



A Lexico-syntactic Analysis of Pentecostal Sermons

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the sermons of some Pentecostal pastors in the south-western part of Nigeria with a view to identifying and analysing their lexico-syntactic features; describing the structural patterns of the identified features as well as discussing how the identified lexico-syntactic features contribute to the meanings of the messages of the sermons. Twelve recorded sermons of six Pentecostal pastors were purposively selected; transcribed and tagged so as to identify lexical and syntactic features that are employed by these preachers. The Systemic Functional Grammar is the framework for the analysis. The study finds out that synonymy, antonymy, lexical repetition and collocation are lexical features which are evident in the sermons but the preachers predominantly use synonymy and lexical repetition in their sermons. The study then concludes that these preachers intentionally utilise these linguistic features which are predominant in their sermons with a view to achieving clarity in their messages.

Keywords: Pentecostal, sermons, lexico-syntactic, synonymy, lexical repetition

1.0 Introduction

Pentecostalism is a stream of Christianity that emphasises personal salvation in Christ as a transformative experience brought by the Holy Spirit in which such phenomena such as speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healings, miracles, signs and wonders are sought, accepted, valued and consciously encouraged among members as evidence of the active presence of God's spirit (Kwame, 2000). Cross (1990) describes Pentecostalism as a practice and belief of some Christian movements usually called Pentecostal churches (bodies or groups) that seek to re-capitulate the experience of the first Pentecost as described in the book of Acts of Apostles Chapter 2 through revivals and emotional worship. Kalu (2005) avers that by 1970s through early 1980s, the charismatic renewal experienced a phenomenal explosion. It was during this period that the trans-denominational charismatic organisations began to take on institutional characteristic and the charismatic denomination that emerged in the early 1980s was Deeper Life Ministry led by William Folorunsho Kumuyi in 1983 and The Redeemed Christian Church of God when Enoch Adeboye became the general overseer in 1981. Kwame (2000) further remarks that, although the Pentecostal denominations in Nigeria have different missions and vision statements, which are evident in the major thrusts of many of their sermons, they all aim towards making Jesus only as the true healer and saviour of the mankind.

A sermon is a talk on a religious or moral subject given by a member of the clergy as part of a religious service. According to Joseph, Jayakar, and Tejaswani (2017), a sermon is God's truth which has the power to change lives. Taiwo (2005) observes that sermons are messages delivered by speakers vested with some spiritual authority within the church or any gathering of Christians. Joseph, Jayakar, and Tejaswani (2017) further confirm that sermons are used as vehicles for motivating and educating the Christian doctrines.

The English word *sermon* originated from the Latin word, *sermonis*, which means *a connected discourse*, that is, to join or weave together thoughts about a single topic. Adedun and Mekiliuwa (2000) also remark that sermon is an art of integrating scientific analysis, literature and imaginative composition for thoughts. Sermon has been described as the central idea of the worship service and the "integrative factor" for all other aspects or facets of the service. They further affirm that sermons are a subtype of religious discourse and they are planned, formal and public discourses that are essentially orally delivered. Sermons serve to confront people with options, to call them to decisions, to warn them of future events and to call for modification of behaviour. Along this line, Joseph *et al* (2017) aver that a good sermon is a well-organised and comprehensible discourse meant to stimulate the imagination of a Christian congregation. The mission of a preacher who gives sermons is to engage the believers in biblical teachings in a manner that is motivating, interesting, and pertinent. Therefore, sermons can be said to be messages given for the purpose

of transforming the lives of the listeners.

However, it is not the meaning of the sermons that this paper seeks to examine but to look at how language is used to couch their sermons. Specifically, this paper seeks to examine lexical and syntactic features that are inherent in the selected sermons of the selected Pentecostal preachers in the south-western part of Nigeria. Language forms an integral aspect of human beings; it expresses the uniqueness of a social group. Osoba (2012) notes that language provides its users with more than one choice in a given situation and that language users make distinct and conscious choice of words that expresses their intended meaning. On the part of religious preachers, Anyanwu, Njemanze, and Ononiwu (2016) opine that a creative preacher uses a variety of inter-related linguistic resources to achieve qualitative instruction and communication. Thus, lexico-syntactic analysis is an interesting area of study in linguistics as it allows scholars to examine the lexical and the syntactic features of any piece of discourse they are investigating. This area of scholastic investigation interests many scholars because it allows them to investigate how the message of a discourse can influence its lexical and syntactic features.

