

International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



Investigating Language Attitudes toward English and Ewe in Ten Charismatic Churches at Hohoe in the Volta Region of Ghana

[PP: 01-12]

Gideon Selorm Agbotsu

Department of Languages, Bagabaga College of Education
Tamale, Ghana

Ernestina Kabrikole Ayira

Bagabaga College of Education, Tamale
Ghana

ABSTRACT

This paper examines language attitudes of pastors and members of ten Pentecostal/Charismatic churches at Hohoe, an Ewe-speaking area in the Volta region of Ghana. The study focuses on the relationship between Ewe, the local language of the community, and English, the official language of the country, as revealed in the speakers' attitudes. Pastors of the selected churches use English as their medium of preaching their sermons in a situation where the local language, Ewe, would have been more appropriate. The sermon is then interpreted into the local language by untrained interpreters for the benefit of their non-English speaking congregations. The study sought to find out what underpinning attitudes motivate mother-tongue, Ewe-speaking preachers to use English in preaching to Ewe-speaking congregations. The ten pastors were individually interviewed and recorded using a portable H1 wave sound recorder. Three focus groups comprising six members each were formed for discussion in three of the ten churches. Data from the recorded interviews and focus group discussions were orthographically transcribed. Six questionnaires were given to each of the ten churches, a total of sixty, to be completed. In the end, 58 of the questionnaires were returned completed for analysis. The theoretical framework used for the data analysis was Joshua Fishman's (1972) concept of diglossia as explained by Wardhaugh (1986) in seven points. The major findings include the following: English is regarded as the language belonging to the elite while Ewe is used by the common people; because of the low prestige accorded Ewe, people deny competence in it; and to a large extent, English and Ewe have a diglossic relationship at Hohoe. The pastors and members of the churches might want to consider reviewing their language attitudes and practices for their own spiritual benefits.

Keywords: *Attitudes, Pentecostal Churches, Ewe, Diglossia, Hohoe, Preachers*

ARTICLE	The paper received on	Reviewed on	Accepted after revisions on
INFO	20/10/2020	21/11/2020	15/12/2020

Suggested citation:

Agbotsu, G. & Ayira, E. (2020). Investigating Language Attitudes toward English and Ewe in Ten Charismatic Churches at Hohoe in the Volta Region of Ghana. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 8(4), 01-12.

1. Introduction

In Ghana, as in other African countries where English is the official language, English is spoken side by side the indigenous languages of the country. The same tendency prevails in the Ghanaian churches. Churches, however, choose carefully the languages they use in the conduct of their worship services, especially, in the preaching of the sermons. Some churches use English or a local language monolingually with varying amounts of lexical borrowing or code switching, while another group preaches the sermon in English and have it interpreted into a local language for the congregation for obvious reasons (Albakry and Ofori, 2011; Obiri-Yeboah, 2019). The present study focuses on some selected churches within the latter

group in the Hohoe municipality of the Volta region of Ghana.

By reason of their location, the vast majority of the congregations of the selected churches together with their pastors are Ewe speakers. The pastors use Ewe when interacting with members off the pulpit. However, in preaching the sermon they use English while someone else, usually untrained in the art, interprets it into Ewe for the congregation. The pastors could have preached in Ewe so as to reach the majority directly with their message while the interpreters use English to convey the meaning to the negligibly few among the congregation who might not understand Ewe. This study sought to find out why the pastors of the selected churches insist on preaching in English even when it is not



necessary to achieve the preaching goal of meeting the spiritual needs of their congregations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language Attitude

Language attitudes are the feelings, opinions, and beliefs that people express towards language in general, their own language, or the language of other people. Such attitudes can be positive or negative, and may be seen in the way some people treat speakers of other language varieties, or peoples' desire to (or not to) learn other languages (Fishman, 1972; Cooper and Fishman, 1974; Fasold, 1984).

Some writers on the subject of English in Ghana have focused on attitudes towards English in the Ghanaian society, for example Saah (1986), Morris (1998), Bamgbose (2000) etc. It has been observed that some members of the society, especially the elite, prefer English to the local languages in every discourse and every aspect of national life. Therefore, being the language of the elite, it is prestigious to use English in Ghana. And most members of the society would like to identify with English usage, levels of education notwithstanding.

On the other hand, several people would like to express their national pride in the use of the local languages. As some people have observed, 'it seems that most people would rather use their indigenous language' Morris (1998:21). Spencer (1971: 50) had foreseen that the local languages would 'receive greater prominence in the practical as well as the cultural life of Ghanaians' in the future than it was the case before independence. Anyidoho and Dakubu (2008) also note,

At the same time as the local language is relegated to the periphery in the education system, a number of Ghanaian languages are now vigorously promoted through radio and television. Many stations broadcast mainly in local languages not primarily to promote them but to reach as many listeners as possible.

The above observation is interesting in the context of the present study, because the opposite of what the radio and television stations are doing is observed in the Charismatic churches that were studied. While the news media stations broadcast mainly in the local languages to reach as many people as possible, the churches preach their sermons mainly in English. A question worthy of exploration is what do the churches achieve by their choice of

English instead of the local language – Ewe, and why is English the appropriate choice to achieve their goal? The present study finds its purpose in answering this question.

2.2 English in the Ghanaian Church

Much discussion on the use of English in Ghana has been done among scholars. Such aspects of English as the history and education, types and stages, vocabulary, grammar, phonology and general societal attitudes have been studied. Not much of the conversation, however, has been taken into the Christian churches in Ghana. One of the recent works on language practices in the Ghanaian church is Obiri-Yeboah (2019). She looked at multilingualism in a single church congregation in a small and remote town called Nkwantamang in the Eastern region. She does not study English usage in particular or its relation to the other languages like Akan is the dominant language spoken in the area, but observed the general language practices in the church. She describes the linguistic situation as 'multilingual' rather than 'diglossic' and observes the congregants' attitude toward the prevailing situation as positive. The present study would rather select 10 churches in a relatively large town in a different region of the country and examine members' attitudes toward English as against Ewe which is the dominant local language of that area. It would determine whether the situation is diglossic or not.

