COHESION AND COHERENCE IN SELECTED SERMONS OF CHURCH LEADERS: ARCHBISHOP OBINNA AND LATE PASTOR BIMBO ODUKOYA

Chika Queen Ude
Department of English Language and Literature
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri
E-mail: chykad2002@yahoo.com

Abstract
Although religious discourse has been given research attention, language as used by Christian leaders especially in Nigeria has not enjoyed wide linguistic investigation. This work is poised to investigate the texture of selected Christian sermons by notable church leaders with a view to laying bare the cohesive ingredients these leaders have used to bring about texture and coherence in the sermons and, as a result, command large followership among the Christian faithful. Two sermons each of Archbishop Anthony Obinna and (Late) Pastor Mrs. Bimbo Odukoya are purposively selected and some utterances were subjected to descriptive analysis relying on insights from the Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Analysis reveals intricately woven and coherent texts which are only made possible as a result of the church leaders' unique deployment of such cohesive ingredients as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion in the texts. With these linguistic tools intricately deployed, leaders are able to command ample followership while discharging their spiritual duties. The paper affirms that cohesion and coherence are necessities for preachers who wish to command spiritual leadership among their followers.
Keywords: Cohesion, coherence, church leaders, Christian sermons

Introduction
Discourse occurs when two or more individuals or groups engage in a conversation, whether spoken or written. Discourse is concerned with language in action: the way it is used by the speaker and what the speaker uses it to achieve in the listeners. For a language to be appreciated, it has to be meaningfully strung together. This can only happen when there are devices present that make the parts hang together towards achieving the speaker's intention. These devices are the discourse structures which refer to those elements or features employed by the writer or speaker, in order to make the readers or hearers make sense of what is read or listened to. These elements make a text, written or spoken, to be recognized as well-constructed, as opposed to those that are jumbled or incoherent and so, the language user knows if communication has successfully taken place.

The ability of an efficient language user to interact or communicate in a given context, variety/style or register influences others to respond or react in a particular way. Different social groups thus manipulate language to suit their communication needs. The convincing and persuasive effect of language during communication is most predominantly noticed in such genres as Legalese, Journalese, political speeches and religious speeches. Religion usually changes the status of any associated language. Religious language gives an aura of sanctity even when its intention is to communicate certain messages as it tries to persuade its audience. An instance of religious language is sermon, which is the focus of this research work.

Quite a large body of research has been carried out on religious speeches (sermons) by religious leaders across different world religions. Some of these works include Bahago (1999), Onoja (2010), Gibbs (2010), Esimaje (2012), Hyles (2015) and, Acheoah and Abdulraheem (2015). Although these works are concerned with linguistic investigation of such sermons, none has been specifically devoted to the study of the coherence and cohesion in sermons of religious leaders. Further, none has been preoccupied with studying church leaders' sermons in Nigeria along different Christian ideologies. Therefore, this paper fills this gap as the researcher seeks to study oral discourse in the form of sermons of Archbishop Anthony Obinna, a male catholic priest and (Late) Pastor Bimbo Odukoya, a female Pentecostal preacher in an attempt to investigate the features or tools that bind discourses together as meaningful whole. These two individuals are famous leaders of their denominations with massive followership. This study examines how these church leaders have been able to deploy

language to relay scriptural messages to their followers over time while still maintaining a firm hold on their numerous followers, by looking into the preachers' linguistic choices in order to characterize or analyze the patterns of linguistic ties that bind linguistic items together. Further, this paper examines how the cohesive ingredients have been deployed by the preachers to bring about coherent structures in the sermons. It is our hope that investigating the patterns of cohesive ties in the sermons yields rewarding insights into the nature of the internal structures of sermons and enrich our understanding of the role of language in the discourse between church leaders and followers.

