

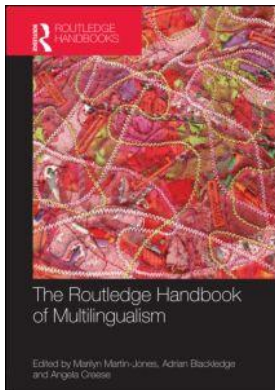
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Multilingualism and religion¹

Tope Omoniyi

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

(Genesis 11: 1)

And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

(Genesis 11: 6)

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to explore the relationship between religion and language in multilingual settings with a view to determining the dynamics of flow and impact that exist between them. Religion is taken here in a narrow sense and is understood to consist of ritual practices in a belief system at the centre of which is a deity. I shall adopt as my working hypothesis the argument that some religions more than others facilitate and benefit from multilingualism and also that, on the flip side, some languages more than others have acquired or developed a capacity to convey the tenets of one or more religions and have in the process been sacralized. Moreover, language varieties that are peculiar to religious practice have emerged and some of these languages are multireligion or multifaith languages. In terms of discursive frames, the first part of the hypothesis has a religion-perspective whereas the latter part has a language perspective.

Within the first perspective, the competition is between religions, within the second, it is between languages. Jointly both perspectives must be considered for a worthwhile discussion of multilingualism and religion. In addition, a further disclaimer is necessary here, and it is the fact that there are no monolithic religions. By this I mean that in very much the same way that we associate a language with synchronic and diachronic variation, religions and religious practices also vary. Depending on the degree of variation, we recognize and distinguish between dialects of the same language and separate languages. We can apply the same paradigm to religion as faith practice and distinguish between X-religion and Y-religion (similar to that between two languages) on the one hand, and between variants of X-religion (similar to that between two dialects of the same language).

Perhaps the first widely documented reference to multilingualism in a religion is the biblical account of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 7–9) when God intervened and terminated the heathenish tower project:

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

The next example is also a biblically derived one. It is the account of the events of the Day of Pentecost, a Jewish festival:

And ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me in all Judea and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

(*Acts 1 v. 8*)

Implicit in this account is knowledge of language beyond local communicative needs and the capacity of the apostles to disseminate the gospel 'to the uttermost parts of the earth'.

Although religious practices were originally specific to individual cultures, missionaries and rituals crossed ethnolinguistic and ethnocultural boundaries as exemplified by Christianity – Protestantism and Catholicism – and the many sects of Islam. During the colonial era, Christian priests and missionaries went in large numbers to European colonies in Africa, Asia, South and Central America, taking with them their languages and imposing them on local populations as the language of worship. We now see the reversal of this process, on a much smaller scale, in missionary work that locates African priests in Europe's churches. However, this process has not mobilized African languages in a similar way. Nevertheless, the contemporary mobility of the clergy has facilitated the globalization of Outer Circle English accents complementary to the sociolinguistic consequence of African diasporic formation.² Previously non-mobile accents have now been granted mobility in the religious domain. In other words, a consequence is that hitherto marginal accents have acquired symbolic capital. The current Archbishop of York, Bishop John Setamu is perhaps the most visible representative of this category of clergy in the UK. Similarly, the reception of Pope Benedict XVI on papal tours in the USA and the UK suggest that accent marginality or better still Outer Circle and Expanding Circle Englishes may not correlate to degrees of acceptability in matters of reverence and divinity. It must be added though that in most instances the rough edges of difference may be smoothed down by globally mobile clergy to approximate or converge towards English as an International Language or English as a Lingua Franca.

In the era of globalization, media and digital evangelism have introduced a new mode of negotiating and crossing boundaries. The Christ Embassy Ministry, also called Believers Love World Ministries, is allegedly one of the fastest growing Pentecostal Evangelical Christian ministries with chapters spread around the world and web-based global television outreach at www.lovetheworldtv.com. On the back cover of their *Rhapsody of Realities* daily devotional, a monthly publication of the Ministry, the blurb claims that:

Several millions of copies of *Rhapsody of Realities*, the best-selling daily devotional and Bible study guide have been distributed in over a hundred and sixty countries in 145 languages of the world including Afrikaans, Arabic, Cantonese, Croatian, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Icelandic, Italian, Mandarin, Myanmar, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish ... Swahili and we're still counting. New languages are added regularly, making the devotional accessible to many more in different parts of the globe, bringing the richness of God's Word into their lives.

(*LoveWorld Publishing, November 2011*)

It is worth mentioning that this kind of religious literacy had been preceded by the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which is credited not only with transforming many oral languages into written languages but also producing descriptive grammars for them. From a sociolinguistic perspective. However, SIL's incursion into rural Africa and Asia and Latin America is undoubtedly also associated with multilingualism in the sense that they were missionaries through whom European native languages were introduced into these new linguistic ecologies. Lamberty (2009) presented a survey of the sociolinguistic situation of Malimba in the Littoral Province of Cameroon conducted by SIL, which focused on language vitality and language attitudes.

