Defining a Speech Community: A Grammatical Cohesive Study of select Nigerian Christian Homilies

Idowu, Olubunmi A
Department of Languages and Literary Studies
Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria
E-mail: idowuo@babcock.edu.ng
Tel: 0803-349-3989

Owuye, Opeyemi Mercy
Department of Languages and Literary Studies
Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria

Kalejaiye, Abiola
Department of Languages and Literary Studies
Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria

Soyombo, Gbemisola
Department of Languages and Literary Studies
Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract
Several sociolinguistic studies have investigated the definition of various speech communities based on the different linguistic levels of and their inherent interferences. However, few of such studies have focused specifically on the capabilities of the discourse analytical tool of cohesion to delimit a speech community. Thus, this work investigates the use of grammatical cohesive resources in select Christian homilies within the Nigerian context, to define a Nigerian Speech community. Two Christian homilies which constitute the data for this study were selected randomly but purposively too across the country, based on the taxonomy of churches into the mission, the Ethiopian, the African Indigenous and the Pentecostal groups. The grammatical cohesive resources in the data were examined to determine their level of contributions to the communicative efficacy and dynamism of the sermon texts. Using the Systemic Functional Grammatical (SFG) theory that relates the form of language use to its function, the study is expected to highlight the relevance of the context to the data, and consequently, create a unique grammatical cohesive pattern for the purpose of defining a Nigerian Speech community.

Introduction
Language is a special gift of God to humans to enable them participate in different forms of communicative interactions involving sharing ideas, thoughts, and information; as well as. Thus, language is not only an individual property, but also a communal or societal possession. As the property of a society, language use amongst them usually reflects some shared beliefs, assumptions and knowledge that constitutes the culture of the language users. The study of language as they relate to these elements of culture in any society is generally referred to as sociolinguistics (Wardhaugh 2013:118). However, it is not every member of a society that uses language the same way because they
are different with respect to their profession, religion, educational qualifications and economic status, etc. Consequently, these bases for differences categorize members of the society into various groups of people who share similar linguistic norms, and social values. Such groups are referred to as speech communities.

**Defining a Speech Community**

A speech community is a sociolinguistic concept that refers to any group of language users that are unified on the basis of language use (Holmes 2008). The membership of a speech community can be from two to an infinitive number of people. Apart from using the same language, they use it the same way because they are guided by the same rules such as grammatical or semantic rules; and have similar expectations or reactions to specific manner of usage (Yule 2010:253). Based on the two defining characteristics of similarity in linguistic norms and expectations, a common example of a speech community is the group of speakers of English all over the world.

However, there are disagreements about the defining linguistic norms amongst some sociolinguists. For Richard Hudson, the definition of a speech community is not as simple because the characteristics that distinguish one speech community or group from another are fuzzy, and are not as clear as they appear. (1996:29). This opinion is the summary of the observations of some older generation sociolinguists that the concept of ‘group’ can be relative and fuzzy; and that being a member of a group does not only involve membership but the knowledge and capability to participate in discursive practices. (Bloomfield 1933:42, Gumperz 1971:101,114-117; 1974:47, 123 and Morgan 2001:31). In addition, it might be a problem to determine the basis (es) for delineating a group or community from another, in terms of its social orientations such as geographical, ethnic, occupational or religious, when the community is too big and fragmented, such as Nigeria. Occasionally, these boundaries can be “fluid or static, weak and permeable or strong and clear” (Wardaugh 2013:126). By implication, it may be an arduous task to clearly define a speech community based on the language(s) spoken, or the nature of the group(s), or the cultural norms(s) that unite them because according to Bolinger (1975:333) (cited by Wardhaugh 2013:127),

There is no limit to the ways in which human beings league themselves together for self-identification, security, gain, amusement, worship, or any of the other purposes that are held in common; consequently there is no limit to the number and variety of speech community that are to be found in a society.

In fact, sometimes the situation described above is further complicated by the fact that an individual may belong to several social groups or speech communities at the same time. Therefore, this study is one of the attempts to define a Nigerian Christian religious group in the twenty – first century, based on their use of grammatical cohesive tools for effective and dynamic communication in a highly diverse heterogeneous community. This study aims at investigating the use of grammatical cohesive tools to create texture and enhance communicative effectiveness in an English as a second-language situation as Nigeria, within the period of the twenty first century among specific groups of Christian worshippers who are connected geographically, linguistically and spatially. The grammatical cohesive tools include References, Conjunction, Substitution and Ellipsis.

