

Generic structure potential analysis of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria

Temitope Michael Ajayi¹

Department of Linguistics and African Languages,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
michealtemitope@yahoo.com

Abstract

Christian street evangelism is one of Bible-based doctrinal practices found among Nigerian Christians, especially in Southwestern Nigeria. Studies have examined language use in Christian activities, including sermons in church services, funerals and marriage ceremonies. However, no scholarly attention has been paid to a linguistic description of language use in Christian street evangelism, which, although shares some features with other contexts of Christian activities, manifests some elements that characteristically define it among the series of Christian evangelistic activities. This study, therefore, is a generic structural potential analysis of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria. Data were gathered using ethnographic techniques. Data comprised fifteen observed street evangelism activities randomly sampled in different cities in Southwestern Nigeria. Data were subjected to discourse analysis within the purview of Halliday and Hassan's (1985) Generic Structure Potential (GSP) theory. Findings reveal 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. The GSP of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria can be catalogued as:

$$[S] \curvearrowright [G] \wedge (DoP) \wedge [Se] \wedge [P] \curvearrowright \{ (CfC) \wedge (WtF) \} \wedge [F]$$

Keyword: Christian street evangelism, Southwestern Nigeria, Generic Structure Potential

Introduction

Evangelism is one of the doctrinal practices among Christians all over the world. In the Nigerian context, prominent among the biblical passages often reinforced to emphasise Christian evangelism are Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 1:8. Hence, various Christian groups have devised different means of evangelism, including sharing of tracts, organisation of open-air crusades, preaching in the bus, and early morning street preaching, among others; each with its peculiar structure and form. This study is a generic structure potential analysis of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern

¹ . Michael Temitope Ayayi PhD is a Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Nigeria. Street evangelism, otherwise referred to in this study as street preaching, is one of the oldest forms of evangelism in the world whose root can be traced to the Bible as evident in (Gen. 3:9) where God 'went out to call on Adam and in the Garden of Eden'. According to Miano (n.d), street evangelism or preaching has to do with the proclamation of religious messages publicly. It involves the use of a voice louder than what obtains in a normal conversation (<https://carm.org/what-is-street-preaching>). In his observation, the act of street preaching is not peculiar to Christianity, as Islam also employs the phenomenon. Street preaching is a common practice among Nigerian Christians in Nigeria, particularly in the Southwestern region. In this region, it is very rare to witness a day one would not observe Christian preachers propagating the gospel through street preaching. These preachers are often seen early in the morning, some with bells, the Bible and megaphone (or public address system).

While language use in other contexts of Christian activities, especially in Nigeria, has enjoyed scholarly attention, the peculiar nature of form and function of language use in Christian street evangelism has not been given attention. Perhaps this is due to the wrong impression that language use in this context of Christian activity is not characteristically different from what is observed in other contexts. This study, therefore, is a generic structure potential analysis of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria, with a view to examining the generic linguistic elements that characterise this sub-aspect of Christian activity that relies sufficiently on use of language, and ultimately to describe the pragmatic imports of the obligatory and optional elements in this context of language use.

Review of relevant literature

Several works have been carried out on language use in Christian religious activities in general and Christian sermons in particular. These include Akhimien and Farotimi (2018), Ajayi (2017), Anyanwu *et al* (2016), Ugot and Offiong (2013), Adedun and Mekiluwa (2010a and 2010b), Esimaje (2012), and Awonuga and Chimuanya (2016), among others. Adedun and Mekiluwa (2010a) investigate the operation of cooperative principles in a Nigerian Christian sermon with the aim of establishing how meaning is conveyed and interpreted in sermonic discourse. They note that background assumptions and knowledge shared by participants in sermonic discourse (preachers and congregation) play a vital role in meaning construction and interpretation during sermon delivery. Adedun and Mekiluwa (2010b) examine the discourse features and patterns in a Nigerian Pentecostal Christian sermon. The study concludes that sermonisation in Pentecostal Christian settings is replete with series of rhetorical and speech acts carefully deployed by preachers in their sermon delivery. Esimaje's (2012: 24) study is a lexico-semantic analysis of Christian sermons delivered in English in Nigeria, particularly in comparison with what obtains in other climes. Esimaje observes that context plays a significant role in the semantic framing and deconstruction of the lexical items deployed in English sermons in Nigeria. Ugot and Offiong (2013) examine language of interaction in Nigeria Pentecostal setting, with particular reference to the Calabar area of Nigeria. They note that Pentecostal churches in this area employ English language, Nigerian Pidgin and other local languages of the area in their services. Anyanwu *et al*. (2016) is a comparative analysis of the use of English language in Orthodox and Pentecostal Churches, using two Catholic Churches, two Anglican Churches and two Pentecostal Churches within Owerri metropolis as case

