

SPEAKING IN TONGUES AS EMIGRATION: A SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF TONGUE SPEAKING USING MIGRATION THEORY

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Abstract

In this article, I explore the social function of speaking in tongues using migration theory. My point of departure is that language delimits a community and defines its collective identity. The notion of speaking in tongues is a unique activity in that it is a language done in churches and it is associated with the spiritual world. If the church congregants share a vernacular language outside the church, how do we fathom a phenomenon whereby they speak in a different language when in church? Does not this phenomenon presuppose an inception of a new identity and new space for collective expression? Can we say they are the same people – if not, what has changed? In this article I have developed a hypothesis that speaking in tongues, is at the core of how the church claims an alternative identity different from the larger society. We can describe the mentality as: “we are a heavenly community and we do not belong here on earth.” The assumed change of space and identity can be well developed by applying migration theory.

Key Words: Migration, Tongues, Identity, Space, Place

Introduction

The phenomenon of speaking in tongues has baffled me since childhood. In academic circles, it remains a contentious issue. Previous theological investigations state that this phenomenon is a gift from the Holy Spirit.¹ Outside theological circles, it has also received considerable attention from clinical psychologists who are of the opinion that the phenomenon of tongues is connected to political instability and economic turmoil faced by people. The assumption is that people who speak in tongues have faced intense distress during their lifetime that has resulted in somewhat disturbed mentality.² Despite the effort to connect the phenomenon of speaking in tongues to people’s real social problems, the psychological perspective is less plausible because no evidence exists that speaking in tongues is evidence of some form of mental illness.

¹ Harold McDougal, *Speaking in Tongues: Understanding the Uses and the Abuses of this Supernatural Phenomenon*. Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 1988:26. See, Hugh F Pyne, *The Truth about Tongues and Charismatic Movement Toronto: Sword of the Lord*, 1989:70. See, Max Turner, “Early Christian Experience and Theology of Tongues – A New Testament Perspective,” in *Speaking in Tongues: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006:6.

² James T Richardson, “Psychological Interpretations of Glossalalia: A Re-examination of Research,” in *Speaking in Tongues: A guide on Glossalalia*. Edited by Watson E Mills. Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1986:371.

My approach is different from theological and psychological approaches. My perspective centres on an aspect in migration, namely that people move from one location to the other in search of wellbeing. My point of departure is that the church is a new space from which a new language emerges. Speaking in tongues normally happens when people are in church, which is a different space from the society. As the *axis mundi*, a church is demarcated by the presence of God, angels and Holy Spirit, making it the hierophany of the deity. Church rituals such as the Eucharist, holy songs, kneeling, raising hands, all are done to delimit the church as a sacred space, a place where God comes and holds fellowships with his holy people. The church, as a holy space ushers sacred time, meaning that normal time ceases to function and is replaced by eternity. In this sacred space, language changes to speaking in tongues. People are directed to think the mind of God. This makes the church space vastly distinct from the rest of the society where people share a common language and where time is punctuated by mundane social occasions and experiences.

The assumption is that people speak in a different language while in church, which supposes that the church is an alternative space and a place where alternative identities are expressed. From this perspective, a person who speaks in tongues migrates from one context to the other. Movement from one geographical location to the other is a field explored by migration studies. Migration studies investigate the factors responsible for people moving from one geographic location to the other and among the reasons noted are wars, hunger, droughts, and economic insecurity. In using this perspective, we raise questions such as: What is the social context in which the church exists and what are the issues that cause people to seek an alternative space? From this perspective, we stop to see the church as a mere building, but as a place that gives a different space, hence influences different identities to the visitors. Does speaking in tongues psychologically provide an alternative space of existence? In this article, I argue that speaking in tongues is a search for a new identity, one of heaven and equivalent to assuming a diaspora status. Through speaking in tongues, the believer experiences a process of transition from his/her social context to that of heaven. This makes the believer feel that he has been transported from a context of hardship associated with his/her social existence to be in heaven where (s)he speaks in angelic languages thereby assuming a heavenly migrant status. From this perspective, speaking in tongues makes the believer assume a new identity and becomes a foreigner to his/her own people who do not understand tongues.

