



SPEECH ACTS IN KIRINYAGA COUNTY ANGLICAN CHURCH SERVICES, KENYA

Muriithi, Gerald Njukiⁱ

PhD Candidate,
Linguistics Department,
University of Nairobi,
Kenya

Abstract:

This study is based on a pulpit discourse and aimed at determining the speech acts that are used in sermons. The research is based on the Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga. The study shows how priests use the speech act to influence the hearers or congregation to make decisions. The research was also based on both speech act theory and the cooperative principle to understand the contextual basis deep. The maxims of the speech act are discussed, and recommendations are made on how they are supposed to be embraced for quality purposes. The research used several methods of collecting first-hand information. These methods were both based on qualitative and quantitative data. They include observation, recording, and direct interviews which were later analyzed and recorded for reference in the future. For instance, the recordings were transcribed and recorded in disks that were not prone to attack by malware. The types of speech acts used in the sermons include verdictives, commissives, declarations, representatives, and directives. These speech acts were representing a part of the sermon which conveyed a strong basis of the sermon. Thus, it acted as a strengthening catalyst. The study on the other hand showed how the speaker used the speech acts to inform, congratulate, make promises, and condemn. It is therefore recommended that the Bible Teaching Institutions should make sure before releasing a person for priestly duties is well conformed with the speech acts in such a way that the congregation can rely on them in times of word which is aimed at changing their lives and affecting their decision making. In conclusion, the research is solely concerned with speech acts in Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga and the same should be done in other churches to come up with a contextual distinctive clue on the same subject.

Keywords: speech acts, Anglican, verdictives, representatives, commissives, declarations, and directives

ⁱ Correspondence: email muriithigerald@gmail.com

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the part of linguistics that portrays various important parts that are brought about by the religious acts by the audience. This is mainly experienced in the pulpits where the speaker sermons the audience. The sermons convey some parts of communication skills very crucial in delivering the planned sermon. This takes us directly into knowing what communication is. According to Nordquist (2019), communication is the process of passing and receiving information either verbal or non-verbal, signals and various behaviors to convey a meaning. On the other hand, the audience evaluates and understands the meaning according to their moral judgment.

Goodman (2018) posits that the audience always reacts upon receiving the message. At first, they normally set themselves in a posture and focus their ears on the speaker. Afterward, after the end of the sermon, they internalize and follow accordingly what they have been taught. More so, it opens a room for questions by the audience for clarity to deeply get the main tips and apply them to their lives.

Sermons are religious talks on a moral matter, especially in churches. During the delivery of a sermon by the speaker, he uses various religious speech acts which ensures the understanding of the message by the audience. According to Green and Mitchell (2007), speech acts refer to the acts which are used by the speaker to make utterances, making promises, and asserting the audience. In the cases of utterances, a speaker may ask the audience *"If you have received the word with gravity and evaluated your life and you have realized you are living a life away from the biblical teachings you may come and receive the Lord again."* This phrase that is formed by several words gives the audience an inner feeling of evaluating their life and decide to live according to the word of God. Various speech acts assert a certain force to the audience and thus it depends on one's interpretation and moral judgment. This paper is based on sermons delivered in Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga which is a social event that unites people.

2. Statement of Problem

Sermons are based on speech acts occasions which include correspondence between the minister and the audience. Speech acts by speakers entailed in messages are mainly focused on making sure the audience understands. The sermon is presented by a speaker to numerous audiences. The speaker aims to deliver the message to influence the audience. Subsequently, the speaker may utilize certain procedures to guarantee crowd cooperation. Different research has been completed in the pulpit and it has been found that the speech acts in sermons have not been sufficiently depicted. This is the gap that this paper set off to seal by recognizing and depicting the speech acts utilized in sermons.

The paper responds to this question:

- What are the discourse acts utilized by selected speakers to pass on significance in their lessons?"

2.1 Research Questions

- 1) Which are the various speech acts used in sermons?
- 2) What impact do they have on the audience?
- 3) Are these speech acts observed by most of the speakers in the Anglican Churches in Kirinyaga?
- 4) What is the reaction of the audience based on the use of these speech acts?
- 5) In which ways does a speaker gauge his effectiveness in the use of speech acts?

