ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE FEATURES IN THE CHURCH SERMONS OF LADY APOSTLE HELEN UKPABIO

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Abstract

This paper entitled "Analysis of Discourse Features in the Church Sermons of Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio" focuses on highlighting the discourse features in church sermons. It investigates a sermon titled 'Placing Price Tag' by Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio'. The Speech Acts Theory as propounded by J. L. Austin (1962) was adopted as the theoretical framework for this research. Data was generated from recorded sermon and analysed using the discourse rank scale, hortatory moves and speech act theory. In this paper, it was discovered that hortatory discourse attains only the first three units in the discourse rank scale – acts, moves, and exchanges. Furthermore, sermons use more informative acts than directive acts. In addition, style is being employed by the preacher in delivering her sermon, thereby eschewing monotony in hortatory discourse. Finally, there are more answering moves in hortatory discourse. This is not accidental as it helps to keep the discourse alive and interactive.

Keywords: Discourse, Sermon, Ukpabio, Hortatory, Speech Acts

Introduction

Language, as defined by Osisanwo (2008) is the "human vocal noise or the arbitrary graphic representation of this noise, used systematically and conventionally by members of a speech community for purposes of communication" (p 1). Language, more simplified could be seen as a form of communication using words, either spoken or gestured and structured with grammar; or, it could merely mean the ability to communicate using words.

From the foregoing, it is established that language is a medium of communication and nothing can be communicated without language. Etim (2016) describes language as the most effective means of communication and it helps members of a speech community to understand the social relevance and cultural involvement of humans in the society. Based on the existence of "a speech community", it is therefore believed that every social organization has a language peculiar to itself. In the English language setting, for instance, there are words that are peculiar with certain specializations. These are called Registers, for example: crucifix, chapel, Bible, congregation, pew, Pastor, Reverend, sacrament, communion, etc. belong to the church lexicon.

Because the church has its peculiar language and mode of communication, it

is of great interest to delve into the interactions that exist in the church. Such analysis is termed Discourse Analysis. For the purpose of this study, the analysis shall be streamlined to focus only on the sermons, sometimes referred to as "messages" or "the Word" in some churches - where a considerable form of church discourse is found. Nevertheless, apart from sermons, other aspects of church worship exist like songs and prayers. These, in one way or the other have elements of discourse and could be of interest in future research.

This study is undertaken to highlight the discourse features found in a church sermon. This study shall investigate the sermons delivered by Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio, president and founder of Liberty Gospel Church.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis has various definitions by various scholars. Some of them are considered. Yule (1996) as cited by Tauschel (2004) defines Discourse Analysis as the investigation of the structural mechanisms a writer or speaker has to deal with when articulating his message. Tauschel (2004) says that discourse analysis "involves all the levels and methods of analysis of language, cognition, interaction, society and culture". Whatsida.com as quoted by Olategu (2004) describes discourse analysis as: "an explicit, systematic account of structures, strategies or processes of text or talk in terms of theoretical notions developed in any branch of the field ".

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Olategu also cites Jaworski and Coupland (1999) who posit that discourse analysis is also language use, in relation to socio- political and cultural formations. Amidst this background, we perceive discourse analysis to be a systematic interrogation, examination and evaluation of the elements of written or spoken communication, or debate; uncovering and understanding their cause-effect interrelationships.

Olateju (2004) writes: "Discourse analysis is not only language reflecting social order, but also language shaping individual's interaction with society... It is the key to understanding language itself" (p.14). Thus, discourse analysis is very fundamental to the accurate knowledge of a particular language and its socio-cultural use.

Jaworski and Coupland (1993) in Olateju (2004) describe it as work, just as it defines various forms of course and academic study. Moving from a well-grounded knowledge of discourse analysis, we go unto understanding its features.