Defining and counting languages and religions: issues and controversies

There are ongoing controversies over the enumeration of languages and over what qualifies as a language (see, for example, Makoni and Pennycook 2007). For instance, with reference to African languages, different scholars and publishers have differently tagged some dialects as languages and vice versa (Omoniyi 2004, 2006). The same controversy surrounds the definitions of religion and its distinction from faiths and spirituality. Resolving such controversies is not part of the remit for this chapter but it is worth mentioning as an indication of the existence of parallels in cultural processes of boundary marking.

According to Ethnologue, there are 6,909 languages in the world (Lewis 2010). Table 20.1 presents the distribution of the world's languages by continents. This shows that Asia and Africa have more languages than any of the other continents.

According to Adherents.com, an online database on religious information, there are 4,300 'faith groups' in the world. Twenty-two of these are described as 'major' religions based on the population of their adherents. The estimates for numbers of adherents on this database, and the languages involved, are as follows: Christianity (2.1 billion), Islam (1.5 billion), Hinduism

Table 20.1 Distribution of languages by continent of origin

Area	No. of languages		No. of speakers	
	Count	%	Count	%
Africa	2,110	30.5	726,453,403	12.2
Americas	993	14.4	50,496,321	0.8
Asia	2,322	33.6	3,622,771,264	60.8
Europe	234	3.4	1,553,360,941	26.1
Pacific	1,250	18.1	6,429,788	0.1
Totals	6,909	100.0	5,959,511,717	100.0

Source: Adapted from Ethnologue, 16th edn, M. Paul Lewis (ed.) Copyright © 2009, SIL International.

(900 million), Chinese Traditional Religions (394 million), Buddhism (376 million), African Traditional Religions (100 million), Sikhism (23 million), Judaism (14 million), Baha'i (7 million), Jainism (4.2 million), Shinto (4 million), Cao Dai (4 million), Zoroastrianism (2.6 million) and Rastafarianism (600,000). Some of these religions have had a proselytizing mission and have achieved global reach (e.g. Christianity and Islam). They have been historically centred on the use of one sacred language, e.g. Latin in Catholicism and Classical Arabic in Islam. However, patterns of language use actually diversified over time and space, as these religions spread out from Rome and from Mecca. Other religions have remained traditional and language-specific and language use in religious observance has remained largely monolingual. Take, for example, the case of Traditional African and Chinese Religions, or Shinto in Japan or Cao Dai in Vietnam.

National discourses about religion, along with the procedures and rationales for religious census-taking vary considerably. For example, the Indonesian Constitution only allows for five official religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism and Catholicism. No allowance is made for traditional, animist practices. Citizens have to declare adherence to one of the five religions listed above. In the UK, there have been two religious censuses: one in 1851 and the second in 2001. The latter coincided with the turning point in the global politicization of religion following the September 11 debacle. In 2001 religious affiliations were divided into six very broad categories as follows: No Religion, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish. To my knowledge, there has not yet been any research into multilingualism among faith-workers from different religions, their transnational movements nor into their use of language in the local communities within which they work.

The relationship between multilingualism and religion

One of my core arguments in this chapter is that, in some multilingual contexts, it is not easy to discern the nature of the relationship between multilingualism and religion. However, there appear to be five broad trends: three of these are macro-historical trends involving different populations and social groups in different parts of the world; the other two are trends that can be observed at a local level – they are the consequences of macro-level processes – and are best viewed and researched from a micro-level perspective.

First, the spread of some religions (e.g. Catholicism and Protestantism) was historically linked to colonization. These religions were associated, from the outset, with languages that had considerable symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991) and that were associated with speakers who wielded considerable political and economic power e.g. Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch speakers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English and French speakers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The spread of these particular religions has given rise to specific localized religious phenomena and particular configurations of multilingualism, such as difaithia (Omoniyi 2006) and diglossia (Ferguson 1972, 1982; Fishman 1967). In some contexts, different 'high' languages have been imposed, leading to the creation of successive diglossic orders.

Second, those religions that have spread around the world have brought multilingualism in their wake. The spread of religion and the spread of multilingualism are interconnected cultural flows. Third, the creation of empires through colonization was accompanied by population movements, ranging from the forced movement of slaves and indentured labourers to the movement of people involved in commerce and trade. Linguistic, cultural and religious diversity became commonplace, particularly in key trading posts along global trade routes.

Fourth, because of the diverse nature of religious groupings in multilingual urban contexts, ritual practices in local sites of religious observance became increasingly multilingual in

nature. The multilingual nature of religious practices continued into the post-colonial era and, with the increasing diversity of contemporary population flows, it has become even more evident. And, fifth, a close look at local ritual practices in particular sites of religious observance reveals that language alternation across the different genres and activity types is quite commonplace, particularly in Christian congregations.

I will discuss each of these five trends in the sections below and I will draw on examples of research in different parts of the world.

Macro-historical and societal perspectives

Colonization, power asymmetries, 'endowed languages' and the spread of religions

Those religions that are associated with 'endowed languages' have had greater potential to assume transnational status than those associated with relatively weaker languages. By endowed languages, I am referring to those languages, which, in Bourdieuan discourse (Bourdieu 1991), have symbolic capital. Elsewhere, I have re-theorized this as language capital within the framework of multilingualism and development in post-colonial societies (see Omoniyi 2003). Endowed languages, which are associated with the world's major religions, are unlikely to undergo language shift and death (Fishman 1991).