1.2 Objectives of Study

- 1) To find out various speech acts used in sermons.
- 2) To find out the impacts the speech acts have in sermon delivery.
- 3) To find out if these speech acts are observed by most of the speakers in the Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga.
- 4) To find out the reaction of the audience based on the use of these speech acts.
- 5) To establish various ways a speaker gauges effective use of speech acts.

3. Rationale

There are various types of speech acts that are used which include verdictives, directives, declarations, commissives, and representatives. Firstly, according to Brady (1981), verdictives are speech acts in which the speaker makes judgment towards the concerned. Such judgments include an appraisal, classifying, evaluating, and making acceptance. Secondly, as brought out by Dorschel (1987), directives are types of speech acts that are mainly involved in inducing. Thirdly, declarations are types of speech acts that change the current state through pronouncements such as when a pastor says "*I officially declare you as a husband and wife.*" Fourthly, commissives are speech acts that are used by a speaker to give future promises or plans about an event or something. Finally, representatives are speech acts whose expressions submit the speaker to the reality of the communicated recommendation.

The existence of something possesses a degree of importance and thus according to Rose, Kenneth, and Kasper (2001), speech acts have an impact they represent. The speech acts in their nature of occurrence in the society are very direct and clear. In other words, they represent a part of language usage in ways such as demands, expressions of remorse, ideas, orders, offers, and suitable reactions to those demonstrations. It should also be noted that the missions of the speakers of these acts are always not fortunate until the intended information is understood by the audience.

As brought out by Green and Mitchell (2007), speech acts are widely used in influencing the audience in the Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga. They are mainly used in making utterances, giving warnings, and making promises. They are mainly used by the speakers to challenge the audience and more, so the audience solely relates it with their life experience and comes up with a cognitive solution. In other words, the speakers try to convey a certain meaning to the people.

According to P. F. Strawson (1964), there are two uses of speech acts, these are, serious and etiolated use of speech. Thus, it can be seen that in churches sometimes the speaker makes some serious speech based on what he intends to deliver to the audience. This is normally affected by the seriousness of what the listeners expect from the speaker. In other words, this research is based on serious speech where the used speech acts reflect meaning to the audience.

Speech acts are used widely in the Anglican Churches in Kirinyaga today. Thus, several things are considered when using these speech acts to ensure the information has reached home. Firstly, the age of the audience should be taken care of. This is because the way the speaker sermons the adults are different as compared to that of Sunday school children. Secondly, the speaker understands the mood of the audience before the sermon, and thus for it to be effective there is a need for ensuring it is right. More so according to Lappin (1982), the audience should also try to understand the mood of the speaker while using the speech acts. A good example is when the speaker says *“Stop sexual sin in the church”*. This automatically shows that the speaker is not happy at all with the state of purity of the people in the church and the audience have to understand the context and rectify the areas that are contrary to the teachings of the word of God.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on speech acts theory and the cooperative principle to bring out the contextual understanding of the research.

4.1 Speech Acts Theory

Speech acts are used for asserting, giving warning, making promises, and even making commands depending on the scenes where they are used. The speech act theory brings out the language as a kind of activity instead of a medium to pass on and express. The contemporary Speech act theory was created by J. L. Austin a British rationalist of dialects. He presented this hypothesis in 1975 in his notable book 'How to do things with words'. Later John Searle brought the parts of the hypothesis into a lot of higher measurements. This theory is frequently utilized in the field of reasoning dialects. Austin is the person who thought of the discoveries that individuals utilize in languages to attest things as well as to get things done. Thus, according to Green and Mitchell (2007), speech acts refer to the hypothesis of Linguistics in which a speaker uses some words to make a promise, make utterances and commands.

Based on the study, the speech acts theory expounds everything on discourse in the sermons delivered in Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga. Therefore, there are actions that God did and the words He used as found in the Bible which brings out a certain understanding into the audience. Thus, according to this study, the research is based on two key categories. They include locutionary and illocutionary speech acts.