studies. They observe the use of English is a powerful tool in the hands of church leaders to manipulate the followers to achieve certain ideological goals. Similarly, Awonuga and Chimunya (2016) engage the linguistic devices in selected Nigerian Christian preachers' sermons within the purview of systemic functional grammar. They submit that linguistic devices such as repetition, syntactic parallelism, imperative sentences, and rhetorical questions, among others, characterise the sermons of Nigerian Christian preachers.

Ajayi (2017) examines language use in Christian funeral services and sermons, particularly among Christian preachers in Southwestern Nigeria. He identifies discourse features such as 'reference to the deceased as *body* and not *corpse*, reference to the good deeds of the deceased, reference to shared religious (biblical) belief about death and resurrection, deployment of songs of relief, and offering of words of prayers' (Ajayi, 2017) as pain-relieving strategies carefully deployed by Christian preachers at funeral services in Southwestern Nigeria. Akhimien and Farotimi (2018: 1-8) engage selected sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria and one of the most popular Pentecostal preachers in the country, with a view to identifying and describing the discourse strategies and persuasive elements that characterise his sermons. Employing Schlegloff's model of conversational analysis, they observe 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 (Akhimien and Farotimi, 2018: 1).

As mentioned earlier, these studies have all examined language use in other contexts of Christian activities, with the exclusion of Christian street evangelism. This study, therefore, attempts a generic structure potential analysis of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria, within the purview of Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Generic Structure Potential theory. In particular, it provides answers to the following questions:

- what are the obligatory and optional linguistic elements in street sermonic discourse?
- what is the generic structure of the street sermonic discourse?
- what are the pragmatic imports of the linguistic elements identified in the street sermonic discourse?

Theoretical orientation

Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Generic Structure Potential (GSP) theory is considered as the theoretical framework for this study. The GSP is a theory of genre analysis which is an integral aspect of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (Sunday and Fagunleka, 2017). Operating within the ambit of systemic functional linguistics, Halliday and Hasan (1985:56) describe genre as 'a meaning which results from language which does a particular job in a particular contextual configuration' (Sunday and Fagunleka, 2017: 112). Thus, the concept of 'generic-specific semantic potential or generic structure potential' is often adopted for the description of a particular text which is structurally different from another. In this study, however, the notion of generic structure potential is considered appropriate, hence its adoption. Following the submission of Halliday and Hasan (1985:56), the GSP is predicated on the notion that

contextual configuration (CC), considered to be a specific set of the values that specify the field, tenor and mode of a discourse, 'permits statements about the text structures' to be made. In specific terms, a contextual configuration can predict the following about the structure of a text:

- Obligatory elements- elements that must occur
- Optional elements- elements that may occur
- Sequencing of elements- arrangements of elements can be compulsory and optional
- Recursiveness- frequency of the occurrence of elements

What the above suggests is that, it is possible to spell out the totality of the range of obligatory and optional elements, as well as their order, in a manner that the possible structure of a text or genre can be exhaustively captured. This possibility is referred to as generic structure potential. The GSP spells out the possible features of texts belonging to a particular genre. For instance, in the argument of Halliday and Hasan (1989: 64), the following schema represents the obligatory and optional elements of shop interaction or service encounter: [(G). (SI) ^] [(SE.) {SR^SC^} ^S^} P^PC (F)]. This is explained thus: Greeting (G), Sale Initiation (SI), Sale Enquiry (SE), Sale Request (SR), Sale Compliance (SC), Sale (S), Purchase (P), Purchase Closure (PC), and Finis (F). The round brackets () show optionality of the enclosed elements; the dot between elements indicates "more than one option" in sequence; the square brackets [] depict restraint on sequence; the braces with a curved arrow are an indication that the degree of iteration for elements in the square brackets is equal, and the caret sign (^) shows sequence. In their argument, Halliday and Hasan (1989) note that the obligatory elements of any interaction (text) define the genre of the interaction. In other words, without the obligatory elements, the text will not be conceived to belong to a particular genre.