Sermons as Religious Discourse

Sermons in the broad sense are presentations on religious themes. They often contain moral appeal. They are generally believed by Christians to be divine or inspired messages presented in churches by authorized persons among the faithful community. In the catholic environment for example, a sermon is understood as homily. It is delivered by priests, bishops or deacons during the holy mass. The homily is patterned on passages from the bible, both the old and new testaments. Specifically, a sermon is a message from God, which is intended to be heard or read, and to have an immediate, deep and lasting impact upon the listeners or readers. The word sermon has its origin in a Latin word '*sermo*', which means a stab or a thrust. This indicates its purpose which according to Ephesians 6:17 is to pierce the heart of the hearer with "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" (NKJV). By this, preachers often use words that arouse strong emotions in the hearts of their listeners in order to achieve expected response.

Preachers use language in sermon delivery either for "the conversion of sinners, or the instruction of Christians, and is usually manifested as encouragement, motivation, exhortation, persuasion, rebuke, correction or warning" (Onoja 70). To achieve the expected reaction during sermon delivery, preachers employ different linguistic resources; they must ensure that the message is conveyed clearly, and they must seek out and utilize acceptable words by which to convey the message and; make the words easy to be understood. Rowland notes that a religious sermon is "a word of God, a sacred and sanctimonious creed to be accepted without question or doubt of authenticity" (105). A sermon is usually an oral address based on scriptural truth contained in the bible, "elaborately treated and with a view to persuasion" (Gibbs 139). The characterization of sermons usually pitches the preacher and the audience in asymmetrical position with the former on the higher plane. Consequently, sermons are often delivered without any appeal to the hearers' sentiments, personal opinions, ego, status, culture or expectations, while the congregation is expected to accept without doubt or bear any grudge against the preacher on the topic preached. Berg calls this "an assault" (Onoja 71) since at the pulpit, the clergy has immunity, giving him or her authority to use their sermons as they deem best. The congregation only responds to the speech when called to do so.

Features that characterize sermons as outlined by Gibbs are thus: they are oral or spoken address, not something to be read, but heard; they are to the popular mind, which means that it should be couched in language which can be understood by all present; and they are upon scriptural truth contained in the bible. This eliminates those thousands of so-called sermons that are nothing but a disquisition upon the most recent scientific discovery, and sermons from other religions outside Christianity. It is elaborately treated, that is to say, the passage is carefully analyzed, the real meaning of its words explained, its truth illustrated and the lesson applied.

For Gibbs, sermons are strictly oral and, this is supported by Adam who views them as specific religious stylistic composition, which is determined for oral presentation (10). However, sermons are not only oral but can also be written. They are not just for Christians but also for other religious groups. On the preparation of sermons, Hyles notes that "the language of the preacher is his (/her) trowel, his hammer, his (/her) scalpel and the conveyor of his (/her) feelings" (89), and so, it must be well structured to articulate the idea as found in the scriptural text, as succinct as possible, in order to be understood and to persuade the hearers. This, one could say, definitely makes sermon preparation an uphill task.

Preachers have a variety of sources of activities around them to choose ideas from, but cannot just include every idea they come across into a sermon. Rather the preacher should be selective about what is included in the sermon and when, as these shape the sermon. A preacher can only achieve this by using a sermon structure. Every part of the sermon must be connected to another for a better understanding on the part of the readers or listeners. It is this type of unity within a text that shows that the text is properly structured. Sermons are structured, coherent and meaningful when the words and sentences that make them up are all linked one to another in a fashion that corresponds to conventional formulae. Although there is no single mould into which all sermons should be poured, all sermons should follow basic guidelines for the sake of clear and relevant communication.

Theoretical Considerations
The study rests on some principles of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). MAK Halliday argues that "language is a resource for making an indefinitely expandable source of meaning potential" (16). For SFL, language is a social semiotic resource with which language users accomplish their purposes of expressing meanings in context (Eggins 1). Eggins adds that SFL views how people use language with each other to accomplish everyday social life. This points to the fact that SFL accounts for the way language works in a social and cultural setting and sees language as a meaning potential that its users draw upon to construe meaning. The theory fuses language and the social context in which it is used.