In many parts of the world, European colonialism was imposed 'through the Bible and the sword'. Take, for example, the close links between military conquest in South America, the spread of Catholicism and the imposition of Spanish in Peru and Portuguese in Brazil; or, the dissemination of Protestantism and the English language under British colonial rule in Africa; or the extension of Catholicism as part of the 'mission civilisatrice' under French colonial rule in Indo-China. The ideology underpinning the 'mission civilisatrice' was clearly articulated in the late nineteenth century by Bishop Depierre, the French bishop of Cochinchina in 1898, in the following terms:

The precise honour of our country is to place intellectual, cultural and moral progress above any other preoccupations. Instead of exploiting its subjects and pressuring them to death as is still done in the Indies and to some extent throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, Frenchmen have always made it a point of honour to bring to the nations in which they establish themselves their ideas, their civilization and their faith.

(Osborne 1997: 42)

Evangelism and missionary work reinforced the spread of particular religions within local colonial orders, particularly when there was an ideological commitment to translation of religious texts into local languages. New writing systems were also introduced by priests and missionaries. The Roman alphabet was, for example, adapted to the writing of Vietnamese by Alexandre de Rhodes, a French missionary working in Vietnam in the early seventeenth century (Wright 2002: 22). In the same broad period in Brazil, the Jesuits were involved in developing a standardized written form of Tupi, the main contact language of the Amazonian region (Drumond Mendes Barros 2004). The twentieth century saw the intensification of missionary involvement in the development of writing systems and grammars for local languages, through the work of the Summer Institute for Linguistics.

A further element in the mix was the role of missionary schooling in colonial regimes e.g. in Africa and Asia. These schools generally served the needs of local elites, such as civil servants,

working within the colonial system. The spread of Catholic and Protestant mission schools contributed to the creation of local situations of diglossia (Fishman 1967; Ferguson 1972). According to Ferguson (ibid.), diglossia means the delineation of low and high functions to languages based on association with religion and secular objectives. By extension, difaithia is the privileging of one religious faith or tradition over another in contexts where multiple faiths exist (Omoniyi 2006). One of the faiths is identified as the faith of the state and is thus accorded privileges over and above other faiths. Elsewhere, I have described the interaction between politico-religious change on the one hand and sociolinguistic change, on the other, as a movement from difaithia to diglossia (ibid.). In the relationship between Western European languages and the languages of those parts of the world with a colonial history, difaithia arguably preceded or actually occasioned diglossia.

During the period of European colonial rule in Africa and the ongoing missionary work, diglossic and difaithic orders sometimes shifted as a consequence of conflicts between European nation states. This is shown very clearly in this account below by Neba relating to the reconstruction of difaithia in the Cameroons and the introduction of a new diglossic order when French colonialism displaced German colonialism:

First, the Catholic Church came to Cameroon in 1884 when the country became a German colony. The earliest German Catholic missionaries, the Pallotines, began their evangelisation work in the coastal region in 1890. They were followed by the German Sacred Heart Fathers, who entered the Grassfields in 1912 (Trudell, 2002: 9). German annexation of new land within Cameroon was halted by the First World War. In 1916, as Germany lost the war, its possessions were divided between France and Britain, with France taking some 4/5 of the territory. French Cameroon, which was governed directly from Paris, prescribed French as the only language to be used in all sectors of public life, including religion. German Catholic missionaries, who established missions such as the Marienberg Mission near Edea and the Shishong mission near Kumbo, had to leave the country. Their evangelising mission was to be continued by French priests, who came to replace them. In 1922, Monseigneur Francois-Xavier Vogt was appointed to be the first Catholic Bishop of Cameroon and, a few years later, the first local priests were ordained. (1987: 141)

Today, a contemporary difaithic order is in place in nations such as the UK where the Queen is both the head of the Church as well as the Head of State. Thus Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and any other religions practised in England occupy a hierarchically lower rung on the status ladder. The status of Judaism in Israel and Islam in Saudi Arabia vis-à-vis other religions is the same as that portrayed above for Protestantism. Difaithia arose out of the colonial experience in Africa in which African Traditional Religions were constructed as ‘paganism’, serving idols rather than God.

The spread of multilingualism through religion

Here I shall deliberate on the capacity of religion to give rise to multilingualism. Take, for example, the case of Catholicism. This religion spread Latin through the liturgy and through devotional hymns. Both the spoken and written Latin formerly used in services around the world were modelled on the services organized in the Holy See in Rome. When Latin appeared in school books in Europe, it had liturgical literacy as a precursor. The point I want to make here is that some form of reduced multilingualism is an indication of the capacity that religion has to

sustain language use. In contemporary times the vestiges of the Holy Roman Empire remain in the emblematic use of Latin in some quasi-religious domains and rituals.

