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A Generic Structure Of Reverend E.M.F Oshoffa's Sermons

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A B S T R A C T

This research's objectives were to examine the obligatory and optional linguistic elements, the generic structure, and the pragmatic imports of the linguistic elements identified in Reverend EMF Oshoffa's sermons by using Halliday and Hasan's (1985) theory of generic structure potential (GSP). Reverend Emmanuel Mobiyina Friday Oshoffa is selected out of many white garment Churches because of the large audience that listen to him as the Supreme Head of Celestial Church of Christ worldwide. In this study, we purposively studied thirty-two (32) excerpts selected from Reverend EMF Oshoffa's sermons through participants and non- participant observations. The findings revealed the GSP catalogue for Reverend EMF Oshoffa as [P]^ [S]^ (DoP)^ [Se]^ {(CfC)^ (WtF)}^ [F]. The elements generated in the catalogue include: prayer P, Song S, Greeting G, Declaration of Purpose DoP, Sermon Se, Call for Confession CfC, Welcome to the Fold WtF, and Finis F. While DoP, CfC and WtF are optional, the remaining ones (P, S, G, Se and F) are obligatory. The findings revealed that most registers used in patterning CCC sermon feature 'angelic registers' whose meanings cannot be traced to any world languages, but their meanings can be inferred from the context of use. Notable registers of the sermon featured El-beraca-bered-Eli, Elmorijah, Elohimjah,and Eli-Bamah-Yabah. The paper concluded that the elements of GSP catalogued here are typical of CCC sermonic discourse. It is therefore suggested that future research could apply this model to other sermonic discourse of other denomination, most especially White Garment Church such as Cherubim and Seraphim to further test its validity.
Keyword: Discourse, Sermons, White Garment Church.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sermon is a kind of speech delivered by clergy men to win souls for Christ. It is also known as preaching. Sermon serves as the communication of truth. Preaching or sermon features two elements, which according to Al-Aadilu (2018) are truth and personality. Truth and personality determine how the given sermon is able to convince the listeners or congregation to change from their bad behaviours to good ones. Sermon has its peculiar language which differentiates it from other genres of speech delivery. Generally speaking, sermon as one of the characteristics of religious discourse has its distinct language that sets it apart from other discourse. Crystal & Davy (1969) submit that the collocational idiosyncrasies which occur in religious English features different collocations which set it different from language use elsewhere. Religious language stands out of other discourse because of its uniqueness. This corroborates (Samarin, 1976) submission that 'religious communities are set apart linguistically, and this makes it interesting to reveal the uniqueness of their use of language.

According to Akpowowo (2002, p. 16), the language of Christianity features different purpose ranging from communicating information to assessing religious truth. Here, the purpose of preaching is for the preacher to reveal the truth to the congregation, which will encourage them to change from their bad behaviours. Sermon language features peculiar language, which according to Olanrewaju (2004, p. 93), is 'a distinct form of the spoken language that is marked with some peculiar features such as the use of biblical quotations, theological terms, prophetic utterances, imperative statements, interruptions, paralinguistic codes, repetitions, metaphors, paradox and

euphony. Sermon plays a vital role in Christianity, and it occupies a central and strategic place in Christian services as it aims to reveal basic truths to humans (the audience) with the hope that they will accept and utilise these truths.

Though there are uniformity in the structure of Christian sermons, but Celestial Church of Christ (hereafter CCC) differs. This study therefore is concerned with a view to examine the generic linguistic elements that characterised the peculiar use of language to describe the pragmatic imports of the obligatory and optional elements in this context of language use.

The study is aimed at knowing the obligatory and optional linguistic elements in Reverend EMF Oshoffa's sermons, the generic structure of Reverend EMF Oshoffa's sermons and the pragmatic imports of the linguistic elements identified in Reverend EMF Oshoffa's sermons.

There are many latest works that related to this paper

Alagbe (2020) examines neologism as a stylistic device in the selected sermons of Paul Enenche and the findings showed that affixation is the central process for forming new lexemes in the sermons. The paper concludes that coinages belong to the four classes of the content words: noun, verb, adverb and adjective, which make the meaning of Enenche's neologisms easily accessible and coinages, serve as an index of the preacher's style. Oloo (2020) examines strategies used by Pentecostal preachers to enhance audience participation during sermons in Eldoret Kenya. The paper uses insights from the speech act theory, and the finding shows that the speech acts performed by preachers fail to get the desired response.