One of the great strengths of Halliday's theory is its applicability to text analysis. The analysis in this present study has been largely limited to the textual meta-function of language, which is the text-forming component in the linguistic system. The textual meta-function is concerned with cohesion on which this research work is based. Cohesion is a potential for relating one element of a text to another. It pulls the parts of a text together that they all appear as a unified whole. Halliday and Hassan assert that "cohesion is the means whereby elements that are structurally unrelated to one another are linked together, through the dependence of one another for its interpretation" (27). The cohesive devices provide inter-textual and intra-textual resonance that bind discourse together. According to Halliday and Hassan, these text-forming agencies are drawn from a number of areas of the lexico-grammatical system, and they make up the non-structural components of the semantic system (28 - 29).

Cohesive devices are tools used to hang pieces of language together and when a text is properly held together as a unit, it is said to be cohesive. According to SFL, the cohesive devices that bind texts together provide inter-textual and intra-textual resonances that tie discourse together. Halliday postulates that each element in a language is explained by reference to its function to the total linguistic system. In other words, each part is interpreted as functional with respect to the whole.
In this paper, the focus of the researcher is mainly the textual function of language since our goal is to investigate the patterns of cohesion in the texts under study. This way, we shall be examining how and to what extent the church leaders have deployed the cohesive devices in their sermons, how and to what extent the sermons are inter-textually and intra-textually tied together and, to what extent coherence has been achieved in the texts under study. To achieve this, our focus shall be on such cohesive ingredients as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

Data Collection Procedure
Data for this study are four (4) church sermons delivered by Archbishop Anthony John Valentine Obinna, the Catholic Archbishop of Owerri Archdiocese, Imo State, and (Late) Pastor Mrs. Bimbo Odukoya of the Fountain of Life Church, Lagos both in Nigeria. The researcher collected these sermons as already recorded oral presentations through the tape recorder. These were transcribed for easy and detailed analysis. For ease of analysis, sermons of the Catholic Archbishop have been tagged AJVO 1 and AJVO 2, while those of the Pentecostal preacher are tagged PBO 1 and PBO 2 by the researcher.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, the analysis shall focus on the following cohesive devices - reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical devices - and how they have been deployed by the preachers to bring about textuality in the sermons.

Reference in Church Leaders' Sermons

Reference is used profusely in the texts under study. Below are a few examples from the texts:

AJVO I

i. For they listened to Him and many who were possessed cried with a loud voice and they who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

The above is drawn from the Bible reading and the church leader decides to begin his sermon with this expression. From the above, 'they' refers to the people who were following Jesus Christ in the reading while 'Him' refers to Jesus Christ. These reference items are exophoric since they refere to characters outside the text. They are used by the leader to shift the attention of the followers to events during the life of Christ.

AJVO II

i. [1]This light represented here by the lumen Christi, the light of Christ, which was lighted on Easter, Easter vigil, reminding us that Christ is the light of the world. [2]That is why we honour this paschal candle. . . . [3]That is why we have symbols conveying spiritual messages and we use them forever.

From the above excerpt, 'this light' points cataphorically to the 'paschal candle' in sentence 2, which in turn is an exophoric reference item since the item itself is not in the text of the sermon. It follows the demonstrative 'this' to show that it is something present and known to the people present at the occasion. The pronoun 'us' in sentence one points forward towards 'we' which appears once in sentence two and twice in sentence three. In sentence 3, 'them', points anaphorically to the word 'symbols'. The reference items in the above refer to objects either out of the text or objects to be further referred to. Therefore, it appears as if the church leader is concerned with intimating members of new happening, event or information. In another example, we have:

PBO I

i. You must understand that when the devil wants to set a trap for you, he's gonna let somebody do something to you that will make you yourself think that unforgiveness is what they deserve.

Here, the reference item 'You' points forward towards three other 'you' within the sentence, the last of the 'you' being emphasized by 'yourself' while 'he' in 'he's' points backward towards 'the devil'. Further, 'they' points anaphorically to 'somebody'. One may say that the church leaders have mindfully made ample use of personal references so that their audience can individualise the message and feel involved.

Conjunctions in Church Leaders' Sermons
AJVO I

Well, I was relaxed as everything went through peacefully with the President of Palestine welcoming graciously the Holy Father. So, while the Holy Father is in that land, the holy land, here I am in Samaria as one of the apostles . . . I take the position of John in your midst while the Holy Father takes the position of Peter in Palestine at this moment.

