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A Religious Language Discourse: An Analysis of the Graphological Features and Cohesive Devices of Proverbs Chapter 9

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Abstract

Aim: This paper discusses the language of religion as a discourse with the application of proverbs chapter. The paper examines the graphological features, the semantic features and the discourse cohesive devices in the text, proverbs chapter nine.

Methods: The graphological features analyzed are the punctuation marks, indentation and capitalization. The cohesive relations examined are the lexical devices and the grammatical devices: the lexical devices include synonym; collocational converse; antonym and repetition. The grammatical devices are anaphora, cataphora, substitutions and conjunctions. The analysis is in this paper is done using the systemic grammar approach.

Results: The semantic interpretation in the text is achieved through the use of proverbs and figures of speech.

Conclusion: The analysis portrays and demonstrates language use in religion in general and proverbs chapter nine in particular.

Recommendation: The authors recommend that researchers in linguistics and discourse analysis should conduct further researches in other areas of the language of religion to create awareness in religious language discourse.

**Keywords:** Religious language, discourse, discourse analysis, proverbs nine.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This paper study interrogates the language of religion by using discourse analysis to analyze Proverbs chapter 9. The language of religion is a part of discourse because it represents text and spoken discourse. It is a type of language said to form a unique type in terms of its condensed nature. This study on Proverbs chapter 9, from the Holy Bible will mainly features aspects of graphological and lexico-semantic, while subsuming discourse, features as cohesive relations, (which are anaphoric and cataphoric relations). These include; substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, highlighting, exemplification, repetition, synonym, collocational antonym and collocational converse. This study on the linguistic analysis of Proverbs chapter 9, will be of a huge contribution to the existing literature in the religious language discourse.

1.1   Religion

Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems and world views that establish moral value. According to Ukagba and Asekhauno (2009) "religion is a virtue in the acts of all the virtues, namely, that which is due to God which also forms a part of justice. They posit thatreligion is one form of the virtue of justices. It is the ethical or moral virtue that inclines us to fulfill our obligations to God.

Leumba (1972) defines religion as a type of rational behaviour, purely from psychological standpoint. He further states that religion has a future, since it will ultimately model man in God's own image. To Allport, (1950) religion is the audacious bid man makes to bind himself to creation and to creator'. This means it is his ultimate attempt to enlarge and 'complete his own personality by finding the supreme context in which he rightly belong. Religion forms parts of a social discourse since it pervades the society and is frequently in the social media. It is an integral part of life. Based on the idea that religious feelings have been expressed in many different ways, as people have turned to God or their gods, seeking blessings and solace because people need help in different ways from God, this study examines Proverbs chapter 9 from the Holy Bible in order to know their discourse linguistic levels. It is pertinent to examine other concepts relevant to this study.

1.2   Language

Language was born in the courting days of mankind. This means that language began since man started living together (Oghiator, 2005). Bollinger (1968), defines language as "a system of vocal-auditory communication, using conventional signs, composed of arbitrary patterned sound units and assembled according to set when interacting with the experiences of its users. To Sapir (1988), language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotion and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. Speech and writing are two vital manifestations of everyday language.

Block and Trager (2017), stipulates that language is 'a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates'. Hall (1968), in his view states that language is 'the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols'. It is therefore, safe to agree that language is a purely human phenomenon that humans employ for the expression of thought, ideas and concepts. To Ohen (2020), language is the principal tool for effective communication. Referring to Ogunsina (2009),

Ohen (2018), further states that language is not just a means for transmitting ideas, but it is frequently the chamber that creates the ideas.

Robins (1998) posits that language is a 'symbol system …that wholly based on pure or arbitrary convention'. To Lyons (1979), language is 'stimulus free'. Another striking definition of language by Chomsky, (2007) is that language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each of a finite set of elements. Citing Melarighilin (2006), Ezeamaka (2015) sees language as the system of arbitrary verbal symbols (and non-verbal means) that speakers put in order according to a conventional code to communicate ideas and feelings or to influence the behaviour of others.

Also, Uhunmwangho (2016) states that language to all intents and purposes is a means of communication between a speaker (writer and a listener (reader). It enhances social mobility and defines our humanness. He further states that "language connects people to each other in social relationship and allows them to participate in a variety of activities in everyday life; it is a veritable aspect of communication which defines and marks its proficient trajectory". This means that language is not simply a tool of social conduct but the effective means by which human beings formulate models of conduct. The authors therefore submit that language is the repository of culture and humanity's primary means of communication. The last stipulation is very vital in the functions of language.