2.0 Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework adopted for the analysis of the data for this study is Halliday's *Systemic Functional Grammar*. According to Berry (1977), this approach to language analysis is considered "functional" rather than "generative" in linguistic orientation. The term "systemic" refers to the view of language as "a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning". The term "functional" indicates that the approach is concerned with meaning as opposed to formal grammar which focuses on word classes such as nouns and verbs, typically without reference beyond the individual clause. Morley (1985) notes that systemic grammar accounts for what the language user "can do" linguistically with the system of options available to them and what they can mean and how they can represent meaning through lexico-grammar and phonology. These choices relate speakers' and writers' intentions to the concrete forms of language.

Systemic functional grammar is concerned with functions of language in any given situational context and people use language to express meaning in a specific situation. The situational context may affect the choice of grammar, words, graphic shape and choice of meaning of people. Halliday (1985) avers that the functional bases of grammatical phenomena are divided into three broad areas called meta-functions; namely, ideational meta-function, interpersonal meta-function and textual meta-function. This theoretical framework seems appropriate for this study because it allows for language analysis from the angle of chain (syntagmatic sense relation) through which the syntactic features of the sermons which serve as the data for the study can be investigated as well as from the angle of choice (paradigmatic sense

relations) through which lexical features – relationships among the lexical items in the sermons – can be examined. It is a good theory which is capable of accounting for both lexical and syntactic features of a text at the same time.

3.0 Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

As a result of the nature of this study, the analysis of the data is grouped into two categories under the headings of lexical analysis and syntactic analysis and the discussion of the findings is presented concurrently.

3.1 Lexical Analysis

Lexical relation is the relationship of the meaning of a word to other words. The relationship exists in order to create meaning in the selected context. Lexical relations are achieved through the use of synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy and homonymy. For the purpose of this work, synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy and lexical repetition are discussed because their instances were identified in the data collected. Presented here in Table 1 is an overview of the occurrences of lexical relations in the data.

Lexical Relations	No of occurrences	%
Synonymy	42	1.5
Antonymy	37	1.3
Hyponymy	3	0.1
Lexical Repetition	2,670	97.1
Total	2,752	100

Table 1: Synonyms, Antonyms, Hyponym and Lexical repetitions in the Data

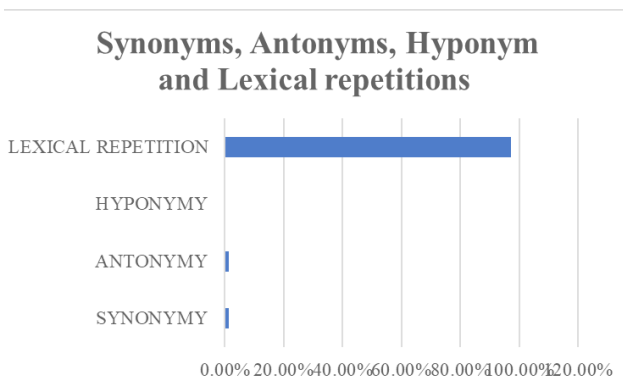


Figure 1

The table and figure above show that lexical repetition had the highest level of frequency distribution of 2,670 (97.1%) instances out of 2752 instances of lexical items in the data, followed by synonymy which accounted for 42 (1.5%) instances, antonymy which accounted for 37 (1.3%) instances while hyponymy accounted for 3 (0.1%). From the data, it can be observed that lexical repetition occurred in all the sermons as the preachers repeated certain words severally in their sermons while the other means of establishing lexical relations as identified in the data accounted for 2.9%.

From the table, we observed that, while there were many instances of synonymy (42) and antonymy (37) in the data, hyponymy as a lexical relation accounted for just an instance. This seems to tell us that there were many instances of comparisons and similarities in the data. The overwhelming occurrences of repetition can be linked to the need for preachers to emphasise and reiterate certain points and ideas. There is no doubt that repetition is crucial in sermons and is often used as a stylistic device to foreground same ideas and get those ideas to sink into the heads of their church members. The use of synonyms by the preachers in the sermons might be a device that enables preachers to avoid the repetition of a particular lexical item which might make the sermons boring.

3.1.1 Occurrences of Synonymy

There are 42 instances of synonymy in the data and some of the instances are presented below for further discussion.

1.
 - a. When God said surely I have carried your *grief*...
 - b. When God said surely I have carried your *sorrow*... (Living Faith Church Sermon 7)
2.
 - a. When she is *happy*, she begins to cry.
 - b. When she is *excited*, she begins to cry. (Living Faith Church Sermon 8)
3.
 - a. They only recognised Satan when there is *madness*.
 - b. They only recognised Satan when there is *insanity*. (Deeper Life Church Sermon 11)
4.
 - a. Apostolic *cautions* against false doctrine.
 - b. Apostolic *warns* against false doctrine. (Deeper Life Church Sermon 12)

From the instances listed above, we can see the pairs of words that are italicised in each instance. The italicised pairs of words are synonymous in the sense that one word out of a pair can be used in place of the second word which makes the pair as in the case of *happy* and *excited* in 2 or *cautions* and *warns* in 4. Another thing that can be observed here is that these words can be used interchangeably in all contexts; therefore, they are known as absolute synonyms. Absolute synonyms are synonyms that can be substituted for each

other in any context in which their common sense is denoted with no change to the truth value, communicative effect or meaning.

