

THE ENGLISH BIBLE: TRANSLATION AND RELIGIOUS UNITY AMONG CHRISTIANS IN MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITIES IN THE FCT, ABUJA

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the English Bible in promoting religious unity among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in multilingual communities across the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Specifically, it examines the extent to which the English Bible facilitates joint worship, reduces linguistic communication barriers, facilitates the sharing of biblical teachings across linguistic groups, contributes to consistency in Christian doctrine, promotes religious unity, and identifies challenges experienced by Christians who are not

proficient in English. The study adopted a mixed-methods descriptive survey design. Using multistage sampling, 400 questionnaires were administered, of which 338 valid responses were obtained, representing an 84.5% response rate; 36 respondents also participated in the qualitative open-ended component. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and mean scores, while open-ended responses were analysed thematically. Findings revealed a high overall perception of the English Bible as a unifying religious language (weighted mean = 4.22). It facilitated joint worship ($M = 4.31$), reduced communication barriers ($M = 4.17$), supported cross-linguistic sharing of biblical teachings ($M = 4.09$), and promoted doctrinal consistency ($M = 4.32$). Qualitative findings identified common worship, interethnic communication, doctrinal unity, Bible study and understanding as major unifying functions. However, limited English proficiency created difficulties in comprehension, participation, cultural meaning and independent interpretation. The study concludes that the English Bible promotes unity-in-diversity as a shared religious communicative resource, while complementary indigenous-language practices can enhance inclusive participation and access.

Keywords: English Bible; Bible translation; religious unity; multilingualism; FCT Abuja.

Introduction

Translation is fundamentally concerned with the communication of meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries. It involves more than the substitution of

words between languages; it requires the translator to consider context, culture, communicative purpose, audience and the intended effect of the target text. In multilingual societies, translation can therefore facilitate communication among people who do not share a common first language. This communicative dimension makes translation particularly relevant to religious communication, where sacred texts and teachings have to be communicated across diverse linguistic and cultural communities.

The Bible occupies a distinctive position in the history and practice of translation. Christianity has expanded across linguistic communities partly through the translation of biblical texts into languages understood by different peoples. Bible translation has consequently been associated with evangelisation, literacy, religious instruction, cultural interaction and the development of written languages. In the Nigerian context, the history of Christianity is closely connected with the translation and dissemination of biblical materials in indigenous languages, while English has remained an important language of wider communication and Christian education. Taiwo (2009) notes that English developed an important interethnic communicative function in Nigeria, particularly within the country's multilingual and multiethnic environment. This historical and sociolinguistic position makes the English Bible particularly relevant to an investigation of religious communication among linguistically diverse Christians.

Nigeria is one of the world's highly multilingual societies. Christians in Nigerian urban centres frequently

worship alongside people whose indigenous languages differ from theirs. The Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, is especially suitable for examining this situation because of its cosmopolitan population and the movement of people from different parts of Nigeria into the capital. Within such communities, English can provide a common linguistic medium through which Christians participate in worship, Bible study, preaching and other religious activities.

The English Bible is therefore important not only as a religious document but also as a translated communicative resource. Through translation, biblical messages originally expressed in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek have become available in English and subsequently accessible to a wide range of Christian communities. The present study does not, however, assume that English necessarily replaces indigenous languages. Rather, it examines how English and indigenous languages may perform complementary functions within multilingual Christian communities.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that Bible translation is strongly influenced by sociolinguistic realities. Bossers (2024) examined the limited use of the Jula Bible in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, and found that the availability of a Bible translation does not automatically guarantee its use. Language attitudes, language ideologies, and demographic factors such as age and gender can influence the reception and use of translated Scripture. The study therefore highlights the importance of considering translation need, user preferences and the sociolinguistic context when developing and evaluating

Bible translations. Similarly, Are (2025), examining Bible translation projects in Nigeria, argues that sociolinguistic factors should be given greater attention in decisions concerning Bible translation into Nigerian languages. The study identifies language politics and inadequate sociolinguistic research as issues that can affect translation decisions.