1.3   Discourse

Discourse originated from the Latin word, 'discursus' which means conversation or speech (Wisniewski, 1998). Discourse refers to a wide area of human life. But our discussion on discourse here is based only on the vantage point of linguistics; which include a linguistic analysis of the levels of language. Linguists notion about discourse differ; some linguists claim that 'discourse' is used in reference to texts while others claim that discourse denotes speech.   Foucault (1994) views discourse as "practices that systematically form the objects with which they deal". Discourse is seen with its relation to language as "any form of language above the sentence level" (Stubbs 1983), and any form of language in use (Brown and Yule 1993). The term discourse applies to both spoken and written language used for any purpose especially for communication (Uhunmwangho 2002). To Uhunmwangho and Oghiator (2022), what is structurally important is the linguistic function and that it is the evidence of this kind that points to the existence of discourse. It is fundamental to any linguistic event in terms of unraveling the meaning that language carries in its vertical and horizontal dimension. The reader must pay attention to the manifestation of language in its entirety. This is what this study strives to address.

Crystal (2016), states that discourse is a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting argument, joke or narrative. Discourse is seen by Schiffrin (1988) as any unit of language beyond the sentence which includes both dialogue and non-dialogue forms in their spoken or written forms. To Widdowson (1979), discourse is not simply patchwork of preordained sentential meanings, but as a dynamic process of meaning creation. From all the definitions of discourse by linguists and other language scholars, the paper can be summarized that discourse refers to spoken and written language which is used for communicative purpose.

1.4   Proverbs Chapter Nine

Proverbs chapter 9 is one of the 39 books in Old Testament in the Bible, the Holy book of the Christian religion. It is divided into 31 chapters. The book of proverbs is a collection of articles

about wisdom. Proverbs chapter 9 is one that celebrates wisdom as a hostess that invites humanity to feast along the path of wisdom, the way of perception that culminates in life. This is in contradiction to the impulsive woman; the attractive and lustful way, the way of the world, the way of disregard for the godly or the sacred. Also, the way of indiscipline, the way which is devoid of an exit, yet pretends to offer the good things of life', condemns one to the vales of shoe (total separation from God which is the wisdom from above). In this chapter, we can conclude that it reflects the general message of the entire book of Proverbs. In the body of the work, the authors will use KJV in place of King James version for citations.

2.0 ANALYSIS OF THE GRAPHOLOGICAL FEATURES AND THE COHESIVE DEVICES OF PROVERBS CHAPTER NINE

2.1 Graphological Features

The graphological features analyzed in this text include; the punctuation marks, indentation and capitalization. The main theme of Proverb Chapter 9 (King James Version) is 'Wisdom' which is metaphorically referred to as God. Proverb chapter nine (9) is written in 18 verses with irregular lines. The first letter in each verse begins with an uppercase (capital letters) but there is an aberration in the use of uppercase. This is because the last words in most of the verses do not have terminal punctuation marks before the commencement of an upper case in a new verse (As seen in some verses below).

3. She hath killed her beasts; she crieth upon the highest places of the city,

4. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

14. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

This is a breach of linguistic code. This is observed at the end of verses 1, 3, 4, 14, 15, and 16. The aberration affects the reading of the text. This is because the reader may be misguided in observing the punctuation marks since they do not conform to the linguistic code. The irregular punctuation marks could also affect the rhythm of the text.

There are 45 punctuation marks in the text. They include 20 commas, 4 semi–colons, 11 colons and 10 full stops. These punctuation marks have their grammatical representation and input in the text. The preponderance of the commas, colons and full stops helps to slow down the pace of the reading of the lines. As one needs a proper meditation in the reading and understanding of the text since it is a proverb of wisdom, and proverbs require wise thought.

Consequently, the use of capital letters in the lines also complement the use of indentation. As the first lines in the verses begin with capital letters, so the first lines are indented. The use of capital letters at the beginning of each verse intimates the reader of the onset of a verse. All these explicate the graphological features in the text and also in language discourse in particular and discourse analysis in general. The lines are musical and are designed to draw attention to their meaning.

2.2 Cohesive Relations

The cohesive relations in the text are the lexical cohesive devices and the grammatical cohesive devices. The lexical cohesive devices include; synonym, collocational converse, antonym and repetition. The grammatical devices are; anaphora, cataphora, substitutions and conjunctions. Synonyms are observed in verses: 10, the *knowledge* of the holy is *understanding"*; 11. "thy days

shall be *multiplied*, and the years of thy life shall be *increased*", and 17, "stolen waters are *sweet*, and bread eaten in secret is *pleasant*". These synonyms which are lexical cohesive devices in discourse, help to explicate meaning in the text and also account for the underlining functional connectedness or identity in the text.

Collocational converse is also seen in verse 5, '*eat* of my bread, and *drink* of the wine…. There are collocational antonyms in verses 1 and 6 respectively. "Wisdom hath *builded* her house, she hath *hewn* out her seven pillars; 'Forsake the foolish, and *live*; and *go* in the way of understanding". These converses and antonyms are also used to elucidate meaning in discourse. They portray the occurrence of collocational lexical items as well as antonyms in the proverb. These collocation and antonyms could also enhance melody and harmony in the text.