The other form of synonymous words that can be accounted for in the data is near synonyms. Near synonyms are very similar in meaning but not identical and they are not fully interchangeable. For example,

5. I have quite a few children that God has used me to *commission* or *ordain*. (Redeemed Christian Church of God Sermon 3)
6. a. It is the highest *form* of prophecy.
b. It is the highest *source* of prophecy. (Living Faith Church Sermon 7)
7. a. I prayed for a very *bright* lady.
b. Very *intelligent* girl, so *intelligent* that when she was in a medical school ... (Mountain of Fire and Miracle Centre Sermon 1)

Those words that were italicised in (a) and (b) of each of the examples 5, 6 and 7 above were in the context of their usage synonymous but they cannot be regarded as synonymous words in every context. For instance, *commission* and *ordain* in example 5 cannot be interchanged in all contexts; while we can say that a project has been *commissioned*, the acceptance of *The project has been ordained* will be challenged at the level of collocation. Also, in example 6, *form* and *source* are not interchangeable in all contexts. If we look at the words that were used as synonyms in example 7 above, we will see that *bright* and *intelligent* are not synonymous in some other contexts such as when beauty is implied. *Bright* which can be used to describe someone's complexion or beauty was used in one of the sermons along with *intelligent* which has to do with cognitive ability; when *bright* is used, ambiguity can stem up but the use of *intelligent* in the consequent clause can delimit the meaning of *bright* to the cognitive ability of the individual. While *bright* can be used in the place of *intelligent* to mean cognitive ability other than beauty or complexion, *intelligent* cannot be used in the place of *bright* to refer to beauty. In this sense, they are tagged *near synonyms*.

Also in the data, there was an instance of synonymy. Let us consider the instance from the data as presented below in Example 8.

8. a. They were *small* boys.
b. They were *young* boys. (MFM Sermon 1)

Small and *young* were used as synonymous words but, in the actual fact, they are not synonymous. While *small* can be used to signal size, *young* is used to signal *age*. However, these two words were used as synonyms to denote *age*.

3.1.2 Occurrences of Antonymy

Antonyms were evident in the data used for this study; there were 37

instances of pairs of words that can be regarded as antonyms. These identified instances of antonyms belonged to different types; gradable antonyms accounted for 8 (21.6%) instances, complementary antonyms accounted for 22 (59.5%) instances while relational antonyms accounted for 7 (18.9%) instances. Gradable antonyms, according to Palmer (1996), are antonyms used in comparative constructions. The comparative form of the adjectives ending with an inflectional morpheme *-er* or occurring with *more* while the superlative forms ending with an inflectional morpheme *-est* or *most* are said to be explicitly graded. Instances of gradable antonyms in the data are as follow:

9. Seven men from one family, the *oldest* was 60 and the *youngest* was 35, all seven men couldn't marry. (MFM Sermon 1)
10. The world of creatures but you see both creatures some of them *small*, some of them *big*. (DLCM)
11. He staggered not, meaning if he had been weak in faith he will stagger so *weak* faith staggers while *strong* faith is firm giving glory.

In the sentences above, the antonyms used are adjectives. The antonyms in sentence 10 were used to contrast different creatures based on size while the antonyms in sentence 11 were used to contrast *faith* in terms of *strength*. Another case of antonymy in the data is presented below.

Apart from gradable antonyms in the data, there were instances of relational oppositeness. Relational antonymy is a concept which explains two lexical items which exhibit a reversal of relationships between each other. Examples of these include:

12. He must *increase* and I must *decrease*. (RCCG Sermon 3)
13. The bible says *buy* the truth and *sell* it not. (LFC Sermon 8)

The examples of antonyms in examples 12 and 13 are different from the instances we have in 9 to 11. While those ones under gradable antonymy are adjectives. These antonyms are considered relational antonyms because, as in 12 and 13, you can either *increase* or *decrease*, *sell* or *buy*. Relational antonyms deal with and express relationship just as gradable antonyms deal with grade. This can be exemplified further in following instances from the data.