**Theoretical Framework**

The Systemic Functional Grammatical (SFG) approach has been employed for this study due to its consideration for the communicative and social aspects of language use. As a theory of systems and choices, its relevance to the study of the Christian sermons in Nigeria is remarkable. This can be better appreciated when one considers the facts that Nigeria is a multi-lingual country and that, Christianity in
Nigeria is characterized by diverse liturgical and historical characteristics. With the emphasis on contexts, SFG is a multi-dimensional theory that provides a compatible and comprehensive framework, capable of handling the complexities of the multi-ideological nature of Christianity in Nigeria, the multi-lingual context of the data and all manner of linguistic complexities for effective and dynamic communication.

Data Collection and Analysis
The data for this study comprise randomly selected sermon texts from four major categories of churches in Nigeria. Based on the different historical, theological, liturgical, and sociopolitical orientations of the churches in Nigeria, the taxonomy of churches in Nigeria by Aiyegboyin and Asonzeh (2002) include:

1) The Mission Churches
2) The Ethiopian Churches
3) The African Indigenous Churches
4) The Pentecostal Churches

Using the participant-observation method of data collection, two sermon texts selected from each of the categories of churches were recorded in attendance, and transcribed in a manner that the originality of the text can be retained to a large extent. As a sample of the spoken discourse, the data are spontaneous spoken speeches that tolerate frequent pauses thereby resulting in numerous incomplete utterances, lots of subordination, much more declarative and active forms than the passive, diverse conjunctive forms, simple conjunctions and repetitions. Thus, the formal connectedness of the sermon texts were investigated with respect to the grammatical cohesive tools of reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. As meaning–realizing tools, the level of communicative effectiveness of these cohesive relations are measured against its redundancy level.

References in the Sermons
References are extravagantly used by Christian sermons in Nigeria to empower and amplify the comprehension level(s) of the hearers. References are language tools that enable a listener/reader to identify people, places or generally nouns). According to Yule (2002:130), the various forms of references can be categorized as personal references when pointing to a person and demonstrative or comparative, when pointing to places, or things/ people to show different relationships amongst the referents.

Personal References
The dominating use of the personal reference cohesive tie in its various dimensions, to achieve interactive and integrative purposes within the Christian sermons is indispensable. The personal pronouns are used to reflect the different interpersonal relationships that exist between the preacher and his listening congregation, as well as the relationship between God and all Christians. The personal references, especially the plural forms such as 'we', are also necessary for uniting the highly heterogeneous audience in terms of their different backgrounds, social and financial status, and challenges. For example in text B below, the different roles of the reference ties in achieving linguistic texture and social cohesion can be explicated with the following extract;

Times and times again, the disciples show that they do not really understand the man they are following, but Jesus does not rebuke them harshly. Instead, He talks to them with love. He accommodates them. Remember the night that he was, he was arrested, the Bible says, they all abandoned him. They ran away. And when he rose from the dead and he appeared in their midst in the upper room, he did not chastise them. He did not say, "why did you run away? Did I not warn you beforehand that this
was going to happen? Instead, what did he say to them? He said, peace be with you. And the gesture, 'peace be with you' the sign is, 'open hands.' And when you open your hands to somebody, what are you doing? You are indirectly inviting the person to come back to you. So, Jesus, as he said 'peace be with you', he was actually saying to them, 'come, you might actually be disappointed in yourself, but, I still love you. That is the kind of way Jesus treats his disciples.

Though 'Jesus' is mentioned only thrice and by inference as the 'man' only once, there are numerous references to Jesus in the above text through the person deixis, (twelve times as he, once as his and once as him). Using this as a sample of a typical sermon in Nigeria, the employment of numerous references through personal deictic expressions especially, and by inference occasionally, are usually used sake of clarity and to avoid ambiguities. Sermons_ being mainly monologues with occasional interruptions of ‘Amen’ or ‘Hallelujah,’ anecdotes and direct Bible quotations, require such utilization of references to enable the audience differentiate the different participants referred to at every point during the sermon delivery, clarify and explicate whose opinion is been expressed at any point of the sermon and from what source. In addition, the use of 'man' and the repetition of the name 'Jesus' twice, do not only add variety, but further clarify the participants in the text, especially with the inclusion of five utterances of Jesus that are reported within the text. The text could have been disintegrated or misunderstood without these appropriate references.