A more recent work, Benya (2020), is only relevant to the present study because it is carried out about the Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic church as the present study does. It talks about the churches 'Selling God' through advertisement which involves the use of language. But Benya does not specify a particular language in the process, neither does he describe language relations nor people's attitudes towards the languages used as the present study does.

Albakry and Ofori (2011) looked at Ghanaian English and code -switching in Catholic churches. The study observed 10 Catholic churches in Accra to see how Ghanaians use language when they go to church. The findings of the study indicate that the higher the socioeconomic state of the church, the more likely English is used exclusively in it. Even though all the major indigenous languages spoken in Accra, including Twi, Ga, and Ewe, were found to be in use especially in the middle and lower

class churches, English dominates Catholic Masses in Accra where it is used ‘monolingually’ and in combination with local languages. (p. 22).

Quainoo (2011) is an interesting work on the sermons of Ghanaian Charismatic preachers. The study investigates how preachers use language to construct power and ideology. Quainoo concludes that, among other things, charismatic preachers in Ghana use language during their preaching to control and manipulate their audience. And, through their manipulative and coercive linguistic practices, the preachers assume a position of authority over their audience, serving as the source of solution to all problems of life, while putting the audience in a position of dependency and vulnerability for exploitation by the preachers. His data is made up of ‘speeches of a handful of (TV and radio) preachers whose code medium was essentially English’ (pg 137).

Both Quainoo (2011) and Albakry and Ofori (2011) examined the use of English in the Ghanaian church. The latter looks at its linguistic dominance while the former explores its use as a tool for selfish gain. The two studies, though earlier works on the subject, provide a balanced overview of the role English is performing in the Ghanaian church. This is because while one studies one of the oldest, most prevalent and most influential church organizations (i.e. the Catholic Church), the other focuses on the most recent Christian movement – the Charismatic church.

The present study studied 10 churches as did Albakry and Ofori (2011), but not Catholic churches and not in Accra, the national capital as they did. A common ground, though, is the prevalence of English use in the Ghanaian church in both the city and the countryside.

Also, the present study is very close to Quainoo (2011) which analyses the content of sermons: what preachers say and how they say it; while the present study looks at the choice of English in the delivery of sermons: why preachers say what they say in English and not in Ewe, especially, in a context where English is not required. Further, Quainoo explores the research question from outside (i.e. from sermons on radio and TV); the present study looks at it from within by talking to preachers and their audience directly to hear what they have to say about it.

3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Data Collection Procedure

The study made use of the convenience and purposive sampling methods in selecting 10 churches with their pastors in the Hohoe Municipality to provide information that would constitute data for the study. Hohoe is the municipal capital and quite a commercial center with a big market that opens on Fridays and Mondays. On those days, traders bring wares to the market from neighbouring towns and villages making the town very busy with human and vehicular traffic. The selected churches were supposed to be Charismatic churches whose pastors are mother-tongue (i.e. L1) speakers of Ewe. This is because the researcher wanted them to be preachers who would be able to preach in Ewe if they chose to. They were also supposed to be pastors who preached in English to predominantly Ewe speaking congregations. The churches were identified and selected by the help of the chairperson of the Ghana Pentecostal Council at Hohoe. The following is a list of the churches studied:

1. Three Town Assemblies of God
2. Full Gospel Church International
3. Eagles Chapel
4. Faith Temple Church
5. Great Commission Church International
6. Holy Ghost and Fire Ministry International
7. Perez Chapel International
8. Sure Foundation Chapel International
9. Target Chapel
10. World Missionary Church

A brief description of the ten churches and their pastors is provided in the appendices.

Apart from interviews conducted with each of the ten pastors and 58 questionnaires completed by six members from each church, the researchers also created three focus groups in three of the ten churches. Each group comprised six or five members who were also selected by their pastors. Most of them were the same persons that had also filled in the questionnaires. They discussed whether they would like it if their pastor preached in Ewe instead of English, and why. These discussions were to provide information on members’ attitudes toward their pastor’s choice of language in the delivery of sermons.

The interview with the pastors and the focus group discussions were recorded in wave sound with the help of a portable H1 recorder. These were orthographically transcribed and added to the questionnaire data. All these data were searched for



information that would reveal the participants' attitudes toward the two languages, English and Ewe, in the selected Charismatic churches.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

In this section and the rest of the study, language, code, variety, and style may be used to refer to the same thing – medium of communication (Wardhaugh, 1986). The specific theory employed for the study is Joshua Fishman's concept of **diglossia**.

3.2.1 Diglossia

Diglossia describes situations where two codes or varieties with separate functions exist in a speech community. One of the varieties is considered the high (H), and it is used for purposes of formality. The other variety is the low (L) which is used for informal purposes. The two major proponents of diglossia are Charles Ferguson and Joshua Fishman (Fasold 1984). Ferguson defines diglossia as follows:

DIGLOSSIA is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (Ferguson 1972:245, quoted in Fasold 1984:38,39).

Ferguson's definition limits H and L to varieties of the same language. In other words, they cannot be separate languages. However, Fishman's (1972) description of diglossia expands the concept to include the use of two 'totally unrelated languages' with an H and L dichotomy. The crucial common ground for both Ferguson and Fishman is that the linguistic difference between H and L 'must be functionally distinguished within the society' (Fasold 1984:40).