In the study, we have adopted the following notations in our analysis: [] obligatory element

() optional elements

^ sequence of elements

recursive elements the first element in a sequence conditions the presence of the second element

Methodology

This study relied on ethnographic techniques for data gathering: participant and non participant observation. Data comprised fifteen street evangelistic preachings/sermons, eleven of which were in Yoruba and four in English, of Christian street evangelists/preachers, across different cities of Southwestern Nigeria. The street sermons of the preachers were observed, transcribed and presented as data in this study. Data were subjected to discourse analysis within the purview of Halliday and Hasan's (1985) generic structure potential theory. My personal experience as a Christian was also useful in data engagement and discussion.

Data analysis

The following obligatory and optional elements characterise Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria.

Obligatory and optional elements in Christian street evangelism and its structure:

$$[S] \text{ } ^\wedge [G] \text{ } ^\wedge (\text{DoP}) \text{ } ^\wedge [Se] \text{ } ^\wedge [P] \text{ } ^\wedge \{ (CfC) \text{ } ^\wedge (WtF) \} \text{ } ^\wedge [F]$$

Song (S)

Song is one of the integral parts of Christian activities. In fact, one cannot imagine any Christian gathering or group whose activities are without songs. The centrality of songs to Christianity has been established by works such as Ekeke (2012) and Tönsing *et al.* (2015). Following the submissions of these scholars, one appreciates why singing of songs comes as the first 'ritual' in Christian street sermons. The songs observed in Christian street sermons can range from such that calls for repentance to those that demonstrate the power of Jesus Christ to save and deliver sinners and people of the world from their challenges. Examples of such songs are presented below:

Excerpt 1

He came from heaven to earth to show the way from the earth to the cross, my debt you paid, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky, Lord I lift your name on high...

Excerpt 2

You cannot just hide it
from God (2ce) You
cannot just hide it from Him
Why not confess to Him
today...

Excerpt 3 m èniyàn rántí

o, gb bo'lùgbàlà tí pee
Ó pè , rántí o, gb b'lùgbàlà tí pee. Wá nísinyii
tì Kristi pè ,wá iw l, wá gb ipè...wá nígbà tí
Kristi pè ..

Son of man, remember, hearken as the saviour is calling
He is calling you...come right now
Christ is calling you sinner, come heed his
voice...come now that Christ is calling you

Excerpt 4

ni tí ò kú fún mi Irún mää j ó jèrè mi (twice)
Jesu lókú fún ùn mi kì mää èsù
ni tí ò kú fún mi Irún mää j ó jèrè mi...
Don't let who did not die for me to gain my soul (twice)
Jesus was the one that died for me and not the devil
Lord, don't let who did not die for me to gain my soul

In the excerpts above, songs are pragmatically deployed as a 'signature tune' that announces the presence of the preacher, particularly to draw and gain the attention of the target audience. Since the target audience would still be in bed (for those sermons preached in the morning) or be involved in some other activities in

which they might be heavily engrossed, street preacher(s) use songs as an ‘attention drawer’, essentially to gain the attention of the target audience. However, in some other instances, songs are deployed in the middle or end of the sermon. When songs come in the middle of the sermon, it is a pragmatic device by street preachers to ‘fill the gap’ in his/her sermonic activity, reflecting on what to say next. In some other instances, it is used to reinforce the import of the message or sermon being preached. In this instance, the preacher can be said to be preaching in song, as is the case in Excerpt 4. However, singing songs at the end of the sermon is a closing signature tune deployed by street preachers to round off his/her sermon, as he/she prepares to leave, perhaps, for another street for evangelism.

Greeting (G)

Several studies have accentuated the place of greetings in interpersonal interactions in the Nigerian social space, particularly in the Yoruba socio-cultural system (Ajayi, 2017: 38). Commenting on the place of greetings in Yoruba culture, Odebunmi (2015) submits that greetings are central to the Yoruba socio-cultural practices. Fafunwa (2008) observes that the Yoruba have appropriate greetings for every situation. In fact, the scholar reports the people have the most elaborate forms of greetings in the world. As noted by Odebunmi (2015), the people have greetings that reflect different times of the day, seasons of the years, occupations, circumstances and situations, including festivities. Hence, there is no aspect of the people’s life that does not feature greetings. This concept is one of the obligatory elements of Christian street sermons in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. The excerpts below are instances of greetings in the observed street sermons.

Excerpt 5

.....

Good afternoon, we are from XXX, we come to bring the good news of

Jesus to you... Excerpt 6 *kààr o*, ìròyìn Jesu Kristi ni mo mú wá fún un
 yín...tí m Màrià tí ó kú fún m aráyé...

