

**Bible Translation as Mission: Towards an Assessment of
the Use of Translated Scriptures and their Missional Impact
in Bakossi, South West Cameroon**

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis has been prepared and written by me and has not been previously submitted to any institution for a degree. To the best of my Knowledge, all citations and references in the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

To my late father, Papa Ngole Hans Kede, the pioneer translator of the Bakossi Bible Translation Project, for encouraging and motivating me to join this ministry; his advice and support cannot be overemphasized.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALACOM: Akoose Language Committee

CABTAL: Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy

CBC: Cameroon Baptist Convention

CDC: Cameroon Development Corporation

CNE: National Education Center

CREA: Centre for Anthropological Research and Studies

F: Following

FCBH: Faith Comes By Hearing

IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons

MINEDUC: Ministry of National Education

Mt: Mount

NIV: New International Version

PCC: Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

PROPELCA: Projet de Recherche Opérationnelle Pour L'Enseignement des Langues
au Cameroun

SIL: Summer Institute of Linguistics

TSC: The Seed Company

UNESCO: United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organization

VCD: Video Compact Disk

ABSTRACT

This thesis entitled, *Bible Translation as Mission: Towards an Assessment of the Use of Translated Scriptures and their Missional Impact in Bakossi, South West Cameroon*, researches the impact of the mother tongue scriptures as an evangelistic tool for missions amongst the Bakossi people in the South West Region of Cameroon. This study attempts to ascertain the impact the Bakossi Bible Translation Project (BBTP) of the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) has had on the socio-cultural and spiritual lives of the Bakossi people. It tries to emphasize the importance of the local language and how it shapes people's world views, as well as how it is a tool to for Bakossi churches in carrying out the mission of God.

This thesis traces the historical aspects that led to the translation of the Word of God into the Akoose language. The missionaries identified the local language as an adequate medium for gospel communication. The emergence of the churches and the Bakossi Bible Translation Project is a realisation of the dream to bring the Word of God to the Bakossi people in their heart language. Since the time missionaries brought Christianity in 1896 and promoted the use of the local language for gospel communication to the recent translation of scriptures in the Akoose language, great strides had been made towards this goal.

The Bakossi Bible Translation Project has been operational in Bakossi since 1996, leading to the translation of the book of Ruth, 1 Samuel chapter 1 and 2, the New Testament (Melle Mekoole), Parables, the Jesus Film, an audio form of the New Testament and posters for scripture exhibition. Moreover, a literacy program is put in place to teach people how to read and write the mother tongue and a program to promote the use of the translated scriptures called "Scripture Engagement."

The author consulted other literary or academic works in order to decipher what others have written towards the importance of mother tongue scriptures for missions.

An empirical study was done by distributing questionnaires to the clergy, lay preachers, Christians and scripture engagement personnel. This study analysed the contextual engagement of the mother tongue Scriptures with its socio-cultural and spiritual impact within the Bakossi churches. To buttress this, the author looked at the theological relevance and significance of Bible translation as a tool for effective missions. He developed theological models for the promotion of the Akoose scriptures in the Bakossi churches and studied its implications for evangelism, discipleship and church growth. The results showed that despite the presence of the local scriptures, there is an absence of proper strategies and a need for more work promoting their use for evangelism and discipleship. Thus the author sought to devise strategies for the effective use and promotion of the mother tongue scriptures to fulfill the missional goal of effective evangelism and discipleship. Finally, the author offered recommendations and action plans to be implemented by church leaders, lay preachers, literacy teachers, scripture engagement promoters and Christians to promote the translated scriptures in the effective transformation of lives and church growth.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Research Background

This project is a result of my involvement in the Bible translation ministry, where I served with the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) from 2000 to 2020. I was an exegete in the Bakossi Bible Translation Project (BBTP) set up for the translation and publishing of scriptural portions, the Jesus film, audio scriptures and the New Testament into Akoose, a language spoken in the Bakossi land in the South West region of Cameroon. These scriptural products have been available in Bakossi land for over twenty years thanks to the huge resources invested for the realisation of the project. In addition, I was motivated to embark on this research project by the following: (1) the presence of twenty years of translated scriptures, (2) the failure to use existing scriptural tools, (3) the need for contextualization, and (4) the need for life transformation.

The translated tools are aimed at empowering Christian congregations in Bakossi land. Most of the population in Bakossi is rural. Akoose is the main medium of communication. Most Christians are indigenes of the area. This study examines the extent to which the Akoose scripture is used in the Bakossi territory. It also seeks to evaluate the missional impact of translated scriptures. The research findings will provide useful data to bible translation organizations. It will also contribute to missional studies in bible translation from an African perspective.

1.1.1 Twenty years of translated scriptures in Bakossi Land

CABTAL extended its missionary vision in Bakossi land by instituting the Bakossi Bible translation project. The project started its activities in translating scriptural materials in 2000 (Fochang, 2008). Only the New Testament portion was translated in different forms. The forms include the hard copy, the electronic copy, hymn books, the audio version, and

the Jesus film. As at now, to the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted on the use of these scriptural tools and their missional impact on the Bakossi people of Cameroon.

1.1.2 The none-use of translated scriptural tools in local languages

Hill and Hill (2008:6) note that there are often denominations whose leaders resist engaging with the mother-tongue scripture in contexts where Bible translation has been carried out. Mother-tongue scripture is generally made available in many forms to Christians and churches; members do desire to maximize the use of this medium of evangelism, yet some pastors or priests are reluctant to use it. This refusal spurred my desire to research why pastors and priests resist the use of the mother-tongue scripture in their Christian communities.

1.1.3 The need for contextualization

There is much talk about contextualization or enculturation amongst the church leaders, particularly within the Bakossi area and the South West region in Cameroon. The concept refers to the adaptation of cultural activities into the worship life of a congregation. Many church leaders accept the practice, but they tend to ignore the local language which is one of the main tools of contextualization. Christians within the village setting face numerous challenges due to the failure to contextualize the message in the local language. In the Bakossi region, most worship activities are run in the English language or Pidgin English, a language of wide communication. Altel (2019:16) reiterates that translation renders the true meaning of the Bible in a way that would speak directly to an ordinary plowboy. Where this fails to happen, Christianity will remain shallow given its foreign character. Since many Christians in the Bakossi area are not literate in the English language, their spiritual needs and aspirations are not met.

1.1.4 The need to transform lives

In the four theological institutions based in the South West Region of Cameroon (Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Apostolic, and Baptist), English is the language of pastoral training. Pastors and priests generally communicate the gospel using English

theological jargons. Christians do not often understand the message since it is preached 'above their heads' and not 'to their hearts. Key biblical terms such as sanctification, righteousness, salvation, glory, trinity, sacraments and a host of others do not seem to speak directly to the people's hearts because they are presented in a foreign language. When hearts are not touched by the Word, it is difficult to expect transformation of lives.

Prior to the translation of Scripture, most church services within the village settings depended on interpreters for oral translation of English words into to the mother tongue. In most cases, there was a misinterpretation of Scripture since the interpreters came out with inaccurate meaning, ignoring the original context of the word. For example, the term "prophet" was translated as "ngaŋ e Dyöb", meaning "sorcerer of God" or "soothsayer of God." Christians tended to liken prophets to mediators or diviners who performed magical activities (casting lots) before they transmitted any information to or from God to people. It is quite ironic to give God's prophets this negative connotation. When Scripture was translated, the meaning of "Prophet" was made clearer to the people as "Nkal é'dæédəŋ", meaning the speaker of spiritual things from God.

1.2 Rationale for the study

The extensive experience I have acquired in the bible translation ministry in Africa has enabled me to appreciate the role of bible translation in mission. I propose five arguments to support my position.

1.2.1 The missional impact of translated scriptures in local languages

There is need for missiologists to fully appreciate the contribution of Bible translation mission organisations in South West region of Cameroon in particular and Africa in general as Christianity has spread far and wide in the continent. Despite the wide spread, Christianity has not gone deep into the lives of the people. According to Hill (2008:42), people may have accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour, but they may not know much about Him or live in ways that honour Him.

Logic tells us that worship should be intelligible, that is, worship proceeds from understanding. The gospel must also be grounded in the language, the worldview and the social context of each community. Torrance and Walker (2008:37) assert that Christ revealed himself to us whom we know through his own word, who utters the word and whose word is identical with his saving work.

The problems of Bible translation are the problems of incarnation. Christ became flesh within an organized group of people in a specific environment in a particular society. There were other tribes speaking different languages, but He identified Himself with a particular language, worldview and social context. For worship to happen, the divine became involved in human affairs so as to experience what humans are going through and to minister to them in their context. Communicating the Christian faith should be the goal of mission rather than transmitting it.

1.2.2 The value of using scriptural tools in local languages

According to Kwesi's article in Bujo and Muya (2008:105), Scripture as the universal Word of God has relevance for all peoples and times. Consequently, it would be preposterous for a group of people to claim sole ownership to its interpretation, relevance and acceptance. If theology is seen as man's endeavour to understand what the Bible teaches about a particular topic or way of life, then it articulates an individual's or group's understanding of the reality with God as the centre (Grudem, 1994:16). If this is true, translation will influence the action and response of a people with regards to the area of life the verse or biblical passage addresses. It follows, therefore, that the choice and arrangements of words in a particular context will lead to right or wrong understanding of Scripture which in turns lead people either to a right or wrong response to God in their daily lives. Ogden (2004:309) asserts that, "translation sets the theological agenda by the dint of its choice of terms and what association these terms have in the target community's various frames, be they cultural, religious, denominational and linguistic or other."

Translation, therefore, facilitates the theological task of making man understand what the Bible teaches about different aspects of life. People's worldview affects their interpretation

of reality, since they interpret new information in the light of existing beliefs and express their response in their language and daily lives. They may not fully understand things articulated outside their context as well as things not made relevant to their context. Giving that mother tongue translation is carried out in the context of the people, it is a better tool to communicate to a people for whom it is translated. This means that the extent to which a people understand scripture is proportional to the extent to which they apply it to worship and their daily lives.

1.2.3 The use of mother tongue scriptures by pastors and priests

The task of communicating God's Word in people's local languages has been part of the missionary enterprise for many years. It was introduced by the first missionaries who established it as an effective tool for the spread of the gospel. Wagenaar (2002:58), paying homage to the early missionaries, says that by investing enormously in Bible translation in vernacular languages, missionaries gave great encouragement to indigenous aspirations.

The task of pastors and priests is to meet the spiritual needs of the people and reflect on their societal challenges. When this task is not met, some Christians move from one church to another to find solutions to their spiritual needs. The medium of communication is a major consideration in the handling of contextual, spiritual issues. Hill and Hill (2008:23) opine that Christians need to have access to Scripture in a language they understand and which also speaks to their hearts.

The local church would be more effective in missions if the Word is well understood by Christians. Spiritually and purposeful lifestyle is greatly enhanced when people hear God speak to them in their own language. Addressing the spiritual needs of the people in their local language means that God speaks to them directly and no interpreter is needed. For Munga (2000:9), "theology that matters is theology where the Christians are." When the Christians understand the Word of God, their faith is deepened and they won't be prey to false teachers—men and women who enrich themselves at the detriment of their flock. Moreover, there is a need for Bible teachers to be grounded in the Word to exegete and expound the Word correctly.

1.2.4 Establishing faith from childhood

The first language a child acquires is the 'mother tongue,' that is, the language introduced by the nursing mother. The child grows up with this intimate language and comprehends concepts presented through it better. Therefore, if any concept, doctrine or religion is introduced from childhood using the mother tongue, the child is embedded in it and responds accordingly. Learning how to read and write the mother tongue from childhood alongside using and applying the mother tongue Scripture is a guarantee for a strong and faithful African church in the future. Hill (2008:30) confirms that when children are taught to pray (the Lord's Prayer), it helps them learn useful phrases such as: Our Father in heaven, Lord forgive us, praise God, and in Jesus' name in their language. Thus, their faith grows and they develop deep fellowship with God.

1.2.5. The need for contextualization

Today, there is the call for contextualisation or enculturation for effective evangelism. Language, particularly the mother tongue, remains an integral part of people's culture. Pastors and other church leaders serving in Bakossi land underwent training in seminaries and Bible institutions with English as the language of instruction. Regrettably, they carry out missionary work in the field mainly in English. The translation of the Scripture into indigenous languages has come to enhance effective communication Scripture. In order to integrate the use of the mother tongue scripture in churches, various stakeholders need to participate, including translators, church leaders and theological-training institutions. Bivin (2010:72) asserts that without mother tongue scripture, the Christianity practised by indigenous peoples will likely be no more than a foreigner's religion instead of being a home-grown, vital, and relationship-based faith. Mother tongue is crucial for the development of contextualised faith.

1.2.6 Inclusion of Bible translation courses in theological curriculum

The world is diverse both culturally and linguistically, with the presence of many languages. The church needs to train pastors and priests who can incarnate the message into the culture of their Christians. Most academic programs in seminaries and Bible institutes are yet to reflect the African context accurately. Norma (2011:154) argues that

in order for the good news of Jesus Christ to be real in people's lives, it must speak to that specific human condition in a language that will be convincing. The clergy's evangelical role will be facilitated if he takes into consideration the impact of the mother tongue in evangelism. In the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Cameroon, for example, students spend time reading and articulating what other theologians have said, neglecting what is happening around them. Pastors in the field are caught up in situations that warrant them to act spontaneously, but their pre-service, training experience is usually a limiting factor. The inclusion of courses in Linguistics and Bible translation in the curriculum offers training in basic skills on Bible translation that is context specific. Translation work is not only to the Bible; it extends to other useful liturgical material such as the liturgy of the service. The field keeps evolving as translators seek to acquire a solid theological training, including knowledge of the original languages of the Bible.

1.3 The purpose for the study

There exist translations of various forms of Scripture (New Testament hard copy, the electronic copy of the New Testament, hymn books, the audio version of the New Testament, and the Jesus film) into the Bakossi language since 2000. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the missional impact of these translated scriptural tools in the Bakossi community in Cameroon.

1.4 Research questions

This project sets out to respond to the following main research question:

1. The main research question:
 - What is the missional impact of Bible translation in Bakossi land in South West Region of Cameroon?

The following sub-questions help to shed light on the main question.

2. Sub-questions:

1. What happened during the Bible translation project in Bakossi land from 2000 to 2015?
2. What kind of dynamics affect the way people think and respond to the use of translated scriptures in Bakossi land?
3. What do the Bible and theologians say about translating scriptures in mother tongues and its role in mission?
4. What is the most appropriate and creative action plan to improve the use of translated scriptures in Bakossi land?

1.5 Research objectives

This research proposes to achieve four main goals:

- Access the use of translated scriptures in Bakossi land South West Cameroons.
- Evaluate the missional impact of Bible translation in Bakossi land.
- The cross-cultural communication of the gospel.
- Increase awareness on use translated scriptural tools available in Bakossi languages.

1.6 Literature review

A central theme in the Bible is that God communicates with mankind. In the Garden of Eden, God and man were in intimate fellowship until man disobeyed God (Gen. 3:9-10). God communicated with Adam to bring him to a confession of his sin. God communicates with us, both through the words in the Bible and in other ways. The fact that God communicates with us means God wants us to know Him. 2 Timothy 3:16 says: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living" (NIV). This text depicts Paul's use of standard terms from ancient education (3:16). The concept of "training" especially characterized Greek education (for discipline). Reproof was especially important in Judaism, which was done privately and gently first. The Bible has information about all of the areas of life and stages of growth that we go through. It teaches us to do good; it tells us when we have done wrong, and it trains us to live in a way that pleases God. The translation of the Word

of God in the various languages has proved to be an effective tool for evangelism or missions.

In this section of my work, I will explore two types of literature: literature on African languages, culture and mission, and literature on Bible translation and mission.

1.6.1 Literature on African languages, culture and mission

Scholarly works abound that deal with African languages and their relation to mission and culture. Ommani (2012:22) confirms that 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. Bible translation gives the African full access to the Word of God in their own language, without intermediary, without foreign accent and without grammatical errors, speaking with full force and full authority.” Translation is inevitable when a message in one language is communicated in another language. Various means are used to communicate the original message in the translation. Language and religion are closely linked with each other. Religious concepts, sentiments, and statements presuppose the existence of language through which they are expressed (Muller 1998:255). Language is part and parcel of the human being. Through language, man articulates and appreciates his environment. Given that the Bible plays a central role in the life of the Church, many translations have been made. The influence of the Bible as the definitive Word of God has been continually felt in the Church. Translation work on Scripture is on the rise; many have linked it to the rapid expansion of Christianity in contemporary Africa. However, many people are still to appreciate God’s Word in their ‘heart language,’ their mother tongue.

When we communicate with people in a language other than their first language, not only the communicator but also the gospel remains alien to the people. Bohannon (1992:201) articulates this position: “When we do not identify with the people in their language and culture we are always aliens to them.” The gospel is unrecognisable because it is transmitted in a foreign language. Thus, many Africans find it difficult to comprehend the

gospel and integrate it into their own culture. When we listen to the Word of God in our mother tongue, be it preaching, music, or Bible studies, it is imprinted in our hearts. Morse (2001:15) asserts:

If the modern church has any desire to try to approximate the success of the first century church, it will have to learn to appreciate the important role that language plays in the dissemination of the Christian faith.

According to Hill (2006:82) when God speaks to us in the language we learned in our mother's arms, the message of his acceptance of our identity penetrates the very fiber of our being. Missions cannot be accomplished unless the message of the gospel is concretized in the life of the hearers.

The church does not have its own agenda for mission; rather it is responding to God's own mission. Bosch (1991:390) speaks of the church's mission as one that is rooted in the doctrine of *Missio Dei*. "God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit sending the church into the world, announcing of good news as well as a call for Christians participation in the human society, including working for human wellbeing and justice." Sanneh (2003:50-51) echoes that "faithfulness, hospitality and forgiveness taken as Christian values have been part and parcel of African conduct."

The role of mother tongue in communicating the gospel cannot be overemphasised. Cook (2011:158) affirms that evangelising disciples of God today in the language of the heart makes a great impact because it translates God's Word in the vernacular, rendering it into ordinary terms, image and vocabulary for meaningful understanding.

Language is not only an aid to understanding; above all, it involves the expression of thought and feelings. In the context of its native speaker, language is fully developed and so "in proclamation and mission to native speakers of another tongue, one must first undertake a profound study of their language" (Muller1998:256). When we consider the various contexts in which the Bible was composed, we see a trend from nomadic culture

to the 'high culture' of the ancient world. These contexts gave it a wide variety of vocabulary whose richness "has been a benefit in mediating the spiritual and ethical values of the biblical revelation to various peoples" (Muller 1998:256). This implies that no sacred language exists for Christians; every language, as far as God is concerned, receives a special dignity.

Harriet Hill (2006:82), says that, "When God speaks to us in the language we learned in our mother's arms, the message of his acceptance of our identity penetrates the very fiber of our beings." When we hear God's Word in the language of our heart, it penetrates our worldview, the core of our identity. The church is likely to experience growth of the Gospel as she values and uses mother tongue for discipleship, evangelism, teaching and preaching. This explains why spiritual truths and doctrines should be taught using the language that speaks to people the most. When spiritual aspects are addressed in a language people understand best, it is a pointer that the Gospel can make a great impact.

1.6.2 Literature on Bible translation and mission

Bible translation and mission also occupy space in missiological and theological circles today. In this second section, I will simply do a survey of some key texts that are related to my topic.

According to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)'s Annual Report (1996:3), Cameroon has over two hundred and eighty languages in which many missionaries had already pioneered the translation of the Scripture. When the gospel came to Africa in general and Bakossi land in the South West Region of Cameroon in particular, it was like the sound of the talking drum bearing the Good News in coded form. Its dissemination in a foreign language made it unrecognisable. It was difficult for the Bakossi people to comprehend the gospel and integrate it into their culture. Translation decolonises the Bible and Christianity as a whole. In support of this view, Wagenaar (2001:57) says that the Gospel cannot be imposed on others in the garb of a dominant culture. For this reason, it needs to be translated. It is against this backdrop that the Bakossi Bible Translation Project demystified the understanding of the Word of God by translating and

publishing the Bakossi New Testament, portions of the Bible and other audio and audio-visual scripture.

According to Fochang (2008:22), the translation of the Scripture in Cameroon was begun by the English Baptist missionaries among whom Joseph Merrick and Alfred Saker pioneered translation work into Isubu—a language in Bimbia and Duala—a language in the coastland of Cameroon respectively.

Afterwards, a new trend came up with the arrival of missionaries from SIL America whose aim was to develop local languages and train Cameroonians in translation principles as a foundation for Bible translation. Fochang (2008:39) has also noted that the “shift to translation was being done by Africans with direction by missionaries.” Gradually, the task of translation was separated from the church with translation organisations working independently to the point where they almost became a forgotten ministry of the church. It is for this reason that SIL carried out a socio-linguistic study of “Akóóse”—the language spoken by Bakossi people in order to lay a foundation for Bible translation. After the development of Akóóse, the Bakossi Bible translation project was established. The translation of the Scripture actually started in 1997 under the auspices and supervision of CABTAL.

Bible translation researchers have written extensively on translation related to specific areas and contexts. With the existence of the Scripture translated into various forms within the Bakossi context, there is need to examine its use to determine whether it is effective in mission. This study is limited to the evaluation of translation of Scripture as a medium of evangelisation within the Bakossi land over a period of twenty years.

1.7 Research design

According to Kombo and Tromp (2014:70), a research design is used to structure the research, to show how all the major parts of the project work together, addressing the central research questions.

This study falls under practical theology as it deals with a real-life situation or problem. The primary task of practical theology is to facilitate faithful practices. The use of mother tongue Scriptures in Bakossi is part of practising faith in a way that is consistent with God's redemptive mission in the world, that is, faithfully participating in the continuing gospel narrative (Smith 2010:12).

This study adopts the qualitative research approach. Smith (2010:13) describes qualitative research as a method of studying things in their natural settings. It takes human experience seriously, and seeks to understand the meanings people ascribe to phenomena and experiences. Data was collected qualitatively through participant observation, interviews, questionnaires and case studies. The sample constitutes one hundred and sixty-two respondents. The respondents are drawn from all the denominations in Bakossi land; they include the clergy and Christians

The study considered the Osmer model ideal for investigating the effective use of mother tongue Scriptures in Bakossi land. It identifies a problem and seeks for solutions. It is simple and easily adapted in research.

1.8 Research methodology

Angellil-Carter's 1995 study (cited in Asewie 2013:8) defines the term "methodology" as referring to the "philosophical framework, the fundamental assumptions, and characteristics of a human science perspective."

Based on Osmer's model in practical theology, the study begins with reflections on the religious practice of using mother-tongue Scriptures in the Bakossi community. It then explores Osmer's (2008:10) four forms of research model namely: Descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic. The following four questions serve to guide the interpretation of the situation of the use of mother-tongue Scriptures. What is the current situation of Bible translation in Bakossi? Why is this occurring? How might we respond? How can this situation be improved?

Descriptive empirical research explores the current situation with regards to the use of translated Scriptures in Bakossi. It also considers how different church denominations have been using the translated Scriptures in mission work. Finally, it examines the current impact of the mother-tongue Scriptures as a tool for evangelism, discipleship and mission in Bakossi churches. Principally, the procedure is qualitative, drawing from my vast experience in the religious practice of Bible translation. The study of this praxis and situation is based not on assumptions, but on participant observation. In addition, questionnaire and interview surveys were also conducted to gather more information in order to ascertain what the use of the mother tongue scriptures means to them.

Still in line with Osmer's (2008:11) model of research, the description stage above prepares grounds for the second question—whether or not local churches employ the translated Scriptures. The study makes a synthesis of the opinions of the clergy and Christians based on questionnaires and interviews to ascertain the extent of use of the translated Scriptures in Bakossi. In addition, the study considers the reasons for the ineffective use of translated scriptures in Bakossi churches. This leads to the interpretive task geared at understanding the reasons for the phenomenon as observed and described (Smith 2011: 50). This stage requires research and logical thinking in order to determine why the religious practice is being used.

The third stage addresses the following questions. What do Scriptures say about using mother tongues in mission? What do scholars or missiologists say about Bible translation and its role in mission? Based on re-examination of theological tradition and other theories, the study explores the potential of this religious practice in shedding light on God's will. According to Osmer, the reflections should be based on theological interpretation, ethical reflection and good practice (Smith 2011:50). Giving its evangelical stance, the study concentrates on the scriptural background of the impact of the local language in communication. This involves a theological reflection in which theological concepts are used to interpret particular episodes, situations and contexts. Notably, the study explores past and present practices of the Christian tradition that provide normative guidance in shaping the patterns of the Christian worship (Osmer 2008:13-14). Biblical

commentators and Scriptural portions will be considered. Furthermore, the study samples the opinions of missiologists and scholars concerning their views on Bible translation.

Lastly, according to Osmer's (2008:14) model of research, the issue of using mother-tongue Scripture for missions and its impact constitute important work in practical, theological interpretation. It addresses questions about finding responses in ways that are faithful and effective and the strategies put in place for the effective use of the translated Scriptures as a tool for missions in Bakossi land. This final task occasions the need to identify a concrete plan of action in order for Bakossi churches in the South West region of Cameroon to attain desired goals and strengthen the faith of the Christians as God speaks to them directly in their heart language.

1.9 Research tools

Research methods are the various tools used to solve research problems (Smith 2008:157).

In the context of this research, the study engages with related literature, comparing and analysing different authors' points of view on the mission of Bible translation. Furthermore, as a case study within a particular context, the study utilises methodologies used primarily in field research to gather data and to analyse the data collected. To achieve this, the researcher interviewed twenty four clergy, twenty lay preachers, and forty five Christians of all ages and from different denominations.

According to Tromp and Kombo (2014:89), a questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data over a large sample and diverse regions. In addition, participant observation is also employed in conducting the investigation. Vyhmeister (2001:145-1460) posits that this research method demands effort to listen, to see, to hear, and even to experience. Everything that is said and done in relation with the incident or case must be noted. Close observation is the basis for understanding. This research is grounded on my participation in the translation the Scripture in the Bakossi area for eleven years. Analysis of my

observations and experience forms the basis of the interpretation of the situation, using key biblical texts to establish a biblical approach to the problem.

1.10 Delimitation

No research of this nature can be exhaustive enough to address all that is relevant to a given topic. This research is limited to the missional impact of the Bakossi Bible translation project in Bakossi land in the South West Region of Cameroon, with specific focus on the importance of mother-tongue Scripture in mission. The domain of research is the Bakossi territory, particularly those found in South West Region of Cameroon. Ejedepand-Koge (1996:26) estimates that the entire ethnic group is about one hundred thousand in and out of Bakossi land. This study targets the present population living within Bakossi land.

This study covers a 15-year-timeframe from 2000 to 2015 of the use of mother-tongue Scripture in Churches.

1.11 Definition of missiological and translation terms

- **Bible translation:**

According to Barnwell (2007:5) Bible translation is the re-telling, as exactly as possible, of the meaning of the original Scripture in a way that is natural in the language into which the translation is being made.

- **Contextualization:**

This refers to various processes by which a local church integrates the Gospel message (the 'text') into the local culture (the context) (Luzbetak 1996:69). In other words, it is a process where the Gospel message encounters a particular culture, calling forth faith and leading to the formation of a faith community (Shank 1999:56).

- **Bakossi land:**

This is a surface area covered by the Bakossi ethnic group found in the South West Region of Cameroon.

- **South West Region of Cameroon:**

It is one of the ten administrative regions in the republic of Cameroon.

- **Mission:** (*missio Dei*)

It is the totality of all that God is doing in his great purpose for the whole of creation and all that God calls us to do in cooperation with that purpose (Wright 2010:25).

- **Missions:**

This refer to the multitude of activities that God's people can engage in, by means of which they participate in God's mission (Wright 2010:25).

- **Missiology:**

The study of mission (Oborji 2006:41) or the study of the salvation activities of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit throughout the world, geared towards bringing the Kingdom of God into existence.

- **Missionary:**

It refers to people who engage in mission, usually in a culture other than theirs (Wright 2006:23).

- **Missional:**

It is a phenomenon that is related to or characterized by mission, or has the qualities, attributes, or dynamics of mission (Wright 2006:24).

1.12 Structure of the work

This thesis consists of five chapters with the following structure:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and it comprises the research background, rationale for the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the research objectives, literature, research design, research methodology, research tools, delimitation, definition of terms, and the structure of the work.

Chapter 2: Translated scriptures and their use in Bakossi land

This chapter examines the various ways in which translated scriptural products such as the New Testament hard copy, the audio scriptures, the Sunday school lesson notes, the song book and the Jesus film in Akoose are used by local churches in Bakossi Land. The

chapter also examines the missional roles played by these tools in various church denominations.

Chapter 3: Dynamics affecting the use of translated Scriptures in Bakossi land

This chapter describes the motivations behind the use of translated scriptures by various church denominations in Bakossi land. The chapter will also explore the reasons accounting for the ineffective use of translated scriptural tools.

Chapter 4: A theological reflection of translated scriptures and their roles in mission

The interpretation phase of this case study is presented in this chapter. It looks at the theological significance of the mother-tongue Scriptures as a tool for effective missions. The analysis looks at the socio-cultural and religious context of the church in Bakossi land in relation to the impact of the mother-tongue Scriptures.

Chapter 5: Towards an effective use of translated scriptures

This chapter suggests hands-on strategies for the promotion of mother-tongue Scripture among the churches in order to achieve the missional goal.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLE TRANSLATION IN BAKOSSI LAND AND ITS MISSIONAL IMPACT

Introduction

This chapter traces the historical factors that led to the translation of the Scripture among the Bakossi people. It describes the various translated products and their missional impact in the churches in Bakossi. The chapter also presents empirical research amongst the churches in Bakossi land in accordance with Osmer's first question – What is the current situation of Bible translation in Bakossi? The discussions in the chapter revolve around the following main axes: (2.1) Bible translation agencies in Bakossi land and (2.2) The Church's use of translated products.

2.1 Bible translation agencies in Bakossi land

Bible Translation agencies are an arm of churches. According to Ejedepang-Kogge (1996:17) the translation of the Scripture into local languages facilitates the church's evangelistic goal of bringing people to Christ and transforming lives. Several Bible translation agencies have made a lot of effort to translate and publish the local scriptures in Akoose. This section explores the roles played by these agencies.

2.1.1 The missionary era

The arrival of the Gospel in Africa in general and Bakossi land in particular did not create much impact because of the use of a foreign language. According to Ejedepang-Kogge (1996:9) the use of English for gospel communication made it difficult for the Bakossi people to comprehend the Gospel and integrate it into their culture and context. Translation, therefore, decolonizes the Bible and Christianity as a whole. In support of this view, Wagenaar (2001:57) says that the Gospel cannot be imposed on others in the garb of a dominant culture. It needs to be translated. For this reason, a linguistic survey of Akoose was inevitable.

Akoose is spoken on the slopes of the Kupe and Muanenguba mountains by Bakossi people. Friedrich Autenrieth, a Basel missionary, is said to be the first missionary ever to come to Bakossi land. He studied Akoose from 1893-1897. He was motivated by the similarities between Akoose and Duala. He believed that a deeper study of Akoose would lead to its development for use as a language of evangelization in the Bakossi area (Zimmermann, 2016:17 and Ejedepang-Koge, 1996:14-19). Heinrich Dorsch, another Basel missionary, continued Autenrieth's study in the years 1887-1911 and published two important works on it in German:

-A Grammar of the Bakossi Language (Grammatik der Nkosi-sprache) and

-A Vocabulary of the Bakossi Language (vocabulary der Nkosi-sprache).

Dorsch's work stopped abruptly due to the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918). The idea of using Akoose for evangelism was also dropped. Instead, Duala was adopted for use all along the coastal and Forest zones while Munghaka was selected for the Grass field zone of British Cameroons.