The relationship between translation, language and culture is also evident in recent African scholarship. Aikins (2025) examines indigenous-language integration in African Bible translation and relates mother-tongue engagement to cultural identity, dignity, belonging and unity. Ramantswana (2024), examining Tshivenda Bible translations, similarly demonstrates that Bible translation can influence the way language and culture are understood and reproduced. These studies reinforce the view that Bible translation should be examined as a linguistic, cultural and social practice rather than merely as the transfer of biblical words from one language into another.

The sociolinguistic dimension of translation is also prominent in the work of Nwike and his collaborators. Nwike and Eze's study of social identity in multilingual subtitling demonstrates that code-switching and politeness encode social roles, emotions, cultural backgrounds and interpersonal relationships, and that translation may lose these meanings when sociolinguistic features are simplified or omitted (Nwike & Eze, 2024). Their work on the translation of Igbo proverbs likewise demonstrates that cultural context and communicative function are important to effective translation (Eze

&Nwike, 2024/2025). These observations are applicable to religious translation because biblical communication also involves linguistic, cultural and social meanings.

Nwike, Ndubuisi and Nnaka (2025) provide a particularly relevant perspective for the present study. Their research examines translation and language mediation in multilingual Nigerian urban centres, including Abuja, and demonstrates the importance of translation in facilitating communication among linguistically diverse populations. Their study is particularly useful to the present research because it establishes that translation can operate as a mechanism of language mediation within multilingual urban communities. The present study extends this perspective into the religious domain by examining whether the English Bible performs a comparable mediating function among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds.

Nwike et al.'s work on subtitling also demonstrates that translation involves intercultural communication and the preservation of meaning and cultural information. Nwike, Olaide and Obiora (2021) found that translation and subtitling require attention to cultural meaning and contextual accuracy, drawing on Nida's equivalence framework. Similarly, Nwike (2021) demonstrates through intersemiotic translation that translation can involve the transfer of meaning between different representational systems. These studies support the broader position adopted in this research that translation should be understood as a communicative process whose success depends on meaning, context and users.

The relevance of translation to religious unity becomes clearer when Christianity is considered within Nigeria's multilingual environment. Where members of a congregation do not share the same indigenous language, a common language can facilitate participation in collective religious activities. The English Bible may consequently provide a shared textual reference for biblical reading, preaching, worship and Bible study. It can enable Christians from different linguistic backgrounds to encounter the same biblical passages through a common linguistic medium. However, the unifying role of the English Bible should not be interpreted as evidence that indigenous languages are unnecessary. Indigenous languages can continue to perform important cultural, emotional and communal functions. The use of English may instead represent a form of linguistic complementarity in which English provides wider interethnic communication while indigenous languages maintain local cultural and identity functions. Bossers (2024) demonstrates the importance of considering users' language attitudes and sociolinguistic preferences when assessing the role of translated Scripture.

The present study therefore examines the English Bible from a Translation Studies perspective, focusing specifically on its relationship with religious unity among Christians in multilingual communities in the FCT, Abuja. The study is concerned with four practical dimensions of this relationship: joint worship, reduction of communication barriers, cross-linguistic transmission of biblical teachings, and doctrinal consistency. It also investigates respondents' own descriptions of the ways

through which the English Bible promotes religious unity. The study is significant because existing research has examined Bible translation, indigenous languages, cultural identity, language attitudes and translation practices, but relatively little empirical attention has been directed towards the English Bible as a shared religious communication resource among Christians from different Nigerian linguistic backgrounds in Abuja. The present study seeks to address this gap.

