certain limitations of the local language or global realities of modern day trends. Despite the changing contexts, there are certain realities that remain constant according to the role of language and a people's worldviews. In this chapter, I present the value of specific research methods and why certain ones were chosen for this study. My research seeks to understand worldviews, attitudes and motives behind language choice and use so my techniques were bound to follow the qualitative research technique naturally.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

The research methods I employed were focus group discussions, interviews resulting from observations<sup>1</sup> and archive records. My focus was on investigating the factors and resulting impact of choice of language among multilingual speakers within the church in Kenya. I look at demographics, language choice and use and its impact. The ages of those who took part in this study ranged from eight years to eighty years. With respect to their literacy levels, they ranged from illiterate to at least four people who hold doctorates. These people had also intermarried and many had friends from other

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<sup>1</sup> My mentor calls this "observation-question technique" (Shaw 1988, 42ff)

linguistic families. The group included a priest, ordained pastors, doctors, professional musicians, two members of parliament, teachers, lay people, and some people who the society would consider to be lowly educated and earning less than dollar per day. I consider these to be a good representation of a cross-section of the Kenyan population.

With respect to language use, I wanted to know the motivations that lead multilingual people to choose a certain language amongst many that could serve them well. Concerning impact, I sought to know the respondents views on inter-mixing of languages and how the process helps them participate in church programmes.

### ***Focus Group***

I used focus groups to provoke group ethos to bring out underlying feelings concerning language use. I had people from different linguistic communities sampled to get a feel of what people think about language use. This is a technique used to elicit information from two or more people at the same time. It is the best methodology for collecting information on people's attitudes and feelings as far as emotive issues are concerned. This is relevant to language use issues. As I was seeking people's opinions on language, it was important to have a methodology that helps bring out various attitudes so that I understand what influences their choice of language (Casey and Krueger 2008, 19). The disadvantage of this method is that it generates so much information that it becomes difficult to code and come up with condensed themes (Kombo and Tromp 2006; Casey and Krueger 2008; Russell 2006). I was intentional in choosing the people who took part. I considered, age, gender, social status and educational level. Table 1 below shows the linguistic group, marital status and age range of the participants.

**TABLE 1**  
**FOCUS GROUP BREAKDOWN**

Group	People	Women:Men :children	Languages Represented	Marriage Status	Age Ranges
Kilifi	42 <sup>2</sup>	15:20:7	27 Giryama, 5 Luhya, 3 Kamba, 2 Kikuyu, 2 Taita, 3 Luo	29 married, 13 single	11-Late 70s
Nairobi	70	30:32:8	50 Kikuyu, 10 Meru, 5 Kamba, 3 Luhya, 2 Kalenjin	45 married, 25 single	9-75
Kakamega A	48	18:15:15	10 Luhya, 8 Luo, 5 Kikuyu, 5 Kisii, 16 Kalenjin, 2 Kamba, 2 Teso	33 married, 15 single	8-early 80s
Kakamega B	36	20:10:6	30 Luhya, 1 Kalenjin, 1 Kikuyu, 4 Luo	30 married, 6 singles	9-Mid 60's
Totals	196	83:77:36	27 Giryama, 10 Kamba, 10 Meru, 5 Kisii, 15 Luo, 19 Kalenjin, 58 Kikuyu, 48 Luhya, 2 Teso, 2 Taita	137 married, 59 singles	8 to early 80s

Data collected from the focus groups consisted of information regarding the language the research subjects use at home, the language of choice for devotion at home and at church, the language of instruction at school as well as the activities that enhance the use of the mother tongues such as public functions. My aim was to find underlying motives for or against use of a specific language among the people in the multilingual churches. I also sought to find information about the observed change people had experienced as a result of their interaction with the Word of God in whichever language they had chosen. I collected the information using a voice recorder.

Due to lack of funds to pay transcribers, I listened to the information and wrote the key points that the people said during the discussion. Transcribing offered me an early opportunity to begin generating ideas from the data collected as suggested by Gibbs (2009, 11-15).

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<sup>2</sup> This is the total number of people who took part in the three focus groups. However, each single focus group meeting was between eight to twelve people. Due to ethnical reasons, some groups were mixed while others were not. This resulted in having many people take part in the groups.

Due to ethical issues (Morgan 1997), I had one focus group for children between eight years to thirteen years old. I had another focus group for women only. Other groups were mixed. Meeting in such manner gave people the freedom to speak as homogeneous groups influence each other positively as some authors indicate (Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook 2007, 10-20).

### **Participant Observation**

Some data was gathered by direct observation of various people as they went about their normal life. Table 2 contains details of the people who participated at different events. I attended church services, weddings and funerals to experience language use and take ethnographic notes. I observed which language people used in various activities.

**TABLE 2**  
**POPULATION OF RESEARCH BODY<sup>3</sup>**

Place	Focus	Observation	Interviews	Total
Kakemega A	48	42,800	19	42,854
Kakemega B	36	100	3	140
Nairobi	70	11,300	15	11,381
Kilifi	42	2400	5	2,447
Total	19	56,600	42	56,836

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<sup>3</sup> The numbers represented here is the estimated number of people who were in all the events under review. For Example in Kakamega A I had more than 42,800 who were present at all the observation events I attended. The smallest even had 350 while the largest had over 2500 and a single church service.

I entered my ethnographic notes in the computer and used the notes to remind myself of key things that were said and done by specific people. I used the information for my in-depth interviews with my key informants later. This working back and forth is what Daniel Shaw refers to as “the observation-question technique” (1988, 42). What I observed helped me to engage the participants more fully.

Observation gave me a chance to be with the people in their natural setting and witness how they use language. This method, “gets you into the door so you can collect life histories, attend rituals, and talk to people about sensitive topics...establishing rapport and learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up” (Russell 2006, 344). I followed what Tromp calls structured observation (2006, 96). I was only interested in what languages specific speakers choose and used. My observations are reported in my data analysis.

### **Interviews**

I used In-depth interviews to elicit information from individuals, one person at a time. I used this technique to elicit information from persons considered as key informants for the study. In each region, the identified people were members of the church and understood the particular church structures and practices. In certain cases, some people were randomly identified and spoken to at the event where the observation was done. This was at funerals, weddings and after church services on Sundays.

I also used interviews so as to give people who would otherwise not speak; due to social factors, a chance to express themselves (Bernard H. Russell 2006). I used this method because for most of the participants, the cultural influence is still very strong and therefore, women and young people may not challenge certain views said by elders or men in a group. It was important to isolate women and young people so that they could feel confident enough to speak their mind. Meeting in separate groups assured

confidentiality without fear of later ridicule for anything one group may have said contrary to the others.

Data from these informants<sup>4</sup> comprised their personal views of the language choice and use as well as the general church position on language choice policy. I elicited information on how they had observed people choose and use language within the church setting. My research with them also included their evaluation of the specific and general benefits of the languages.

For initial discussion, I used a voice recorder to capture my discussion with each informant. I transcribed the information onto the computer as soon as I got home. Later, I telephoned informants for clarification and more information on either what they had said or what I had seen come up in the information gathered from other participants. I also sought clarification on language use on what I had observed while on site.

### **Records Review**

During fieldwork, I sought to obtain some information from church records and reports. These would provide important information on language use and the impact in the particular church. In two cases, the church had records in the form of committee minutes showing when and why it was determined necessary to use the mother tongue alongside English and Kiswahili for ministry. The Catholic Church referred to language policy established in 1962 during the second Vatican council<sup>5</sup>. The others had no records but the leadership was aware that it was important for them to use mother tongue in ministry although the practice had been to use either English or Kiswahili.

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<sup>4</sup>See Table 1 for total number of people who took part in the interviews. However, the list does not contain the number of those I randomly picked to speak to at observation events.

<sup>5</sup>This council took place from October 11 to December 8, 1965. The council resolved that missionaries were to learn native languages. Liturgy and mass was to be translated and conducted in native language respectively.

### ***Handling the Data***

In all cases, not just observation, I wrote down my field notes which I later coded and analysed. The recording was done as soon as I got back to my computer. In this manner, I was able to capture the ideas while still fresh in my mind. These notes were used with the rest of the data when I did my data interpretations. This helped me to clarify the information I was getting and gave me better understanding of the themes that were beginning to form. I was “seeking to generate as many ideas, issues, topics and themes as possible” (Shaw, Fretz, and Emerson 1995, 166) as regards language use within the church.

I carried out a pre-test of my research questions before I went out to the field. This helped me to have a final tool that was, “carefully planned and precisely worded to yield the kinds of data the researcher needs to answer his or her research questions” (Leedy and Ormrod 2010, 191). A pre-test of three of the methodologies and the question route I had chosen were tested in order to first determine the suitability of the methodologies and secondly to review the quality of the questionnaire for both the interview and focus groups to give an opportunity for revising the tool before the main data gathering. All the data was recorded on a voice recorder.

I listened to the recordings and wrote out key words, concepts, and phrases said during the discussion. The writing was done without necessarily transcribing the whole discussion. I coded the respondents as group for focus and individual for interviews<sup>6</sup>. The major advantage of this is that it helps with early data analysis. Gibbs says, “...doing your own transcription, gives you a chance to start the data analysis...become familiar with the content and start to generate new ideas about the data” (2009, 15). This helped me to understand the discussions better. I then started generating themes that were occurring from the data. Gibbs suggests it is the researchers’ prerogative to decide how

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<sup>6</sup>See Appendix B. These are the quotes I will use in reference to my data as a complete copy is not provided here. A copy of the detail is available for future reference and anyone who needs it.

much of the data to transcribe based on the nature of the research (2009, 11). Themes started reoccurring from all the four sites and this was very encouraging for me. It showed some reliability as, “the research and its conclusions are only valid as long as the data is reliable” (Leedy and Ormrod 2010, 99-101, 245). The replication of the data gives confidence to the methodologies used. I used focus groups, observation and individual interviews to ensure triangulation of the themes that came through the research. During observation, I took notes. Triangulation helps to establish reliability of the data collected.

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

Adrian Holliday defines data analysis as “the process of making sense, sifting, organising, cataloguing, selecting themes - processing the data” (2002, 99). Data analysis has been viewed differently by various scholars depending on what the process has meant for them. For me it was the mining of the gold and harvest of the first fruits. Data analysis could simply be the single most import route that leads a researcher to make a unique contribution to knowledge on the topic under study. As I experienced it, data collection and analysis was occurring simultaneously in a modified grounded theory approach (Kathy Charmaz 1994).

To summarise Gibbs, coding is about what data a researcher is trying to analyse (2009, 54-73). For me this was a way of naming and putting ideas together. It helped me to make sense of what I was hearing and seeing. It not only organise the data but helped to organise the categories of the various scenarios that affect and determine language of choice and use. I used the thematic, open coding and analysis techniques common to qualitative research. I followed method specific investigation, for focus group analysis and participant observation from taking field notes (Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook 2007, 109-132; Casey and Krueger 2008). Following these approaches I was able to find occurrences of a word or phrase and trace its use throughout my data. According to

Holliday (2002, 102-105) the formation of themes helps the researcher make sense of the data and represents the necessary dialogue between the researcher and the data. In this study, themes began emerging from what I observed in the field and were confirmed in the data I collected. My field notes in most cases gave me a hint of how the themes were developing.

### **Objectivity of the Researcher**

Initially I sought to do research on the impact of mother tongue use in the church in Kenyan. As I surveyed the literature review, as shown in Chapter 2, I discovered I needed to look at the multilingual reality people in Kenya face. In order to remain objective in setting the research questions, and to be open-minded in hearing what people said concerning language use and their concerns, I looked not at the subject of mother tongue , but at the subject of contextualised language choice and use in Kenya. As I will attempt to demonstrate in Chapter 4, the topics that came out of the data collected demonstrates how objectivity was attained. My earlier intention of studying the impact of mother tongue usage did not influence my work which seeks to determine factors that influence choice of language. It turned out mother tongue was just a small section of the whole study of language of choice.

According to Elizabeth Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit - researchers need to be aware of the existing and cutting-edge criteria for judging qualitative research in order to give an informed rendering of the methodological positioning (2004). As noted when discussing how I overcame field limitations while doing the research, the entire objective was to collect reliable data which would enable me to effectively analyse the data in order to produce valid findings.

### *Limitations of This Study*

Every researcher seeks to establish a position where their work is trusted and accepted as truthful. While methods used to collect data relate to reliability, validity is determined by establishing reasonably consistent findings that are a product of analysing the collected data. Part of the reason for the triangulation of several methods is to establish consistency and truthful findings. In effect, any other researcher could do similar research in the same context and come up with similar conclusions. Furthermore, reliability of data and validity of findings is usually a result of the issues a researcher experiences in the field context and how the limitations are overcome. There were a number of limiting factors as I undertook this study.

1. The study was only for multilingual churches that used at least two languages for devotions. This ensured that I only sampled churches that were multilingual and were using more than one language in their service and corporate meetings. It helped me to experience firsthand some of the factors leading to choice of language.
2. The research methods used overlooked case studies which I think would have been excellent to compare the results from other monolingual churches. This means that the factors I have here do not necessarily mean people in monolingual settings do not have same factors influencing why they only use one language.
3. The geographical distances between my four research sites prevented me from staying in one place long to spend more time with the people for in-depth interviews and observations. It is possible that if I had been able to spend more time in the research sites, I would have found more factors that determine language choice and use. . Perhaps I would have observed situations that were beyond what I was told in the interviews. Therefore the limited time was in favour of what I observed and was stated in either focus groups or in interviews.
4. Due to the post election violence of 2008 which affected many people, some individuals were reluctant to participate in the research, thinking that perhaps the research and the previous violence were in some way connected.

I attempted to be sensitive to the political and cultural experiences of the people. Respondents spoke with conviction that in future the choice of which language to use

would remain a positive issue. I therefore came away convinced the information was reliable thereby making the findings that emerged valid for the contexts I researched.

### **Reliability**

I established reliability in this research by triangulation of three research methods.

In addition the following factors also ensured reliability;

1. Applying and undertaking the three research tools in four locations with different participants,
2. Conducting the research with assistants from the congregations where research took place, and
3. Availability of key informants from each congregation. I was able to telephone these people and clarify information coming from their congregations.

### **Validity**

A research is deemed valid when the results can be repeated by different populations in different places. This gives any research accuracy and authority. “A research study should be repeatable....perhaps with a different population, in a different setting, or with slight variations on the treatment implementation” (Leedy and Ormrod 2010, 245). Through the following methods I attempted to achieve validity.

1. I conducted research in four different denominations,
2. I sampled people from eight different linguistic speech communities who were also multilingual in either English or Kiswahili or both,
3. Different informants with different experiences participated,
4. People of different demographic settings took part,
5. I used local assistants to conducted focus group discussions, and
6. People were free to volunteer the information.

The tools I chose to use offered people freedom to express themselves and this is a good sign of validity of any research as people are able to, "...offer the full range of response that apply" (Martin Britt Davies 2007, 102). For this reason, I conducted focus groups that considered women, children and men as was culturally appropriate.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter I have discussed the methodologies I used and how I went about collecting the data, transcribing the focus groups and interviews and analysing the material in order to make interpretations. This will help my readers to understand and appreciate how the findings in Chapter four developed from the context described in Chapter two.

I moved beyond self interest in order to keep to intellectual expectations. To this end, I have indicated ethical considerations ranging from those that involve the planning of the research through to the presentation of findings including proper acknowledgements and referencing of sources. Therefore, I am now ready to discuss the data and my interpretation of it.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS**

I was encouraged by the enthusiasm people have concerning the topic of language of choice either at church or at home. With such an emotive topic there will always be differing views. There are those who want to have a number of choices while others only want one language to be used. Each side has valid reasons that contribute to the topic. These views were evident in my data.

In this chapter, I present my data findings as captured through the data analysis. The main factors impacting language choice among those who participated in my study include what is referred to as “cultural sub-systems (Shaw 1988, 24). These sub-systems included, social, political, and religious. Other factors that affected language choice included leadership, institutional expectations, proficiency of reading, and rewards for language of choice.

In all the places among all the samples, there were reasons for and against native languages and the lingua franca. People consistently expressed views that were concerned with communication and peace in community. The most important issue is that those using the given language have good reasons for doing so. The choice of which language to use is a factor that people in a multilingual setting must deal with. Language choice varies with contexts as Fasold says, “...variation implies that speakers have a choice among language varieties” (1984, 208). Most times, language choices are influenced by a number of factors and relationships at the time of communication.

Besides the role of communication, language also defines relationships as well as identity, determined by the event and situation people and social groups are in. Language

shapes the ideal situation of a given society and it is not just a silent ‘subject’ to be used. Language impacts how people relate, code or decode information, and understand reality. The factors that emerged from my analysis of the data show the societal issues that occupy peoples’ worldviews. This is demonstrated through the choices they make regarding which language to use. Through language, “We communicate our desires, our regrets, our fears, our doubts, our worries, and our delight” (Diane Blakemore 1993, 49). Language is a guide to social reality. By observing how people use language, one is able to understand what people value and seek to promote in society.

### ***Language Choice Influencers***

I have put my findings under two main sections. First I will look at the positive factors that influence people to make specific language choices in given contexts. These factors included communication, cultural, economic, political, institutional, religious, and language proficiency. Second, I will present some of the negative factors that affect the choice and use of language.

### **Communication Factor**

Multilingual speakers make language choices most of the time due to the recognition that they want to communicate to as many people as possible. One respondent said, “We want people to understand us. So we try our best to use different languages” ‘Klf1’<sup>1</sup>.

Two others had this to say, “When a speaker chooses a language with the majority people who understand it in mind, it means that a small number of those who do not understand the language are left out” ‘NRBi1, KKAi1’.

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<sup>1</sup> These marks, KLF, NBB and KK refer to the responds as coded for my data analysis KLF stands for Kilifi, NRB for Nairobi while KK is for Kakamega. See a detailed list in Appendix B.

An artist said, “I want people to understand me. That is why I translate some words into English when I sing on stage” NRBi4. It is clear there is need for more translation and where there is none; the speaker needs to be sensitive to the people present. The communication factor is the main reason people consider in making language choice.

Respondents said to me, “My congregation has many languages represented so I use a language common to all although I know some people from around here may not understand it well” ‘KLFi1, KKAi1’. Another pastor told me, “I have to be mindful of the foreigners among my people. I try to explain a few words in another language but all people need to feel they belong” ‘KKAi1’. I observed this same view during specific services in the churches I attended. It was the same experience I saw at weddings and funerals. In one English service, Kiswahili and several local languages songs were sang.

A visiting musician told me when I sought to know why he sang in the local language and gave simultaneous English translations that, “I know there are always people in any group who do not understand my language, so I have to help them because I want them to get the message of the song” ‘NRBi4, NRBi1’. Relevance theory demands that the message and the language has to fit within the context of the listener for people to decode the meaning readily. The communication factor presents the communicator as one who is making an appropriate language choice.

### **Socio-Cultural Factor**

Language defines people without forcing anyone to say what tribe they belong to. Socio-cultural factors, in my context, were the silent and salient reasons many people use to determine language choice, even at church. The most common in this category was identity with the community. Many people feel language is the main link one has with the community. Some felt that as a speech community they are able to understand their

things together better and work as a team. In all places, people said, "My language defines who I am and some of the values I stand for. The language I speak has those underlying values of the community and sometimes I display them without knowing". 'NRBFG1, KKAi1'.

Another culturally conditioned reason for language of choice is expectations of the community. People who have gone to school to a certain level speak English to show their level of modernity. This is an expectation many try to respond to. In other words use of mother tongue is considered by some as primitive and backward. Choice and use of a specific language defines the social group that one associates with as well as the level of education a person has attained<sup>2</sup>. According to some respondents in the formal schools systems, the use of English is enforced to the extent that if pupils fail to keep the law, they are punished for it. This is a negative way of encouraging people to learn a language other than their own.