The use of ‘you’ to refer to the audience sometimes exophorically to anybody, and endophorically to the disciples, is peculiar to a religious discourse and quite significant to the accurate reference to the targeted audience. The use of ‘you’ specifically reflects cordiality, closeness and efficacy rather than, the more distant personal pronouns such as 'somebody', 'one', and 'someone' or, the third person singular pronouns ('he' or 'his'). Furthermore, ‘you’ refers to the disciples within Jesus’ utterances that are quoted directly, as an exophoric reference. This is quite cohesive when we consider the third person plural pronouns ‘they’ and ‘them’ that are used to refer to the disciples in the preacher’s statements as subject and object respectively. The two instances of the first person singular pronoun, ‘I’, that refer to Jesus in his quoted utterances above gives credence to the theme of the message, as well as reflects the authoritative position of Jesus in relation to his followers. It also shows the level of cordiality between Jesus and his disciples, and ultimately between him and all Christians; as reflected in the second to the last clause of the sample text above, ‘but I still love you’.

The use of the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ (in the subject form), ‘us’ (in the objective form) and, ‘our’ (in the possessive form) is not only cohesive but highly integrative. In text A, the preacher comments on the Bible reading thus:

That is the tall order that we were given, that as children of God, as the awesome creature that has created, that he has endowed us with certain gifts, everyone. But, the most important gift is the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who came to die for our sins. And when we say we have accepted Him into our lives. He wants us to become good stewards of God's grace that's in us. And the passage we read is explicit enough in terms of what we are meant to do and the way to summarize it to say we are required to live our lives as unto Him. We are required to live our lives not as to self, as we find in the first few verses of that chapter, as non-Christians do, living to self; using God's blessings and God's talent and whatever He has endowed us with to serve ourselves, to enjoy ourselves. That is not what is meant for us as Christians.

Generally speaking, the text extract above is saturated with other types of the personal pronoun for clarifying the place of each member of the audience, in view of God’s expectations from them. The different forms of the first person plural pronoun, ranging from the subjective ‘we’ (eight times), the objective ‘us’ (five times), the possessive ‘our’ (four times), to the reflective ‘ourselves’, (twice), are generously distributed in the above text to reflect the personal involvement in the subject matter,
'Being stewards of God's grace'. This is expedient according to Janvier (2002:17), “preaching changes lives when the preacher involves himself”. This is an effective tool for convincing the audience of the thrust of the message and the commitment of the preacher. In addition, the use of the first person pronouns (‘I’ and ‘we’), generally produce more forceful active sentences than the passive forms which are less communicative.

Thus, the various instances of personal reference relations have bridged the social distance and formality which is common to the more formal public speeches, thereby empowering the transformational purpose of a Christian Sermon.

Demonstrative References in the Sermons

The themes of Nigerian Christian sermons usually mirror the physical, social, as well as spiritual contexts of the sermons. The various implications of these sermons which require different approaches to handle as Christians, and as Nigerians are also highlighted. This is possible through the use of various forms of demonstrative references such as 'this' and 'that, to compare and emphasize arising issues. Nigerian Christian sermons employ demonstrative references to reflect the physical contexts, which in turn interpret the implications of the demonstrative. Consequently, majority of the demonstrative references used in the sermon texts are endophoric, except when general statements are made to specifically refer to items. Examples include the following from texts E and F:

The topic for today's service is 'ye are the salt of the world'. And to discuss this, Elisha will be our main character... Thus says the Lord, I have healed this water, there shall not be from thence anymore death and barren lands. That was a prayer and a prophecy. It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and be hidden under men. That is to say... (Text E)

Injury time, this is when people think God is late... it is also a time when people compromise their ... injury time, this is when a woman has an affair with another man and they call it outside experiment. (Text F)

In text E, all the underlined demonstrative references are endophoric. They clearly specify grammatical or lexical items that could have been confusing and usually operate anaphorically, except the second instance of ‘this’ is used though endophorically to refer to ‘waters’ in form of a determiner, and ‘thus’ which refers cataphorically though endophorically to God's utterance which follows. This is typical of the Biblical discourse to announce whatever God has to say, and it is an apt form of 'as follows'. The first instance of ‘this’ refers to the topic, ‘ye are the salt of the earth’, which when applied from the Bible story to the present Nigerian political, social and economic situation, is a challenge for the audience to be sweetening agents or positive influences while, 'this' in the second instance refers to the use of the bad water which is the present issue at stake.