Firstly, according to Searle (1968), locutionary acts refer to the execution of the demonstration of saying something that presents itself at the degree of expression, like jargon and sentence structure, which shows what has been said or composed. This plays

a pivotal part in bringing the contextual meaning of utterances. More so, this act mainly depends on the audience. If the audience fails to understand the speaker, then automatically the locutionary act is declared as failed. A good example is when a speaker in the church says '*Ngai akumio*'. The people in the church do not understand since they belong to different tribes or languages. Rather, when the speaker says '*Praise the Lord*' a big percentage will understand and that is what we call locutionary speech act.

Secondly, in conducting an utterance in speech acts, there is always a purpose. For instance, when a speaker uses utterances there is always the reason that is based on it. Therefore, according to Sari (2019), illocutionary acts refer to where the information uttered is conveyed to the audience through giving promises, making orders, and appreciating. In the use of Illocutionary acts contexts, there is an illocutionary force that is developed which shows what exactly an illocutionary utterance is. An example is when a speaker makes a promise to the congregation, 'I promise to pray for you all'. 'Promise' has been used and shows the illocutionary force. Thus, the illocutionary force of the speaker is promising the audience, and this has relayed certain information to the audience and made their understanding.

Illocutionary acts depend on both the speaker and the audience or congregation. Therefore, through utterances, the audience should be able to understand the cognitive meaning that is being brought out and more so interpreting it. Thus, for the audience to understand the illocutionary dialect used, the speaker must use a language that the audience can understand.

In conclusion, locutionary acts can be termed as the use of meaningful utterances by a speaker. For example; when the speaker says that "*My son, come to the kingdom of God is sweet!*" On the other hand, illocutionary acts bring about important expressions which are shown by promises, orders, and appreciation. An example is when the speaker says, "*Jesus resurrected and promised the church that He will come for the righteous ones.*" This shows a meaningful context to the audience because they are being assured of the second coming of the Messiah.

4.2 Cooperative Principle

In cooperative principle, the agreeable rule is the conclusion that members in a discussion typically endeavor to be instructive, honest, applicable, and clear. The idea was presented by philosopher H. Paul Grice in his 1975 article 'Logic and Conversation'. Grice proposed rather than significant discourse is portrayed by cooperation. Every member perceives in them, somewhat, a typical reason or set of purposes, or possibly a commonly acknowledged bearing. Therefore, according to Lindblom (2006), in sociology and semantics explicitly, cooperative principle depicts how individuals accomplish successful conversational correspondence in like manner social circumstances. How audience members and speakers act helpfully and commonly acknowledge each other to be perceived with a certain goal in mind.

Thus, there is that harmony created when the speaker is talking to the audience. The cooperative principle applies where the speaker knowledgeably successfully converses with the audience and what concludes at the end is the capacity of

understandability by the audience. For example, *“When the Messiah comes back I want every one of you to enter the kingdom of the righteous.”* When the speaker utters such words, the congregation automatically understands that they are supposed to live a righteous life because the kingdom of heaven specifically belongs to the righteous ones only.

Ephratt (2012) says that there are four maxims of the cooperative principle. They include maxim of quality, manner, relevance, and quantity. The maxim of quality shows the statements being used should convey truthful nature in it where there is no room for lies. The maxim of manner also stresses on clarity of statements and thus ambiguous cases should not be therein. More so, the maxim of relevance or relation is mainly based on the relevance of the information being given at that particular time. Thus, the speaker in the church makes utterances that are specifically related to the topic or theme of the day. Finally, the maxim of quantity shows that the information being given should be at least not be overdone by giving unnecessary statements. As the foundation hypothesis of pragmatics, the Cooperative Principle is one of the significant standards for managing individuals' correspondence. The principle and its adages can clarify the scholarly significance and its ramifications of correspondence. Hence, the guideline can be applied to different parts.

In conclusion, the Cooperative principle is very important in the church because many conversations are based on the four maxims which ensure quality and reliable information is fetched by the audience. An example is when the speaker says to the audience *“Prepare yourselves in a total dry fast for the Lord is going to bring His visitation upon your life”*. This information is clear and to the point because every person in the church can understand and interpret what is expected to be done.