During cultural nights<sup>3</sup>, I attended events organised around certain linguistic and cultural communities. I observed many bus loads of university students who came out specifically to take part because it was their language. People celebrate culture through food, language, music and dance from a specific community. I talked to several people who were very proud to belong to the community. In their daily life at the university, even with those from the same mother tongue, they told me they often use languages of wider communication as their medium of communication. But in the context of a cultural

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<sup>2</sup> This is not always true. At times it depends on how confident people are of themselves and their position in society. If they feel threatened they would want to prove a point. If not they are willing to make language choices freely. For example, at one of the congregations, I found very educated and senior people in the society attending mainly mother tongue church service. At one funeral in the village the two most educated people who were given a chance to address the mourners due to their social standing spoke in the mother tongue and not any of the languages of wider communication.

<sup>3</sup> Within the major cities, communities organise events that run from 9pm to 6am where people come to sample specific community cultural unique events ranging from music and dance, foods and dress. People from other communities take the opportunity to attend and learn as well as enjoy something different from other communities. Most senior community leaders especially politicians do attend as well.

night, they feel safe to communicate in their native mother tongue. Some youth use languages due to peer pressure. One said to me, “my friends expect me to stay civilized and speak English” NRBi5. The cultural orientation is that English is developed and more civilized.

During my work, I experienced this cultural expectation as well. At a funeral service, I was asked to prepare the eulogy of the departed. I did it in my mother tongue and those with me objected because they felt, as someone who has travelled gone to high level of learning I should use English. One focus group lamented on how, “The young people who come for mass in languages of wider communication do not even enter the church but stand outside. Most of them even leave the service before Holy Communion and final blessings” ‘KKA’. To the respondents this is a generation that does not understand the role of the Scripture and church is a social place and not a place of worship and spiritual engagement.

Their concern is that the youth do not understand the message in languages of wider communication. Languages which many of the youth claim to speak and understand but the language does not penetrate their minds. They determined this based on the character she had observed among the youth. When people are equipped to understand, they are empowered to know how to apply it for their own good. Their character is transformed and witnessed by the community. For this group of youth, language is not an issue because English or Kiswahili is their mother tongue. Young people are using the mother tongue at this stage as the language they acquired as children.

People who had a strong view of the native mother tongue usage besides the languages of wider communication had a better understanding of traditional factors that at times influence people away from God and the Good News. They were also more involved in sharing their faith with others and helping people in need. They saw language use as a form of acceptance of oneself as God’s creation and advocated for respect for

others irrespective of which language they used. They view Christian life style as a service to others. This strong view of helping and sharing with others seems to come from communal living the society share as a value. This is a value whose dynamics the church should take advantage of to further God's work.

### **Economic Factor**

People, including Christians, need to be able to operate in the market place as the world becomes industrialised. Sometimes the mother tongue is only used in a small region and it becomes very limiting. For this reason, many people turn to learning and choosing to use languages of wider communication. They master its use so well that they may lose vocabulary in their native mother tongue. At one church during the focus group the people said, "We use English and Kiswahili so that we can help our members learn these languages in order to communicate with people from other communities when they travel for business" KKBF. The singer said, "I want to sell my music to people of other communities so I try to incorporate their languages or English and Kiswahili because I know they understand those languages" 'NRBi4'.

If people only use native mother tongue then they are left out of the economic growth and remain poor. This reason is also advanced in schools. Children are told to be good in English so that they can operate in the job market 'KKAi5, KKAi2'.

I observed that as much as people may have chosen English and Kiswahili because of economic factor, there are those for whom the economic factor was a reason for learning other native mother tongues that were not their own. People who had migrated to other places for business purposes learned local languages so that they could do business with the people who are not fluent in English or Kiswahili. This was observed in Kilifi and Kakamega regions. It is possible that people choose to learn a language for specific reasons but they end up benefiting in many other ways.

### **Political Factor**

Kenya is a highly charged political society. Due to the nature of what happens especially around election times, some people tend to be selective in using language. This is so because politics in Kenya at times is practiced along tribal groupings. In such cases, speaking in the mother tongue immediately reveals their identity and can be positive or negative depending on the audience. This may be another positive factor for learning a native mother tongue.

My research came after we had just concluded a disputed presidential election and people had voted and disagreed based who the candidate of preference build around tribal political parties. The bad experience discouraged some people to take part in focus groups.

Politics and politicians often affect how people view social life and relations in the community. In the churches, people understood that there was nothing wrong in using MT in public. Politicians only turn to language as a tool based on their interests. They use it when they know it will further their selfish ends against the other people. Politicians talk about MT negatively when they want to portray those from other communities as enemies. The common citizen is not well informed to differentiate between language and tribal politics. Tribal politics is wrong and should be discouraged. It hurts people from other communities who are very innocent<sup>4</sup>.

The church members including the leaders in all the places were of the same mind that language or tribe has nothing to do with tribalism and negative ethnicity. They all see positive values of their linguistic diversity and want to promote positive views of others. Many underscored the fact that as much as we speak English, it has not turned us into Englishmen. Language need not be identified with the negative acts of fallen human

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<sup>4</sup> It was such situation that led to the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994. The community needs to check what politicians say and not take it as 'the truth'. People should learn to appreciate those of other communities.

character. People are victimised for being proud of a God given gift of language. It leads some to think English or Kiswahili is the solution to tribalism. They said, “People should use English and Kiswahili so that they are not victimized based on their language” ‘NRBF1 and 2’.

### **Practical Factor**

Some factors influence people to choose or not choose a language for communication. Such factors included diversity of languages present in a congregation as shown in Table 1. Churches have more than three different local languages present in any one service. It is not easy to decide on which language to choose. The speaker needs to be fluent in the language and also know that the audience understands it. The dilemma that this presents is easily taken care of by opting for languages of wider communication, even when only a few may be fluent. I observed their dilemma presented in such forms as;

Many languages being present; this was in KKA, KLF and NRB.

1. In all cases people are not fluent in all the languages although they can speak some and simultaneous translation is not done.
2. Lack of other reading materials in the mother tongue to help people understand complex passages about biblical people, places and times.
3. The pastors used English or Kiswahili because they are from another linguistic group.
4. The pastor wants to be politically correct so they use the language of wider communication in order not to be seen to favour one community.

There was no dictionary or Bible commentary in any of the native mother tongues I studied. Some said, “We want to know more but the lack of reading materials is a challenge so we look for help from English and Kiswahili” ‘KKAF, NRBFG2, NRBi2 and 3’. Respondents said whenever they use their native mother tongue, “It is rich in

vocabulary and is self-explanatory". 'KKAi3, NRBi2, KLFi1, 2 and 3'. People genuinely want to know more so they choose a language that helps them get the information.

### **Leadership Factor**

Leaders influence people to act, respond, relate and view things in a certain way. Some respondents chose a certain language partly based on how they had observed certain leaders use language in public. Mostly it was for self-promotion and not for common good.

People in places where leaders use both native mother tongues and languages of wider communication positively were also using the languages with ease. In Kakamega, the people told me, "Our Bishop, who is from another community, has learned our language and he is using it, it is obvious that we too have to use it besides English and Kiswahili" 'KKAi1, KKAi1'. In Nairobi, young people attend the youth service which is in English and later attend the service in the native mother tongue. It helps them to learn the language. They are proud of it. One said, "We learn our language and improve vocabulary. Many senior people in our community come to attend the native language service and we think it is good for us to attend as well." NRBi5. In this church, I found members of parliament as well as PhD holders attending mother tongue service. In Kilifi, many people had started attending the MT service since their senior pastor himself who is a good LWC speaker was attending and preaching in the MT. In other words, if the leaders attach value to a language, the people value it as well. The leaders' action becomes a strong motivator for language choice.

During my first round of the research, one church had only been using Kiswahili although all members spoke and understood native mother tongue well. The leader was using Kiswahili and encouraging the people to use it as the language of choice. He had valid reasons as to why. This was partly for economic and social reasons but also the "big

man" syndrome (Luchivia 2009). When I went back a year later, they were using the MT. They said, "The pastor had started using our language so we felt it was fine for us to use it as well" 'KKBFG'. Leaders set the direction and tempo for people to respond to social issues.

### **Institutional Factor**

Structures through which people learn and use language also play a role in determining language of choice in a community. Through institutions policy is formulated and implemented. The main ways through which institutions have contributed to language of choice include unclear or contracting policy at the national level. For example, whereas the constitution promotes the use of one's language and celebrations of different cultures throughout the country, parliament has legislated against use of native mother tongues in public places because it is viewed as tribalism, and 'may' contribute to unrest. It is either to choose a language to communicate or to be politically correct.

In the education system, teaching native mother tongue is supposed to be from primary one to three. Respondents said, "due to lack of materials and training of teachers, people do not learn how to read and write their native mother tongues". 'KKAFG, KKAi2, NRBFG3'. These means they do not practice enough reading of mother tongues to be able to read in public. There is a policy in place to teach mother tongues, but motivation for choice and structure for implementation is lacking. This may require the church to think of using audio materials to support and help those who are not able to read. Other forms of promoting hearing God's Word have to be considered.

In formal education, school children are prohibited to speak to one another in native mother tongue. Use of English and Kiswahili are preferred as appropriate. People think that the use of these languages promotes nationalism and cohesion. Native mothers

are viewed as a source of disunity. Portraying the mother tongues in this manner may be a diversion for people not to address the real issues. All across Kenya and much of East Africa, Bible collages train the future church workers in languages of wider communication. Two respondents said, “It is true the training materials as well as the curriculum are in either English or Kiswahili. So in ministry, we use the languages in which we have learned about the Bible” ‘NRB, KLF’. In return, people in the church think it is the official position of the Church to use these languages and not their own native mother tongues. Church policy on language choice will ensure people are properly guided in this matter.

### **Religious Factor**

People who are engaging with the Word of God either alone or in public want to understand something new or a fresh. They hope to get information that can help bring transformation and help them be better in all aspects of life. Language of choice by the speaker is in most cases for the desire to relay Gospel truths to the audience. Speakers want to be sure that all listeners feel part of the communication. Every speaker wants to be inclusive without leaving anybody out. It is therefore assumed that majority would understand languages of wider communication and where they do not understand, someone would interpret for them or they would seek clarification later. My data shows that both interpretation and seeking clarification rarely happen or is not there at all.

Preachers want all the people who come to church to understand the message. The people also want to understand and be understood. In my analysis of texts, the idea of understanding and the word “understand” appeared more than any other word. I got comments like, “I preach to all people who come to church. The language I choose to use must aid people to understand me and understand the Gospel” KKAi1, KLFi1, 2. Another said, “It is not just being inclusive, we want people to understand. That is why sometimes

I have to explain things in mother tongue even during Kiswahili service because I know people will understand the point better in mother tongue” KKAi1. “Our work is to feed people spiritually and language choice has to consider this. They are only feed if they understand” NRBi1. Understanding God’s Word either orally or through reading should lead to growth both spiritually and numerical.

People have experiences and worldviews that have been formed through language and exposure to certain things. New information helps modify, confirm or cancel the views they hold. Language and its terminology is at the core of helping people gain right meaning. The presence of a matching word from language ‘A’ to language ‘B’ does not necessarily give similar meaning. This could be misleading and results in misunderstanding mainly due to worldview differences. For example, using the word “owl”, for most Europeans, implies wisdom, but for East Africans it implies death or a bad omen. For central and West Africa, it implies things pertaining to witches.

With this in mind, speakers ask themselves if the words they are using are understood by the listeners in the manner they purpose to communicate. One said, “When I am preaching in a language I want to be sure people understand the key words I have chosen to use, for example what does it mean to be holy? In my MT it means clean of body and not bad intention of heart. I have to make it clear to people I mean the heart” KKAi1.

Although language is used with the assumption of all listeners understanding, the words used may infer a different meaning. At one service the preacher used the words ‘*Tafraja* and *Anasa*’. The equivalent and dictionary meaning is pleasure, recreation and entertainment. The context was for God to help people to overcome sin. I interviewed nine people after the service to seek their understanding of the words. The one who came

closet said, “For God to help us to have clean hearts so that we go to heaven” KKAi5. I talked to the leader later and he was surprised the people did not understand him<sup>5</sup>.

It is therefore important to contextualise language to reduce the effort spent in trying to understand. As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, relevance theory emphasises what people hear within their context, how they interpret and apply it in order to bring about positive mental and conceptual change. People’s understanding is shaped by their experience and grammar that has developed mainly through their first language. Sperber and Wilson say, “Processing effort is a negative factor: other things being equal, the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance” (1995, 124). In communication people look for what is relevant. Language of choice should be aiding people to get that relevance much easier and faster.



Guava ‘edible’



Sodom apple ‘poisonous’

**FIGURE 1**

**GUAVA AND SODOM APPLE USED FOR SERMON  
ILLUSTRATION**

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<sup>5</sup> What the leader had meant was that God may help people not to desire leisure life that leads them to sin. As much as it is true it stops people from going to heaven, in this context it is not what he had in focus as one respondent explained what they understood. The rest did not have an idea what it meant.

In my language the generic word ‘fruit’ is understood to mean an orange. Every other individual fruit has its name and there is no classification as ‘fruit’. For a long time I preached on the fruit of the spirit without this knowledge. During this research as a way of testing words, I illustrated the same passage using a guava and Sodom apple, see Figure 1.

Both fruits have a name that does not point to a fruit or orange in my language. People understand what the names mean. I asked people if they were hungry which one would they eat. They all said guava because Sodom apple is poisonous. I in turn said, God wants us to be like a guava that is healthy and brings life and not death in the community. After the service, an old lady who had been in church for more than thirty years, said to me, “my grandchild, you have helped me to understand what the Bible is teaching us about the fruit. I never knew it. I pray that in the next days till God calls me home, I will be a guava in this community” ‘KKBO’.

### **Proficiency Factor**

A very strong factor that determines people’s language choice in public is fluency to speak and read the language. The degree of fluency demonstrates the power to manoeuvre and function in a particular socio-linguistic environment.

In all areas I went for observation, I asked people to read to me a short passage in their native mother tongue. Most could not. The same who could not also expressed doubts concerning value of native mother tongues. I got responses like, “Native mother tongue is hard to read although we know what the words mean. We never learned how to read it in school. Besides how will I or my children benefit from reading it outside my village?” ‘KKAi3, NRBFG1, 2 and 3’.

In analysing the data, an awareness that those who spend more time hearing the Word of God in a language they considered mother tongue and adequate for them had a

better view of what God expects of them. They have memorised Scriptures that they recite and apply appropriately in times of hardships. Those people who had decided on usage of what they considered as mother tongue or several languages they understood best were more knowledgeable in the Word of God and they applied it appropriately.

The people who used more than one language, either English and Kiswahili or Kiswahili as well as the native language or all three languages were the most informed of all. It was clear that for them, choice of a language especially when praying and sharing their faith was to find a word that would express the idea best. These kind of words were considered to be rich in meaning, strong in transmitting the message, and deeper in teaching the concept or cultural value in a manner that the listeners who knew the words remembered and acted upon the teaching.

On the other hand, those who had a negative view of the use of MT and advocated for English use, seem to wish away traditional culture and values. They said things like “witchcraft does not exist”. For example, some view witchcraft as the traditional way of explaining germs. Their idea is that someone could turn to traditional medicine men for help because that person does not understand modern science. Most could not tell a single Bible verse that talk about witchcraft. Hardly would any of them think that the scripture teaches against such. They think those who teach against it are spending time on issues that are not important to the audience. This may show a weak point in their theology. This factor was in all the four congregations I sampled. On the contrary the pastors confess that native mother tongues easily address cultural issues the people wrestle with. “Mother tongue choice helps people recognise issues we wrestle with from our traditions and it makes it easy to respond to those issues.

These issues include, witchcraft, marriage, dealing with widows and orphans, wealth, death, rites of passage and even social relations.” ‘NRBFG, KKAFG, KLFFG’. Some said, “We use English or Kiswahili but we it does not help us understand and

adequately solve problems that come from our traditional practices. We need help”. KKAi1, KLFi1.

Those who do not appreciate challenges arising from cultural issues are people who do not associate much with their traditional social values and customs. They are people in transition from rural African life to some western life but not yet there. This category seems to be doing little as concerns the missio Dei which is a call upon all believers. Some people argue such people exist as individuals and not as part of a community. On the other hand those who are sensitive to the challenges caused by their traditions and cultures are very active in missions. In two places, the pastors said to me, “Cultural awareness and knowledge helps people to know the agency of the gospel and want to share it with others” ‘NRBi2, KKAi1, 2, and 4’.

### ***Flawed Language Views***

All the respondents said they listen to the Word of God in English and Kiswahili. However, the majority of them also said physical visible structures appeal to them as a means to justify spiritual and social transformation. For example, they relate church growth with big buildings. Others said that choice of English or Kiswahili showed maturity and promotion of unity in Kenya. The response was that choice of any of the languages of wider communication is choice to serve many people. Respondents said, “Being able to speak English or Kiswahili gives one an opportunity to serve other tribes without prejudice” ‘NRBi5, NRBFG3’. This may be true to a certain extend but there are other factors.

In my data, there was no evidence of people who use English or Kiswahili being more active and involved in Christian witness than people who only used native mother tongue. On the contrary, old women in one location had become active members of the worship team. They said, “The opportunity to worship in our language has released us for

ministry. We used to think ministry was only for those who speak Kiswahili and English. We now sing in the choir, we visit the sick at hospital and pray for them. We feel blessed and honoured to do something in the church" 'KLFFG'. On the same day I witnessed these women lead worship and two days later, I found them at the local hospital praying for the sick.

### **Policy Factor**

For people to make useful language choice decisions in a multilingual setting there is need to have policies and structures that empower people to use different languages without any uncertainties. In this case, the education system does not have learning materials in native mother tongues and worse still in many cases across Kenya, pupils in primary schools are still being punished if found using their native mother tongue. As much as the policy is available on paper, the structures do not support its implementation. Several scholars have discussed this issue at length (Githiora 2008, 243; Wendo 2009, 125, 129 ; Nyaga 2005, 54 ). Instead the systems enforce the learning of English and Kiswahili by punishing those pupils who speak their own native mother tongue. Therefore, children are afraid to use the mother tongues outside their home where it is safe. Native mother tongues are still the language of communication at home. English and Kiswahili are less used at home. There is little incentive for using English or Kiswahili at home. The challenge is that they learn to read other languages and learn to speak another.

In churches where choice of native mother tongues is encouraged, it was clear that many young people were seeing it as a chance for them to learn the native mother tongue. It is only in one church where things were to the contrary. For those who do, it is an indication of people who are seeking to identify with their native community and maintain a link through language choice. They need support from the community through

formulating policies and following through to implement through provision of reading materials and teaching programmes. On the other hand the majority of church leadership in Kenya does not use the native mother tongues so most of their followers do not. According to Jim Harries this had hindered participation in ministry (2011, 71). Native mother tongue choice empowers a certain category of people to participate in.

The national policy on language needs to be supported or else removed so that people are left to choose what is appropriate to them on their own volition. We see from the few churches that have language choice policy that there are benefits to it. As much as there are some struggles, it has enhanced the church strategy in carrying out *missio Dei* in the community.

### **Preference Factor**

In relation to my central research issue, my research points out that though those who are choosing native mother tongue are relatively few in number as compared to those who use languages of wider communication, spiritually they are solid. They may be limited as to how many people outside their social-linguistic group they can reach, but they are able to reach others within the social group who are not fluent in English and Kiswahili. This phenomenon was experienced in all four locations. Those who learned English as adults were the least interested in sharing their faith with others. They do not see the urgency of taking time to tell others about their story. They have more helps for them to understand Scripture, but have not desired to share with others what they know. They seemed to lack the confidence to share what they know. A respondent remarked, “People who speak English keep to themselves. They do not even want to serve on church committees or go out for evangelism. It is selfishness” ‘KKAi4’. This may not be

true of all of the English speakers but this is how the respondent saw and interpreted the experience.

Those who grew up in multilingual situations and acquired several languages simultaneously were the most effective in ministry. They have a better opportunity to share their faith with others. Whereas, the native mother tongue choice people were most effective in reaching those of their social group, the ones who have a choice of languages of wider communication are effective to the degree that they have more opportunities as the community continues to become multilingual. Multilingual situation seems to impose itself on the people.