'Well' is a conjunctive item, a continuative because it serves to indicate that what follows is in response to a preceding item. It is seen to introduce an explanatory comment. In this case it links and introduces a continuation of the speaker's utterance after a brief pause of laughter from his audience and the feeling of the speaker as he watched the video clip of the Pope's visit to Palestine. The use of the causal relation 'so' forms a cohesive chain, pulling the Pope's visit and the Archbishop's together. The preacher uses it to connect these visits to that of Jesus' apostles in the Bible or, the coming of Christ into the world as read prior to the sermon. 'At this time' is a conjunction which shows temporal relations, indicating the actual time of the event. We have another example in **AJVO II**:

> *Blessed are you if you suffer for the sake of Christ, but if you suffer for the sake of stealing or sin, then it's no use.*

In the above, there is the use of 'but', an adversative conjunction which presents a contrary view to the preceding idea. 'Then' which presents a causal and conditional effect hints at the fate of those who suffer for the sake of sin. Again in **PBO I**, we have:

> *Now if you notice God speaks about love being a commandment; and when you are talking about commandment, you are not giving the person a choice. You are telling the person 'this is what you have to do.' . . . if I say to you, 'this is an instruction' . . . maybe you might decide, 'well, I don't want to obey that instruction'. But if I say to you, 'this is a commandment', it means you have no choice.*

The church leader begins her speech with the conjunctive item '*Now*' to link her next expression to the Bible passage previously read. The conjunctive '*Now*' links the two expressions by its intonation pattern. It opens a new point of argument in the speech. The next sentence begins with an additive 'and' which is used by the speaker to elaborate more on what commandment really means. There is also the use of a conjunctive item 'well' as a continuative. Its use in the text seems to give the addressee a freedom of an option. The adversative 'but' introduces a contrary option, pointing to the Biblical fact that to love is a commandment, which must be obeyed, and not an instruction, which is optional. From the examples in this subsection, conjunctions have been used by the church leaders primarily to link items together but specifically to add new information, to show contrast, to indicate time and reason for speeches/actions.

Lexical Cohesion in Church Leaders' Sermons
Lexical Cohesion has also been used profusely in the texts of church leaders. The following are some instances:

AJVO I
i.   *All will be vanity. Vanity on vanity, all is vanity.*
ii. *So, when people abuse you for being faithful, for doing right, for seeking to live in a chaste way, in an upright way, in an honest way . . .* don't you worry . . . .

In (i) the lexical item 'vanity' is reiterated. This is for the purpose of emphasis for a more forceful or stronger sermon by the church leader. In (ii), 'doing right', 'a chaste way', 'an upright way' and 'an honest way ' are lexical synonymies especially in the context of a religious sermon. They are all included in the meaning of 'faithful' which can be taken to be their super-ordinate. They are all used emphatically too to buttress the importance of holy living. In **AJVO II,** we also have:

i.   *Adoration of God, because of His glory, because of the immensity of His goodness, the immensity of His benevolence, the immensity of His forgiveness.*

In the above sentence, the lexical items 'benevolence', 'forgiveness' and 'goodness' are synonyms. They constitute lexical synonymy used by the church leader to emphasise the idea contained in their meaning. There is also the repetition of the word 'immensity'. Both the lexical synonymy and the repetition are used to drive home or emphasise the greatness of God's attributes. Another example in this section as seen in **PBO I:**

> *So, if I say that I want to love, I'm going to work against my flesh; I'm going to work against my desires; I'm going to work against my passion.*

From the above, the terms 'passion' and 'desires' are lexically synonymous given the religious context in which they are used. 'Flesh' is a superodinate, which includes passions and desires. There is also the reiteration of the expression 'I'm going to work against'. This is done on purpose for emphasis. By using lexical synonymy and reiteration, the church leader repeatedly emphasises what believers must do in order to love in a Godly way.