14. It will *caution* those who are careless and *encourage* those who are purposeful. (MFM Sermon 1)
15. There are angels that are *reapers* and *gardeners*. (MFM Sermon 1)

Example 14 presents *caution* and *encourage* as the two lexical items that are antonymous. In the real sense of it, the two lexical items are antonymous in this context if we consider the accompanying lexical items. While the first clause of the sentence has *caution* as the verb and the *those who are careless* as the extensive complement, the second clause has *encourage* as the verb

while *those who are purposeful* is the complement. The second instance, Example 15, shows that there is a difference between *reapers* and *gardeners*; their difference can be linked to what they do despite the fact that the two sets of people work in the same setting, *garden*. While the work of one is to oversee the garden (*gardeners*), the work of the other is to harvest (*reapers*).

If we consider some instances of antonymy in the data, we will discover that there are some instances of antonymy that can be grouped either under gradable antonymy or relational antonymy. These types of antonyms are called complementary antonyms. Complementary antonymy is a type of oppositeness that exhibits incompatibility in that the items are usually complementary to each other. When the assertion of one implies the denial of the other, we say it is complementary antonymy. For example,

16. You shall not *die* but *live*. (Living Faith Church Sermon 7)

The antonymous items in 26 above, *die* and *live*, are considered complementary because you can either be alive or dead. It is not possible to refer to one thing as being dead and alive at the same time because the items or the states are mutually exclusive. This implies that the use or the adoption of one of the items prohibits the use of the other.

Furthermore, at the morphological level, there are instances of antonyms that are formed through the addition of a negative prefix or suffix with a view to contrasting them with their positive counterparts which do not have any negative marker. This is exemplified in the following examples from the data.

17. We have to compare *power* and *powerlessness* and we know which is stronger. (RCCG Sermon 3)

18. a. Anyone who practises *righteousness* is a child of *God*.

b. Anyone who practises *unrighteousness* is a child of the *devil*. (Daystar Sermon 6)

We can see that, in Example 17, the antonym of *power* that is used in the sentence is *powerlessness* which is formed through the use of *-less* (a negative adjective-forming suffix) before *-ness* (a noun-forming suffix) is added to the adjective formed so as to make the new formed item be in the same grammatical class with its counterpart. In Example 18, *-un* is added to the *righteousness* to make it a direct opposite of the item. This way of forming opposing words in terms of meaning makes it easy to quickly see the oppositeness that is obtainable in the pair of words that are involved.

In all, it seems that the primary reason that justifies the use of antonyms by the preachers is to establish and bring it to the knowledge of their congregation that life is characterised by polarity. In establishing facts, especially in a religious discourse, a preacher is able to appeal to the sense of reasoning of their congregation because presenting contrasting scenarios can make their listeners understand their choice in relation to decisions they will like to make

as far as the subject of faith is concerned.

3.1.3 Occurrences of Hyponymy

According to Fakoya (2004), hyponymy is a sense relation between one lexeme which is the superordinate term and two or more terms which denote more specific instances of what the superordinate term denotes. The meaning of one form is included in the meaning of another which forms a type of hierarchical relationship among words. This lexical sense relation device is not predominantly used in the data by the preachers but its few instances are enough to discuss its presence in the data. *Son, father, daughter, mother, wife/wives, husband, children, sister/sisters* and *brother/brothers* are co-hyponyms of *family* that were used in the data; while *son* appears 116 times, *father* appears 46 times, *daughter* appears 5 times, *wife/wives* appears 37 times, *husband* appears 13 times, *children* appears 13 times, *sister/sisters* appears 7 times, *brother/brothers* appear 16 times, *parent* appears 3 times, while *mother* appears 15 times. These items can be recognised as co-hyponyms of the superordinate term *family* because these people are believed to be related by blood to form a family. Below are examples of sentences where hyponyms were used:

19. Your *parent* can acquire a killer sword that will kill members of the *family* at a particular age. (RCCG Sermon 4)

The use of *family* encompasses all individuals that are listed above. With this, we have established that they are co-hyponyms of *family*.

Also, it is evident in the data that hyponymy is used in describing *vehicles* and *cars*. The meaning of *cars* is included in the meaning of *vehicles*; while *vehicles* can be described as the superordinate term for *cars, lorry, truck, van* and so on, *cars* is a specific term that was used to delimit the type of *vehicles* that was meant by the speaker. The superordinate term, *vehicles*, was used once in the data while the co-hyponym, *car/cars*, was used three times. In the same vein, co-hyponyms of cutlery were used in the data as in:

20. You have to drop your *knife* and *fork*. (Believers' Love World Sermon 9)

It is the combination of *knife, fork* and *spoon* that make up a cutlery. While it is not possible to discuss *cutlery* without mentioning what makes it up, we do not need to mention cutlery if we are to discuss any of the items because they are specific terms while *cutlery* is a generic term. The relationship that exists between *cutlery* as a superordinate term and its co-hyponyms is generic-specific.