People who are multilingual and choose to use it appropriately have more benefits. Among the immediate benefits is power to operate economically, socially and politically in the global world. The people who are multilingual have greater access to information as there are more reading materials available. Spiritually, theology and doctrine has already been explained in languages of wider communication which have more reading materials.

This is beneficial to a local church that seeks to be missional. The opportunities for ministry will be far and wide. One respondent said, “People do not have to go overseas to reach out to people of other nations but will find them in their neighbourhood” ‘NRBi1’. One can still be on foreign mission within the confines of their own region.

### ***Indeterminate Language State***

Language choice in Kenya seems to be a very emotive issue. Some people do not wish even to be known to speak a native mother tongue other than Kiswahili or English. This is not only true for the younger generation but adults as well. It is clear from the respondents that native mother tongue choice appears to be dwindling while English and

Kiswahili choice continues to grow both in use and influence. People need to know what is available and decide on when and how to use it. One respondent said, “Language is a personal matter. I cannot even decide for my children which language they speak to me in.” ‘NBDG2’.

Due to socialisation, many people spent time doing business in English and Kiswahili. The lack of dictionaries and other texts for help in the languages hinders people to learn their native mother tongue as their vocabulary decreases.

### ***Summary***

I have attempted to present my findings in categories that describe and define the average Kenyan within the context in which they live and operate. People make language choice decisions based on function and how practical the language is within the context. The factors that influenced language choice as presented are some of the issues people consider. My finding is that people use a cocktail of languages to best fit the context in which communication is taking place. My data shows that people choose a language based the benefits of using that language with the context they are in.

In the next chapter, I will seek to establish theological lessons that can be drawn from these factors. Language choice is a tool to fulfil *Missio Dei*. I will apply these factors to Biblical examples and expectations to establish how the church in Kenya could carry out *Missio Dei* through choice and use of many languages.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THEOLOGICAL LESSONS**

In this chapter, I will focus on Bible passages to establish how language choice decisions in some contexts were determined. I will endeavour to do this with biblical examples that include how instructions were passed on from generation to generation, evangelism and discipleship, Mission and identity, language as a unique feature to people, language and God's story and finally language and worship.

#### *Instructions to People*

Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language (Esther 3: 12).

In the Old Testament there are several occasions when instructions were sent out to people to carry out what the king commanded. We see this in Nehemiah, Daniel and other books as well.

Esther's example suggests that several languages existed in a nation and it was important for all to be communicated to in their different languages. They may not be referred to as multilingual, but monolinguals within the same proximity. It was important for the people to understand the king's message. The message was put in the different language for the people who were the primary recipients. This was an effort to be inclusive and ensure that all understood. This is same thing we see happening when

communicators choose to use LWC so that each one can understand. The difference is they are not doing it in different languages but applying same principle.

In Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 God instructed the Israelites to teach children to keep His laws and teach them to their children. God still requires this of parents. This teaching happens within the context of language as the tool for sharing the message and meaning. As the children recite Gods laws through the language, both language and teachings are reinforced in their minds and hearts. The respondents in KKA lamented over poor application and lack of teaching leading to the youth not being well trained in the Word of God. While in NRB, the youth had seen its value and as a result attend native MT service so as to hear the preaching in both LWC and the MT.

In his work, Hunter says that God is so concerned with human salvation that he would do whatever is necessary to bring them salvation (Hunter 1983). Translating the Bible into other languages is one way that God presents His message to His people. Hunter rightfully recognises that language is not static and thus there is a need for translation. He however, seems to equate translation to use. It is possible for the translation to be available and not used if people cannot read or hear. They have to find help to appreciate the value in their native language so that they can use it in translated Scripture. This was very evident when respondent said that, “MT is sweet and very deep in meaning”. The musician had decided to sing the MT because for him the message is richer and people remember it well. It is when people are able to remember that they think about it and seek transformation. It can personal where they gain confidence to serve as we saw in the case of the women in Kilifi who can now lead worship and go to the hospital to pray with the sick.

The degree of exposure to the outside world, as well as knowledge of a language has influence on people's ability to use the language with necessary flexibility. Those who have little exposure have limited ability. Ability to use a language encourages

decisions for language choice for ministry to the people. As a missionary among the Orma people of Kenya, who are mainly cattle herders, I was impressed to find a wide range of names they had for colours. Everything in this community takes reference from cows. In fact, in describing the beauty of a woman, they say, “as beautiful as a cow”. Other communities would be offended to describe their ladies in this manner. It is because their world views are not structured around cows. This difference of language structure and how it affects people’s brain development is also seen in the manner people perceive things. Evans says, “A study of language may well give insights into values and ways of thinking of a society” (Evans 1970, 78). The language people use shapes how they develop their shared values. Each language represented in this research will have some unique aspect to attend to the experiences of the people who meet together.

### ***Evangelism and Discipleship***

And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians--we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God (Acts 2: 8-11).

When God’s people come together, their talk to one another should be understood as God’s oracles to the passersby. Each person who hears should be able to sense something of supernatural doing that is not common. In return they are able to go out and serve others as I recorded in my findings. Christianity is about service to humanity and language should empower people to serve.

In this text, the disciples were speaking God’s oracles. It turned out to be God’s own way of evangelising the many linguistic communities that were present. Out of the talk, the disciples explained more about God’s story. The end result was that the number of believers increased. The presence of many languages was not in any way a barrier but

rather the channel through which God attracted His people to His message. In this case we see that language served a social factor and gave people self-esteem as they were able to identify with the apostles. All who were present felt included. There was no fear of identity with the language as it had no links with tribe or tribalism. This is what people in my context should be striving for.

The next part that comes after evangelism is teaching and discipleship. In the chapters that follow in the book of Acts, disciples moved out to many of the places where the languages present in the initial meeting had come from. It could be assumed that they were doing follow up for discipleship. Wherever they went, they told and discipled in their language. Proper teaching will aid people to understand and avoid scenarios of miscommunication as was with '*Tafrija and Anasa*' words referred to earlier in Chapter 4.

### ***Mission and Cultural Identity***

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring’ (Acts 17: 26-29).

God created everything. He set boundaries for everything. People may not change these foundations He has established, Psalm 104:5. We may consider this to include people's cultures within their geographical regions to live and practice the culture. Similarly, language as any other gift was given by God. As a gift, it needs to be used well and for His kingdom. Besides language shaping how people view and assign meaning, the culture in which one grows has a big role in affecting how people view truth and reality. Much of cultural teaching, values and beliefs are transmitted linguistically. Most

people who migrate to cities have moved when they are adults; with their cultural background having shaped their minds in certain ways. This shaping of the mind reinforced by the MT determines which lexicon and pragmatics they hear and understand. “Language helps to structure our worldview and is crucial to the culture-language relationship” (Matsumoto 2000, 314 ). Language shapes how people express their emotions and affects how they behave in a community. Language that one has been exposed to, influence what they consider right or wrong, sin or mistake and, the role they assign to religion. People will choose to consult a witch doctor as was seen earlier because the concept of a witch doctor and Christianity has not been well explain in LWC. Religion in LWC has not been clear enough for them to understand why they should not consult a witch doctor.

On the other hand for those who are multilingual, they can explain to others in a language they can understand best. One youth said, they do a lot of code switching because it is easier and faster and the words from different languages helps them understand better and share faster than if they used one language. This is where ‘*sheng*’ as a developing language can help. I gave the example of two very educated people in Kilifi who when invited to address mourners at a funeral, they choose to use the MT and not English. It is because they wanted to identify with the social group that was present.

Information that is transmitted with the listeners’ culture in mind considers relevant contextualisation and this invites listeners to be part of the theologising process. For me, as one who was introduced to English, as a third language, many times it does not convey the urgency and accuracy that I get through my MT. Yet, there are concepts that I do not get well through MT use. I do not relate to the ideas. In such times, my use of English helps me to understand better. So we are different yet same as we all depend on God according to Galatians 3:28. Our diversity linguistically does not make any one superior but limit us to seek God.

Language helps to develop personality and identity and guides people in linking actions and events, individuals and emotions. In this manner, people with a shared background and language find it easy to engage and help one another, socially and spiritually. The preachers' role therefore is to equip members for the work of God according to Ephesians 4:12. God in modern day is leading His people everywhere to share His knowledge through the cultures He has given to them. In so doing cultures enrich each other and become better carriers of God's mission. Transformed hearts and minds transform culture and society. A biblical worldview develops as peoples' minds are shaped by God's Word. The preacher prepares the members to minister locally and also to stay relevant in the global world. It is therefore important that those who seek to acquire LWC can do it without denying them the chance to use their MT to minister locally. They both need help to be able to be and do what God has called them to do.

God has set each people in their culture and language with a purpose; so that they may understand and glorify Him in that context. Some may understand LWC but for many others, "...if there is anything that we understand, then it is our native tongue" (Johnson-Laird 2003a, 3). This means that peoples' ears are attracted to words and capture the message much faster in native mother tongue. By Johnson saying so he does not propose lazy minds on the part of the hearer but rather that MT help people understand. Native mother tongue is used to aid the process of information transfer. The purpose of communication is for the hearer to understand and act upon the information. Donald Smith has observed that getting involved with people and knowing them, helps in the process of helping them understand (1992, 23-40). This involvement has a lot to do with language as people communicate. One good example I found of this was a Bishop in Kakamega who is from a different linguistic community but has learned the language where he ministers so well that he has prepared liturgy for his priests in the language. The people see him as an example to emulate.

Culture structures the mental framework under which people operate. Each individual in the language they have been acculturated in, brings a different understanding to a topic under discussion. “Human understanding depends on the construction of mental models from perception, from imagination, and from the comprehension of language” (Johnson-Laird 2003b, 42). This being true as it suggests, the church needs to be thinking of how to use each language to gain understanding of other cultures and enrich their reflection on God’s Word together.

### *Language as a Unique Human Feature*

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).

God created animals each after its own kind and gave them a means of communicating with one another. No one knows if all animals could decode all their sounds to mean something. However, for humans sounds are organised into speech and the speech conveys meaning.

One factor that distinguishes people from animals is the ability to use language to communicate. Language may also distinguish one community from the others. Communication is done in a context where the listener is able to infer the correct meaning from what is said. The language that is used should be one that transfers the information and makes it easy for the listener to process the meaning. Mother tongue choice and use has been in existence since the creation of humankind with speech communities later as families expanded. Communication that does not transfer information remains a closed piece of art and no one can enjoy its beauty. It is like music that has no tune to it. Nobody can know how to dance it.

Most multilingual people in this research said they use LWC so as to be inclusive of outsiders while on the other hand they use the MT to be culturally effective and

relevant. It is only children in school who used LWC as a way of obedience to institution and school rules.

The proponents of relevance theory have demonstrated the value of communicating with understanding (Hill 2000, 11-24; Sperber and Wilson 1995, 61-75). Language plays a role in every cultural sub-system and this helps to transfer meaning (Shaw 1988, 24ff). Religious and ideological factors that shape community values have to be shared in a manner that brings conviction to people. Language empowers them to share and receive this information. Cultural sub-systems and other aspects of life in society, order and group issues to assist people identify and relate with life in an organised and predictable manner. In all cases the leaders were emphatic that factors that determine their language choice included the desire to be inclusive and be relevant to speakers of other languages, seeking to be culturally and politically sensitive within their place of ministry and above all to ensure that the truth of God's Word is communicated.

### *Language and the Story of God's People*

They said to him, "From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God. For we have heard a report of him, and all that he did in Egypt" (Joshua 9:9).

Native language defines the smallest unit of a linguistic group that can mutually share information through language with fluency of speech and cognition of ideas. Byworth (1977) develops the idea that, how people live is shaped by their experience learned and expressed through language. The experiences help to develop peoples' knowledge in the supernatural. The kind of response people will give to their myths supply the information to fill in the gaps of what they cannot explain as human beings. Outsiders may see this as superstition, but for the insider who understands the language

and has same worldview, mysticism finds its meaning in religion, and religion is explained through mysticism and rituals.

The text above shows is an example of how people can hear of Gods work among others and accept His purposes in their own situation. Understanding and explaining the myths in their native mother tongues and experience in the light of God's Word helps to transmit their story and place themselves in Gods story. Telling individuals' story strengthens their faith in God as they together see how God has walked with them through history and revealed Himself to the ancestors. Through same language, the mysteries of God are past to the other people as they all share Gods message with His people. Therefore, every language contributes to the story and knowledge of God. The example of Abraham in Genesis 14 who went out as a missionary and a servant of the Most High God help us to understand this. He met Melchizedek; a traditional priest who knew God as the Almighty God. Their knowledge of God expanded what each knew and they each had enlarged knowledge about God. People develop their theology and social values to govern and guide the community based on individual experience with God. The languages explain and present their social worldviews that contribute to people's knowledge of God.

Christians need to be inclusive as they consider other people in their worship of God. The Bible has many verses that talk about considering and accepting other people. This is a sign of Christian love and care. For example, Romans 12:5, 10; 14:19; and Philippians 2:3<sup>1</sup>, talk of situations where the Christian has to give preference and regard to others so that other people can experience their Christian love and care. This is one of the principles those who are thinking of using language to include outsiders apply. The

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<sup>1</sup>There are at least 67 verses in the New Testament that have the phrase, "one another". In all of them it is either to care for, share with, love, consider, give preference, build, and many more. These verbs describe a situation where Christians ought to be mindful of other people for the building of God's Kingdom.

stranger will feel cared for, and have a sense of belonging to the body of Christ even if they are in a strange land. This factor which was mainly in town churches that I did research in is a factor that should be used effectively in order to have congregations that are not tribal in formation. LWC is a bridge to unity in diversity and church can be a good example in this context.

### ***Worship***

And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth’ (Rev. 5:9-10).

The purpose of worship is to glorify God. Church is only a place where people who speak different languages yet come together to express their worship. The experience results in holistic transformation. The transformation is the underlying purpose of God’s fulfilment among all peoples of the earth. Christianity disciplines people to be witnesses of God and do His mission among the nations. Multilingual situation is both an opportunity and a challenge to many within the context. This context for many people is a reality.

To respond to this need we have to find if the Bible has any references for us to learn from. Language is a tool the church use to accomplish its mandate through people as they move out. It only took the women in Kilifi to know that they can use their language to serve to get them into the choir as well as turn them into evangelist to visit the local hospital and pray with the sick. With the pastor in KKB encouraging the use of either language, more people found their place and could now speak of Gods’ goodness to their neighbours.

In the text above, all people were together for worship of God and not glorification of any single community or language. Multilingual communities exist to honour God by default and carry out their individual lifestyle as gifted individually. God's people are called to worship Him. When they get together their focus is on God and not any single community. It is Him that transforms the community and enables them to do what is good for all.

One way to study personality and related theories that affect it is by studying the language the people involved use. Beck, looking at how faith in Jesus influences personalities says, "Language not only reflects human experience, it is a vehicle with which we lift our praise to God; Psalms 119:13, a vehicle through which God communicates to us; Exodus 20:1, and the ultimate vehicle through which God brought salvation to a lost and dying world; John 1:1. Due to this role language plays, "...personality theories seek to learn about human personalities through a thorough review of the language humans use to describe the personalities of themselves and of others..." (Beck 1999, 25). Language is core to a people that people feel lost when they do not hear a familiar language. This is the same feeling that those who cannot hear feel when we cannot speak to them in their sign language. Sign language should be looked at as a unique MT, but that is not my concern as of now<sup>2</sup>.

People praise God not only with words, but also in doing things that improve human life and in an excellent manner. In this, there may be no Scripture passages that talk directly about language as relates to politics and economy in the Bible, but we can infer something from the Scripture. For example, in Esther 3:1-15, and Daniel 6, we see a situation where the people of God needed to survive and had to be careful within the political system they were in. However, even in that situation, the concern of God's

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<sup>2</sup> DOOR International which is a ministry focused on reaching the deaf people, together with other partners have are developing Scripture in sign language for the group. For more information refer to <http://www.doorinternational.com/>.

people was to worship and glorify God. Jesus Himself in Matthew 5:5 teaches about meekness which is important in certain political contexts. In all this, people need to know power is with God; Psalms 33:12, so that they follow their heritage in doing what is right in God's side.

Economically, the Bible has promises of God blessing His people if they obey His Word and do what is right. This is not about a prosperity Gospel but the recognition that God causes profits. He brings productivity in the land; Psalms 112:1-3. In 3 John 1:2, we see God's prosperity is good for His children. What this means for us is that it is God who allows his children to prosper, and it may be necessary for them to use a language or languages in order to acquire wealth for His purposes. Christians should be able to use other languages in order to grow economically; however, their end goal should be to glorify God even through their pursuit for wealth. This was well articulated by the musician who sings in his native MT but does not only give an interpretation of his songs while singing on stage, but on every truck, he puts some song in other languages as well as LWC. This should be encouraged other people even to hear and learn through the music in other languages. People who had moved to other places were also learning the local MTs so that they could do business with the people easily. The church needs to encourage this for religious purposes as well.

God has given each people a language so that they may use it to fulfil His mandates, worship Him and show His glory. For those who are multilingual, they need wisdom to know when and where to use which language. It is part of their worship to God. No one should feel their worship to God is inferior because of how much their language has been rated by speakers of other languages. The women in Kilifi had found a place to worship and serve God when they realised their MT was sufficient for ministry in their context 'KLFG'. Likewise when people in KKB realised that all any language could be used in the service, they felt free to use either 'KKBFG'.

***Summary***

In this chapter, I have attempted to show the place language use and choices as presented in Scripture. References throughout the Bible indicate how God utilises language to build relationship between Himself and people, and among people themselves. Reflections on the Bible in this chapter were not meant to be exhaustive but to set a biblical context for language choice. It is meant to assist the church in Kenya appreciate language choice as a missiological strategy we can all learn from.

I have presented examples of how the factors in chapter 4 find relevance in the Bible and how these could be used for people to understand not only their context but the Word of God as well. Understanding language from a biblical view will help people appreciate its role in missional development of the church in Kenya. This is the topic to which I turn in Chapter 6.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **MISSIONAL LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH IN KENYA**

During the data analysis, I started seeing themes that lead me to ask, what these findings mean for the Church in Kenya. In this Chapter, I will share my reflections on the implications of this research on the body of believers in Kenya as part of the developing village world. I will attempt to demonstrate the significance of my work and the contribution it will make to the academia in the field of social linguistics, personal and community transformation.

I will do this as it relates to linguistic decisions people face, language and ministry, transformational communities, cost of context verses cost of meaning, covenant communities, and empress of outsiders. I will address myself to fears and concerns about use of MT.

#### *Linguistic Decisions*

The group grid as developed by Sherwood Lingenfelter explains how social games people play in any society helps them know how to relate and function well (Lingenfelter 2008, 62). I will apply this to language choice decisions people make. In every society, at any one given moment people have choices they make as they relate with others. As, I write, I have to make a choice of words and phrases. I keep asking myself, which word is appropriate for my writing. People in mixed language community face same tension which results in determining language choice. Borrowing form Lingenfelter, I call it linguistic games.

The more people are fluent in languages of wider communication and native mother tongues, the more they can operate in several fields linguistically. It means they are more functional linguistically. They become more effective in the society. As they move away from the centre their choices are limited and tend to operate in fewer fields. This is so because most of the things people do within their natural setting are considered as part of their social life. This is what was reported by a musician who uses language as he considers the mixture of languages in a congregation when singing, 'NRBi4'. He has to choose language in order to stay relevant in his ministry. Language choice remains a political game for people who are involved. The political factor therefore in my context overrides most of the other factors.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Patron</b>
Position in society and over others	Preserver of community values and morals
<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Identity</b>
Access to wealth, information and global world.	Defines who the insiders and outsiders are and are treated

**FIGURE 2**  
**LANGUAGE ROLE IN SOCIETY**

Figure 2 demonstrates these games as authority, patron, facilitator and identity. Language within the four quadrates defines how people operate in social life. Knowledge

of a language gives authority to control others; it gives access to information, and wealth. It is the patron of a community's values, and morals. It preserves and gives people their identity while keeping off the outsides.