The general objective of the study is to examine the role of the English Bible in promoting religious unity among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in multilingual communities in the FCT, Abuja. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the extent to which the English Bible facilitates joint worship among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in multilingual communities in the FCT, Abuja; determine the extent to which the English Bible reduces linguistic communication barriers during Christian worship in multilingual congregations; assess the role of the English Bible in facilitating the sharing of biblical teachings across different linguistic groups; examine the extent to which the English Bible contributes to consistency in Christian doctrine among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds; and identify the perceived ways through which the English Bible promotes religious unity among Christians in multilingual communities in the FCT, Abuja.

Corresponding to these objectives, the study asks the following research questions. Questions (i)–(iv) are structured questions, whereas questions (v)– (vi) are

open-ended and allow respondents to express, in their own words, their perceptions of the ways through which the English Bible promotes religious unity among Christians in multilingual communities in the FCT, Abuja.

- i. To what extent does the English Bible facilitate joint worship among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in multilingual communities in the FCT, Abuja?
- ii. To what extent does the English Bible reduce linguistic communication barriers during Christian worship in multilingual congregations?
- iii. What role does the English Bible play in facilitating the sharing of biblical teachings across different linguistic groups?
- iv. To what extent does the English Bible contribute to consistency in Christian doctrine among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds?
- v. In what perceived ways does the English Bible promote religious unity among Christians in multilingual communities in the FCT, Abuja?
- vi. What challenges does the English Bible pose for Christians who are not proficient in English?

The study focuses on the English Bible, translation and religious unity among Christians in multilingual communities in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Geographically, the study covers Christian communities across all the six Area Councils of the FCT, namely Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Bwari Area Council, Gwagwalada Area Council, Kuje Area Council, Abaji Area Council, and Kwali Area Council.

Conceptually, the study is situated at the intersection of Translation Studies, sociolinguistics and religious communication, examining the English Bible both as a translated biblical form and as a shared religious communication resource within a multilingual environment. The study specifically examines shared worship, reduction of linguistic communication barriers, cross-linguistic dissemination of biblical teachings and consistency in Christian doctrine, while also considering respondents' open-ended perceptions of the ways in which the English Bible contributes to religious unity. Although indigenous languages and indigenous-language Bibles are relevant to the study, they are considered principally to understand the position and function of English within the multilingual Christian environment. The study does not undertake a comprehensive textual comparison of all English Bible versions and Nigerian indigenous-language Bible translations. Geographically, the study is restricted to the six Area Councils of the FCT and therefore provides coverage across the Federal Capital Territory, while the findings are interpreted within the context of the Christian communities and respondents included in the study. The study is also delimited to the contemporary use and perception of the English Bible, while historical developments in Bible translation are discussed only where necessary to provide context for the present linguistic and religious situation.

The theoretical foundation of the study is provided by Skopos Theory, Dynamic/Functional Equivalence Theory and the Sociolinguistic Perspective. Skopos Theory, developed within the functionalist tradition by

Hans J. Vermeer and subsequently developed by scholars such as Christiane Nord (Vermeer, 1989; Nord, 2018), views translation as a purposeful communicative activity. The theory is appropriate because the study is concerned not simply with the existence of the English Bible but with what the translated Bible does within a multilingual Christian community. Its purpose and communicative function can therefore be examined in relation to joint worship, Bible study, the communication of biblical teachings and the maintenance of a common doctrinal reference. Skopos Theory has also been applied to Bible translation, with Esala (2013) demonstrating its relevance to the Likwɔnl Bible translation project, particularly in relation to purpose, users and communicative context. More recent functionalist Bible-translation scholarship similarly emphasises purpose, context and loyalty in evaluating translation decisions (Houston, 2023).

Dynamic/Functional Equivalence Theory, associated principally with Nida (1964) and Nida and Taber (1969), complements Skopos Theory by emphasising the communication of meaning and the response of the target audience rather than rigid word-for-word correspondence. This perspective is relevant because the effectiveness of the English Bible as a translated religious text depends partly on whether its intended meanings are accessible to Christians from different linguistic backgrounds. The theory also supports attention to communicative effect, contextual meaning and audience response. Nwike, Olaide and Obiora (2021), for example, applied Nida's equivalence framework alongside subtitling strategies to examine the

transfer of meaning and cultural information in Igbo audiovisual translation.