With regards to linguistic classification, Sir Harry H. Johnston's seminar work, "A Comparative Study of Bantu and Semi-Bantu languages" (1919-1922), classified Akoose under the Muanenguba Group of languages. Between 1956-1957 Guthrie, Tucker and Richardson included Akoose in their study of "The Northern Bantu Borderland" where they classified it within the Mbo cluster, comprising 15 units (Ejedepang-Koge 1996:23-24). All these efforts to classify and describe the language laid a foundation for the translation of the Scripture for effective evangelization and transformation.

The use of Duala Scripture did not meet missionary goals since the teaching of Duala had been stopped in schools. Moreover, these missionaries did not master Duala and they were bound to preach and teach the Scripture in English with the aid of inaccurate interpretation. The training of pastors from Bakossi boosted the efforts to preach in Akoose, thus enhancing the missional goals of evangelization and discipleship. Zimmermann (2016:32) affirms indigenous pastors' use of Akoose to address the spiritual needs of Christians.

2.1.2 The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)

The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a faith-based, non-profit, international organisation founded in 1934, is committed to serving local communities worldwide to build capacity for sustainable language development. SIL functions primarily through research, translation, training and materials development. SIL works alongside ethno-linguistic communities and their partners in uncovering how language development addresses the challenging areas of their daily lives—social, cultural, political, economic and spiritual. The organisation serves all equitably without regard to religious belief, political ideology, gender, race or ethno-linguistic background (<https://www.sil.org/> (accessed 30-12-2017)). Its scientific study of languages laid the basic foundation for the translation of the Scripture in mother tongues. According to the SIL Annual Report (2018:4), the development of local languages fulfils the main criteria for the translation of the Scripture for the transformation of lives and communities.

The arrival of SIL in 1967 ushered in a new trend in Cameroon as its missionaries settled in communities in order to work with indigenes to develop their languages. SIL pursued this missionary task in large scale, engaging linguistic research in many languages in communities. The agency incorporates indigenes to fulfil the task of Bible translation as missionaries basically supervise the project. Fochang (2006:39) highly commended the incorporation of locals in translation work.

In the seventies SIL, in collaboration with the churches and the Bakossi community, assigned Robert Hedinger, a Swiss linguist together with his British wife Sylvia, a linguist as well, to carry out a socio-linguistic study of Akoose. Robert and Sylvia Hedinger spent four years leaving in Ndom and Nyasoso villages in the Bakossi region from 1974 to 1978 during which they conducted extensive field research (Zimmermann 2016:15). Through their relentless efforts and in collaboration with the Akoose Language Committee (ALACOM), they developed the Akoose Alphabet (E'kii be Akoose). Robert Hedinger crowned his research with a thesis titled, "A comparative historical study of the Muanenguba languages (Bantu A15, Mbo cluster) of Cameroon". He also published many scholarly articles and literacy books on various aspects of Akoose. These include: Phonology, Verbs, Noun classes, Pronouns, Reported speech, Locatives, Friendship stories in Akoose, Let's read and write Akoose, and an Akoose Grammar. Given this solid

linguistic background, a firm foundation was laid to commence with the translation of the Scripture in Akoose.

2.1.3 The Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy

The Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) is a Cameroonian, non-profit based organisation which facilitates Bible translation into local languages. CABTAL works on language development, Bible translation, Literacy and community development. Its goal is both to see individuals and communities transformed by the Word of God in their languages and to train them to use their languages for sustainable development. In addition, this organization mobilizes and empowers churches, communities, and individuals to carry out Bible translation and language-based community development through linguistic research, translation, functional literacy and Scripture engagement (<https://www.cabtal.org/> Accessed 30-12-2018). CABTAL works to make Scripture available in all its forms, that is, hard copy Scripture, audio version Scripture, Bible story books, translated hymns, the Jesus film, and Scripture apps. Its activities in Bakossi land necessitated the creation of the community based Bakossi Bible Translation Project (BBTP). CABTAL partnered with Bakossi Bible Translation Project to engage the translation of Scripture in Akoose.

2.1.4 The Bakossi Bible Translation Project as Mission

Following the development of the local language and the establishment of the Bakossi Bible Translation Project (BBTP), a solid foundation had been provided for the eventual translation of the Word of God into Akoose. These moves later served as a platform to bring all Bakossi people together to listen to the Lord speak to them directly in the language of their heart with excitement. Acts 2:6 says, “They were all excited because they each heard the believers speaking in his own language.” In this verse, the Jews from Parthia would know Aramaic; those from the Roman Empire, Greek. But many of them would also speak local languages spoken in other areas of their cities. It implies that what they were hearing was not the Jewish language but the language spoken where they had been born and brought up (Adeyemo 2006:1328).

Excitement is generated when one listens to information communicated in his or her heart language. As a further illustration of the importance of communicating in the heart language, a man from Bangem in his late 80s (August 18,2019) commented: “I was marvelled and so excited when I first watched the Jesus film and felt that Jesus was speaking to the Bakossi people. I confessed that truly Jesus is a Bakossi man.” His response indicates that he felt intimate with the message of Jesus as he listened to it in his heart language. This act eliminates the idea that the message of Jesus Christ is coming from afar.

Prior to recent translation work on the Scripture in Akoose, Dr. Robert Hedinger in collaboration with some students of the Presbyterian Theological College, Nyasoso attempted a translation of the Gospel of Mark although the project did not spread wide (Ejedepang-Kogge 1996:15). In 1992, Nelson Ndando and Emmanuel Ekinde, graduants of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Kumba propagated the need for the Bakossi people to have the Scripture in their heart language for total transformation during their time in the Bakossi Presbytery. With the aid of the Akoose Language Committee, their work resulted in the translation of some portions of the New Testament and the creation of literacy materials. In July 1998, Rev. Nelson Ndando was seconded to CABTAL to work full time in order to coordinate the project. The team also contained two full time translators, Mr. Ngole Hans Kede and Mr. Masango Zacheus Nkwelle. Technical expertise was provided by Dr. Robert and Ria Hedinger. The project culminated in the translation, publication and dedication of the gospel of Luke.

In July 2001, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) seconded Rev. Ngole David Kome (author of this thesis) to relieve Rev. Nelson Ndando as the exegete and the project coordinator. In order to strengthen the translation team, the following persons were trained to carry out the work of translation: Epie Vincent of Church of Christ, Abraham Ajang of the Presbyterian church, Ngalame Hipolite of the Lutheran church, Nkwelle Joseph of the Roman Catholic church, Enongene Daniel and Alobwede Grace (both of the Presbyterian church). The last two serving as project typists.

During my stewardship of BBTP, our mission was to demystify the understanding of the Word of God by translating and publishing various forms of the Scripture in Akoose. Ten

years after, precisely in 2011, the following translated scriptures were made available: The Bakossi New Testament, the audio version of the New Testament, published biblical stories and parables, mother tongue songs and the Jesus film. These scriptural publications provided Akoose with vital tools for missions and evangelization.

2.1.5 Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH)

Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) is a Ghanaian-based, missionary organization whose goal is to record and produce local scriptures in audio forms (<http://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com> Accessed 04-04-2019). The BBTP team worked in close partnership with FCBH to record the entire Bakossi New Testament. The audio was dedicated in September 2013. This recording was produced in inbuilt machines called "Proclaimers". The machines were powered by electricity, battery or solar system, making them accessible and usable to all in any locality. The recording made for easy access to chapters, verses and themes. According to Asewie (2013:79), the recording was done in multiple voices/modified drama, thematic readings or topics, sectional readings followed by questions and answers, verses set to music, especially new melodies composed within the indigenous (or locally created) musical system.

Viggo (2009:1-2) estimates that printed scripture coverage is barely around ten percent of the population. The challenge is therefore to develop translations in acceptable media productions that are appropriate and distribution systems for scripture that reach the non-reading population. This applies for the Bakossi congregations where only few Christians possess printed scriptures. The majority access the translated scriptures in Church during worship services. As a result, the listening strategy is put in place for the effective communication of the Gospel.

2.2 Motivations for Bible Translation as a Mission Imperative

Bible translation mission organizations have various motivations for translating scriptures in the local language people in Bakossi, Cameroon. The next sections that follow examine these motivations.

2.2.1 Non communication of Duala and Latin

The missionaries based in the coastland town of Douala extended the Gospel to Bakossi, using Duala as a medium of communication. Duala was compulsory at the elementary level in missionary primary schools in Bakossi area. It was also a prerequisite for further studies in the senior primary classes. According to Keller (2001:24) the missionaries stressed the use of native languages. The Duala Bible and hymn book were the main books for worship and the study of the Scripture in the Protestant Churches. Meanwhile missionaries of the Roman Catholic church introduced Latin in worship services, particularly in the reading of the Gospel and the singing of liturgical songs. Despite the use of these languages, the message could not penetrate the hearts of the people as only few Christians had studied these languages in school. Indeed, Jesus does not need a special language or culture to establish a redemptive relationship with people. For gospel communication to penetrate and transform Bakossi culture, it should be communicated in Akoose in order to establish a natural connection between biblical concepts and Bakossi people's thought patterns (Ngeh 2015:20).

The use of Duala in services continued even after the abolition of the teaching of foreign languages in schools. Churches were filled with Christians who mainly recited and sang liturgical formulae without any proper understanding. A lay preacher in the Presbyterian Church, Mwambong testifies that "I can sing and read Duala, but I do not understand anything. This has no spiritual meaning in my Christian life" (May 16, 2019). In this light, the Scripture mainly hovered above the heads of Christians without touching their hearts. Bivin (2010:74) quoting Sanneh observes:

Translation is primarily a matter of language, but it is not only that, for language itself is a living expression of the culture. ...Language is not just the 'soul' of a people, as if it belongs to some sort of elite gnostic circle. Language is also the garment that gives shape, decorum and vitality to conscious life, enabling us to appreciate the visible texture of life in its subtle, intricate variety and possibility.

It was therefore high time for these liturgical worship tools be translated into Akoose for a complete spiritual transformation and understanding of the scripture.

2.2.2 Interpreters' flaws

Missionaries discouraged the role of interpreters in communicating the scriptures. Atta-Akosah (2004:51) points out that as part of their missionary language policy, expatriate missionaries were encouraged and helped to minister through the local language, and reliance on interpreters was discouraged. Giving that the Bible was written for a people whose culture is different from that of the Bakossi people, its authors did not need to explain their culture in detail because the readers understood the context in which the Bible was written. It was a hideous task for interpreters to translate these cultural issues accurately whenever pastors preached in English. According to Hill (2008:4), many people know very little about the cultures of the Bible today, making it hard for them to understand the biblical authors' meaning. Besides, there are non-Bakossi pastors serving in Bakossi land, requiring interpreters to translate the message being preached to the indigenous congregations. With any formal training, these interpreters translate many portions of the scripture, especially the key biblical terms, wrongly. In his response to the questionnaire, the interpreter of the Apostolic Faith Church, Mwambong (June 20, 2019) explains:

There are biblical words which I find difficult to translate. I pronounce them as they are called in English when I am interpreting the sermon. This is because I do not know the actual meaning of these words.

Key biblical terms are important words or expressions in Jewish and Christian beliefs and religious systems used in a special way in the Bible. They include words like salvation, glory, grace, mercy, righteousness, sanctification, and blessings. In addition, there are cultural items (flora and fauna), religious rites and events, are personalities that were unknown in the receptor language or land (in this case, Bakossi) before the introduction of Christianity. Some of the words include: prophet, priest, cross, gospel, sabbath, angel, Satan, pharisee, apostle, fig, mustard, wheat, and camel. The proper translation of such terms is very important for communicating the biblical message without distorting it. Local

interpreters often grappled with the translation of these key biblical terms and end up assigning different meanings to them.

I observed a case during a participant observation at the Worship event at the Apostolic Church in Mwambong and Tombel respectively where the interpreters translated the term “glory” to mean “respect,” forgetting that glory has different contextual meanings. Such a translation of the word “glory” in the sense of something wonderful, revealing the power and holiness of God visibly is bound to lead to a misinterpretation”. Romans 6:4 says, “...just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life”. Glory can be seen in this sense to mean greatness, surpassing greatness, wonderful power. The Bakossi Bible translation project came to redress these concerns.

2.2.3 The people’s perception of the Scripture

The perception the Bakossi people (Christians and non-Christians) have of the Bible is positive. They believe that the Word of God is authentic and cannot be disputed. According to Atta-Akosah (2004:104), even those who do not go to church have high regard for the Holy Bible and its sacredness. This means that the scriptures are not ordinary words, but inspired and divine.

The Bakossi people refer to the Bible as “*Eyale e Dyob*,” that is, “the Word of God”. The Bakossi believe that “*Dyob*” is a Supreme Being who oversees the existence of the world (Ejedepang-Koge 1996:15). This is an indication that for the Bakossi the Bible represents the utterances of God. A non-Christian in Ndum (April 17, 2019) in excitement declares: “I am proud that I have my own copy of the Akoose Bible and the Jesus film.” According to him, owning these translated scriptural products is acknowledging that God reigns in his life and speaks to him directly. From my research, I observed that non-Christians and traditionalists also possessed these translated products, meaning they value the Word of God.

A 74-year-old traditionalist in Maked (June 12, 2019) testifies:

I have never been a Christian. But when I watched the Jesus film and saw the miracles that Jesus performed, I decided to be baptized and become a Christian.

The testimony above reveals the Word of God as a transformative tool in the lives of Bakossi people. Thus, translating the Word in the mother tongue will facilitate intimacy between the people and God.

2.2.4 The Scripture and its relevance

Atta-Akosah (2004:105) opines that people tend to either read the Bible or hear it read when they realise that what it offers is relevant to their life situations. In the same vein, Bakossi people read and listen to the Word of God because it addresses issues related to their felt needs and livelihood.

Scriptures constitute a means of resolving family problems. The catechist of the Roman Catholic Church, Ebonji (July 23, 2019) explains that “In resolving family problems, the scriptures remain my source of reference.” According to him, resolving family problems is a reoccurring issue in his community, meaning that it is not necessary to quote the English version of the Bible to people who do not understand English. The English Version of the Bible does not meet the spiritual needs of Bakossi Christians. When the scriptures are quoted from the translated version, God speaks directly to the people. The preacher does not need any explanation after quoting a verse. Reading directly from the translated scriptures is self-explicit and addresses issues related to human relationships.

In this researcher’s point of view, Bakossi people live in a challenging moment characterised by injustice, health pandemics and war. Many have lost loved ones and property, and have relocated as internally displaced persons. This has left many people homeless, maimed, amputated and traumatized. The role of the Scripture to redress these societal challenges cannot be underestimated. In a trauma healing workshop in Tombel (June 12-13, 2020), an internally displaced family whose son was killed in a military raid said they were greatly comforted by the Scripture; it gave them hope that all was not lost. They express in their testimony that the Scripture empowered them to

continue to hope in the Lord. Using mother tongue scriptures to redress these challenges will speak more in the hearts of the people for comfort and spiritual empowerment.

There are traditional beliefs and practices in the Bakossi culture that are against the Christian doctrine. These include ancestral veneration and the practice of witchcraft. Some Bakossi people still believe that sickness, misfortunes, and natural hazards are caused by ancestors and witchcraft. That is why some resort to different ways of counteracting these phenomena. According to Balz (1995:67), one of the ways is placing an anti-witchcraft “medicine” (Epumε) in the ceiling to prevent sudden death. It remains a daunting task to convince these people to abandon such practices and believe in Jesus Christ and the working power of the Holy Spirit. Proper understanding of the Scripture is the surest means of bringing salvation in their heart language.

There is an immediate response in watching the Jesus film. It leads to a dramatic change of lifestyle. As an immediate response of the film, the Jesus film coordinator (June 12, 2019) for Ngusi narrates:

When I projected the Jesus film in a Bible study class, one of the viewers confessed to me that he is keeping protective charms on him. He decided to destroy them because he realised that the power of Jesus conquers any other power.

The participant’s confession implies total surrendering and walking in accordance with the saving power of Christ. More specifically, his reaction is the result of understanding of the Scripture in his local language.

2.2.5 Literacy foundation

Hill and Hill (2008:3-4) posit that presenting scriptures in written form to people who do not know how to read or like to read is vain. The reading and writing of Akoose was greatly promoted prior to the actual translation of the Scripture. Linguists did a lot of research to lay down the literary components of the language. Books related to the teaching and learning of Akoose were published and distributed. Akoose became part of the curriculum of the schools. This good literary foundation facilitated Bible translation agencies to begin the work of translating the scriptures.

2.2.6 Adapting to the audience's context and needs

Originally, the Gospel was communicated in a format that does not suit the Bakossi context. The language (English) and the context in which the Bible was presented do not reflect the Bakossi cosmos. According to CABTAL's constitution (2017:2), her vision is for communities and individuals to be transformed through God's Word in their language and context and to use their language for sustainable development. For information to flow, it must be communicated in the context of the recipient. That is why CABTAL through the Bakossi Bible translation project saw the need to transform the people based on their context and needs.

Barnwell (1999:6) argues that Bible Translation is a form of communication with the first principle being receptor-oriented. As a result, the communicator needs to know the audience. Rick (2001:12) outlined the following questions to be taken into consideration before any information is communicated: What are the fears, desires, and needs of the recipients? What are their ultimate questions and concerns? Where do they get their information? Where does that information get its credibility? How is traditional wisdom passed on to the next generation? What are their preferred media of communication? Are they oral communicators, semiliterate communicators, functionally literate, or multimedia communicators? What kinds of media products will be most appropriate for them? What is the status of Christianity in their community? What are their views of Christians and the Bible? What cultural characteristics do they have in common with the cultures of the Bible? How does their worldview compare with the worldview being communicated by the Bible? What have been the barriers to the communication of the biblical message?

Answers to these questions provide the keys for designing an effective program for communicating God's message. Based on my experience, the Bakossi community is an oral community spiced with parables and idioms. The translation project first laid a foundation by translating the biblical parables. These parables suit the context in the sense that locals use parables to enhance communication. It is important to select scripture portions as a study of the audience's culture and a comparison of their worldview with the worldview being communicated by God's Word. This enabled the audience to filter the message through the grid of their own worldview and respond to the message in

accordance with their own concepts and values. Good communicators begin with what their audience already know and accept; they then build on that to draw them step by step to an understanding of new things. This is the approach we see throughout the Bible and it helps explain why God spent 2,000 years preparing people for the coming of Christ (Rick 2001:13-16). It is important to give the audience time to become comfortable with the Word and to be convinced through the witness of the Holy Spirit, knowing that God speaks to them through it.

2.3 The church's use of translated products

This section examines the various translated scriptural products used by the churches in Bakossi land.

Fig.1: Target Communities

The table below gives a cross section of the various churches with varied doctrines and approaches to evangelism found in Bakossi land. The churches include the Roman Catholic church, the Protestant and the Pentecostal churches. They have different doctrinal backgrounds and style of worship. Some of these churches are wide in scope both numerically and geographically. Some are cosmopolitan in nature while others are typically indigenous congregations. In addition, the clergy has a different approach and motivation in the use of the translated products as highlighted in this research.

Target church denominations	Locations or of areas	Number of participants	Motivations for the choice	Goal to evaluate the use of the translated scriptures
Roman Catholic Church	Tombel, Baseng, Bangem Parishes	281	The translated products are available in these parishes in which the priest insists on their use.	To evaluate whether these translated products are used appropriately by the Christians and Clergy.
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon	Tombel, Ngombo-Ku, Ebonji, Mbulle, Bangem, Ndom, Enyandong,	308	The administrative heads of the church in the area of research have instructed all the congregations and Christians to use	With the presence of Bible study groups, indigenous choirs, lay preachers, Sunday school

	Peng, Nyasoso, Mwambong Parishes		the translated products as a tool for evangelization and discipleship. In addition, he has encouraged the pastors to see how they can maximize the use of the translated scriptures. This is the largest denomination in Bakossi both numerically and geographically.	and mother tongue scripture promoters; it is a fertile ground to evaluate the use of the translated scriptures in the communities.
Full Gospel Church	Tombel, Nyasoso Districts	61	This is a Pentecostal church in which they have Bible study classes and groups for listening the translated scriptures. In addition, their liturgical style of worship is different.	I wish to know how the translated scriptures have empowered the Christians who believe in the working power of the Holy Spirit.
Cameroon Baptist Convention	Tombel, Ebonji, Ngombo-Ku congregations	15	This denomination is made up of non-indigenes. Only a few Bakossi speakers are present. Despite that, they too are using the translated scriptural products.	To evaluate how non-indigenes can make use of translated scriptures.
Native Baptist Church	Tombel Parish	14	The main language of gospel communication is a foreign language. Meanwhile 95% of the Christians are Bakossi people. How can the translated	To evaluate the introduction of another language to communicate the gospel. A switch from one language to another for scripture communication.

			scriptures blend their worship style?	
Apostolic Faith Church	Tombel, Bangem, Mwambong assemblies	31	This is a Pentecostal church in which Akoose is the main language of gospel communication. With the presence of the translated products, it is an added advantage to meet their missional goals.	I seek to understand how these translated products are integrated in the worship life of the Christians.

The availability of Akoose scriptures in different forms has resulted in the various uses, accessible to the Christians, non-Christians and congregations. According to Atta-Akosah (2004:75), the objective of the use of the local scriptures is to ensure that every person is given the opportunity to hear or read God's Word as part of the fulfilment of missions. Both print and non-print media promote and facilitate the use of mother-tongue scripture although each congregation has its own distinctive way of engaging with the scriptures for the transformation of life. The section that follows explores the different uses of Akosse scriptural products and gadgets in various churches.

Fig. 2 The use of translated scriptural tools

The table below shows statistics of the available translated tools possessed in the various denominations.

Church denominations	Number of participants	New Testament	Jesus film	Audio scriptures	Hymnal songs
Roman Catholic Church	281	201	212	7	16
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon	308	260	271	16	107
Full Gospel Church	61	30	42	2	2
Cameroon Baptist Convention	15	6	8	0	2
Native Baptist Church	14	7	9	1	4
Apostolic Faith Church	31	20	26	3	5

The above chart indicates that the New Testament and the Jesus film is distributed more because of their availability. Meanwhile less copies of the audio scriptures and the hymn books are distributed because they are in short supply.

2.3.1 The Akoose New Testament (*Melle Mekoole*)

The Akoose New Testament was published and dedicated in November 2011. Two thousand copies were produced. During my research in September 2019, one thousand four hundred and seventy-six copies had been distributed (CABTAL distribution statistics September 2019). It is being used extensively across congregations as the main mother-tongue, translated scriptural product in most spiritual activities. It is used by Christians, pastors, priests, evangelists, catechists, lay preachers, counselors, school moral instructors and mother-tongue song composers. The pastor of the Presbyterian Church Bangem (July 14, 2019) in an interview says:

“This is my main tool of scriptural engagement as it facilitates my preaching, Bible study classes, counseling sessions, crusades and a host of other spiritual activities. When I read directly from the Akoose New Testament, the people understand well and do not need any explanation.”

Thus, the use of vernacular products enables him to meet the spiritual needs of the people as they derive a maximum comprehension of the Word of God. In his opinion, God speaks directly to the people.

Besides, vernacular Bible is used all in aspects of worship: Bible study classes, doctrine classes, counseling sessions, crusades, schools, prayer groups, youth, men and women groups, choir groups, funerals and other evangelistic activities.

2.3.1.1 Lay preachers and the use of the Akoose New Testament

This section will examine the role of lay preachers in the use of the Akoose New Testament. Most of the congregations in Bakossi depend on visiting pastors. For example, 22 pastors of the Presbyterian Church in Bakossi area serve 83 congregations (PCC Diary 2020:80). There are parishes with five or six congregations led by a single pastor or priest. The pastor or priest Christians visits each congregation once a month to

carry out any of the following activities: Holy Communion, Baptism, Confirmation and pastoral counselling. It is against this background that lay preachers such as elders, deacons and catechists sit in for the pastor or priest to meet the spiritual needs of the Christians. The catechist of the Roman Catholic church, Ngusi (August 24, 2019) attests:

The publication of Akoose New Testament has facilitated my communication of the gospel during Sunday mass, Bible study classes, counselling sessions, scripture drill and memorization. It is my main source of inspiration as I read the scriptures and make references directly from it.

Reading lessons directly from the translated Bible makes preaching lively; Bible study classes are interactive. Scripture drill and memorization is less cumbersome.

An elder of the Full Gospel church, Ebonji (July 16, 2019) recounts that during counseling sessions, his source of scriptural reflection is the Akoose New Testament. According to him, translated scripture products helped him address complex issues such as marital disputes, drug abuse, sexual immorality, conflicts, enmity, disunity and other counseling concerns.

Addressing the issue of sexual immorality during a Bible study class, the facilitator of Presbyterian Church, Mwambong (August 22, 2019) explains that he expounded on this topic after reading directly from the Akoose Bible. He selected First Corinthians 10:8:

Syánē deekábé mesón ngáne bó donje á bad bébélé'áá. Nén dêmběł Dyöb dénkōgsēn bó, bó bad móom mé e'kálé mébe ne e'kálé é'láán béwé epun ehóg.

(We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousands of them died.)

According to him, the participants visualize the intensity of the punishment as a result of committing the sin of sexual immorality. It is so alarming for twenty-three thousand people to die a day for committing the said sin. These examples show that Akoose New Testament is a major scriptural tool to meet the spiritual needs of the Christians.

2.3.1.2 Lay preachers and discipleship

Keller (2001:35) and O'neil (1999:71) argue that the first Christian doctrine or foundation is laid by lay preachers and catechists who follow up Christians on a daily basis. In most congregations, lay preachers organize catechumen classes and use the Akoose New Testament for the spiritual upbringing of Christians in preparation for Baptism, Confirmation and admissions. Teaching about the cost of discipleship, the catechumen instructor in Presbyterian Church, Enyandong (July 23, 2019) cited Matthew 5:11:

Akoose: Nnam mbé ne nyé ábe bad bésyáá'é, nyé ábe bétagtáé, bébānē nyé e'bébtéd é' mam áyāī, bébīdē-é nyé mbón é metóm áyāī, á dīn ádēm.

English: Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me (NIV).

According to him, becoming a Christian entails tribulations and trials from fellow human beings. Listening to this verse read in the mother tongue reminds new converts that being a Christian is a journey of trials and temptations.

Catechumen classes expose new converts to the Christian doctrine, teaching how to live a godly life and biblical knowledge. In most case the elderly participants understand mainly the mother tongue. For this reason, the Akoose New Testament is the recommended Bible or tool used during this spiritual training. The elder in charge of doctrine classes in the Presbyterian Church, Mwambong (July 13, 2019) emphasised that "It is imperative for all catechumens in his class to own a copy of the vernacular New Testament. This is my working tool for spiritual instruction." In this case, the Akoose New Testament accompanies catechumens in their spiritual growth and the acquisition of biblical knowledge. It is an opportunity for them to regularly read the translated scriptures and apply it in their daily life.

The scriptures are not only read, but are also explained in the heart language. This helps to deepen their understanding of the scriptures as in the case of a 72-year-old catechumen at Catholic Church, Meked. He could neither read nor write English. He testified that he was able to understand basic scriptures and the church's doctrine after the reading and explanation of portions of Akoose New Testament. He confirmed that through the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, the lessons sank deep

in him, making him feel as if Jesus was talking to him directly. As a result, he abandoned the practice of ancestral veneration.

2.3.1.3 Laity and mother tongue preaching

Preaching in the mother tongue is mostly done by lay preachers in Sunday services, funerals and on other occasions. Bakossi lay preachers officiate in indigenous congregations; they read lessons and exhort Christians with a sermon in the vernacular using the Akoose New Testament. In one of the funeral services, a lay preacher from the Apostolic Faith Church, (August 25, 2019) read and preached a consoling message from Romans 8:35-39:

Akoose: Nzéé-ᵑ ahēle ábēl boŋ Krīstəə asóg syánē adəŋ? Mekan ríme mélénlédé syánē áte, ké'ε ndutul, káa ahé áde bad béhāgkē syánē á meséb? Nzaa, káa awóŋ áde déwō'é mbóté? Nzé-'ε akíme áde bad békímméé syánē? Ké'ε awúu áde bad béhédéé syánē awúu? Kálag e Dyöb ehóbé aá, “Póndé téé bad béwúε sé áyā echōŋ. Bényíne sé nēŋgáne rdyoŋ rí mbód ríme békagké awúu.” Mmén mekan mésyāēl mébenlad boŋ detómé mó áte, mbwiined ne Krīstəə, mó awě adéé syánē boŋ áwōŋgān-ne syánē. Mbíí bwām nén méé chōmchōm éesaá éche éhēle-se épāŋ edəŋge éche Krīstəə ádáé syánē. Ken kwééd-ε, ké'ε alongé. Ken ángel-ε, ké'ε benkamlenε, ké'ε ngíne éche édé ádyöb. Ken póndé eche dédíí áte nén, ké'ε póndé echě ehúε. Ké ngíne e nkoŋ rímín, ké'ε e nkoŋ rísé, chōmchōm éesaá átínté e nhəgtéd rísyāēl éche éhēle épāŋ edəŋge éche Dyöb áwóŋné syánē mbwiined ne Yesu Krīstəə, awəd Sāŋgwéé.

English: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Scriptural explanations and illustrations are all expressed in the local language with suitable contexts. A congregational lay preacher of the Presbyterian Church, Ndum (August 28, 2019) states:

Whenever I am preaching in the mother tongue in church or during funerals using the translated New Testament, the feedback and the echoes I get give me the impression that the message is well understood by the listeners.

He further reiterates how biblical terms like grace, salvation, mercy, Passover are well understood when he reads and preaches using the Akoose New Testament. He argues that some of these biblical terms are well understood when he uses concrete examples in the mother tongue to illustrate them. Preaching, especially on public occasions like funerals and crusades with the translated New Testament as his main Bible, gives him an opportunity to reach out even to non-Christians who listen to God's message in the local language. The Akoose New Testament remains a veritable spiritual tool for evangelism and discipleship in the hands of the lay preachers.

2.3.2 The translated song book

The Ban Be Presbyterian Choir Association, that is, BAPRESCA choir song book speaks volumes in communicating the gospel of Christ. The choir sings only in the local language. Songs are composed based on biblical themes like the birth of Christ, his death and resurrection, gospel parables, thanksgiving events, funerals, the work of the Holy Spirit, evangelization, Love, peace, forgiveness, unity and others. In great satisfaction, a 57-year-old woman of Presbyterian Church, Mwambong (September 12, 2019) who could not read nor write in English states:

Nze nláá nkone'ε ngəŋge rímé mbidé á kalag e ngəŋgé,
mbelle nsongtən mekan rímé mebenledé á kalag e Dyöb –té
botyaa á mbóóted apε á asog. Enen kalag ewongan me abíí
ne asongtən mekan rímé mbenlédé nengáne ahəg dé
nkonḡse, echyáá éche Yesué. Kweed ne mpuu ríme Krīsto,
ngan, akal nkalaŋ á ekone mǐn, Nhəŋlən rímé Solε ne polε
émpεε Ndε menyíŋge bwǎmbwǎm.

English: When I read and sing the songs from the song book, I am able to understand the biblical events that took place from the book of Genesis to Revelation. This book is helping me to know and to understand biblical events like the creation story, the birth of Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ, the parables, the preaching on the hill, the conversion of Saul and other biblical narrative stories. I am very happy.

This testimony indicates that vernacular scriptural tools enhance biblical knowledge. According to the respondent, the songs improve her biblical knowledge and facilitate her understanding of the scriptures. These songs convey the message into the hearts of the listener.

A chorister in Presbyterian Church Ngusi (July 23, 2019) who could not read English testifies that: “Nzε ngone kaa nwoglene nkεngé á Akoose-tε, mbele nsongtεn eyale é Dyöb bwăm tómaa nzε pasto akobε metim á kale-tε”. (When I sing or listen to these mother tongue songs, I understand the gospel message more than the sermon preached in English by the pastor). This is an indication that the song book is a sermon by itself, preaching to Christians for proper comprehension of the Word.