Most people operate in the authority quadrant. However, there are times when they also operate in the other three. Multilingual people have advantage in that they can operate to some degree in all. The kind of language a person is fluent in gives certain authority not only of control but access to information and other privileges. The concern for Christians who have this privilege is to consider how they use it for God's glory. Many times people lament over eroding social morals, but it seems to be related to how language is used to pass values on to younger generations. What concepts do the descriptive terms used have and how the people understand them? How do the people identify themselves? It is good to note that for Christians our principle identity is in Christ and cultural identity and affiliation is only complimentary as people of dual citizenship in theological terms.

Knowing how to play these games helps people to decide when to apply which factor. For most people all factors will be applied depending on the other players in the game. These players will include not only those who are being communicated to but who else is present, may be a government agent or a senior leader who may feel shamed if a junior use the MT instead of LWC.

### *Language and Ministry*

As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, language is a tool for communication to share information. People respond to what they hear based on the degree of understanding. Response is a result of negotiation between what they hear and perceive to be correct based on their worldview. The new knowledge hopefully expands their worldview and they act in a different manner.

Leaders involved in this research, underscored the fact that language choice should be one that promotes peoples' understanding. Relevant and contextualised language choice is necessary for this to happen. The understanding brings about transformation that others can see and aspire for. In Christianity, this change is what is ultimate in this life. The change will transform the community and bring it back to God, its creator.

Christian mission is not a matter of inviting or compelling people to become Westerners. ...it is inviting people to become more fully human through the transforming power of the gospel that fits all because it answers to the most basic need of all and restores the common glory of what it is to be truly human- a man or woman made in the image of God (Christopher 2006, 424).

People in urban Churches need to recognise it will always be multilingual yet people still belong and identify with specific social and linguistic communities. The message of the Gospel should make meaning to them in any language they choose to engage within. The responsibility of the church is to enable them to understand God's teachings. It is therefore important that the sermons as well as songs are presented in contextualized language or languages. The artist in Nairobi presents that ideal situation where interpretations can be done to aid those who are not familiar with the other languages being used. It is not only a principle of inclusivity and cultural sensitivity but seeking to reach people with God's message.

The church needs to help Christians to see their first identity in Christ and not in linguistic or social groupings. This may appear as social redemption from colonial past and political present as well as spiritual liberation. Redemption is what God's Word is about. Jesus commanded His disciples to carry on doing it until all people have heard. In communities that are mainly oral, hearing in native mother tongue is much better and easier than hearing in a second language. It gives identity to those who otherwise feel despised. For those who may have failed in formal education, which was mainly in

English, it reminds them of their past failure and continuing examination of their intellect. Native mother tongue presents a positive view of who they are while inviting them to take part in missions as one among the participants in God's work.

### *Transformational Communities*

People who reflect on Scripture and evaluate their experiences in the light of God's Word seek God's glory in the community. The Scripture is the reference, while the community is the place where they carry out their mission. Transformation into the character of Christ is a basic teaching of the Christian message. People benefit more from the Word of God when they take part in blending it in their social life. Contextualisation needs to consider the language of theologising as an all-inclusive process. This kind of receiver participation in contextualisation is what Hiebert (1987, 104-112) has rightfully referred to as "critical contextualisation". For some the language of choice may be a lingua franca, for most it may be native mother tongue, while for others it will be a mixture.

Language choice as well as the process of contextualisation requires the participation of the people. As some respondents in KKA observed, the young people are not part of the service because they may have felt the process did not include them. On the other hand people in KKB when visited the second time they felt they owned the process and were part of what was happening as language had stopped being an issue but the message one was sharing. It is such knowledge that releases laypeople to view reaching out to others not as pastors work but something all believers should take part in as we saw in KLF.

When contextualisation is not done together with the people, they tend to take the other religion just as an extra deity or an item to add on the shelf. This does not just bring "cultural pluralism" (Hiebert 1987, 104) but is a danger to the contextualisation process.

This “split-level” Christian maturity of individuals involved. Many people who have not understood the Scriptures live a split-level faith. They practice Christianity on Sunday but throughout the week they are doing everything else that is according to traditional religion and not in line with the teachings of Scripture. During my research I attended a village law court and at one stage I asked someone why they had done something despite the fact that they were Christians. He boldly told me, “At times we have to put Christ aside and seek help somewhere else. When Sunday comes we can go repent and be Christians again”<sup>1</sup>. The somewhere else meant consulting witches and diviners.

As Ralph Fasold observed, “Language is a guide to social reality” (1990, 50). It predicts and influences how people perceive their faith in God. Each factor that determines choice is a reality that has shaped their situation and they have to be sensitive to it. People live out their faith within the context of their community which has shaped their understanding of who God is and does. Before Christianity reaches a people, they already have a view of God in their myths and value system (Kato 1985; Conder-Frazer, Kang, and Parrett 2004). Use of African terms in translation and preaching, introduced the God of Christianity as the one the people had been looking for. They had talked about Him in oral terms but the missionary had helped put His name on paper. Bediako says,

Our mother tongue is the language in which God speaks to each of us. He does not speak in a sacred language, but in ordinary language, so that we may hear Him and realise that this gospel is about us and that we have been invited to join a company drawn from every people, tribe, nation and language; Rev 7:9 (2006, 3-4).

Respondents said native MT goes deeper and it is sweeter. This depth needs to be explored to share Gods’ truth.

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<sup>1</sup>This was a case at a local chiefs’ place in my village on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 2010. One brother had been accused of bewitching and causing the death of his brother’s child. The elder brother advised them to seek the help of a diviner to determine the cause of the death. All those involved were members of an evangelical church. In the church they preach in Kiswahili which many people do not comprehend well.

Mbiti takes an even more radical position when he says for the African, “conversion to new religions like Christianity and Islam must embrace his language, thought patterns, fears, social relationships, attitudes and philosophical disposition” (1969, 3). “His language” in modern day may not be native language but that which one learned first and is comfortable to communicate in. Religion that does not consider language of choice and use creates a situation for “*polyfaiths*”<sup>2</sup>, just like in a polygamous marriage, where men commit to more than one wife.

Use of multiple languages will enable people to reflect on the things of God together. This will enable each individual to understand better. Through their shared experiences, they will enrich and enlarge their theology as well as appreciate what God has been doing through others (Walter C. Wright 2005, 94). The church in Kenya can promote positive co-existence where people enjoy and celebrate their diversity. The church will strengthen its presence in the society through taking advantage of its numbers. The power to identify and work with small numbers to equip the many will multiply the capacity to witness.

### ***Cost of Context Verses Meaning***

When responding to cultural issues, people respond in a certain prescribed manner. People have a linguistic sieve in their mind’s through which actions are processed before they are played out. Angrosino and Crane talk of five different cultural ways people respond to issues namely, compulsory, preferred, typical, alternative and restricted (1974, 147). Language choice in Kenya can be analysed through these response models.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a term I use to refer to one person having allegiance to many faiths, just like one man with many wives.

In official government places people choose ‘compulsory language’, with only one proper thing to do in the circumstance, to use one of the official languages which happen to be either Kiswahili or English. People will use the language that is acceptable even when they make grammatical and lexical mistakes. However, I observed by attending public meetings, that when they know the senior most officers understand their MT, they choose MT which is the typical language. At church people choose ‘preferred language’, where they have several acceptable choices but one is expressed more frequently than the rest. In this situation people either opt to go by what they know the policy says or what the leadership does because they want to show solidarity with the rest. It is a better way to be inclusive so that strangers find their place in the new context.

Still at Church others choose ‘typical language’ situation, where there are several acceptable choices but the speaker prefers one over others. This is what I saw in different language assigned services. For example I observed a worship service in English where Kiswahili or MT was being used and vice versa, People know one language is preferred but it is fine to use any other. They switch languages as is necessary to help communicate. At the funeral services and within the community I observed native mother tongue choice was the most typical language for people to use even those who were very educated and fluent in English. Some, however still used English and Kiswahili.

As a growing trend of code switching, the ‘alternative language’ becomes a situation of several acceptable choices, with no difference in either value or frequency of expression or use. ‘*Sheng*’<sup>3</sup> takes this place. Many multilingual young people operate in this category. They do not consider any language to be superior over others. For them, all languages serve the same purpose; communication. ‘*Sheng*’ helps them to communicate faster without wasting time thinking of the right word in a single language. They are

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<sup>3</sup> *Sheng*, as mentioned earlier, is a mixture of as many available local languages as possible with English, Kiswahili and other local languages. However, there is not just one version of *Sheng*. Rather, it is as diverse as the regions in Kenya where it is spoken, and the social and age groups who use it.

using the languages they know to perform a service much faster and better. ‘*Sheng*’ has become socially relevant and comfortable to use. It communicates faster to those who know it. If this trend grows in the church then it will enhance Scripture understanding for those who may be struggling with language choice. ‘*Sheng*’ vocabulary will grow faster for the down dwellers that have exposure to many languages.

As people make choices a number of factors may be influencing them to learn towards a specific choice. It may be that it not just meaning alone but context too. They want to be sure they are safe and they are not putting any other person in danger. This as we saw during my data collection, some people did not want to take part because of the experiences the country had just gone through with post-election violence where language was one of the issues used to isolate and harm people from other communities.

### ***Covenant Communities***

For Christians, community relationships are practical in the light of the Scripture. Communities are expected to promote unity and harmonious co-existence. Covenant communities whose identity and purpose is founded in the desire to establish the kingdom of God will be ideal. As Africa becomes more multicultural and multilingual in its formation, people have to build strong harmonious societies. For covenant communities Lingenfelter says, “The key lies in building relationships that lead to trust, influence, and encouragement for the work and purpose of God” (2008, 140). The community is becoming more diverse and working with people whose worldviews are different. In becoming a covenant community, people become strong in their resolve to see change. There is increasing respect for others who are of different views, there is accountability in the group, and people of different languages begin to understand better as there is strong dependency on the group. People begin to accept each others’ weaknesses and are willing to share their strength for common good. Africa’s capacity to

depend on one another has helped it survive hard times. People who acknowledge that the walls of division have been removed and are one, although from different backgrounds; according to Ephesians 2:14, build communities that accept others from other backgrounds. They are able to co-exist with no or little prejudice.

Trust in people for one another and for Godly values requires surrender of self in order to live for others. Their character will influence others and impact the community. Covenant communities that are build on trust will result into transformed societies who will live in harmony irrespective of language choice. Within the context of this research, applying covenant community principle will be the best way to be inclusive as is the concern of many preachers yet at the same time recognises the God's demand for people to be who they are and serve Him in that community.

### ***Embracing Outsiders***

What will it take the church in Africa to remain a unique community yet embrace the outsider? Some people think true Christianity one losing all their cultural aspects of life including native mother tongue. There is talk of having a global culture of which no one knows what it is. Maybe it's their effort of defining being inclusive. The question to ask is, can it be possible for one to be truly Christians and express their cultural aspects of life in a positive manner? Is it true that to be a good Christian one should no longer identify with the community God put me in?

Accommodating others calls upon people to agree on certain values that enable them to live together despite their differences. For Christians their faith in Christ is one thing that binds them together. They together do His will to build God's Kingdom thereby participating in transforming the community as agents of God (Lingenfelter 1996). In this manner, people use language for the service of God to reach other people with the message of the good news. Ministry as proclamation is done to all who need to

hear. The message is therefore proclaimed in the MT as well as LWC so that people can understand and take part in the making of a community of believers who are building God's kingdom. Active participation allows people to identify with others. It moves ministry beyond proclamation to service to God's people. The people who had moved from other communities to live especially in KLF, NRB and KKA felt they had been welcome as they did not feel as though language was a barrier. They felt the native speakers were taking care of their concerns through use of LWC. As one respondent in Nairobi remarked, "Use of LWC allows me to serve people from other communities".

Churches with multiple cultures and languages have to purpose to be all-inclusive. People have freedom to express their feelings and at the same time feel that they belong and are appreciated within the family of believers. God's message aims to free those who hear it so that they can express their fears and joys to God and to other people. The church promotes social cohesion and commitment through rejoicing and mourning together. The people's experiences are audibly shared through language. The church allows itself to grow together. The Scriptures should be accepted in other forms of medium for those who cannot read.

### *Navigating Language Fears*

In the literature review, I encountered thoughts that seemed to put native mother tongues and languages of wider communication against each other as competitors. To some degree they may be true. However, reflecting on this missiologically, it becomes clear that all languages should be complementing each other to enhance sharing and understanding of information. Not to address the fears will be doing my research a disservice and some people may consider it as one sided. Whether real or imagined, some negative perspectives contribute to isolation and non-use of native mother tongues in the Church family.

### **Tribalism Verses Nationalism**

The reasons against native mother tongue choice included the possibility that the choice of MTs could promote tribalism. People are not sure if it encourages nation building and patriotism. These groups of people think that using one “foreign” language will foster nationhood. There is no documentation of any research to proof this. However, Fasold observed that people think, “If virtually everyone in a country spoke a common language, then life of the nation would be much easier to carry on” (1984, 247). This is not true when we consider countries like Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia<sup>4</sup> who speak one language but have had some of the worst wars in modern history.

From a religious view use of one language does not necessary mean spiritual understanding and transformation. It does not mean unity of faith either. Mansour (1993) has the view that in Africa language is used for ideological control. Ideological control does not necessarily mean easy management of national or spiritual affairs. Nor does it mean understanding of the ideologies. At times it is used for withholding the right information from the people so that they may remain subjects of the leaders and do what the leader says, think and want. When people do not understand a language well enough, they suffer knowledge malnutrition. Information control is not only in political arena but in religious circles too. This was the situation within the Catholic Church till 1964 when the Vatican allowed use of native languages for ministry.

English and Kiswahili have value to nation building and present some form of uniform manner of carrying out national events. This should not be equated to unity. On the other hand as one respondent noted, “Language has nothing to do with tribalism. It just shows how we love ourselves and appreciate who we are. In turn we can love others

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<sup>4</sup> The country of Somalia has been in civil war since 1991, while Rwanda witnessed genocide in 1994 that left over 800,000 people dead in three months. The war in Rwanda spilt over to Burundi and people still suffer from its effects. In all these countries, they had one native mother tongue and one language of wider communication.

as the Bible tells us" NRBi6. Language has to be promoted for its purpose in society and not wrong value people have given it.

Pastors want to enlighten the masses through teaching them to be fluent in LWC but their calling is not to teach languages but instead to teach them the things of God. Language is a tool to achieve the desired goal which is to have a mature body of Christ. This does not mean any one choice will automatically deposit Bible knowledge into people. People have to corporate and allow God's spirit to do His work. Negative talk against any language choice is a scheme used by a few for their own interests. The church has a duty to help restore the good value of language as God gave to people.

Sperber's relevance theory demands that any new information must be used either to reinforce or challenge existing ideas and "Languages are indispensable not for communication, but for information processing; this is their essential function" (1995, 174). Therefore, language choice promotes self-image for people to communicate and sets common ground for both speaker and listener. Speakers identify with their audience and the information. Languages of choice build the right bridge between the speaker and their information and with their audience. It is easy for people who have always operated in their native mother tongue, which is dominant not to seek to know the struggles those in multilingual settings go through. Proper language choice helps people to "Understand how the gospel of Christ relates to all human cultural traditions" according to Bediako (1998, 56). Understanding will result in communities that are God fearing as they find their direction and interpretation from the Word of God.

### **Originality Verses Tribalism**

Some people have a view that the use of native mother tongues brings division in the church. This may be how they access spiritual maturity among the people as shown in

their character. Spiritual maturity needs to match the degree with which people are able to allow difference of opinions and forms of expression in their midst. Andrew Kirk says,

A mature social community will allow as much difference as possible within the confines of a coherent political and legal system, and will investigate as dispassionately as possible all claims to wrongful treatment on cultural or ethnic grounds (2000, 79).

Churches in a multilingual setting need to operate in such manner that no one community feels disadvantaged due to their language choice. Use of many languages that I am referring to as ‘cocktail of languages’ could offer some solution. All linguistic communities feel none is favoured and all are capable to communicate God’s Word effectively and accurately. One respondent said, “Use of MT makes the message precise and to the point. It brings out the real meaning. All languages should be proud of this fact and accept it” KKAi3. He went ahead to say, “Those who think it is tribalism, syncretic and shallow have a problem accepting who they are. They need help to understand God’s creation and its variety”.

Divisions arise when dominant tribes and language groups have privileges over those who belong to minor groups. However, when people are able to articulate themselves, knowing that they are different yet equal with everyone else in Gods’ site, they value that gesture and seek to give the same to others. If by any chance choice of minority languages will be looked at as ethnicity and tribalism, then the big language communities like English are worst as they not only make their language the preferred choice everywhere; instead, they have turned it to a commodity for export and not just medium of communication. I am using English as an example because I spend so much money to buy it. I am therefore able communicate with others outside my native mother tongue. In my home environment, use of the MT is the most appropriate. Use of native mother tongues is a positive thing in its context. I process most things through my native mother tongue. People should not look at it as tribalism. It is not the language people

choose that brings conflict but the attitudes towards other people with a different choice. Negative attitudes towards other communities lead people to do bad things to others it is blamed other factors like language. This should be discouraged and good values and appreciation of others promoted.

People who have understood the message will be able to share it with others in a language that is common to them. As the musician said, “It is the best way for me to understand the message I want to share with other people. I process it in my mother tongue then translates it to them in other languages” ‘NBi4’. Positive attitude will increase as people willingly gain knowledge about other cultures and languages. This will remove any prejudice and stereotypes about other languages.

### **Primitive Language Verse Developed Ones**

Some people tend to wonder whether African languages are adequate vehicles for carrying out theological enquiry. Timothy Wachira, in his unpublished<sup>5</sup> article, notes that people can only sufficiently understand God if that God is explained in a language they understand best. These means African languages are sufficient to explain the concept of God. Those who doubt need to understand that language as one of God’s creations has no fault. People in multilingual settings see language value and beauty when they accept this fact and promote positive of all God’s creation.

The principle of incarnation is very critical in helping people understand God’s involvement in individual societies. No culture or language has the capacity to sufficiently articulate who God is. However, God revealed himself to all human beings through a Jewish culture and the Hebrew language. Moreover, God desires to reveal himself to every nation, every tribe, every language, not because they have the capacity

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<sup>5</sup> These ideas were shared at a Bible translation public promotion day in Nairobi Kenya on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2009 in a speech titled, “theologising in African languages”. At the time, Dr. Wachira was Vice chancellor of St. Paul’s Christian University. He is currently Vice chancellor at Daystar University.

to communicate who He is but because He is in the business of reconciling people of all languages to himself. God uses these limited and fallen languages to reveal himself so that He can redeem people. Jesus left his glory, took on our humanity with all its accompanying language and cultural limitations, so that he may reveal God to us.

The representations of God we have in the Bible are largely Jewish and Greek metaphors. Human beings cannot adequately comprehend God, but he has chosen to reveal himself using cultural modes of a people. In Psalms and other passages of the Bible, we know God as a shepherd, lion, hen, thunder, rock, and more. All these are human representations of God in the first Bible culture. He is truly more than all-human imagination can call Him. Nevertheless, He seeks to be understood. Hence, God takes up human representations in languages and in Christ, he takes human form so that it may be possible for all to know him as we see in John 1:14.

Kenyans need to know God. God has revealed himself well enough through creation to them as well as to any other people. There is need to break down into local ones, the Semitic Jewish, and Greco-Roman renderings; metaphors, in scripture into local languages. African's are intrinsically worshippers, and as Mbiti says, "African soil is rich enough to have germinated its own original religious perception" (1969, 30). Mbiti is of the view that true conversion takes place in an atmosphere of holistic transformation. He says, "...conversion to new religions like Christianity and Islam must embrace his language, thought patterns, fears, social relationships, attitudes and philosophical disposition. If that conversion is to make a lasting impact upon the individual and his community" (1969, 3). Religion is what is lived and shared and not what we keep in a book. Christianity has to be lived out. Wachira says,

The African desires to understand God and if this need is to be well met, then we must endeavour not only to put scripture in vernacular, but also to facilitate the process of theologising in those languages. There is a need

for a new thinking in African languages which will yield African renderings of who Yahweh is (2009).