3.1.4 Occurrences of Lexical Repetition

Paying attention to all the lexical items that were used repeatedly by all the six preachers whose sermons were used for this study; we observed that these

lexical items form the basis of Christian religious belief and discourse. A study of the cluster of these lexical items can definitely show that the religious discourse under study is that of Christianity generally; *God* appeared 608 times, *Hallelujah* 32 times while *Amen* appeared 126 times. This explains the reason these lexical items were found throughout the data.

On the other hand, the reason some lexical items were not used by all the preachers can be explained by the differences in doctrines and the nature of the messages. The doctrines of the denominations of the preachers can determine their choice of words while their messages determine the lexical items that they used repeatedly. For instance, the word marriage occurred 71 times in the sermons of Daystars and LFC because of the nature of the sermon. Also MFM and Daystars repeated the word Holy Spirit 226 times because the sermons they preached was based on Holy Spirit.

3.2 Syntactic Analysis of the Data

Under syntactic analysis, sentences are analysed and they are analysed based on their functional and structural classifications.

3.2.1 Functional Classifications of the Sentences in the Data

The analysis showed that there were 668 instances of sentences based on their functional categorisation. All the functional sentence types were identified in the data. The breakdown of the sentences based on the grammatical functions that they performed in the data is presented in the table below.

Sentence Types	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative Sentence	388	58.1%
Interrogative Sentence	212	31.7%
Imperative Sentence	38	5.7%
Exclamatory Sentence	30	4.5%
TOTAL	668	100

Table 2: Functional Types of the Sentence in the Data.

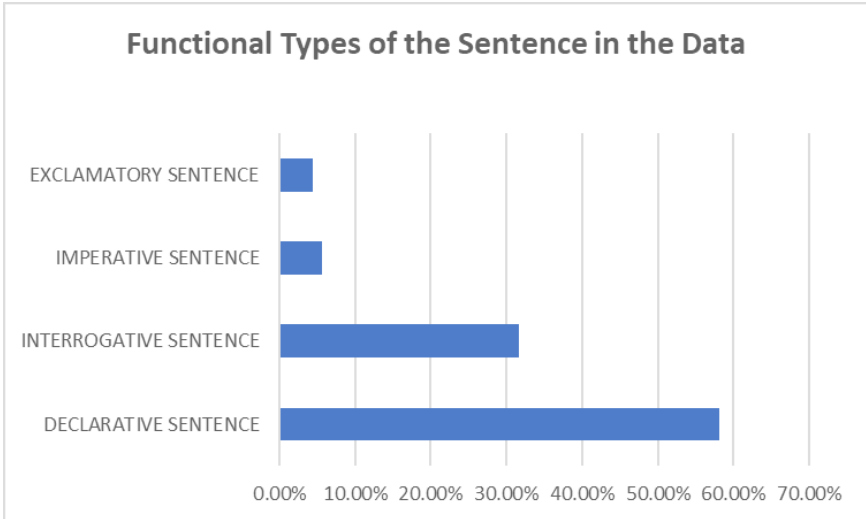


Figure 2

The table and figure 2 show that, from a functional perspective, there were 668 sentences in the data. Declarative sentences accounted for 388 (58.1%) instances, interrogative sentences accounted for 212 (31.7%) instances while imperative sentences appeared 38 (5.7%) times and, exclamatory sentences accounted for 30 (4.5%) instances. The analysis shows that declarative sentences and interrogative sentences were predominantly used in the sermons of the chosen preachers. The predominant use of these two functional types of sentences can be linked to the fact that the preachers might have assumed the position of who knows more than their listeners do and has what it takes to educate them. The use of questions can be said to be a means to keep their listeners awake and participatory in the exchange of information.

Furthermore, we observed that imperative sentences were used more than exclamatory sentences. Imperative sentences are used with a view to charging the hearer to perform one action or the other while exclamatory sentences are used to show the speaker's emotion towards what is being discussed. Since religious discourse is not mainly a discourse for expressing one's emotions or feelings, this seems to explain the reason exclamatory sentences were the least-used type of sentences in the data. Four sentence types were identified in the data and these sentence types can be grouped into major and minor sentence types according to their frequency in the data. While declarative and interrogative sentences can be considered the major sentence types in the data because they collectively accounted for 600 (89.8%) instances, imperative and exclamatory sentences accounted for just 68 (10.2%) instances. There is a clear margin between the numbers of instances that these sentences based on

major-minor categorisations accounted for.

3.2.1.1 Occurrences of Declarative Sentences

There were 388 instances of declarative sentences used by the preachers in their sermons. Presented here are examples of declarative sentences used by the six preachers in their sermons.