There are many parishes led by non-indigenous pastors and priests. Christians from these congregations who do not understand English highly depend on these songs to be spiritually fed. During my research (March 29, 2020), I worshiped in the Presbyterian Church, Peng. The indigenes make up 95% of the congregation and about 60% do not understand English. Meanwhile the pastor is a non-native speaker. While the pastor was preaching, most of the Christians were sleeping. But there was alertness when the indigenous choir sang; the Christians applauded when the song came to an end. When I enquired why this happened, the elder on duty explains:

“Most of the Christians do not understand the pastor while preaching since he is using English. The boredom of not understanding the sermon lures them to sleep. That is why they applauded after the indigenous choir sang because they

understood the scriptural theme for the worship service of the day that talks about peace and forgiveness.”

Thus, translated songs remain a precious medium of gospel communication and understanding in the worship life of Bakossi people.

2.3.2.1 The use of translated scriptural songs

The use of composed and translated songs in Akoose during worship helps to communicate the message preached in Pidgin or English. These songs are used during worship services. In the same way, Paul exhorts the Christians to “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16 NIV). Paul insists on the importance of the word since no spiritual growth is possible without it. The Colossians, taught and warned by Paul through the word must in turn teach and warn one another. It is in this way that they will reach full knowledge. (Adeyemo2006:1482). Singing remains a medium by which God’s message is transmitted and implanted among people.

These songs are composed based on the liturgical themes or seasons of the Christian calendar. They are propagated by indigenous choirs who composed them for effective evangelization and missions. The BAPRESCA song book that was published and dedicated in 2009 is an example. We examine some exemplary songs and their missional significance in the worship life of the Christians in Bakossi.

2.3.2.1.1 Songs for thanksgiving and their missional significance

Harvest thanksgiving is an annual occasion where Christians exercise their Christian responsibility by acknowledging the blessings they have received from God. Psalm 65:9-13 says: “You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it” (NIV). The picture depicted is that the worshipers see God’s provision in the well-watered ground, the flowing streams, the full harvest and the flourishing countryside before them. They view the scene as if God is driving through the land in his chariot to inspect its

richness and the pastures, harvest and flocks join in joyously shouting their welcome to their divine provider. of God sending rain that overflows the land, providing water for the growth of crops (Fleming 2005:202).

Below is a liturgical song used during the annual Harvest Thanksgiving celebration in Presbyterian Church, Ndom on the 30th of August 2020. It is composed by BAPRESCA.

Dyõb dé dibe wínde é ekombe mĩn
 Abem bad nyepéen wee Sangwe
 Daso mwa mpin ayeole eche nyewoo
 Mo abage chom esyeol
 Nyeebag eyokel akoo chom ban Dyob deebyee

God will open the windows of heaven
 My people bring to the lord
 Just a little of what you have
 He is the giver of everything
 Don't be foolish to hide anything from God

The singing was joyous. This song explains why Christians render part of their proceeds during harvest thanksgiving celebrations. God knows all that he has given us as blessings. Thus, it is foolishness when we attempt to hide anything from him. Such songs motivate people to appreciate God for provision. The offered items during harvest thanksgiving are sold to raise funds for evangelistic outreach and mission work.

From the song, Christians understand that God in Heaven opens a window where blessings flow. Being a typical agricultural area, Christians in Bakossi believe that blessings such as rain, sunshine and high yield of crops like cocoa, coffee, cocoyam, plantains, cassava and corn come from God. During the celebration proper, Christians dance forward, carrying different crops as a symbol of appreciation to God. They believe that the more they thank God, the more God will bless them in the years to come. Motivated by this song, the Christians respond positively as they offer both material and financial gifts. The pastor of PCC Tombel (February 24, 2020), in an interview, reports

that Harvest Thanksgiving is an occasion for the raising of funds for mission work. These funds are used to pay stipends for the clergy, build church houses, and provide liturgical materials, discipleship and evangelistic outreach activities in missionary areas. A mother-tongue song composer in Catholic Church, Kodmin (March 13, 2020) testifies that scriptural messages are well understood through singing when composed from the translated scriptures.

2.3.2.1.2 Songs for Christmas and their missional significance

Some mother-tongue songs are composed for the celebration of the birth of Christ. These songs are crafted from Bible stories, and they are culturally relevant. Focus is given to the scriptures. Local melody is used, rendering the songs natural in order to appeal to listeners. Below is a locally composed Christmas song:

Akoose: Yesue achyaate chii,
Nkongse nde menyinge ayele echya eche Yesue.
E'nyinnen be ekide epede a nkongse.

English: Jesus is born today.
The world should be happy
because of the birth of Jesus.
Light has come to the world.

The song above posits that the birth of Christ calls for universal joy as Jesus is the Saviour of mankind. Christmas is known to men all over the world. Although it is true that Christmas is celebrated as the day of the Birth of Christ into this world, it also symbolizes a very deeply significant truth of spiritual life. The song reminds the Bakossi people that the coming of Christ has brought light. Light within the Bakossi context according to Atabe (2001:47) signifies purity, holiness, brightness, void of things of darkness (witchcraft, enmity, injustice, and occultism). Jesus Christ is the very personification of Divinity. He was born at a time when ignorance, superstition, greed, hatred and hypocrisy prevailed upon the land. Purity was forgotten and morality was neglected. In the midst of these, Christ came as the light of the world to transform the lives of people. He gave a new

spiritual turn to the lives of man. People began a new way of life, marking a new dawn for the world. The joy expressed in this Christmas song reminds the people that the birth of Christ has brought light to shine in the dark aspects of their lives. The song equally calls for reconciliation, forgiveness, love, and kindness. Christians exercise these virtues by contributing gifts to the poor and needy during Christmas services.

Local songs also express the deep meaning of Christmas. That is, the celebration of Christmas is not limited to merry making. A Christian in the Native Baptist Church, Peng (January 22, 2020) confesses:

On Christmas day, I listened to a song exhorting us to live in peace since the Prince of Peace is born. This made me to reconcile with my cousin with whom we have been for four months without talking to each other.

Vernacular scriptural songs communicate the gospel in the hearts of the people who respond to it. If Christians are to enter into a new life of spiritual aspiration, purity and devotion, then the Christ-spirit must take its birth within their hearts. This is the real Christmas when the Divine element begins to express itself in the heart of people through singing. From then onward, light begins to shine where darkness was before.

2.3.2.1.3 Songs for Easter and their missional significance

Easter is the annual celebration of Christ's resurrection following His crucifixion and death. The day is also called Resurrection Sunday. It is celebrated as an expression that Christ has conquered death and there is hope beyond the grave. The leaders of women's group in both the PCC and the Catholic Church recount that on this day Christians in Bakossi area do an evangelistic procession in all parts of the town, singing specifically composed songs in the local language. Below is an example of an Easter song in the vernacular.

Akoose: Yesue ade a alonge,
nyine mo a Galili.
Apumbo ooo!

English: Jesus is alive;
I have seen him in Galilee.
He has resurrected ooo!

The song above emphasizes the act of Christians regaining hope upon seeing Jesus alive in the resurrection just as the women testified (Luke 24:1-10. NIV). Jesus died on the cross, was buried and three days later rose to life again. The act of a dead man rising from death and living for evermore is the trust of the celebrations at Easter. To the Bakossi people, the meaning of Easter is that the Son of God paid the price for our sins, and rose again to reconcile us to God (Romans 4:25). On this day, Christian rites such as Baptism, Confirmation and Admission are carried out in churches to express new life.

According to the leader of the Catholic Women Association (April 26, 2020), the choral procession means that their greatest enemy, death, has been conquered. In this way, their sins are forgiven and they are made right with God. Easter songs signify that Christ is truly the King and Victor, seated “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked” (Ephesians 1:21). He is the Lord of new beginnings, new days, and new lives. There is hope. As Jesus said, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19. NIV). Spreading the Easter message through mother tongue singing gives a real meaning to Easter. The songs remind the people of a new life as they relate with Christ.

2.3.2.1.4 Indigenous choirs and their missional impact

Most churches in the Bakossi area have indigenous choirs that communicate the gospel by singing in Akoose. Ommani (2009:1-2) argues that missionaries and the church do their work best when they champion the value of arts done by the local people in their own style, rhythm, and language, allowing them to express their praise to God. A strong church will accept the healthy challenge to worship freely with both contemporary and indigenous music styles. In Africa, the performing arts are not just for the stage, but also refer to the use of instruments, genre, style and artistic dancing during singing. They are part of the people’s life. This means language is seen in everyday activity. It is, therefore,

regrettable that Christianity has not explored much of the arts as they already exist in Africa. Keller (2001:51) points out that the missionary songs that came with the faith are foreign. Many Bakossi traditional musical instruments were rejected by the missionaries. Even though Bakossi people embraced the Christian faith, it is still seen today as the Europeans' religion. This has created the necessity to initiate moves that incorporate local dances, drumming and singing into the expression of faith by Bakossi Christians in order for upcoming generations to see Christianity as their own.

Talented composers use portions of translated scriptures in composing. One of the vernacular music composers in PCC, Ndabekom (August 22, 2020) testifies that before the translation of the Bible he used to compose songs without any clear biblical meaning. The availability of translated scriptures enables him to select portions directly from the Akoose New Testament and transforms them into songs. These scripturally composed songs cement the message of God in the hearts of the people during worship services. A Catholic chorister in Ndibejock (July 20, 2020) explains:

When the mother tongue choir sings during church service, it is already a sermon, because I am not only touched by the lyrics and melody but I am moved by the message. Sometimes I do not understand the priest's or catechist's sermon but I feel satisfied when I listen to the Ekambode choir sing.

The above testimony indicates that singing has a vital spiritual role to play in the life of Christians. Since the sermon is the climax of worship wherein the Christians are exhorted, understanding the message through singing is tantamount to spiritual growth. The message of God is well received and assimilated through songs.

Choirs meet within the week for rehearsals. These weekly meetings opportunities for choristers to learn how to read and write the mother tongue. The scripture for Bible meditation is read from the translated scriptures while the exhortation is also done in the

mother tongue. The purpose of the meditation is to remind choristers that the Lord has entrusted the gift of singing in them for life transformation.

All newly composed songs are taught by the composers themselves, using the conventional Akoose alphabet. As the choristers acquire literary skills, they are then able to read the translated scriptures for personal Bible knowledge. In an interview, a mother-tongue song composer (August 22, 2020) in Tombel explains:

Nze n'yəgté ngəŋgé mekóóle, dɔɔ nwoo'ε nɔɔm ayəged
bekɔn ngáne bélaa'ε ne ngáne bételεε Akoose. Nɛn
awɔŋgenε békɔn ábíí ngáne bélaa'ε Melle Mekolle eseban
alɛnlad bó ate

(When teaching the newly composed songs, it is an opportunity for me to teach the choristers how to read and write the Akoose language. This has enabled the choristers to know how to read the Akoose New Testament without any difficulties.)

Choir groups not only evangelize through singing, but also play a vital role in promoting literacy. Knowing how to read and write the mother tongue eases the reading of the scriptures, hence enhancing a deeper knowledge of the scriptures.

In order that these scriptural songs are immortalized, the Bakossi Bible Translation Project translated, printed and published the BAPRESCA song book used by choristers and Christians from different congregations who find pleasure in singing. This has promoted literacy skills as people are anxious to read and sing from the song books. These song books are used by the 750 choristers in and out of Bakossi land. These choirs do not only sing in church, but they also go out for evangelization, using evangelistic songs to share the Gospel. The songs are embedded with deep spiritual truths that speak to the hearts of the audience, thereby causing repentance.

2.3.3 Sunday School scriptural products

The availability of mother tongue products for faith building cuts across all ages of persons. The use of translated products in children's ministry is not left out. This is

because all the children in village congregations speak and understand their mother tongue. The Sunday school instructor for PCC Ngombo-Ku congregation explains that (July 12, 2020): “Though all the children in my Sunday school class understand the local language, about fifty percent do not understand English.” This explains why communicating the Gospel in English does not meet the missional goal of building the Christian faith of all the children. The Bakossi Bible translation project also prioritized the translation and publication of scriptural products that facilitate the communication of the gospel of salvation children. These products included Sunday lesson notes, story books and picture posters.

2.3.3.1 The use of Sunday School mother-tongue products

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon takes much interest in training its future members through the Sunday school ministry. Special scriptural materials are designed for this purpose. Mother-tongue scriptural lessons, gadgets, charts, story books and portions of the Bible are published as didactic aids that communicates God’s message in a simpler form. According to the PCC Sunday School Handbook (2014:9), the goals for the production of Sunday school materials are to lead children to Christ and to enable them grow in faith.

2.3.3.2 Translated lesson notes and scriptural stories

Fig. 3: A one-month short lesson plan for Sunday School

The table below depicts the lesson plan for the Sunday school children. Each lesson is based on the ministry of Jesus Christ. Narrative passages are selected for easy comprehension.

Epun Date	Ayege Lesson	Nlo me Eped Bible Study Title	Eped Text
1 st January 2019	1	Yesue a Ndab e Dyob (Jesus in the Temple)	Luke 2:21-40

6 th January 2019	2	Yesue ade a Yerusalem (Jesus in Jerusalem)	Luke 2:41-52
14 th January 2019	3	Edusen eche Yesue (The Baptism of Jesus)	Matthew 3:1-7
20 th January 2019	4	Devele akege Yesus (Devil tempt Jesus)	Matthew 4:1-11
27 th January 2019	5	Yesue asudne (Jesus is sad)	Luke 13:31-35

In order to facilitate the teaching of mother-tongue scriptures to children, the children's lesson notes are translated. Comprehension of the scriptures when it is introduced to the children in the language they already master. Besides, religious concepts, Christian doctrine and biblical stories had already been translated into Akoose.

The Sunday school teacher in the Presbyterian Church, Kupe (January 12, 2020) narrates:

The use of the translated lesson notes during the children service has improved their belief and understanding of the salvation story of Jesus Christ. Introducing the Christian doctrine with the aid of these translated notes has laid a solid Christian foundation.

Since the children in her congregation speak and understand Akoose, no further explanation is required for communicating the message of the day during Sunday worship services or when these lesson notes are read. She reiterates that the children get a first-hand Christian doctrine as they listen to it in their first language. Benda (2005:46-46) argues that the first knowledge acquired by a child changes his/her scope of thoughts and action. The Christian doctrine children acquire directs them towards Christ, their Lord and Saviour and prevents them from acquiring a contrary doctrine of venerating ancestors as practised in Bakossi land.

2.3.3.3 Growing children's faith

The use of mother-tongue scriptures in the ministry of Sunday school has facilitated the intimate relationship between children and God. It is the missional role of the Sunday school ministry to denounce those traditional practices in Bakossi land that are against the Christian doctrine. Such practices include sorcery, veneration of ancestors, offering of sacrifices at graves, stones, and rivers, as well as the use of charms and amulets. As children grow up, their day-to-day lifestyle is reflected in their relationship with God as they worship and believe in Him only. Ejedepang-Koge (1996:49) reiterates that children with a deep understanding of the scriptures preach the Christian doctrine to their parents and oppose pagan practices. According to him, some of these children have become trained pastors and catechists and have also converted most of their family and relatives to Christianity. They equally denounce unchristian practices practised by their parents. An elder in the Presbyterian Church Kupe testifies that as a Sunday school child he remembers having refused to consult a soothsayer and to offer sacrifices to ancestors when his father ordered. He had grown to know that God alone created the world. All glory and power belong to Him.

2.3.3.4 Grow in faith

It is a great task for the ministry of Sunday school to build children's faith. Faith refers to a sense of trust, guiding belief, faithfulness, a committed sense of loyalty. In the Christian context, it is reliance upon and trust in God (Gupta 2016:302). Belief in early childhood is important. What a child is taught influences his or her belief system. In order for children to build their belief and trust in God, they are not only taught the scriptures but they also learn how to approach God in their day-to-day life. Communication with God through prayers in the heart language strengthens their trust and faith in God. This is further emphasized in scriptural and doctrinal portions such as the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, Apostles Creed, memory verses drawn from translated lesson notes. In an interview, a Sunday school pupil in PCC Mwambong (February 23, 2020) exclaims "When I pray in my language, I feel God is listening attentively to my prayers". Thus, he builds his trust in God as he communicates with Him through prayers.

2.3.3.5 Increase Bible knowledge

As Sunday school pupils grow to maturity, biblical knowledge and Christian virtues accompany them in their day-to-day life. Before the scriptures are introduced to them in English at their adolescence, they already have a good knowledge of the scriptures in their mother tongue. Confirming the impact of learning Akoose scriptures as a child, an adult Christian of Presbyterian Church, Kack (March 23, 2020) states that the foundation of his Bible knowledge and belief stems from Sunday School where he got first-hand scriptural information in his mother tongue. As an adult, his biblical knowledge and faith deepened as he recited Bible stories in Akoose accurately. Yet another respondent added that his children who attend Sunday school services narrate biblical stories because they heard these stories in their mother tongue. From the above responses, it is clear that children develop deepening faith and Christian foundation when they listen to scripture in their heart language.

2.3.4 The audio Scriptures

Reacting to the use of the audio or recorded mother tongue scriptures, an 81-year-old, visually impaired man in the Native Baptist Church, Ndom (August 22, 2020) explains:

Though I am unable to read, I know and understand the scriptures very well, thanks to the available audio scriptures. I do not need a pastor or any interpreter because I understand all that I hear from the audio scriptures.

In this case, the proclaiming machine is his main scriptural instructor. Listening to the scriptures played on this device enhances his spiritual growth and broadens his understanding the scriptures. This explains why the audio evangelistic tool is widely used in homes, Bible study classes, listening groups, choirs, cars, crusades and other public occasions. Besides, audio scriptures are easily distributed and circulated in disks, tapes, telephones and memory cards.

2.3.4.1 The use of audio Scriptures in listening groups

This section examines the use of audio scriptural products and their impact in faith-building. This form of scripture is made available to the people who are unable to exploit

the hard copies of Scripture such as the blind and those who cannot read nor write the mother tongue.

2.3.4.2 Listening group background

Viggo (2009:1-2) estimates that in some African countries printed scripture only reaches around ten percent of the population. The challenge is therefore to develop translations that are relevant to the media, productions that are appropriate, and distribution systems for scripture that reach the non-reading population. Few Christians in Bakossi congregations possess printed scriptures because they can read the local language. The majority listens to translated scriptures when they are read in Church during worship services. That is why the scripture listening strategy was put in place for the effective communication of the gospel.

Contextually, the Bakossi community is an oral oriented community just like other communities in the South West Region of in Cameroon. Information is primarily received through the oral means of communication. Asewie (2013:79) contends that the majority of people living in undeveloped countries transmit beliefs, heritage, value, and other important information by means of stories, proverbs, poetry, chants, music, dances, and ceremonies. It is a custom for Bakossi people to sit in groups to share information through stories while sharing a meal or drink. Keen attention is given whenever they listen to the elderly, educated, elites or visitors. Therefore, the gospel listening program rightly suits the cultural context of Bakossi people. Jackson (2009:1) emphasizes the role of the listening program:

We know that if we do not create oral strategies we are going to miss huge percentages of the population, because many people are illiterate, and they will never learn to read and write. And it's important that they hear the good news of the gospel.

Moreover, school dropout is a common phenomenon in Bakossi communities due to economic hardship and poverty. This means there is a huge number of persons, especially among the youths who cannot read English Bibles. Viggo (2009:1) attests that "Children

are going to school and learning to read and write, however, about half are likely to stop the learning process before actual skills for reading a daily newspaper have been achieved". This category of youths is very active and participates in the listening groups where they derive an in-depth knowledge of the Bible and build their faith on it. The oral strategy for the communication of the gospel touches all people irrespective of age, sex and level of education.

2.3.4.3 The mode of operation of the listening group

According to the listening group coordinator of Full Gospel church Tombel (April 20, 2020), the listening group program is designed in three steps for effective operation and mission. The audio gospel machines are shared to congregations who have formed listening groups of 20 to 30 persons, coordinated by a trained facilitator. These groups meet twice or thrice a week, observing the following steps.

Firstly, the group facilitator places the machine at the centre of the listeners who sit in a circle form. He or she selects a book and tunes in the audio machine while the listeners listen with keen attention.

Secondly, the facilitator engages the listeners in a question and answer session. Questions are asked and discussed based on the passage for clarification and proper understanding. The exercise is meant to spur the listeners to apply the lesson in their daily lives. During my research in Mwambong (March 14, 2020), I participated in a listening group session at the Apostolic Faith church. In all, fourteen members from different age groups attended. The topic of discussion was "Settling of disputes." The passage was drawn from 1Corinthians 6:1-11. After listening to the passage, members carried out a question and answer session. They reflected on questions like why do people have disputes, how can they (Christians) settle disputes among themselves and what are the consequences of settling disputes in civil law courts. The topic is context relevant giving that Mwambong community is noted for land disputes. Both Christians and non-Christians have the habit of suing one another at the civil court in Bangem (an

administrative town). They usually spend a lot of money on transportation, bribery of court officials and hiring of lawyers during court proceedings.

After discussing on the consequences of settling disputes in the civil court, a member testifies:

I have a land dispute with my neighbour and I have taken the matter to the civil court in Bangem. I have spent a lot of money in such a way that I cannot feed my family or meet up with the school needs of my children. The court officials demand bribes so that they can favour me in their judgments. This matter had been dragging now for six months and the judgment is delayed in order to extort more money from me. This lesson of today has reminded me that this dispute can be settled in church amicably without spending a lot of money at the expense of my family. I will immediately withdraw the matter from court and meet my neighbour with my pastor to settle it amicably.

From the testimony above, the participant has realized that suing his neighbour in a civil law court inflicted pain and suffering to his family instead as the court officials use the occasion to extort them financially. His decision to solve the dispute in the Christian context is an immediate outcome of the knowledge he acquired during the scripture listening group. As listeners acquire an in-depth knowledge and understanding of biblical portions, they ask questions for explanation and meaning which result in transformation. Thirdly, there is a smooth flow of discussion between the listeners and the facilitator. At this point they share experiences on how these biblical lessons can be applied in their daily lives. The group facilitator of the PCC Kupe listening group (March 15,2020) shared how a woman revealed that she has forgiven the son after participating in the discussion on the biblical portion of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-30). According to him, the woman had vowed not to accept the son after he had mismanaged the late father's property. She had hardened her heart and refused to forgive her son despite several pleas from family members and other Christians. Her willingness to accept and forgive the son came as a result of understanding the deep meaning of the parable of the

prodigal son. Listening groups can be rightly described as agents of peace building and reconciliation and the promotion of godly living.

2.3.4.4 Missional impact of listening groups

The facilitator of the listening group of the Full Gospel Church, Tombel (March 19, 2020) explains:

The climax during a listening session is during the questions and answer session. During this period, members share their biblical knowledge on the said passage. It is an opportunity for members to have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the passage based on its context and application to our day-to-day life.

This form of communicating scriptures has enabled the gospel to reach out to the non-literate communities. Romans 10:17 states that faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ (NIV). It captures the mission of communicating God's message through audio. Paul confirms that the saving message is none other than the proclaimed message of Jesus Christ. The listening group is an opportunity for individuals to have a deeper understanding of the scriptures. Through the oral communication of the gospel, people are able to retain and share scriptures with one another. An 81-year-old woman at PCC Ngusi (April 17, 2020) is able to narrate and explain portions of the Bible without a translator or interpreter. She recounts:

When I listen to the audio scriptures in my language during our listening group sessions, I feel God is talking to me directly. In addition, I am able to understand the scriptures well as I have repented from doing things that are against the will of God. I thank those who recorded the scriptures for us who cannot read the Bible in any language.

This is a clear testimony that mother tongue scriptures draw people closer to God. In addition, the audio version of the scriptures brings transformation as the people do not only listen, but they also apply it in their day-to-day lives. The group facilitator of PCC Mwambong shared that three non-Christians had given their lives to Christ after listening

to portions of the audio version of the scriptures. They were converted and baptized. Communicating God's message through the audio version leads people to Christ through conversion as they become new creatures in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Due to poor road infrastructure in Bakossi area, the clergy is unable to reach out to all the communities for evangelistic activities. People in enclave areas are gathering to listen to and discuss the Word of God in little groups and in families. Out of these simple listening groups, churches are being planted and communities are being transformed. Moreover, hearing the Bible is actually helping people with literacy and increasing the demand for print scriptures. Literacy is motivated in the sense that some listeners are able to learn how to read and write the local language given that they listen to the audio scriptures simultaneously with the printed copy. This enhances the reading skills of Christians. Viggo (2009:2-3) attests that Bible reading is a Bible communication event, where the text is set in its context, and where immediate application is achieved in the minds and context of the listeners. Thus, participative communication brings the message in a mode which is customary for oral societies.

2.3.5 The Jesus Film

The Bakossi Bible translation project in partnership with Campus Crusade for Christ translated and dedicated the "JESUS" film based on the Gospel of Luke. The film was projected in about thirty-eight communities, several homes and Bible study groups, and in about fifty-two congregations. It is a veritable tool for gospel sharing since the people do not only listen to voices, but they also see the actions live. According to Asewie (2013:81), the Jesus film allows God's Word to speak to the people in the language they know and understand. Commenting on his excitement, The priest of Catholic Church Tombel attests:

I am so excited that the Jesus film remains an effective evangelistic tool that enables the viewers not only to understand the biblical events, but they are able to picture and narrate the actions as they watched the film. I can testify that

my Christians, whether literate or illiterate in English can now narrate biblical stories and events by watching the Jesus film.

According to the respondent, watching the film helps to implant the events of the ministry of Jesus Christ into hearts and heads. It draws many people to Christ.

The research shows that many people have been converted by this evangelistic tool. The Jesus film coordinator attests that when the film was projected in a crusade in Mwambong eleven people gave their lives to Christ. They were later baptized in their respective congregations (May 16, 2020). According to him, these persons were marveled by the miracles Jesus performed. It was an opportunity for many people who had never heard God's message of salvation to do so. The projection of the ministry and works of Jesus in Bakossi area brought the people in a face-to-face with Christ. As He communicates with them in their heart language, they are able to relate with him more.

During my research, I witnessed the Jesus film projection in Nyasoso on the 16th of October 2019. I later enquired about the feeling of viewers. One of them commented that, "I feel that Jesus is watching and speaking to me directly. I feel guilty for any acts of unrighteousness in my life." According to him, he feels a direct penetration of the message of salvation in his heart and life that warrants him to repent.

The Jesus film strategy of evangelization has helped to build the faith of the people of Bakossi. Listening to the characters in the film speak Akoose language convinces the audience of authenticity of the Word of God. In his comment, a viewer in Baseng community (November 12, 2019) explained that the fact that Jesus speaks Akoose is proof that He loves and wants Bakossi people to enjoy salvation. According to him, this is a booster to strengthen his faith and to live a life of righteousness.

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples before he ascended into heaven, he imparted God's eternal vision to reach the world with His love (Matthew 28:19-20). The twelve men obeyed his call and transformed human history with the life-giving message of forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. Today, The JESUS Film

Project prioritizes the Saviour's last command by making His Great Commission her first concern. The vision is to work with the body of Christ to finish the task of sharing Jesus with everyone, everywhere, in his or her own language, so that everyone will have an opportunity to hear the Gospel and receive Christ (<http://www.jesusfilm.org/> Accessed 02-04-2019).

2.3.5.1 The background of Jesus film in Bakossi

The Bakossi Bible Translation Project in partnership with Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI) produced and dedicated the Jesus Film in the Akoose language in May 2016. The objective of the film is to win people to faith in Jesus Christ, building them in their faith and sending them to win and build others. The aim is to bring the good news to life for the peoples of the world through the powerful medium of film. The film is projected to help the body of Christ to do evangelism and discipleship through various creative approaches. It is a full-length feature film based on the Gospel of Luke (<https://www.cru.org/> Accessed 02-04-2019). Eight hundred and fifty Video Compact Disks (VCDs) of the Jesus film had been distributed in and out Bakossi land.

2.3.5.2 Effective use of the Jesus film

The effective use of this evangelistic tool is promoted by "film coordinators." These are people who mobilize the various communities and congregations for an open air or indoors projections. They make all necessary arrangements for the effective use of this evangelistic product.

During my research, this film was projected at Catholic Church Ebonji (April 10, 2020) during the Passion Week. In all, about 144 viewers of different ages attended. Emphasis was laid on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ since Christians were commemorating this part of the film. During the projection, many viewers could not hold their emotions as they shed tears at the points of the torments and crucifixion of Jesus. During the question and answer session, some viewers wanted to know why Jesus had to go through huge suffering and death. In his explanation, the coordinator revealed that Jesus had to go through this humiliating death in order to save mankind from their sins.

He further emphasized that people should turn away from their sinful life and give their lives to Christ. When an opportunity was given for those who were willing to give their lives to Christ, twenty-one viewers stepped forward, indicating their readiness to repent from their sins and be baptized. One of them states:

I am not a Christian and I do not go to church. But the film has taught me that this innocent man Jesus went through suffering and death in order that I should be saved and my sins forgiven. Therefore, if he can suffer that much because of my sins, I think it is but normal that I will give my life to serve Jesus, baptized and turn away from my sins. All the evil things I used to do I will do them no more.

Watching the actions and listening to the utterances in the mother tongue gives real meaning to the scriptures. It touches the emotions of the viewers and transforms them instantly. After the projection of the film, the coordinator chairs a question and answer session. During this time Christians and non-Christians ask questions relating to the life and ministry of Christ. The team of pastors present assists the coordinator to respond to the questions. These responses increase the in-depth knowledge of the Word of God of the viewers.

2.3.5.3 Missional impact of the Jesus film

The JESUS film is very effective due to the power of the Word of God. Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32. NIV). “Lifting up” alludes to Isaiah 52:13 and refers to being lifted up on the cross for human salvation. God promised that His Word would never return void. As we continue to lift up Jesus and proclaim the Word of God throughout the earth, He is faithful to draw people to Himself. God’s vision of reaching the world with His love existed long before Jesus proclaimed the Great Commission.

One of the regular viewers at Full Gospel church Tombel (November 23, 2019), narrates:

Whenever I am watching this film, I am so overwhelmed and convinced that Jesus is speaking to me directly as I see and listen to ‘him’. I realize a remarkable transformation in my life

when I first heard and watched the Sermon on the Mount projected on the screen.

According to him, living a godly life is accompanied with blessings. It is easy to remember a story when it is visualized than merely told. This study indicates that there is an instant conviction and transformation as viewers feel and get a first-hand gospel message in the Jesus film.

The Sunday school teacher of PCC Kupe (January 23, 2020) recounts how the children are able to narrate and mimic the characters of some biblical stories after watching the Jesus film repeatedly. Repeated projection of the Jesus film implants the scriptures deep in the minds and hearts of children. The film is a self-teaching method for learning the scriptures. Furthermore, aged men and women who cannot read the Bible in English or Akoose also follow up the biblical events through the Film.

A seventy-eight-year woman (January 23, 2020) testifies:

Since I became a Christian some forty-five years ago, I am unable to read the Bible in any language and I am unable to know many stories in the Bible. I was only opportune to have access to the Bible stories when the scriptures were read in the mother tongue. But I can assure you that since I started watching and listening to the Jesus film in my local language, I am able to know what it takes to be a fervent follower of Christ. The film had taught me to forgive one another as I enjoy watching and listening to the parable of the prodigal son. Moreover, I have not felt the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus until I watched the Jesus film. Whenever I watch this part of the film, ahhh! I weep a lot (translated from Akoose to English).

From the testimony above, the Jesus film expounds the concept of the cost of discipleship. The respondent deduces that it takes a lot of sacrifice to be a follower of Christ. In addition, she is able to acquire the Christian virtue of forgiveness. The film builds a godly life in Christians as they interact and live with one another. It should be noted that

even non-Bakossi speakers find delight in watching this film because they visualize biblical events read in the Bible. The film projection imprints biblical events on their minds. Rick (2009:85) affirms that communication occurs only when a message is both successfully transmitted and received. He states:

In an African country, a national mission leader told me they had shown the JESUS film for years to millions of people, using an official language, with only modest results. When they started showing the film using local languages, however, people responded in a marvellous way. It was like people were seeing a different film, even if they had seen the former one before. It was worth all the effort to put it into their dialect.