In the recent past, we have seen significant shift within churches in Kenya. For example, in the churches in the city use of English or Kiswahili and inclusion of vernacular songs is becoming popular. It removes the ‘mystical’ character of foreign words and expressions that sounded more like ritual chants. When liturgy is conducted in a language most people do not understand, various prayers could easily be mistaken for magical chants. When the same is communicated in the vernacular words and expressions become clearer, words become a means of communication and not a spell to invoke the divine. People then think about what they hear and its impact to their lives. Songs are a very good mode of communicating the gospel message especially when they are in a language that speaks to the heart of the hearers. Therefore, the challenge is for musicians to write songs in the heart language based on scripture to ensure that worship songs have theological teaching. Africans process issues and pass message through song. That is why in Africa, there are songs for all events. This will help those who cannot read to get God’s message in their heart language.

### **Challenge of Syncretism**

Some western schooled theologians raise the issue of native MT being a vehicle of syncretism. They feel that African languages are heavily laden with cultural animistic baggage that may negate the true picture of biblical theology and may open the floodgates of syncretism. This may be a black spot in theological training that needs correction. It may be a case of trying to defend Gods course. Wachira says,

A prejudiced mind tends to divide people as those who know God and others who are idol worshippers, those with inferior and those with superior languages, and those with cultures that are developed and those whose cultures are primitive and tribal. It is precisely because of this possibility of syncretism that we must allow the African culture to be truly confronted by the gospel (2009).

Theologising in African languages allows this process to take place, a process that includes careful listening to the culture of a people, intelligibility and meaningfulness of a particular articulation of the Gospel within that very context (Kato 1985; Tieneou 1982). This view in some case may hinder people from engaging with scriptures in native mother tongues forgetting that English has its own weaknesses. It would be good to look at how those areas would be made relevant within scriptural boundaries.

Syncretism is always taking place in human life. As Charles Kraft has observed, “All theologizing is culture bound” (1981, 291). What the church needs to consider is the good aspects of syncretism and press itself up to respond to the negative with the truth that will set people free. Relevant language, communicating the relevant truth, in the relevant context is what will empower the people to receive the freedom.

### **Lack of Supplement Materials in MT**

There is a great lack of written materials in native mother tongues to supplement Bible reading. As much as this is a genuine concern, missiologically it does not authenticate the non-use of native mother tongues which may communicate better to some people within the church. It may not be possible to carry out teaching in native mother tongues for obvious practical reasons. It may also take quite an effort to write theological books in the vernaculars. However, developing small booklets that address a particular issue of concern to the Christian community should be encouraged. There is need to encourage development of bible study material in languages of the Kenyan people. The materials need to address cultural, social, political and economical concerns in the community, as the factors I isolated in Chapter four are developed to ensure appropriate choice of language in churches across Kenyan and even the whole of Africa.

This type of material would be helpful in facilitating groups within different congregations to think through biblical concepts in their own contexts. This process gives

the believer, a “metacultural framework that enables him or her to translate the biblical message into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of another culture” (Hiebert 1987, 109) The result is a new theology that helps people to know God better as He reveals himself to people in their context. People then establish and articulate for themselves truths and stories about God. As each share their story and experience of God, it enlarges their understanding and develop their theology of a God who is active in their community. People may not know they are theologising; for they have not had that term in their language, but they would be developing basic biblical lifestyle that is also in harmony with their context. The individuals’ story becomes Gods story and doing for His people and God’s story happens to be what His people have experienced. There language becomes a vehicle of Gods story.

The church needs to develop indigenous theological reflections in dialogue with indigenous traditions for pastors in each language community. This may need to be extended to also focus on creative writings and songs that would enrich theological depth, to produce or promote ‘a living theology’ of great value for fruitful living. It will involve storytelling as these are mainly oral societies. Encouraging theologising in MT does not seek in any way to underestimate the advantage of learning other languages. People in KKB had been using LWC as one way to assist other people learn the language in order to be able to communicate with others within the region. However, when they realised that even MT had value, they started using it at church. This gave them a double benefit as they can now share their faith and also learn another language.

The message has to be translated and presented in an appropriate language to people. Every language has particular contextual inferences and expressions unique to it. “Christian faith is about translation” (Walls 1996, 28). The idioms and concepts unique to this language may not always find exact equivalent in the ‘receptor language’ into which the original is translated. This fact underscores the significance of the original language.

### ***Missional Response***

God has spoken to His people through incarnation according to Lamin Sanneh (1989, 1995) and Andrew Walls (1996). Bible translation in a language people understand is one of the ways God speaks to his people. He wants to be understood well. Nelson Mandela<sup>6</sup> was once asked to explain what motivated him to learn Afrikaans while he was in prison, He replied, “If you speak to a man in a language he understands, you speak to his head. If you speak to a man in his own language, you speak to his heart.” Christianity unlike any other religion seeks to reach people in their mother tongue and not the founders’ language as it is in other religions Christianity was born in a multilingual situation; Acts 2:11. At one moment, the church viewed the Bible as a tool for the clergy and not the layperson. With time, the missionaries viewed the Bible as “a book that the common man should read daily to be able to understand and thus obey. If necessary for understanding, translation was done into the language of the common people. Scripture was to be used both privately and publicly for evangelism and Christian growth” (Sim 1998, 30). It is through the use of MT that Jesus, “comes to all men and those who accept him he makes them to be sons of God” (John 1: 12 paraphrased).

Language is the main medium through which ideas are transmitted from one generation to another and from one person to another. It is therefore important that this medium is understood. The kinds of idioms, language structure, use of language in relation to the speakers’ role and status in relation to the listener has to be well established. When people share a worldview and language yet have to communicate in a language with a different worldview, it is possible for them to misunderstand each other. Differences in the manner they both use certain words; assuming that they are referring to the same thing could bring confusion.

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<sup>6</sup> I have not yet found the official source of these words quoted often to have been said by him. Several internet sides quote the words.

People learn morals, values and laws, through terms whose definition is common knowledge in the society. This shared worldview shapes the way in which they define life as a whole. Anderson suggest that minds are developed through first language, therefore native mother tongue plays a central role in determining how someone understands religious teaching (Anderson 1995). Religious teaching is about morals. Use of native mother tongue reinforces the teaching. In all societies, besides ritual, language is the main medium through which religious teaching is passed on. African being very religious, they have many words that define their religious experience. It would be easy to teach them how to relate to the God of their newfound faith if it were done in their native mother tongue. It cannot be true to think that only languages of wider communication would be sufficient to teach religion to people. The church should promote use of many languages and encourage pastors to do simultaneous translations where possible.

Bible translation in text form and simultaneous translations when preaching is only a strategy for the communicators to reach the people with Gods story. It is the responsibility of the church through its activities to make disciples in every community for God. The church is a missionary body whose mandate is to carry out the work of its master. Her member reach out to all people who use a multiplicity of languages to demonstrate their love for God through utilising their language choice for good relationship with God and other people.

### **Missional Church**

Missional church is that group of Christians who know and understand their position and mandate in God's Kingdom. They live as people on pilgrimage knowing they have to give an account of their actions as people of God. All believers are witnesses of Christ wherever they are. There is no division of lay Christians and 'professional missionaries' as concerns being witnesses of Christ. All believers are on a mission to

represent God. All Christians are involved in the great commission<sup>7</sup>. The concept is routed in *Missio Dei* which is the sending and empowering by God for His work. Darrell Guder considers missional church as one that, "...relates constantly and dynamically both to the gospel and its contextual reality" (1998, 18). A missional church is that which recognises its identity and purpose within the society. "Regardless of the actual shape and name adopted, the local congregation is the basic unit of Christian witness....The gospel is always to be embodied by the people of God in a particular place" (2000, 148).

In the light of this definition, Christians are missionaries as they live out Matthew 28: 19-20 in obedience to Jesus' command. The church in Kenya needs to prepare its members to play its missional role through language of choice.

### **Missional Leadership for Language Change**

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the people; the nations will rally to him and his place of rest will be glorious (Isaiah 11: 9-10).

Outward change has to begin with the individual's inward renewal and change. . It is the leader who has witnessed true change and knows its impact that will invite others and lead them on the change path. Personal change is vital for effective leadership to engage people in accepting healthy multilingual co-existence. Healthy co-existence will help people appreciate the beauty that comes with diversity. Complacency that denies people opportunity to seek out appropriate timely change eats like a cancer. People's hopes for change vanish with time and they resign to despair. Leadership keeps people's hopes a life. People then rally behind the leader to accomplish tasks.

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<sup>7</sup>The Oxford English Dictionary defines missional as "relating to or connected with a religious mission, missionary". Several who have written on this see missional as a contemporary adjective for missionary.

One factor that will help bring this is the promise of harmony in the community through understanding of the Good News irrespective of language of choice. This promise would help create positive attitudes towards other native languages and cultures. It is for the good of the community as, “A missional church must clearly identify and resist all attempts to equip the church merely for its maintenance and security” (Guder 1998, 268). In this light, a missional church will see multilingualism as a, “God given opportunity to shape ourselves for God’s mission” (1998, 268). The church in Kenya needs to seize this opportunity for the common good.

Change is forever with people everywhere. A missional church sets itself as an adaptive structure for service and provides opportunity to reach others. It is important for missional leadership to dream and create a positive change climate for people to feel welcome to the change game. Change environment is culturally appropriate. The leaders create and manage the process for positive results (Kane 2005). As adapted in Figure 3, leaders define the situation, cast a vision and set the strategy to get people in the community to work together for the desired change.

In language issues the leaders show the value of using different languages in multilingual situation. Plueddemann suggests in transforming a community three things take place within a given cultural environment; understanding of situation, analysing it, and having a vision to get to the desired end (2009, 191). This is adapted as in Figure 3.

A lot of personal, community, and self-evaluation take place in the process. Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, proposes, to manage the process well, the leader has to act and not react to situations, have a clear picture of what the end should look like, seek to understand other people and their feelings and go out of their way to influence people. The things that must be done should be done first so as to give hope (Covey 1990).



FIGURE 3

### STAGES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

(Adapted from Plueddemann 2009, 191)

I will work with leaders to find what the strategy should look like in my context. It is a spiritual issue that has to be done in the light of God's word, leading, and empowerment by those who totally depend on him (Sanders 1994). A spiritual mind frame will be important for language issues that are dealing with attitudes and affect people's understanding of God's word. Discipleship demands personal and group reflection on the Word of God. People reflect well in a language that has shaped their worldviews. These worldviews need transformation, Romans 12:2. This kind of transformation ensure the church remains missional asking themselves what it will take for people to participate in mission as a lifestyle and not an activity.

### Who's Mission?

All Christian missions, is God's mission as defined by Scripture. It is the missional task of the Church to make disciples of all nations so that people worship and

glorify God in harmony. A missional church prepares its members to be witnesses always, everywhere, to everybody by God's own power and will. This brings transformation in the community and expands the Kingdom of God. The expansion result into quantitative and qualitative growth.

The church does mission which is the activity of God himself. Mission comes from God by his nature acting through His people by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a missiology that seeks to be relevant in a people's age and day. David Bosch says mission, "Has to be multidimensional in order to be credible and faithful to its origins and nature" (1991, 512). For Bosch, this relevant missiology is what the Church needs to be doing. Jesus told the disciples, "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you", John 20:21. This does not apply to any class of professional missionaries but all Christians. It releases people to apply their individual gifting to serve community. Missional living calls on Christians to live community life that demonstrates God's peace. The practical implication is that each believer and local congregation plays a role in doing their part (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006).

For language choice, it will take on different forms, through different appreciation of others. Each cultural and linguistic expression has to be accepted. Hiebert and Meneses say, "One thing is clear. There will be no one form of church that serves as the model for all others. There will be house churches, store-fronts, local congregations, and mega churches; ethnic churches and integrated churches; churches that stress high ritual order and those that emphasise informality. No one of them can serve the spiritual needs of all people. And each of them has its own temptations and faults" (1995, 328). For the church to be effective and relevant in such context there needs to be self-understanding and acceptance of the context people are in. Hiebert summarises it as,

We must proclaim divine revelation to people in their diverse settings...so the divine revelation must take flesh in human languages and

cultures....Both refer to more than a simple translation of the gospel into different languages and cultures in the way that one translates a history book or a science text. Rather, they point to the embodiment of the living Word in human culture and social settings in such a way that its divine nature and power are not lost. True contextualisation is more than communication. It is God working in the hearts of people, making them new and forming them into a new community. It is God's Word transforming their lives, their societies, their cultures (1995, 370).

God's Word in different languages is important for people who seek to be witnesses in a multi system. It is not about language and culture, but a community of people under one God. It is their care for one another that bring harmony and peace in the community. To be a missional community the followers of Jesus seek to live in such way that those of other communities feel welcome.

The missional church defines itself in terms of its mission, making the gospel become incarnate within specific cultures and languages. The church mutates itself to affect and infect all who come in conduct with the members. Whereas the message of the gospel remains the same, the context is different and Christian response to the context has to be relevant; what Baven and Schroeder refer to as constants in context (2004). God prepares the church to serve and witness as carriers of His love to all people. Each community of believers is prepared to be able to minister to those within their reach. The nature of such community includes, showing signs of God's reign, carry God's image, and be a witness. People are aware of what God is already doing in their context, and want to discover what God might be leading them to do (Branson and Martinez 2011, 66).

### **Missional Message**

As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, the concepts arising out of this research and their implications for the church have meaning in the light of God's Word. Jesus is the foundation of the church. He teaches those he has called and then sends them to go and

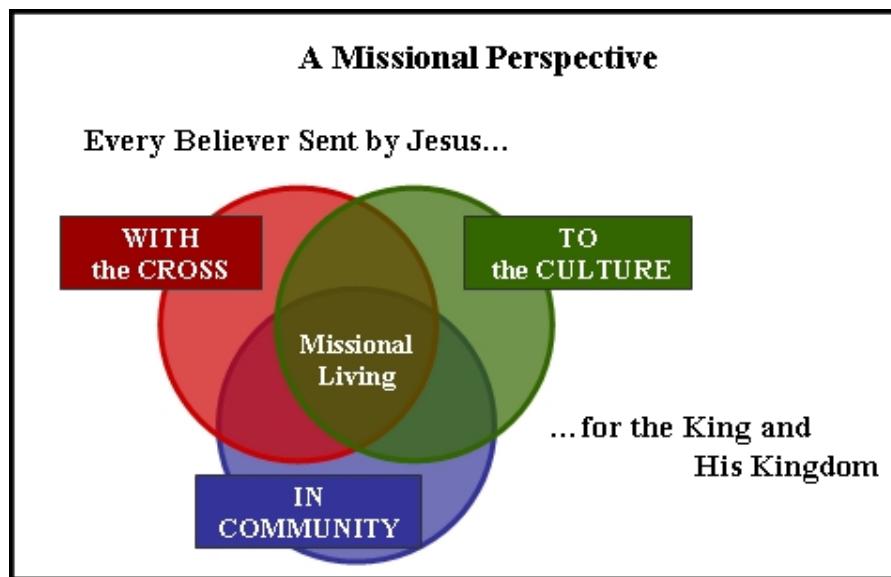
share His message with others. Believers have been called to be with Jesus so that he may prepare them to be His witnesses wherever they are. The time to be with him is a learning time. Christians are renewed through reading or hearing God's Word. Their worldviews are transformed. Once people are transformed, they go to people of all languages and social groups and share the Good News. The people of the world are not of one language and each needs to understand in order to obey and become a follower.

Jesus sends his disciples to speak His message as the master. They use His methods and not their own. The message of Jesus is only unique to people because of His work on the cross. It is not the language in which it is presented or the ethnicity of the person presenting it to another. His Message that He came to earth to seek and to save that which was lost according to Luke 19:10 is the motivation for the messengers. The fulfilment of Jesus' work is His defeat of death on the cross. People need to hear this in a language of their choice. The message of the cross is at the centre of a missional community.

Jesus is preparing a community of believers that the Bible refers to us His kingdom. This kingdom's agenda is carried out by all those who follow after the king. His kingdom will keep growing and no one can stop it. His subjects are part of the plan to expand it. The believers are His army to carry out His offense. His mission is to reach all others who are yet to hear the message. The people who have become believers are one, not because of ethnicity or language but covenant community in a covenant relationship. For all they do is to witness and, "God then is the one who is responsible for the results" (Lingenfelter 2008, 141). As His agents, they are called to share His message with others in all contexts.

Jesus' message has to reach people within their socio-linguistic context. Church history shows people found ways of expressing their faith within their culture (Walls 2002b, 75). God Himself took on human form to reach human beings. Those who go on

His behalf must operate to some level within the cultural framework of those being reached without necessarily becoming one with the new culture. This is what incarnation and true Bible contextualisation is about. Understanding the context in which Christians live and witness enables those among them who wish to remain relevant to be effective. The understanding is not only cultural but also linguistic, economic, political and spiritual. People's values and cultural ideas are most times made explicit through language of choice. It is helpful to make appropriate language choice when sharing the Good News. The Christian's activities and character defines and gives life to who they are individually and corporately as a people of God. Their work is associated with the King and His attributes. Their language choice is viewed in this light too. This is what the world notice and define its' understanding of who Christians are, Acts 11:26; 17:6.



**FIGURE 4**

**MISSIONAL CHURCH IN COMMUNITY**  
(adapted July 2012 from: <http://cafetheologien.wordpress.com/>)

The message of God is lived in community within specific cultures. Figure 4 above summarises the message. Jesus came as God's message. He demonstrated the love and the weight of the message through his death on the cross. The message continues to reach people within their own culture which includes language. The believers who accept this message live and demonstrate their life and love within the community they belong to. Language choice is a strategy through which the church in Kenya serves the community. The factors that determine language choice as identified in data interpretations are only opportunities within a changing context in which people play linguistic games in order to serve.

### **Mission and Language**

People experience and express spiritual life up to a certain level in all languages at their disposal. This is something the church can utilise for its missional life. The church equips people in order to be witnesses of God's love and grace to all people in all circumstances. However limited vocabulary someone has in any given language, they can be able to share with someone who understands that language about God's love. They may not achieve much but it can be the first steps of the person desiring to know more about God. A key issue for the church to consider is how to be inclusive in its language policy. A good policy formulation will be guided by what the church considers as beneficial for language of choice (Mckinney 1990, 279-280).

### **Mission and Culture**

Every community has a culture that is unique to it and expresses spiritual issues that sheds more light to enable people to understand. Jesus told stories so that the Jews understood. The Old Testament uses certain terms to describe God that people in that

culture understood. People can be able to share specific contributions that can help broaden our understanding of God. For example the idea of God as a father is better understood when people view God from those cultures in which fathers have demonstrated love and not tyranny to children. Communities that have had a positive experience with taking care of widows can help others learn that wife inheritance is not for sexual relations but a responsibility of taking care of the family in a holy respectful manner.

It is incumbent upon the church in Kenya to make good use of its linguistic diversity. Sharing ones cultural experiences with people from other languages helps them understand and appreciate others better. In most cases, people turn to native mother tongues because they feel incapable to express themselves in English or Kiswahili. Personal experience culturally and linguistically enriches personal knowledge of the Gospel. It helps shape local theology. Andrew Walls sees in the Ephesians experience a means of allowing Christianity to grow without the control of any given language or culture (2002a). In this manner each culture helps to expand our knowledge of Christianity.

### **Mission and Economy**

God's plan for His people's prosperity is spiritual, economical, and physical so that they have resources and ability to serve Him. In modern economy people learn other languages so as to trade with others. It demands ability to communicate in LWC. This is tactical strategy to improve personal and community situation (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 98). The church needs to have its people in economic strategic position to utilise the opportunities for mission. Those who engage with people for economic purpose should be able to use those opportunities to share God's message. God has allowed people to move around. At times many will move to places where they will have

opportunity to hear His Word. Christians engage with new comers not only for business but also to share Gods message. This is a missional mandate at no extra cost. I will therefore look at this in the light of the factors that were presented in chapter 4 in the sections that follow.