Good morning, I bring the good news of Jesus Christ to you...the son of Mary that died
 for our sin

Excerpt 7 **kú ojúm yin èrò agbègbè yíí**, ìhìn rere Jesu Kristi
 ni amú wá fún un yin *Good morning, I bring the good news of*
Jesus Christ to you

Excerpt 8

Mo kí gbogbo yin tí ó wà ní agbègbè àti àyíká yíí ní orúkò olúwa...

I greet everyone in this neighbourhood in the name of the Lord

In excerpts 5-8, the various preachers orientate towards the Yoruba socio-cultural practice of starting a social interaction with greetings. Even Excerpt 4 that takes place in English is not exempted. In particular, in accordance with the practice of the Yoruba to greet according to the various times of the day and generally, the preachers reflect the actual times of the day in their greetings as they begin their evangelism work (as evident in **Good morning:** Excerpt 5; . *kààr o*:

Excerpt 6; **kú ojúm yin èrò agbègbè yìí**: Excerpt 7; and **Mo kí gbogbo...**: Excerpt 8). This practice, even though observed to have been subconsciously practised by the preachers, must have been predicated on their understanding of the role of greetings in social interactions among the people, and that failure to fulfil this 'ritualistic' part of social interactions, even when the audience are not physically present, is like committing an abomination. Doing this pragmatically gives the preacher some sort of 'soft-landing' before the target audience, as an adage in Yoruba says '*ni dami síwájú, á t'í tútù*' one who wets the ground ahead of him/her would definitely walk on a cool ground. Greeting the people, more or less, serves as a precursory ritual required to get to their hearts. Interestingly, this is observed even in instances where the target audience are not physically seen by the preachers; as, in their (the preachers) imagination, the target audience are present.

Declaration of Purpose [DoP]

Declaration of Purpose is an optional element of Christian street evangelism. This is very much like what Labov and Waletzky's (1967) refer to as Orientation. Here, the preacher feels indebted to let the people know why he/she is out to engage them. Although, it is not an obligatory element in Christian street sermons, when it features, it makes it easy for the people (the audience) to know their (the preachers) intentions. It prepares the minds of the audience for the mission of the preachers. The excerpts below are examples of declaration of purpose observed in our data.

Excerpt 9 j ará ní orúk olúwa, **ìhìn rere tí Krístì nì mo mú wá ní òwúr yìí**. Ìhìn rere tí a rán mi sí , èyí tí Krístì fi hàn fún wa nínú iwée mí m r, iwé Isaiah, orí ogójì...

Brethren in the Lord, I bring the good news of Christ to you this morning. The gospel sent to you through me is as found in the book of Isaiah, chapter 40...

Excerpt 10 kààr o, **ìròyìn Jesu Kristi nì mo mú wá fún un yín...** Good morning, I bring the gospel of Jesus to you...

Excerpt 11

...A mú ìhìn rere Jesu t yín wà lónìí...
We bring the gospel of Jesus to you today

Excerpt 12

... we come to bring the good news of Jesus to you...the word of Christ. He is coming back again...

As shown in the excerpts above, the singular purpose of Christian street evangelism is to 'save' souls by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. This practice, as evident in the language of street evangelists, is commanded in the Bible. Some of the popular passages of the Bible often quoted as justification for this practice are John 3:16, Mark 16:15-16, and Matthew 28: 18-20, among others.

Prayer (P)

Prayer is an obligatory element of Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria. Just like song, prayer is very key to Christian activities, including evangelism.

Commenting on prayer and Christianity, Adams (2016: 271) submits that prayer is the Christian way of being in the world with God. In the opinion of Henry (1972:30), the lifeline of theology is prayer, because it paves the way for believers to know God. In the words of van der Merwe (2018: 8), prayer and the experience of God's involvement in a believer's life constitute human–divine dialogue, and therefore, the experiential knowledge of God in daily life can result in both planned and unplanned prayers. In Christian street evangelism, prayer is a recursive element that features at different times. It can come up before the sermon itself, after the sermon or at the end of the whole preaching exercise. The forms of prayer observed in Christian street sermon include prayer of salvation, particularly for the souls of listening 'sinners'; prayer of breakthrough and others. Examples are presented in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 13

Mó gbàdúrà, bí a e pinu lóníí láti jw wa,
Jesu á gbàwá, A ò ní padà sínú m lórúk
Jesu. Ore f t'a ó fi e if Irun, Irun á yànda r
sínú ayée wa ní orúk Jesu Kristi

I pray, as we are deciding today to confess our sins, Jesus will deliver us, we will not go back to sin anymore in Jesus' name. The grace to do the will of God, God will give to us in Jesus' name

Excerpt 14

God bless you, it is well with you my brother...God
bless you my sister...