The influence of different religions and the languages associated with them is particularly evident in Palestine. Amara (2006) explores the history of the changing fortunes of Bethlehem as it swung between differing spheres of religious influence including the caliphate of Umar Ibn al-Khattab, the Crusaders, the British Mandate, Jordan and Israel. Each of these put its own stamp on the linguistic landscape (Shohamy and Gorter 2009). The hierarchy of languages in Bethlehem was reshuffled at each turn. The socioreligious and sociolinguistic histories of different parts of the world are closely bound up with political change.

As I have noted above, the transplantation of religion and faith practices as part of transcultural flow processes often involved the transplantation of the language or languages associated with particular religions. This explains the presence of Arabic in the northern Sahel Savannah across West Africa. The Islamization of this region, which occurred from the eleventh century onwards, was championed by the Al-Murabethin (Almoravids) Movement (Davidson 1998: 32). This ‘colonization’ preceded Europe’s colonization, which came from the Atlantic from the sixteenth century onwards.

As a consequence of these far-reaching processes of change, contemporary sub-Saharan Africa is overlaid by two hegemonic religious traditions – Islam and Christianity – which, in some countries, are caught up in political power struggles. The incessant religious conflicts in Nigeria provide illustration of this. But the relevance of this to our discussion here are the ethnolinguistic consequences of the contact situation created by the arrival of these religions.

These are the ‘language effects of missionary work’ that Pennycook and Makoni (2005: 4) say need to be understood. The linguistic landscapes are inscribed by the texts of both Islam and Christianity and, as Salami (2010) has documented, even the names of people reflect the opposition between these two religious traditions. Beyond the cultural influences, perhaps the more pervasive indicator of religious contact is the resultant multilingualism and the relative statuses of different local languages and the ideologies that have been built up around the use of particular languages.

In the linguistic minority literature, evidence abounds that one of the ways in which minority languages are undermined is through ethnoreligious incursion. By this I mean the despatch of religious personnel from a different but more dominant ethnolinguistic background to minority enclaves. Adegbija (2001: 289) discusses the minority status of his Oko ethnolinguistic group and remarks that the pastors despatched to the Anglican church in Ogori were often Yoruba, and so the Bible readings were conducted in Yoruba. One deduces from this account that, in terms of situated literacy practices, one of the ways that bilingualism has developed among Oko speakers, who are Christians, is through encountering Yoruba in Church. Whereas there are over 20 million Yoruba spread across the West African coast in Nigeria, Benin and Togo, there are only about 50,000 Oko people. Ordinarily, the Church would be a narrow domain to control, however, in a deeply religious community, and in a nation so sensitive on issues of religion such as Nigeria, control within that domain cannot be underestimated. Often religion becomes entangled politics and governance.

Migration and the border crossing of ethnoreligious and linguistic minorities

The creation of empires through colonization not only facilitated the transplantation of religions and languages, it also provided new spheres for migration movements (voluntary and involuntary). The slave trade and the transportation of indentured labourers from one colony to another, to build railroads or to work in plantations, created multilingual and multifaith worlds

around the globe: in the Caribbean, in the coastal regions of South America and in Africa and Asia. These large-scale population movements and meetings of people of different origins had local consequences for religious observance.

Rajah-Carrim's (2010) study of religious practice in Mauritius provides an excellent illustration of places of worship as a site of language contact in a post-colonial context. With a slave history that stretched from 1810 to 1968, it is understandable that Mauritian Christians are a heterogeneous group comprising descendants of slave labourers and immigrants from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds – Sino-, Franco-, Indo- and Afro-Mauritians. Consequently, the Christian religious practices in different churches on the island are multilingual practices. The Islamic fold is less heterogeneous.

At different points in history, imperial powers and nation-states with one dominant religion have shown different degrees of tolerance to religion and to linguistic diversity. Thus, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, ethnolinguistic minorities fled persecution across Europe and out of Europe, taking their languages with them and settling, for the most part, in urban centres. Significant numbers of French-speaking Protestants from France – the Huguenots – moved to Britain in the sixteenth century. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the exodus of Jews from Spain and Portugal. According to Reid (1984: 408), 'the earliest minutes of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, dating from 1760, are in Portuguese'. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Yiddish-speaking Jews fled from Russia to other parts of Europe and to the USA. This movement was followed by the worldwide dispersal of German-speaking Jews from countries such as Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Germany itself.

Within the established colonial orders of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the border crossings of different linguistic and ethnoreligious minorities intensified, due to commerce, due to the widening of transport links and due to chain migration. Within the British Empire, communities of South Asian origin were established in East Africa and in Malaysia: these included Sikhs from the Indian Punjab (East Africa and Malaysia) and Gujarati-speaking Hindus and Muslims (East Africa). In the post-colonial era, the migration trajectories shifted from the periphery to the centre, with push and pull factors shaping the trajectories. One major pull factor was Britain's espousal of a 'colonial solution' to ensure the supply of labour needed for its expanding industrial base in the period after the Second World War.