What this implies is that the Jesus film is not only a film for leisure and entertainment, but it is a soul-searching tool for evangelization and life transformation. The film assumes meaning only when it is translated and projected in the heart language of the people. The Bakossi Bible Translation Project continues to move forward in cooperation with the body of Christ to reach all people in the farthest corners of Bakossi land who have not yet heard about Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. It gives Christians and non-Christians multiple opportunities to hear the Gospel through the Jesus film.

The Jesus film project stands with the body of Christ to follow the Saviour in His mission to "... preach good news to the poor ... to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1b NIV). This project fosters the compassion of Jesus for the lost in this world, the poor, the broken hearted, the captives and the prisoners by proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom to the ends of the Bakossi land in particular and South West region in general.

2.3.6 Mother tongue Scripture engagement program

Scripture Engagement is a life-challenging process by which individuals and communities not only gain access to Scripture, but encounter God in such meaningful ways that they are progressively transformed (Forum of Bible Agencies International: 2008). This program seeks to help people apply biblical truths to their lives.

The thrust for Scripture Engagement was born out of the realization that nothing was done to help communities to make use of translated scriptures and to apply it in their daily lives at the end of the translation work. Hill (2006:2) asserts:

Bible translators realized that translated Scriptures sitting in warehouses fell short of their goal. Their real goal was that receptors use these Scriptures to draw closer to God. United Bible Society (UBS) refers to this goal as Scripture engagement; SIL and Wycliffe refer to it as Scripture use. Global sociolinguistic factors in fact militate against vernacular languages, making the use of mother-tongue Scriptures the premier challenge for Bible translation in the twenty-first century.

It was a common phenomenon in communities where the Bible had been translated and dedicated to find many people who were not aware of it. After the dedication of the Bakossi New Testament, the audio version, the Jesus film and the song book, there was a need to develop a strategy to give Bakossi people greater access to God's Word and help them to engage with it for transformation to take place.

The Scripture Engagement program developed strategies to help individuals and churches in Bakossi to engage with mother tongue scripture. Training sessions were organized in churches and Christians were trained on how to read and preach in the mother tongue. The program increased alertness Bakossi Christians as they accessed God's Word using oral communication.

Furthermore, Scripture Engagement equips the church and communities to be able to deal with relevant cultural issues that can help the church do discipleship in more relevant ways, especially in specific contexts. Its workshops privilege translated products and highlight cultural practices that contradict the Christian doctrine. Such practices are addressed biblically for discipleship and life transformation. The workshops have helped to repair broken relationships and restore peace amongst families and friends. In a Scripture Engagement workshop in PCC Tombel, one of the participants (November 23, 2019) shared this:

My brother and I had a land dispute. This made us to live for two years without talking to each other despite my regular attendance in church. It was only after I attended the Scripture Engagement workshop that I sought for a reconciliation and peace. The lesson taught came from I John 4:20. A person is a hypocrite if he or she says he or she loves God whom he or she does not see and hates his or her brother he or she sees.

This respondent understood true love only after attending a Scripture Engagement workshop in which they were exhorted to show true love for one another, be it in the family or community. The workshop was carried out in the mother tongue. It helped him understand that although he was always punctual in church, he was not living a godly life. Ommani (2012:24) argues that when people express their relationship with God using the language of the heart their understanding is deep, thus minimizing chances of syncretism and hypocrisy. Therefore, this program brings transformation and encourages a healthy style of living.

Scripture Engagement also offers trauma-healing activities to individuals and communities who are experiencing epidemics, wars, disasters and hardship. With the ongoing socio-political crisis plaguing Bakossi land (2016-2020), families have witnessed trauma of all sorts. This Scripture Engagement program organises trauma-healing workshops in which affected people are encouraged and motivated to forge ahead with life despite the challenges and difficulties. Organizers use translated products that speak directly to the life situation of the people. This strategy blends mental health principles and what the Scripture says to help traumatized people. Christians are engaged as they respond to the demands of the scriptures for life transformation.

Hill (2006:82) points out that when the church puts emphasis on the importance of mother tongue scripture it correlates with the era Reformation in church growth. When mother-tongue scriptures are neglected in gospel communication, spiritual stagnation sets in. The Scripture Engagement program in Bakossi region has met the felt needs of the people as their daily challenges are being addressed.

Since the ultimate goal of Scripture Engagement is transformation, it places missions at the center. Scripture Engagement strategies as mentioned above are part of the mission package. Workshops centre on Gospel and culture workshops. Pastors, Christians and community leaders from different cultural backgrounds come together to brainstorm on key cultural issues affecting ministry. Pastors and congregational leaders learn new skills to do missions or discipleship and evangelism. Asewie (2013:84) attests that the strategies put in place by the Scripture Engagement department among the Christians in groups have offered churches the opportunity to effectively use the mother tongue scriptures to provide a solid and sustained understanding of the Word of God. When scripture is well understood and applied, it brings transformation not only in the church but also in the communities. This also enhance church growth.

2.3.7 Mother-Tongue Scriptural Products and their Impact across Denominations

The need for people to have God's Word in their language has been recognized throughout various church denominations. The sections that follow expatiate the impact of mother-tongue scriptural products.

2.3.7.1 Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon enjoys a large following in Bakossi land. Ejedepang-Koge (1996:16) traces the long-standing activities of the PCC in Bakossi land to the early work done by the Basel missionaries. With the advent of formal education, business and influx of foreigners, some Bakossi towns became multilingual. Hill (2006:83) states that education, government offices, cybercafés, cell phones, televisions, radios, and transportation link a community to the wider world, resulting in widespread multilingualism. This led to a shift from the mother tongue to using the English and Pidgin languages in Presbyterian congregations in Bakossi area. With the institution of the Bakossi Bible Translation Project, scriptures were translated into the heart language of Bakossi people. Attention was now tilted towards promoting the indigenous language (Akoose) for effective evangelism and missions.

This change came with its challenges as well. According to Hill (2006:84), already established churches in the community function using Scriptures in a language of wider communication, a practice that takes a surprising amount of effort to modify so that mother-tongue scriptures can take their rightful place. The Bakossi Bible Translation Project galvanized efforts towards the effective utilization of the mother-tongue scriptures in the Akoose-speaking Presbyterian congregations. These efforts fostered mother-tongue scripture engagement, resulting in life transformation.

Accordingly, lessons are drawn from the translated New Testament during worship services and public occasions in all congregations. The full engagement of the local scripture has improved spiritual growth through comprehension of the scripture. An 88-year-old Christian at PCC Nlog (November 23, 2019) acknowledges that “since the mother tongue scripture was introduced in my church, I have gained spiritual growth and become a mature Christian because of my understanding of the Bible.” According to him, mother tongue scripture has enabled him to share the Word of God with his grandchildren besides using it as a tool for counselling.

Christians do mature in their faith when they have access to the Word in a language they understand best. Presbyterian congregations engage in active and participatory Bible studies wherein the Word of God is communicated in the language the people understand the most. The pastoral approach towards the promotion of local scriptures and its use in Presbyterian Church has facilitated life transformation for missions. The pastor of PCC Ngombo-Ku (January 24, 2020) attests that when the scripture is communicated in the local language in crusades, Bible study classes or catechumen classes, Christians and new converts confess and surrender talismans and charms in their keeping for destruction. Scriptures communicated in the local language expose ungodly practices and satanic devices. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon does prioritize the use of evangelistic tools for missions and discipleship.

2.3.7.2 The Roman Catholic Church

Unlike the Presbyterian Church that introduced a local language in communicating the Gospel in Bakossi land, the Roman Catholic Church introduced Latin as a means to

communicate the gospel. A local language promoter in Catholic Church, Tombel explains that in his childhood only Latin was used to run entire worship activities at their congregation. According to him, English was only used in the reading of the Gospel. They responded to the liturgy by chanting in Latin. For him, Latin was the authentic language for communicating the scriptures by the priest or catechist. Using an imported language for gospel communication hardly meets the missional goal of life transformation and scriptural comprehension. Christians most often adopt a liturgical formula of reciting and chanting the liturgy without any spiritual impact.

Engaging vernacular scriptures in the Roman Catholic Church in Bakossi met with resistance. Christians had grown to assume Latin was a divine language used for gospel communication. According to Payne (2009:1), resistance in the use of mother-tongue scriptures in this denomination is due the staunch and almost mystical veneration Latin. The Bakossi Bible Translation project engaged a number of activities to promote the acceptance of vernacular translation, most of which were intended to educate the audience in translation principles as well as the benefits of an idiomatic translation. All these met with little success. Around the time of the dedication of the Akoose New Testament, the Vicar General of Buea diocese assessed the quality of the translation and authorized its use of in Roman Catholic congregations in Bakossi land. The church's hierarchy remains the motivational force in the use and promotion of the local scriptures in her congregations. Hill (2006:86) believes that Church leaders must see that all members of their congregations receive spiritual food in a language they understand, regardless of social class, gender, or age. The more church leaders encourage the use of Scripture in the mother tongue, the more the members will use it.

Today, the Roman Catholic Church, via priests and catechists, in Bakossi land is fully engaged in the use of vernacular scriptures. Indigenous choirs use mother tongue scriptures in the composition of songs, thus transforming lives. Membership in these choirs has greatly increased as many young Christians see the need to evangelize through singing the Word in the mother tongue. The leader of Saint Therese indigenous choir of Catholic Church, Tombel (April 12, 2020) explains that “many youths have

become members of our choir for the purpose of spreading the gospel through singing in the local language.” Through this choir youths are evangelized and are taught how to read and engage with mother tongue scriptures through singing. Meditations are also done in the local language during choir meetings.

2.3.7.3 Baptist Churches

There are two Baptist denominations in Bakossi land. That is, the Native Baptist Church (NBC) and the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC). This section examines the engagement with the translated scriptures in Baptist congregations.

2.3.7.3.1 Native Baptist Church

According to Ejedepang-Koge (1996:10), the Native Baptist Church in Bakossi was founded by a missionary body from the coastland town of Douala in 1957. It mainly used Duala for mission, admitting and baptizing members from the secret (juju) traditional society as well as polygamists. Indigenous pastors from Bakossi were trained in the Bible school in Douala. Singing, liturgy and sermons were communicated in Duala irrespective of the origins of the Christians. For believers in this denomination, it was therefore imperative for the Christians to learn Duala.

A Christian of the Native Baptist Church, Tombel (February 23, 2020) remarks:

I felt very guilty using a neighbouring local language (Duala) for spiritual transformation. I was wondering if God could not also speak my own language (Akoose). When I listen to the scriptures in my Akoose, I feel God is speaking to me directly and that intimate relationship is felt. I am proud of my language for spiritual transformation.

The translation of scriptures in Akoose is an indication that scriptures can be communicated in any language. Songs are now composed and sung in native Baptist congregations using the translated scriptures. The younger generation who could not speak Duala is now engaged with the scriptures as they read and listen to it in their heart language. It is a challenge for pastors to change their strategy following the realization

that it is more enriching to communicate the Gospel in the local language rather than in borrowed language.

2.3.7.3.2 Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)

There had been no formal planting of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Church in Bakossi land. CBC Christians who migrated from the North West Region of Cameroon to Bakossi land grouped themselves and established CBC congregations in some Bakossi villages. Most of these Christians served in the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), an agro-industrial plantation, as labourers and hired farmers. Based on the CBC constitution (2008:13) among other things, a local church is considered a church when “it is the primary instrument of God’s Kingdom made up of at least 25 members who through faith in Christ live to glorify God...and also if it plants preaching stations and or nurtures those entrusted to her by Fields or Areas.”

The pastor of CBC Tombel (December 12, 2019) indicates that only about two percent of indigenes are found in this denomination. This statistics tends to question the Church’s inability to strategize in evangelizing by reaching out to indigenous people of Bakossi. An indigene who worships in CBC Tombel (December 12, 2019) narrates that CBC denomination is fondly called “Graffi Church”. Graffi is a local appellation given to people who hail from the Grass field area of the North West Region of Cameroon. CBC’s main medium for the communication of the gospel is English or Pidgin. Using translated scriptures in this denomination may not have any substantial missional impact as most of its Christians cannot speak nor understand the local language. In addition, its pastors are non-indigenes; they had remained resistant to the use of mother tongue scriptures in their congregations.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the historical findings and factors that facilitated the translation of scriptures in Akoose. It also examined the missionary work of Bible translation agencies. The foundation laid for Bakossi people to access to mother tongue scriptures gave birth

to the Bakossi Bible Translation Project. The project translated, published and dedicated translated scriptural products. These products include the Akoose New Testament, the song book, the audio scriptures, the Sunday school lesson book and the Jesus Film. These scriptural products have become veritable tools for evangelism, discipleship and missions. Throughout the chapter, the missional impact of these translated tools was examined across different denominations; they have been proven to have a very positive influence on the transformation of lives.

CHAPTER 3

DYNAMICS AFFECTING THE USE OF TRANSLATED SCRIPTURES IN BAKOSSI LAND

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the use of translated scriptural products and their missional impact in Bakossi land. This chapter attempts to respond to Osmer's second question "Why is this occurring? Why accounts for the use or non-use of translated scriptures in mission work by various denominations? Do all Christians and the clergy see the presence of the translated products as a veritable tool for life transformation? Although this chapter builds mainly upon empirical findings, data from secondary sources are also included. It contains current information about translated scriptures in Bakossi churches made possible by the data collected from the churches and focus groups. This chapter dwells on the following axes: (3.1) Data collection techniques and presentation, (3.2) Challenges faced in data collection, (3.3) Motivations behind the effective use of translated scriptures, (3.4) Barriers in the use of the mother tongue scriptures in Bakossi, (3.5) Reasons for effective use of the translated products, and conclusion.

3.1 Data collection techniques and presentation

In this study, data is collected from six denominations: The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) with twenty-two congregations, the Roman Catholic Church with eleven congregations, Full Gospel Church with five congregations, Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) with four congregations, Native Baptist Church with three congregations, and the Apostolic Faith Church with three congregations. This is summarized in the chart below:

Fig 4. Denominations with Congregations

Denomination	Number of congregations
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)	22

Roman Catholic Church	11
Full Gospel Mission	5
Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)	4
Native Baptist Church	3
Apostolic Faith Church	3

In order to gather information, questionnaires were distributed to the pastors, lay preachers and Christians of these congregations (see appendix 1). Some questions had yes or no answers while others had the option of providing more information for clarification and explanation. The questionnaires explore the interviewee's views concerning the communicative use of language for the transmission of the gospel for missional purposes and life transformation.

Before the administration of the questionnaires to various groups of interviewees, the researcher contacted the various denominational leaders who granted access to carry on the research in their areas of jurisdiction. Sharing the aim of the research, these administrators were motivated to inform their pastors, evangelists, catechists and lay preachers to assist me in this research.

Below is a chart showing the number of denominations and their various leaders who shared information on the use of the translated products in their congregations.

Fig 5. Denominations and Church leaders

Denomination	Pastors/ Priests	Catechists/ Evangelists	Lay preachers
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)	12	0	19
Roman Catholic Church	5	11	0
Full Gospel Mission	3	2	4
Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)	4	0	4
Native Baptist Church	3	3	4

Apostolic Faith Church	3	0	4
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I met the church leaders (priests, pastors, evangelists, catechists) during their monthly meetings and explained the purpose of my research. They all agreed to participate. The questionnaires were then handed to them for onward distribution to their lay leaders and Christians in their different parishes. They were encouraged to persuade Christians to respond to the questionnaires. These responses were further handed to the Church leaders for transmission to the researcher. Meanwhile some of the Church leaders and Christians sent their responses directly to the researcher. To buttress the authenticity of my findings, I conducted interviews with the clergy, lay preachers, coordinators of the Jesus Film, listening groups and Christians.

I was also able to gather information from focus groups in the congregations. This includes the Congregational Bible study groups, Indigenous choir groups, and Audio scriptures listening groups as seen in the chart below.

Fig 6. Focus groups in the congregations

Denominations	Bible Study group	Indigenous Choir group	Scriptures listening group
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)	11	10	7
Roman Catholic Church	6	5	5
Full Gospel Mission	4	0	4
Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)	2	0	1
Native Baptist Church	2	2	2

Apostolic Faith Church	4	3	3
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The focus groups used for data collected are found in urban and rural areas.

Information was got from the various group leaders and group participants across congregations located in urban and rural areas, and indigenous and non-indigenous pastors and priests as seen in the chart below.

Fig 7. Statistics of the denominations and the clergy in Bakossi

Denominations	Urban Congregations	Rural Congregations	Indigenous Pastors and Priests	Non-indigenous Pastors and Priests
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)	4	18	3	9
Roman Catholic Church	3	8	1	4
Full Gospel Mission	2	3	1	2
Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)	2	2	0	4
Native Baptist Church	1	2	2	1
Apostolic Faith Church	2	1	3	0

Data collected was analysed and interpreted. Data analysis according to Kombo and Tromp (2014:117) refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deduction and inference. This involves uncovering underlying structure, extracting important variables detecting any anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions. In gathering data for research work, the researcher peruses the collected data and identifies information that is relevant to the research question and objectives

and further develops a coding system based on sample of collected data (Kombo 2014:119).

3.2. Challenges faced in data collection

It was difficult for all categories of informants to respond as it was hoped. Some church leaders and Christians were unable to respond to the questionnaires. 29 pastors were served questionnaires; 18 responded. 81 Christians served questionnaires and 61 responded. Some responses came much later. The reasons given for the delay include busy pastoral and domestic schedules, and insecurity due to the socio-political upheavals in the region. In order to get the information, I went to some localities myself to collect the questionnaires completed. While there, I took the initiative to pay personal visits to some lay leaders and Christians and encouraged them to participate by responding to the questionnaires. This follow-up strategy facilitated the quick response to the questionnaires enabling me to collect the information delayed.

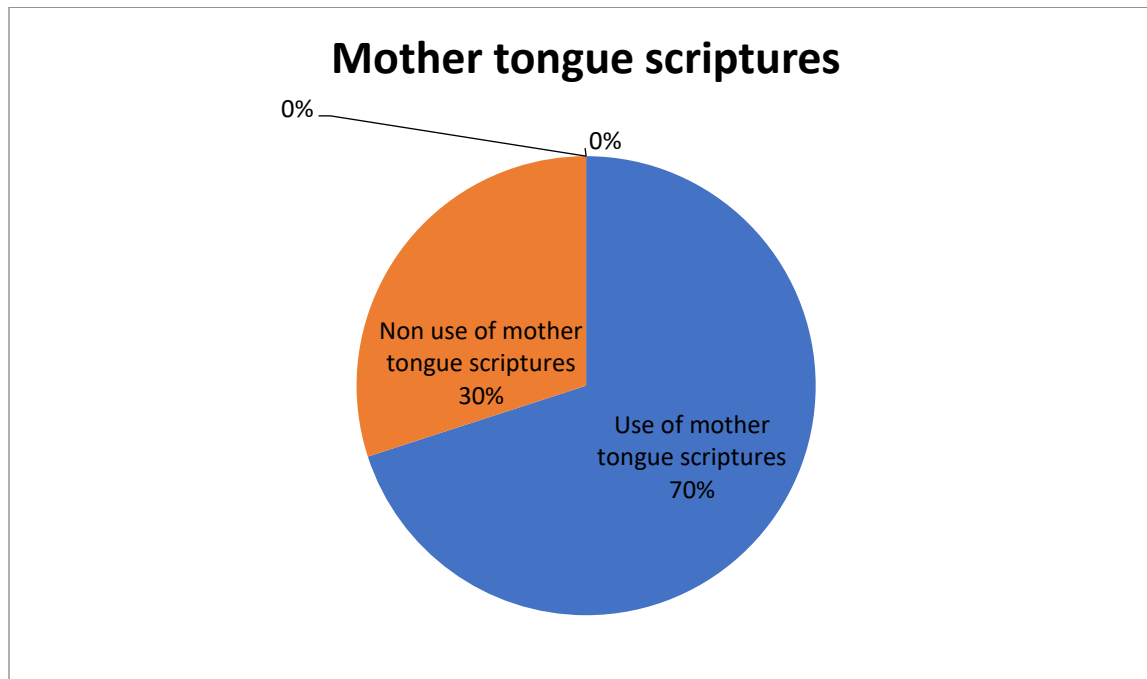
I equally encountered enormous difficulty in the data collection moving from one locality to another. As mentioned earlier, this research is done in Bakossi land in the South West Region, an English-speaking part of Cameroon where the separatists are in constant confrontation with the government military. I had to postpone previously planned journeys into communities where there were constant fighting and confrontation severally. I went through trauma and embarrassment from the separatists who demanded financial support from me at gunpoint. In addition to the questionnaires shared, I was able to interview some pastors, priests, catechists, lay preachers, church elders and ordinary Christians in order to get first-hand information. These interviews involved the aged and the young from different occupations. Despite these challenges, no harm befell the researcher as he travelled safely under God's protection.

3.3 Motivations behind the effective use of translated scriptures

Based on the research I conducted from January 2019 - October 2020 in nineteen villages in the Bakossi land among twenty-five focus groups, 70% of the participants showed a

positive view regarding the use of translated scriptures while 30% did not as seen in the chart below.

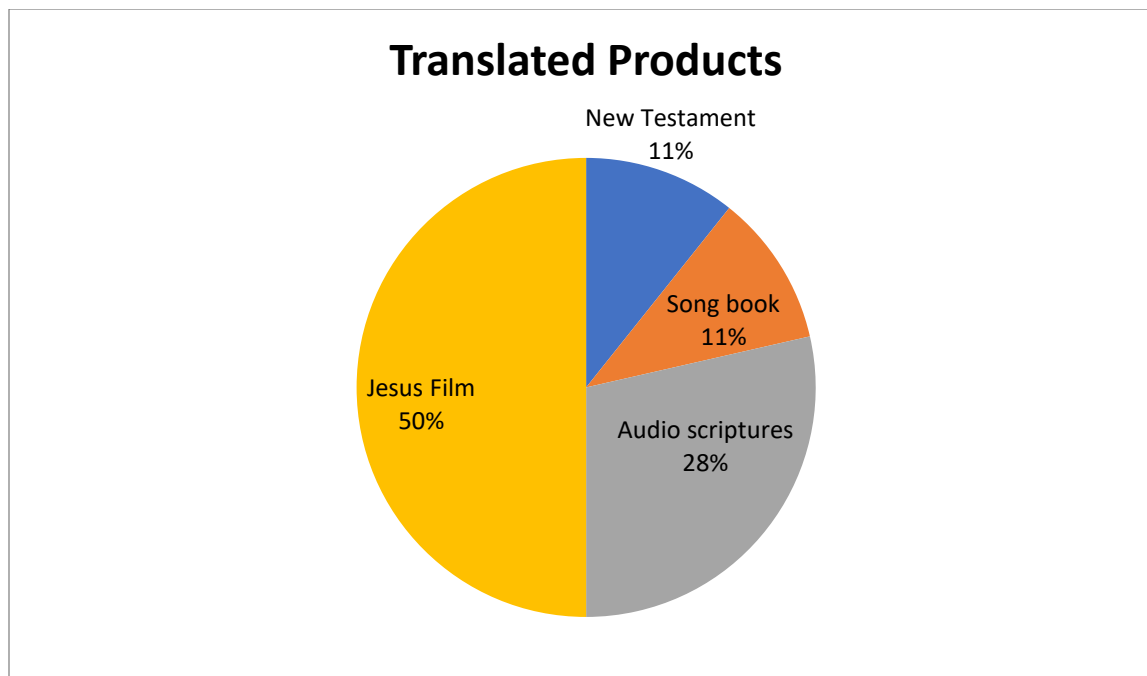
Fig 8. Percentage of mother tongue scripture engagement



The research indicates that the 30% of the non-use of translated products results from persons who are non-indigenes, illiterate in the mother tongue, do not have access to the products, physically challenged (blind, deaf), and have fled their towns to live in the bush.

The high percentage pertaining to the effective use of mother tongue scriptures comprises the indigenes and non-indigenes and is related to the number of translated products that are being used. Some of these participants read, listen and watch the translated products. Others listen and watch the translated products. The chart below shows the various uses of the translated products and their percentages.

Fig 9. Percentage use of translated products



The chart above shows that participants make use of the Jesus film (50%) more than the other translated products to receive the gospel. This is because they are able to watch and listen to the actions. A Jesus film viewer during a crusade in Ngusi (March 10, 2019) comments:

I prefer to listen to the scriptures watching the Jesus film because I watch the actors and actresses doing the actions and I listen to what they say. In addition it sticks in my memory and it is very retentive as I can narrate the ministry of Jesus while on earth.

This respondent and others prefer to watch the Jesus film because it suits the context of the oral and visual communication tradition of the people. It can be used with a wide variety of people. Whether indigenes or non-indigenes, literate or illiterate, deaf and dumb, blind, the young and the old, all of these persons watch this product. They do not need to read, but to watch or listen.

The audio scriptures (28%) constitute the second most used translated products. Participants in this group, like in the first, cannot read but are eager to listen and participate orally in the discussions in listening groups or small gatherings. The least used

translated scriptures are the Akoose New Testament and the song book (11%). This is understandable since only literate persons can read their mother tongue. The research shows that though many people are in possession of the New Testament and the song book, they do not put them to maximum use because they are not literate in the local language.

3.4 Barriers in the use of the mother tongue scriptures in Bakossi

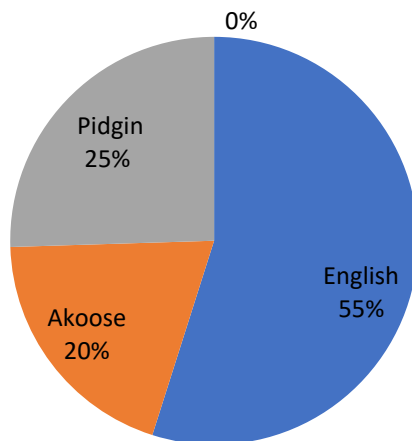
Research on the use of mother tongue scripture in Bakossi land reveals several setbacks. An analyse of the major barriers in the use of mother scriptures is done in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 Literacy Barrier

Hill and Hill (2008:3) attest that printed scriptures are effective when people know how to read and like to do so. Yet there is only a very limited number of persons in the Bakossi community who can read or write Akoose. During a Bible study meeting, 17 out of 25 participants of the Bible study group in Presbyterian Church, Tombel indicated that they could not read or write the mother tongue. Despite owning copies of Akoose New Testament, they are not engaged with materials translated in the local language (Woodward 2014:62). In addition, there is a general shift in region to the use of Pidgin which is a language of wider communication. Meanwhile English is the main language of instruction and communication in the academic milieu. But emphasis is on the study of English than the mother tongue. Despite the efforts to teach the local language in the communities, Bakossi people give less attention to it. A member of the youth group of Roman Catholic church, Kack (April 14, 2019) states: "My study of the local language will limit me only in reading the translated scriptures as compared to English that will lead me in my educational and job career." According to him, the study of the local language is limited to the scriptures, and therefore not worth studying. With this conception, the printed translated materials are not put to maximum use. The chart below highlight the literacy rate in the language used in Bakossi land.

Fig 10. Percentage of language use in Bakossi churches

Literacy Rate of the Languages Used in the Bakossi Churches



The chart above indicates that there is a low literacy rate in the mother tongue (Akoose) while there is a high literacy rate in English and Pidgin. The growing number of clergy who are non-indigenes also accounts for the wide use of English and Pidgin in churches.

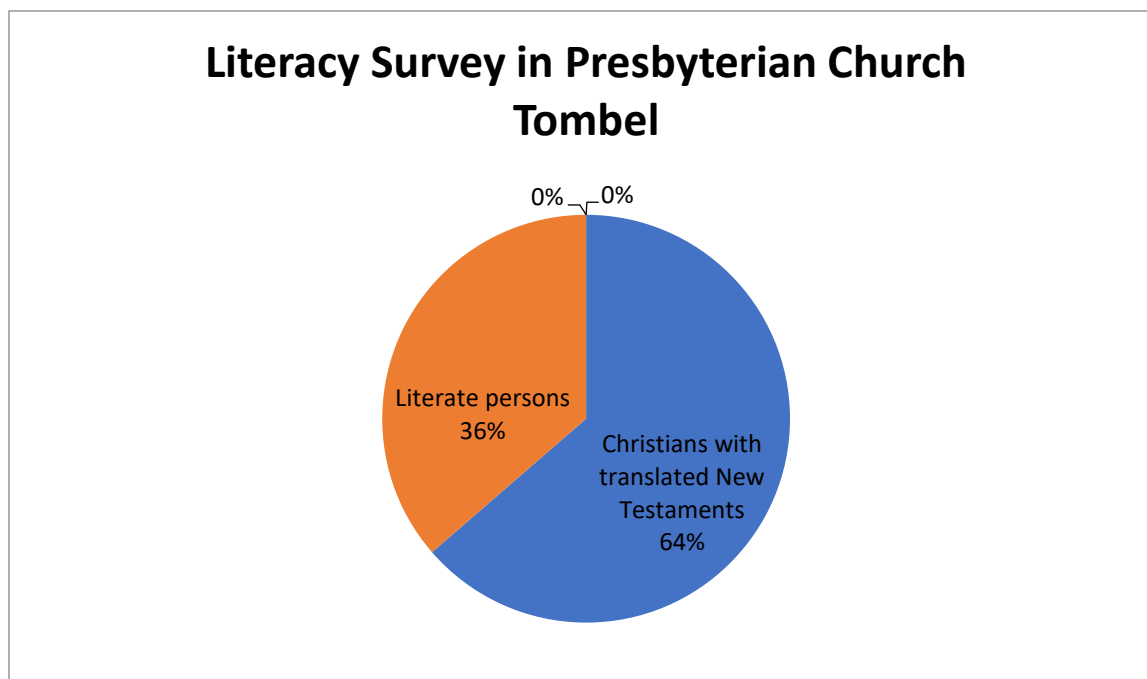
The research indicates scripture reading in rural congregations is done in English when less than 30% of Christians actually understand it. For this reason, scripture communication does not serve its purpose because 70% of Christians do not understand English.

Though the knowledge to read and write the local language is acquired from the literacy classes in the Churches and communities, participants showed great preference for the oral/audio and visual means of scripture communication. This situation confirms the incident of limited use of the translated bible to grow in faith since Bakossi people lack interest to read and learn the local language.

The research also sampled the opinions of 36 participants who own Akoose New Testament in Presbyterian Church, Ngusi. Only eleven demonstrated the literary skills necessary to read it. In his response, an elder in PCC, Tombel (April 23, 2020) narrates: "I always take my copy of the New Testament to church. But I will prefer to listen how it

is read because I do not know how to read my language”. Christians may have the desire to read the mother tongue scriptures, but they do not have the literary skills. The figure below highlights the literacy survey in PCC, Tombel.