Excerpt 15

Mó gbàdúrà fún , ní orúk Jésù, a mú ìdíw àti ìdèná kúrò Inà r...j mo gbàá l'ádúra láàár yíí, ànúú Olúwa kí ó wá rí. Àánú olúwa wá rí... mo gbàá l'ádúra láàár yíí gg bí ik àtí írìjù Irun, ìtura yóò dé bá lóri i r àti lóri k r. j lóri okòwò r, lóri ohun tí ò dáwélé, mo paá lá lórúk Jesu, ìtura yóò j tì r... *I pray for you in Jesus' name, hindrances are taken away from your path...* I pray, the favour of God shall locate you.... the favour of God locates you...I pray as God's servant, you shall experience comfort in your engagements/dealings, business and all that you lay your hands on

Excerpt 16

...jé gbogbo yin tí etán láti fi ayé yín fún Jesu, naw yín sókè...**mo gbàdúrà gbogbo agbàrà , Dáfídì ní Olúwa gbà mí lw bi , mo pà, mo gbàdúrà, gbogbo agbàrà tí e ti , gbogbo èso nínú ayée yín, óyá máa gbiná snù..** Mo dúp pé Jesu ti gbà yín là. Lórúk Jesu Kristi ní mo gbàdúrà. Aàmin.

All of you ready to give your life to Jesus, raise your hands...

pray every power of sin, David declared, Lord, deliver me from sin; every

sin in my life, I decree, I pray, all that represent sin in my life, attract fire...I thank God that Jesus has saved you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

Sermon (Se)

Sermon is one of the basic principles upon which Christianity and Christendom rest, hence its obligatory status in the list of elements that define street evangelism among Nigerian Christians. In fact, as Acheoah and Hamzah (2015:23) note, Christianity as a religion is a product of the evangelical ministry of Jesus and His disciples, characterised by sermons which challenged the religious authorities of their times. In line with this submission, it suffices to conclude that the whole essence of street evangelism or sermonisation by Christian preachers is to make people (sinners) change their ways and live up to the standard of Jesus Christ and His apostle. As a matter of fact, as we have observed, some street sermon-givers practise this 'for a living', with the claim that God has admonished them not to combine it with any 'worldly' (secular) vocation. Some examples of sermons in our data are presented in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 17

Jesus is coming soon. Run away from your sinful ways. Give your life to Jesus. Jesus is coming soon. You cannot hide your sin from God, you cannot hide it from Him... Surrender your life to Jesus today. Give your life to Jesus; let him wash away your sins. Give your life to Jesus, let him come and save you. Call on Jesus, and say Jesus, I am a sinner, have mercy on me...

Excerpt 18

What is man that you are mindful of him? What is man man my sister? What is man my brother? God does not want you to land in hell fire. God does not want you to lament forever. God does not want you to die in sin. God paid you a visit, appreciate that visit. Ask yourself my sister and brother, who am I? From January to December, you are not better than those who have died...

Excerpt 19

Irùn retí r, kíe ewé lásán ni Irùn retí, kíe òdòdó tí a pè ní flower ni Irùn retí. Ggbí iwé Gàlátíà ti s fún wa: Galatians 5:22. O ò rǎntí wípe kiràkità asán nilé ayé yíí, a ò m'óhun k'óhun wá, a kò ní m'óhun k'óhun l. Ìgbà tí à b wá sínú, ìhòhò la wá sínú ayé arákùnrin, ìhòhò la wá sínú ayé arábìnrin... è é e tí yóó fi mú ègbé! Kí ló wà nínú ayé yíí ná? ...

God is expecting you, not leaves nor flowers. Just as the book of Galatians 5:22 has told us. You don't remember, upon all our activities in this world, we are taking nothing to heaven, just as we brought nothing. Brothers and sisters, we came to the world naked, why will you perish! What is in this world?...

Excerpt 20

He is coming back again, our Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again. For God so loves the world that He gave His only begotten son to this world that he would heal us, save us. The Bible makes us understand that when the people were going towards destruction, God sent his word and it healed them from their destruction. You need Jesus; there is no any other way to succeed in life and the afterlife than Jesus. No matter who you think you are, no matter what you are passing through, you need Jesus... no matter whatever you are passing through in life, God will still have mercy on you, God will still deliver you. That is why you have to believe in Him. Some people

will pass through some things in life, they begin to move into the world, they begin to enter the world, they begin to do artificial things of this earth...