Up to the late twentieth century, the trajectories of post-war migration acted as a window onto the ethnoreligious and ethnolinguistic composition of different countries. Thus, multilingualism in the USA reflected the fact that the country had drawn its immigrant populations from places where the USA has had vested imperial interests, such as the Phillipines, Puerto Rico, Guam and Western Samoa, as well as from bordering nations like Mexico. Prospective emigrants from the countries of the British Commonwealth more often than not chose English-speaking destinations such as the UK, New Zealand, Canada and Australia. The core of their immigrant populations from former colonial holdings in Central Africa (Belgium), Surinam and Dutch East India (The Netherlands), Macau, East Timor, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau (Portugal). The by-product was religious plurality or diffusion, particularly when emigration was from a religiously diverse source.

With the advent of globalization, in the final decades of the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century, global population flows became more complex, leading to the creation of new 'ethnoscapes' (Appadurai 1996) and to the emergence of superdiversity (Vertovec 2007). As noted in the Introduction to this volume, superdiversity is the term employed in recent anthropological research on migration to refer to the complexity of the new patterns of migration: today migrants are increasingly diverse in origin, in their transnational connections

and in their socio-economic and legal status. Vertovec (ibid.) notes the urgent need for ethnographic research related to the ways in which new groups of migrants are recasting their lives within the new, transnationally connected diasporic spaces in which they find themselves. He does not specify language or religion, although these are significant cultural resources for the reshaping of identities in the context of migration.

Pandariphande (2010: 61) reports on a study of practising Hindus who have moved to live in the USA. He says that: 'The Hindu immigrants in the US have come from different nations (India, UK, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Fiji, etc.).' He also notes that they speak different languages (e.g. Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil) and have complex transnational ties of caste, sect and regional affiliation. In addition, he shows that religious practice has been transformed now that it has been transplanted into a different linguistic ecology. Pandariphande (2010) identifies four ways in which the language of Hinduism has changed upon transplantation to the USA:

- (1) English is rebranded and introduced into Hindu practices thus shaking off its 'foreign' and 'spiritually polluted language' and consequent exclusion in India;
- (2) Sanskrit–English codemixing occurs in worship rituals in private and public religious practices;
- (3) English translations of the Hindu scriptures (the Vedas, the Bhagavadgita) are sacralized and accorded recognition as legitimate alternative mode of the Hindu scriptures and their recitation as religious ritual; and
- (4) English composition and recitation of Hindu prayers and the imposition of the Sanskrit meters on these, and their recitation in traditional Hindu style are normative.

In the superdiverse societies of the post-colonial era, as in the past, churches, mosques, temples, shrines and other sites of religious worship are in reality more than spaces for the performance of religious rituals. They double up as cultural centres or social hubs for sustaining and recasting ethnolinguistic identity within a new context. Different ideologies become embedded in such cultural centres. Sometimes a church or temple serves the purpose of reproducing and insisting on traditional homogeneous practices rather than opening up 'third spaces' and allowing multilingualism and different cultural practices to develop. Take, for example, the Polish Church on Watlington Street, Reading, UK. This church was the site for ethnographic observation as part of a linguistic landscapes study. In spite of the bilingual online posting for the church (Figure 20.1), actual language practices were observed to be mostly monolingual, across multiple genres (Omoniyi 2008).

Sacred Heart (Polish)
Watlington Street Reading
Telephone (0118) 957 3647
Mass Times
Sundays: 9am, 10.30am
Weekdays: Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri 7pm
 Thur 9.30am
 Sat 9.30am
Holy Days: 10.30am, 7pm
Confession Before Mass

Figure 20.1 Bilingual online posting for a Polish church in Reading, UK.

Woods (2004) conducted a detailed study of language and ideology in ethnic churches, of different Christian denominations, in Melbourne, Australia. She shows how immigrant languages were used alongside English in these ethnoreligious communities, depending on the nature of the congregation, the language background of the religious leaders and the ideological orientation of the church. Here are some examples from her research findings:

- (1) Anglican church with a Chinese minister of Malaysian origin. The church members were using Hakka and English. By 1997 there had been a split into two separate services – one for older Chinese members from Southern China and East Timor and one for younger members who were mostly professionals who preferred English and who were from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. They were wary that the separation might impact on the sense of community. They therefore held joint services on important occasions.
- (2) Anglican church: the leader of the Persian congregation was of Iranian origin. He was also vicar of the English-speaking church. He discouraged exclusive membership of the congregations but saw the Persian congregation as linked to the larger Iranian community, which was predominantly Islamic.
- (3) Baptist church with a pastor of Egyptian origin. The Arabic Baptist congregation was drawn from Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Somalia. Arabic was the dominant language and English was prominent. Woods (2004: 54) notes that: ‘When the proliferation of English versions of the Bible began in the 1980s, some Arabic speakers began to call for a more modern version of the Arabic Bible, to no avail’.
- (4) Baptist church, with Spanish speakers mainly from Latin America. The pastor was of Spanish origin. Simultaneous translation into English was provided. Spanish was the preferred language even though there were Sunday schools and other activities organised in English. Woods notes that: ‘The future of the congregation as a Spanish one depends, to some extent, on continued immigration from Spanish-speaking countries’ (ibid.).
- (5) Catholic church, using the Croatian language. The church was formed in 1962 as part of a Croatian Community Centre and thus formed a significant focal point for the community.
- (6) Catholic church which also functioned as an Italian Resource Centre: 40 Italian masses were celebrated every Sunday, in different locations in Melbourne, by Italian priests, by Maltese priests who knew Italian, by Rome-trained Australian priests and by Australian priests who had picked up Italian informally. The Mass was in Italian and the Homily was in English due to the fact that many of the priests could not give sermons in Italian but could read. Among second generation congregants, bilingual weddings, baptism services and funerals were in Italian, but the prediction was that the Italian Catholic churches would lose Italian over time.
- (7) Lutheran church where German was used. Sixty to eighty people attended the three German and two English services.