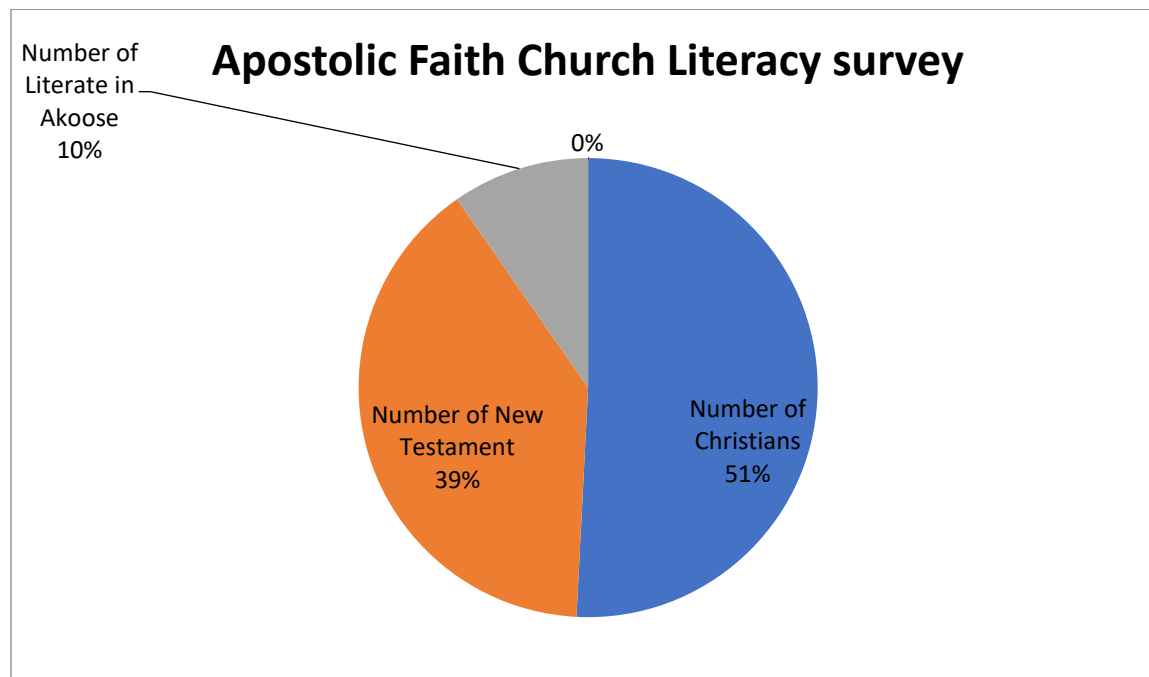
Fig 11. Literacy survey in the Presbyterian Church Tombel



The above chart shows that out of the 64% of the Christians who own Akoose New Testament barely 36% is able to make use of it because they can read and understand it. Owning copies of the printed translated scriptures does not actually meet the evangelistic goal of learning and having a deep reflection on the Word. In an interview, the catechist of Roman Catholic Church, Tombel (May 8, 2020) expresses his desire to study the available scriptures in the local language, but lacks the reading skills to do so. He owns the translated New Testament, but he cannot read it since he does not know how to read or write the local language.

In Apostolic Church Mwambong, 49 out of the 63 Christians own copies of the translated New Testament. But only 12 make use of it because they are literate in the local language as shown in the chart below.

Fig 12. Literacy survey in Apostolic Faith Church Mwambong

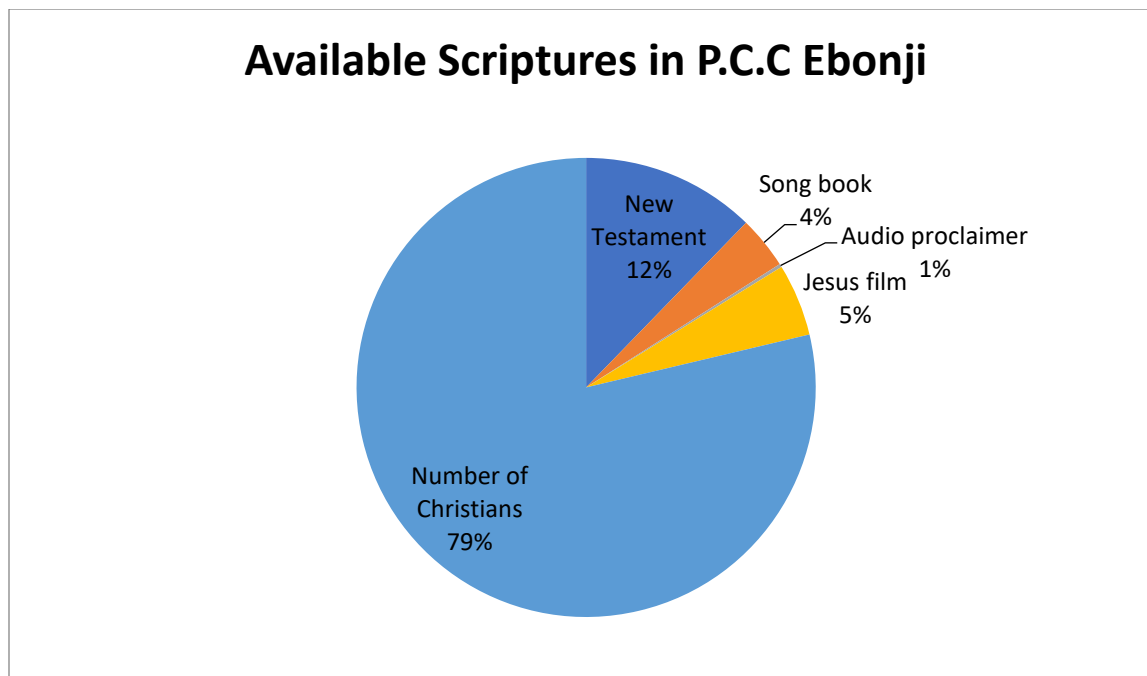


The chart above indicates that majority Christians are in possession of the New Testament, but they cannot use it since they are unable to read and meditate on the scriptures.

3.4.2 Distribution and limited supply barrier

I received many orders for translated products from Christians in Presbyterian Church Ebonji (August 13, 2019) as one of the stakeholders of the translation project during my research. With about three hundred and forty Christians in this congregation, I found out during my survey I discovered that there were just 53 copies of the translated New Testament, one audio scripture proclaimer machine, 22 Jesus film VCDs, and 16 song books. The reason for this was that Christians do not have access to these products. Many Christians showed interest to own these products, but the products were either not available or in short supply as shown in the chart below.

Fig 13. Distribution of translated products in PCC Ebonji



The chart indicates that Christians' willingness to use translated products is constrained by non-availability or short supply. Translated products are not yet easily accessible to Christians. As for the audio scriptures, one proclaimer cannot be enough for all the Christians in a congregation. Limited supply is a major hindrance to the maximum use of the audio scriptures. The pastor of Presbyterian Church Ebonji (May 23, 2019) regrets:

Listening to audio scriptures builds the faith of the Christians. I am willing to form more listening groups but there is only one proclaimer machine. I have made all efforts to look for another one but they are not available. For this reason we cannot carry out the evangelistic strategy of listening to scriptures.

People may be willing to read or listen to scriptures, but they do not have access to it. For people to use the translated scriptures, they need to know that they are available, find them attractive and be able to get copies. Since the publication and dedication of the translated products, distribution and availability have been a major problem. Christians need to know the scripture materials that are published and where to buy them (Ngeh 2015:129). Some of these products are available in the CABTAL main office in Yaounde only. That is, they are hundreds of kilometres away from Bakossi land. Hill and Hill

(2008:262) explain that scripture products can be distributed in bookshops, mission offices, church offices, markets, shops, and at conferences, church services and meetings. The Bakossi translated scriptures are not available in most of the places mentioned above. The catechist of Roman Catholic church, Meked (May 21, 2019) expresses his disappointment:

I have made all efforts to get a copy of the Akoose New Testament to no avail. When I have to share a passage from the Akoose New Testament, I will either borrow a copy from a friend or photocopy the page. Reading the scriptures from a paper does not give it the value it deserves.

According to the respondent above, he has searched for copies of the translated New Testament in bookshops in order to distribute to his Christians, but could not find one. Resorting to reading photocopies of translated scriptures does not project its authenticity and value either.

Margetts (2012:2-5) and Hill and Hill (2008:260-263) argue that high illiteracy rate in the local language, poor administrative strategies, lack of professional distributors, poor distribution channels and the lukewarm attitude of churches had been a hindrance to the smooth distribution of mother tongue publications. Emphasis needs to be laid on churches partnering with Bible translation agencies for effective distribution and use of mother tongue scriptures.

3.4.3 The multilingual or urban context as barrier

Bivin (2010:72-73) argues that the grounds for using a language of wider communication at the expense of the local language is based on the assumption that it is understood by all. Commenting on the use of language as a means for gospel communication, a lay preacher of Native Baptist Church, Tombel (April 23, 2019) holds that non-indigenous pastors and preachers are seen as a hindrance to mission in the use of local language. Since church leaders are the pace setters in the use of scripture, the language and

version they use have wider and serious implications on the use of vernacular translations.

The Bakossi community is multilingual, harbouring people of varied origins from different parts of Cameroon who speak different languages. This include people from Ngie, Kumbo, Batibo, Ngambe, Meta and Bamileke, According to Ejedepang-Koge (1996:48), the rich volcanic soil in Bakossi attracted people from other regions to migrate to Bakossi. They settled and lived in the urban communities, making the urban congregations cosmopolitan in nature. Church leaders do not give preference to the use of the local language in these congregations. The catechist of Roman Catholic Church Ebonji (April 20, 2019) attests:

The priest does not want us to use the mother tongue translated products during worship. He argues that the congregation is made up of people from different ethnic groups. All attempts to use the translated New Testament and audio scriptures are made futile by him.

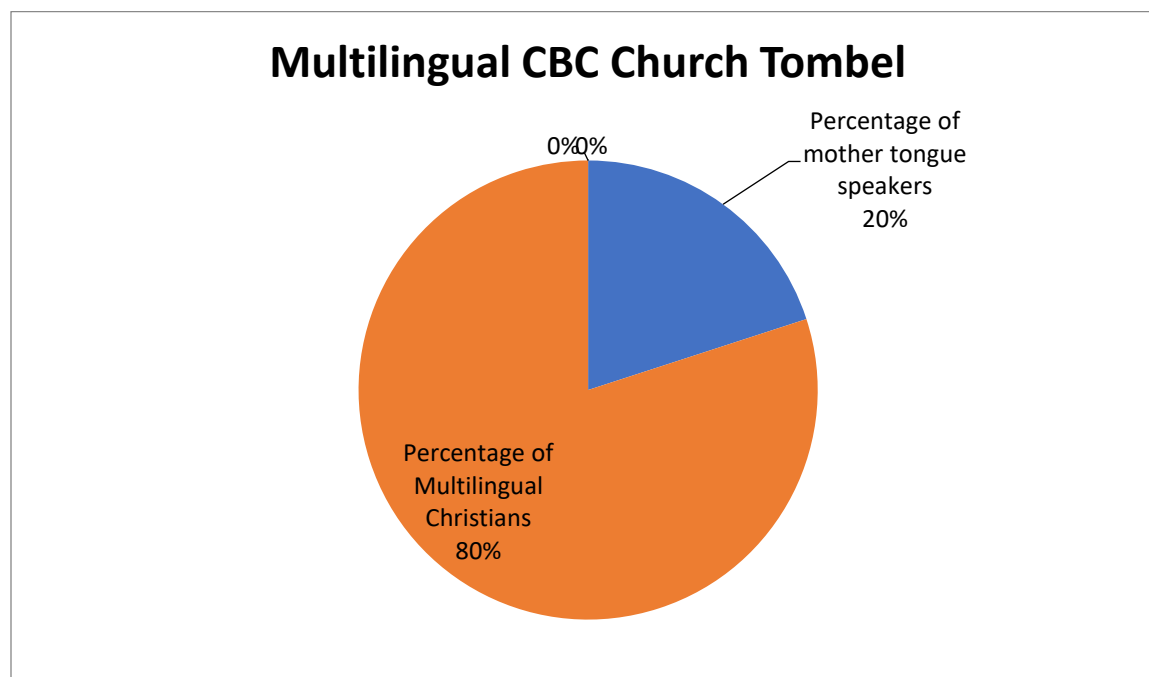
The resistance of the priest to use translated products is on the base that this congregation is made up of Christians who do not understand the local language. Even though the majority of Christians understand the local language, preference is given to non-indigenes.

Hill and Hill (2008:6) attest that church leaders whose congregations are made up of speakers of many different languages may use a neutral language in an effort to be fair to everyone. They fear that using the local language will be bias. The pastor of PCC Bangem (August 16, 2019), a cosmopolitan congregation, argues that he cannot emphasise the use of the mother tongue in his congregation since a cross section of the Christians are non-indigenes Thus, Christians from different ethnic groups will not understand the deeper spiritual truths being taught when the gospel is communicated in the local language. Using scriptures in a local language is effective in communities where everyone uses that language as their mother tongue. Today, with the search for employment and sustenance, Bakossi communities are becoming more cosmopolitan

and multilingual in nature. As communities become more and more multilingual, so does the congregations (Ommani 2012:10-11).

A survey on Cameroon Baptist Convention Tombel (a cosmopolitan town) shows that 80 percent of Christians are people who do not understand the local language. Meanwhile 20 percent are natives as seen in the chart below (Sunday censors 9th August 2020).

Fig 14. Multilingual nature of CBC Tombel



It is a daunting task for church leaders in multilingual congregations to promote mother tongue scriptures for fear of uneven communication of the gospel. The English versions of the Bible are commonly used by Christians.

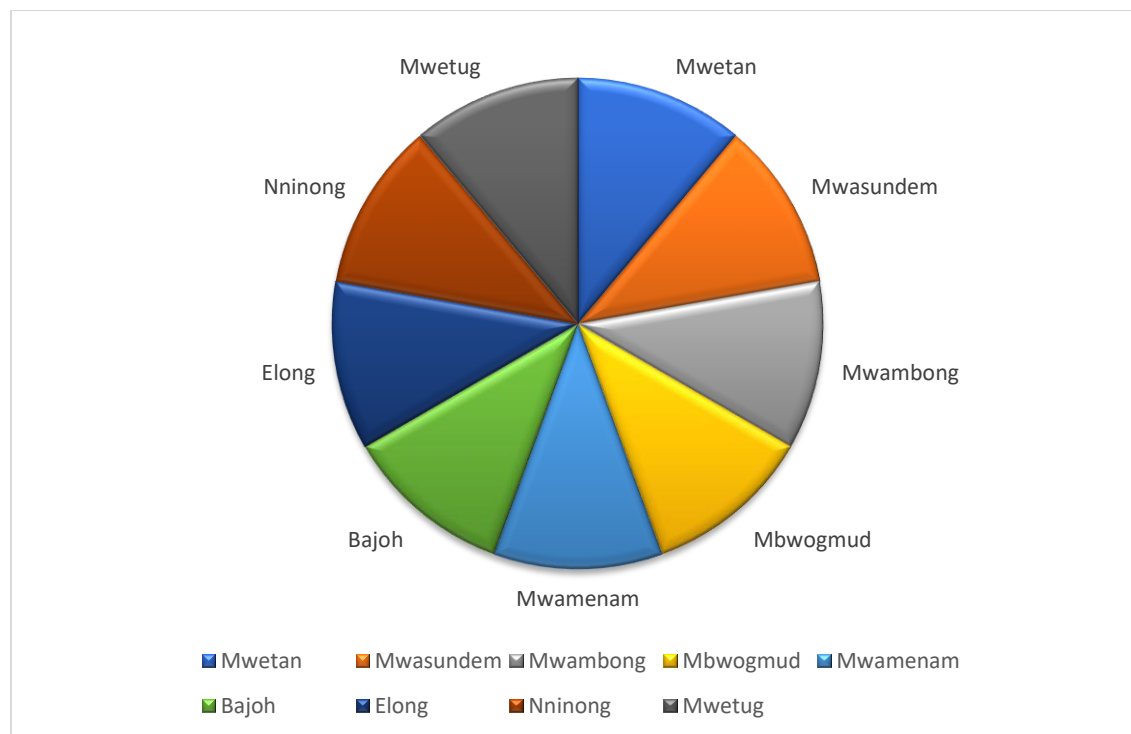
English remains a language of wider communication in the Bakossi community. According to Griffis (2011:110-11), despite the activities to promote the use of vernacular scripture, there is little success. These activities, however, met with very limited success because of the staunch and almost mystical veneration of national language translation. Griffis argues that the resistance to idiomatic translations in vernaculars is a result of the strong attachment of the already popularly used English versions in the pews.

The priest serving in Catholic Tombel town—a multilingual congregation (May 24, 2019) attests that the effective use of mother tongue scriptures cannot be exploited during worship services because of the multilingual nature of the congregation. Tombel is an administrative town in Bakossi, hosting all administrative offices and institutions of the sub-division. Officials serving in Tombel come from different parts of the country. According to him, the Christians in his congregation come from sixteen different ethnic groups. In this case the main language of wider communication (English) is dominantly used during worship services while less attention is paid to the use of Akoose.

3.4.4 Dialectical Barrier

Akoose has nine dialects spoken in nine different clans with different variants as seen in the chart below.

Fig. 15: Number of dialects in Bakossi



These dialects show slight differences, but mutually intelligible. Each dialect claims to have hegemony and to be the “original” Akoose. Ejedepang-Koge (1986:46) confirms that each dialectical community claims to be the original Akoose spoken from its creation. For the sake of translation, the Bakossi Bible Translation project selected the Mwetan dialect as a reference dialect that is well understood by all. The Church leaders and the language committee were guided in selection exercise by a trained linguist. As Hill and Hill (2008:19) note, church leaders of an area need to agree about the dialect to be used in their translation. Despite a thorough survey and selection of a reference dialect used for translation, other dialectical areas resist the use of the translated products.

During my research in northern Bakossi, the chief of Elung (January 18, 2019) declared to me that they would not use the translated scriptures because it was written in the dialect of southern Bakossi. According to him, using the translated scriptures in another dialect is a form of assimilating their clan and dialect. Some dialectical areas in the northern Bakossi find it difficult to use the translated scriptures since it is done in a dialect spoken in the south. These communities consider their dialects superior to the one used for translation. Literacy classes in these areas of Bakossi are timid for fear that they being assimilated by another dialect. The dialectical tussle remains a hindrance to the smooth use of translated scripture in different dialectical areas of Bakossi.

3.4.5 Church Leader Barrier

The research indicates that church hierarchy or leadership variables are important for effective use of local language scriptures in Bakossi. Ommani (2012:26-27) argues that the contribution of church leadership is foundational for successful vernacular evangelism. According to him, the influence of leaders in the choice of which language to use in congregations reveals the principal role of church leaders in the use and non-use of local scriptures.

Pastors in Bakossi area who speak the local language communicate the message mostly in the local language during worship services. Ngeh (2015:61) explains that the linguistic affinity of a pastor tends to influence language choice in the church. Meanwhile, most of

the congregations using Akoose exclusively are led by the laity, evangelists and catechists who did not do formal theological training in English.

Some seven lay church leaders interviewed (August 13-15, 2019) argue that the clergy has authority and power to influence and mobilize the Christians to use mother tongue scriptures in their congregations. Indigenous Christians are willing and anxious to hear the Gospel communicated in their heart language, but the church leaders are more inclined to the use of English. This is partly because it is the language used during their training. Hill and Hill (2008:6) argue that if church leaders do not encourage their congregations to use mother tongue scriptures, it will present a serious barrier. Christians and auxiliary church leaders like catechists, elders and lay preachers take instructions from the pastor or priest in charge of the parish for the introduction or the use of scriptures in a language not commonly used during worship. With regard to the resistance to use mother tongue scriptures, the catechist of Catholic church, Ngusi (May 22, 2020) states:

Using the mother tongue scriptures in the congregation is good for easy comprehension. But until I receive instructions and an authorization from the priest stipulating that the Akoose scriptures should be used during worship, then will I permit its use.

Though the catechist acknowledges that vernacular scripture is an evangelistic tool, he can only use it when authorized by the priest in charge of the parish. In addition, he reiterates that since the priest is a non-indigene, he will be reluctant to promote the use of translated scriptures as he does not understand the language or its impact. In an interview, a mother tongue scripture promoter in Catholic Church Baseng (May 23, 2020) states that: "When the priest is present in church, he resists the reading of the translated scriptures because he does not understand my language." According to him, reading mother tongue scriptures during church service in the absence of the priest is not a problem. But whenever the priest is officiating in church, he does not give the opportunity for local scriptures to be read.

Church leaders who serve in urban multilingual congregations explain that the communication of scriptures should be done in a language that is understood by all. Woodward (2014:69) and Hills (2008:6) argue that church leaders feel the use of local language resources in church may trigger disunity or division in the church. In order to involve all Christians during worship, pastors and priests serving in urban congregations in Bakossi feel reluctant to use local language scriptures. For this reason, they choose to use English or Pidgin for wider communication in an effort not to discriminate.

Besides, the research shows that some Bokossi church leaders are inclined to using certain versions of the Bible. Their choice of the version of the Bible for use in church services obliges Christians to use the same versions. Commenting on the use of a particular Bible version, a lay preacher in PCC Tombel (April 27, 2020) states: "My pastor will always quote the version from which he is reading. This has influenced us to use the same version as well." According to him, using the same Bible with the pastor gives it more value.

3.4.6 Inferiority complex about the local language

The main language of instruction in Bakossi area is English. Meanwhile Pidgin is the day-to-day language for economic and social transactions in Bakossi. These two languages remain languages of wider communication. The mother tongue is considered inferior. The youths and the educated use English as a language of prestige that portrays them as learned. Since most of the congregations are made up of educated people, there is resistance to use the mother tongue for gospel communication. A lay preacher in a rural congregation claims (January 25, 2020) that: "Although I speak and understand the local language very well, as a learned man, I will prefer to preach in English."

According to him, English is elitist and learned. Although the majority of Christians understand the local language, he prefers to use English, even though less than 40 percent of Christians understand. Since most leaders of Bakossi congregations are educated, they prefer using English rather than the mother tongue. Restricting God to a particular language that is not understood by the majority does not enhance understanding of the scriptures. Communication occurs only when a message is both

successfully transmitted and received. It is possible that these gospel communicators equip Christians with head knowledge without conviction in the heart (Ngeh 2015:70).

It is noted that 80 percent of congregations in Bakossi are rural congregations, yet only about 40 percent of the local language is used by church leaders and lay preachers. A survey shows that Akoose speaking Christians are not given access to scriptures in their heart language.

3. 5 Reasons for effective use of the translated products

This research is a testimony that mother tongue scripture is a vital tool for spiritual empowerment and missions. This section looks into the spiritual impact or benefit of the presence of translated scriptures as testified by Christians and church leaders in and out of Bakossi land.

3.5.1 Improved Understanding of the Scriptures

In response to a questionnaire, a Bible study facilitator (March 20, 2020) attests:

When I started attending the Bible study classes in English, I would always come out empty without understanding what was taught. But since I started attending the mother tongue Bible study classes, my understanding of the scriptures has greatly improved until I am one of the facilitators of the mother tongue Bible study class in my congregation. Since I can now understand the scriptures well as taught in the local language, I am now able to communicate this same knowledge to others during Bible study classes.

The feeling of emptiness as expressed above indicates that he could not understand the meaning of the scriptures communicated in English. Not being able to read or write English, his participation and presence were unworthy. Attending a Bible study class while communicating the scriptures in a language he could not understand has no impact in his spiritual life. His felt needs and aspirations are not met. According to the respondent, the communication of scriptures in his literate heart language enables him to get a deep understanding of the scripture.

The knowledge of scriptures builds skills to facilitate its communication in the local language to others. Studying the scriptures in the local language does not only improve understanding, but enables and builds biblical knowledge that motivates Christians to promote this same message. This has led to a multiplying effect of more local church leaders and workers who are agents of evangelization, scriptures instructors, and lay preachers. They assist the clergy, and facilitate church growth and life transformation in congregations and communities. These local language scripture promoters use the vernacular to transmit the scriptures in the hinterlands. A Christian in Roman Catholic Church Ebonji (April 26, 2020) attests:

We can stay for two months without having the visiting priest.
But our faith remains strong since the catechist and Bible study group leaders communicate the scriptures in our language for a better understanding.

A greater understanding of vernacular scriptures is improved in communities where the local language is dominantly used. This is common within localities where the mother tongue is the language of wider communication. The majority of respondents who reported a greater understanding of the scriptures were the elderly and less educated. The pastor of PCC Nyasoso (May 16, 2019) acknowledges that some Christians are dormant when English is used as a medium of communication during Bible study classes. According to him, these Christians hardly offer a word during Bible classes. This is because they do not understand what is taught since the lessons are delivered in English. But they will actively participate when the mother tongue is used for communicating and explaining the scriptures. According to the pastor, when the lessons are communicated in the local language, the Christians respond to and ask questions, indicating that they are eager to study or get a clearer understanding of the scriptures.

25 lay preachers and 11 Bible study instructors stated that an understanding of the scriptures in the mother tongue actually improved their biblical knowledge and evangelistic skills. According to them, biblical concepts and biblical key terms are explicitly explained in the mother tongue during Bible studies. Knowledge acquired by participants during these classes has enabled some of them to be communicators of the

scriptures, leaders of Bible study classes, or lay preachers in their congregations and communities.

Out of the 18 pastors interviewed, 10 expressed how the less educated and the elderly have improved in their understanding of the scriptures. In his response, the pastor of Peng (May 26, 2010) states that his mother tongue Bible study classes are so interesting as the less educated and the elderly challenged him with in-depth questions for scripture clarification.

3.5.2 Emotional Connection with the Scriptures

According to Woodward (2014:50-51), the benefit of translated local language books or scripture is an enhanced emotional connection between the reader/hearer and the text. Wherever translated scripture is read, there is an emotional response to the hearer. An elder in Full Gospel church Tombel (April 20, 2019) recounts that when mother tongue scriptures are read after the English version, Christians spontaneously respond with applause and side comments, indicating their comprehension and satisfaction. Usually, these emotions are positive, intriguing and draw an evaluation of the way English and the mother tongue versions are perceived. Participants in the research tend to connect with Akoose scriptures more, especially in the deepening of their faith rather than English scriptures used before. A Christian in Native Baptist Peng in an interview (May 28, 2019) attests:

When the mother tongue scriptures are read in church I feel touched and my emotions are awakened as I feel that it is addressed to me directly. I have the feeling that the scriptures are not coming from anybody but from God directly. God speaks to me directly. Moreover, when the pastor or lay preacher is preaching in my language, I am always guilty when issues affecting my ungodly life are addressed. This includes forgiveness, hatred, enmity, and drunkenness.

According to the interviewee, listening to scriptures in the heart language enables the message to sink deep in him. The emotional touch of scriptures eventually leads to life

transformation. This is because issues affecting their spiritual life are addressed. There is a reversal of ungodly attitudes and the purpose for which the scripture is communicated is achieved. When the people read and listen to scriptures in the local language, there is no intermediary as it speaks to them directly. It sounds as if it is coming from God directly. In an interview with the focus group at Full Gospel church Tombel town (April 20, 2019), the participants confirmed that reading scriptures in the mother tongue builds emotional feeling of belonging, comfort, and joy. Scripture becomes alive and touching, thus penetrating the worldview of the people.

The pastor of PCC Ndum (February 12, 2019) recounts that whenever she sings in the mother tongue Christians are moved emotionally as they enjoy her with applause, gesticulating the scriptural content of the songs. There is a spontaneous response as the message is appreciated. She further explains that while preaching she communicates ungodly attitudes such as witchcraft, enmity, drunkenness, murder, war, and a host of others in the local language. By the mention of these vices in the local language, Christians understand the extent to which ungodly attitudes affect their Christian life on a daily basis. They usually concur with utterances such as “yes”, “true”, “say it again”, or “Amen.” They sometimes clap at the end of the sermon to indicate their felt needs are addressed and touched emotionally.

Joy is a typical response upon reading or listening to mother tongue scriptures. It has been observed that when Christians hear and read the Word of God in their local language, it touches their hearts and makes them feel God is conversant with their wellbeing and spiritual lives. In an interview with a Christian at Apostolic Faith church (April 11, 2019), she attests that when she listens to or reads the scriptures in the mother tongue during worship services, she feels her problems are addressed as she is touched, blessed, comforted and feels cared for. Communicating the scriptures in the heart language pulls the people closer to God, and gives them hope in the midst of hopelessness.

A Native Baptist Christian at Ndum (August 27, 2019) explains “when the scripture is explained during Bible study classes or preached on the pulpit in the local language, I develop ‘goose pimples’ and I feel it ‘touching my heart’”. Some of the interviewees affirmed that when the local language is used to communicate the gospel during funerals, it is more consoling and comforting than when communicated in English.

Pastors who try to read translated scriptures get the attention of Christians more than when scriptures are read in English. In his attempt to read the scriptures in Akoose, the pastor of Full Gospel Nyasoso (March 25, 2019) admits that he is able to win the confidence of Christians as they are eager to listen to him. The act reminds Christians that the gospel is for Bakossi people, not for foreigners. According to him, he feels God is using him to speak directly to Christians whose emotions are touched directly and who express their emotions of satisfaction by encouraging him to read more during subsequent services or during Bible study classes. The study shows that when people listen to scriptures in the local language (Akoose) emotions are expressed more.

3.5.3 Mother Tongue Scripture, Daily Life and Missions

Each language has its dominant role to play in the daily lives of the people. This section examines the role of mother tongue scriptures in people’s daily lives. The researcher agrees with Atta-Akosah (2004:105) that people tend to either read the Bible or hear it read when they realize that what it offers is relevant to their life situations. There are domains in life where the local language is dominant in its expression. The communication of certain concepts or information has a great impact when expressed in the local language than in English or Pidgin. The listening facilitator of Apostolic Church Tombel (April 24, 2019) attests that the concept of Jesus Christ being the only mediator between man and God is best expressed in the mother tongue for comprehension. This is because the concept of ancestral veneration is dominantly expressed in the local language. Libations and other ancestral rites and incantations are done mainly in the mother tongue.

In his testimony, a catechumen at PCC Mwambong (August 28, 2019) confirmed that he only understood the concept of Jesus Christ being the mediator between God and man

when he attended the catechumen classes wherein mother tongue was the medium for scriptural instruction. In his assertion, the local language offered a detailed explanation of ancestral litany with its unchristian implication. His theological understanding of Jesus being the Saviour and intercessor was well understood when it was communicated in the local language. He had previously considered his ancestors as his mediators. The concept of ancestral worship and veneration is a daily occurrence and its implication is better expressed in the local language. Ignorance had played on the Christians in Bakossi who were involved in practices considered as a normal life style. Since these concepts were addressed in English, no impact was felt. The introduction of local scriptures has broadened their scope, incorporating these concepts. Church leaders and lay preachers have seen the need to address these ungodly daily practices using mother tongue scriptures.

Bakossi customs and life styles that are similar to those observed in the time of Jesus are best expressed in the context of the language dominance in Bakossi. A scripture engagement promoter (May 26, 2020) acknowledges that people had understood the concept of the biblical farming system of sowing of seeds, ploughing, cultivation of crops, tenants, servants, and hired workers as they were expressed in the local language. The issue was not that the corresponding English words were unintelligible, but rather that people were used to discussing farming methods and concepts in the local language (Woodward 2014:54). Since Bakossi people are used to talking about farming in their daily lives, these biblical concepts are more understandable as they are presented in Akoose. Agricultural concepts are much clearer in Akoose, since that is the language people use in their farms and daily lives.

During a Bible study class I attended in PCC Ngombo-Ku (March 25, 2020), the group leader identifies portions of the Bible that have a strong impact in the daily lives of the people. He used the parables of the Kingdom of God that have an impact in the daily life of the people as recorded in Matthew 13:1-30. The agricultural setting of the above passage gives a contextual meaning of the peasant activities of Bakossi people.

Jesus' invitation to people to bring their burdens to Him is more profound in Bakossi because it is the daily language of the people (Matthew 11:28). Addressing these daily challenges in the same language within the Christian context, gives hope and trust to the scriptures. The pastor of PCC Ngombo (March 25, 2020) suggests that scripture portions that deal with the sick, blind, deaf, dumb, widows, orphans, injustice, abandonment, torture, displaced, natural disasters have an impact on Bakossi people. He states that when Christians listen to these scriptural portions in Bible study classes or listening groups, it gives them hope and trust that Jesus is the ultimate solution rather than soothsayers who extort and exploit their wealth, milking them dry. Some Bakossi people believe unfortunate situations in life can be best remedied by soothsayers and charlatans. These soothsayers provide charms and amulets to them in order to redress and prevent these mishaps and calamities.