Akhimien & Farotimi (2018) examine selected sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed

Christian Church of God in Nigeria with a view to identifying and describing the discourse strategies and persuasive elements that characterise his sermons. Using insights from Schlegloff's model of conversational analysis, they reveal that Adeboye's sermons manifest discourse features such as feedback-call-response, adjacency pairs, openings and closings; repair mechanism, and selection of next speaker, complemented with non-verbal conversational features as pause, smile, laughter, and raising of the hands and head.

In addition, (Ajayi, 2020) examines generic structure potential analysis of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria. The findings revealed that Christian street evangelism features five obligatory elements: songs, greetings, sermon, prayer and Finis; and three optional elements: declaration of purpose, call for Confession, and welcome to the fold. This study is similar to the present study with little difference in structure In addition, Awonuga and Chimuanga (2016) examine the syntactic devices in the selected sermons of Pastors Paul Enenche and Chris Oyakhilome.

As mentioned earlier, these studies have all examined language use in other contexts of Christian activities, with the exclusion of CCC sermon. This study, therefore, attempts a study of generic structure potential in select sermons of Reverend Emmanuel Mobiyina Friday Oshoffa, the pastor and supreme head of Celestial Church of Christ, using insights from Halliday and Hasan's Generic Structure Potential theory.

II. METHODS

Data for this study employs participant and non participant observation. Data comprised thirty-two (32) CCC preaching/sermons, which were in English.

The pulpit sermons of Reverend E.M.F Oshoffa were observed, transcribed and presented as data in this study. Data were subjected to descriptive discourse analysis, with insights (Halliday & Hasan, 1989) generic structure potential theory (thereafter, GSP). This study is based on Halliday and Hasan's theory of generic structure potential (GSP).

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

An attempt is made in this section to analyse the generic structure potential found in the selected sermons of Reverend E.M.F Oshoffa based on the following: prayer, song, greeting, declaration of purpose, sermon, and call for confession.

3.1 Prayer (P)

Prayer is a means of communicating with God. It is the experience of God's involvement in a believer's life which constitute human-drive dialogue and therefore, the experiential knowledge of God in daily life as result in both planned and unplanned prayers (Van der Merwe, 2018). Prayer in CCC is either rendered 'silently' or 'loudly.' When the congregations are asked to pray on their personal request after receiving sermon, silent prayer is offered. When a preacher needs to pray for the congregation, he does that by praying loudly in order for people to hear and reply with amen. Prayers in CCC sermon feature recursive element, which could be said before the sermon, during the sermon, and at the end of the sermon. The forms of prayer rendered in CCC sermon include prayer of repentance and blessings over salvation. Examples are presented in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 1
Father, your children are ready to do your will today,
Grant unto them the spirit to sin no more.
Make them the heir of your kingdom.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Excerpt 2
Jehovah, Jesus Christ, Holy Micheal
Our father and God, we pray that your spirit join our gathering so that when your word is coming out, let it not be blown away by wind.
Let your Holy Spirit reigns in our lives today and partake in the harvest celebration.

Excerpt 3
Elberacah-bered-Eli, Elohimjah, Jerimoyamah
You are all angels of blessings
Bless your children, may they never know poverty
Bless them all and grant them peace and longevity

Excerpt 4
Eli-bamah Yabah (3ce)
Jehovah, Jesus Christ, Holy Micheal
Our father and God
Pray for your children
As they gather here today to observe the harvest anniversary
Spare their lives so that they will have a full course to glorify your name
In Jesus' name I have prayed.

3.2 Song (S)
Song plays an important role in religious discourse. It features the content of a given sermon in Christian sermon. Song in Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) summarised the theme of the intending sermons, which prepares the congregants with needed information. According to Oha (2012), song rendition in religious gatherings as a medium to express inner feelings, convert and edify soul has become a futile avenue for free worship. The songs examined in this study are taken from CCC hymn book. They are presented below:

Excerpt 5
Jehovah, give us your power,
Jehovah, give us your power,
The power to conquer witches,
The power to conquer wizards,
The power evil world cannot confront,
Jehovah, give us your power (CCC hymn 253)

Excerpt 6
You children of Celestial,
Girdle up your loin firmly,
We might join Hosts of Angels,
Chant Hallelujah on that day,
That we might all dwell in the joy of the Lord... (CCC hymn 620)

Excerpt 7
I will trade with my Lord,
I will never run debt,
I will trade with my Lord.