### **Mission and Political Systems**

Political systems many times determine how people behave and relate. In this context people may be treated based on their political affiliation. Political affiliation is often around ethnicity. People are therefore always alert to their environment so as not to put themselves or others in danger. Language of choice is one way to determine ethnicity which maybe wrongfully linked to political affiliation. My data shows people in Kenya sometimes use English or Kiswahili to hide their ethnicity to stay safe. This factor came out in all discussion groups as well as with individual interviews. The old ladies referenced a situation when they were growing up, people who used Kiswahili or English within the community were seen as “Conmen or representatives of the foreigner”. We need to help those who still have this view least they see Christianity as a religion of con people or a foreign thing.

From a missional view this can be viewed as a positive decision that encourages people to learn neighbouring languages which in turn they can use to witness and share their story about God. Learning other languages helps to improve their lives including politics. It is one way to measure spiritual transformation as people relate better and more graciously to others of different ideology.

Epistemologically, Christian knowledge expands as people experience God’s intervention in their daily lives. One responded in Kakamega said, “MT brings out the meaning and people are able to remember it and apply it. The people who have transformed our community are those I see applying God’s Word daily”. KKAi3. As

various people begin to live out their experiences it shapes their understanding of God and His doing in their community. This shapes the theology and experiences of the transformed community. It is out of expanded experience and theology that a community purpose together to live for God.

### **Mission to Strangers**

Christianity exists for the sake and benefit of none members. Believers carry out mission within their ethnic or linguistic group to the benefit and prosperity of others. This is as far as ethnicity is concerned as they know truly well as believers there is no wall of ethnicity that can stand between them. Rather they are all people under the same covenant. Christianity considers unity in diversity as people live out a missional life in doing God's mission. As people who live with strangers,

Knowing and appreciating the languages in our midst, celebrating our diversity and,... Knowing and impressing our own ethnic story, self identity is the greatest way to humility and service to others"(Lamb 2008, 249, 259).

Language is the route to self-discovery and the rope through which people link with others. It is the avenue through which people express themselves. Through it, people realise where God brought them from and what He has made them to be as people on His mission and witness. It strengthens relationships as people remember together (Wright 2005, 91-101).

People of God are encouraged to take care of strangers in their midst. They recognise that they too are strangers in this world. People need to utilise available opportunities culturally and linguistically to share God's message. People become sensitive and mindful of those who speak other languages. It is therefore in order for people to make language choice decisions that are inclusive of outsiders to help the

'outsiders' feel welcome. This should be done in moderation so that the majority are not left out.

### ***Mission Hindrances***

One of the major issues that came up in the literature review as well as data analysis was the fear of MT possibly being an entry of syncretism in the church. Leaders need to address this question by doing biblical theology that could address this. Theologising so far has been in foreign languages. Theologising is a process that leads to genuine transformation of individuals, cultures, and communities. It would make more sense if the theologising that is aimed at bringing transformation is done in the peoples' heart languages that have shaped their worldviews. Hiebert looking at this issue views this to be the way to avoid syncretism and have authentic Christian practices coming out of the process. He says,

The gospel is not simply information to be communicated. It is a message to which people must respond. Moreover, it is not enough that the leader be convinced about change that may be needed. Leaders may share their personal convictions and point out the consequences of various decisions, but they must allow the people to make the final decisions in evaluating their past customs. If the leaders make the decisions, they must enforce these decisions. In the end, the people themselves will enforce decisions arrived at corporately, and there will be little likelihood that the customs they reject will go under (1987, 110).

The growth of independent churches in Africa is partly inspired by the fact that the indigenous people feel a need to understand God that is not met by mainstream churches and their western theologies. This need is fulfilled by the extensive use of MT in the indigenous Churches. However, due to lack of theological training among indigenous church leadership, cultic tendencies may creep in. If Christians have to save the independent churches from being cultic, believers must encourage the Christian

academy to think, reflect, write and communicate God in local languages. Training has to be offered to the leaders from independent churches as fellow members of the covenant.

The church needs to recognise the three levels of syncretism; negative, neutral and positive. According to this view syncretism is part of life but those involved need to go for the good syncretism. This is where the gospel meets culture and initiates positive change allowing people to live as transformed people who are still unique in their culture, language and social life as God's creation. People allow themselves to be under the authority of Scripture. The problem is that people think, "Syncretism is what others do, Contextualisation is what we do. However, Christianity is a result of syncretism from the time Jesus came. Its growth has been in entering cultures and changing the cultures from within as it becomes relevant to the cultures" (Walls 2007). We need a Bible centred syncretism. Lynne Price reviewing the theology of Walter Hollenweger says;

Hollenweger had said, the question is not 'syncretism, yes or no', but what kind of syncretism? Already the Bible is an example of theologically responsible syncretism. In two journal articles he added that all forms of Christianity, including the western ones, are syncretistic; the problem is that we do not recognise our syncretism (2002, 92).

A missional church will recognise that Christianity is therefore syncretism par excellence; taking the good in each culture and making it better. Strategies will be set that help reach people in their cultures and languages. Those who have been accepted will remove fear of other language communities. The possibility of syncretism in any community should not be a hindrance to ministry but a motivation for people to seek to understand the language and correct that which is wrong.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter I have considered implications of the research findings for the church in Kenya as a missional church. I have presented how the Church in Kenya could

live out its missional life. The views that my research findings presents are only a piece of what the church in Kenya will need in order to respond to mission effectively within this context. My desire for the church in Kenya is that it be a community of believers that do God's mission. For a missional church, every challenge that comes forth is looked at as an opportunity to sharpen its theology and remain relevant as people of God building His kingdom.

In the next Chapter I will present what I consider as the desired change to help the Church in Kenya to use appropriate language in its context and empower people for ministry.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **STRATEGY FOR MULTILINGUAL CHANGE**

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest (Prov. 9: 6-8).

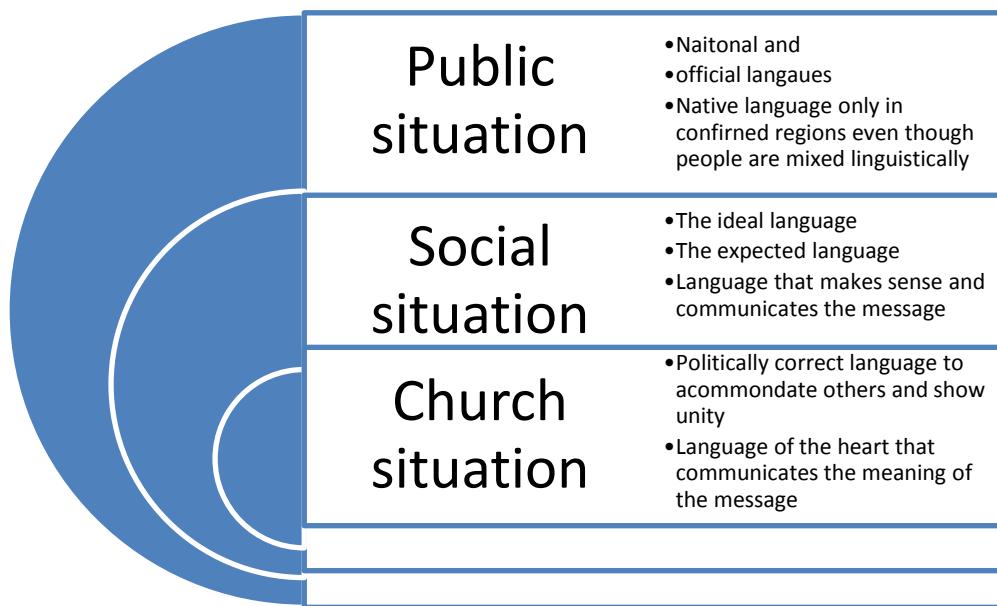
People are the most intelligent among all God's creation. Yet without direction and focus, they can be most disorganised. People can learn something from ants to work together linguistically to build the community. Though small and we cannot establish their brain capacity, they organise themselves in order to make a difference in their kingdom. It takes initiative, integrity, diligence, and understanding. With the right use of our very many small languages, we can have a big story that others can hear and relate to. The story of God told by his people in their language cannot be ignored just like people cannot ignore the big ant-hills built by small ants.

The place of the Word of God is non-negotiable in the process of conversion and spiritual formation. While dependence on the written Word was the most used in yester years, there are other forms of use that include, non-print like, audio and audio-visual, art, and storying that facilitate people to access the Scripture in the language they understand best. Believers respond to such new ways in order to reach others. Appropriate response requires evaluation of current situation in the light of God's Word. Evaluation will help believers to understand their context and make right choices including language choice.

In this chapter, I will present the kind of change model that the church and partner institutions in Kenya need to adapt in order to steer a change that is missional. This will be a change that helps individuals make good language choice decisions.

### *The Current Situation*

One needs to appreciate the linguistic scenario people in Kenya face as a natural ongoing change situation to be able to envision why the factors presented are unavoidable. Figure 5 tries to capture the different scenarios.



**FIGURE 5**  
**LANGUAGE SCENARIO IN KENYA**

In social setting, people belong and operate in the inner circle most of the time. It appears separate yet part of the whole. People at times show indifference to a given language depending on where they are. They know that there is the ideal language for use. This language communicates the message with ease. Then there is the expected language which in this case may be national or official languages although they may not be very fluent in either. Most times people have to make very difficult choices to accommodate others and ensure understanding.

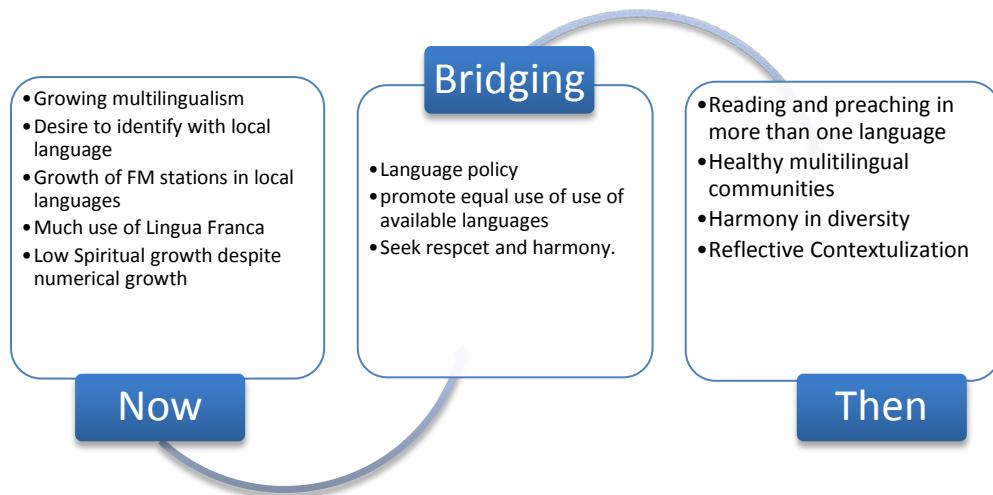
In public life, the constitution sets out English as the official language while Kiswahili is the national language. It goes further to state that native languages shall be used in confined regions (Republic of Kenya 2010). However, due to migrations people are mixed linguistically so the same government has come up with a parliamentary bill that could get one prosecuted for using native mother tongue in public institutions. This leaves people unsure of what to choose. Those who are illiterate are being discriminated against by the powerful literates. Leaders are among the literates. At church, efforts are made to reach all. The church stays politically correct while being spiritually relevant most times by using the national and official languages. There are good reasons why this has to be, but consideration needs to be given in view of Revelation 7: 9-10. Use of language that is not heart language is likely to hinder reflective understanding. Understanding is taken to mean not only to hear and be aware, but to promote action in the right direction in obedience to knowledge received.

While the constitution may stipulate issues on language of use, people only follow the law while dealing with the government and its policies. People would also choose national and official languages for economical, educational and political reasons. These have their benefits.

The decisive factor is what people consider as ideal and normal within the given situation. There are situations where the government will allow individuals to use native language due to the situation of the individual especially illiteracy. At the individual level, people chose a language based on how they consider the other person either as an insider or an outsider. Outsiders will be communicated to in lingua franca even if they can speak ones native language. When speaking with insiders, native language is used because it is considered important for them to understand. Understanding leads to appropriate action by the listener that could be inclusive or exclusive. This inclusion or exclusion depends on the level of existing relations. This web is designed to promote

familiarity. The success of a web is built upon good and strong relationships that are open and honest. The web communicates equality and respect for the team. People have the freedom of how they serve each other in a true loving community.

The church has to consider how the various factors I raised in Chapter 4 will strengthen ministry and come up with policies that are flexible for the people to feel free to make choices that enables them to participate in mission.



**FIGURE 6**

**NOW TO THEN SCENARIO**  
(adapted from Clinton 1992, chapter 1-1)

According to Clinton it is good to have a solid bridging strategy for it helps all participants to understand the various factors involved and issues to consider. It promotes peoples' acceptance of change (Clinton 1992, 1-3 chapter 1). Figure 6 shows how we can move from the now scenario to what would be an appropriate situation that gives people the freedom of choice of language of choice.

### *Models of Seeking the Change*

In this context as a change agent, I will need people resources, not in individuals but positions they hold either in the organisation or community. At the national level they may be change agents, but at the local level, they will be both agents and participants (Clinton 1992, Chapter 3) . At the organisational level I will work with language services and scripture engagement persons to influence policy formulation for promotion of multilingual use in place. On the church side I will work with denominational heads and mission department heads at the seminary school. These are the catalysts and those who can get the policy put in place and implemented. They are the gate keepers for Bible school and will assist in getting the policy and curriculum in the Bible collages. At the local level, I will seek to work with scripture use promoters and evangelists so as to help people change their attitudes towards other languages. As much as personal relations will be important, some people could easily be transferred to different places and their absence could weaken the program. However, with good relationship between institutions the work will continue. I should therefore establish open bridging strategy where things are adjusted along the way as changes takes place (Clinton 1992, 1 chapter 1).

### **Structural Frame**

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 'Martha, Martha' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her' (Luke 10: 39-42).

In a community that is highly social, people spend more time socialising as a way of building relationship and implementing tasks. There are other life sustaining activities that take place. In this case, Jesus recognised that these activities were important. While

affirming what Mary was doing he does not condemn Martha's acts of hospitality. Each activity is important to ensure smooth functioning of society.

People get to know the value others attach to their choices especially in social issues when they work very close with them. Working close provides an opportunity for people to understand emotions behind peoples' choices. Then the circumstances and choices made are appreciated. It opens more opportunities for service.

Organisations develop structures that serve them and their people well in order to carry out their mission. Minority language Bible translators are encouraged to learn the languages of those communities they serve in. The church wants to be all-inclusive so it may promote lingua franca use. Being inclusive means focus on language from different viewpoints. People appreciate organised life that produces results. It is important that structures and policies help individuals see order in the process and not just the product.

### ***Church Structure***

The church has both highly organised leadership structure and at the same time very loosely organised at the individual level. Mintzberg promotes a high hierarchy as way organisations function (Bolman and Deal 2003, 73). This model is good as far as administration and order is concerned but not for the church's core mission which is for all Christians to share their story with other people. Helgesen seems to agree with those who argue that Christianity in early days grew due to its capacity to mutate into the languages and cultures it went to and later changed traditions from within (Sanneh 1995; Walls 1996, 2002c).

When people are given opportunity to operate with what they have within their environment, they are able to perform much more, faster and better than an organisation can organise and handle. This multiplies the growth and benefits the organisation as well as the individuals who attain self-fulfilment and life goals. It is important for the Church

to change with times and have strategies that allows it to reach many. While hierarchy may help in many ways, it is also good for individual members to do what is within their capacity to reach others. Ori Brafram and Rod Beckstrom say, “Decentralisation will continue to change the face of industry and society. Fighting these forces of change is at best futile and at worst counterproductive” (2008, Kindle 2294).

People live in a group and protect it as well as want to see it grow. As social animals, people treat others in response to how they sense they have been treated (Aronson 1972). When people are given space to be, they are able to add value to the society because it gives them more recognition and honour. As much as language may be seen as a tool for economic advancement, it is more useful in its social role.

People promote what they believe in and value. Transformational structures allow people to see that their values are being enhanced and not hindered by systems. Within the structure, leaders set clear channels of communication, define acceptable ethical practices, encourage diversity teams, and practice participatory empowerment of members (Bennis and Joan 2003, 28 -34). This helps promote harmony and social transformation which people value. People promote their unity in diversity and allow each to contribute from their cultural, linguistic and social status without demanding universalism. Universalism is unattainable as people are different as created by God. Christians will better grow in their faith as they share with others their story knowing that they are part of a team.

Structure is important, but it cannot take over the individual’s ability to use their linguistic capacity to reach and perform their role in society. As much as all are under structures, all are free in the Spirit to reach out and make disciples.

### ***Recommendation***

My recommendation is for the church to equip people to be able to operate wherever they find themselves. Structures serve the purposes of the people. People want a structure that promotes harmony in their community. This will enable people to evangelise, disciple new believers, build self-identity, and enhance harmony in the community. It will be a community where people give and receive service. In KKB people were beginning to gain self-confidence as they felt free to use language of their choice. In Kilifi as the older women felt given more opportunity they were out to share and witness. The young people in Nairobi had said they use '*Sheng*' as a means to minister without wasting time thinking of words and it gives them opportunity to stay relevant.

### **Political Frame with Recommendation**

Then he said to them, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him alone (Matt. 22: 21-22).

In its core values, SIL states its belief in reaching all people in a language of the heart. In its early days, there is evidence of divine connection of how God lead Townsend to people in high positions who in turn made it possible through government links to allow him to establish his work in Latin America (William A. Smalley 1998, 677). Townsend was very much aware of serving God and governments. In the Bible text above, Jesus' challenge to the Pharisees above demonstrates why it is important to know what to do with whom and when. Earthly systems are important for advancement of God's work.

Languages of wider communication have political or economical value but little as far as understanding spiritual and cultural issues.

English functions well as a trade language or as an academic language, such as Latin did in Europe for many centuries. But it does not easily communicate the depth of meaning presented in the gospel for those whose first language is not English (Branson and Martinez 2011, 128).

People strike a balance between the economical and psychological role of language. For multilingual people, leaders have a role to model language choice in context. They empower people as individuals and create a sense of belonging to the larger group as globalisation takes route. Christians are called to be effective witnesses in this globalisation. As demonstrated through the various factors that influence language choice, language choice will always remain a factor for multilingual people to consider.

My recommendation is that we foster trust where people from other communities do not feel disadvantaged due to their language choice. The church can promote this through positive use of culture days celebrations, reading of scriptures from different languages when people meet together, and enabling those who feel weak to be able to serve. As was the case with the women in the Kilifi location who felt they were able to serve because they were free to use their language ‘KLFi4’.

### **The Human Resource Frame**

The man answered, ‘Now this is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing’ (John 9: 30-33).

Leadership is not about recognition but touching individual lives in a manner that it leaves imprints that reshape their worldviews. It displays acts of kindness that those who experience them cannot be able to resist accepting the leader as a unique actor on Gods behalf. This was very evident in Jesus as a leader (Heifetz and Linsky 2002, 234-236), say leaders demonstrate compassion for the people they lead. It is because, “...exercising leadership is at heart, a personal activity. It challenges us intellectually,

emotionally, spiritually, and physically" (2002, 163) . People want to feel the person and not just see their presence. The testimony above demonstrates the power of torching lives that Jesus as a leader had.

According to Bolman and Deal, the human resource frame, "centres on how characteristic of organisations and people shape what they do for one another" (2003, 111). Branson and Martinez refer to it as relational leadership (2011, 56) and deal mainly with human connections and concerns. Language choice concerns have to be considered within the context people make them. They determine the action the church should to help its members in relation to the Word of God. People's behaviour is understood in the light of their experiences. People are more willing to serve when they know the organisation has their good at heart. They want to be able to improve their own situation and that of their immediate social relations. Language choice is a key at their disposal to improve their life without extra costs.

The Church desires to reach out and disciple many people. Leadership cannot do it on its own. People have to take part and reach their neighbours to share their story. On the other hand people need to be cared for as they go. Many multilingual people in my context feel restricted to use of one language when they need to be empowered to use any. Bolman and Deal say, "organisations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities" (2003, 115). People want benefits from their involvement. They should be given opportunity to serve with the promise of rewards. One reward is harmony through appreciation of others in the community. Without giving people opportunity, it is easy to assume, they are not willing to be involved or they are ignorant. People become passive and tend to avoid conflict with leadership. When people are given opportunity, they grow out of,

...capacities to understand each other, to share in work and to hope requires an interesting consciousness about our own worldviews and

commitment to listen to and walk under the influence of the worldviews of others (Branson and Martinez 2011, 112).