5. Methodology

This research was conducted and the data presented as below with the appropriate choice of Research design, location of study, target population, sampling techniques, sampling size, research instruments, data collection techniques, and data analysis.

5.1 Research Design

The research used the descriptive research design method since the study mainly focused on the large population whose membership is the Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga. More so, the descriptive method is mainly used to describe how, when and what queries. According to Siedlecki (2020), when conducting a given project, descriptive designs help to explain the nature of things and events. The research used both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand key areas.

5.2 Location of Study

This study was based in Kirinyaga County since the Anglican Churches that were chosen could provide ample first-hand information.

5.3 Target Population

According to the research materials that were available the target population was set at thirty people in each of the churches that were set aside for the collection of data. This was so since too many people could alter the collection of data and thus the selected population was manageable from a personal aspect. The speaker and the audience were the main targets of the researcher to meet the requirement of the religious acts that were used and the audience reaction too.

5.4 Sampling Techniques

Sampling refers to the process of choosing a target group that you can use to collect data. This study used mainly purposive sampling since it maximizes quality data for statistical for qualitative and quantitative methods. More so, it is a simple technique in terms of cost and ease in the collection and analysis of data. The purposive sampling technique was used in the five churches to gather information.

5.5 Sample Size

The sample size of the study constituted 30 persons in each of the selected churches. This is shown in the table below.

Table 1: The Total Target Population of the 5 Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga

	Church	No of people	Males	Females
1	ACK Kutus Church	30	15	15
2	ACK Kagio Church	30	15	15
3	ACK Kerugoya Cathedral	30	15	15
4	ACK St. Lukes Wanguru	30	15	15
5	ACK Baricho Church	30	15	15

5.6 Research Instruments

The research incorporated several research instruments such as the application of recordings which were later transcribed, taking of notes, interviews, and videos. The observation was also used in the research to determine the hindrances encountered in the use of speech acts in the church. There was also an assistant researcher whose work was supervising the interview and taking note of key information.

5.7 Data Analysis

The data collected was sorted and recorded in appropriate media for future reference. In addition, the recordings that were made were transcribed where the quantitative data was recorded using statistical methods while the qualitative data from the direct interviews were recorded and the main congruent drawn from it.

6. Literature Review

This part covers what other authors who have talked on the speech acts that are used, the importance of the speech acts used in the sermon to the audience, reaction of the audience

based on the use of the speech acts, and ways the speaker uses to gauge the keenness of the audience for effective use of speech acts.

6.1 Speech Acts Used in Sermons

Firstly, in the context, the speakers mostly deliver to the congregation using several speech acts. The speech acts utilized by the speaker are pointed towards engaging the crowds consistently, morally, and inwardly. All forms of speech acts such as directives, commissives, and constantives are always brought one in one through various utterances. The moral that most sermons bring out is an emotional part drawn out by the audience as portrayed by Griffin (2000). In addition, the expected effect of the message uses the persuasive nature of language to reach the audience. Language is always a key thing when using speech acts. This is because it can arouse some feelings from the audience which can either be positive or negative. Therefore, the speaker should be language sensitive because people experience a lot in their lives. Semantic sensitivity has got aspects such as public and transnational correspondence, for example, territorial contrasts inside a similar language, quick improvements of the language, and contrasts among composed and communicated in language. Thus, long experience is required by the priests for effective and perfect handling of the audience.

6.2 Importance of Speech Acts in Sermons

Speech acts have got a great impact on the life of the audience. According to Kambo (1997), speech acts are very crucial since the speaker says what he is doing in written words such as appreciating, asking for forgiveness, and making promises to the audience. Another significant space of pragmatics is that the speech acts are informative demonstrations that pass on expected language work. Speech acts incorporate capacities like solicitations, conciliatory sentiments, ideas, orders, offers, and proper reactions to those demonstrations. The use of speech acts also helps the audience to understand what the speaker is saying in a deeper revelation. This applied to this article because in messages speakers perform different demonstrations with language which they anticipate that the audience should recognize and, in this manner, comprehend the lessons in it. The pastors express their aims and desire to accomplish the objective of impacting the conduct of the audience.