Ellipsis and Substitution in Church Leaders' Sermons
There are instances of ellipsis in the sermons, where items which recoverable are omitted completely. Some examples are presented here:

AJVO I: *You have the message of eternal life, and we have come to believe (^).*
PBO I: *The Bible says, 'every desire that I have, whatever I want God to do to me, or   do for me, He's willing to (^).*

PBO II: *Any man that is smart must make sure that he has affairs without his wife knowing (^) . . . When you're having extra-marital affairs, the wife at home must not know (^)*

In AJVO I, the end of the sentence is an instance of ellipsis. The expression 'the message of eternal life' has been ellipted to avoid a redundant expression. This type of ellipsis is called the nominal (object) ellipsis. In PBO I, we see an instance of verbal ellipsis where the verb 'do' is ellipted. In PBOII, there are two instances of ellipses. The first is the ellipsis of a nominal clause 'that he has affairs'. This is an example of a clausal ellipsis. The second another clausal ellipsis of 'you're having extra-marital affairs'. Ellipses as used here are usually employed to avoid redundancy in expressions and make the expression come together as a coherent whole. However, there is a very sparse use of substitution all through the sermons. This perhaps is because the speakers have employed other cohesive devices mostly for the purpose of emphasis. Below is an instance of substitution from **PBO I:** *God said to me, "who is God in your life?" I said,* [1]*"You are the One".*
As seen in the sentence above, 'One' is a substitute for 'God'. It is a nominal substitution, pointing anaphorically to 'God'. The substitute is used to achieve economy and variety in the choice of words. It also functions as the main word which it replaces.

Collocation in Church Leaders' Sermons
Collocations are lexical items that co-occur or appear close to one another in discourse. Their proximity in a discourse contributes to the texture of the text. The cohesive effect of these pairs of words is not because they share any semantic relationship per se but because they share the same lexical environment. Normally, any two lexical items or more tending to appear in similar contexts will generate a cohesive force since the mention of one tends to bring to mind the other. A number of collocations which have helped to generate texture have been identified in the texts and presented below.

(AJVO I) – Holy Spirit . . . God . . . Jesus Christ . . . Lord . . . son . . . Father . . . devil . . . saints; Pope . . . Holy Father . . . apostles . . . Peter . . . John . . .; Jews . . . Gentiles . . .; Baptised . . . confirmed . . . Holy Communion; Sin . . . eternal life . . . judgement . . . vanity . . . humanity . . . universe; Soldiers . . . swords . . . guns.

(AJVO II) – Christ . . . Father . . . God . . . Lord . . . Holy Spirit; Light . . . darkness . . . lumen Christi . . . Easter . . . Paschal candle; Humanity . . . world; Redemption . . . Salvation . . . Prayer; State . . . land . . . nation . . . Nigeria; Wining . . . losing . . . election . . . vote . . . regime . . . governance ; success . . . failure; police . . . army . . . civilian; Heaven . . . kingdom . . . earth; Bread . . . food; Holy . . . sin . . . truth . . . evil; Women . . . men; big . . .small; friends . . . enemy; hands . . . feet**.**

(PBO I and **PBO II)** – man... woman... male... female... husband... wife... ladies... girls; lies... truth... sin; God... Lord... Father... Spirit... Jesus... devil; Alleluia...Amen; born again...christian; honesty...deceive...trust; courtship...marriage...dating; blessing... curse**.**

Conclusion
This work has examined the internal structure of Christian sermons delivered by selected church leaders in Nigeria with a view to exposing the cohesive devices used by these leaders to enhance texture and coherence in the sermons while determining the extent the devices have helped the leaders in commanding large followership among the Christians. Descriptive analyses of sermons of Archbishop Anthony Obinna and the Late Pastor Mrs Bimbo Odukoya reveal intricately woven and coherent texts which are only made possible as a result of the church leaders' unique deployment of such cohesive ingredients as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

These cohesive devices have been specifically used to achieve emphasis, to avoid redundancy, link ideas, to direct attention, give information, show contrast, indicate time and show reason for certain speech/ actions. With these linguistic tools intricately deployed, the messages become clear and understood by the faithful, while the leaders are able to command ample followership while discharging their spiritual duties. The paper affirms that cohesion and coherence are necessities for church leaders and preachers who wish to command spiritual leadership among their followers.

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