Wardhaugh (1986:88) observes that,

A key defining characteristic of diglossia is that the two varieties are kept quite apart functionally. One is used in one set of circumstances and the other in an entirely different set. For example, the H varieties are used for delivering sermons and formal lectures, especially in a parliament or legislative body, for giving political

speeches, for broadcasting the news on radio and television, in captions on political cartoons in newspapers, and in 'folk literature'. On occasion, one may lecture in an H variety but answer questions about its contents or explain parts of it in an L variety so as to ensure understanding.

He further outlines the following differences between the H and the L varieties:

1. The use of H is inappropriate in a circumstance where L should be used. Likewise L is not used instead of H when the situation calls for H.
2. The H variety is the prestige variety, but the L has so little prestige that people claim with some pride that they do not know how to speak it as fluently as they can speak the H variety, even though it can be observed that the L is the most widely used variety.
3. There is often a general perception that the H variety is more beautiful, logical, and expressive than the L variety. Therefore, certain honourable activities such as preaching and literary works are better performed in the H variety than the L.
4. A relatively large body of literature can be found in the H variety, while little or none exists in the L. As such, users of H have more literary knowledge in the H than in the L variety.
5. The H variety is 'taught' through some formal education system with the help of grammars, dictionaries, standardised texts etc; while the L is 'learned' naturally through social interactions, and more often, as an L1. As a result, all children learn the L variety but only some learn the H variety.
6. When L is used there is often a tendency, especially in educated speakers, to borrow words from the H variety to express oneself.
7. The H variety is usually associated with elite while the L variety is identified with the common people.

'Diglossia reinforces social distinctions. It is used to assert social position and to keep people in their place, particularly people who are not at the upper end of the social hierarchy' (Wardhaugh, 1986:91).

3.2.2 Ewe and English in Hohoe

The situation of Ewe and English as used in the Hohoe churches under study reflects a virtual diglossia. This is not to say that all the local languages in Ghana are in a diglossic relationship with English. Such a generalization might require more empirical investigations. However, it is a well-tested and documented fact that English is a

prestige language in many parts of Africa where it is the official language, particularly in places where it has been the language of the colonial administration. For instance, the following comment on some data by Myers-Scotton (1993:133) is an allusion to this generalization:

Examples from Kenya and Zimbabwe, show how, in these nations with their Anglophone colonial heritage, English is often the medium of a marked CS switch to express an authoritative/angry stance.

Ewe and English use in the Hohoe churches shows a ‘diglossically’ functional distribution. A glance through the data shows that English is used for preaching the sermon in order to create and maintain social identities for the pastors and their churches. And Ewe is used to interpret and explain the sermon for the understanding of the masses. Ewe is also used for informal conversation among the congregation and between the pastors and members of the congregation once the preacher is out of the pulpit. In this case Ewe functions as an L variety while English functions as an H variety in a diglossic relationship.

Another instance is that Ewe lacks prestige, so much so, that many of the pastors and their congregation members deny that the pastors have the ability to ‘flow’¹ in the use of it as a medium of sermon delivery. Yet the pastors can be observed to be proficient users of Ewe in the way they stop to explain parts of the sermon in Ewe for clearer understanding.

4. Data Analysis

Items in the data are labelled for easy reference. For example, the interviews are numbered from 1 to 10 and the respondents (pastors) are labelled P and the number of times he or she makes a response is indicated by P1, P2, P3,...etc. Thus, the reference ‘Interview 2. P3’ means the third response of the pastor in the second interview. A similar system was used for the data from the focus group discussions. The analysis used the concept of diglossia to examine attitudes about the two languages – Ewe and English.

4.1 Analysis of Text

Information from the data reveals that the Ewe language is considered a low language, and the English language a high one in the churches that were studied. According to Wardhaugh (ibid), when two

languages are in a diglossic relationship, the H variety is usually associated with the elite while the L variety is identified with the common people. The following examples from the data make this distinction clear:

1. Number two, eh, we are in contemporary times, a lot of people are now going to school or attending school and if you want to do a serious church you need educated people to come to your church. So learning or knowing how to speak English or where English is spoken is associated with modernism sort of, or is a place where the elite or educated people would want to come, the lawyers, the teachers, the nurses, and so forth. They would feel that they are among the educated class, so we want to speak the English so that they know that it's a modern church, ahaa, is a church that can appeal to them so that when they come we can now know how to engage their hands in building the work of God (Interview 2.P6).

In the above example, English is indicated as the high language so that the church where it is spoken is ‘where the elite or educated people would want to come, the lawyers, the teachers, the nurses, and so forth’.

2. And most especially too, most of these members especially the young ones they identify quickly with anybody who is speaking in the queen's language. Yes, they identify with you than when you are speaking the local language (Interview 3. P2).

3. When you speak the local language is (sic) like our pastor is not up there. Our pastor is a local man, he is not educated (Interview 3. P3).

4. Yes, somebody who is not educated, who is not enlightened, who cannot flow² in the English language (Interview 3. P4).

5. And once you begin to speak English in your church, societal acceptance is very high (Interview 3. P7).

Examples 2, 3, 4, and 5 do not only show the high position of English but also the low position of Ewe. The pastor’s ability to preach using English, ‘the Queen’s language’, causes the youth to identify with him; and it also earns the pastor very high societal acceptance. On the other hand, when the pastor preaches in Ewe, societal acceptance is low and the youth do not identify with him because they feel ‘like our pastor is not up there’, and that he is not enlightened.

¹ This term is used by respondents throughout the data to describe expressiveness and fluency in speech.