Excerpt 21

Ronú pìwàdà lóníí iw alágbèrè,
asklbatèniyànj, paágà, Abrià, mùtí,...Jesu
pè lóníí kí o ronú pìwàdà. Ia lè p jù fún ..

Repent today you fornicators, gossips, adulterers, idolators, the drunk,
Jesus is calling you today...

An appraisal of the excerpts presented above reveals that Christian street sermons are persuasive and admonitory in nature. In the sermons, the sermon-givers often paint the target audience as a sinner or sinners whose life/lives is/are precious to God, and hence should not die in their sins. In some instances, the street sermon-givers reiterate the second coming of Christ, believed among Christians to be a soul-harvesting period in the life of humanity. According to this belief, when Jesus comes (the second time), He shall take with Him the righteous to paradise, while those who have refused to 'give their lives to Him' are doomed and 'sentenced to eternal condemnation and damnation' (John 14:1-3, Luke 13:1-28, Matthew 13: 41-43, and Hebrews 9: 28, among others). In some other instances, the preachers could make deliberate reference to some practices that are considered sinful according to Christian biblical belief in order to address specific 'sinners' who are involved in them and ensure they repent accordingly. Such is found in Excerpt (21), for instance, where the preacher calls out to specific 'sinners' practices such as: *alágbèrè* (fornicators), *asklbatèniyànj* (gossips), *paágà* (adulterers), *abrià* (idolators), *mùtí* (drunkard).

Call for Confession (CfC)

Call for confession is another optional element of Christian street evangelism. It is a phenomenon that comes up where the street evangelist imagines that a soul has been 'won' for Christ and as such, such a soul or souls, as the case may be, need(s) to formally renounce his/her ways and denounce the devil (in line with Paul's injunction in Romans 10: 9). This practice is very much like the 'altar call' that is often witnessed within the context of the church service, particularly in Pentecostal contexts. Typically, an altar call would require the pastor asking whoever in the congregation wants to give his/her life to Christ after a sermon has been preached to signify by raising their hands. After such individuals must have raised their hands in response to this call, they would be asked to come to the front (though not in all situations) and asked to recite certain prayers of confession and renounce their sins. The end result of this process is that such individuals are declared 'born again'. A typical example of such is captured in Bryan (2016: 49) as follows:

Dear God, I thank you for loving me. Thank you for sending Jesus into the world. I believe you died on the cross for my sins. I believe you rose again. Forgive me for all my sins. Give me the gift of eternal life. And help me face the challenges that I'm up against. God, I surrender my life to you. In Jesus' name

Call for confession in Christian street evangelism follows this same procedure, except for the aspect of asking 'the newly won souls' to come forward for prayers. In

the call for confession segment of Christian street evangelism, the sermon-giver can ask the 'new souls' to place their hands on their chests and repeat a prayer of confession after him or her. Some examples in our data are presented in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 22

Ìw tóo etán láti fi ayé r fún Jèsù lónií tàbí padà sí d r, I lóri ekún r, kí o sì kígbe sí Irun pé, Olúwa, gbogbo nà mi tí mo ti rìn, gba kàn mi, má j n ègbé srun àpààdì, má j kí run àpààdì ó jèrè lóri mi...Máà j kí pàdànù ilé ológo

You that are ready to give your life to Christ today or go back to him, go on your knee and cry to God that, Lord, all my sinful ways, save my soul, don't let me perish in hell. Don't let me be a candidate of hell. Don't let me miss the glorious home...

Excerpt 23

j ní wákàtí yíí, tí a bá rí ni tí ó ti etán láti fi ayé r fún Jèsù, o ò e wí nínú àdúrà wípé Irun aláàánú, mo dúp Iw r ní òwúr yíí fún àfàní, èmi I, dáríjì mí, fún mi ní iyè r, fún mi ní àlááfíà r, mo gba Jèsù gb ggbí Irun àti olùgbàlà mi...mo fi síwájú kí n lè rí iyè gbà níjba Irun ní j ìkyìn.