Migrating through Speaking in Tongues

To establish a context and factors that cause migration in southern Africa, Zimbabwe is chosen as a country hard hit by high levels of migration with most of her people going to neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Botswana. The country is engulfed by political turmoil that resulted in an economic downward spiral due to Mugabe's rule. Zimbabwe has a total population of 12 million and an estimated 4 million people are living as migrants in various countries. The estimates suggest that South Africa hosts over 1.2 million Zimbabweans. As a Zimbabwean, I grew up hearing people expressing their wish to go to another country in order to seek employment and to find better living conditions. I also observed that Zimbabweans who live in diaspora boast about their experiences outside the country by speaking in foreign languages, thereby making migration a hoped-for experience by every Zimbabwean. Due to economic and political challenges, Zimbabweans idealise being in diaspora. The experience of being in diaspora means a person has assumed a different identity. In addition to acquiring wealth and other material benefits, those in diaspora are viewed as being in a better social position.

The article's hypothesis developed from conducting field research in the Light Ministries Church located in Sunnyside, Pretoria, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. I conducted this research over a period of eight weeks by attending church services, Bible discussions and interacting with the congregants, during December of 2011. I observed a possible link between speaking in tongues and migration. The church comprises mostly immigrants, a majority of whom are from Nigeria and Zimbabwe, countries that are economically and politically unstable. It is safe to say a majority of them are economic migrants, which mean that they voluntarily left their countries in search of better living conditions. An economic migrant is different from a refugee in that a refugee is one who was forced to leave his/her country of origin. In contrast, an economic migrant voluntarily leaves his/her country in search of better working and living conditions. The church has an average attendance of 100 people every Sunday. The church leader is accorded great respect and is addressed by various names such as Pastor, Prophet, Apostle, Bishop, or Overseer. A majority of the members were women, and most functioned as choir leaders, deacons, and ushers. We can assume that the high number of women congregants supposes that the church offers an alternative space for women to express their identities. I interviewed three church elders from the Light Ministries who concurred that speaking in tongues is the work of the Holy Spirit inside the believers, and whereby the believer is enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak in the tongues of angels. The qualification for speaking in tongues is to be born-again which entails a renunciation of sins and receiving Jesus as saviour. They believe that believers are endowed with various tongues and that the believer alone knows what (s)he is talking. The believer has no control over when (s)he can speak in tongues since (s)he is under the Holy Spirit's power. The doctrinal claims were made without much backing from verses in the Bible. Possibly the respondents did not cite biblical verses because of the way I phrased my questions. I asked them about their understanding of the phenomenon of speaking in tongues and not what the Bible says about speaking in tongues. My questions were informed by my theoretical slant of using social science theory (migration) to understand the phenomenon of tongues. This focus makes this study distinct from previous ones that focused on biblical textual analysis and little on how the phenomenon of speaking in tongues is intertwined with people's social realities.

From people's responses, the first observation to be made is that like migrants, speaking in tongues suggests a search for a better and safer place of existence. Insight from migration studies say an immigrant is a person who leaves his or her country of origin because of various reasons and chooses to take residence in another country. An expert in refugee studies, Philip Marfleet observes that people migrate to other places because they are escaping repression, war, civil conflict, and economic and environmental crises.³ Migration is also triggered by the collapse of political and economic structures of the local state, influenced by world affairs, for example the current economic recession that affected many countries. In the past, a majority of African countries have also suffered the negative effects of capitalism and globalisation through displacements, political and economic challenges.⁴ Owing to suffering, people migrate to stable economy countries. Migration studies help to shed light that speaking in tongues can be compared to people who migrate to other countries in search of better living. Psychologically, the desire to relocate to another space is a parallel between speaking in tongues and migration. However, the difference should be noted that unlike migrants, speakers of tongues only imagine the existence of an alternative

³ Philip Marfleet, "Introduction," in *Refugees in a Global Era*. Edited by Philip Marfleet. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006:1.

⁴ Marfleet, "Introduction," 21.

space. Through speaking in tongues, people believe that heaven is a place of refuge and that by speaking in tongues they escape the problems associated with the present world. This means that speaking in tongues reveals a psychological desire to reside in an alternative world rather than one's own.