² To speak fluently



The following examples from the questionnaire data also express similar sentiments regarding English as the high and, by implication, Ewe as the low language:

1. *English is more official (Eagles Chapel questionnaire: respondent [e]).*

2. *Being a national language, English is acceptable medium of communication in all areas of the nation (Perez Chapel questionnaire: respondent [b]).*

Another difference observed by Wardhaugh (ibid) between the H and the L is that the H variety is the prestige variety, but the L has so little prestige that people claim with some pride that they do not know how to speak it as fluently as they can speak the H variety, even though it can be observed that the L is the most widely used variety. Evidence in the data show that the claim of some of the pastors that they 'flow' more in English than in Ewe is largely because of the low prestige accorded Ewe. Examples are as follows:

1. *Though I speak Ewe, it is difficult for me to preach in Ewe. I found it difficult to come with the right terminologies in Ewe (Interview 1. P1).*

When the pastor made the statement in example 1 above, he was asked if he thought the sermon changed when it is interpreted from English into Ewe. He had the following to say in response:

2. *Yea, a little... you see, the problem is that since I understand Ewe, and if I preach in English and you interpret it and you don't interpret it well, sometimes I can come back, I can correct you in Ewe because I am understanding what you are saying so if you don't say what exactly am saying I can correct it in Ewe for you or reemphasize it in English for you to...do it again (Interview 1. P2).*

In example 2 above, one wonders how the pastor suddenly finds the right terminologies in Ewe to correct the interpreter while he lacks the same terminologies to preach in example 1.

3. *I lack the vocabulary to be able to express myself in Ewe (Interview 3. P5).*

4. *I flow better in English than in Ewe, even though I speak Ewe too (Interview 6. P8).*

The pastor in example 4 above was asked the following question:

There are times when the interpreter doesn't say exactly what you mean, how do you handle such situations?

In response to the above question, he said the following:

1. *At times you go over again what you said, but if you see that he is not speaking your mind to the people then you have to say it yourself (in Ewe) as you want him to say it (Interview 6. P3).*

2. *And is like preaching in English is easier for me than preaching in the local language, because there are certain things that can easily be expressed in the English language more than the Ewe (Interview 7. P5).*

Again the question was posed to the pastor in example 6 above:

So what do you do when your interpreter doesn't say exactly what you intend to say?

Example 7 below was the answer he gave for the above question:

1. *First of all, I repeat the sentence for him to clearly get what am saying before interpreting to the church; and also, if he still doesn't get it I change the English, I try to bring it down so he will understand. Thirdly, if he still fails to get what I want the church to understand then I help him with the local language (Interview 7. P3).*

The present study is of the view that, based on the above pieces of evidence in the data, the pastors' choice of English instead of Ewe in preaching the sermon is not motivated by their incompetence in the Ewe language but by its low prestige. The data show that when there is difficulty in communication during preaching, all the 10 pastors interviewed make themselves understood best using Ewe and not English. Below is a list of more evidence from the data:

...if you don't say what exactly am saying I can correct it in Ewe for you...(Interview 1. P2).

I interpret what I said in English, I interpret it myself in Ewe before I continue preaching (Interview 2. P4).

...at times I come back to Ewe and correcting myself then he will say amen (Interview 4. P2).

...then I interpret it in Ewe myself (Interview 5. P2).

...if you see that he is not speaking your mind to the people then you have to say it yourself as you want him to say it (Interview 6. P3).

...if he still fails to get what I want the church to understand then I help him with the local language (Interview 7. P3).

...you still have to come up and tell them [in Ewe] (Interview 9. P3).

1. *And when there is difficulty I come into the vernacular and explain before I continue (Interview 10. P2).*

Some of the church members also say with some pride that their pastor preaches more fluently in English than in Ewe. During a focus group discussion, the following question was posed: **Would you like it, and why, if the pastor preaches in Ewe instead of English so that the interpreter speaks English for the benefit of non-Ewe speakers?** The following examples from the data were some of the responses from discussants:

I personally think no, because Ewe is in such a way that it has a limitation in which that the pastor needs to flow. No matter how who you are, because of education there are certain words it will be very difficult to interpret them in Ewe. So the best for you to flow fluently is English. So I would prefer pastor preaching in English and interpreting it into Ewe rather than preaching in Ewe and interpreting it into English, because he will flow better. (Focus group 1. Speaker A1)

They didn't study the Bible in Ewe, you see, so they can't take the Bible and say that they are preaching in Ewe. They will have difficulty in preaching (Focus group 1. Speaker C2).

What I also want to say is that I know pastor as somebody who flows in English than Ewe. So with that anointing whenever he tries to speak Ewe you see that the Ewe doesn't flow easily (Focus group 3. Speaker C1).

1. I think I also side with my sister, he does better with the use of English for the preaching so I think he should go for the English so that the interpreter goes for the Ewe (Focus group 3. Speaker E1).

It was also revealed in the data that some of the pastors have the perception that their congregation members are more competent in English than in Ewe. And this perception also informs their choice of English instead of Ewe in preaching the sermon. However, observations made in the data do not substantiate the pastors' perception. Below are some examples:

1. Oh I think they will understand it in English because most of them understand English so if I go English, they will understand it better... Yes few people, at least in my church only few people do not understand any English so I think they will understand it better if they receive it directly from me in English (Interview 1. P4).

The pastor who made the statements in example 1 above selected 5 members from the 'elite class' of his church to form a focus group and to fill in questionnaires for the present study. The group comprised 3 teachers, 1 civil servant, and 1 pastor. The following examples reflect the English proficiency of one of the group members:

1. For the sek of Ewe's (copied from questionnaire data).

(For the sake of Ewes)

1. Pastor needs to preaches in English for him to be abel to floo (copied from questionnaire data).

(Pastor needs to preach in English for him to be able to flow)

1. A1: I personally think no, because Ewe is in such a way that it has a limitation in which that the pastor needs to flow. No matter how who you are, because of education there are certain words it will be very difficult to interpret them in Ewe. So the best for you to flow fluently is English. So I would prefer pastor preaching in English and interpreting it into Ewe rather than preaching in Ewe and interpreting it into English, because he will flow better (orthographically transcribed from audio data).