As diverse as the people are, when they come together in a covenant relationship, they learn to share their stories as individuals who form part of the whole. People grow together from their combined experience and expression of God's love and message.

### ***The Human Resource Frame and the Church***

Church does advocacy in a manner that its social change is participatory and all-inclusive; never imposed. If this is neglected, people shun the leaders and their call for participation in social transformation becomes an illusion of the mind and not a yearning of the heart. The human resource frame invites all to participate as its banner is self-esteem and actualisation as designed in God's image. At times there are bound to be misunderstandings by those who are not exposed to many languages. "Little thought is given to the idea that different languages might affect how thinking is organised and how what is 'out there' is perceived. Language is a means of sorting out reality and the boundary between objects 'out there' and concepts 'constructs in our mind'" (Branson and Martinez 2011, 115). It is a map for interpreting sounds. It is only that which is familiar that make sense to the hearer, for Language choice is dependent upon the ability to communicate.

There should be neither "Greek nor Jew" based on linguistic culture and status. This is possible in a situation of mutual love. The Church, community and Scripture engagement partners aspires for this unity.

### ***Recommendation***

A willing person to serve is the greatest asset the Church in Kenya has. Each individual should be encouraged and empowered to use the languages at their disposal for

ministry within their context. In this manner the church will be present at all times in every human sphere as the believers interact with people in society wherever they are. Then everybody, including the university students can be able to engage people from their community whose worldviews have been shaped by their language within same lexicon. Their discussions will be enriched as they find other meanings from English as another language they use to process information in.

### **Symbolic Frame with Recommendation**

Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic, 'Brothers and fathers, listen to my defence.' When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. The Paul said, I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today (Acts 21:40-22:3).

The symbolic frame looks at leadership as inspiration and organisations as theatre where people are acting and what is done has meaning and value. What is valued is only understood by those who share certain symbols. This is the tactic Paul used in the story above. It allowed him to share his story. In the whole scene it brings him great favours amidst the challenges he faced.

Diversity is an asset in team work. Sharing stories of the heroes and heroines and remembering communities' walk helps to strengthen meaning of life (Wright 2005). Branson and Martinez call this interpersonal leadership. It seeks to understand and shape meaning of activities and rituals in society (2011, 213). It helps people to understand the Kingdom of God and its unity in Diversity. Revelation 7:9 portrays a situation where different people and languages are at ease worshiping and glorifying God. This frame is about meaning, belief and values. For Christians language choice should bring glory to God, be good for others and result in the individuals own growth.

Church unites people around shared beliefs and values. The book of Amos 3:3 says different people can only do meaningful service together if they are in agreement. It takes respect, understanding, acceptance and willingness to be vulnerable for individuals to work with leaders. Language choice should be uniting people through shared values. The main symbol of unity is the cross and the work Christ achieved for all people.

Africans love to celebrate. The church should be ready to celebrate its victories in every sphere of life including victories gained through language choice and use. Celebration days to recognise contributions made through various people like the women in Kilifi who now minister in worship and offer prayer at the hospital, the musician who is able to reach many people in various languages, the women who can now stand and testify in church because language is no longer a barrier in Kakamega are all reasons for celebration. This could link to what happened during the East Africa revival and the participants will see that what they are doing today as a long lasting impact many years to come.

There is also need to promote unity through the celebrations. Appreciating what each language and culture has contributed and will contribute to the church and community. People will better work together when they know unity is a strength and a gift to share with others.

### **Spiritual Resource Frame with Recommendation**

Jabez was more honourable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, ‘I gave birth to him in pain.’ Jabez cried out to God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request (1 Chron. 4: 9-10).

Spiritual foresight develops from the fact that individual have passion in seeing the kingdom of God established. People stand in total trust that it is only God who can

cause transformational change to happen. Individuals demonstrate their faith in God by stepping out and asking for what is humanly impossible. Leaders know to make headway means they have to depend on God in prayer as a sign of total surrender and dependence. God has the ultimate power to bring change. Change is not dependent on the leader's gender, position in society, popularity, skill, knowledge or any other mystical thing in the physical. It depends on their character as shaped by the Word of God. Leaders draw strength, skill and power from God who is the source of their being and doing.

Language of choice factors presented in Chapter 4 demands people have self-reflection in view of God's Word which gives direction. In seeking social and linguistic transformation, spiritual transformation is the point of reference. People need discernment and humility without which they could be paralysed. Following certain spiritual principles helps to win over the paralyses. They include ability, desire and capacity to serve others. Language choice should be for purposes of service. Spiritual frame promotes dependence upon God in peoples' plans and ambitions. It aspires for God's glory among His people. It seeks to rebuild the society into one that God's harmony is present amongst its people. Language of choice should therefore be a tool to bring harmony in the community and with God and the community.

The church needs to promote spiritual formation that leads to Godliness that promotes true self-esteem and actualisation in God and empowers people to serve others. True spirituality is for service of others and ensuring that God's purposes are done of which language serves and promotes. These purposes includes, the several cultural subsystems presented in chapter 4, institutions through which people receive services, the political environment people operate in and the considerations they have to make, the policies leadership formulate in order to enable the community to operate harmoniously and the fact that people have to work in order to make wealth in an economical environment that is very global and multilingual.

### ***The Change***

We must acknowledge our own weakness, greed, insensitivity, and lack of vision and courage. If we do so, we begin to understand the clear need for a course correction, and we slowly begin to reinvent our self. The transition is painful, and we are often hesitant, fearing that we lack the courage and confidence to proceed. We uncover a great paradoxical truth. Change is hell. Yet not to change, to stay on the path of slow death, is also hell. The difference is that hell of deep change is the hero's journey. The journey puts us on a path of exhilaration, growth, and progress (Quinn 1996, 78).

Turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to change leads to an open arena of self destruction which is like toxic mine. Many people will resist change due to fear of the unknown and lose of comfort (Spencer 1998). Therefore, leaders must make change more appealing and exciting rather than allow people to move slowly towards self destruction. Cultures change when people change their worldviews as God's Word finds place in their lives. Community transformation comes about as a result of individual and cultural change. Language choice attitude change will come as a result of a transformed mind set.

### **Motivation for Linguistic Change**

Courses of social change are very emotive to the people involved. It requires cautious handling. Language issues penetrate to the very core of how people view and define themselves. Some even define their security in terms of how well they are accepted through the language they speak. The teachings vary. Jassy observes, "Security and identity are approached in different ways by different cultures" (2001, 23). Strong relationship between the vision bearers and others foster understanding and value of change. However, social change takes more than the endearment of the vision bearer. People want to be sure of their survival and stable future. This at times does not seem to be a concern for those who are majority and things always go their way. Those who have always to keep adjusting to the wishes of the majority feel like oxygen is being sacked

from them every time they encounter change. If leaders themselves are willing to face such challenges and demonstrate a willingness to change, then others are ready to take part (Jennings and Stahl-Wert 2003).

For language choice in Kenya, some of the motivation for the church to desire change would be mainly the command to disciple people as Jesus gave to his disciples. The current Kenyan Constitution promotes cohesion and patriotism in diversity as it seeks to promote the different cultures and languages that exist. This would result in a strong nation with strong cultural and social links held together through common values expressed through and in different languages. They could also seek to evangelise those living beyond the geographical boundaries through FM radio stations that are coming up in almost every language within the nation. Finally the growth of Bible colleges in different regions offers an opportunity to train people at local or regional level. The church could come up with a curriculum that is responsive to peoples language needs in given regions. Church planters could be trained and prepared for ministry in multilingual settings. This will consider language choice issues.

Already several churches have recognised the need. Sunday services are conducted in different languages. The challenge is, the services are held at different times and it becomes complicated for family members whose language preferences are different. There is need to encourage reading of Scripture in two or more languages in same service to accommodate special needs.

My own motivation is to act as a catalyst through my involvement with SIL. In this manner, I may assist those seeking to reach millions to understand the Word of God better in the available languages. The use of different languages helps people access and analyse information through different worldviews. My involvement will be done through workshops trainings and where possible engaging in promotional speaking at church and in teaching at seminaries.

### Language Change Scenario

I will follow John P. Kotter's eight steps of leading change (1996). This will enable the leaders to implement the change for its value to the group and not just individuals. Elliot Aronson (1972) further proposes that people want change that impacts on the society in a meaningful and harmless manner. People act to influence social behaviour and their beliefs determine the change they accept or reject. Shared vision will result in transformational change in a community.

#### *Establishing a Sense of Urgency*

In the eight steps that Kotter proposes, his first step towards change is to create a sense of urgency among the group (1996, 35). Leadership has to create value for change in its society. A society that does not seek change, very soon, “joins the legion of the walking dead, they begin to live lives of ‘quit desperation’” (Quinn 1996, 21). Leadership invite others to take part, and empower the champions who will go out as pioneers. The sense of urgency is seen as real as people gain power to participate. There is need to recognise the changing dynamics and emerging multilingualism even at the village level where native language is assumed to be dominant. While the urgency to change is still strong in people's hearts and minds, the leader needs to take steps that lead to deep change. The desired result for language choice and use is transformed lives as expressed in most of these organisations policy documents. This is the vision the founders had and must be retained. Translating into native languages is a strategy to reach people, whose desired goal is to realise transformed lives.

For the urgency to have relevance, the church will first put a language policy in place so that people could have a reference of what the official position on language choice is. The policy should communicate clearly what the desired goal is.

### ***Creating a Guiding Coalition***

Partnerships either with individuals or organisations of like minds to carry out the task are important. Both the Church and SIL seem to be making strides in this aspect of partnering; There is need to have same understanding as concerns language of choice as they have on the value and need of Scriptures. Multilingual people need freedom of choice as maybe appropriate. Some people may view this as creating disorder. But this can be managed through appropriate strategies and programmes besides right kind of leadership. Good relationship with leaders will promote cohesion in implementation phase.

“A leader, as defined from a study of biblical leadership, and for whom we are interested in tracing leadership development is a person {1} with God-given capacity and {2} with God-given responsibility to influence {3} a specific group of God’s people {4} towards God’s purpose for the group” (1988, 197). These people will ensure the growth of unity and diversity as concerns language choice.

This kind of leadership will know the value of working with others as equal partners. The church will form cross-organisational teams that will lead the language choice campaign through promotions at local and national levels.

### ***Developing Vision and Strategy***

Vision is the link between the people and the desired impact. Several vision building meetings and eventual strategising will take place. SIL and the Church need to use appreciative inquiry to know what the people think about this issue. It is a process that demands patience and persistence. “Vision is an exercise of both the head and heart, it takes some time, it always involves a group of people, and it is tough to do well” (Kotter 1996, 79). For teams to be successful, they need to have an understanding of what

they want to do individually and corporately. This working together to reshape and refine the vision creates a bond and strong visionary team.

The church through its working teams will formulate a shared vision that revolves around discipleship and unity through language choice and use. An effective language use vision that will capture the imagination of people has to be inclusive of other peoples and at the same time empowering enough for each individual to see their place and role in it.

### ***Communicating the Change Vision***

Open communication channels following the five frames discussed earlier in this chapter will be important to implement the desired change. This is highly a hierarchical society and engaging the right people is important. Acceptance and approval of the right leader, opens doors to many other avenues behind the leader. One meeting with the right symbolic leader is worth more than a thousand with willing individuals who have no power and space to influence others. In communicating the values, beliefs and meaning will be important as well as use of examples of heroes and heroines in issues of language choice. Well communicated information is power "...the real power of vision is unleashed only when most of those involved in an enterprise or activity have common understanding of its goals and direction" (Kotter 1996, 85)..

This communication has to be simple to understand, metaphoric to capture imagination, done in multiple of forums and repeated as necessary, by leaders who lead by example. Communication should show indicators of change and resistance as well as assumptions of the team especially leaders.

The church has to be international and participatory in its language use policy. The people at all levels will be involved in stating what will work for them and others in a manner that is not limiting and also not interfering with other peoples' privileges.

### ***Empowering Broad-Based Action***

Change grows when the leader lets go. The desire to hold on current scenario where LWC is the choice and control could be the first hindrance to broad based change. Those involved need to begin by encouraging positive attitudes towards other languages. This calls for inclusive leadership that take care of cultural, linguistic, economical, gender and age differences. Churches and seminaries have to develop language policy that gives guidance at training and engagement level. The policy needs to recognise the evolving scenario under which individuals and communities live and make language choice decisions. Jim Collins refers to this as the hedgehog concept which combines humility and inner drive based on knowledge to want change. “The hedgehog concept is not a goal, strategy, or intention, it is an understanding “ (2001, 118). It seeks to understand in order to change. Linguistic differences should never be a reason for disharmony or disunity in community. People can choose to learn together from the Bible, each contributing from their linguistic and cultural knowledge. This could be done without blaming linguistic diversity as the source of divergence in understanding. Momentum for this will be build in the concept of early Christian growth in multilingual and cultural setting reinforced with our own story of the East Africa revival which took place through different linguistic setting as alluded to by Peter Falk (1979, 270).

One of the things the church will seek to do is not to micro manage the language choice and use scenario. The people will decide for themselves and know that by choice they are not victimising anyone and neither will they be looked upon as not being respectful to the leadership. The leadership has to give support by assuring people that all languages are fine and any choice and use is acceptable. The result is that this may go either way. Some people will prefer either LWC while others will prefer the MT, yet others will want both. All should be acceptable.

### ***Generating Short Term Wins***

Celebrations are symbolic of progress made towards the goal. They encourage the participants and inspire the doubters. Bible translation agencies and the church have had times when they celebrate when Scriptures in languages are made available to the speakers. Cultural days are held among people groups to showcase and celebrate their diversity and uniqueness.

Use of other languages shows appreciation of people's diversity. This will help consolidate the progress made not only in our diversity but unity as people of the covenant. It is an opportunity to honour those who have taken part and encourage others to join in the vision so as to adjust for improvement. Improvement creates better way of doing things. It is the key to managing and sustaining transformational change and provides opportunity to evaluate the vision, ideologies of the organisation and show where people are going (Quinn 1996, 103).

The church needs to come up with training programmes to help people learn how to read their own native MTs. There is a request for help as was evident in one of the group discussions. The church has to respond positively by seeking appropriate assistance that can equip members to be able to function effectively through the choices that maybe applicable.

### ***Consolidating the Gains and Producing More Change***

Early changes shall be documented. This will persuade more people to take part in future language choice change. Involvement of more people will spread the change. Documented benefits shall demonstrate values of language choice change. Benefits of multilingual use of languages demonstrate positive coexistence. It promotes shared community values and calls for continued strengthening of the leadership team for,

“Without sufficient leadership, change stalls, and excelling in a rapidly changing world becomes problematic.” (Kotter 1996, 144).

### ***Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture***

People want changes; yet unknowingly sometimes delay it by their actions. There is need for a conscious attempt by leaders to change the status quo. They should incorporate the new approaches, attitudes and behaviours that promote change. This should be, “compatible with the relevant culture” (Kotter 1996, 148). There is constant need to review language choice among people. Any change requires constant awareness for change as soon as the new becomes the norm and things stall. Language choice has become a norm in Kenya. Right change is a painful process that takes many willing people to establish. It , “comes at end of the transformation, builds on past success results, takes team work in an atmosphere of openness, is painful as some have to leave as they discover they are incompatible, and requires succession planning on leadership” (Kotter 1996, 157).

With defined and yet differing cultures about language choice in my context, understanding a missiological view will help anchor the change. Spiritual frame working with the political frame will be important to implement and sustain language choice. This process requires change of leadership itself. Some leaders may resist it as, “Change challenges how people define themselves”(Morgan 2005, 107). Some may think they will lose their authority and power if language choice allows native mother tongues. Despite all the unknowns’ people experience, they want to finish successful. It will be best to seek incremental change which is less disruptive. The new change should motivate other people for better future. There are a lot of things people like about the current but a lot may be missing. People may like the use of one language, but there is much more they will learn through use of many languages.

### **Desired Change**

My current context is that of LWC choice at the disadvantage of others. In most cases the LWC is national or official. The desired future is where people are encouraged and guided to use whatever they know and share with others. People will equip and facilitate them to do God's mission with others who may only speak and understand one of the languages. The change will broaden people's theologising as they process concepts through different worldviews. In turn it will strengthen their relationships and unity of faith. To influence this, I will seek to integrate various principles that work with social transformation. The change will be to see people freely using language of choice to share and learn from one another.

Contextualisation and missiological considerations must be taken into account. These considerations need to recognise the value of language choice in helping people engage with Scriptures. Hill says, "When people recognise the value of their language, they are more likely to use mother tongue Scriptures. When people feel their language is inferior, interest in mother tongue scriptures may be weak or lacking altogether" (2006, 183). Some people think the MT has no value for the users. Ultimately, language of choice is determined by other factors that are not necessarily ability to communicate. Therefore people need help to have positive attitude towards the MT and those people who use it.

### ***Strategy to Influence Change through Multilingualism***

Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, "Why stay here until we die? If we say, 'we'll go into the city' – the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die (2 Kings 7: 3-4).

To lead change, takes courage, it is risky, demands faith, sometimes despicable, and first steps may be taken by few with a vision and purpose. Once the first fruits have

been seen, many people accept it. Positive change brings honour. This is a process many leaders may approach with suspicion, yet this is the opportunity for greatness. The story of Bible translation history has to be shared in the light of *missio Dei* and its impact. This will seek to show why the native language use will need to be promoted alongside lingua franca; sign language included.

I will seek to work with one seminary that has already been identified to begin sharing the change as a missiological developing trend that might strengthen discipleship. I will use success stories from other parts of the world.

Alongside the seminary teaching, I will identify two congregations that I will work with to do a pilot project of multilingual service. This will be done with caution to avoid confusion in worship. I will promote public reading of lingua franca alongside available native mother tongues Scriptures.

### ***Indicators for the Desired Language Use Situation***

Leaders evaluate the progress and measure change that is taking place. “Deep change requires an evaluation of the ideologies behind the organisational culture” (Quinn 1996, 103). This kind of change is one step at a time. It comes in small measures over a long time. Patience among leaders who want fast change is required. The leader needs to rally people behind the vision and not the individual. The team has to lead a community of continuing learners to impress the future. The main indicator will be people who are able to witness to their neighbours in any language of their choice. This will be as a result of mature spirituality out of discipleship.

Good leadership invites people to move together to the desired future. For language issues, it has to be within the context of understanding, communication, self-identity, and respect for one another, community development, globalisation and harmony. This calls for lifelong learning that

...overcome a natural human tendency to shy away from or abandon habits that produce short-term pain....But most of all, their goals and aspirations facilitate the development of humility, openness, willingness, to take risks, and the capacity to listen (Kotter 1996, 183).

Harmonious change in a diverse situation calls on leaders to take risks and be persistent in resisting short-term comfort to empress lasting painful but lasting change.