Discourse Rank Scale

This is a very crucial aspect of discourse analysis. It calibrates discourse text into ranks as they function. A higher rank consists of a number of units in its "downline". Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), as cited by Osisanwo (2008) discovered five ranks in the scale including:

1. Acts: This is the smallest rank of the scale. It is created using words, groups, clauses or a sentence. An act cannot be divided. According to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), there are twenty (20) types of acts. From there, Osisanwo (2008) identified three (3) as core. They are: informative act (giving information), elicitative act (demanding response) and directive act (giving instructions or commands) (Osisanwo, 2008).

2. Moves: This in "the single minimal contribution of a participant to a talk at once" (Osisanwo, 2008). It consists of either one or more acts. A move with one act is a "simple move" while any with more than one act is a "complex move". Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) identified five types of moves: focusing moves, framing move, opening move, answering move and follow- up move.

3. Exchanges: This is the set of moves in a particular discourse topic. For instance, Speaker X initiates a talk and speaker Y responds while speaker X gives a follow up or feedback, an exchange has been achieved, (Osisanwo, 2008).

4. Transactions: Refers to a number of related exchanges where the first is the preliminary and the last is the final.

5. Lessons: This is the totality of the discourse. It consists of one or more

transactions. Coulthard (1977) identifies words that serve as boundaries of transactions in lessons like: "well", "right", "now", "good", "are". They are called frames. They do not carry their original meaning in this content. They are used together with comments, evaluations or comments to end a transaction and begin another within a lesson. It is pertinent to note that the last two features- transaction and lesson- are only found in classroom discourse.

Discourse Analysis of Sermons

The Discourse Analysis of sermons is also called Hortatory Discourse Analysis. This is because, like every other hortatory text, sermons aim at:

> influencing conduct, that is, getting the receivers of the text to do something they are not currently doing, to continue doing something they are already doing to expend greater effort in an activity embarked on, to modify the nature.... (Longer, 1992, p. 45).

A Hortatory Discourse has four types of moves:
  i.   Establishment of the authority/ credibility of the text producer
  ii. Presentation of a problem/ situation
  iii. Issuing one or more commands, which can be mitigated to suggestions of varying urgency, and
  iv. Resort to motivation (Cipriani, 2002).

Basically, every Hortatory Discourse cannot be complete without commands/suggestion, and, as a matter of fact, some hortatory discourse can be completely commands and suggestions. This depicts that hortatory discourse is "brusque and brief" (Cipriani,2002). Longacre (1992) further shows that:

> The presence of [ii] is implied (for presenting the context of situation), i.e there is necessarily some problem/ situation which evokes the command elements. Most hortatory discourse also include [iv], motivation - unless the power of the speaker/writer over the addressee in incontestable. All this in turn implies [i] even if not overtly stated (p. 78).

Cipriani (2002) explains why sermons are classified as hortatory discourse. He writes, "a sermon, fits the hortatory notion because it is a discursive instance where whosoever possesses power and knowledge (credentials) discuses a problem solution) and encourages (motivation) the group to overcome this problem through

his orientation (command).

Also, in most hortatory discourses, the exhorter/preacher performs a greater part of the discourse; others are more interactional. In the less interactional discourses, the preacher uses a call to ensure a response from the congregation in order to still retain his audience. Sometimes, he asks them to read a passage from the Bible unanimously; this helps in unifying attention. In the more interactional discourse, the preacher engages the congregation in a discussion which he leads or in a Question-Answer Session from which he draws an inference which always is a suggestive command.

In addition, like every other verbal discourse, hortatory discourse involves semiotics- signs- which include gestures, facial expressions, movements, etc. This makes the sermon lively and attracts the attention of the viewing congregation.

Theoretical Framework

The Speech Act theory is akin to pragmatics, which is the study of the language in a social setting. Speech Act is "an utterance that has performative functions in language and communication" (Wikipedia). Bach and Harnish (1979) explain it as "the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention".