In addition, contrary to the pastor's perception in example 1 above that most of his church members understand English, 2 of the 5 members of the focus group observe the following:

1. Because most of the members are not educated

2. Most people do not understand English very well

The group members made the statements in examples 5 and 6 in response to item 6 on the questionnaire. Item 6 on the questionnaire asks: **In your church, why is the sermon interpreted into Ewe?**

The statements in example 7 below were made by another pastor in an interview during data collection:

1. elm, yea, you realize that the average or percentage of people in the church who do not understand English at all are rather in the minority. They are about 5 to 7%. So about 93 to 95% are enlightened and they understand English (Interview 3. P5).

The above pastor also selected 6 persons from among the elite of his church to fill in questionnaires. The 6 persons comprised 3 teachers, 2 students, and a pastor. The following observations were made from their completed questionnaires:

1. Most of the people are Ewe's [sic] and understand it better.



2. *Because members enjoys [sic] it better*
3. *There are some members that have not been to school or does not [sic] understand English...*
4. *About 40% of people [sic] do not understand English*

Below is another example from another pastor:

1. *no, to me the majority would understand the sermon in English more than Ewe because 75% of my congregation members read and have English Bible (Interview 10. P3).*

Some of the members of the group selected by the pastor to fill in questionnaires, however, had the following observations to report:

1. *...most people in the community where the church is located, are Ewes. They will understand better if preached in Ewe [sic] (copied from questionnaire data).*
2. *...because majority [sic] of the congregation don't understand the English language very well (copied from questionnaire data).*
3. *...there are people in the church who doesn't [sic] understand English (copied from questionnaire data).*

The above examples do not only reflect the views but also the English proficiency of 3 persons from the 5-member group. Therefore the claim that most members of the congregation understand English better than Ewe, their mother tongue, is not supported by the data.

Another difference made between the H and the L varieties in a diglossic relationship is that H is taught in a formal school system, and a large body of literature can be found in it while almost none exists in the L. The data reveal that the pastors were educated in English and have reading materials in English while they do not have such available to them in Ewe.

Training of leaders, we call them shepherds. Most of the books that we use for the training are already in the English language... (Interview 3. P7).

I said earlier that the kind of orientation that we received at school was tilted towards the English language. That was the medium of communication at school. Em, you did your practicals in English, your homiletics you were marked in English, and everything all the books that you will find around that will help you as a pastor are all in English (Interview 3. P2).

that will be more difficult for me, because personally I read the English Bible more than the Ewe Bible (Interview 7. P5).

And most books are not written in Ewe, they are written in English... And with the internet, you'll have to read a lot of things on the internet, but when you go on the net you'll not find the things written in Ewe, they are in English (Interview 9. P5).

1. *They studied the Bible in English, communication everything is in English... because the study that they did was in English. They didn't study the Bible in Ewe,...* **(Focus group 1. Speaker C2).**

Also, as often found in a diglossic relationship, the H variety is generally perceived as more beautiful, logical and expressive than the L variety. Therefore certain honourable activities like preaching and writing fiction and other works are better done in the H than in L. It was found in the data that such is the case with English as H and Ewe as L in the language use of the Hohoe churches studied. The following examples from the data reveal that some people would like preaching to be done in English instead of Ewe because they consider English as more beautiful, logical and expressive than Ewe:

it's very difficult to speak the Ewe because of the preaching. When you want to preach in the Ewe language you lack vocabulary, you yourself you lack vocabulary to be able to reach the people out (Interview 3. P4).

...yes they enjoy it better, though the majority doesn't understand English well but they are happy. They are shouting amen, praise God, you will hear someone say pastor you are preaching, preach to me! Though if you call that person he can't say anything in English and they can't write (Interview 4. P5).

English is important because you have many words to express exactly what you want to say (Interview 6. P4).

...our Ewe language is such that our vocabulary is not so much developed, and we don't have many words that can express exactly... (Interview 6. P5).

And is like preaching in English is easier for me than preaching in the local language, because there are certain things that can easily be expressed in the English language more than the Ewe (Interview 7. P5).

...Ewe is a little difficult (Interview 9. P6).

...Ewe is in such a way that it has a limitation... So the best for you to flow fluently is English (Focus group 1. Speaker A1).

...so if pastor should stand on the pulpit speaking Ewe and his interpreter rather speaks English it is not fine (Focus group 2. Speaker S1).

The sermon sounds well when pastor preaches in English (questionnaire data)

English makes the message enjoyable (questionnaire data).

1. The sermon 'looks' more interesting in English than in Ewe (questionnaire data).

Wardhaugh (ibid) also observes that the use of H is inappropriate in a circumstance where L should be used. Likewise L is not used instead of H when the situation calls for H. In the data, it was found that there was a consensus among the respondents that the location of the churches is a predominantly Ewe-speaking community. And therefore, the congregations are made up of a large majority of Ewe speakers. Seven out of the ten pastors interviewed have said that if they were to preach in Ewe, the vast majority would understand the sermon better than what holds presently in their churches. All the respondents in the focus group discussions and questionnaires who would like their pastors to preach in Ewe for the interpreter to use English have cited 'understanding of the sermon' as their concern. A few examples from the data will suffice to substantiate this observation:

4.2 From Questionnaire

58 questionnaires were completed. 31 respondents would like it if their pastor were to preach the sermon in Ewe so that the interpreter uses English. Below are some of the reasons they have given:

The majority of the people understand Ewe better than English. It is better to reach out to people in the language they understand. The sermon is not useful to people if they don't really understand

4.2.1 Focus Group 1

There were 5 members in this group. 4 would like it if their pastor were to preach the sermon in Ewe. Below are excerpts from their speeches:

E1: I would say yes, because if you look at the environment where the church is situated, it's among the natives and then most of them are in the church. Though the visitors are in but most of the natives are in and speaking the English they find it difficult understanding... because of the

understanding that's why he is preaching for them

B1: I think yes will do, because like she is saying the understanding is what we are all looking at. If we need communication and the person does not really understand what you are saying, at the end you don't reach the people the way you want it.