(Woods 2004: Chapter 3)

What are fascinating in Woods’ (2004) study are the accounts for Latvian and Slovak. There has, apparently, been a resurgent use of those languages for religious observance since the independence of their states from the Soviet Union, although religious culture has remained basically the same as it was in the newly independent states of the post-Soviet era.

Multilingualism in local religious practice.

Religion as a site of multilingual ritual practice

One of the hallmarks of Christian religious practice in post-colonial multilingual urban contexts is the provision for ‘instantaneous translation’. There are three models: Model One has one dominant ethnic population with small numbers of other ethnic groups and as a result the primary language of liturgy is the language of the majority group with translation into the former colonial language. In Model Two, the cosmopolitan composition of the congregation is more obvious and acknowledged, with the former colonial language as the language of the liturgy and translation into the languages of the immediate community (Bamgbose 1991). In Model Three, churches run two or three language-specific services. Prime Time, whatever that may be, is occupied by the language service in the former colonial language. The other language services are scheduled before or after the main service.

Kouega (2008) reports on a study of the languages used during the Catholic mass. This study was carried out in the region of Cameroon where French is widely spoken, in one of the most multilingual countries in Africa. The study documented patterns of language use across different parts of the services in 60 churches: during the reading of the missal and the gospel and during sermons. This study shows Model Two in action:

The analysis showed that while French and English, the country’s joint official languages and Beti and Bassa two minority languages spoken in the Centre province of Cameroon are liturgical languages i.e. used for the Gospel, sermons etc, the other minority languages spoken by the inhabitants of the capital city are used mainly for singing and occasionally for epistle reading. Interestingly, the choice of these minority languages is determined by various nonsociolinguistic factors including the degree of their speakers’ involvement in church issues.

(Kouega 2008: 140)

Micro-perspectives on ritual practice: language alternation across different genres and activity types

Religion and religious practice is not monolithic in nature. In fact, what seems to be common is that there are several discernible aspects of religious practice. They may be observed and patterns of language use can be documented. Woods (2004: 148) identified liturgy, music, prayer, the Bible, and sermons as aspects of ritual practice. Based on her Melbourne study of ethnic churches, she posits that liturgies in such churches are often, although not exclusively, in the local community languages. Liturgies are modelled on or influenced by those used in the home countries, in the form of official or home-made translations. Decisions about language use are made either on the basis of principles such as ‘that which is most easily understood by the congregation’ or ‘that which upholds the continuity of church tradition’ irrespective of whether the congregation understands it or not.

Woods (2004) did record several instances of services being conducted predominantly in English with praise and worship choruses including songs from a variety of languages. The songs were not necessarily religious in origin. The practice of appropriating popular songs for religious worship by changing the lyrics to reflect Christian themes is a global phenomenon. Woods reported similar appropriation of popular Persian love songs (2004: 149). Appropriation in the opposite direction, i.e. from the sacred to the secular also takes place and this kind of appropriation occurs across languages.

In the 'Praise and Worship' component of services in evangelical churches it is not uncommon to observe the use of choruses from a variety of languages especially in urban multilingual environments. For instance, the chorus below, which is regularly sung in Evangelical church services and in Christian social gatherings like weddings and christenings in Nigeria has been released on commercial tapes and CD:

A ga m aja ya mma
Si n'ebiyebi, ebiyebi rue n'ebiyebi
A ga m aja ya mma
Si n'ebiyebi, ebiyebi rue n'ebiyebi

Ma yin Oluwa fun titi lailai,
Titi lailai, fun titi lailai
Ma yin Oluwa o fun titi lailai
Titi lailai fun titi lailai

We shall praise him from everlasting
Everlasting to everlasting
We shall praise him from everlasting
Everlasting to everlasting

Here, we have a trilingual rendering verse by verse in Igbo, Yoruba and English. Choruses may be perceived as an area of the ritual that facilitates the inclusion of local languages. Among diasporic congregations, the switch may be between transnational songs, that is, songs deriving from an ethnic group in one nation being co-sung by congregants who have a different homeland from that of the song source.

The illustrations (a) to (c) below, drawn from a variety of regions in Nigeria present an overview on how multilingualism actually works in religious practice. Following Bell (1984), I am presuming that, in the production of religious texts, the producers have particular audiences in mind and will therefore tailor the text bearing in mind the communicative characteristics and capacities of their audience.