The Sociolinguistic Perspective provides the social and linguistic context within which translation operates. Language is closely connected with identity, culture, social relationships and group membership. In a multilingual environment, the choice of a language for religious communication can consequently have social consequences. This perspective enables the study to examine how English operates alongside indigenous languages within Christian communities. Nwike and Eze (2024) demonstrate that sociolinguistic features such as code-switching and politeness carry meanings related to identity, emotion, social distance and cultural relationships, while Nwike, Ndubuisi and Nnaka (2025) demonstrate the role of translation as language mediation within multilingual Nigerian urban environments. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide an appropriate foundation for examining the English Bible as a translated religious resource whose purpose, communicative effectiveness and social function may contribute to communication and unity among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds.

In the empirical studies, Are (2025) examined emerging issues in Bible translation into Nigerian languages, with particular attention to selected translation projects. The study highlights the importance of sociolinguistic research in determining which Nigerian languages should receive Bible translations. It also identifies language politics and linguistic sentiments as factors that can influence translation decisions.

The study is relevant because it demonstrates that Bible translation in Nigeria cannot be separated from the sociolinguistic environment. However, Are focuses principally on Bible-translation projects and target-language selection. In contrast, the present study focuses on the English Bible as a shared religious communication resource and its contribution to religious unity in Abuja.

Bossers (2024) investigated the limited use of the Jula Bible in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso. The study demonstrates that the availability of a translated Bible does not necessarily mean that the translation will be widely used. Language attitudes, ideologies, demographic factors and users' preferences can influence Scripture use.

The study is relevant because it establishes the importance of considering users and their sociolinguistic environment in Bible-translation research. The present study extends this concern to the Nigerian context by examining how Christians from different linguistic backgrounds perceive the English Bible's unifying function.

Aikins (2025) examined cultural identity and indigenous-language integration in African Bible translation. The study links mother-tongue engagement with cultural identity, dignity, belonging, resilience and unity. Its relevance lies in demonstrating that Bible translation has consequences beyond linguistic transfer. Nevertheless, Aikins focuses mainly on indigenous-

language integration and cultural identity, while the present study investigates the role of English as a shared religious language among multilingual Christians.

Nwike, Ndubuisi and Nnaka (2025) investigated the impact of migration on translation practices and language mediation in multilingual Nigerian urban centres, including Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt. Their mixed-methods study demonstrates the role of translation and language mediation in facilitating communication among linguistically diverse urban populations.

The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it provides empirical evidence from Abuja itself. However, its focus is general multilingual communication and migration rather than religious communication. The present study extends the argument into Christian religious contexts by investigating whether the English Bible functions as a shared linguistic resource that promotes religious unity.

From the above, the four studies demonstrate that contemporary research has addressed Bible translation in Nigeria, sociolinguistic factors affecting Scripture use, indigenous-language integration, cultural identity and translation-mediated communication in Nigerian urban centres. Nevertheless, there remains a gap concerning the specific role of the English Bible as a unifying religious language among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in Abuja.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating four measurable dimensions: joint worship, communication barriers, cross-linguistic Bible teaching and doctrinal consistency, and by examining respondents' open-ended descriptions of the English Bible's unifying function.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a mixed-methods descriptive survey design to examine the role of the English Bible in promoting religious unity among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The quantitative component examined respondents' perceptions and experiences, while the qualitative component provided detailed explanations of their views.

The study was conducted across the six Area Councils of the FCT: Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Abaji, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje and Kwali. The multilingual and culturally diverse nature of the FCT provided an appropriate setting for investigating English as a common language of Christian religious communication.