21. They are around us. (MFM Sermon 1)
22. It is possible to suffer from the consequences of the sin of your parent. (MFM Sermon 2)
23. Stars of God don't eat what the world eats. (RCCG Sermon 4)
24. These are the stars. (RCCG Sermon 4)
25. Money touches the very foundation of your life. (Daystar Sermon 5)

It is important to note that, in examples 21 to 25 above, the sentences follow the syntactic arrangement that is expected of a sentence that is meant to give out information. The basic syntactic pattern of a declarative sentence is SPCA. Also, it was evident in the data some preachers employed clefting as an information packaging process to pass across their message. This is exemplified in examples 22 above and in 26 below.

26. It is preparation that determines the experience. (LFC Sermon 8)

This information packaging process is used to lay emphasis on the actual part of the message that the speaker wants to emphasise. In clefting, the actual subject in a sentence is made to appear in an equative verb which follows the dummy subject, *It*, that is introduced. The use of a cleft sentence as in 22 was a subtle way of explaining and emphasising the possibility of *suffering from the consequences of the sin of your parent* while the use of clefting in 26 has emphasised the role of *preparation* in the nature of the experience one gets. Instead of the use of a cleft sentence in 22 or 26, the basic arrangement would have been "*To suffer from the consequences of the sin of your parent is possible*" and "*Preparation determines the experience*" respectively. The use of declarative sentences, as seen in the examples above, seems to be a characteristic of sermons.

3.2.1.2 Occurrence of Imperative Sentences

Imperatives are used to elicit actions. Imperative sentences are sentences primarily used to instruct someone to do (or not to do) something and they are mainly commands. They usually end with a full stop. These sentences are sometimes referred to as directives because they provide direction to whoever is being addressed. Here are some of the instances of imperative sentences in the data.

27. Listen, Beloved. (MFM Sermon 1)
28. Listen. (Daystar Sermon 5)
29. Try it. (LFC Sermon 7)
30. Write it down. (BLW Sermon 10)
31. Beloved, Tell me out loud. (DLCM Sermon 11)

In examples 27 to 31 above, the first items are lexical verbs showing the instruction that the hearers are expected to follow. It can be observed from the sentences above that there are no subject markers (nouns and pronouns) or tense markers. The sentences above adhere strictly to the structure of imperative sentences; since imperative sentences are not expected to have any item that functions as the subject. The structure of an imperative sentence as P (C) (A) is confirmed by the examples identified in the data. However, there are some imperative sentences that have some items that occupy the initial position just like a subject as in 31 above in which we have *Beloved* and in 57 below.

32. *My friend*, hurry up. (LFC Sermon 8)

Beloved in 31 and *My friend* in 32 are not the subjects of the respective sentences but they are technically called vocatives. Vocatives are used to show respect, endearment and to specify the person who must perform the action that the verb in the imperative sentence denotes. Imperatives are often used by preachers to engage the audience into the mainstream of the sermon, and to also get their response and attention.

3.2.1.3 Occurrences of Exclamatory Sentences in the Data

Exclamatory sentences are used to show emotion or to express surprises. Exclamations often stand on their own and in writing they are usually followed by an exclamation mark. Following this description, the sentences presented below are examples of exclamatory sentences used by the preachers in their sermons.

33. *Oh!* (LFC Sermon 9)
34. *Wow! Wow! Wow!* (Daystar Sermon 5)
35. *Glorious!* (BLW Sermon 10)
36. *What a shame!* (Daystar Sermon 6)
37. *What a stupid thing to do!* (Daystar Sermon 8)

Paying attention to some of the instances of exclamatory sentences in the data as presented above in 33 to 37, one could see that these sentences do not have any verbal element denoting any action. This is as a result of the fact that exclamatory sentences do not express any action but they are used to show the speaker's emotion or disposition towards a situation or scenario. This confirms the submission that exclamatory sentences are phrases or clauses

that are used to show or express the speaker's emotion. Presented below is an instance of exclamatory sentence with a verb.

38. *How sweet art thy word to my taste!* (RCCG Sermon 4)

In 38 above, the exclamatory sentence has the verb *art* as its verb. *Art* as used in the Bible is an archaic form of either *is* or *are*; this verb is used in the sentence just to show emotion of the speaker to the proposition. An interjection or exclamatory sentence can also be used as a stand-alone sentence. It does not require a subject and action that is normally required for a complete thought to be expressed.

3.2.1.4 Occurrences of Interrogative Sentences

There were 212 instances of interrogative sentences evident in the sermons. Polar questions had 35 (16.6%) instances, non-polar questions had 149 (70.2%) instances, declarative questions accounted for 19 (9%) instances and tagged questions had 9 (4.2%) instances. From the analysis, it can be seen that non-polar questions were dominant in the data. While polar questions were the most frequent question type in the data with 70.2% of the total 212 instances of interrogative sentences being polar questions, tagged question type was the least used question type because it accounted for just 9 instances. Some of the occurrences of imperative sentences are presented below.