- (a) Redeem Christian Church of God, Obadore, Lagos
 - English sermons
 - Yoruba/Hausa/Igbo/Ijaw for prayer points and choruses
- (b) Daystar Christian Centre, Ikosi Road, Ikeja
 - English sermons
 - Yoruba and Igbo for praise and worship
- (c) Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan
 - Morning services entirely in English; [two services] except for songs and praise worship which are largely in Yoruba, Igbo and English.
 - Yoruba service in the evening
 - Igbo and Yoruba Bible classes in the evening – one hour sessions.

As I have shown thus far, the practice of multiple language use in the enactment of a religious ritual extends across religions. However, there are settings where there is a mismatch between the linguistic repertoires of religious leaders and different generations within a congregation. Writing on liturgical literacy among British Muslim communities of South Asian

extraction in the West Midlands, Rosowsky notes that the ‘language of the liturgy is often different from that spoken by the congregation’ (2008: 78). In this Midlands setting, it is Classical Arabic that is being used for religious observance and Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, is being used in Quranic classes. Parents from the British Midlands community where Rosowsky carried out his study were concerned about ‘the lack of use of English’ (ibid.). The Imams have limited English and the children have limited Urdu but the Imams conduct their teaching of the Quran in Urdu. There is a disjuncture between the older generation clerics who are competent in Urdu and the younger generation pupils who are competent in English. Transmission of Urdu, Classical Arabic and the Islamic faith are seen as being under threat and are therefore a cause for concern, as shown in the excerpts below:

Discussion with British Muslim parents in the West Midlands

One of the parents, Aktar, responds to the prompt: ‘So the speech is in Urdu not Punjabi?’

AKHTAR: The biggest gripe I have with them is that they won’t preach in English ...

RESEARCHER: Is it because of the language?

WAJIB: Yes, because of the language as well. Because most of the kids, they are very fluent in English and were born here and most of the kids speak English and some of them have difficulty understanding Mirpuri³ or Urdu. Even Urdu. Mainly Urdu they have difficulty understanding it. I mean if they don’t understand it how are they going to learn? So what I have been suggesting is that the teachers can’t communicate well with kids and they can’t get the message across. This is why we’re falling behind.

MUNIR: I think myself, if children go to the mosque, they should read in Arabic and also in English as well. They should understand what the meaning of this word is. I mean, if they are reading that, and they don’t understand, don’t know what is the meaning of this, they are just wasting time. We want proper teachers. Qualified teachers, who can teach these children born in this country.

(2008: 79)

The last piece of research that I draw on here was based in Finland, in a Russian Orthodox cathedral. American anthropologist, Jim Wilce, whose current scholarship is focused on ‘lament’ as a ritual practice in Helsinki, Finland, shared with me an experience he had when attending a multid denominational service on the eve of Easter Day at the Uspenski Cathedral.⁴ He recorded in his field diary the incidence of multilingualism in the religious rituals he observed. These rituals involved the use of up to ten different languages and language varieties, including Finnish, Swedish, Russian, Karelian and English, reflecting the diverse nature of the congregation.

There were perhaps a dozen priests moving in and out of the inner sanctum, together with altar boys (no girls as I remember). The boys circulated through the church late in the service taking up an offering. The choir was beautiful—and what endurance, singing for almost the whole four hours of the service. There was beautiful musical dialogue between solo priests and the choir. Noteworthy too is that the choir sung almost no contrapuntal music at all, i.e. only block chords. A youngish priest seemed to relish calling out ‘*Kristus nousi [kuolleista]!*’ (Christ rose from the dead) and evoking responses of ‘*Totisesti nousi!*’ (Verily he rose!). This was striking during the minutes we were outside, circum-ambulating the church in the not-too-cold (perhaps just above freezing) early spring temperature that is apparently very unusual for Easter here. The choirmaster was there too. In some inside as well as outside moments he turned from the choir to conduct the

congregation singing '*Kristus nousi kuolleista, kuolemallaan kuoleman voitti ja haudoissa oleville elämän antoi*' (Christ rose from the dead, by his dying defeated death and gave life to those in the grave). I first noticed English outdoors. Ensio told me the singing indoors [he was not able to walk outside because of his legs] was in Finnish, Swedish, Russian ... but at times far more languages than those. Very late in the service, with much devotional attention to a huge 'book' representing John's gospel, passages about the incarnation of the Christ were read by the priests in about ten languages, one of which was Karelian, said Ensio (I had thought it an odd mix of Russian and Finnish).

(Jim Wilce, field diary entry, 30 May, 2010)

The Uspenski is the largest Orthodox Cathedral in Western Europe with a congregation that runs into the thousands. Figures 20.2 and 20.3 are images of the Cathedral and a copy of the schedule of services, respectively, rendered in Finnish, English and Russian. Linguistic landscapes enthusiasts might read into the order of presentation of the languages on the list a reflection of ongoing linguistic reconfiguration and rehierarchization in Europe, especially those areas that had been previously under Russian influence, including in the domain of religion.

Because of the cosmopolitan nature of the congregation in this Russian Orthodox Church in Finland, language practice in religious rituals has become remarkably multilingual in nature. This led me to wonder about developments in Orthodox churches in areas of the former Soviet Union, particularly in the Baltic States. To what extent has the Russian Orthodox Church been able to sustain the use of Russian both inside and outside the Church in the newly independent states? Can new national and official languages in those countries, such as Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, which feed a sense of pride among their diaspora populations, also threaten Russian internally within the Church?