C1: ok I will side with my two sisters, because the people here they understand Ewe. Those who don't understand Ewe are just a few about 3 or 5, you can count them.

D1: I'm also saying yes, because you are reaching out to the people and then if you want the people to get the message, then preach to them in the language that they understand.

4.2.2 Focus Group 2

Members of group 2 spoke Ewe during the discussion because most of them could better express their ideas in Ewe. Their speeches were translated by the researcher during the transcription. There were 7 members in this group. 2 would like it if the pastor were to preach in Ewe so that the interpreter uses English. Below are excerpts from the speeches:

S2: on my part, there are some pastors who are not educated but God has called them to teach. So I think that if the pastor does not speak English and someone has to speak English to interpret his message from Ewe, it is the same thing. It does not disgrace the church. Everyone has his own calling.

S7: Yea, it's true because sometimes the interpreters have been deceiving us. They say something different in Ewe from what the pastor says in English.

4.2.3 Focus Group 3

There were 5 members in this group. 2 would like it if their pastor were to preach the sermon in Ewe. The following examples are excerpts from their speeches:

B1: I think yes, he should use the Ewe instead of the English. Because the church is located on an Ewe land and then almost all the people in the church can understand and speak Ewe, and then if he preaches the message it goes directly to the people

A2: I want to add something to refute my own point by saying that it would be good for pastor to preach in Ewe, because the people need to understand the words of the Bible clearly so that they can use those words to pray effectively.



In the circumstance illustrated by the examples above, the use of Ewe (i.e. L) is more appropriate than the use of English (i.e. H) for sermon delivery in the Hohoe churches. However, all the 10 pastors chose English to deliver their sermons.

4.3 Questionnaire Data

Question 8 on the questionnaire was to be answered YES or NO. The question was as follows:

Would you like it if the pastor preaches in Ewe instead of English? (The sermon could be interpreted into English for non-Ewe speakers).

The answers were supposed to reveal respondents’ code preferences between English and Ewe in the delivery of sermons. Those who answered YES have indicated that they would prefer Ewe as the language of preaching; while those who selected NO have indicated that they preferred English.

This part of the analysis sought to investigate what influence factors such as age, gender and socio-economic status had on respondents’ code choices for the preaching of the sermon. Fifty-eight (58) questionnaires were completed by respondents. Twenty-seven (27) respondents selected NO while 31 selected YES. This information is represented in Table 1 below.

Table: 1 The distribution of respondents who selected English as against Ewe, as medium of preaching.

Number	%	Answer
58	100	Yes/No
27	46.6	No
31	53.4	Yes

In the table above, 53.4% of all the respondents would have wanted the pastor to preach the sermon in Ewe, so that it could be interpreted into English for non-Ewe speakers; while 46.6% favoured the current practice of the pastor speaking English while the interpreter speaks Ewe. It is therefore not in the interest of the majority of the congregation that the Hohoe pastors speak English when they preach, but they do so for social identity needs that override the spiritual needs of the majority. And English is not a tool for reaching as many people as possible, but for hyping the social status of the preacher and the church as much as possible.

Table 2 below shows the age distribution of the 27 respondents who chose NO for an answer.

Table 2: Age distribution of those who preferred English to Ewe as medium of preaching.

Age	Frequency	%
17 – 29	20	74.7
Youth		
30 – 50	7	25.9
Adults		
51 – above	0	0
Elderly		
Unknown	0	0
Total	27	100

It can be seen from the table above that the youth are in the vast majority of those who preferred English to Ewe in the Hohoe churches. This picture nearly gives the impression that English is a youth thing in the churches until one examines the table in Table 3 below which represents the age distribution of the 31 respondents who answered YES.

Table 3: Age distribution of those who preferred Ewe to English as medium of preaching.

Age	Frequency	%
17 – 29	19	61.3
Youth		
30 – 50	10	32.2
Adults		
51 – above	0	0
Unknown	2	6.5
Total	31	100

The above table shows that the youth again are in the majority among those who preferred Ewe to English as the medium of preaching. This negates the impression created in table 2 that English is a youth thing.

Therefore age does not appear in the data as a factor in language preference between English and Ewe as mediums of sermon delivery in the Hohoe churches. Education and socio-economic status do not also seem to affect people’s code choice in the study. This observation is so because all the people selected to fill in the questionnaires were educated and belonged to the elite class of their churches, yet their choices or preferences differed vastly.

5. Discussion of the Results

The study has found that in the Hohoe churches that were studied, English is considered the language of the elite while Ewe is the language used by the common people. This is in keeping with the finding of Albakry and Ofori (2011) that the higher the socioeconomic state of the church, the more likely English is used exclusively. And, that the local languages are used in the middle and lower class churches. This finding answers the research question as to why the Hohoe pastors prefer to preach their sermons

in English when the situation actually calls for Ewe. It is because the pastors would like to be seen with their churches as belonging to the elite group in the society. The preachers therefore use English in preaching not only to put themselves in the elite class but also to attract perceived members of that class into the congregation.