Excerpt 8

The world had been bent to one side,
Satan is driven with shame,
Oh sinners come on board the last ship,
So that you may not be missing... (CCC hymn 539)

Excerpt 9
Take care of your works in Celestial (2 times)
Over the hills and over the plains,
My eyes behold your works in Heaven... (CCC hymn 608).

Excerpt 10
In my Father's house in heaven
Very many mansions exist there
Jesus is in there,
Angels are in there,
Singing Holy
Hallelujah, Holy
Hallelujah Holy

Hallelujah Holy
Hallelujah Holy
Hallelujah Hallelujah (CCC hymn 699).

Excerpt 11
O hearken all ye people,
To the voice of the Lord,
The day of judgment draws near,
That ye shall be reckoned.
Cr: All the whole world have sinned,
And fallen short of His glory,
O sinner the name of Jesus shall save us all.
No other way that leads into salvation,
Be prepared all ye people to accept Jesus.
(CCC hymn 283).

3.3 Greeting (G)
Greeting in CCC sermon is meant for interactions. Greeting forms integral part of Yorùbá interpersonal cultural communication (Ajayi, 2017; Odebunmi, 2015; Fafunwa, 2008). It is in line with Apostle Paul's and other writers' preaching in the Bible. Whenever Apostle Paul preaches, he will first of all send his greeting to open door for interactions. These forms of greeting are evident in Philippians 4:21& 22, Mathew 28:9, Luke 24:36.

Excerpt 12
Hallelujah! (3 times)
I welcome every Celestian to this special occasion,
Without God we cannot witness today,
Let's stand up and praise Him.

Excerpt 13
Congratulations to everyone here
I greet you all in Christ's name
Who had given you the opportunity to be here today
Some people wish to be here today but they could not
Once again, congratulations!

Excerpt 14

Brethren, I welcome you all in the name of God the father,
The son and the Holy Spirit.
If you are here with me shout hallelujah!

3.4 Declaration of Purpose [DoP]
DoP concerns how the preacher let the people know why s/he is out to engage them. It allows the audience to know the reason for the sermon. DoP is an optional element in CCC sermon. Once a preacher declares his/her intention, the audiences are able to prepare their minds towards the message (s). The excerpts are presented below:

Excerpt 15
Hallelujah!
My mission here today is to encourage us on how to priase God
How do you praise God?
You can do this through giving.

Excerpt 16
Hallelujah!
I am here today to know our preparedness for the kingdom of God
Brethren, are you fully prepared?
I want to believe that through our interactions with God we are fully prepared.

Excerpt 17
Children of Celestial,
My message for you today is about harvest and goodness of God
The message will force you to meditate and know where you have fallen short of the glory of God.

3.5 Sermon (Se)
Sermon is an obligatory element of CCC sermon which makes sinners change from their bad ways of lives and live a life worthy of Christ.
Excerpt 18

What did you bring for God?
What does God need from you?
Does God eat?
If you check the book of Isaiah 1:12-16, God forbids vain oblations... what He needs from us is to put away our evil doings from His sight and cease to do evil.

Excerpt 19
It is time to bring forth our first fruits to God and praise Him. By so doing you will be blessed abundantly
We should be full of joy
Exodus 23:19 emphasises how you can fully engage in observing it.
God really loves us, we have to appreciate God.
How can you appreciate God?
The Bible says we should bring all our treasure into God's house. I want you to remember all His goodness in your life this year.
Children of Celestial do not forget the good things God has done in your life.
Today you have to offer Thanksgiving to God,
As you are present today, do not forget
You must fear God, the one you have not seen before but you watch His deeds,
Why won't you respect Him?

Excerpt 20
Do not forget God goodness in your life
An angel has been sent before you because you have kept His commandments.
God will never forget to protect you because He does not forget his covenant.