The population comprised adult Christians from diverse linguistic backgrounds who were sufficiently familiar with the English Bible. Four hundred questionnaires were administered, of which 338 were validly completed and returned, representing an 84.5% response rate. A multistage sampling procedure was used to obtain respondents across the six Area Councils, while 36

respondents were purposively selected for the qualitative open-ended component.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing demographic and Likert-scale items as well as open-ended Questions V and VI. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation, and its reliability was established before the main data collection. The quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and other appropriate descriptive statistics, while the open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis through coding and grouping of recurring themes.

The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a broader understanding of the English Bible's role in facilitating communication, participation and unity among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds. Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, respondents were informed of the purpose of the research, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

Results

The English Bible as a Unifying Religious Language

The study examined the ways in which the English Bible functions as a unifying religious language among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in multilingual communities across the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Four questionnaire items (Items 1–4) examined its perceived roles in facilitating joint worship, reducing

communication barriers, enabling the sharing of biblical teachings across linguistic groups, and maintaining consistency in Christian doctrine. Item 5 was an open-ended question that provided respondents with an opportunity to describe, in their own words, the perceived ways through which the English Bible promotes religious unity.

Table 1: The English Bible as a Unifying Religious Language (N = 338)

S / N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
1	The English Bible allows Christians who speak different languages to worship together effectively.	159 (47.0)	152 (45.0)	6 (1.8)	15 (4.4)	6 (1.8)	4.31	0.855	High Perception
2	The English Bible reduces communication barriers during church services in multilingual congregations.	126 (37.3)	177 (52.4)	13 (3.8)	10 (3.0)	12 (3.6)	4.17	0.907	High Perception
3	Bible teachings are more easily shared across linguistic groups when presented in English rather than indigenous languages.	91 (26.9)	209 (61.8)	20 (5.9)	12 (3.6)	6 (1.8)	4.09	0.790	High Perception

S / N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
4	The English Bible helps maintain consistency in Christian doctrine across different denominations in Nigeria.	157 (46.4)	155 (45.9)	10 (3.0)	10 (3.0)	6 (1.8)	4.32	0.819	High Perception

Source: Research Report, 2026 | Weighted Average Mean = $16.89 / 4 = 4.22$ (High Perception)



Figure 1

The results in Table 1 indicate a high overall perception of the English Bible as a unifying religious language, with a weighted average mean of 4.22. This indicates that the respondents generally agreed that the English Bible performs important unifying functions among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds.

Item 1 recorded a mean of 4.31 ($SD = 0.855$), with 311 respondents (92.0%) selecting either strongly agree or agree. This indicates that the majority of respondents perceived the English Bible as enabling Christians who speak different languages to participate effectively in joint worship.

Item 2 recorded a mean of 4.17 ($SD = 0.907$), with 303 respondents (89.7%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that the English Bible reduces communication barriers during church services in multilingual congregations. The finding indicates a high perception that English provides a common medium for religious communication where members of a congregation do not share the same indigenous language.

Item 3 recorded a mean of 4.09 ($SD = 0.790$), with 300 respondents (88.7%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that Bible teachings are more easily shared across linguistic groups when presented in English rather than indigenous languages. This indicates a high perception of English as a medium for communicating biblical teachings across linguistic boundaries.

Item 4 recorded the highest mean of 4.32 ($SD = 0.819$), with 312 respondents (92.3%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that the English Bible helps maintain consistency in Christian doctrine across different denominations in Nigeria. This was the strongest perceived unifying function identified by the four quantitative items.

Overall, the quantitative findings demonstrate that respondents perceived the English Bible as serving four

related unifying functions: facilitating joint worship, reducing communication barriers, enabling the cross-linguistic transmission of biblical teachings, and providing a common textual basis for doctrinal consistency.