Repetitions are also prominent in the text. The nominal group 'wisdom' in verse 1 is repeated in verse 10. The personal pronouns 'she' and 'her' are repeated in verses 2, 3, 4, 14, 16 and verses 2, 3 and 18 respectively. The archaic verbal, 'hath', is repeated in verses, 1, 2 and 3. The personal pronoun 'him', is also repeated in verses 4 and 16. 'He', a personal pronoun is also repeated in verses, 7, 8 and 9. Other repetitions in the text include; 'and', a conjunction, determiners such as; 'thou', 'thy' and 'that' and verbals such as getteth and rebuketh. The repetitions are musical and also direct us to read and imply meanings.

The text uses grammatical cohesive devices to actualize the use of cohesive ties in the analysis of language discourse. The anaphoric devices in the text include; 'her', she', 'whose, 'him', 'my,' 'thyself', 'thou', 'who', 'me', 'himself'. The cataphoric devices in the text are; 'thy', 'that', 'their' and the' similarly, there are substitutions and conjunctions used in the text to achieve cohesion. The substitutions include; 'she, 'her' in verse 1, line 2. They are repeated in verses 2 and 3, lines 1 and 2 respectively. While the conjunctions are; 'and' in verses 5, 6 and 7, lines 1 and 2; 'lest' in verse 8 line 1; 'yet' in verse 9, line 2; 'but' in verse 12, line 2 and 'which' in verse 5, line 2. All the aforementioned cohesive devices establish cohesion and unity in the text.

2.3   Lexico-semantic Representation

The semantic interpretation in the text is achieved through the use of proverbs. It is also achieved through figures of speech, which include; metaphor and personification. 'Wisdom' in the beginning of the text is a metaphorical representation of God. Verses 10, 13, 17 and 18 are metaphorical statements. Thus; "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: the knowledge of the holy is understanding "(KJV 10); "A foolish woman is clamorous" (KJV verse 13): "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (KJV,verse 17); "that her guests are in the depths of hell" (KJV,verse 18). The metaphors are used to achieve meanings in the text.

Consequently, the personifications could be seen in verses 1, 2, 3 – 5. They include: "wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars" (verse 1) ; "she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine.She hath also furnished her table" (verse 2); "she hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city" (verse 3); "… She saith to him" (verse 4), "… eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (verse 5). 'Wisdom', an inanimate abstract noun, is being personified in the foregoing verses with personal pronouns. They are; 'she' and 'her, the finite verbs such as; crieth, mingled; builded', 'furnished' and the nouns used for animate objects, such as; 'house; 'beasts', wine' 'maiden' and "bread". The personification is used to actualise the semantic features in religious language. The text actually,

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demonstrates its title, Proverbs, which are embedded with linguistic and discourse features for analysis.

3.0   CONCLUSION

This study conducted a linguistic analysis of Proverbs chapter nine bringing out the linguistic features and the discourse features in the text. The analysis which showed that the linguistic features *use in Proverbs Chapter 9* include; the graphological feature, and the lexico – semantic structures. The discourse features analyzed the cohesive devices, which are the lexical cohesive devices and the grammatical cohesive devices. The lexical devices included synonym, collocation converse, antonym and repetition. The grammatical devices were anaphora, cataphora, substitution and conjunction. The analysis explicates and demonstrates language use in religion in general and Proverbs chapter nine in particular. Finally, 'wisdom' which is the theme of Proverbs chapter nine, is metaphorically referred to as God. The text actually explicates what Crytal and Davy (1969), Obodeh F.E (2018) referred to as contemporary living usage".

4.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

This study would help to embrace and understand religion by religious heads and members. This would make them understand the language of religion better. Therefore, the authors advocate for the religious heads to apply the knowledge of the language of religion in proverbs chapter nine for integration in their teachings and preaching. The knowledge of the language in proverbs chapter nine would enhance their use of language in other aspects of religious teaching. The authors recommend other researchers in Linguistics and Discourse Analysis to conduct researches in other areas in the language of religion, to create awareness in religious language discourse. The authors further recommend that government agencies and non-government organizations should sponsor researchers in this field for more publications of the language of religion for public awareness.

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APPENDIX

Proverbs Chapter Nine

The text proverbs chapter nine is presented below;

1. Wisdom hath buuilded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:

2. She hath killed her beasts; she Hath mingled her wine, she hath also furnished her table.

3. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city,

4. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

5. Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

6. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

7. He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.

8. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

9. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

11. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

12. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

13. A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.

14. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

15. To call passengers who go right on their ways:

16. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

17. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

18. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.