Excerpt 21
You Celestians, obey Jesus Christ
Jesus was with the Israelites in those days, He provided them light.
Children of Celestial, are you ready to proclaim Him wherever you go? The Israelite are headstrong, it is like you also have headstrong that we no more keep God's commandments.
Keep God's commandments and He will surely bless you.
Know God with all your belongings
Come back to God you children of Celestial
Worship God with what you have, He will bless you (psalm 116:12-14).

Excerpt 22
Celestians, you are celebrating harvest anniversary today
What did you bring for God for what He has done for you?
Do you wish to worship God with all your belongings?
Pay your tithe, pay all the necessary dues, tempt Him; you will know that He is good.
My sermon has now turned to question.
Can you trade with God?
Can you tempt God of Oshoffa?

Excerpt 23
Take God's warning because He rebukes those He loves.
Be righteous in your dealings with God. (Mat11:20)
You children of God listening to me, repent.
Where will you be that day; in the midst of sheep or goats?
Keep the way of God, there won't be partiality.
My father and mother are there cannot save you.

Excerpt 24
Celestians, whatever you sow you shall reap.
You unbelievers, work for kingdom of God.
Bring forth your treasure to God. The last deed you engaged in shall be used to judge you. (Rev 20:11, Judges 5:23)

Excerpt 25
Children of God, nobody is perfect before God

Repent and renounce evils because we shall all give account and stand before the judgment throne (2Thessalonians 1:6-10).

3.6 Call for Confession (CfC)

It is an optional element of CCC sermon. This comes up when a sinner confesses his/her sins and promises to follow Christ. CfC takes different form in CCC as a new convert is neither asked by the preacher to signify for confession nor the new convert comes forward for prayer. The following excerpts show instances of CfC below:

Excerpt 25
I believe some people are ready to give their lives to Christ.
I don't need to call you out but you can see me or the shepherd in charge after service.

Excerpt 26
Jesus is calling today,
Oh come, oh come to Him.
As you renounce your evil deeds to follow Christ,
May God's spirit dwell in you

3.7 Welcome to Fold (WtF)

WtF is not an obligatory feature of CCC sermon. It is a stage in sermon where those who have repented promise to do the will of God. Here, the preacher congratulates the new converts and charges them not to identify themselves but do that in their next gathering. Some of the examples captured in our data are presented below:

Excerpt 27
Congratulations to those that have promised to do the will of God.
I pray that as you promise to practice 'giving' you will be number one Harvest Chairman next year.

Excerpt 28
I am sure that at the end of this sermon some people have determined to stop their cunning attitude.
I don't want to know you but I wish you fulfilled your promise in our next gathering.

3.8 Finis (F)

This is the last element of CCC sermon. It is a compulsory part of the sermon. It serves as discourse marker, which alerts congregants the rounding off of the sermon. It is an element of the sermon that summarises the theme of the preaching, and it could be in form of song or prayer. Consider the excerpts below:

Excerpt 29
Brethren, as you plan to follow Jesus today, I pray that He continues to watch your steps not to go back to your sinful lives.

Excerpt 30
As these people renounces their old ways of life to do your will, grant unto them discerning spirit to do your will eternally.

Excerpt 31
I hear the call of the lamb,
I hear the call of the lamb,
Jesus commands me to come,
You will follow Jesus to the end. Shalom!

Excerpt 32
I pray that satan will not take away all the words of God that we have heard today. The ones that passed through our right ears will not pass out through our left ears. May we be heirs of paradise in the last day. So shall it be.

Prayer is a means of communicating with God. It is the experience of God's involvement in a believer's life which constitute human-drive dialogue and therefore, the experiential knowledge of God in daily life as result in both planned and

unplanned prayers (Van der Marwe, 2018, p. 8). Prayer in CCC is either rendered 'silently' or 'loudly.' When the congregations are asked to pray on their personal request after receiving sermon, silent prayer is offered. When a preacher needs to pray for the congregation, he does that by praying loudly in order for people to hear and reply with amen. Prayers in CCC sermon feature recursive element, which could be said before the sermon, during the sermon, and at the end of the sermon. The forms of prayer rendered in CCC sermon include prayer of repentance and blessings over salvation. The songs extracted from the hymn book are either sang by the preacher or the choir.