The Light Ministry Church encourages believers to speak in tongues when praying. According to them, the purpose for speaking in tongues is that Satan does not wish to hear what the believer is praying. The church teaches that Satan hears and blocks believer's prayers from being heard by God. One church elder confided that the book of Daniel⁵ teaches that the prophet Daniel prayed for several days for the liberation of the Israelites from captivity but Satan blocked his prayers. They believe that Satan hears normal language but he cannot hear when people speak in tongues. Also, onlookers hear tongues as unintelligible sound but the believer knows what (s)he is saying. Speaking-in-tongues produce rumbling sounds: *raba shondo shalaka ti, kitishala salata*. South Africans label foreigners as *makwerekwere*, meaning people who speak unintelligible language. I observed that people normally speak in tongues during praise and worship, a time when people sing songs to praise God.

The view that onlookers convey to people who speak in tongues introduces the second observation that a person who speaks in tongues is regarded as an outsider, an odd person and a suspect. A comparison can be made with migrants who are seen as outsiders. People who speak in tongues think that they are unintelligible while to an outsider they are not. In addition, the claim that their language is not heard by Satan, makes them appear somewhat insane. The idea of being misunderstood makes people who speak in tongues share similar traits with migrants. Migration studies reveal that migrants are not well received in their host countries. Migrants are normally treated as people who come to take jobs away from locals and therefore must be sent back to their respective countries.⁶ In analysing the role of the media in reporting about migrants in South Africa, Aquilina Mawadza and Jonathan Crush noted that migrants are normally lumped in overarching categories such as 'aliens,' 'illegal,' 'foreigners' and sometimes branded as bringers of disease, crimes, takers of jobs or consumers of 'our' resources.⁷ Mawadza and Crush analyse the metaphors that are used by the South African media – they say migrants are projected through metaphors such as 'aliens' that are invading the country, or using metaphors that describe natural disasters such as a 'flood' that is 'flowing,' 'pouring' and 'flooding' the country. Military metaphors are also used to describe how the government is 'battling,' and 'fighting' foreign invasion.⁸ However, this is not to say that people who speak in tongues are subjected to the same homophobic attacks as the migrants; instead, like migrants, they are viewed by onlookers as strange and odd. Perhaps this explains why some psychologists have branded people who speak in tongues as somewhat crazy because they seem to listen more to their inner Holy Spirit than to what people may say to them. Listening to the inner voice, makes people who speak in tongues seem odd and unpredictable.⁹ For example, John Kildahl labels people

⁵ The book of Daniel is in the Old Testament and is believed to have been written by the prophet Daniel during the exile in Babylon.

⁶ Bruce Frayne and Wade Pendleton, *Namibians in South Africa: Attitudes towards Cross-Border Migration and Immigration Policy*. Cape Town: Idasa, 1998:24.

⁷ Aquilina Mawadza and Jonathan Crush, "Metaphors of Migration: Zimbabwean Migrants in the South African Media," in *Zimbabwe's Exodus, Crisis, Migration, Survival*. Cape Town: SAMP, 2010:363.

⁸ Mawadza and Crush, "Metaphors of Migration," 364.

⁹ John P Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," in *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide on Glossalalia*. Edited by Watson E Mills. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1986:351.

who speak in tongues as victims of distress and as people who are looking for a strong leader whom they can trust. This person can be a church pastor or the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

I also observed that unlike mainline churches where songs are printed in hymn books, in South African Pentecostal churches they use choruses, which offer a few lines that are repeated several times. During the praise and worship, the new converts are called forward and instructed to raise their hands as sign of surrender to God. This session is construed as offering a gateway to heaven. Here, the believer accepts that his/her proper existence is not here on earth, but in heaven. During speaking in tongues, the speakers raised their hands to heaven or they moved around the room with their fists clenched. Some tongue speakers closed their eyes while others prayed with their eyes open. Those who open their eyes while praying think their eyes make them see Satan and that closing one's eyes makes one not see Satan.