6.3 The Reaction of the Audience on the Use of Speech Acts

As a demonstration of correspondence, a speech act succeeds if the crowd distinguishes the speaker's goal and the mentality being communicated. According to Griffin (2000), when delivering a sermon especially in churches, the speakers ought to understand the mood and state of the audience. This mainly boosts the communication skills of the speaker and uses the power he has to deliver well. If the speaker fails to understand the hearers the result is that the whole sermon performs poorly and most of the information won't reach the audience based on maxims such as quality, manner, and relevance. The experience of the preacher can be used to gauge how good he or she is in handling different moods of the people that can be encountered.

6.4 The Way for Gauging the Keeness of the Audience

According to Damasio (1999), possession of good character shows a good image in a person and is always accompanied together. Thus, in the church, the preacher tries to gauge the keeness of the audience by looking at the outward image they carry. In other words, the image of a person speaks more about the person. The pastor normally gauges the attentiveness of the audience through their outward image portrayed by their calmness and concludes whether the message is being captured and received in the right way. Keeness also helps the speaker to use more and advanced speech acts which ensures that the audience can analyze their life and come up with some sort of life principles that guides Christians today.

7. Findings

The study was mainly aimed at identifying the speech acts that are used in sermons in the Anglican Churches within Kirinyaga. Thus, the exercise took place in five churches within Kirinyaga County. The findings are as per below.

7.1 The Types of Speech Acts Applied in Sermons

According to the research, it was seen that priests in Anglican churches within Kirinyaga employ various types of speech acts so that the congregation can understand the concepts delivered in a deeper revelation. Firstly, the examples of speech act used areas in the table below and an example attached in it.

Table 2: Shows Various Speech Acts Attached with their Examples

Speech Acts	Examples encountered
Verdictive	The church during the reign of the Old Testament feared the Lord so much unlike today.
Directives	Will you join me in prayer and fasting for three days?
Declarations	Before the congregation, I now declare you a child of God in the Kingdom of God.
Commissives	Let us prepare well in advance because we will be welcoming our former priest for a whole day of service.
Representatives	The second coming of the Son of Man is in hand.

These speech acts were reinforced by a certain force by the speaker to make sure that every nook and cranny in the church understands deeply.

7.2 The Importance of the Use of Speech Acts in Sermons

Despite the great struggle by the priest to deliver the sermon to the congregation, it was found out that speech acts played a great role in ensuring that at least 99% of the church was getting everything that was being taught. According to Miller (1994), through the description of a speaker by the use of various speech acts in the pulpit the audience creates an image in their mind making the message real and practical. More so, during the interview with the speaker of that day, he said that in his preaching the first thing he

made sure of is unity amongst the audience. In doing so, it could be easy for the application of the variety of speech acts and make sure everyone was getting the concept that was being delivered and transform them into the world of thinking to come up with evaluative keys in their life.

7.3 The Reaction of the Congregation on the Use of Speech Acts

For a sermon to be completely functional, the presence of the congregation must be there. Based on the research by Weigand (2010), face-to-face communication emotions are expressed through non-verbal cues such as body gestures, intonation, and body postures. Thus, in sermon delivery, the speaker understands the role and mood of the audience. During the study, through observation and note-taking, it was noted that the audience had a good mood and the service delivery was good due to responses such as 'Amen.' The speaker based his speech acts in a way that everyone was keen listening to the scenario when the Israelites were traveling along the desert and the appearance of God in different ways. Consequently, the way the speaker was driving himself especially in ACK Kutus church attracted the attention of the audience and thus all was a success since the audience at times were celebrating with ululations and clapping loudly. Automatically, through such communications skills, it was affirmative that they have understood.

7.4 Gauging of the Keeness of the Audience

Sometimes it is good to note when the audience is on the right track during the delivery of the word in the pulpit. The preachers in the five target churches were very keen on the use of the speech acts in that they attracted the attention of the hearers. An example is when the preacher said *"My son come, the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who strictly roots themselves in His teachings."* The utterance made the congregation stare at the preacher and their eyes were glued to the preacher implying that something had touched them. In conclusion, the preachers at times applied the speech acts in their communication to nurture the attention and the keeness of the audience. In the research by Trenholm (2001), we find that at times the audience confirmed to the speaker that they were keen through asking questions, but the main aim of the message remains intact.