39. Can I graduate now? (RCCG Sermon 4)
40. Do we have money? (Daystar Sermon 5)
41. Is that the NIV? (BLW Sermon 9)
42. What provokes them? (MFM Sermon 1)
43. How can I lead a nation? (RCCG Sermon 3)
44. Who are you? (Daystar Sermon 5)
45. When are you going to stop crying? (LFC Sermon 8)

Examples 39 to 41 are instances of polar questions because they require either *Yes* or *No* as the response while 42 to 45 are instances of Wh-questions.

There are also instances of declarative questions in the data. Declarative sentences have the form of a declarative sentence but the force of a question. They are signalled by rising intonation in speech and by a question mark in writing. Presented here are different instances of declarative questions used by the preachers in their sermons.

46. Now you know what that one means? (RCCG Sermon 3)
47. I hope you are not carrying one? (Daystar Sermon 6)
48. You see it? (BLW Sermon 8)

The sentences in 46 to 48 can be regarded as interrogative sentences because of the presence of the question mark but they will be perceived as questions when they are uttered because of the intonation they will take. These questions

can be said to have been uttered so as to get confirmation from the listeners. What this suggests is that the speaker already assumes that their listeners are in line with them as far as their belief is concerned but these questions need to be asked so as to confirm their assumption.

3.2.2 Structural Classifications of the Sentences in the Data

It was seen from the data that there were 1,687 sentences based on structural classifications. The structural types of sentences that were identified in the data are simple sentences, compound sentences, compound-complex sentences, complex sentences and multiple sentences.

Structural Type of Sentence	Frequency	%
Simple sentences	798	47.3%
Compound sentences	473	28%
Compound-complex sentences	112	6.7%
Complex sentences	111	6.6%
Multiple sentences	193	11.4%
TOTAL	1687	100

Table 3: An Overview of Simple, Compound, Compound-complex, Complex and Multiple Sentences

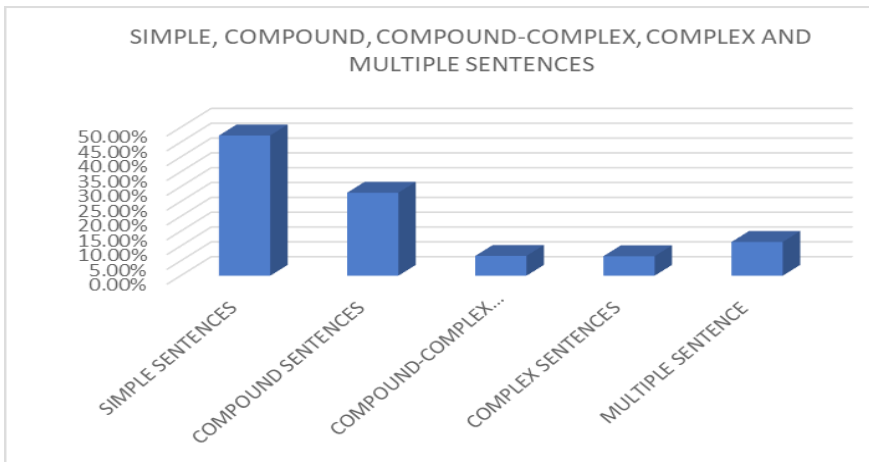


Figure 3: An Overview of Simple, Compound, Compound-complex, Complex and Multiple Sentences

As shown in Table 3 and figure 3, there were 798 simple sentences accounting for 47.3% of the total instances of the sentences in the data, compound sentences accounted for 473 (28%) instances, compound-complex sentences accounted for 112 (6.7%) instances, 111 (6.6%) instances were complex sentences and 193 (11.4%) instances were multiple sentences. Simple sentences were more dominant in the data than any other structural types of sentence while complex sentences were the least used type of sentences. It can be observed from the table above that simple sentences dominated each of the types of non-simple sentences with simple sentences accounting for 47.3%, while the remaining four types of sentences that were identified in the data and which were non-simple sentences accounted for 52.7% of the total instances.

Furthermore, among the types of non-simple sentences that were identified in the data, it could be seen that compound sentences were used more than their fellow structural counterparts put together. While non-simple sentences accounted for 889 instances out of 1687 instances in the data, compound sentences accounted for 473 (28%) instances, compound-complex sentences accounted for 112 (6.7%) instances, complex sentences had 111 (6.6%) instances while multiple sentences accounted for 193 (11.4%) instances. It is so glaring that compound sentences dominated other types but no one can point out precisely and authoritatively the dominating type between compound-complex and complex sentences because the difference in the frequency of compound-complex and complex sentences was just one. The implication of the use simple sentences in the data shows the attitude of the preachers and the structured of how the messages are arranged.