Future research directions

Future work in multilingualism and religion as a theme of scholarship may be approached from two perspectives, theoretical and methodological. First, different languages and religions have been treated in these discussions as neat categories but there are varying degrees of mixing or hybridity (Bhabha 1994) in actual language use and in religious or faith practices. Zuckermann (2009: 41) discusses hybridity in the context of the language he calls 'Israeli'. He notes that, 'whereas most forms of Israeli are Semitic, many of its patterns are European'.⁵ How widespread hybridization is as a phenomenon and which languages and religions are involved are yet to be systematically studied. Thus they constitute a possible focus for researchers in the future.

Second, syncretism is represented as a recently developing world phenomenon (see Omoniyi 2006; Haynes 1996) but the biblical details of the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness contains several exemplifications of this, albeit without information on the language dimensions of those wanderings. It would be interesting to explore the potential for syncretism to be globalized through the same valves through which transcultural flows occur. Is the formation or expansion of diasporas of populations associated with faith mixing a natural context for the spread of syncretism? The term has also been associated with Creole studies in linguistics in the description of contact phenomena of various forms of language mixing.

Finally, let us consider possible directions in the methodology of multilingualism and religion scholarship. The investigation of hybridity can be carried out by looking at corpora within the framework of corpus linguistics or historical sociolinguistics. When a dialect or accent acquires symbolic capital like those of non-native English-speaking immigrant clergy, they become prime subjects for ethnographic exploration. For instance, some African pastors



Figure 20.2 The Uspenski Orthodox Cathedral in Helsinki.

attempt assimilation into the new speech community by picking up an American or British tone. This is convergence towards International English or ELF (Jenkins 2007; Dewey and Jenkins 2010). Second, language contact is another paradigm within which multilingualism and religion can be explored. The hierarchy of languages and contact phenomena such as

USPENSKIJKATEDRALEN	
Öppen för besök och tyst andakt:	
ti, on, to, fr	9.30 - 16.
lö	9.30 - 14.
sö	12 - 15.
må	stängd
THE USPENSKI CATHEDRAL	
Open for visit and for silent prayer	
Tues, Weds, Thur, Fri	9.30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sat	9.30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Sun	12 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Mon	closed
УСПЕНСКИЙ СОБОР	
Открыт для ознакомления и частной молитвы:	
вт, ср, чт, пт	с 9.30 до 16 ч.
сб	с 9.30 до 14 ч.
вс	с 12 до 15 ч.
пн	закрыт

Figure 20.3 Uspenski Cathedral: schedule of services in Finnish, English and Russian.

codeswitching, diglossia and difaithia (Ferguson 1972; Fishman 1967; Omoniyi 2006) are situated squarely within this framework. More recently, research in linguistic landscapes (LL) (Shohamy and Gorter 2009) also offers a plausible framework in the sense that the different kinds of flow alter the LL, and the dynamics of reconstitution require investigation and description.

Concluding comments

I have attempted in the foregoing sections to explore the mutual relationship between religion and language and to demonstrate that, to a large extent, the one has facilitated the spread of the

other and vice versa. I have drawn illustrations from around the world to show that multilingualism is both a cause and an effect of the spread of religion even from biblical times. Its parallel is multifaithism, the presence of multiple faiths in a community and the possible practice or observance of more than one faith by individuals and institutions. Difaithia is the parallel of the sociolinguistic concept of diglossia; they are framed by social asymmetry in society. Diversity is obvious in the manner in which contemporary religious rituals are globalized and localized at one and the same time. Moreover, there are micro- and macro-level perspectives to the exploration of the links between language and religion and these perspectives can only be drawn together in interdisciplinary research.

Related topics

Lessons from pre-colonial multilingualism; codeswitching; heteroglossia; multilingual literacies; linguistic landscapes and multilingualism.

Notes

- 1 I wish to acknowledge the editorial assistance and encouragement offered by Marilyn Martin-Jones without whom I might not have completed this project.
- 2 The linguistic landscape of host communities of immigrant groups who have mother tongues other than English expand to accommodate not only multilingualism but also accent repertoires of speakers of non-native Englishes. Braj Kachru (1986) had divided speakers into three groups: the Inner Circle comprising native speakers; the Outer Circle comprising speakers of English as a Second Language (former colonies of Britain); and the Expanding Circle comprising speakers of English as a Foreign Language. See critiques of this in Saxena and Omoniyi (2010).
- 3 Mirpuri is a regional variety of Punjabi spoken in the Kashmir region on the border between India and Pakistan. The region is the source of extensive migration to Europe.
- 4 Personal communication with Jim Wilce, American anthropologist.
- 5 The term 'Israeli' is used by Zuckerman – instead of the term 'Modern Hebrew' – as a means of foregrounding 'the difficulty in determining a single source for the grammar' (2009: 40). His broader argument is that 'revived' languages generally do not have a single source language.

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