Songs used in the sermon are selected based on the theme of the sermon. The songs are appropriately selected by the preacher or choir to draw the attention of the target audience. The songs also make the congregation to be carried along and prepare them to easily digest the content of the sermon. CCC sermon is full of hymnal songs which are adopted by the preacher to support the selected scripture verses, and this helps the preacher to fully disseminate his/her message. The selected songs from Reverend E.M.F Oshoffa showed that he is preaching in songs, as the case in excerpts 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

In excerpts 12, 13, 14, the preacher starts his sermon by greeting. It shows that the first thing a preacher does to get his message disseminated is through greeting. This form of greeting reflects the context of the preaching. It therefore shows that how a preacher greets during Sunday sermon is different from when giving sermon in naming, burial, thanksgiving and harvest ceremonies. This form of greeting is similar to Yorùbá forms of greeting, which show various times of the day in their greetings. It is a taboo in Yorùbá culture to interact with people without greeting them. Importance is also attached to greeting in the Bible, for instance, whenever the disciples go out to preach the gospel of Christ, the first thing they do is 'peace be unto you' (shalom). If peace reigns there they will carry out their mission but if the people reject them they will shake off the dust from their legs and leave (Mathew 10:12-13). Hence, greeting in context of CCC sermon has certain peculiar features. Here, people are referred to as 'brethren' and 'celestians' as expressed in excerpts 12 and 14 respectively. Excerpts 12, 13, 14 above show the purpose of the sermon which are meant to know how the people are fully prepared for the kingdom of God through giving and repentance.

Excerpts 15 to 17 afford the preacher the opportunity to let the people know why he is out to engage them. It allows the audience to know the reason for the sermon. Once he declares his intention, the audiences are able to prepare their minds towards the message(s).

Excerpts 18 to 25 present the obligatory element of Reverend EMF Oshoffa's sermons which encourage sinners to change from their bad ways of lives and live a life worthy of Christ. In excerpts 25 and 26, Call for Confession (CfC) occurs when a soul is won for Christ and such person will see the preacher in private and the preacher will direct him/her to perform certain 'ritual.' The 'ritual' in this sense does not mean that the person engages in the killing of animals for sacrifice; it is based on sanctification. Here, a pail or bucket of water is brought before the preacher or clergy man for prayer, and the new convert bathes with the water. After bathing, the new convert is qualified to be welcome to the fold. This aspect of CCC sermon is in line with practice in the book of Romans 10:9.

From excerpts 27 to 28, the preacher congratulates the new converts and charges

them not to identify themselves but do that in their next gathering. Finis used by serves as discourse marker, which alerts congregants the rounding off of the sermon. It summarised the theme of the preaching, and it could be in form of song or prayer as seen in excerpts 29 to 32.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined a generic structure potential of Celestial Church of Christ's Supreme Head, Reverend Emmanuel Mobiyina Friday Oshoffa's sermons, using insights from Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Generic Structure Potential (GSP). It has identified the obligatory and optional linguistic elements in CCC sermonic discourse. The GSP of Reverend EMF Oshoffa has been catalogued in this study as follows: **[P]^ [S]^ (DoP)^ [Se]^ {(CfC)^ (WtF)}^ [F].** The elements generated in the catalogue include: Prayer **P**, Song **S**, Declaration of Purpose **DoP**, Sermon **Se**, Call for Confession **CfC**, Welcome to the Fold **WtF** and Finis **F**. While DoP, CfC and WtF are optional elements, the remaining elements are obligatory.

The paper concludes that the elements of GSP catalogued here are typical of CCC sermonic discourse. It is therefore suggested that future research could apply this model to other sermonic discourse of other denomination, most especially White Garment Church such as Cherubim and Seraphim to further test its validity. In addition, the findings revealed that most registers used in patterning CCC sermon feature 'angelic registers' whose meanings cannot be traced to any world languages, but their meaning can be inferred from the context of use. Notable registers of the sermon feature El-beraca-bered-Eli, Elmorijah, Elohimjah, and Eli-Bamah-Yabah. It is evident from our analysis that most of the registers used in CCC sermon pose some challenges to the listeners/readers because most of these words cannot be traced to any world languages. Hence, the study is a new contribution to sermonic discourses. Sermons in CCC are persuasive in nature.

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