Results: Thematic analysis of the open-ended responses: *Items 5 and 6 (N = 36)*

How does the English Bible function as a unifying language in your church or Christian community? — Item 5 (N = 36)

Table 2

Theme / Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Common language for worship	10	27.8
Helps interethnic communication	8	22.2
Encourages doctrinal unity	7	19.4
Facilitates Bible study	6	16.7
Promotes understanding	5	13.9
Total	36	100

Source: Research Report, 2026

The distribution indicates that the most frequently identified function of the English Bible was its role as a common language for worship (10 respondents, 27.8%). This was followed by its role in facilitating communication among Christians from different ethnic

and linguistic backgrounds (8, 22.2%). A further 7 respondents (19.4%) associated the English Bible with doctrinal unity, while 6 (16.7%) emphasised its usefulness in Bible study. The remaining 5 respondents (13.9%) highlighted its contribution to general understanding of biblical teachings.

What challenges does the English Bible pose for Christians who are not proficient in English?— *Item 6 (N = 36)*

Table 3

Theme/challenge	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Difficulty understanding biblical messages	12	33.3
Limited participation in worship and Bible study	9	25.0
Loss or reduction of culturally specific meanings	7	19.4
Dependence on others for interpretation and explanation	8	22.2
Total	36	100

Source: Research Report, 2026

The responses to Item 6 show that difficulty in understanding biblical messages was the most prominent challenge, reported by 12 respondents (33.3%). This was followed by limited participation in worship and Bible study (9, 25.0%) and dependence on pastors, interpreters, family members or other Christians for

interpretation and explanation (8, 22.2%). A further 7 respondents (19.4%) identified loss or reduction of culturally specific meanings as a challenge.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate that the English Bible performs an important communicative and unifying function among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The quantitative questionnaire responses and the qualitative open-ended responses converge in showing that English provides a shared linguistic medium through which Christians with different indigenous languages can participate in worship, Bible study, preaching and other religious activities. At the same time, the findings reveal that the unifying function of English is not without limitations, particularly for Christians whose proficiency in English is limited.

The questionnaire findings indicate a generally positive perception of the English Bible as a medium of religious communication across linguistic boundaries. Respondents' agreement with the relevant questionnaire items suggests that the English Bible enables Christians from different linguistic groups to access a common biblical text and participate in shared religious activities. This finding is consistent with the sociolinguistic role of English in Nigeria as a language of wider communication. In a multilingual environment such as the FCT, where Christians may have different linguistic backgrounds, a shared language is necessary for

communication in contexts where no single indigenous language is commonly understood by all participants. English consequently provides a practical linguistic bridge between members of linguistically diverse congregations.

The quantitative findings are further supported by the responses to the first open-ended question. The most frequently identified theme was English as a common language for worship, accounting for 10 respondents (27.8%). Respondents explained that English enables Christians from different linguistic backgrounds to participate in Bible reading, preaching, prayer and other worship activities. This finding demonstrates that the unifying function of the English Bible extends beyond the written text itself. The English biblical text becomes part of a broader religious communicative system in which members can listen to sermons, read biblical passages, respond to teachings and participate in collective worship through a shared language.

The second major theme, facilitation of interethnic communication, was identified by 8 respondents (22.2%). This finding is particularly significant in the FCT because of the area's highly multilingual and multiethnic population. Christians who do not share an indigenous language can use English to communicate about biblical teachings and participate in common religious activities. The English Bible therefore contributes to interaction across ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Rather than requiring members to abandon their indigenous languages, English provides an

additional linguistic resource through which different groups can interact within the religious domain.

This finding supports the concept of unity-in-diversity. The study does not suggest that English replaces indigenous Nigerian languages or that linguistic diversity disappears within Christian communities. Instead, English creates a shared communicative space within which speakers of different languages can interact while maintaining their respective linguistic identities. The English Bible thus functions as a lingua franca that facilitates religious interaction without necessarily producing linguistic uniformity.

The questionnaire findings relating to shared understanding of Christian teachings and doctrinal unity are also reinforced by the open-ended responses. Seven respondents (19.4%) specifically identified doctrinal unity as a unifying function of the English Bible. The use of a common English biblical text enables Christians from different linguistic backgrounds to refer to the same passages when discussing Christian teachings. This shared textual reference is important because religious communication often depends on common sources of authority. When members can locate and discuss the same biblical passages, linguistic differences become less restrictive to collective religious discussion.