If there is anyone that is ready to give his/her life to Jesus, why not say this prayer: the merciful God, I thank you this morning for the opportunity, I, a sinner, forgive me, give me life, I accept Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. I put you ahead of me so as to receive life in your kingdom in the end

Excerpt 24

Receive Him this morning by saying after me Lord Jesus, I acknowledge myself as a sinner, I know I cannot do without you I know I am nothing without you, I know I am a sinner. But father, I believe that you died on the cross of Calvary for my sins. I believe that you rose up on the third day for my justification. Please take away my guilt of sin; take away my iniquity by your precious blood this morning in the name of Jesus. Father, come into my heart, be my Lord and write my name in your holy book of righteousness and keep me till the very end ...

'Welcome to the fold' (WtF)

The 'welcome to the fold' (WtF) session of Christian street evangelism is an optional element that features immediately after the call for confession. At this point, the street evangelist 'officially' welcomes the new 'soul' in to the fold of Christ. It is like welcoming or ushering the soul into a new life devoid of his/her old way of life characterised by sins and 'the works of the flesh'. It is a move that signals a new beginning for the newly saved soul. Some of the examples captured in our data are presented below:

Excerpt 25

j ní wákàtí yíí, mo kí kú oríire ìw tí o ti gba àdúrà yíí, ore f Irun yóò máa bá gbé. Ní orúk Jèsù o ò ní ks; ní rúk Jèsù o ò ní ubú dà á nù. Mo tún gbàdúrà fún ún lówùr yíí, bí a ti

jáde l, tí a bá rí ìdánwò kí ìdánwò ní inú ìrìn àjò wa lónií, mo gbàdúrà, gg bí ìrìjù Irùn, a mú ìdánwò náà kúro ...

At this moment, I greet you congratulations if you have participated in this prayer (of confession). The grace of God shall abide with you. In Jesus' name you will not 'fall'. I also pray for you this morning, as we are going out, if there is any temptation on our way, as a servant of God, I decree such is taken away..

Excerpt 26

j mo kí kú oriire fún ipinu r yií. A ti k orúk r sínú iwé iyé. Àwn aglì sí y lóri ayèè r. Olúwa yóò mú délé lórúk Jesu.

I greet you congratulations for your decision. Your name has been written in the book of life. Angels are rejoicing over your life. God will take you home in Jesus' name.

Excerpt 27

If you said this prayer this morning, I say congratulations to you. There is joy in heaven over your soul. Look for a Bible-believing church around you where the word of God is preached. May the Lord bless you.

Finis (F)

Finis is the last part of Christian street evangelism. It is a compulsory phenomenon in the activity and it points to the fact that the street evangelist is rounding off his/her sermon. This sometimes comes in form of prayer (wishing the new convert well in his/her new found faith); it can also come in form of song whereby the preacher summarises the thematic content of his/her sermon in songs.

Excerpt 28

My brothers and sisters, as you decide to give your life to Jesus this morning, I pray God will see you through, God will see you through

Excerpt 29

This morning, He is calling us. Harden not your heart my brothers...As you have hearkened unto him this morning, God bless you. It shall be well with you.

Excerpt 30 (a song)

...Halleluyah látrun wa plú orin ay, Òlugbala yóó pada wà, láì kò níreti
Halleluyah from heaven with songs of joy. The Saviour
is coming back, when we least expect

Excerpt 31 (a song)

Eternal, eternal life, eternal, eternal life. I want to reach eternal life
God save my soul, I want to reach eternal life, God save my soul

Excerpt 32

...Mo gbàdúrà, àlááfìà ni fún un yin (sings as he leaves) *I pray, it is well with you*

Conclusions

This study has attempted a generic structure potential analysis of street sermons in Southwestern Nigeria, particularly within the purview of Halliday and Hasan's (1985) GSP. It has identified the obligatory and optional linguistic elements in street sermonic discourse in the region. Similarly, the study has attempted as descriptive analysis of the pragmatic import of the use of the linguistic elements identified in the discourse. The generic structure potential of Christian street evangelism has been catalogued in this study as follows: **[S] ^ [G] ^ (DoP) ^ [Se] ^ [P] ^ (CfC) ^ (WtF) ^ [F]**, where S stands for sermon, G for greeting, DoP for declaration of purpose, Se for sermon, P for prayer, CfC for call for confession, WtF for welcome to the fold, and F for finis.