The above finding leads to another finding that English and Ewe are virtually in a diglossic relationship in the Hohoe churches. This confirms the (vii) point of Wardhaugh (1986) above, that when two languages are in diglossia the high (H) variety is usually associated with elite while the low (L) is identified with the common people. This finding is, however, in contrast with the finding of Obiri-Yeboah (2019) who did not find diglossia in the multilingual situation in the Victory Bible Church at Nkwantamang.

It was also found that all the pastors were competent speakers of Ewe, but because of the low prestige associated with this language they pretend to have inadequate knowledge of it. They therefore claim better competence in English and cite it as reason for preaching in it instead of in Ewe. Yet they make themselves understood better in Ewe than in English; and are able to correct their interpreters when there is any difficulty in communication. This agrees with Wardhaugh's (1986:88) second point on diglossia that:

The H variety is the prestige variety, but the L has so little prestige that people claim with some pride that they do not know how to speak it as fluently as they can speak the H variety, even though it can be observed that the L is the most widely used variety.

The data revealed that the choice of English is inappropriate in the delivery of sermons in the Hohoe churches. This is because the vast majority of the congregation members would understand the sermon better if it were delivered in Ewe. This agrees with Wardhaugh's first point on diglossia that, 'The use of H is inappropriate in a circumstance where L should be used. Likewise L is not used instead of H when the situation calls for H.'

The interpreters were also found to have some problems. Most of them were competent speakers of Ewe, but they were not equally competent in English. In addition, none of them had had any formal training in interpretation or translation. These deficiencies affect the effectiveness of the interpretation, so that the sermons

change in meaning by the time the interpreters finish speaking. The pastors confirmed their awareness of this problem, but the need to use English overrides such challenges.

A few of the pastors actually thought that most of their congregation members understood English better than Ewe. And they also had a perception that most of their members were pleased with English as the medium of preaching. The data, however, revealed that their thinking was completely wrong, and that the majority of their members were wary of their pastors' preaching in English. It was also revealed that the majority of the congregation did not understand most of the sermon because they were not as knowledgeable in the English language as their pastors presumed.

6. Conclusion

It might help the Hohoe churches, as a matter of effective communication, for their pastors to preach the sermon in Ewe so that they can reach as many people directly as possible with their message. This could be an important cue from what the radio and television stations are doing in the country as observed by Anyidoho and Dakubu (2008).

There was a consensus among the research participants that one of the goals of preaching should be that the audience understand the message. This was probably the reason why the missionaries who first brought the Christian message to Ghana (the Gold Coast, at the time) decided, as a matter of importance, to learn the local languages and reduce their materials into writing in some of the local languages (Agyekum, 2012). Therefore, if the compulsive use of English could impede the congregation's understanding of the message then the pastors might want to review their language attitude and practices in church.

References

- Agyekum, K. (2012). Documentation and preservation of the Akan language. *Basic Research Journal of Education Research and Review*. Vol. 1(2) pp. 23-37. Retrieved on 22 May 2014 from <http://www.basicresearchjournals.org/education/pdf/kofi.pdf>
- Akrofi, A. K. (2002). First-grade classroom and home English literacy practices in an urban Ghanaian speech community: An ethnographic case study. Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University.
- Albakry, M.A. and Ofori, D.M. (2011). Ghanaian English and code-switching in Catholic churches. *World Englishes*, 30: 515 – 532. Retrieved on 31 July 2012



from

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2011.01726.x/full>

- Assamoah-Gyadu, J. K. (2005). Anointing through the screen: Neo-pentecostalism and televised Christianity in Ghana. *Studies in World Christianity*, 11(1), 1-28.
- Assimeng, M. (1995). *Salvation, social crisis and the human condition*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Benyah, F. (2020). "Selling God": Contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity in the Marketplace. *Journal of World Christianity*, 10(2), 170-196. doi:10.5325/jworlchri.10.2.0170 Retrieved 20 November, 2020.
- Boadi, L. (1976). Mother Tongue Education in Ghana. In Ayo Bamgbose (Ed.). *Mother Tongue Education: The West African Experience*. London: Hodder and Stoughton. Pp. 83-112
- Dakubu, M. E. Kropp. (1997). *Korle Meets the Sea, a sociolinguistic history of Accra*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dyer, J. (2007). Language and identity. In Carmen Llamas, Louise Mullany, and Peter Stockwell (Eds), *The Routledge companion to sociolinguistics*. Pp. 101-108
- Edwards, J. (2009). Language and identity. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Retrieved on 21 Nov. 2014 from onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0599
- Fasold, R. (1984). *The sociolinguistics of society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Fishman, J. A. (1972). *The sociology of language*. Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.
- Forson, B. (1979). Code-switching in Akan-English bilingualism. Doctoral Dissertation, UCLA.
- Mendoza-Denton. (2002). Language and identity. In J.K. Chambers, Peter Trudgill and Natalie Schilling-Estes (Eds), *The Handbook of Language Variation and change*, pp.475-499. Oxford: Blackwell
- onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470756591.ch19
- McWilliam, H. O. A. & Kwamena-Poh, M. A. (1975). *The Development of Education in Ghana*. 2nd revised edition. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivation for code switching evidence from Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Obiri-Yeboah, M. A. (2019) Multilingualism at church: language practices in a Ghanaian context. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 20:4, 403-

417, DOI: [10.1080/14664208.2019.1582946](https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2019.1582946). Retrieved 20 Nov. 2020