I deduced the third parallel from observing the gestures of people who speak in tongues that similar to migrants, speaking in tongues is like being in a tug of war, or a fight, in order to assert one's existence against negative forces that seek to thwart such existence. How do we make sense of gestures such as raising one's fists, hands, and opening one's eyes when praying? First, we must acknowledge that gestures make meaning within the individual's context. As such, within a context of economic struggle and political violence, raising one's fists might be interpreted as a gesture of defiance, or a need to retaliate. People normally retaliate when provoked by an external threat; in this case fighting back is both a defensive posture, as well as attacking the enemy. The gesture of raising one's hand could be seen as surrender to God, which could also be seen as evoking a stronger power to fight on one's behalf. Similarly, opening one's eyes can be interpreted as a sign of being alert and attentive. The common theme from these gestures is that the believer is in a power contest and that there is need for self-assertion. In complimenting this observation, migration studies show that migrants always fight to assert themselves because in most cases they are scorned and humiliated. They are likely to get demeaning and low paying jobs. A study carried out by JoAnn McGregor shows that Zimbabwean immigrants in Britain are employed mostly in cleaning jobs despite their high qualifications. Most Zimbabwean immigrants find these kinds of jobs deskilling, a loss of status and shameful.¹¹ McGregor says even highly qualified people such as teachers, accountants, engineers, mechanics, administrators, bankers, are all employed in care jobs where they nurse old people. McGregor says the challenge to care for the elderly emerged as a result of British people living longer lives and having smaller families and also the unwillingness of white women to take up traditional roles as family care givers. This resulted in migrants being employed in care jobs. In these jobs they clean, dress, bath and feed the elderly at care centres.¹² Marfleet, who writes from the perspective of economic liberalisation, says migrants are always viewed as cheap labour, their wages are low and they are not entitled to pension and other work related benefits.¹³

¹⁰ Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," 352. However, scholars such as James T Richardson are less satisfied with an approach that dismisses speaking in tongues as psychopathological. See James T Richardson, "Psychological Interpretation of Glossolalia: A Reexamination of Research," in *Speaking in Tongues: A guide on Glossolalia*. Edited by Watson E Mills. Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1986:378.

¹¹ JoAnna McGregor, "Between Obligation, Profit and Shame: Zimbabwean Migrants and the UK Care Industry," in *Zimbabwe's Exodus, Crisis, Migration, Survival*. Cape Town: SAMP, 2010:180.

¹² McGregor, "Between Obligation," 193.

¹³ Marfleet, "Introduction," 6.

The need of self-assertion and a claim for one's self-worth are equally evident in people who speak in tongues. Speaking in tongues is a psychological desire to move above negative social issues through the assistance of a supernatural power. The mentality is that by speaking in tongues, the believer self-asserts him- or herself as occupying a higher social position. The person no longer sees him- or herself as ordinary, but rather as being endowed with supernatural abilities. IM Lewis did a similar study from which he deduced that belief that a supernatural power dwells inside people is an attempt to induce courage against an oppressive situation.¹⁴ Lewis' study may be seen as too reductive, but in my view, it must be credited for trying to understand the complexity of spiritual issues from a social perspective. Margaret M Poloma says speaking in tongues is some form of mysticism undertaken to induce power and strength against present social challenges and is not separate from social implications. It derives its form and meaning from the social context from which it appears.¹⁵ The understanding is that speaking in tongues is a catalyst for courage and hope against social odds – a similar resilience expressed by migrants.

In the Light Ministries Church, two rituals are crucial in making this spiritual exodus a possibility: these are firstly, the role of the songs and secondly the role of the pastor. Throughout this sacred session, the church choir sang and the senior church members came forward to assist those who collapse due to the Holy Spirit's power. Songs were sung slowly and emphatically, thereby allowing the participants to meditate every word in the song. The songs made the participants surrender themselves to God and to create a sacred space that made the people believe that they were on a sacred journey. In addition, songs played an efficacy role, by making the believers regret their sins and wait upon God to wash their sins away. The believers believed that the journey to heaven is a sacred trip embarked on by the pure of heart. The dichotomy between the present evil world and pure heavenly bliss was evident through emphasis on personal purity as a prerequisite to meet God. Those who would have made a breakthrough into the mystical heavenly bliss did so by shaking, laughing and shedding tears. Shaking could be understood as a sign that the sacred is present, while laughing may signify happiness that comes because of being in unison with God. I interpreted tears not as pain but as profound happiness that came as a result of leaving the pain of this world and being in God's presence.