However, the finding should not be interpreted to mean that the English Bible eliminates denominational or theological differences. Rather, the common English text provides a shared communicative and textual platform through which Christians can discuss their beliefs. The

English Bible can therefore facilitate communication and mutual understanding even where differences in interpretation or denominational doctrine remain.

The questionnaire findings concerning Bible study and religious understanding are similarly reflected in the qualitative responses. Six respondents (16.7%) stated that the English Bible facilitates Bible study, while five respondents (13.9%) emphasised its contribution to understanding. These findings indicate that the unifying role of the English Bible is not limited to formal Sunday worship. It also operates in smaller and more interactive religious contexts, including Bible study groups, Sunday school, prayer meetings and discussions about Christian teachings. A common language allows members to engage with the same biblical material and exchange their interpretations despite differences in their indigenous languages.

The convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings strengthens the reliability of the study's central observation. The questionnaire provides evidence of the respondents' general perceptions, while the open-ended responses explain *how* and *why* the English Bible is perceived as unifying. The quantitative results establish the prevalence of the perception, whereas the qualitative responses provide contextual explanations of the mechanisms through which this perceived unity is achieved. The two forms of evidence therefore complement rather than contradict one another.

Nevertheless, the findings concerning the challenges of the English Bible introduce an important qualification to

its unifying role. The quantitative responses indicate that the benefits associated with the use of English are not necessarily experienced equally by all Christians. This is strongly supported by the responses to the second open-ended question, which identified four major challenges: difficulty understanding biblical messages, limited participation in worship and Bible study, loss or reduction of culturally specific meanings, and dependence on others for interpretation and explanation.

The most frequently identified challenge was difficulty understanding biblical messages, reported by 12 respondents (33.3%). Respondents explained that Christians with limited English proficiency may experience difficulties understanding biblical passages, sermons and theological explanations. This finding demonstrates that the use of a common language does not automatically guarantee equal access to religious meaning. English can unite those who possess sufficient proficiency while simultaneously creating difficulties for those who do not.

This distinction is important for interpreting the quantitative results. A respondent may agree that the English Bible promotes unity because it provides a common language, while another respondent with limited English proficiency may experience the same language as an obstacle to comprehension. The apparent tension is therefore not necessarily contradictory. Rather, it illustrates the dual role of English as both a bridge and a barrier, depending on the linguistic competence of the individual user.

The second challenge, limited participation in worship and Bible study, was identified by 9 respondents (25.0%). This finding suggests that language proficiency affects not only understanding but also active participation. Christians who have difficulty following English may be less able to contribute to Bible discussions, respond to questions, interpret passages independently or participate fully in group activities. Consequently, linguistic accessibility is an important component of religious inclusion.

The third challenge, dependence on others for interpretation and explanation, was reported by 8 respondents (22.2%). Christians with limited English proficiency may depend on pastors, interpreters, family members or fellow worshippers to explain biblical passages. Although such assistance can reduce the immediate effect of the language barrier, it may also limit independent access to biblical knowledge. The individual becomes dependent on another person's explanation before fully engaging with the religious message.

The fourth challenge, loss or reduction of culturally specific meanings, was reported by 7 respondents (19.4%). This finding highlights the close relationship between language and culture. Translation into English can make biblical texts accessible across linguistic boundaries, but some meanings, expressions, metaphors and cultural associations may not be fully represented or immediately understood by speakers whose cultural experiences are grounded in indigenous Nigerian

languages. Thus, linguistic accessibility and cultural accessibility are not always identical.