8. Discussion on the Findings

Firstly, it was noted that the preachers mostly liked the attention of the audience and thus they employed the use of several speech acts in their sermons as brought out by Newman (2010) who instills a command on attention. The area they ventured in most was the utterances in that they were used in a high degree to assert, make promises, and even to ridicule some behaviors among the audience. The application of these speech acts followed the maxims that were relevant in ensuring the quality of what was being taught. This was proved by the reaction of the audience in that all was being smooth from the preacher, moderator, and the internalization of the teachings.

Secondly, the focus of the audience was mainly identified according to the way they responded to some obvious phrases such as “Praise the Lord Church of Christ?” which forms conventional greetings between the priest and the church as portrayed by Taiwo (2005). Their uniform response did ascertain to the speaker on their attentiveness and thus it gave him an opportune time to explicitly apply the speech acts in an advanced manner to nurture the attention uniquely. Through this way of speech delivery, the speaker was ascertained that he had done a lot on the pulpit. It was confirmed through the oral interview where the speaker happily expressed gratitude to the audience for a power-packed sermon. Thus, the need for speech acts was embraced accordingly to ensure a perfect service by the pastors.

In conclusion, the image presented by the audience gave the speaker confidence to largely declare and rebuke every form of evil the church might indulge into by use of strong utterances such as “*Brethren, stop what you are doing in darkness!*” These words conveyed high intonation and thus aiming at giving the hearers the right direction.

9. Conclusion

Basically, according to the research, it was concluded that the speech acts in the Anglican Churches in Kirinyaga are solely depicted in the entire sermons. The speakers mainly apply them to ensure the audience gets everything right for the personal decision-making process in their lives. More so, most hearers depend on the impact of the speech acts that are applied by the speaker during the pulpit discourse. Due to the varied ages in the churches, Anglican priests availed to the congregants several services such as English, Kikuyu, and Kiswahili services. Thus, during the services, it was concluded that the speaker for the second and third service struggles a lot to deliver the message which at times doesn't involve many speech acts that have quality maxims as they are best delivered only in the English service. The attention of the hearers is very key thus the speakers in the five Anglican Churches made sure the concentration by the congregation. This was, seen through their conduct, writing key points, and their general response. Thus, this portrayed a well-gauged sermon with quality use of the speech acts.

10. Recommendation

This research recommends that further research be done on the speech acts in other different religions and Christian denominations more so the mainstream churches. This shall be of much importance as it would address the academic gap of establishing speech acts that are used by the said religions and those not addressed by this research. The speech acts found in the songs sung in the course of the service are also an area that needs to be studied by future researchers. Each of the four maxims can be made a research area on its own and be explored by future researchers. The speech acts theory can as well be explored in the case where a pulpit is shared by a preacher and his interpreter in a case where not every member of the congregation understands the language used by the preacher.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

About the Author

The author is a PhD candidate for Linguistics at the University of Nairobi. He holds a Master of Arts in Linguistics degree from the University of Nairobi and a Bachelor of Education arts with English and Literature from the University of Nairobi. He teaches part-time a select number of Kenyan Universities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview with the Priest

I am a researcher at the University of Nairobi. I would like to ask you some questions based on the speech acts and your response to my research. The interview will take a maximum of 20 minutes.

- 1) Praise be to the name of God?
- 2) What is your name kindly?
- 3) Are you a resident of Kirinyaga County?
- 4) How many years have you lived in Kirinyaga?
- 5) Tell me more about your educational background.
- 6) Apart from your native language, can you speak well any other language?
- 7) Based on your priesthood work can you say you indulged in it through pursuing a Degree in Theology or it was just a call from God?
- 8) Do you often make sure you follow the maxims of the speech acts like relevance and quality?
- 9) What challenges do you experience when using such quality speech acts in Sermons?
- 10) What are you aiming at to ensure the congregation becomes used to these forms of speech acts?