What can be deduced is that speaking-in-tongue gives a feeling of breakthrough, a crossing of borders, and a new page to life. Being born again and leaving a sinless life could be viewed as qualifications for border crossing, a comparative scenario to migrants who must produce valid documents in order to cross the border into another country. Like a restrictive border that requires sojourners to produce valid documents, here we also see this church demanding from the congregants to be born again and adopting a certain kind of life style. Upon entering the new space, the congregants redefine themselves. Instead of suffering misery associated with their social contexts, the believers shed tears of joy; they laugh and express profound happiness. In my view, the happiness is derived from the change in identity, that is, the believers see themselves as having crossed the boundary of sorrow and are now in a new space. My comparative analysis here need not be overstretched because migrants do not necessarily face joy in their host countries. Instead, there are reports of abuse and even deportation or denied entry.¹⁶

¹⁴ IM Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion, A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*. London: Routledge, 1989:183.

¹⁵ Margaret M Poloma, "Glossolalia, Liminality and Empowered Kingdom Building: A Sociological Perspective," in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-disciplinary Perspective*. Edited by Mark J Cartledge. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006:172.

¹⁶ Marfleet, "Introduction," 6.

The reports of abuse are associated with the second ritual, which is the role of the pastor. I noticed in Light Ministries Church that the pastor acts as an intermediary by helping people to cross the great chasm. The pastor was revered as a heaven ambassador who tells people about heaven. His presence was conspicuous through the white robe and a white clerical collar. The pastor came forward to dispense the Holy Spirit through waving of his hands, a white cloth or by mere commanding the new believers to speak in tongues. He shouted repeatedly with intensity: *Receive the Holy Spirit!* As an observer, I deduce that the present world is seen as an antithesis of the other world. Here, I want to compare the role of the pastor to that of an immigration officer who regulates who may cross the boundary. In the Light Ministries Church those who can enter heaven are people who obey the pastor's instructions. Since the pastor's authority comes from heaven and no one can challenge his power, it therefore is open to abuse. The comparison here is not that I noted the pastor abusing his power, instead the comparison is on the dangers of having one person, with so much power, deciding over one's future. Without claiming abuse, I realised that the pastor in the Light Ministry yields tremendous power. Whatever the pastor says is believed to be from God and must be obeyed. There is a strong teaching in the church regarding obeying and following 'the man of God.' The congregants have also developed a submissive attitude – that of not questioning what the 'man of God' says since he is the door to the heavenly and personal spiritual blessings.

Similarly, migration studies show that immigrants are quick to trust anyone who promises to offer help in their situation, thereby exposing themselves to abuse and being swindled.¹⁷ At the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa, immigration officers have been accused of abusing immigrants. Migration studies reveal that immigrants are prone to abuse by immigration officers, or people who promise to smuggle them across the border. More often, Zimbabwean women faced sexual abuse when trying to cross illegally into South Africa, especially women who are caught without adequate papers. These are forced into sexual relations by male immigration officers.¹⁸ Those who make it into South Africa suffer abuse because they are seen as aliens who have invaded the country or foreigners who are bringing a foreign culture. A majority of immigrants are employed in low paying jobs where they earn less than 4000 rands a month. Those who work on farms earn less than the minimum wage of 785 rands.¹⁹ In South Africa there are also cases of immigrants who work as housemaids and they too face harassment and sexual abuse by their employers. Those who work in restaurants are coerced into sex acts because they are not paid salaries but have to survive on tips from customers.

Lastly, I wish to state that migration can be compared to speaking in tongues in that both suggest a veiled protest. James KA Smith proposes that "tongue speech is a kind of discourse that arises out of resistance to given cultural norms and institutions, it is a language of resistance against the 'powers that be.'"²⁰ It is a language that arises with the margins of language, by marginalised people, as a way to express "a kind of eschatological resistance to the powers."²¹ In their struggle to exist, the poor suffer constant disem-

¹⁷ John P Kildahl, "Psychological Observations" in *Speaking in Tongues: A guide on Glossalalia*. Edited by Watson E Mills. Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1986:352.

¹⁸ Jonathan Crush, Daniel Tevera, "Existing Zimbabwe" in *Zimbabwe's Exodus, Crisis, Migration, Survival*. Cape Town: SAMP, 2010:35.

¹⁹ Crush and Tevera, "Existing Zimbabwe," 37.

²⁰ James KA Smith, "Tongues as 'Resistance Discourse,'" in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-disciplinary Perspective*. Edited by Mark J Cartledge Milton Keynes. Paternoster Press, 2006:81.