The findings consequently point to an important distinction between communication across languages and complete equivalence of meaning across languages. English makes interethnic religious communication possible, but this does not mean that every biblical concept carries the same cultural and interpretive significance for every Christian. Indigenous languages can provide additional cultural and semantic resources for understanding religious concepts. The use of English should therefore be understood as complementary to, rather than necessarily superior to, the use of indigenous languages in Christian communication.

The combined questionnaire and open-ended findings therefore suggest that the English Bible has a significant role in promoting religious unity among Christians in the FCT, Abuja, but that this role is mediated by English proficiency and linguistic diversity. English provides a practical common language for Christians who otherwise have different linguistic backgrounds, thereby facilitating worship, interethnic communication, Bible study and discussion of Christian teachings. However, where proficiency is inadequate, English may restrict comprehension, participation, cultural interpretation and independent access to biblical teachings.

The findings have broader implications for multilingual Christian communities in Nigeria. Religious unity need not require linguistic uniformity. A more inclusive approach would recognize the value of English as a

lingua franca while also supporting the use of indigenous languages and interpretation where necessary. Such an approach would preserve the communicative advantages of English while reducing the exclusionary effects experienced by Christians with limited English proficiency.

Overall, the convergence of the quantitative and qualitative evidence supports the conclusion that the English Bible functions as an important linguistic bridge among Christians from diverse linguistic backgrounds in the FCT. Its contribution to unity derives from its ability to provide a shared textual and communicative medium. At the same time, the findings demonstrate that genuine religious inclusion requires more than the provision of a common language; it requires ensuring that Christians have meaningful access to the biblical message regardless of their level of English proficiency or indigenous linguistic background. The English Bible therefore promotes unity-in-diversity most effectively when its lingua-franca function is complemented by multilingual practices that preserve comprehension, participation and cultural meaning.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of the English Bible in promoting religious unity among Christians from different linguistic backgrounds in the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The findings from the questionnaire and open-ended responses demonstrate that the English Bible serves as an important shared linguistic and textual resource

within multilingual Christian communities. By providing a common medium for Bible reading, preaching, worship, Bible study and religious discussion, English enables Christians who speak different indigenous languages to participate in common religious activities.

The quantitative findings indicate a generally positive perception of the English Bible as a unifying medium, while the open-ended responses provide further explanation of this perception. Respondents identified its major unifying functions as providing a common language for worship, facilitating interethnic communication, encouraging doctrinal unity, supporting Bible study and promoting mutual understanding. These findings demonstrate that the English Bible contributes to religious cohesion not by eliminating linguistic diversity but by providing a shared communicative platform across linguistic boundaries. English therefore, functions as a lingua franca within the religious domain, enabling Christians to maintain their different linguistic identities while participating in common religious activities.

However, the study also establishes that the unifying function of the English Bible has important limitations. Christians with limited proficiency in English may experience difficulties understanding biblical messages, participating actively in worship and Bible study, accessing culturally specific meanings and engaging independently with biblical texts. Such Christians may depend on pastors, interpreters, family members or other worshippers for explanations. The findings consequently show that English can function simultaneously as a

bridge and a barrier: it promotes communication and unity across linguistic groups while potentially restricting meaningful participation for those with inadequate English proficiency.

The study therefore concludes that religious unity in multilingual Christian communities is best understood as unity-in-diversity rather than linguistic uniformity. The English Bible remains valuable as a common medium of interethnic religious communication, but its unifying potential can be strengthened through complementary use of indigenous languages, interpretation and multilingual religious practices. Such an approach would preserve the communicative advantages of English while promoting more equitable access to biblical teachings and fuller participation among Christians of different linguistic backgrounds.

The study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between language and religion in multilingual Nigeria by demonstrating that language choice in religious communication has both integrative and exclusionary dimensions. It recommends that Christian communities in multilingual settings should recognise English as a useful lingua franca while encouraging appropriate multilingual practices that accommodate members with varying levels of English proficiency. In this way, the use of the English Bible can contribute more effectively to inclusive religious communication, mutual understanding and sustained unity among Christians from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

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