Thank you so much for your time and for facilitating the research through your response. I would like to give you an overview so that you can correct me where I captured information wrongly.

Appendix 2: Interview with a person of the audience

- 1) Praise be to the name of the Living God?
- 2) What is your name Kindly?
- 3) How old are you?
- 4) Are you a resident in Kirinyaga County?
- 5) Do you often come to this church or you normally attend services when you are off from duty?
- 6) What can you say about the experience on the use of the speech acts by your pastor?
- 7) Where do you think an improvement can be done to ensure quality sermons based on speech acts?

Thank you so much for your time and for facilitating the research through your response. I would like to give you an overview so that you can correct me where I captured information wrongly.

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Appendix 3: Map of Kirinyaga County

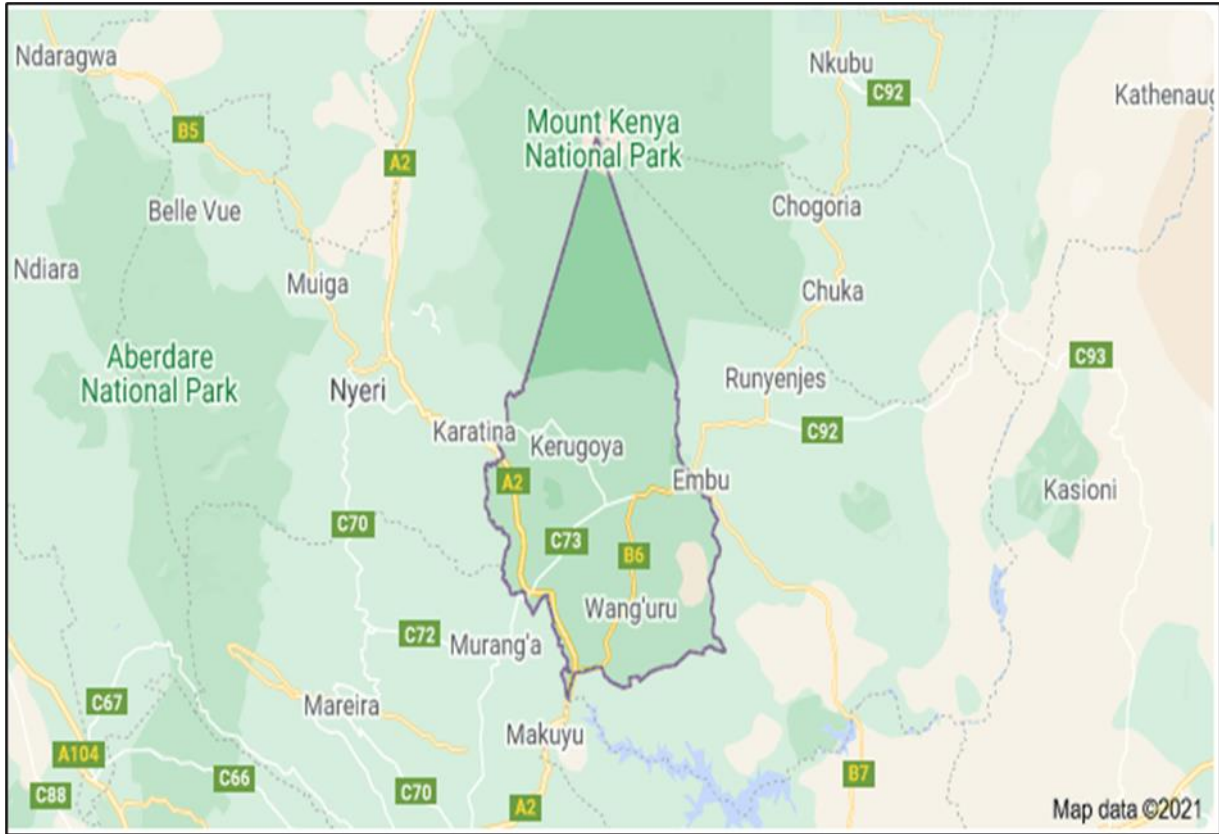


Figure 1: Map of Kirinyaga County, where the study was conducted

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