The expression of biblical portions reflecting the daily life of Bakossi people in the local language brings the gospel closer to them. But when these portions or narratives are read in English the gospel seems to be far. A Bible study participant in Apostolic Faith Church Tombel (February 24, 2019) reports:

When I used to listen to the scriptures in English I thought that some of these events took place in heaven. Not until when I watched the translated Jesus film in my language. That is when it occurred to me that Jesus lived amongst us on earth as a human being. I see the scriptures closer to me and speaking to me directly.

From the above assertion, mother tongue scripture draws the Christians closer to a real daily life event. Dye (1985:39) affirms that, "People respond to the Gospel in proportion to their conviction that God and His Word are relevant to the concerns of daily life."

Conclusion

This chapter examined the current reality of the use of the mother tongue scriptures in Bakossi churches. For the researcher to realise this, he carried out an empirical research in six denominations with congregations in the urban and rural areas. Data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires and interviews carried out in focus groups,

clergy, Christians and lay preachers on the engagement of the mother tongue scriptures and its impact in the Bakossi churches. Data were collected, analysed and interpreted.

Although translated scriptural materials are used in churches, the research examined the different challenges faced in the full engagement of these translated products among the churches in Bakossi. This research revealed that not all pastors, priests and laity see the need to promote the use of mother tongue scriptures in Bakossi. Lastly, the research examined the different reasons for the use of mother tongue scriptures for evangelism and discipleship in Bakossi churches.

CHAPTER 4

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON TRANSLATED SCRIPTURES AND THEIR ROLES IN MISSION

Introduction

This chapter centers on biblically-based theological reflections on translated scriptures with the goal of highlighting their role in mission. The discussion revolves around theological interpretation, ethical reflection and practice (Smith 2011: 50). The chapter is divided as follows: (4.1) Theological Reflections on Bible Translation for Missions, (4.2) Language in the Plan of God for Missions, (4.3) Language and Spiritual Experience, (4.4) Mother Tongue Scripture Use and Church Growth for Missions, (4.5) Contextualization and Bible Translation and Mission, (4.6) From the known to the Unknown as a Mission Strategy, (4.7) Christian Faith, Community Life and Mission, (4.8) Dialogue with Scholars on Translated Scriptures and Mission, (4.9) Foreign Preachers as Hindrance to Mission, (4.10) Bakossi Translation Project and its Spiritual Contribution and Impact, and conclusion.

4.1 Theological Reflections on Bible Translation for Missions

Churches create a great impact when scriptures are translated in the language the people understand best. God gave each language group its own language for easy communication and interactions. Acts 2:5-11 declares that all languages are inspired and divine. There is excitement when the people listen to God speak to them in their heart language. The Jews, who had come to celebrate the festival of Pentecost, were to a large extent pilgrims from various lands of dispersion. Many of the visitors were astonished or bewildered as they heard the loud praises the disciples uttered to God in inspired languages. This is because they recognized the indigenous languages and dialects of their native lands. The visitors from the lands to the East understood Aramaic; those from

the lands to the West understood Greek, but neither Aramaic nor Greek was a strange tongue to the disciples. In the same way, the Galileans accent was easily recognized. But these Galileans appeared for the moment to share among them a command of most of the tongues spoken throughout the known world (Bruce 2000:54). Christians in Bakossi show a sign of astonishment whenever mother tongue scriptures are read in church. This is closely followed by applause.

Hill and Hill (2008:44) affirm that “unless Christians have access to the Bible in the language of the heart, they cannot mature in their faith.” Mother tongue or language of wider communication remains a vital tool for the communication of God’s message for life transformation. When the gospel is communicated in the heart language of the people, it penetrates deep and leads to life transformation. Bediako (2003:60) echoes: “...it is through language, and for each person, through their mother tongue, that the Spirit of God speaks to convey divine communication at its deepest to the human community”. Everyone is supposed to communicate with God in his or her own heart language because it is God who created these languages for edification. This is one of the bases of African theology which seeks to bring Africans into deep engagement with God through the heart language and the appropriate context for life transformation.

This research concurs with Bediako (2003:17-23) claim that mother tongue scriptures remain an irreplaceable element for the birth of theology, for spiritual transformation. Maxes (2010:173) supports the view that languages shape our theological categories as we appropriate mother tongue scriptures according to our “...social, religious and communicative locations”. John recounts in Revelation 7:9 how “he looked and saw a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” (NIV). This apocalyptic view of languages highlights the vital role languages play on human salvation. The salvific plan involves uncountable people with different language backgrounds. Ngeh (2012:7) affirms that languages will be represented in heaven and this gives an eschatological hope for languages and hence the need for their promotion in light of God’s Word and mission.

Acts 2:6-13 gives a vivid picture of the impact of mother tongue in declaring the wonders of God. Trites and Larkin (2006:388) comment the events in this passage, emphasizing the impact the crowd reacted in different ways. At first, the crowd was bewildered or confused (2:6). Then, when the full impact of the miracles struck them, they themselves responded in wonder (2:7). After reflecting on the event (2:12), the crowd was still amazed (astonished), and they were either perplexed or mocking in their assessment of what was happening (2:12–13). Their perplexity was expressed aloud as they wondered how Galileans could be speaking in languages foreign to Palestine. The crowd's bewilderment or confusion points to a reversal of Babel and makes for an interesting, contrasting parallel. In Genesis 11, God confused the languages so that the people would not understand each other. But in this context, He used the languages to bring people together to hear the mighty things He has done.

Bruce (2000:378) recounts how the religious authorities in Judaea sanctioned the use of any language in the recital of the *Shema* ("Hear, O Israel, ..."). So, the act of praising God in a variety of tongues or dialects was a common phenomenon in Jerusalem during great festivals. The fact that the pilgrims heard the words of praise uttered in their own languages by Galileans of all people is an indication of the reversal of the curse of Babel. The statement "...because each one heard their own language being spoken" (Act 2:6 NIV) generated a state of excitement. This kind of excitement felt is amazement and bewilderment, not the excitement of good news or of some thrilling spectacle. The miracle is in speaking and not in hearing. There is a feeling of astonishment mingled with fear, the natural reaction to the totally unexpected, especially as considered a miraculous act. Listeners were amazed or marveled as a reaction to a declaration of the mighty acts of God and the supernatural in Acts. This miracle affirms the universality of gospel proclamation among all nations, but it does so in such a way that the integrity of each culture is embraced (Trites and Larkin 2006:386).

Fleming (2005:460-461) argues that although these are Jews, they are culturally and linguistically members of many nations. Thus, even from the church's inception as an identifiable community, the Spirit moved the church into multicultural diversity under

Christ's Lordship. More likely is the proposal that Luke has simply updated the names of nations in the table of nations (Genesis 10). Those nations were scattered at the Tower of Babel where God judged them by making their communication unintelligible to one another (Genesis 11). Here God reverses the judgment in a miracle that transcends the language barrier.

Ngeh (2015:21) quoting Adeyemo (2006:1329), declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues implies that what representatives of various countries were hearing was not the Jewish language. Each of them heard apostles' praises in the language they had been born and brought up. The declaration of the wonders or the mighty deeds of God in the heart language of the people was a clear testimony of the presence of God in human existence. It was a great amazement for everyone because they each understood in their heart language all that was said. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, there was divine translation as the Jews understood the Apostles declaring the mighty works of God without any interpretation. According to Trites and Larkin (2006:387), the ability to instantly speak a foreign language was an empowerment to witness the outward manifestation of a gift that came at the Spirit's initiative expressed in inspired speech. Through this miracle, the promised Spirit came to empower believers to be witnesses to all peoples, even to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The unique and unrepeatable aspects of Pentecost fulfilled their purpose in signifying the inauguration of the Spirit's empowering and missional presence indiscriminately among his people. The Spirit gave early believers the ability to speak foreign languages (Acts 2:4). God desires that His people keep on being filled with his Spirit so that they may be powerfully enabled to live for and bear witness to Christ and His gospel (Ephesians 5:18, Acts 4:8; 7:55 and Rom 12:11).

People who constituted the multitude were God-fearing men, and what happened was a reversal of what happened in Babel in Genesis 11. In Babel languages separated people into nations because of sin while in Pentecost languages became veritable vehicles of

communication, thereby converging people from different nations in the knowledge of God and His mighty works (Ngeh 2015:28).

Hill (2006:82) believes that the celebration of Pentecost is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when people miraculously heard the wonders of God in their mother tongue. According to her, the Holy Spirit broke through the ordinary language of communication and spoke to people in their mother tongue. This shows the importance of people's linguistic and ethnic identity in the plan of God. When God speaks to us in the language we learned in our mother's arms, the message of his acceptance of our identity penetrates the very fibre of our being. The pastor of Presbyterian Church Ebonji (July 25, 2020) attests that many people who listens to scriptures in the mother tongue in Bakossi says it awakens something that was almost extinguished inside, causing them to shed tears. Though there are other factors that lead to Church growth in Bakossi, the use of translated Word had had a tremendous impact to the Churches.

4.2 Language in the Plan of God for Missions

This section seeks to discover the biblical existence of language and its impact in creation and humanity. We will reflect on the role language plays in the creation story. We will also look at the role language plays in the missional goal of life transformation and witnessing for the purpose of salvation.

4.2.1 Language and Creation

In the creation narrative in Genesis we frequently read the statement "God said...." Though God does not have a physical body, He created things with mere breath of a word. Language is seen as a supreme manifestation of power. Moises (2001:20) asserts that the ancient rabbis were not far from the truth when they suggested that this form of expression was intended to emphasize God's power and supremacy. God did not plan, prepare or use any effort or materials for creation. He merely uttered the word and all was done according to his wish. In Genesis chapter 1 God uses language to command the existence of things. He frequently used the statement, "Let there be...." (Genesis 1:3, 6). God did not use his hands or materials to create the earth and its content. His speech

alone is a manifestation of the power of his word. He revealed his divine sovereignty by speaking and it was done (Genesis 1:5, 8). God speaks and uses language to exercise rule and authority. Even human beings as God's creation also exercised this authority. Adam is seen as fulfilling God's mandate in naming animals (Genesis 2:20). Adam's naming of animals is not a mere historical curiosity, nor does it reflect some kind of primitive mythology. Adam cannot rule the earth unless he understands it. His understanding is bound to the need for ordering what he sees, and such ordering takes place through language. Genesis 1-2 enables us to view language as a distinctive human quality, a particularly clear manifestation of divine image (Moise 2001:23-25). Thus, biblical narratives present language as a gift created by God for use as a powerful tool for authority, dominion and transformation.

4.2.2 The Confusion of Tongues

The biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) gives us a vivid picture of the multiplication of tongues over the earth. The passage is divided into two balanced sections. The first section announces what man proposed (Genesis 11:1-4), and the second declares what God disposed (Genesis 11:5-9). At the beginning the people are united and speak a unique language, but at the end they are scattered and speak different languages. The intervening literature explains the reversal. Everything mankind proposes in the first half (11:1-4) is disposed of in the second half (11:5-9) (Ross and Oswalt 2008:90). In place of stone and mortar, fragile brick with tar was used by these foolish people (Genesis 11:3). Their summons "Come, let us build" (Genesis 11:4) is seen in God's response as "Come, let us go down" (Genesis 11:7). Their purpose was protection, yet the Lord scattered them all over the face of the whole earth (Genesis 11:8-9) (Moises 2001:27). This account explains how nations came to be scattered around the world, speaking different languages. It is an account of divine judgment for disobedience. The unity people prided themselves in became their downfall, and what they feared the most, being scattered, came upon them. From their motive and actions, it became clear that the "Shinarites" had immense pride. They had been commanded to spread out and fill the earth (Genesis 9:7), but they came together and strengthened their identity. This was

open rebellion against the command of God. Rather, it was independence from God (Ross and Oswalt 2008:90).

4.3 Language and Spiritual Experience

God created all languages for the edification of His relationship with humanity. Ommani (2012:22) acknowledges all languages have equal value as far as usage and transfer of meaning is concerned, however small the sphere of use may be. In religion, all languages are capable of communicating the concept 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 Christians. For effective communication, the language used should be one that transfers information and makes it easy for listeners to process meaning.

Acts 2:6-13 brings out the importance of mother tongue in communal life, evangelism, reasserting a sense of belonging, facilitating understanding and enhancing worship. Information is given or received in order to confirm certain views. When knowledge is shared and applied, it brings individual or communal transformation. Ommani (2012:20-21) states that transformation comes when people acquire the correct knowledge. People are eager to understand God and His teachings.

Apart from mother tongue translation within an ethnic group, history shows that other translations in languages of wider discourse have impacted people and facilitated the understanding of the scriptures. The reality of people groups with mother tongue translations for decades now is not a one to one correspondence with “evangelism/church growth” success.

Field study proves that congregations in Bakossi in which English is used exclusively in communicating the Word of God due to the non-use of translated scriptures are not vibrant. In these congregations Western composed hymns are sung, ignoring the presence of mother tongue speakers. Using hymn books means only those who can read

and write English participate in the singing. In Presbyterian Church Nyasoso congregation, for example, only about 20 percent of Christians sing from the hymn books during worship services. This contrasts the liveliness in congregations where the indigenous choirs sing and exhort the Word in the vernacular, accompanied by the sweet melody from traditional instruments. Christians in such contexts actively participate in the singing and dancing, responding spontaneously as it touches their hearts and emotions. The Word of God is understood better, and there is transformation as Christians engage with scriptures in their heart language. Theologising in mother tongue facilitates a clear understanding of scriptures, and reduces chances of misunderstanding of the Word of God. When unknown biblical concepts are shared in a language not understood by the people, meaning remains shallow in their minds. This affects their faith and spiritual growth negatively. Ngeh (2015:30-31), quoting Bediako on the uniqueness of Christianity, stresses that “Divine communication is never in a sacred, esoteric, hermetic language but in the language of the heart so that everyone hears the wonders of God in his language.” There is no special or sacred language to communicate scriptures. Divine speech is vernacular, and since all human languages are vernacular languages in their appropriate contexts, God communicates with people in the context of vernacular languages.

4.4 Mother Tongue Scripture Use and Church Growth for Missions

Root (2011:61) argues that the rapid spread of Christianity in many parts of the world has resulted in what has often been termed “Christianity is a mile long and an inch deep.” People may have accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour, but they may not know much about Him or live in a way that honours Him. The amount of Scripture churches use and the language of the Scripture they use contribute to the situation. If people cannot read or hear Scripture in a language they understand, then their spiritual growth will be impeded.

4.4.1 The Missional Role of Language in Church Growth in Bakossi

The national president of BAPRESCA recounts how the use of mother tongue scriptures strategy for effective evangelisation started in Bakossi in 2000 with about 30 indigenous

choirs singing in the local language in 30 congregations. With over two decades of implementation of the strategy, the number of choirs has increased to 80 in 80 congregations. Amongst these are congregations found in towns and cities out of Bakossi land. This is because biblically composed songs speak to them more than their English counterparts. Atta-Akosah (2004:109-110) posits that the presence of translated scriptures impacts discipleship and growth in Churches through preaching and teaching in the local language. Preachers and teachers do not have to make spontaneous translation when they read from the Bakossi New Testament. The pastor of PCC Ngombo-Ku in an interview (July 14, 2020) states: "There is an increase in the number of elderly people in church because they understand the scriptures being read and preached in the local language." It is easier and more interesting for the Bakossi churches to conduct group studies from the New Testament. Some of these elderly persons who mainly understand and speak the local language were reluctant to attend services because activities were run entirely in English. These elderly persons now understand the scriptures as they attend church services and Bible study classes regularly.

Creson (2008:1) argues that hearing and understanding is the first step in evangelism and discipleship, leading to church planting or church growth. God has sent His message of love, but it must reach people in the language and in a form they relate to best. If mother-tongue Scriptures are to be used, church leaders must understand their importance and model their use. Usually, someone in the language group must champion the course and share the vision with other church leaders. Christians cannot mature in their faith unless they have access to the Bible in a language they understand. A vital part in our growth as Christians is our knowledge of God's word. It is our spiritual food and it makes our faith grow stronger and stronger. In some congregations in Bakossi, Christians only hear a few verses of the Bible in English on Sunday. The verses are read by the pastor or a lay leader in a language the people barely understand. Listening to scriptures does not necessarily lead to the spiritual growth of the church. It is not enough to make Christians strong in their faith, and they are likely to follow the false teaching of sects or leave the church altogether. To grow as true and knowledgeable Christians, they need to read or hear God's word in a language they understand very well. From 2012 to

2019 the number of listening groups increased from 15 to 35 with 1,250 adults and 1,600 children, making a total number of 2,850 Christians impacting their lives with the audio scriptures. Whiteman (1999:134) argues there is a positive correlation between Bible translation and development as vernacular scriptures helps to expand people's world. He further states "It opens people up to a larger world in time and space, and presents them with alternatives. No church can last for long without the Word of God in a language the people understand.

Advocating translated scripture is not without challenges. Fokwa (2019:5) illustrates the story of missionaries who went to China in the early 1900s and translated the Bible into Chinese. In 1951, the Communists chased all the missionaries, but 20 years later the church multiplied by 500%. What was the secret? The people's faith was sustained by the Bible translated in their language, even though in times of persecution.

By contrast, the northern parts of Africa were the center of Christianity in the first few centuries AD Woodward (2014:13-14). The church leaders at time used Latin and not the local languages (Punic and Berber) even though only educated church members understood Latin. When Islam swept across that part of Africa from AD 600 – 900, the church virtually disappeared. The lack of translated Scripture in local churches played a significant role in the downfall of the church. Although churches in Egypt and Ethiopia experienced many of the same pressures, they had Scripture in their language and that made them survive to this day. Church leaders must see to it that all members of their congregations or churches, regardless of their social class, gender or age receive spiritual food in the language they understand best. The more church leaders encourage people to use scripture in their mother-tongue, the more members experience spiritual growth and a deepening faith.

4.5 Contextualization, Bible Translation and Mission

Scriptures can only make meaning if they are applied to the context in which they are communicated. According to Glenn (2007:4) contextualization begins by attempting to discern where the Spirit of God is at work in a context. It continues with a desire to communicate the Gospel in word and deed, and to establish groups of people who desire

to follow Jesus in ways that make sense to them in their context. Therefore, Christianity is presented in such a way that meets people's deepest needs and transforms their worldview, allowing them to follow Christ and remain within their culture (Whiteman1997:2-7). The use of local languages as a tool for missions interweaves the scriptural teaching about the community and the church with a particular human situation and a specific context. For this reason, doctrinal reflections from scriptures are related in one way or another to the situation from which it is born, addressing the aspirations, concerns, priorities and needs of the local group of Christians who are doing the reflection. Schrieter (1986:29) summarizes this biblical foundation:

“...the development of local theologies depends as much on finding Christ already active in the culture as it does on bringing Christ to the culture. The great respect for culture has a Christological basis. It grows out of a belief that the risen Christ's salvific activity in bringing about the Kingdom of God is already going on before our arrival. From a missionary perspective there would be no conversion if the grace of God had not preceded the missionary and opened the hearts of those who heard.”

4.5.1 Local arts and missions

Scripture is made available in its context within Bakossi communities through local storytellers, songwriters, dramatists, illustrators, and other artists. Scripture engagement specialists encourage communities to distribute and interact with scripture and scripture-derived works in print, performances, visual arts, video, drama and recordings. This is to give opportunities to use them and to teach people how to interact with scripture or scripture-derived works in their context. Local artistic genres communicate in ways people are used to receiving information, not requiring that people become readers in order to access and interact with scripture. Instead, people receive scripture in their traditional genres via works created by local community members. According to Michelle (2017:2-3), the formal structures of arts carry emotive, symbolic, and contextual meanings and associations. Each genre and work is appropriate to its own set of occasions and functions. He further states:

There is no artistic form that communicates intended meanings universally. ... Local creativity has essential benefits that outside creativity doesn't provide. These benefits include more penetrating, relevant, memorable, and engaging communication for education and motivation.

Local art offers ways to remember important truths, especially for non-readers. They convey social memory and history. Through this traditional communication of the Scriptures, the people's hearts and emotions are touched. The theological rationale for the people's creativity is that they are created in the image of a creative God who encourages his people to create methodologies to suit their context for the smooth flow and understanding of scriptures. Many of the ways people may encounter God and his Word come through the voices and expressions of those who know him, telling his glory through their own art forms and bringing Him all the glory of all the nations.

The Bakossi community has a multilingual, multicultural structure. One language is used for market communication, another for church services, another for home or family communication, another for traditional gathering. Each language is associated with different functions and social gatherings. Michelle (2017:3-4) argues that vernacular languages and languages of wider communication (LWC) are suited to different functions in any given community.

Pidgin is mostly used for commercial purposes as it is widely spoken in and out of Bakossi land. Traders from different language groups use this medium of wider communication to interact in their commercial dealings. Pidgin is widely spoken in markets and shops. Its wide use has orchestrated its adoption in mission to learn and teach about God.

English is mainly used in congregations during worship services. The entire liturgy, hymns, scriptural readings and the sermon are mostly done in English. Most literature used in worship services is published and distributed in English. Despite the dominant use of English in congregations, some Christians are still able to get a proper understanding of scriptures.

Lastly, the local language (Akoose) is widely used in home, family and traditional circles. Akoose is used among indigenes in communal gatherings as a mark cultural identity and view of belonging. Traditional dogmas and rites are communicated in Akoose. In an interview, a family head in Nyasoso (April 12, 2020) attests the mother tongue is the main medium of communication in traditional occasions such as marriages, birth and death celebrations, and filial interaction. According to him, the people believe their ancestors also partake in these celebrations since they understand solely the mother tongue. The use of mother tongue is a requirement for the communication of traditional norms and dogmas. The minimum use of mother tongue in the congregations is limited to indigenous choirs who compose and sing scriptural songs.

When scripture is translated into a language for the first time, there is usually already a history of using scripture in a LWC. Changing the language of ministry from the LWC to a local language (or languages) is a paradigm shift for leaders and lay people. Akoose has its own literary genre that goes with elements of music, dance, drama, and visual arts (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/genre> Accessed 23-11-2019). This is expressed in the communication of scriptures in all its forms as it speaks to the context of Bakossi people. The translation and availability of the Word of God in a local art is a characteristic of the people, indicating that it belongs to them, thus performing an important function in the church and life of Christians. Just as every culture has a unique genre, (song, dance, drama, poetry, storytelling, and visual arts) so does mother tongue scriptures in Akoose. They are adapted to suit the stylistic genre of Bakossi people.

4.5.2 Adapting to the audience's context and needs

For information to flow smoothly, it must be communicated in the context of the recipient. Bible Translation is a form of communication. The first principle of communication is to be receptor-oriented. As a result, the communicator needs to know the audience. According to Rick (2001:12), the following questions should be taken into consideration before any information is communicated: What are the fears, desires, and needs of the recipients? What are their ultimate questions and concerns? Where do they get their information? Where does that information get its credibility? How is traditional wisdom passed on to

the next generation? What are their preferred media of communication? Are they oral communicators, semiliterate communicators, functionally literate, or multimedia communicators? What kinds of media products will be most appropriate for them? What is the status of Christianity in their community? What are their views of Christians and the Bible? What cultural characteristics do they have in common with the cultures of the Bible? How does their worldview compare with the worldview being communicated by the Bible? What have been the barriers to the communication of the biblical message? The answers to these questions provide the keys for designing an effective program for communicating God's message, giving that God enables.

Since the Bakossi community is an oral community spiced with parables and idioms, the translation project first laid a foundation by translating the biblical parables. These parables suit the context in the sense that the people facilitate communication with parables. It is important to select scripture portions as a study of the audience's culture and a comparison of their worldview with the worldview being communicated by God's Word. This enables the audience to filter the message through the grid of their own worldview and respond to it in accordance with their own concepts and values. Good communicators begin with what their audience already know and accept, and they build on that to draw them step by step to an understanding of the unknown. This is the approach we see throughout the Bible and it helps explain why God spent 2,000 years preparing people for the coming of Christ (Rick 2001:13-16). It is important to give the audience time to become comfortable with the Word and to be convinced, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, God is speaking to them. To this end, it is helpful to begin with portions that seem relevant and interesting to them.

Following are translated versions of contextual parables in Akoose.

Fig. 16 Contextual parables for daily life

Translated (Akoose)	Parable	English Version	Scriptural Teaching
Ngan e mod a awě aboó nlém Lukas 10:25-37	Samária	The Parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37	The practice of God's word is the central issue in this narrative unit. Jesus has

25 Βοῶb-πῶ meléede a 25 On one occasion an been about the task of
 mbéndé anhyě expert in the law stood up presenting faithfulness to
 Yésueakəgáteaá, ”A- to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he God as hearing and doing
 meléed, cheé měbenlé asked, “what must I do to God’s word. The question
 boŋńkūdalongé áde inherit eternal life?” of the identity of one’s
 déemaá’?” 26“What is written in the neighbor leads into a
 26 Yésueantimténmé Law?” he replied. “How do further exploration of
 aáken, ”Chánéténlédé á you read it?” appropriate behavior,
 kálag e mbéndé. Cheé 27He answered, ““Love the however, with the
 27 Meléede a mbéndé Lord your God with all your conclusion drawn by the
 ankwenténaá, ”Etəŋgéné heart and with all your soul lawyer himself. The one
 édəŋSáŋgwéé ádəŋDyöb and with all your strength who was a neighbor, he
 ne nlémńsyəəl, ne and with all your mind’c; acknowledges, is “the one
 edəédəŋesyəəl, ne and, ‘Love your neighbor who *did* mercy”. Jesus
 ngíneesyəəl, ne as yourself.’d” concluded “*Do likewise*” (v
 mewəmtənmesyəəl. Édəŋ- 28“You have answered 37) (Green 1997:425-432).
 ’emwănyoŋŋáneechoŋyəl correctly,” Jesus replied. Neighbor love knows no
 .>> “Do this and you will live.” boundaries irrespective of
 28 Yésueanláá mé aá, 29But he wanted to justify tribe, status, colour, origin.
 ”Ebí akwentən. Nzé ebelé himself, so he asked The Bakossi community is
 áned, né wěkūdalongé Jesus, “And who is my made up of people from
 ádedéemaá’>> neighbor?” different ethnic groups,
 29 Ngáneanemodáhédáá 30 In reply Jesus said: “A status. It is multilingual and
 aá mésuudyəłnzəm, man was going down from multicultural in nature. This
 ansədədaá/ken,”Nzé adé Jerusalem to Jericho, when complex setup has
 myănned?” he was attacked by generated the vices of
 30 Âtimtənmé robbers. They stripped him tribalism, favouritism,
 Yésueankəłŋganaá ” Mod of his clothes, beat him and nepotism, discrimination,
 a Ísraēlnhógakagáá eke, went away, leaving him half hatred, enmity, selfishness,
 ambíd á Yerúsalem, átimé dead. greed, wickedness, strive
 á Yeriko. Ádeépédé á etŋn- and disunity. The

tê, bechîbbénkōbmé, 31 A priest happened to be translation of this parable in
békōbēnmé going down the same road, the audio visual form had
chōmésyāēlēcheánwālē. and when he saw the man, come to perpetuate and
Bêmbōmtédmé káéñáhédé he passed by on the other determine the boundaries
awé. Déəbéchénné mé á side. of acceptable social
nkəg n̄ nzii. 31 Pr̄sepógché 32 So too, a Levite, when intercourse. In his Galilean
ámpē esyōgké'áá he came to the place and ministry, Jesus had worked
melemlem mé nzii. saw him, passed by on the to exterminate those
Déəátáné ane mod. other side. boundaries that
Ambamé nkəg n̄ 33But a Samaritan, as he predetermine human
nziiínmíníí. 32 Mod a traveled, came where the interaction. A
túmbé eLébi awě abelé'áá man was; and when he saw comprehensive love of God
nsón á ndáb eDyōb awé him, he took pity on him. generates love for fellow
mámpē ampě áhed, 34 He went to him and human beings. Jesus has
boṅanyínmé, ambamé bandaged his wounds, nullified the worldview that
melemlem. pouring on oil and wine. gives rise to such
33 Boṅ mod a Then he put the man on his questions as, who is my
Samárianhóg awě own donkey, brought him neighbour?
atómé'aá enenziiampě to an inn and took care of Neighborly love has been
áhed (Béəbe bad bé him. concretized in care for one
Ísraēlbéechemtānnaá) 35 The next day he took out who is, in this parable, self-
Ádeányiné mé, anwógmé two denariie and gave evidently a social outcast.
ngol, them to the innkeeper. This parable reminds the
34 ákē áhed, ahé mé mēl á 'Look after him,' he said, Bakossi people that
siitê, ákaṅché, boṅápēmē 'and when I return, I will neighbourly love binds all
mé á esēlmîn. A pēén-'aá reimburse you for any extra irrespective from where
mé á dyad-tê, boṅásōnlē expense you may have.' they come from and of what
mé á ndáb ebeken, ábōṅgē 36 "Which of these three do status. Love cuts across
mé. you think was a neighbor to geographical boundaries,
35 Néε bñé'sáṅgé the man who fell into the tribe nor status.
ahúde'kélé é'taan, hands of robbers?"

ábāgnwóó ndábaá, 37 The expert in the law
 'Tédnén, étognananén replied, "The one who had
 mod, ké chéé mercy on him."
 émpēéechewěbēbēdtē,měti Jesus told him, "Go and do
 mtédwεámbīd á ehúu.' likewise."

36 HέεYέsusεásεδtεέ
 anεmeléede a mbéndé
 aá/ken, "Átîntê ábê bad
 béláánábebéntānane mod
 awě bechîbbénlógénné,
 ahéé anlúmédaá mэдē
 mwănyarj"

37 Meléede a mbéndé
 ankwenténaá, "Ane awě
 anwógmé
 ngɔl."HέεYέsusεálâηγεέ má
 aá, "Kăg-kō, wέmpē
 ébεlemelemlem."

The translated parables and scriptural charts attracted the attention of adults and children as it facilitated the smooth communication of God's word in the communities and children services. The translation began with portions that share cultural similarities with the audience to make the audience comfortable with the story and to identify with the characters. Also, portions related to farming were given priority since Bakossi people largely depend on agricultural. These included the parables of "the sower", and "the wheat and the weed". Priority was equally given to scriptural portions that identify social structures, agricultural festivals, and concerns about honor, purification, blessings, curses, and heirs. Household rivalries were identified with Joseph and his siblings. Women with marital problems were referred to the problems of Sarah, Naomi, Ruth, and Hannah. To this effect, the Bakossi Bible translation project translated the book of Ruth,

and 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2. The initial translation served as a bridge because it facilitated cross-cultural communication. The distribution of these cross-cultural biblical portions captivated the interest of Christians as their felt needs were touched.

4.5.3 Basic comprehension

Woodward (2014:16) argues that the most obvious benefit of translation is improved comprehension of scriptures by individuals and communities for whom the target language is the language that they know and understand best. The missional goal for translating scriptures in the context in which it finds itself is for communities to access God's Word in language that speaks to them so that they can develop their own means of theological understanding and spiritual training. According to Dye (2009:90), comprehension is vital to the growth of Christian faith, and it almost goes without saying that comprehension of Scriptures is closely linked to the proficiency of a person in the language of Scriptures. For those who have low proficiency in the language of scriptures, a translation of the Bible into a language that they understand well brings great benefit.

4.5.4. Preparing the way for the Lord

John the Baptist prepared the minds of people about the coming of Jesus Christ, even though it was difficult for them to believe and accept Jesus as the Messiah. People still need preparation today before to be able to assimilate the Scriptures and manifest it in their day-to-day life. Rick (2001:11) observes that before non-evangelized people can grasp the gospel, they need to have a more biblical worldview. In particular, they need to understand a number of foundational truths. Despite the presence of the English version of scriptures in Bakossi land, the livelihood of the people remains questionable. Practices such as ancestral worship, offering of sacrifices, hatred, enmity, and infidelity remain the order of the day (Ngole, 1997:24). In order for translated scriptures to have meaning in the life of the people, scriptural topics (God's holiness, goodness, love, and faithfulness, the hopeless and sinfulness of mankind, the consequences of sin, mankind's need for a perfect substitutionary sacrifice for sin and living a godly life) should constitute the points of emphasis. In his response to the questionnaire the pastor of PCC Mwambong (July 13, 2019) explains how communicating these scriptural topics in the mother tongue during

Bible study and catechumen classes touched the mind of the people greatly, enabling them to develop the appetite to apply scriptures in their lives. Thus, the translation of Scripture in its context is a strategy that facilitates the smooth flow of communication and an understanding of Scripture for spiritual growth. The strategy of contextualizing scriptures greatly contributed to effective missions in Bakossi land.