²¹ Smith, "Tongues as 'Resistance Discourse,'" 81.

powerment and disintegration. In this context, religion becomes their illusionary hope. Smith argues that the proletariat speak in tongues and tongue speech is the language of the *multitude* because it is the language that resists oppression, capitalism and unjust redistribution of wealth. It is a discourse that is symbolic of a deeper and broader desire to resist and it calls into question the existing economic and political structures. It is the language of a counter-cultural “exilic” community.²² Smith argues that since the means of production are redefined due to capitalism, the proletariat only imagine bliss in surrealism, thereby making tongue speech a form of protest and resistance against unjust structures.²³

The motif of protest is applicable to migration. Emigration can be described as a vote of no confidence in the government concerned. When people migrate they are fleeing from misgovernment, from appalling working conditions and low pay levels that are below subsistence.²⁴ This is true of Zimbabwe where people, for years, have tried to remove Mugabe from power through the ballot box, but they failed because through the electoral commissioner Mugabe rigs the elections and further intimidates the people. Due to violence, poor service delivery, and poor remuneration, the Zimbabwean civil servants find better ways of expressing their discontent, and that is through emigration. A Zimbabwean scholar, Rudo Gaidzanwa who wrote “Voting with their feet: Migrant Zimbabwean Nurse and Doctors in the Era of Structural Adjustment Program,” says that, in protest, Zimbabwean professionals migrated to regional destinations such as Botswana and South Africa.²⁵ An estimated figure of over four million Zimbabweans are now living in the diaspora, with 37 per cent in the United Kingdom, 35 per cent in Botswana, 5 per cent in South Africa. More than half of the 5 per cent immigrants working in South Africa are skilled Zimbabweans; 3,4 per cent are estimated to be residing in Canada. The figure of 5 per cent does not account for thousands more who have sneaked into South Africa without official travel documents.²⁶

Allow me to summarise the above discussion. This discussion juxtaposes seven aspects. Firstly, I suggest that like emigration, speaking in tongues suggests a search for a better and safer place of existence. Secondly, I suggest that like immigrants, by speaking in tongues, one takes a position of an outsider, an odd position and one that makes one a suspect. Thirdly, I suggest that like emigration, speaking in tongues is being in a tug of war, or a fight, in order to assert one’s existence against negative forces that seek to thwart such existence. Fourthly, I suggest that the need for self-assertion and claim for one’s self-worth is equally evident in people who speak in tongues. Fifthly, I suggest that speaking in tongues gives a feeling of breakthrough, a crossing of borders and a new page in life and that being born again and living a sinless life could be viewed as qualifications for border crossing. This is comparable to migrants who must produce valid documents to cross the border into another country. Sixthly, I suggest that the pastor’s authority comes from heaven and no one can challenge his power, thereby leaving chances of abuse, which is comparable to migration officers who are accused of abusing and swindling people. Lastly,

²² Smith, “Tongues as ‘Resistance Discourse,’” 108.

²³ Smith, “Tongues as ‘Resistance Discourse,’” 108.

²⁴ Daniel Tevera and Jonathan Crush, “Discontent and Departure: Attitudes of Skilled Zimbabweans towards Emigration,” in *Zimbabwe’s Exodus, Crisis, Migration, Survival*. Cape Town: SAMP, 2010:113.

²⁵ Rudo Gaidzanwa, *Voting with their Feet: Migrant Zimbabwean Nurses and Doctors in the Era of Structural Adjustment*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999:47.

²⁶ Eustinah Tarisayi, “Voting in Despair: The Economic and Social Context,” in *Defying the Winds of Change: Zimbabwe’s 2008 Elections*. Edited by Eldred V Masunungure. Harare: Weavers Press, 2009:17.

I argued that speaking in tongues is comparable to emigration because both suggest a veiled form of protest.

Conclusion

In this study, I explore how social studies such as migration studies can help to unpack seemingly challenging topics such as tongue speaking. The study shows that tongue speaking cannot only be seen as a spiritual activity, but that it is linked to people's social experiences. In this light, using insights from migration studies, speaking in tongues express a desire to relocate to other space. There is a desire by people who speak in tongues to be identified with the other world. Hence, the speaking of another language is a culmination of the psychological desire whereby the person speaks in a different language – a clear proof of change, space and identity. In relocating to another space, this psychological desire is a veiled protest against the political leaders. As protest, the believers use religious language through which the enemy is coded as Satan and they reclaim justice and equality robbed from them by the oppressors.

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