Speech Act does not ask what form an utterance takes but what it does. The speech Act is based to a large extent on culture. For instance, in India, politeness requires that if someone compliments one of your possessions, you should offer to give the item as a gift... An Indian woman who had just met her son's American wife was shocked to hear her new daughter in-law praise her beautiful saris. She commented, "what kind of girl did he marry?" She wants everything! From the illustration, the American girl compliments her mother in-law's saris for their beauty, based on her American culture, while her mother- in-law interprets the compliment based on her Indian culture. However, discourse analysts hope to make a contribution to improving cross- cultural understanding by comparing how people in different cultures use language.

Furthermore, J. L. Austin's "How to Do Things with Words" directed philosophical attention to non-declarative uses of language through his notions "locutionary act", "illocutionary act" and "perlocutionary act", which are commonly classified as "speech acts". Nevertheless, there is the existence of a "fourth notion", "meta-locutionary act" which refers to the forms and functions of the discourse itself rather than continuing the substantive development of the

discourse (Austin, 1962).

According to Wikipedia, the locutionary act is the performance of an utterance: the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning comprising phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts; corresponding to the verbal syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance. The illocutionary act, which is very central to the Speech Act is "the pragmatic 'illocutionary force' of the utterance; thus, its intended significance as a socially valid verbal action. And, the perlocutionary act is the actual effect such as persuading, convincing, searing, enlightening, inspiring, or otherwise getting someone to do or realise something, whether intended or not. Still, there is the "Indirect Speech Act" which is a situation where the meaning of the linguistic devices used may be different from the content intended to be communicated. For example, one may say, "Peter, can you close the window?" thereby asking if he could be able to close the window, but also requesting he does so. Since the request is performed indirectly by means of performing a question, it counts as an indirect speech act.The speech act theory is relevant to this work because it analyses discourse based on pragmatics. It will help further to serve as a guide to the right use of utterances during church services.

Research Methodology

The raw data (sermon) for this study were recorded in the preacher's church where they were preached, and analysed. They are analysed based on the speech Act Theory, and the discourse rank scale. These sermons were not specially based for this research but were "normal" sermons and were presented during a normal service. The research focuses solely on the contribution of sermon to hortatory discourse analysis.

Analysis of Sermons

Analysis of "Placing Price Tag" by Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio

This discourse is expository; it merely reveals what the preacher knows about the congregation. Through this revelation, the congregation has an awareness of what the source of their problem is. The sermon was preached for a record time of about 96 minutes.

Acts

It consists of 264 acts, of which 204 are informative, 57 are elucitative and 3 are

directive.

Samples of Informative Acts

Apostle: *This morning, we had started with a pro- eh- with a topic, "Invading Evil Spiritual Markets"*. (Act 1)

I'm not going to repeat any of the things that I said in the morning apart from the fact that to help you to understand because we- we did not conclude so we are continuing with the same message to conclude this evening. (Act 2)

Apostle: *Thank you for understanding* (Act 16)

Samples of Elicitative Acts (and Responses)

Apostle:... *True or false?* (Act 21)
Congregation: *True* (Act 22)
Apostle:... *Is what?* (Act 31)
Congregation: *Sin.* (Act 32)
Apostle: *Let us read Isaiah- Isaiah chapter 50 verse 1: so, every unbeliever you see, every home that that family has not known God, most of them have been bought, and bought, and bought and bought," thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of your mother's divorcement whom I have put away..."* (Act 37).
Congregation: (Silence) Because the question is a direct quotation.

Sample of Directive Acts (and Actions)

Apostle: *This is why today we are invading-say, we are on invasion, mission.* (Act 96)
Congregation: *We are on invasion mission.* (Act 97)
Based on the Speech Act Theory, the following acts are found in this sermon:
Meta-locutionary act: It functions as a hortatory discourse.

Perlocutionary act: It is directed at revealing the activities that go on in the satanic markets (evil spiritual markets) in order for the audience to trace effectively the sources of their problems and appropriately act and deliver themselves (through prayers).