4.6 From the known to the unknown as a mission strategy

MacDonald (1995:9) cites and endorses a remark by David Strange, a translation consultant, that “trying to translate the New Testament without the Old Testament in place is like trying to build the fourth story of a building without the three lower stories in place.” New comers to the Scripture have considerable difficulties in getting started in assimilating and manifesting it in their lives.

Rick (2001:18-19) argues that some bilinguals need only few books of the Bible in their language in order to move on to a Bible or partial Bible. They may require only a transitional Bible with one or more key portions from the Old Testament and one or more from the New Testament. But for those who need more, a translation project can begin with a series of stories, which can be expanded into biographical portions. In this way believers are provided with highly usable scripture products without making them wait for long before they have the whole Bible. As the local translation team carries on with the work, they can fill in the gaps in the partial Bible to produce a whole Bible. This enables both the translators and the audience to deal with key biblical terms and unknown concepts gradually instead of handling all at once as in the New Testament. The translation of biblical stories enabled Bakossi audience to absorb new biblical concepts progressively. Old Testament stories and narratives were first translated rather than the gospels and epistles. These portions were much easier to read, thus developing interest in Christians to eventually read the published New Testament entirely.

Brown’s (2009:2) argument establishes the importance of giving the audience time to become comfortable with the Word and to be convinced, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, God is speaking to them. Bakossi Christians are already familiar with some of the

names of the heroes in the Bible; they are equally interested in knowing more about them. Translating and publishing story books on these heroes lays a solid foundation for gospel communication. In an interview, the lay preacher in PCC Ngusi (August 24, 2020) recounts how he was impressed about Joseph forgiving his brothers. Reading Joseph's story in his local language gives him an in depth appraisal of God works in people's lives. Having a pre-knowledge of scriptures paves the way for better comprehension when read or listened to in the heart language. Some people, having heard only the story of Joseph, have begun reading the whole Bible and approached Christian believers to ask more about finding forgiveness from God. These points of common affirmation are sometimes called "bridges" because they facilitate cross-cultural communication. It is usually wise to select portions that have many bridges and few barriers as the first portions to be translated and distributed. The Bakossi translation project identified biblical stories that both challenge and attract Christians and selected these for early translation and distribution. Some of these translated stories are common both to Christians and non-Christians. Reading and listening to these motivates them to be eager to learn. This transition from the known to the unknown facilitates gospel communication and application.

4.6.1 Culture, gospel and mission

Psalm 104:5 reminds us that God created everything and set the earth on a foundations that can never be moved. According to Ommani (2012:71), we may consider this to include people's cultures within their geographical regions where they live and practice the culture. God gave the good news to be spread for the growth of his kingdom. The culture in which people grow plays a big role on how people view truth and reality. Much of cultural teaching, values, and beliefs are transmitted linguistically. Ngeh (2015:19) acknowledges that Christianity rejects the notion of a special sacred language for the Bible. But religions like Islam, Buddhism and others have a sacred language each. They use it to communicate to the spiritual world. In contrast, Christianity believes that the Gospel can be translated into every language and still remain pure. Thus, translation considers the natural context of the people. That is why the Christian faith is relevant in every culture.

Language, as a gift from God, assumes meaning when it is used to transmit information that shapes the people's belief systems. Bivin (2010:72-73) asserts that Christianity is remarkable for the relative ease with which it enters living cultures. In becoming translatable, it renders itself compatible with all cultures. Translatability is the source of the success of Christianity across cultures. The specificity of the religion is its willingness to embrace any culture that would receive it. Ommani (2012:72) emphasizes that language and culture shape how people express their emotions and affect how they behave in a community. The language a people are exposed to influences what they consider right or wrong, sin or mistake, and the role they assign to religion. For instance, some people still take part in annual ancestral feasts because the concept of life after death has not been well explained in the language of wider communication. In an interview, a youth leader in PCC Kupe (April 27, 2020) confessed how he stopped taking part in the annual "Ndie" feast (A feast where sacrifices are offered to ancestors) after he got a clear explanation of Jesus being the intermediary between man and God during a mother-tongue Bible study class.

True confession and repentance come with understanding the scriptures in the heart language. Woodward (2014:17) confirms that the act of translating Scripture into vernacular languages is in itself a powerful statement about the culture of the community that speaks that language. God has set each people in their culture and language with a purpose, so that they may understand and glorify Him in that context. Information that is transmitted with the listeners' culture in mind considers relevant contextualisation; it invites listeners to be part of the theologising process (Ommani 2012:72-73). When scriptures are transmitted into the culture of the people, they engage with the scriptures more. The effect of the church's use of official languages of wider communication is immeasurable. Converts become more integrated with the scriptures.

According to Ejedepang-Koge (1996:26), the Basel mission missionaries were the more to try to study the local language when they arrived Bakossi land. It was amazing for Bakossi audience to hear missionaries from Germany or America speak, read and write

Akoose. This physical activity challenged Bakossi people to respond to God in awesome wonder. Knowledge of Akoose enabled the missionaries to carry out research on some cultural and religious practices to be addressed by the scriptures. With the use of the local language, converts got a deeper understanding of how to live a godly life. They abandoned pagan practices like ancestral sacrifices, soothsaying, and the practice of witchcraft. Ejedepang-Kogge (1996:30) testifies about a large grave that was dug in Mpako in 1954 for the burial of fetishes, masquerade attires, objects of ancestral worship and talismans. The inscription “grave of fetishes” was written on a cross above the grave. This shows that people must be brought to an understanding of at least some of the basic truths contained in the Scriptures before they can make a meaningful response to the Gospel. The Holy Scriptures must be proclaimed and disseminated in the heart language of all those who are being evangelized and disciplined. Through this, the Scriptures are kept in the heart of listeners while uprooting cultural barriers to a clear understanding of the gospel in the listeners. Specifically, the early missionaries who studied the local language taught basic Christian doctrine in Bible study classes using it. God’s knowledge is shared through the cultures He has given to humanity. When people are transformed by scripture, their culture and society are also transformed to lead them to righteousness. Sanneh (1989:53) argues that Christianity will ultimately come to depend securely on its vernacular roots, and that bureaucratic centralization will come to require some form of cultural absolutization. The penetration of Christianity into Bakossi culture greatly transformed their thoughts and actions as they accepted the Christian doctrine easily. Brown (2009:87) reiterates that when a group of people is not been given God’s Word in its own spoken language, its knowledge of biblical faith is weak and unsustainable over the generations. In Bakossi land, this missional legacy was not picked up by the next generation of pastors ministering in the area. So, the Bakossi Bible translation project had to revisit this evangelist and missional tool by revising the teaching of mother tongue and the translation of scriptures.

4.7 Christian faith, community life and mission

The impact of Christian faith in Bakossi land is huge with several implications for mission.

4.7.1 The Christian faith versus syncretism

The church in most areas in Cameroon in general and in Bakossi in particular is guilty of the sin of syncretism. According to Ejedepang-Kogge (1996:24) syncretism is the combination of incompatible cultural beliefs and practices with Christian beliefs and practices. This attitude has caused the greatest damage in the church in Bakossi land. For situations in which the church is said to be growing, the indicators of growth are largely physical: How many people attend Christian meetings, Bible classes and Sunday services regularly. Thus, the church grows horizontally and not vertically. That is, there is no corresponding in-depth growth of spiritual consciousness that reflects and affects the adjustment of worldview and social accountability among Christians. The presence of Christianity in Bakossi can be said to be above 80% in some places, but vices such as witchcraft, enmity, corruption, injustice, embezzlement, and other social ills are in very high proportions at the same time.

This situation confirms Woodward's (2014:17) argument that persons who understand the Scriptures in a learned language of wider communication tend to perceive God as distant and restricted to certain domains of life. The communication of the Gospel in Pidgin or English does not give a deep understanding of the message. Dye (2009:90-91) believes that engaging with the Bible in a language of wider communication only "suggests that Christian living is only for one's public persona, and internal spiritual growth is seriously hindered". Dye cites the example of a group of pastors who taught about African Traditional Religion in their local language and Christianity in the national language. He concludes that this dichotomy occurred because "They believed and taught two incompatible religions, but by using different languages for each they had never noticed a conflict".

When Scriptures are translated in the local language, they go a long way to bridge this gap. The lack of a deeper understanding of the Christian faith makes some youths to react ungodly, especially to social upheavals; Bakossi youths are not exempted. Some of them have joined the guerrilla warfare and are involved in human and material destruction, kidnappings, torture, looting and raping. These youths drug themselves and

terrorize their own communities, inflicting pain on their people through beatings and executions. During my research, it was alleged that a youth from Presbyterian Church Ngombo-Ku shot and killed a family relative on the 16th of March 2019. According to the youth, the victim had killed his uncle through witchcraft earlier that the youth's actions clearly contradicts the Christian faith, and makes one wonder whether the people in Bakossi land have really come to terms with what it means to be a Christian with respect to judgment and revenge.

4.7.2. The Christian faith at church versus Christian faith at home

Christians are most often accused of complacency. Becoming a Christian rather than being a good Christian is the norm. In some congregations, believers are conscious and zealous of their faith and seek to live in accordance to the Bible, but their application of biblical assertions is sometimes too literal and self-assured, making others accuse them of complacency. In a complacent situation, life is explained from a spiritual perspective so that physical laws and natural phenomena have lost their explanation. That is, whenever any mishap or accident befalls some Christians in Bakossi, they accused the devil of being behind such a scenario instead. Hence, the expression "EsaaNgen", meaning it is not normal. This situation seems to question biblical assertion "the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12 NIV).

In line with the passage above, Adeyemo (2006:1522) comments how God's word which was received by Israel through Moses and by the readers of Hebrews in Christ left those who heard it no excuses. Judaism recognized the ability of God to search out every detail of one's heart and it was natural to apply this property to his word or wisdom. The point here is not an analysis of human nature, but that the Word searches the heart in such detail that it is like a sharp sword that divides even what is virtually (but not absolutely) indivisible, whether soul and spirit or joints and marrow. Understanding the Word is important for good results, and that understanding ensues from adequate ways of communicating the Gospel in a given context.

4.7.3 Evangelism versus true life transformation

Communicating for relevance must not ignore the context. Relevance is the sum of the effects produced from a piece of communication. Sperber and Wilson (2006:125) argue that relevance is obtained when an assumption within a given context produces large contextual effects and when the processing effort of what a piece of communication asserts is minimal. This is the focus of translation as a means of communicating the gospel. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23) depicts the relevance of scriptures in the daily life of Christians. In this Parable, the first seed fell along the footpath; we could classify this seed as having the worst of the results from proclaiming the seed. In explaining this, Jesus says in verse 19: "When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart." In other words, the reason for such abysmal performance is the lack of understanding from those who heard the message. In verse 23, we get the best results. Some seeds grew up and bore grain a hundred-fold. Jesus explains this result thus "But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." The differences between performance and excellent results lie in the word or root of the word "understand." The scenario painted in Cameroonian churches is significantly caused by poor or lack of understanding amongst other reasons. Lack of understanding is largely caused by a difficult processing effort to come to terms with what the Bible is communicating. The results of the other two seeds also reflect the idea of lack of understanding.

From the above Parable, we learn of the relevance of scriptures for missions. Our hypothesis here is that understanding brings a stronger involvement and commitment, and conversely, inadequate understanding brings loose involvement, leading to syncretism, complacency and literal application of Scriptures. Since understanding is pivotal for good Christian behaviour, adequate communication is also very vital. The question is how to ensure understanding to make the word "alive and active and sharper than a two-edge sword". Good communication is the transfer of understanding. Everyone

who speaks or writes has a message he wants to put across, and desires that his message be understood. In communicating, God does not confuse his audience. God's purpose of communicating is to be understood so that man may come to terms with Him and live a righteous and fruitful life.

The role of a preacher is to make this message well understood. The preacher studies a passage or the Holy Spirit illuminates his mind to gain understanding of a given passage, and then he sets out to release what he understood to his audience so that the meaning could be profitable for them in their daily lives. To carry out this divine well, the preacher needs to choose a medium that is mutually the best for him and his audience. Things have to be so for two important reasons. Firstly, understanding is primordial, and precedes positive response to the Gospel. Secondly, understanding scriptures is greatly influenced by medium of communication. In most cases, the effort of communication comes from the first language or the heart language of the audience. The Bible, to a large extent, is better understood in the first or heart language of wider communication. In an interview, a Christian in Catholic Church Kack (July 20, 2020) recounts:

“Since I do not understand English that is widely used during worship on Sundays, I have so many interpretations of the scriptures since I am trying to deduce what the pastor is saying. In trying to share or quote some biblical portions, I sometimes add or subtract most of the information.”

According to the interviewee, language remains a barrier for the understanding of scripture. When scripture is communicated to an audience that does not understand the language in which it is communicated, the processing effort in understanding what the preacher said becomes greater, and some people end up with poor or mixed understanding while others give up in the processing effort or get just the opposite meaning. For effective communication and understanding of scriptures, the translator must first have a good understanding of the message himself.

An examination of the understanding of the key biblical term “grace” in English and in Akoose follows as illustration. The word grace is defined in English as ‘unmerited favour

of God'. Its occurrence in English is homogenously rendered as "grace" everywhere it occurs like is the situation in the original Greek word or root *caris* (Wood 2000:433). In Akoose, a unique rendering does not only distort the meaning, but it also obscures understanding completely in some situations. The role of the translator is to study, define and determine the range of meanings and to give each context its specific meaning. This reduces the processing effort and pre-empts wrong meanings and misunderstandings. We observe from the above that a Bakossi Christian or reader has an added advantage to understand better than his English counterpart, given that the key term speaks to a situation that is specific in his context.

Furthermore, when Philip met the Ethiopian Eunuch reading from Isaiah, he asked him: "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip could understand that the context of Isaiah is alien to this Gentile and he was most likely not to understand what he was reading. The Eunuch answered: "How can I unless someone explains to me" (Acts 8:30, 31)? The answer suggests that he needed a background to understand, a background that will furnish him with specific situations of context. Though the Ethiopian Eunuch could read, the communication was not effective for understanding for an alien like him. Many Bakossi people may be literate in English and French, but understanding is not as spontaneous as it would have been in the first or heart language. They need a background to get hold of understanding.

Background study of the context enables the speaker to know which instance of the range of meanings to apply as seen in the Bakossi translation of the term grace; it is knowledge of context that renders the communication effective. If we have to come to terms with a given meaning or understanding, it has to assume local colour, local language in order to appeal to our world view, the lens with which we see the world and try to understand it. Language encompasses both spiritual and physical contexts, and is used by a people to ignite both physical and spiritual changes. The Gospel attempts to speak to human beings in their context. For us to understand the Gospel, we need to understand the whole infrastructure and what its ramifications are on each aspect of our lives.

4.8 Dialogue with scholars on translated scriptures and mission

This section seeks to explore the missiological role of the impact of mother tongue scriptures.

4.8.1 Foreign preachers as hindrances to mission

The communication of the gospel in a language that is not understood by the people does not meet the missional aspiration of the communicator. Those to whom it is communicated may not be edified as well. People give or receive information in order to confirm or dispel certain views (Ngeh 2014:15). As such, when the Gospel is communicated in a language that is not understood, it is not certain whether the people have received the message, or that it is applicable in their lives. The application of gained knowledge brings individual or communal transformation. Transformation comes when people get the right knowledge. When people do not understand Scriptures in their heart language or language of wider communication, they cannot gain full knowledge of God's truth in the foreign language (Ommani 2012:82). This is the case in the Presbyterian Church in Bakossi land where most church leaders (pastors, evangelists, lay preachers) do not speak or understand the mother tongue. They use English as the main language of communicating the gospel whereas most Christians understand the mother tongue better than English.

Fig. 17 Statistics on origins of Presbyterian pastors in Bakossi land

The chart below shows the dominant presence of the non-indigenous pastors in the Presbyterian Church in Bakossi.

Name of Church	Location	Number of pastors	of Indigenous Pastors	Non-Indigenous Pastors
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)	Bakossi in area	20	02	18

Data collected from pastors and lay preachers (May 24, 2019) of Presbyterian Church indicates there are only two indigenous pastors out of the 20 pastors in the 20 parishes and 82 congregations in Bakossi land. The rest (18) are non-indigenous pastors as seen

in the table above. More so, 32 congregations out of 82 use mother tongue dominantly while Pidgin and English are used in the remaining 50 congregations. Congregations led by non-indigenous clergy and laity use English and Pidgin during worship services. It is obvious Christians who are literate in mother tongue may not get a clear understanding of God's message. The consequence of this is scripture may not sink deep in the hearts of indigenes. In an interview, a lay preacher in PCC Tombel (March 27, 2020) states:

Our pastor does not speak or understand the Bakossi language. That is why he uses English or Pidgin during worship services. The entire liturgy and the sermon are communicated in English. This has no impact to the elderly persons who are only literate in the mother tongue.

What the respondent above implies is that the sermon could have impacted the lives of elderly persons more if it had been communicated in Akoose—a language best understood by them. In this case, the elderly is deprived of a deep spiritual understanding of scriptures while those literate in English or Pidgin gain spiritually. During Bible study classes, foreign preachers find it difficult to communicate scriptures to those who are not literate in English. Hill and Hill (2008:4-5) argue that for God's word to engage us deeply, we need to understand it and meditate on its truths in a language we understand well, that is, one that touches our hearts. Despite detailed explanations and lengthy interpretations of scriptures in English, some Christians are left in doubt. Their engagement with scriptures is superficial, and they may lose interest in it. An elderly Christian in PCC Tombel (February 23, 2020) expresses her frustration: "I find no interest in attending Bible classes because only English language is used for teaching". In her quest to gain a deeper knowledge of scriptures, the pastor responds to her questions mainly in English. In the end, she does not get a clear understanding of some biblical truths. When people do not access the Bible in their language, they lose a sense of belonging or are confused on what to identify with.

Hill and Hill (2008:31) further attest that foreign Church leaders who do not speak or understand the language of the people will not promote the use of vernacular scriptures,

presenting a huge barrier to missional goals. Some of the foreign preachers serving in Bakossi fear that they may not be able to read or preach in the mother tongue properly. This is because they do not master the writing system of the language. The pastor of Ngombo-Ku, a non-indigene, in an interview (July 24, 2020) about his reluctance to use local scriptures states that he had made efforts to learn how to read the Akoose in order to read the scriptures himself during service, but he felt uncomfortable reading it in church for fear that Christians may laugh at him. The issue of complexes discourages the pastor from making an effort to promote local scriptures himself. Some foreign pastors do not motivate Christians to learn how to read mother tongue or use translated scriptures at all.

In addition, non-indigenous pastors prefer using English for reasons of prestige. Slocum (2009:1) attests that the national language with a long history of use, both oral and written, is naturally the prestige language. The introduction of a translation in the vernacular needs special promotion to convince speakers of the value of Scriptures in a non-prestigious language. Payne (2009:1) argues that one of the major obstacles for the acceptance of an idiomatic translation of Scriptures into a vernacular where there is some form of established church is that often there is a strong veneration of a translation of the Scriptures in the national language. Therefore, there needs to be a strategy to facilitate the use of mother tongue scriptures, thereby integrating scriptures to daily life. While advocating for the need to communicate the message in people's indigenous languages, the main barrier is at the level of theological training where the tutoring language is English and the language for wider communication is Pidgin. Hill and Hill (2008:6) point out that church leaders who received theological education in a majority language (English) and do not know how to express biblical concepts in the local language where they serve find it difficult to use mother tongue as an evangelistic tool. Moreover, Payne (1988:19) attests some pastors venerate scriptures in English; this strong attachment hinders gospel communication. In Full Gospel and Apostolic Faith churches in Bakossi, pastors teach Christians to memorize and recite biblical portions in English. Some of the Christians recite these scriptures without understanding the meaning. Therefore, the Word has no transformative impact on them.

4.9 Bakossi translation project and its spiritual contribution and impact

This research is a testimony of mother tongue scripture as a vital tool for spiritual empowerment and missions. This section examines the spiritual impact or benefit of the presence of translated scriptures as testified by Christians and church leaders in and out of Bakossi land.

4.9.1 Improved understanding of scriptures

In response to a questionnaire, the Bible study facilitator of PCC Mueba (October 16, 2019) attests:

When I started attending the Bible study classes in English, I would always come out empty without understanding what was taught. But since I started attending the mother tongue Bible study classes, my understanding of the scriptures has greatly improved until I am one of the facilitators of the mother tongue Bible study class in my congregation. Since I can now understand the scriptures well as taught in the local language, I am now able to communicate this same knowledge to others during Bible study classes.

The emptiness expressed indicates that he did not understand the meaning of Scripture since it is communicated in English. His felt needs and aspirations are not met. The communication of scriptures in his literate heart language enables him to get a deep understanding of scriptures. Improved knowledge of scriptures builds skills to facilitate the communication of scriptures in the local language to others. Studying the scriptures in the local language does not only improve understanding, but it also builds biblical knowledge that motivates Christians to promote the same message. This has had a multiplying effect as more locals have become agents of evangelization, scripture instructors, and lay preachers. They assist the clergy and facilitate church growth and life transformation in congregations and communities. These local-language scripture promoters use the vernacular to transmit scriptures in the hinterlands.

A greater understanding of vernacular scriptures is intensive in communities where the local language is dominantly used. This is common within localities where mother tongue is the language of wider communication. The majority of participants who reported improved understanding of scriptures were the elderly and less educated. The pastors of PCC Bangem and Ngomgo-Ku (July 12-13, 2019) acknowledged some Christians are dormant whenever English is used in Bible study classes. But these Christians actively participate when the mother tongue is used to communicate and explain scriptures. According to these pastors, when lessons are communicated in the local language, Christians respond to and ask questions as an indication that they are eager to study or get a clearer understanding of scriptures. Furthermore, 25 lay preachers and 11 Bible study instructors also attested that improved understanding of scriptures in the mother tongue has broadened their biblical knowledge and evangelistic skills. They confessed ability to explicitly explain biblical concepts and key terms in mother tongue during Bible studies.

Out of the 18 pastors interviewed, 10 confirmed improved understanding of scriptures expressed among least educated people and the elderly. The lay preacher of PCC Bulutu (November 27, 2019) states that mother tongue Bible study classes are interesting the least educated and the elderly challenged him with in-depth questions for scripture clarification. The pastors of PCC Ngombo-Ku and Kupe (March 23-25, 2019) also testify that the least educated and elderly persons participated more when scripture is communicated in the local language during Bible study classes.

4.9.2 Emotional connection with scriptures

According to Woodward (2014:50-51), the benefit of translated local language books or scriptures is an enhanced emotional connection between the reader, or hearer and the text. Wherever translated scripture is read, there is an emotional response to the hearer. The chairperson and lay preacher of PCC Tombel (March 24, 2019) recounts that when mother tongue scriptures are read after the English version, Christians spontaneously respond with applause and side comments, indicating understanding, comprehension and satisfaction. Usually, these emotions are positive and intriguing. They equally draw

an evaluation of the way English and Mother tongue versions are perceived. Akoose scriptures is said to connect Christians more in the deepening of faith than English scriptures. An elder in PCC Ndabekom in an interview (April 13, 2019) attests:

When the mother tongue scriptures are read in church I feel touched and my emotions are awakened as I feel that it is addressed to me directly. I feel the scripture is not coming from anybody but from God directly. God speaks to me directly. Moreover, when the pastor or lay preacher is preaching in my language, I am always guilty when issues affecting my spiritual life are addressed. This includes forgiveness, hatred, enmity, and drunkenness.

According to the interviewee, listening to scriptures in the heart language enables the message to sink deep in him. The emotional touch of scriptures leads to life transformation. This is because issues affecting their spiritual life are addressed, leading to a reversal of ungodly attitudes and the attainment of the purpose for which the scripture is communicated. In an interview with 15 Christians at Presbyterian Church Tombel town, they confirmed having emotional feeling of belonging, comfort, and joy when scripture is read in the mother tongue.

The pastor of PCC Ndum (February 12, 2019) recounts that whenever she sings in the mother tongue Christians are moved emotionally as they enjoin her with applause while gesticulating the scriptural content of the song. They give a spontaneous response as the message is appreciated. She further acknowledged using such occasions to communicate ungodly attitudes such as witchcraft, enmity, drunkenness, murder, war, and a host of others. The act of mentioning these vices in the local language make Christians realise their negative impact on Christian lifestyle. Joy is a typical response upon listening to or reading mother tongue scriptures. When the Word of God touches the hearts of Christians and they feel God is conversant with their wellbeing and spiritual lives. In an interview, an elder at Native Baptist Tombel (March 19, 2019) attests that when she listens to or reads scriptures in the mother tongue during worship services, she feels touched, blessed, and comforted. Thus, communicating scriptures in the heart

language pulls the people closer to God and gives them hope in the midst of hopelessness.

Pastors who try to read translated scriptures win the interest of the Christians. In his attempt to read scriptures in Akoose, the pastor of PCC Bangem (April 24, 2019) admits he is able to gain the confidence of more Christians as they become eager to listen more. This noble jest reminds Christians that the gospel is for Bakossi people and not for foreigners. According to him, he feels God is using him to speak directly to Christians as their emotions are touched directly. Besides expressing emotions of satisfaction, Christians encouraged him to continue to use the mother tongue for reading lessons during subsequent services or Bible study classes.

4.9.3 Mother tongue scripture, daily life and missions

Language plays a dominant role in the daily lives or specific livelihood of a people. This section examines the role of mother tongue scriptures in the daily lives of Bakossi people. There are domains in life where the local language is dominant. For instance, the concept of ancestral veneration is best expressed in the local language. Drawing from this, the catechist of Catholic Church, Baseng (May 28, 2019) attests that Christians easily understand the concept of Jesus Christ being the only mediator between man and God since libations, incantations and other ancestral rites are carried out mainly in the mother tongue. In a testimony, a newly baptized Christian at PCC Mbulle (March 14, 2019) confirmed he understood the concept of Jesus Christ being the mediator between God and man only after attending catechumen classes where mother tongue was the medium for scriptural instruction. His theological understanding of Jesus being the Saviour and intercessor was also enhanced. The concept of ancestral worship and veneration is a daily occurrence and its implication is better expressed in the local language. The introduction of local scriptures has broadened the scope of Bakossi. Since these concepts were addressed mainly in English, no impact was felt. The use of local scriptures that reflect the daily life of Bakossi people brings the Gospel closer to them.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the theological relevance of Bible translation as a tool for effective missions. The main idea of this chapter was to develop a theological model for the promotion of Akoose scriptures in Bakossi churches and to outline its implications for evangelism, discipleship and church growth. Babel is seen as a problem whereas Pentecost is seen as a correction to the effect of Babel. God is praised in the mother tongue of those who came to celebrate the Pentecost. It is evident that Christians in Bakossi cannot mature in faith when enough attention is not given to Akoose scriptures. Language (mother tongue) remains indispensable for spiritual growth and the spread of the gospel in Bakossi communities. The researcher strongly holds that when the Word of God is not communicated in the language the people understand best, their knowledge of biblical truth and faith grows weak and becomes unsustainable with time. Different language communities have different needs and situations, different worldviews and attitudes, and different spiritual conditions.

For effective missions, contextual and cultural realities must be taken into consideration. This chapter indicates that cultures have found favour in God and they are void of stigma of inferiority and untouchability. Therefore, the mission of the Church recognizes all cultures and the languages in which they are embodied as lawful in God's eyes, making it possible to render God's word into other languages. Christianity is expressed in a way that reflects their cultural backgrounds. Blending the biblical worldview with the worldview of the audience enhances spiritual communication. This makes scriptures relevant and appropriate in a given context, thus taking the audience along the path of righteousness.

This chapter reminds us that Christians should not be subjected to listen to scriptures in a language not relevant for gospel communication. In his argument, Ngeh (2015:115) attests that the availability of God's word in the language of the missionary cannot bring the desired impact, since people cannot be expected to engage meaningfully with the language they do not understand.

In addition, this chapter has presented and analysed the contemporary picture of the engagement of the available mother tongue Scriptures as a tool for missions in the churches in Bakossi land. Significantly, it has been argued that translating the Bible in the mother tongue is one good step to the evangelization of a people. Yet, it could be much better if more people are able to read and engage with scriptures in their mother tongue. On the basis that religion informs the life of every African people in its totality and memory, language is integral to identity. Deepening of faith could be more when people read and understand the gospel message in their mother tongue. It has also been argued that for translated scripture to have a greater impact on the indigenous people as a tool for missions, the church could include church-based Bible literacy classes for its theologians (Pastors) who are the main communicators of the Good News to the people. However, there is need for more literacy classes and pastoral training for church lay preachers who do most of the preaching, as pastors are not always present in every congregation on each Sunday.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE USE OF TRANSLATED SCRIPTURES IN BAKOSSI, SOUTH WEST CAMEROON

Introduction

Various ways exist for engaging mother tongue scriptures for missions, yet there is need for an improved pastoral strategy in discipleship. This chapter reviews the challenges encountered in the full engagement of translated scriptures in churches in Bakossi in order to propose relevant strategies for effective implementation and promotion of vernacular scriptures in Bakossi churches. The proposals made are based on historical and empirical analyses of research seen in chapters two and three of this thesis. The chapter begins with a discussion on improved use of mother tongue scriptures and ends with a general conclusion.

5. Towards an improved use of mother tongue scriptures

This section explores strategies for improving the use of mother tongue scripture in Bakossi, South West Region of Cameroon.

5.1 Training people in Akoose schools

Attah-Akosah (2004:45-46) argues that God interacts with human beings through the languages they understand best. At the heart of the Christian message is the fact that God speaks every language, and wants to communicate to each person in his or her heart language (Psalm 19:2-3). Given the fact that language is a tool for missions, there is need to train people on how to read and write their local language. Most Bakossi people, especially Christians, cannot read or engage with the translated scriptures because they lack any formal literacy training. Akoose schools serve the purpose of communicating socio-economic and cultural knowledge. They help children and adults to understand what is communicated from the 'known' to the 'unknown' language. Communicating

knowledge in the local language speaks directly to the hearts of the people without any interpretation. “God speaks directly to His people without intermediaries” (Ommani, 2012:2). Considering that even adults who have been Christians for so many years still lack Christian knowledge (Ejedepang-Koge, 1996:23) and indulge in ungodly activities (Luke 11:39, 2Timothy 3:5, Matthew 15:8), Akoose schools further buttresses Christian faith and belief as Christians feel God is speaking to them in person Chapter three reveals that the introduction of local scriptures has enabled Christians to have a deeper understanding of the scriptures. In response to this, they have abandoned ungodly life styles thanks to the acquisition of literary skills by the people.

The clergy plays a vital role in promoting the reading and writing of mother tongue. Since most church leaders did their theological and pastoral training in English, they are bound to face challenges in communicating this theological knowledge in a different context and language. Ngeh (2014:122) asserts that they find it difficult to express spiritual truths, especially key biblical terms in the local language. Consequently, they favour the language of education which does not facilitate the practical proclamation of the gospel. The pastors of Presbyterian congregations of Ngombo-Ku, Tombel and Ndum (May 23-27, 2019) acknowledge this handicap. They regret not being able to fully communicate the theological knowledge and experience acquired in the seminary a language fitting the local context.