- Quainoo, J. E. (2011). Language, Power and Ideology: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Advertisement Sermons of Charismatic Preachers in Ghana. Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, University of Ghana.
- Saah, K.K. (1986). Language use and attitudes in Ghana. *Anthropological Linguistics*. 28, 367- 377.
- Wardhaugh, R. (1986). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

Appendix I: Participant Churches and Pastors

- THREE TOWN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
Pastor information
Age: 57yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Avatime, Ewe, English
Education: Bachelor of Arts degree. University of Ghana
This is the smaller of the two Assemblies of God churches in the Hohoe Township. It has a membership of about 120 people with about 95% native speakers of Ewe. The pastor is bilingual, speaking Ewe as well as his native Avatime language. He has one associate pastor who is an L1 speaker of Ewe. A wooden structure that can sit about 300 persons serves as auditorium and classrooms for the church's nursery and kindergarten with part of it made into offices. Other classrooms are attached for the primary school.
- FULL GOSPEL CHURCH INTERNATIONAL
Pastor information
Age: 47yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, Akan, English.
Education: Pursuing a degree in Theology at Pentecost University.
This church is headquartered in Accra with other branches all over the country and beyond. The Hohoe branch has a membership of about 90 persons with about 98% Ewe speakers. The pastor is also an L1 speaker of Ewe. The church worships in a large hall covered at the sides with galvanised roofing sheets; it is an abandoned classroom. There are three other classrooms in the premises and these are also used by other churches as auditorium.
- EAGLES CHAPEL
Pastor information
Age: 48 Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, Twi, Ga, English
Education: Dip. In Administration, Dip. In Biblical Studies.
The current pastor is the founder of this church. The size of the congregation is about 100 people. About 90% are native speakers of Ewe including the founder and his two associates. The church worships in a wooden structure which is also one of the classrooms for the church's school.
- FAITH TEMPLE CHURCH
Pastor information
Age: 58yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, English
Education: Polytechnic graduate
An independent church with the current pastor as the founder. Members of the congregation have built homes close to the church, thus forming a community which they have named 'Oklahoma'. This name reflects the founder's admiration of the renowned evangelist, T. L. Osborn, who was based in Oklahoma City in the United States of America. There is a massive auditorium under construction. Part of this edifice is roofed and the church meets there for worship. The pastor says there is no one in the church who cannot speak Ewe. The church has over 200 members.
- GREAT COMMISSION CHURCH INTERNATIONAL
Pastor information
Age: 60yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, Kabri, English.
Education: Middle School Leaver.
This church is a branch of a larger church organisation with other branches all over the country and beyond. The membership is close to 200 people. The pastor is not aware of anyone in the church who does not speak Ewe. He himself is an L1 speaker. The church has a well-built auditorium that can sit about 400 persons and it is also used as a classroom for the church's primary school.
- HOLY GHOST AND FIRE MINISTRY INTERNATIONAL
Pastor information
Age: 47yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, French, English
Education: Diploma from Ghana Institute of Languages
The church is headquartered in Hohoe where the founder resides. The church has a few branches in other towns in the Volta Region of Ghana and in Togo. The Hohoe branch has a membership of about 160 people. About 98% of the congregation can speak Ewe. The pastor is also an L1 speaker of Ewe. The church worships in a wooden structure, and there is an auditorium under construction.
- PEREZ CHAPEL INTERNATIONAL
Pastor information
Age: 48yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, English
Education: BSc. Admin. University of Ghana
Until recently, this church was known as The Word Miracle Church International. Headquartered in Accra, it has branches all over the country and abroad. The Hohoe branch has a membership of about 150 with about 95% Ewe speakers. The pastor is also an L1 speaker of Ewe. The church worships in a rented hall that looks too small for the congregation. They run two worship services on Sundays because of the small space. They are building their own auditorium at a different location in the town.
- SURE FOUNDATION CHAPEL INTERNATIONAL
Pastor information
Age: 43yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, Twi, English.
Education: Diploma in Theology, Benson Idahosa University, Nigeria.
It is headquartered in Hohoe where the founder lives. It has some other branches in other towns. The size of the congregation is about 250 people. The pastor estimates that about 98% can speak Ewe as their mother tongue. He is an L1 Ewe speaker as well. The auditorium is a long wooden structure that can accommodate close to 350 people.
- TARGET CHAPEL
Pastor information
Age: 44yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, Akan, Dangbe, English.
Education: BSc. University of Ghana
The church originated in Hohoe where the founder lives. It has one other branch at a different part of the town. It also has branches in a few other towns. The membership is about 100 people with about 93% Ewe speakers. The pastor also speaks Ewe as his mother tongue. The church meets under a galvanised roofing structure supported by metal pillars. The sides are open, with some cement blocks packed nearby which indicate that walls would soon be constructed under the roof.
- WORLD MISSIONARY CHURCH
Pastor information
Age: 54yrs Sex: Male
Languages: Ewe, Twi, English.
Education: Polytechnic graduate.
Headquartered in Hohoe where the founder lives, the church has six other branches in other towns in the country. The size of the congregation is about 80 people with about 90% Ewe speakers. The pastor is a native speaker of Ewe. They worship in a wooden structure constructed by the church. The church also has a private basic school but its location is different from where the church is located.

Appendix II: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is only a data collecting tool for an academic research. It is not for any other purpose. Names are not required, so that respondents can remain anonymous.

- Age:
- Male or Female:
- Hometown:
- Occupation:
- Languages spoken apart from English:
- In your church, why is the sermon interpreted into Ewe?
- Do you think English only should be used in the preaching?
YES NO
- Would you like it if the pastor preaches in Ewe instead of English? (The sermon could be interpreted into English for non-Ewe speakers).
YES NO
- What is your reason for your answer in (8) above?
- What percentage of your church congregation do you think understand Ewe better than English?