Locutionary act

Apostle: *This is why tonight, we are invading- say, we are on invasion mission.* (Act 96)

Congregation: *We are on invasion mission* (Act 97)

Indirect Speech Acts

Apostle: *I didn't hear you well* (Act 98)

Congregation: (a higher pitch) *We are on invasion mission.* (Act 99)

Apostle: *You must believe your prophet so that you can prosper in the prophet.* (Act 262). This expression performs double functions. First, it tells the audience what to do in order to " prosper in the prophet", and also directs them to believe their prophet.

Moves

It contains 72 moves: 22 opening moves,36 answering moves and 14 follow-up moves; 38 complex moves and 34 simple moves.

Sample of Complex Moves

Apostle: *This morning, we had started with a pro- eh with a topic, "Invading Evil Spiritual Markets" ... What will happen 12 midnight?* (Moves 1)

Sample of Simple Moves

Congregation: *True* (move 14)

Sample of Opening, Answering and Follow-up Moves

Apostle: *What is the price here?* (Opening move)

Congregation: *Sin.* (Answering moves)

Apostle: *So,in the spirit realm,sinners can easily be bought because they are living in sin. Ye have sold yourselves for what?* (Follow-up moves).

Three types of hortatory moves are found in this sermon 2 are part of Cipriani's (2002) 4- moves of a sermon. They are:

Problem Presentation Move

Apostle: *This morning, we had started with a pro- eh- with a topic, "Invading, Evil Spiritual Markets" ... What will happen 12 midnight?* (Move 1)

Apostle: Thank you for understanding... True or false?(Move 13)

Command Issuing Move

Apostle: *Use my language. What will happen 12 mid night for those of you who were here in the morning?* (Move 5)

Apostle: *"And that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders"* ... *This is why tonight, we are invading- say, we are on invasion mission.* (Move 33)

      The third type of hortatory move used in the sermon is called expository move. Expository move is a move that explains, reveals and makes manifest a concept, a phenomenon or a meaning rather than evoking emotion or empathy, or convincing the hearer. It does a little of describing, although it may not necessarily relay to the five senses. Examples are shown below:

Apostle: *So, sin is also a price, so, everyone that are available in the spirit realm to be bought, it means that they are sold out because of their sins. If you read the book of Judges, you will see Israel committed sin."*... Behold for your inquiries have ye sold yourselves." So, what is the price here? (Move 17)

Exchanges

There are a total of 5 exchanges in the sermon:

Exchange 1= Moves 1 to 16

Apostle: *This morning, we had started with a pro- eh- with a topic, "Invading Evil Spiritual Markets". I'm not going to repeat any of the things that I said in the morning apart from the fact that to help you to understand because we-we did not conclude so we are continuing with the same message to conclude this evening. What will happen 12 midnight?*

Congregation: XXX

Apostle: *What will happen 12?*

Congregation: XXX

Apostle: *Use my language. What will happen 12 midnight for those of you who were here in the morning?*

Congregation: XXX

Apostle: *Okay can I ask you- what today in the spirit realm?*

Congregation: XXX

Apostle: *Yes, in the bidding market, what is today?*

Congregation: XXX

Apostle: *What is today?*

Congregation: XXX

Apostle: *Thank you for understanding. That is why I said I'm not going to handle any of those but for the purpose of clarification, in the morning we were handling those who buy and sell. That was what we handled in the morning: those who buy and sell. So, this evening, we'll be looking at a subheading: "Placing Price Tag"- "Placing Price Tag"...*

Congregation: *True*

Apostle: *So, you are not going to bargain (Clears throat). But there in the open market, even if they place price tags you still bargain because it's an open market, if not, you can go to another shed. Now, it is the same thing in the spirit realm.*