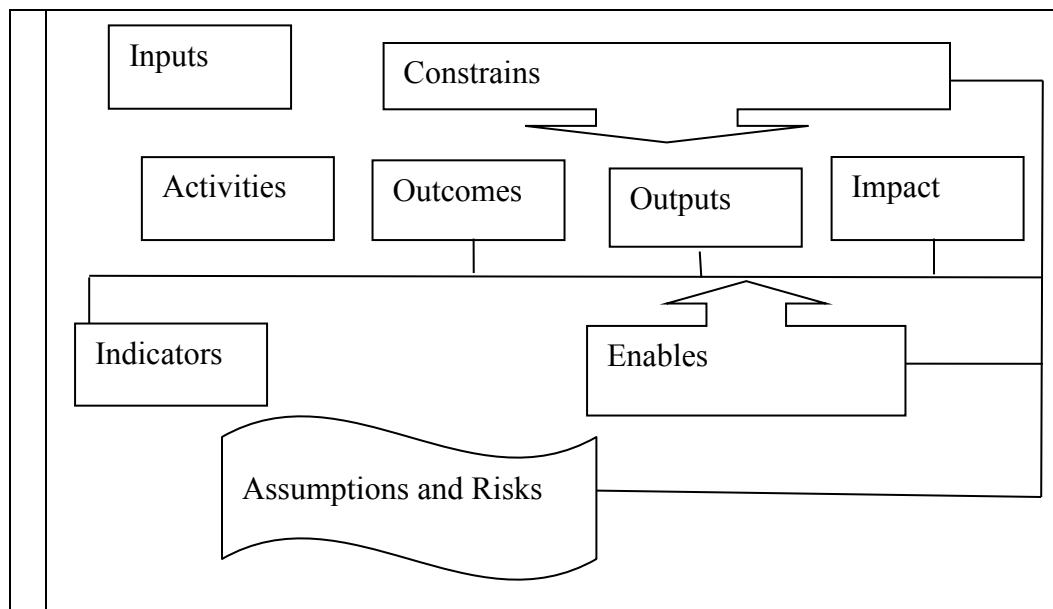
### ***Evaluation of Change in Choice of Language***

It is important to have an inbuilt evaluation system so that change can be measured. Micah Amukobole is of the view that proper evaluation takes place when leaders are willing to evaluate themselves. Leaders must be honest to share the achievements, failures and challenges with others in order to review for a better action plan. This helps the leader to reflect back on their vision and “translate intentions into reality and sustainable efforts” (2012, 171). Church leaders have to be willing to evaluate how the current language choice is impacting the church so that they can promote that which will bring much transformation.

In my evaluation and monitoring, I will follow a results based management ‘RBM’<sup>1</sup> model as shown in Figure 7 and 8 show how this will work out. While Figure 7 shows the concept, Figure 8 lays out the details for what I will be doing and all that it will take. I will seek to establish how in a scenario of people having use a cocktail of languages, how freer people are in making choices concerning language of use. In this, I have my inputs, outputs, outcomes, and the anticipated outcome set out. In the planning indicators for change, assumptions as well as risks will be started.

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<sup>1</sup>RBM is a planning tool developed in Canada. It is best when working for community transform that takes time. It considers all aspects both positive and negative that will enable the planner think critically towards the desired impact.



**FIGURE 7**  
**RBM FLOW CHART FOR LANGUAGE CHANGE  
 IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION**

Bible translation partners will have positive attitude in policy for field projects that will promote choice of all available languages for who are fluent enough to use. There will be programs that support people to access Scripture in appropriate media they find comfortable to hear, read or share in.

Seminaries will have a curriculum with consideration for language choice for multilingual settings. It will be a core subject for all who are seeking to do missions cross culturally. Bible schools would therefore be teaching relevant lessons and recruit students for training who in turn will also work as Bible translators in other languages. It should not be the sole responsibility of translation agencies to recruit and train Bible translators. SIL and partners' work is to set strategies and assign workers who are trained by the Church through seminaries. At this stage increase in the number of those taking the

translation course should be realised. Besides, social-linguistics should have become a required lesson for all who train as pastors, church planters and missionaries.

	Specific expectations
Inputs	Churches, Bible translation agencies and seminaries
Activities	Promotion workshops, literacy classes at church, and teaching at seminaries.
Outcomes	Awareness among people for value of all languages, and changed attitude towards other languages and culture
Outputs	Simultaneous promotion of native MT and LWC, free choice of language of use among members, and increased use of all languages.
Assumptions	People are willing to change attitude towards other languages.
Enablers	The constitution gives right for use of native languages, growth of native MT FM radio stations, people already speak the languages and appreciate the value it gives in understanding the message.
Constrains	Rapid growth of LWC, lack of training materials in native MTs and too much mix of people which makes it difficult to teach any one group how to read and write their language.
Indicators for change	At all levels where change will be measured, the main measure will be free choice and use of any one language without fear of generating negative feelings or being victimised.
Impact	Community that is aware of its diversity and uses this diversity for community growth as all people contribute within that context in an atmosphere of love, peace and harmony.

**FIGURE 8**  
**EVALUATION CHART**

Lastly, there will be churches with language choice policy that equips and promotes language choice based on benefits and values appropriate choice gives. I will follow up graduates from seminaries to see how they are applying the knowledge principle of language choice as a missiological strategy for ministry to build covenant communities. This will be a time of mentorship and encouragement for us to learn from the people.

### ***Benefits of Positive Multilingualism***

For people who are leaning towards LWC choice to value the changes proposed in this research, they have to be convinced of the benefits. They want to ensure that only LWC develops at the expense of native MTs while I am proposing development and use of all. They need persuasion that the pain of change is less than the benefits the society will experience especially in ministry<sup>2</sup>.

Reasons for use of *lingua franca* in my context include the inclusion of outsiders. This lends the church to faster growth numerically. However, it excludes those native speakers who are illiterate and are the majority in this context. Use of cocktail of languages seems to be the best solution. Besides, for people who may never be able to read, there is need to develop the story based Bible listening and use of multiple use of languages in song compassion and singing. People may want to hear it in a language they understand but are illiterate.

Growth will be measured in both quantity and quality. The church will impress the spirit of growing small to grow big. This is through empowering individuals and forming teams who become part of the larger family. Individuals understand their contribution to the growth of the church.. This knowledge promotes learning together as situations change. This has been the church strategy from its inception. Those who went out during persecutions kept the faith a life. Individuals take part in the life of the church; making mission of the church unique. The church desires to do great and, “Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice.” (Collins 2001, 11). Leaders make the choice to see the benefits of multilingualism. The result is more Christians who are witnessing to their neighbours. God’s work is by, within and among the people who see language choice as a strategy for service to all God’s people.

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<sup>2</sup>I am using ministry here and not missions to refer to the specific work each leader, individual Christians, Bible school or organisation is involved in, in their belief to serve and bring glory to God. This may be church planting, Bible translation or training, and any other work Para-church organisations do.

### ***Where Is the Target?***

As demonstrated in the literature review and the research findings, language choice appears to be an ever moving target especially for people in the developing world. This may be for several reasons but I think key among them is education which is always presented in languages of wider communication.

Looking at language as a moving target as Wilbert Shenk put in personal communication presents some options for all those who see language as a strategy for carrying out their mission. Out of these chapters there are some recommendations that relate the whole research in relation to the findings and respondents comments.

1. People are using LWC but some of them recognise that they do not understand much so they are asking for help. The church and partners will have to consider training people in some of the key Biblical concepts and terms so that they may understand what they read.
2. For majority who speak their native MTs and are not able to read, the church will need to consider teaching people how to read their MTs. One way to do this is to have interlinear or parallel Bible where people can read and compare in a language that is familiar. There is already parallel Bible in Kiswahili and English so doing one with native mother tongues will only require a financial cost and no other.
3. The church will have programmes for training pastors in Seminary schools that help prepare them for ministry in multilingual settings in a manner that appreciates and promotes the linguistic diversity that exists.
4. The arts and musicians need to be encouraged to compose more Scripture sound songs in native mother tongues. This will help many who will most likely remember the song than a sermon they listen to once.

### ***Summary***

Linguistic change is a reality for the people who live in this context. I have demonstrated the kind of change needed to ensure that language choice impacts the way multilingualism brings change to the church in Kenya, and how it should be navigated to allow involvement of many. My proposed strategy is only a pilot that will need to be

evaluated 5 years from the time of implementation to be able to map a better way forward.

My hope is that language choice will empower and build self-image of those who have felt despised due to their language acquisition and use ability. It will invite participatory Biblical contextualisation of different cultures that live in a common environment. This will model and paint an earthly picture of the heavenly picture that we find in Revelation 7: 9-10 and give a depiction of fulfilment of Isaiah 11.

## CONCLUSION

In my study, I undertook to determine factors that influence language of choice for people in a multilingual setting. My research questions were focused towards getting this factors from the people. I collected data through focus groups, observations and interviews in four sites.

I have presented this data and its interpretations for the benefit of my readers. I have endeavoured to look at these findings in the light of God's Word to establish if the factors have any bearing from the Bible. The factors determining language of choice range from economical, social, religious and political. One could say the factors could as well be grouped as personal, communal, institutional, national and global. Therefore those involved in having to make a choice consider all these factors and make a choice based on the best in relation to the context.

I have then looked at what these factors mean for the church in Kenya and how it can strategically apply them in its missional practice. I have shown how the church could apply these factors to its benefit and growth of God's Kingdom. These factors call upon the church to view language choice as a strategy to give or get service for those involved. It therefore requires that the church promotes healthy multilingualism in a manner that empowers people to use literature, drama, art, music and speech for purposes of doing God's mission. For the church to make disciples and equip people for God's work, it demands that those who are in the business do not only focus as such on strategy but on how to get more and growing believers.

It is clear from the literature review and data analysis that there is a shift from Monolingualism to multilingualism within Kenya. This calls upon all communicators to

respond to the change and make a conscious decision to change with the trend. Each participant in the arena will have to be sensitive to the fact of sharing information effectively in a manner that promotes unity and understanding. As concerns our cultural and linguistic diversity, we should accept it as a done deal by divine design and learn to enjoy the harmony such diversity bestows on and requires of us. People have therefore to be equipped to use the available languages in a field of freedom. '*Sheng*' as a language is yet to grow to a level where it can be accepted and used by manner. So the default is the mature languages that people recognise. These include the native mother tongues, Kiswahili and English. The language shift will continue as more people gain LWC through formation education institutions.

For translation organisations like SIL and Wycliffe, there is need to consider the motivation of the founders for doing translation. It was so that they could have scripture to disciple people. Reaching people with Scripture in this generation will not be about language alone but the medium will play a big role. This will include, art, literacy and technology especially through mobile phones. SIL has to consider incorporating an aspect of promoting health multilingual use in her training programs. Through i-DELTA which is training to equip translators and SE workers in Africa, the trainers can prepare their future workers to begin thinking of how to have positive promotion and use of multilingualism for discipleship. Finally for SIL as a member of the Forum for Bible Agencies in Africa, she has role and an opportunity in helping others to begin responding this linguistic shifting trend in a positive manner. Together the partners can be able to formulate strategies that empower people in the area of language choice and use.

For the church in Kenya, the opportunity is there to make use of the changing linguistic landscape and business environment. The many FM radio stations in local languages is a means to reach people in their local mother tongues. The Kenya constitution promotes language and cultural diversity which the church should make use

of to reach people of different backgrounds. The growing economic challenges and people movements in order to advance economically should be an avenue to teach people how to reach out to their business partners through their common language. Through promotion of Scripture in song either in church or on FM stations the church will be helping to promote positive aspects of diverse cultures that live together in a given region and thus help people appreciate God's creation. The church can also help train and send young people to serve in short term missions in other communities. The people will be able to learn something about the other language and culture and also teach those communities from the community they have come from. Missionaries are not only going to be from across the seas but from Africa to Africa, or better still from Kenya to Kenya. This is achieved when we use our multilingual gifts positively for God's purpose. Language of choice issues in the evangelical church is a matter that is never discussed but only practised. The church has to come to terms with the fact that language is a missiological tool and it is when well used as a strategy that to preach the message of Christ. Language of choice will be for the purpose of informing minds, inspiring hearts, transforming lives, changing character, uniting communities and building nations for the glory of God the creator.

For Bible schools as training institutions, there is need to see issues of language study not just as an academic field, but a missiological concern that is a tool God is using to bring people back to Himself. Bible schools should make their trainees aware of the issues of multilingualism and prepare them for ministry in a globalized world. Issues of language choice should be taught as a transparent and transformational subject that empowers people to make choices without fear. The Bible schools can go a step ahead and have extension programs in rural areas where they will train lay leaders and other pastors at certificate level in their own native languages. This will remove the fallacy that

Bible training and ministry can only be done in LWC and those who preach can only be effective if they use LWC.

### ***Possible Research to Establish Support for the Change***

As I have continued to reflect on this subject, there are areas that will need further and deeper investigation. First, within the next five years it would be good for someone to find out the level of multilingual use in places that are still monolingual in matters of language choice. Secondly, using social networks analysis I would like to measure the level of multilingual choice and use influence within the community. Through this we shall be able to establish the effectiveness and degree of how the people are impacting each other through language of choice and use. Leaders from the church, Bible collages and Bible translation organisations will work together to find how language choice impacts their ministry and programs.

Other areas of research will include how to work with the church leadership itself to bring change. Some of the issues to research include, how to help church leadership who are prosperous in their ministry through *lingua franca* appreciate value of multiple languages for the members. Leadership will set strategies concerning choice and use of language that are appropriate to the context. This will promote positive language attitudes among people and help separate language choice from issues of tribalism and negative ethnicity. A strategic team will have to consider issues that will promote positive attitudes towards other people in a community. The church will have to consider ways of managing any proposed change in order to reduce anxiety among the various social groups. It is important that the individuals, the society and the church come to this with win-win open minds. This will be better presented through a study to find aspirations and motivations people have for linguistic change.

### *Some Final Thoughts*

Some changes are necessary in order to see the issues I have raised implemented. Key among them is attitude change on the people and policy creation and implementation in society. However, setting policy for language choice is like aiming at a moving target. The chances of missing it are very high. I have proposed a model through which I think leadership could lead this change. The key aspect of this model is that it will be participatory in nature and the members who are impacted by the policy will take part in formulation and implementation. Secondly, it will not be at grassroots but also at the training institutions where leaders are prepared from. I have demonstrated the kind of impact change in language policy on choice and use would have among Christians as more people will have more freedom of choice of language leading to wider ministry.

I pray that you may find ways to make this useful in your ministry as you live in community. Seek to be an effective learner and teacher in the kingdom of God as you use your linguistic skills. Use this to become a truly global minister within your local setting that God has called and put you in.

As the Church seeks to grow may the focus on people and their unique language gifting mature the body of Christ so that the whole body experience Revelation 7:9 together. The church can have a glimpse of the heavenly experience now. Linguistic diversity in multilingual settings is a shadow of things to come. With globalisation, we do not all have to leave and go across borders in order to do missions. Many can be missionaries and do missions within the comfort of their neighbourhood as the mission field has come to all people where they live and work.

The purpose of my study was to investigate and document factors leading to language choice and the resulting impact among multilingual speakers within the Church in Kenya. I have demonstrated in Chapter 3 how I went about collecting data to help me get the factors. The research yielded appropriate data which produced the findings

presented in Chapter 4. The methods, the data collected and the results have presented reliable and valid data to convince me that I followed the right route. The findings which include, social subsystems that determine language of choice, institutional and leadership factors, and practical factors all show that the people are having to make the choices based on their context which is a key factor for all people who seek to communicate.

My central research issue was to discover factors that influence choice of language use among multilingual people in the church. I have enumerated from the data what the key factors are. These sub-systems are a part of human life that has to be embraced and responded to.

My goal was to present the church in Kenya with factors relating to language of choice among multilingual speaking church members and the resulting missiological implications. My hope is that these, will help the church in Kenya to come up with appropriate language choice strategies for mission among multilingual Christians.

I have demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6 the weight of responding or not responding to these factors from a theological view. This theological view is established in the fact that the Bible is the foundation of all Christian teaching and expressed views. I have demonstrated that these factors and other changes are part of the modern day challenges the Church has to respond to. Responding to these factors appropriately enables the Church to live a missional life as a people of God while empowering individuals to take part as co-workers in the service.

The significance of this study is found in the fact that the Church in Kenya is increasingly becoming multilingual. Multilingualism is a trend that can never be reversed the world over. The church has therefore to prepare itself to minister in a multilingual context. This requires acknowledging that all peoples of the world are not only equal because they are made in the image of God, but whatever gift each community has from God can be utilised to worship God. Language is one of the many gifts. The church will

therefore prepare itself and have strategies to respond to the linguistic opportunities. She will seek to have a policy that empowers people to make appropriate language of choice. Bible translation ministries will have strategies that consider language of choice for multilingual people for Scripture engagement. These may include storying for those who may not be able to read. Bible colleges will consider a curriculum that equips people going to serve in multilingual contexts, and finally the church will recognise that social-linguistic issues have a missiological impact on the Good News. Socio-linguistics is not just intellectual debate at the learning institutions. Therefore as faithful stewards of God's gifts, believers will seek to make good use of the gift of languages.

God Bless you fellow missionary.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

What languages are mostly used in reading and writing in the community?

What languages do you use for your personal devotions?

What are the benefits of using the languages you choose?

How do you decide on which language to use at the church functions like preaching, weddings and funerals?

How do other individuals decide on which language to use? What difference is there when people read or hear Scripture in their native mother tongue as compared to hearing English or Kiswahili?

What influences people to choose a language for use in your context?

**APPENDIX B**  
**CODES OF INTERVIEW RESPONDEDS AND FOCUS GROUPS**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
KLFi1	Kilifi Interview- Senior Pastor	KLFG	Kilifi Focus group
KLFi2	Kilifi Interview –Assistant Pastor		
KLFi3	Kilifi Interview – R. Assistant		
KLFi4	Kilifi Interview -Lady		
NRBi1	Nairobi Interview S. Pastor	NRBFG1	Nairobi Focus group1
NRBi2	Nairobi Interview 3-Elders	NRBFG2	Nairobi Focus group 2
NRBi3	Nairobi interview 2-R. Assistants	NRBFG3	Nairobi Focus group 3
NRBi4	Nairobi Interview Musician		
NRBi5	Nairobi Interview –2 youth		
NRBi6	Nairobi Interview MP		
KKAi1	Kakamega A - Father	KKAFG1	Kakamega focus Group women
KKAi2	Kakamega A- 3 Elders	KKAFG2	Kakamega Focus group mixed
KKAi3	Kakamega – Man	KKAFG3	Kakamega Focus group Children
KKAi4	Kakamega A- 2Women/Sisters		
KKAi5	Kakamega A-9 Women		
KKAi6	Kakamega A – 3 school children		
KKBi1	Kakamega B –Senior Pastor	KKBFG	Kakamega B Focus Group
KKBi2	Kakamega B- 2 elders		

**APPENDIX C**

**FACTORS OF CHOICE AND INTERFACE WITH THE CHURCH**

Factor	Church Response
Social-linguistic	Identity with specific social class and migrations and inclusion of outsiders
Cultural	Self identity as a unique people of God
Economic	Response to human need of self improvement
Political	Desire for security and fear of harm from others
Practical	Lack of reading materials and instruction at school
Leadership	Modeling right image of language
Institutional	Creation and implementation of policy
Religious	Desire to understand and share knowledge
Proficiency	Public self image

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## VITA

John Ommani Luchivia was born on 12 December 1965 in a rural village in Kakamega, Kenya. He grew up on a peasant farm with his step father and mother was a very dedicated Christian. In 1979 after his mother past away he was reunited with his biological father. In the years that followed, he lived with his fathers family, step fathers family and maternal uncles. It was during that time he was exposed to missionaries and also became a believer in Jesus Christ while in high school in June 1982.

He joined the university of Nairobi in 1988 where he took a bachelors degree majoring in Anthropology and minor in religion and politics. In 1991 he Joined Africa International University, then referred to as Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology where he graduated with a Master of Translation degree in 1994.

He joined the ministry of Bible translation in 1994 and was sent out as a missionary among the Tharaka people of Kenya as a technical assistant in translation and literacy activities. While in Tharaka his major interest was in seeing people engage with the available Scriptures in a manner that resulted in transformation.

In 1998 he was reassigned to the coastal region to help coordinate translation work among the Awer, Digo, Duruma, Girama, Ilwana, Orma and Pokomo people. In 2002 He was asked to move back to Nairobi to coordinate Bible translation programs in Kenya. His work involved setting strategy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The work also involved initiating language survey and beginning new translation projects. All along he kept his heart in scripture engagement matters.

In 2007, Luchivia moved from the national Bible translation agency and joined SIL International Africa area office as a Scripture Use Consultant work across the continent in training mentoring Scripture use workers, besides working with other Bible agency partners.

Luchivia is married to Janet and they are living in Nairobi where they are members of International Christian Centre. They have three children Joy, Jed and Jason aged 18, 15 and 9 years old. Luchivia hopes to work with the Church in Kenya through Bible collages training upcoming church leaders and missionaries. It is through training others that we can be able to reach the nations for our master and King.