As indicated in the structure, Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria begins with songs and the element is recursive, that is, it can occur many times in the sermonic activity. This is followed by greetings, declaration of purpose, sermon, prayer (another recursive element), call for confession, welcome to the fold, and finis, which signals the end of the activity. Similarly, as shown in the structure, call for confession is a pre-condition for the featuring of welcome to the fold. In other words, the manifestation or presence (or absence) of 'welcome to the fold' in Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria, is determined by the presence or absence of call for confession. Following from the elements that have been identified as defining Christian street evangelism in Southwestern Nigeria, it suffices to submit that this aspect of Christian activity, although shares certain linguistic patterns with other Christian activities, demonstrates a peculiar language use that depicts it as a unique part of Christian evangelistic activity. This finding is a major contribution to studies in sermonic discourse, especially within the Nigerian context. It will therefore be interesting to see how future studies examine the phenomenon in other regions of the country, particularly with the aim of comparing and contrasting what obtains in the GSP of sermonic discourse in Southwestern Nigeria and other regions.

References

- Acheoah, J. E. and Hamzah, A. 2015. "Style in Christian and Islamic Sermons: A Linguistic Analysis". *American Research Journal of English and Literature*, 1 (1): 23-31.
- Adams, M. M. 2016. Prayer as the "Lifeline of Theology". *Anglican Theological Review* 98(2), 271–283.
- Adedun, E. A. and Mekiluwa, O. O. 2010a. "Cooperative Principles in a Nigerian Christian Sermon". *Lagos Notes and Records*, 16: 110-125.
- Adedun, E. A. and Mekiluwa, O. O. 2010b. "Discourse Features and Patterns in Sermonic Texts: An Analysis of a Nigerian Pentecostal Christian Sermon". *Arc: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University*, 38: 63-94
- Ajayi, T. M. 2017. "Language Use and Pain-relieving Strategies in Christian Funeral Sermons and Services in Nigeria". *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education*, 11 (1): 42-63
- Akhimien, P. E, and Farotimi, Y. 2018. "A Study of the Conversational Features and Discourse Strategies in Select Sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye". *American Journal of Linguistics*, 6(1): 1-8

- Anyanwu, E. C., Njemanze, Q. U., and Ononiwu, M. C. 2016. "English Usage Pattern In Nigerian Religious Settings: Perspectives from Selected Worship Centers in Imo State". *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 21 (6), 1-6
- Awonuga, C. and Chimuanya, L. 2016. "An Investigation of the Syntactic Devices in Selected Nigerian Preachers' Sermons". *Journal of the English Scholars Association of Nigeria (JESAN)*. 18 (1): 1-20.
- Bryan, C. D. 2016. "Heads Bowed, Eyes Closed: Analyzing The Discourse of Online Evangelical Altar Calls". A PhD Dissertation. Middle Tennessee State University.
- Ekeke, E. C. 2012. "Oral Expression of African Christianity in Songs and Choruses (A Case Study of African Independent Churches in Calabar-Nigeria)". *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(6): 154-163.
- Esimaje, A. U. 2012. "A Corpus-based Lexical Study of Sermons in Nigeria". *English Language Teaching*; 5(9): 24-32
- Fafunwa, A. 2008. "'Eyin Ara E je ka Gbe Yoruba Laruge'. *Ede Yoruba Lode Oni: Iwe Apileko Nipa Ajo Idagbasoke Imo Yoruba*," 1-10. Lagos and Ibadan: Macmillian Nigerian Publishers Limited.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. 1985. *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-semiotic Perspective*. Victoria: Deakin University.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. 1989. *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-semiotic Perspective*. (2nd ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Henry, G. S. 1972. "The Lifeline of Theology". *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 22–30.
- Labov, W and Waletzky, J. 1967. "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experiences". In J. Helm (ed.). *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts: Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society*, 12–44.
- Miano, T. (n.d.) What is street preaching? Viewed 22 April, 2019 from [https://carm.org/what-isstreet preaching](https://carm.org/what-isstreet-preaching)
- Odebunmi, A. 2015. mlúàbí. *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Germany: Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Sunday, A. B. and Fagunleka, O. O. 2017. "Generic Structure Potential Analysis of Feature Articles in Nigerian Newspapers". *UJAH*, 18 (1): 108-130.
- The Holy Bible (King James Version). 2003. World Wide Printing.USA
- Tönsing, J. G., Wepener, C. J., Vos, C. 2015. "The "Cognitive" and the "Emotive" Components in Christian Songs: Tracing the Shifts in Traditional and Contemporary Songs", *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(1): 1-14.
- Ugot, M. I. and Offiong, A. O. 2013. "Language and Communication in the Pentecostal Church of Nigeria: The Calabar Axis". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(1): 148-154
- Van der Merwe, D. G. 2018. "Prayer, the Encounter and Participation, the Experience: A Pauline Exhortation towards a Spirituality of Prayer", *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39(1): 1-8.