Congregation: *Sin*

Exchange 2= Moves 17 to 36

Apostle: *So, sin is also a price; so, everyone that are available in the spirit realm to be bought, it means that they are sold out because of their sins. If you read the book of Judges, you will see the Israelites committed sin. They went after Ashtoreth, and God- you know, God allowed their enemies to enslave them for seven years; God allowed their enemies to enslave them for seven years; God allowed their enemies to overpower them for three years; God allowed their enemies to take- you know to buy them over for 14 years, and sorely oppress them...*

Congregation: *Sin*

Apostle: *What is the price here?*

Congregation: *Sin*

Apostle: *So, in the spirit realm, sinners can easily be bought because they are living in sin. Now, when a man is living in sin; in first John three verse six and eight, the bible says he is " of the devil", so, why should the devil come and negotiate again on your head? Those who took you there to be punished soon discover that you have no value...*

Congregation: *Sin*

Apostle: *No, He's not saying somebody sold you but you are selling yourself for what?*

Congregation: *Sin*

Apostle: *Okay, let's look at somebody who is a drunk, he has deliberately chosen to be taking strong drinks. Are you hearing me?*

Congregation: *Yes*

Apostle: *Now he keeps taking it, so almost every day, he's always intoxicated. Now,*

why should Satan, or witches and wizards place a value on him when he has no value?...

Congregation: *Yes*

Apostle: *Jeremiah fifteen- Jeremiah fifteen- one-five, verses thirteen and fourteen. I know,if you came in only this evening, it's like magic butkeep- just keep your calm."Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without"* what?

Congregation: *Price*

Apostle: *Without what?*

Congregation: *Price.*

Apostle: "*And that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders". All the sins you commit: you are a regular customer to juju- priest; you are always very fetish and diabolical; you seek for protection but not from God; you cover yourself with certain measures of protection, not from God. Now, when you allow your lifestyle to remain like this, the bible says even what was meant for you- she, you know, we're talking about spirit realm as it is done in heaven...*

Congregation: *We are on invasion mission.*

Apostle: *I didn't hear you well.*

Congregation: (a higher pitch) *We are on invasion mission.*

Other moves include:
Exchange 3= Moves 37 to 52
Exchange 4= Moves 53 to 60
Exchange 5= Moves 61 to 72

Summary

Discourse Analysis, defined as a systematic interrogation, examination and evaluation of the elements of written or spoken communication, or debate; uncovering and understanding their cause-effect interrelationships, has various sub - branches, of which Hortatory Discourse belongs. Others include classroom discourse, bureaucratic discourse, etc. Five ranks of discourse were proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) which are: acts, moves, exchanges, transactions and lessons.

Also, Hortatory Discourse refers to the communication in the church, between a preacher and the congregation. This form of discourse, taking into cognizance the Speech Act can be analyzed as shown above to explore the use of speech acts and discourse mover as used by preachers. It also shows that style is

being employed by the preacher in delivering his/her sermon, thereby eschewing monotony in hortatory discourse.

Finally, it is seen that hortatory discourse is not gender or status bias; women as well as men, youth as well as children can deliver sermons as far as they possess a good command of the language in use.

Conclusion

From the analyses above, it has been proved that Hortatory Discourse is a form of discourse which deals with the delivering of sermons in the church, and that in discourse ranks, it attains only the first three units namely - acts, moves and exchanges.

It has also been discovered that Hortatory Discourse targets the emotion of the audience- whipping sentiments and amassing unison through cheering, declaration, or call to actions, especially using the Indirect Speech Act. This will culminate in a prayer session. Most times, as well, Hortatory Discourse could be more interactional, but this depends on the preacher's style and the programme of the day.

In the view of these results, the researchersare of the opinion that further research should be conducted in the field of hortatory discourse so as to provide a greater wealth of literature in the subject matter and also bring to the fore more of the hidden contents of Hortatory Discourse. This will help to establish tenets, rules and guidelines for Hortatory Discourse delivery.

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