3.2.2.1 Instances of Simple Sentences in the Data

A simple sentence contains a subject and a verb. It expresses a complete thought and it can stand on its own. Presented here are examples of simple sentences used in their sermons.

49. Every word of God is a prophecy. (LFC Sermon 7)
50. There is a positive of side of life. (BLW Sermon 9)
51. The battle has even spread to Nigeria now. (MFM Sermon 2)
52. He was full of the spirit of wisdom. (RCCG Sermon 3)

3.2.2.2 Instances of Compound Sentences

A compound sentence has two independent clauses. Compound sentences are joined by conjunction such as *but*, *and*, *or* and *yet*. Here are some of the examples of compound sentences in the data.

53. Go to the bush and get me some bush meat. (RCCG Sermon 3)
54. You don't learn how to shoot gun in the battlefield but you learn to shoot it before the battle begins. (LFC Sermon 8)
55. They were not entirely right but they were not entirely wrong. (Daystar

Sermon 5)

Also, there are instances of compound sentences in which the subjects are omitted in the second clause because the two clauses are expected or assumed to have the same subject. Examples of such compound sentences include:

56. They beat them and scatter them. (MFM) Sermon 2

57. You cannot obey God and end up poor. (Daystar) Sermon 5

In examples 56 and 57, the subjects in the first clauses, *They* and *You*, are omitted in the second clauses because the clauses still have the subjects in the first clauses as their own respective subjects; as such, when the subject is ellipted, the omitted subject is recoverable by paying attention to the preceding clause.

3.2.2.3 Instances of Complex Sentences in the Data

A complex sentence is made up of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. A complex sentence always has a subordinator such as *because*, *since*, *after*, *although* and *when*. The subordinators are usually referred to as binders because they bind the subordinate clause to the main clause. Presented here are examples of complex sentences in the data.

58. He was already in the air when the wild wind picks him up.

(RCCG Sermon 3)

59. You are a fool if you spend everything because the money is not enough.

(Daystar Sermon 5)

60. Men are people of few words because they are logical beings.

(LFC Sermon 8)

3.2.2.4 Instances of Compound-complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence is a sentence that has two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. In a compound-complex sentence, both the coordinator and the subordinator are present. Examples of compound-complex sentences in the data are:

61. Usually wherever I go, I know there are a few of them there and whenever the light is burning, the moth must gather and all of them will have hands laid on them today. (RCCG Sermon 3)

62. An understanding of the prophetic dimension of the scripture keeps me going, that is why we praise him because we discover his integrity is from his word and that this is what God has committed himself to doing.

(LFC Sermon 7)

3.2.2.5 Instances of Multiple Sentences

A multiple sentence is a sentence which has three or more independent clauses with no dependent clause. A multiple sentence is usually joined by a comma or

coordinating conjunction. Presented here are examples of multiple sentences in the data.

63. They now sat down, ate the food very well and drank the whole of their palm wine. (MFM Sermon 2)
64. You need to become bigger, you need to become greater and the only rule Satan provides is disobedient to God. (Daystar Sermon 5)
65. God's word is not just informative, is not just instructive, God's word is principally prophetic designed to create your desired future and my desired future. (LFC Sermon 7)
66. They thought he was a gentleman and he just ran like a wild man and the bible says the Holy Ghost made him run like he made Elijah run. (BLW Sermon 9)
67. He is no more talking about the place, he is no more talking about a universe now but is talking about the people in the land and he says and the world knew him not. (DLCM Sermon 11)

The sentences presented above are some of the instances of multiple sentences in the data. There is no sentence among the sentences that has less than three independent clauses in them. Some of the clauses in some of the sentences are arranged in such a way that it is shown that the events or actions denoted by the verbs in the clauses are logically connected and must be logically arranged. The arrangement of the clauses in example 63 shows that logically the action denoted by the verb in the first clause should precede the other actions denoted in the remaining clauses while the actions denoted in the second and the third clause can be argued to be logically connected.

4.0 Conclusion

With the assertion of Adedun and Mekiliuwa, (2000) that sermons are vehicles for motivating and educating the laity on the basics of Christian doctrines and that the mission of a sermonist is to engage the believers in the biblical teachings in a manner that is motivating, interesting and pertinent, it should be noted that the six Pentecostal preachers utilised different lexical and syntactic features to make their sermons unique and different from one another. The study concluded that lexical repetition and synonymy are the most common lexical features while declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, simple sentences and compound sentences are most dominant syntactic features that preachers use to drive their points home. What this seems to tell us is that the lexical features and the syntactic features that were dominant in the data were intentionally injected in the sermons so as to aid the clarity of the messages. The study concluded that sermons are embedded with linguistic resources which are viable tools that aid meaning production and interpretation in religious discourse.

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