The fact that pastors are being trained in English is a result of the absence of theological books in the mother tongue. But Ngeh (2014:123) proposes that pastors who upon graduation continue undergoing refresher courses and in-service training can be able to contextualize the Gospel by seeking ways of doing theological and biblical studies in the mother tongue. He further reiterates that attending several in-service trainings without prioritizing the linguistic factor does enhance full communication of the gospel still. The researcher proposes that church leaders should not only reinforce the teaching of the mother tongue in their congregations, but they themselves should actually enrol in the classes and learn how to read and write local scriptures to enable them to communicate the gospel fully in the context where they serve. Hill and Hill (2008:45) recommend that

church leaders see in to it that all members of their congregations, regardless of their social class, gender, or age, receive spiritual food in a language they understand well. Christians cannot mature in faith unless they have access to the Bible in a language they understand. The more Church leaders encourage people to use mother tongue scripture the more they will use them. This strategy encourages and promotes the teaching and learning of the local language for the sake of effective evangelism.

5.2 Akoose newspaper as an empowerment tool

Pole e njeb, Akoose Newspaper, is a community monthly newspaper aimed at sharing information and current events in and out of Bakossi land in order to alleviate the livelihood of the people and to enhance development (*Pole e njeb*, March 2006, Vol.5). The March 2006 edition, for example, communicates information on how to increase of plantain production which is one of the staple foods in Bakossi. In his response to the questionnaire, a farmer in Nlog testified that he acquired useful information on the cultivation of plantain by reading the Akoose newspaper. Unfortunately, the production of Akoose newspaper has stopped due to lack of funds and a distribution strategy. The restitution of this means of communicating information in Bakossi will help a great deal to disseminate information on a vast range of socio-economic and cultural issues. It is also a means of promoting literacy among Bakossi people in Akoose. This literacy strategy will augment the efforts of the government to reduce illiteracy by assisting language groups to build reading and writing capacities.

This research recommends the production of *Pole e njeb* should be done weekly, monthly or quarterly, and a good distribution strategy be put in place so people can easily access it. Its content should not be limited to scriptures, but it should cut across other domains of life. Health information such as pandemics, vaccinations, epidemics should be shared. In addition, information relating to economic empowerment should be communicated in this medium. Information related to the production of consumable items for marketing, economic sustainability and social wellbeing should be shared for poverty alleviation. Akoose Newspaper is a source of developmental information—a process by which people

are developed rather than bringing the products of development (Atta-Akosah, 2004:86-87).

5.3 Mother tongue scripture distribution as a mission strategy

The lack of effective distribution of translated material is a major setback for effective scripture engagement and use. A lot of resources are galvanized to make scriptures available in the local language, but its availability remains a problem. Atta-Akosah (2004:129) observes that even though copies of translated scripture are in stocks, they are not accessible to prospective buyers. Stocks of Akoose New Testament are packed in the CABTAL main office in Yaounde, and little effort is made to make them available. The research strongly recommends the provision of kiosks and local scripture bookshops in Bakossi towns and villages to bring these translated products in the market situation. This will enable Bakossi people to have immediate access to these scriptures. Moreover, mobile distributors should be recruited; they are charged with moving from one church to another or during church occasions (crusades, harvest thanksgiving, marriages, funerals) and displaying the various published local scriptures in all its forms. The people would be served these scriptures on the spot. Furthermore, copies of Akoose New Testament should be made available in Christian Bookshops in areas with considerable Bakossi settlement in Cameroon. Promotional advertisements for vernacular scriptures should be made on radio stations and local or national television networks.

5.4 Mother tongue scripture programs for children

The catechist of Roman Catholic Church Baseng (May 11, 2019) attests that less attention is paid to children's ministry in Bakossi. Out of 16 Roman Catholic congregations visited in rural areas, none has a separate Sunday school service for children. These children attend services together with their parents. The entire service is run in a language where the children have a poor understanding as compared to their local language. In the end, parents are the main beneficiaries of scriptures. Proverbs 22:6 reminds us that parents are to train or teach their children the right way so that when they mature they should not turn away from it. When parents do not teach children scriptures, taking them along to church becomes a formality. As such, children grow with a poor knowledge of

scriptures. Moreover, in some Roman Catholic congregations in Bakossi, parts of the liturgy are sung in Latin during worship which children barely understand. Though children are small persons, they are important to the church. Their daily lives depend on their Christian faith and understanding of scriptures. Hill and Hill (2008:181) emphasize that children are the leaders and members of the church of the future. The foundation of the Christian faith of a child determines his or her future as seen in Proverbs 3:1-2, 6:20. On the contrary, children with shallow Christian faith are most likely to lead a “double lifestyle”. In order to prepare the church in the future and to deepen the faith of children, mother tongue scripture programs for children should be taken seriously. Children’s programs like Sunday schools, children’s Christian clubs, camps, youth meetings, youth choirs, and drama clubs should be emphasized in congregations and local scriptures be put at their disposal. Atta-Akosah (2004:130) opines these programs are aimed at helping children develop interest in reading mother tongue scriptures. This act can be considered a rewarding investment. Moreover, these programs cultivate positive attitudes in children towards Scriptures in their mother tongue.

When Christian doctrines are introduced in the local language, children understand best. They come to Christ more easily than adults who already have ideas fixed. Scripture influences children and youths during their formative years. Since they are part of God’s family, no part of this big family should be ignored. In addition, parents have as responsibility to communicate the scriptures to their children (Deuteronomy 32:46). It is common within Bakossi communities for parents to sit at the fire side in the evening or at home with children to communicate folktales, cultural and customary information. Deuteronomy 11:19 instructs “Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (NIV). This long-standing Jewish practice of disseminating information and informal parents training to children should be implemented across churches. Communicating scriptures in this manner will build the faith of children and they will never depart from the scriptures (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).

5.5 Mother tongue scripture translation as mission strategy

Woodward (2014:72) states that a major theme in the responses of the people is the way in which hearing Scriptures in the local language is particularly poignant when the text related to a dominant domain of life in the local language. This is the case even with speakers who are highly bilingual with English. As a result, decision makers may want to consider translating certain key parts of the Bible that are particularly related to local language domains, even in a situation where the community understands and accepts the English Bible as adequate. Rick Brown (2009:1-2) argues it is important to give the audience time to become comfortable with the Word and to be convinced, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, that God is speaking to them directly. To this end, it is helpful to begin scripture translation with portions that seem relevant and interesting to them. It also helps to begin with portions that share cultural similarities with the audience, making them comfortable with the story as they identify with the characters.

For instance, there are scripture portions that reflect and communicate the message of communal life common in rural communities in Bakossi. Translating proverbs is one way of promoting the rhythm of community life since proverbs are commonly used in settling disputes, idiomatic expressions, for counselling and the communication of secret information. Parents also communicate moral lessons using proverbs. That is why children are reminded in Proverbs 1:8-10 that “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. My sons, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them” (NIV).

Moreover, translation of short stories and parables, particularly relating to agriculture or familial relationships also enhances the use of local scriptures within a cultural setting. For example, Luke 9:62 says “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (NIV). Plowing is a common agricultural activity in Bakossi. It requires steadiness for the furrows to be straight and orderly. So, translating it in Akoose as “Kéńzéeé awě aboótédé hõmalí, bońánõné’ámbĩd, eékwognedéé ábełnsónásē e nkamlēn ŋ Dyõb” captures an immediate picture of the context of the people. Even when local language speakers understand the English Bible better than

local scriptures, they still find that the local language books particularly resonate in them when they relate to domains of life readily associated with their context. Rick Brown (2009:1-2) attests that these cultural matches may be called “door openers” because they appeal to people and encourage them to open their minds and hearts to hear the message.

5.6 Pastors’ fellowship around the use of mother tongue scriptures

My interview with pastors of Protestant and Pentecostal churches and Roman Catholic priests in Bakossi reveal optimism in the use of mother tongue scriptures. But more encouragement is needed in this area. Since church leaders are stake holders in promoting local scriptures, there is need for an enlarged meeting to dialogue and to discuss practical issues that arise when local scriptures are used in multilingual communities and/or local communities.

According to Ngeh (2014:121), spiritual leaders can use their influence to create opportunities for extensive use of mother tongue scriptures in their churches for evangelism and discipleship. As they encourage its use, church members will be willing to use it. This way the impact of translated scriptures will be felt. It is an added advantage as indigenous clergy learn to read and write Akoose. This will enable them to administer in the context of their people by communicating the gospel in their heart language. Whenever church leaders read and communicate the gospel in the local language, Christians are motivated to own copies of translated scriptures and to invest more to learn how to read these themselves.

One way of redeeming the soul that are still ignorant or in darkness by hearing God speaking to them directly in their heart language. As the clergy engage in missional task of evangelism, they need to recognize that people’s most basic need is to know Christ as their Saviour, regardless of their immediate problems and challenges (Hill and Hill 2008:165). This research reveals the act of Christians leading double lives because they have not yet received this new life in Christ. In an interview, a Christian of Catholic Church Ndibejock (August 16, 2019) confessed that he has lived a life of drunkenness, immorality

and irresponsibility at the expense of his family despite being a Christian for nineteen years. During a reflection on Romans 13:11-14 in a mother tongue Bible study class, he realized he has been living a life of darkness. His understanding of the passage made him decrease from these ungodly practices. From the testimony above, the effective communication of gospel calls for genuine repentance and change. There is an automatic response as there is a change of life style. Thus, the missional goal of changing lives is manifested. Hill and Hill (2008:165) stress that pastors need to be able to explain the way of salvation in a way that is relevant to Christians' cultural context. They argue that explanations of salvation developed in the West often focus on whether people go to heaven or hell when they die. But the salvific message within the context of Bakossi focuses in living a godly life and not a life of darkness. Once they know how to explain the way of salvation, they need to be able to connect it with people's felt needs.

5.7 Mother tongue scripture media as a mission strategy

The research reveals the strategic importance of the availability of local scripture media, but more strategies need to be put in place for its promotion. The projection of mother tongue scriptures in videos, films and television channels is a great evangelistic tool as it draws interested crowds and families. Hill and Hill (2008:225-226) insist these evangelistic tools help Christians learn certain important scriptural truths much more rapidly than if they just heard or read the scripture. There are videos and films like the Jesus film that portray parts of the Bible. Christians benefit by getting a better idea of what life in Israel was like. These projections help viewers to see the reality of the context in which the Bible was written with its socio-economic, political and geographical features. The presentation of mother tongue scriptural programs on television channels also add to its evangelistic strategy. It is against this backdrop that I recommend the extensive use of videos and films (Bible stories, parables, drama, video CDs) across different media: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

5.7.1 Visual display of the Word

Hill and Hill (2008:220) further explain that visual arts help people engage with scriptures. In places where most church members do not know how to read, the church has used

paintings or posters of biblical scenes as a primary means to communicate the message of the gospel. There are passages or verses in the Bible that become most appealing if displayed artistically through posters or banners. Such passages or key verses might be Bible promises or reminders in our walk with God. These key verses should be extracted from Akosse New Testament and printed on charts or posters and posted on walls of church buildings, homes, authorized public places and notice boards to easily catch people's attention. In an interview, a youth in Catholic Church Baseng (May 17, 2019) testifies:

I am able to retain and recite the verse John 3:16 in the mother tongue because of the poster at the wall of my church building. My constant seeing and reading it every Sunday has perfected my reading and memorization of the verse. I often use it during evangelism as it dwells in my mind.

Scriptural posters not only decorate the walls, but they equally communicate scriptures in the minds and lips people. The use of large fonts in posters facilitates reading. The use of Akoose scriptural posters and frames should be promoted in Sunday School Children services. Posters help in rehearsals. In an interview, the Sunday school teacher of PCC Kupe (October 14, 2019) testifies:

I am able to communicate the mother tongue scriptures using charts and posters to the children. Through these tools the children are able to memorize key lesson verses. As they recite them these verses remain in them and applicable in their lives.

This method of communicating scriptures enables children to retain the Word deep in their hearts besides preparing them for future evangelism. This strategy for gospel communication and uses also enables Christians and children to retain scriptures not only in their heads but also in their hearts. Charts and posters remain picturesque in the minds, heads and hearts of the children. The researcher recommends scriptures posters should be posted in public avenues like markets, public halls, schools, churches, private homes and bill boards.

5.7.2 Listening to the audio Word

Bediako (2001: vii) observes "... it is through hearing in African mother tongues ... that African theology emerges to edify not only the African Church but the Church world-wide". This strategy has helped to put Scripture in the heads and minds of many Bakossi Christians. Paul in Romans 10:17 emphasized "... faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" (NIV). This applies to all whether literate, illiterate and the visually impaired. This strategy of gospel communication meets the spiritual needs of a cross section of Christians. It is made available in VCDs, memory cards, and other technological devices or gadgets like cell phones and CD players. In addition, these devices are quite affordable these days.

5.8 Strategies for an improved use of translated scriptures

Atta-Akosah (2004:104) quoting Whiteman draws attention to the stacks of translated Bibles gathering dust around the world, attesting to the fact that people have not always valued vernacular Scripture. When Akoose New Testament was dedicated in November 2011, 439 copies were bought on the spot out of the 1000 copies printed. By the year 2019 about 845 copies had been bought. The question is whether the copies of the Akoose New Testament are being used. Or, are they decorating shelves and harbouring dust? In this section, we propose various strategies for enhancing the use of translated and published scriptures in Bakossi land.

5.8.1 Mother tongue scripture Bible study classes and evangelism

Rick (2009:85) asserts that missions across the world have found it especially fruitful to conduct evangelism and discipleship through Bible storytelling, studying and audio Bible discussion groups in the heart language of the people. Chapter three explores the need for Christian groupings in order to digest scriptures and to enhance the growth of faith. Paul admonishes the study of the Word by urging the Christians of Colossae thus "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts" (Colossians 3:16 NIV). The study of the Word nourishes our spiritual lives in this present world. The study classes are useful because they help explain

the words of the Bible. The use of a people's heart language affirms their personal worth and opens hearts and minds to hear the message. When biblical passages that apply to the present situation of Christians are studied and expounded, Christians develop a deeper understanding of the scriptures (Dye 2000:17).

Since most Bakossi people cannot read the local language, Bible study classes offer interactive discussions on the Word of God which facilitate the communication of the gospel. Forseth (2007:2) affirms listening is a wonderful staple of "Scripture consumption" whether it is listening to ourselves, reading the Word or hearing someone else read it to us. Listening to and studying scriptures is an intake strategy that offers an opportunity to hear the word of the Bible as busy lifestyles so often push it out of our schedules. Sharing scriptures during these classes gives those who cannot read the local language an opportunity to digest the scriptures. Woodward (2014:70) emphasized uneducated and those living in rural areas had the lowest proficiency in English, and so potentially benefit the most in terms of comprehension when Scriptures become available in their local language during Bible study classes. Bible study classes provide significant explanatory help for Christians who want to understand the Bible in a deeper way, especially with regard to the meaning of specific words and phrases in their immediate context and in relation to the Bible as a whole (Crossway Bibles 2008:10).

A deeper reflection during gospel sharing enables them to discover ungodly attitudes in their lives. A regular member of a Bible study class in PCC Ngusi (August 17, 2019) confessed he stopped assaulting his wife when he attended one of these classes. He testifies:

When the presenter read and expounded on Ephesians 5:21-33 in my language, I felt very guilty and ashamed in the way I treat my wife at home. In her presence I could not even look at her face as I 'buried my head down'. Reaching home, I immediately approached her and asked for forgiveness and vowed never to beat her again. Since then there is a strong love bond between us.

Bible study classes that use translated scriptures for studies are a veritable tool for life transformation. Discussions about meaning, interpretations, doctrinal substance, and key biblical terms are productive means of engaging the Word and driving it deeply into the hearts of Christians.

In his response to the questionnaire, a regular member of Roman Catholic church Ndibejock (August 17, 2019) confessed that he stopped worshiping ancestral objects and the practice of immoral sexual dealings after participating in the sharing of 1 Corinthians 10:6-10 in the mother tongue during a Bible study class. According to him, he had been carrying out these ungodly attitudes despite being a Christian. The passage made him realise the gravity of his sins. The effectiveness of this strategy in gospel communication and life transformation calls for its intensification and promotion. The creation of Bible study classes in all congregations in Bakossi constitutes a remarkable strategy for promoting the use of mother tongue scriptures for spiritual growth and life transformation.

5.8.2 Evangelizing through mother tongue scripture public-reading

Our faith cannot be fully realized when we are isolated as individuals (Forseth 2007:3). A corporate reading of the Word in a public context creates a community dynamic of praise, honour, obedience, grace, and hope. Apostle Paul acknowledged "...I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20 NIV). His evangelistic strategy of public proclamation of the Word led many to repentance. This was a source of encouragement even to the elders who later followed his footsteps in his absence. The public pronouncement of scripture was and remains a way of reinforcing people's faith in God (Exodus 24:7, Deuteronomy 31, Joshua 8:34-35, 2Kings 23:1-2, Nehemiah 8:3-4, Luke 4:16-30).

Public reading of translated scriptures is not only limited in reading lessons and portions during Sunday services, but it extends to public occasions like funerals, crusades and marriages. Apostle Paul urged Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching (1 Timothy 4:13 NIV). During public occasions, there is a proclamation of scriptures over extended periods giving both Christians and

non-Christians the opportunity to listen to it. It is important for non-literate people to hear the scriptures read, since they cannot read themselves. A scripture engagement promoter in Full Gospel Tombel (March 26, 2019) acknowledges:

Whenever there is a public funeral service, I always make sure I read the mother tongue scripture that is applauded by indigenes and non-indigenes who are coming from other towns. In one of the funeral open-air services, I read a passage from the Akoose New Testament. After service many people who came from the cities and even non-indigenes requested for copies of the New Testament for their personal use and to share with others in their cities.

The reading of Akoose scriptures in public is a means of creating awareness and anxiety on its use and importance. It motivates people from far and wide, and generates the desire to consume it and to have access to it. City dwellers who are motivated to own copies of local scriptures facilitate its use in the cities or communities out of Bakossi.

During community outdoor crusades, scriptures are read and listened to at length by the audience. Both Christians and non-Christians feel delighted to listen to the Word in the local language. It is always an opportunity for non-Christians to be convinced and shown the truth about the saving power of scriptures. The scriptures tell us Apollos "...vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah" (Acts 18:28 NIV).

In an interview, the pastor of Full Gospel church Nyasoso (February 19, 2019) testifies:

When I organized a summer crusade the attendance was timid during the first hours. But when the scriptures were read and preached in the local language, the number increased. Even passers-by who heard the preaching and reading in the local language joined us. In the end some non-Christians and backsliders who listened to the Word in the local language joined the service and gave their lives to Christ and were later baptized.

The strategy to extend the gospel to the public is an opportunity for everybody to partake in and respond to it for life transformation. The public consumption of scriptures enables many to transform their lives and turn to Christ. Those who give their lives to Christ are no longer under the power of sin. Wilbur (1997:20-21) acknowledged the changes brought about by public reading of scriptures as many people who were previously in bondage practicing witchcraft, immorality and violence had been changed by Christ into good and godly people. The researcher believes that corporate reading of the Word is the best way to align the Church with God himself.

From the above analysis, the researcher proposes that pastors and other church leaders should organize outdoor crusades to put local language scriptures to maximum use. Outdoor crusades create an opportunity for the public to digest the gospel communicated in their heart language, thus deepening their understanding and faith and bringing them closer to Christ.

5.8.3 Using mother tongue scripture drama as a missional tool

Hill and Hill (2008:211) posit the use of drama to evangelise, to build up believers in their faith, or to help a group understand a scripture passage better and engage with it. If drama can bring life to life, then certainly it can be a useful means and strategy of bring Scripture to life. Dramatization of the word can be completely spontaneous, rehearsed, costumed, recorded and replayed. This is common with Sunday school service where children dramatize portions of Akoose scriptures for better comprehension. They bring narrative stories to life; they articulate a poetic passage through dance and physical expression. Dramatization of the Word is more valuable and impacts lives most when Christians celebrate events such as the birth of Christ at Christmas, the death and Crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday, and the Resurrection of Christ at Easter.

In an interview, the priest of Catholic church Baseng (February 22, 2019) explains:

When the youth group, Young Christian Workers (YCW) used the translated text to dramatize the sufferings, death and crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday, the Christians were

touched emotionally. It was so touching that they could not hold their tears when Jesus was beaten and hung on the cross through drama.

This testimony indicates that when the Word is dramatized, it touches the emotions of the people. They do not only listen to and watch the drama piece, but they also feel and respond to it emotionally. Thematic portions of scriptures like forgiveness, repentance, kindness, love, mercy, and judgment day are dramatized for easy comprehension. A Bible study group may attempt to capture a passage through an interpretive drama, or a worship drama team may memorize and re-enact a passage. In any case, the Word comes to life as it takes on two dimensions: motion and sound (Forseth 2007:6). This strategy helps Christians to face the Scripture live for it to remain in their hearts and minds. It is an opportunity for illiterates, the old, and deaf to have a proper understanding of the Word. The researcher proposes the adoption of dramatization of gospel as a communication strategy in all Bible study classes across all age groups and church gathering.

5.8.4 Mother tongue scripture memorization

The strategy of memorizing scriptures does not only make the scripture stay in the heart of a person, but it also implants in him/her. In Psalm 119:11 David said, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (NIV). Forseth (2007:6-7) asserts scripture memorization is a foundational exercise in which many other forms of scripture meditation are based. Memorization is about having a passage at the full disposal of the mind at any time God might want to teach you from it, so you can meditate as you” Sit at home...Walk along...Lie down...and Get up” (Deuteronomy 6:7, NIV). During mother tongue Bible study classes, key verses for every session are memorized. Through this, Christians who cannot read are able to retain scripture in their minds. In an interview, eighty-year-old woman in Apostolic Faith Tombel (April 20, 2019) who could not read testifies:

Through the memorization of some key verses of the Akoose New Testament, I am able to use them when necessary especially during marriage disputes, funerals, counselling,

family evangelism and personal meditation. I can now be proud to know the scriptures and apply them in my daily life.

From the testimony above, this aged woman is offered the opportunity to develop not only her knowledge in the scriptures, but also to use the memorized portions for evangelism and life transformation through counselling and meditations in the local language.

Memorization of mother tongue scriptures is common with youths given their age. Hill and Hill (2008:183) state children of all ages can memorize Bible verses which stay with them all their life, and God may well use it to speak to them years later. Children often enjoy memory verse competitions. In the Presbyterian Church, for example, key biblical verses from lessons taught during Sunday school services are emphasized for memorization. This strategy enables children to retain scriptures as they recite the verses to their parents, thus acquiring Bible knowledge. This form of evangelistic sharing of scriptures makes scriptures available to all. As scripture is memorized, it grows internally as faith is deepened and biblical knowledge expanded. This strategy of communicating scriptures builds a strong faith and increase biblical knowledge. Mother tongue scriptures become deep rooted in the minds and hearts of Christians through memorization.

5.8.5 Mother tongue scripture songs in mission

Saurman (2010:1) argues music is a potent memory aid and an instructional vehicle. Through music's repetition and poetry, individuals can retain information without its being written. This section explores some ideas and approaches for using indigenous music to facilitate the use of vernacular scriptures. The pastor of PCC Tombel (February 24, 2019) states "When the scripture is communicated through singing in the local language, there is some revival and it backs up the message they listen to and read during worship services". Singing in the local language brings spiritual awareness and helps to transmit the gospel more in the hearts of the people. Hill and Hill (2008:199-100) attest music plays an important role in Christian life. It gives us a way to express our emotions and our thoughts in praise and worship. Singing in the local language is one of the ways by which a message is communicated in Bakossi culture, accompanied by musical instruments

(Psalm 150). Using scripture songs, people of all ages remember many scriptural portions or verses. God's word is not only taken into our heads, but also into every part of our being. There are those who are gifted musically, and there are those who are good at playing local instruments. The gospel can be communicated better when talented musicians compose thematic and spiritual songs using Akoose scriptures. Effort should be made to use the same words and poetry in the translated Bible. Songs permit to retain and quote the Word of God accurately. In excitement, a member of BAPRESCA indigenous choir at PCC Tombel (March 5, 2019) attests "Singing the scriptural mother tongue songs is a way for me to memorize and retain the scriptures. It sticks in my brain and mind". These songs are tools for evangelism for those who cannot read the scriptures. Through songs, scripture is planted in the minds and brains of the people. In an interview, a Christian at Native Baptist church Tombel (March 19, 2019) confessed "The scriptural message I take back home after a Sunday service is the one I listen through the songs sung in my local language rather than the sermon preached in English". Forseth (2007:8) confirms God has ordained a power in music which when combined with Scripture penetrates a heart like nothing else can. The dynamic combination of scripture and music are two elements that should be brought together as often as possible for spiritual enrichment and deepening of faith.

The instruments used during singing do not only touch the emotions of the people, but also trigger them to express their joy through dancing. Hill and Hill (2008:205) posit the use of local music in services move people. Musical language is buried deep in the people from childhood, and it remains the music of their hearts. It touches their emotions in a powerful way. It is a channel through which the Holy Spirit speaks to them deeply.

From the discussions above, the researcher is of the opinion that talented and skilled mother tongue composers be encouraged to teach the composing of thematic biblical songs. These songs should be based on Christian events and festivals such as Christmas story, the passion story, Baptism, Harvest Thanksgiving, funerals, peace and reconciliation. These songs should be printed, recorded and made accessible to everybody. Local gospel artists and musicians should be taught how to read and write the local language for effective mother tongue scripture composing.

In addition, English hymn books which are dominant in most congregations in Bakossi should be translated, published and made accessible to all. Other relevant local hymns addressing cultural issues should be composed and used for worship.

Hymn writers, Atta-Akosah (2004:115) explains, are products of their cultures, hence they write about things that are relevant to their cultural context. These hymns reflect the daily lives of the people and speak to them directly. For example, composing a hymn on the “Parable of the Sower” (Luke 8:4-8, 11-15) contextualizes the agricultural life of the people and will communicate the message directly. Composing hymns that speak about love and good neighbourliness (Luke 10:25-37, Parable of the Good Samaritan) addresses the issue of discrimination that exists amongst the indigenes and non-indigenes in Bakossi land. English hymns may be translated into Akoose, but their relevance is questionable as the words may not meet the felt needs of the people such as the prevalent situation of witchcraft and ancestral worship in Bakossi. The locally composed hymns should address the felt needs of the people for a more meaningful and spiritual impact.

Conclusion

Chapter one of the study introduces the work and raises the problem addressed in the research. The review of literature on the topic is based on other scholars’ view on the topic. It identifies the research gap and signposts further study. The chapter sets a foundation in view of the importance of mother tongue scriptures for missions and life transformation. It equally defines the key terms used in the research for a better understanding.

Chapter two examines the historical background that led to the translation of the scriptures in Akoose. The use and impact of translated products is further exploited in this chapter.

Chapter three analyses data on how translated products are used for the enhancement of spiritual growth among the churches in Bakossi.

Chapter four examines a theological framework and the significance of mother tongue scriptures for effective missions. The chapter examines the role of mother tongue in enhancing the relationship between human beings and God for the sake of missions. Genesis 11: 1-9 and Acts 2:5-11 depict all languages as inspired and divine. The chapter reflects on theological lessons and the need to promote mother tongue scriptures in Bakossi land. Furthermore, the researcher carries out a survey of the contextual engagement of mother tongue scriptures within Bakossi churches. A practical framework in the use of mother tongue scriptures in churches is also examined. A questionnaire was served to church leaders, lay preachers, Christians in order to evaluate the use and impact of the presence of mother tongue scriptures. Despite the socio-political crisis in the area of study, the researcher travelled from one community to another, interviewing pastors, lay preachers and Christians. The researcher personally witnessed how translated scriptures impact the socio-religious life of people in Bakossi.

Lastly, chapter five proposes a pastoral strategy for an improved use of mother tongue scriptures for evangelism and discipleship. It also outlines some strategic actions and recommendations for promoting Akoose scriptures in Bakossi land and beyond.

Bible translation has become another way of doing ministry for many Christian organizations across the globe. Each organization has its own motives for this endeavour. This research foregrounds a different approach to bible translation in Africa by emphasizing the missional dimension of translating scriptures in mother tongues. In addition, it encourages bible translation agencies to look beyond translation and start developing strategies that can promote the consumption of translated tools by local communities. Otherwise, bible translation projects may become a waste of valuable time, effort and resources. This research creates awareness on the use of translated scriptures as effective tools for missions and evangelism. I argue for the contextualization of scriptures in Africa through translations of the Bible in mother tongues. This study is an open invitation to theologians and missiologists to take an active role in conducting research around bible translation to contribute to the fulfilment of the Great commission of Matthew 28:19-20.

Based on my experience as a participant in the translation of Akoose (Bakossi) New Testament and other mother tongue scriptural products in 2011, this research enabled me to both evaluate and make an appraisal of the missional impact of these translated scriptures for life transformation.

The following main issues that arise in this research:

First, the translation of scriptures into mother tongues does not yield results immediately. It is a long, missional process that requires time and patience. Missional goal is achieved when these translated materials are put into use by Christians in their various church denominational contexts.

Second, the social, cultural and economic life of Bakossi people requires more attention. The people live in misery, poverty, war, sickness, bitterness, syncretism and marital problems and very little has been done to address these existential matters by the government of the day. But hope can be given to this people through the missional initiatives of the church. Bible translation agencies can play a vital role in addressing these issues by sharing the Christian world view about the evils affecting Bakossi people. For example, translating portions of scriptures related to trauma, agriculture, health, family life, wars, death, forgiveness, salvation, and conflict resolution in mother tongues could alleviate some of the people's challenges.

Third, local language translations have made an impact on various aspects of the life of Bakossi people including the spiritual, social and ministry. It has given the Bakossi people an opportunity to enhance their faith and deepen their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. More consideration be given to the language in which the scriptures are communicated for missions and evangelism.

Finally, mother tongue scriptures impact Bakossi churches. The research offers reflections on their transformative nature and how they could be strategically applied in missional practice and the growth of God's Kingdom. It is, therefore, in the interest of churches in Bakossi to promote the use of translated scriptures in ways that empower

Christians to use printed scriptures, Bible study classes, drama, music, art and public crusades for the purpose of God's mission.

As a researcher, I also acknowledge the fact that this research has not exhausted all aspects of Bible translation in Bakossi land. Further research could be conducted around the following topics:

- Using mother tongue scriptures to address social issues affecting oral communities;
- Training mother tongue scriptures' users as mission agents to their own communities;
- Enhancing the missionary vision of evangelization and faith building in engaging with mother tongue scriptures;
- Understanding the missional mandate behind the translation of scriptures in mother tongues.

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Appendix:

A Research Questionnaire to Evaluate the Missional impact of the Bakossi Bible Translation Project in Bakossi land

Name of the Congregation.....

Linguistic affinity of the Congregation pastor\priest\Lay preacher a) Indigene b) non Indigene.....

Approximate number of members.....a) Indigenes.....b) Non-indigenes.....

Town or village Congregation.....

- 1) What language is generally used in your Congregation:
 - a) During sermon.....
 - b) Reading of Lessons.....
 - c) Bible Study
 - d) Singing.....
 - e) and other Congregational activities. Name them?.....

2) Is it easy or difficult to use the Akoose scriptures in your Congregation? a) Yes b) No

3) If yes, what are the reasons that make it easy? Name them.....

4) If no, give some reasons why it is difficult.....

5) What do you suggest can be done to solve these difficulties?

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6) In which language(s) does your church make very important announcements?.....

7) How many times have you preached or heard a sermon or teaching in Akoose in your congregation? a) once b) twice c) several d) none

8) Are there any other programs in your church in which you use mother tongue scriptures (Akoose)? (Yes or No). If yes, what are they?.....

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9) According to your opinion is it helpful to use Akoose scriptures? A) Yes b) No c) I don't know

a) If yes, how is it helpful?.....

.....
.....

b) If no, how is it not helpful?.....

.....
.....

10) In your congregation, who determines the use of any language in the church?

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11)The Akoose Scriptures is in many forms (Audio, hard copy, Jesus Film, Android app). How are these forms of scripture used in your congregation?.....

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Thank You for your wonderful contributions.