Nigerian Christian sermons also use demonstrative references appositively as typical of conversational texts. This manner of using demonstrative references is characteristic of informal speeches to reflect the level of presupposition of ideas between speakers and listeners. In the process, such demonstrative references aid textuality by retaining the sermon’s focus through its repetition. For example in text F, the use of both instances of 'this' is not only cohesive but is responsible for the coherence of the text. Also, 'it' refers to 'injury time’ (the subject matter of the sermon), anaphorically and endophorically. Thus, the use of 'this' in both cases intensively emphasize the theme 'injury time'; and through the continual focus on the theme by both the preacher and audience, communicative competence is achieved.
1.2.3 Comparative References
As typical of the spoken discourse, Nigerian Christian sermons employ comparative references for accurately specifying issues and ideas by comparing them with similar ones, and for relating the sermons' or biblical context to that of the Nigerian society at large. Thus, the audience is able to easily apply their knowledge of their various social and cultural backgrounds to the interpretation of the sermons. In the following extract,

The first failed coup is that of Satan in heaven and the second failed coup is that of James and John. It was an attempted coup but it was aborted. Yes, a coup, because they know that earlier, after the first prediction when Jesus blessed Peter.

the underlined 'first' and 'second' refer to the two different coups in the Bible in the order of occurrence, and as determiners of ‘coup’, they serve as the basis for distinguishing one coup from other. Furthermore, the use of 'earlier' to refer to a time prior to the coup incident, in the last sentence expressly implies that there was a fore knowledge of a contrary plan for leadership which James and John had planned to thwart. Thus, the use of ‘earlier’ in the text creates texture as listeners want to find out or refer back to, the 'earlier' succession plan, and compare with the existing one the two plans are thereby establishing a comparative relationship of one to another. This relationship is also reflectively referred to with the last occurrence of 'that' anaphorically in order to enhance the explicitness of the text.

Also in text C, talking about the common sights of corpses on Nigerian highways the preacher says;

Before, those sights were not found on the highway, but it's common now. Armed robbers, you know, before, at least, they had a bit of caution, at least fear in them. But now, they write letter.

The comparative reference to times in the past with 'before' and the present time with 'now', adequately compares and differentiates between the present and the past socio-political contexts of the sermon text C. The comparison is heightened with the use of the contrasting conjunction 'but', in lines 1 and 3 before 'now'. The cohesive relations and more importantly, the texture of the above extract are reinforced by the reference of the singular neutral, 'it' and the personal pronoun, 'they', to refer to 'the sights' and 'the armed robbers' respectively.

Lastly, in text D as a whole, the preacher uses 'another thing' to introduce each of the highlights of the sermon. In summary, comparative references are not only used for comparing issues places, persons, objects, they also specify and distinguish between them for the sake of clarity and objective interpretations of texts.

1.3 Conjunctions in the Sermons
The different forms of conjunctions are employed in the data to link ideas together and show different semantic relationships between them for highly Christian sermon texts. Using sample stories from the Bible, real life situations and experiences from different social, economic, political and geographical backgrounds results in different kinds of linguistic complexities - mixtures of direct statements, bible quotations, and reported speeches. Therefore, apart from the use of accurate reference items discussed earlier, a preacher of Christian sermons in Nigeria needs to be well-equipped with appropriate linking devices to create an effective and convincing sermon text for his audience. In the multitude and diversity of these ideas, a Nigerian preacher needs to display a wide range of connectives to show harmonious, though varied relationships, amongst the different ideas. Quite significant in this respect, is the use of simple coordinators and subordinators to create various clause structures, ranging from the simple, the compound to the complex clause structures. More significantly, is the overuse of the simple coordinators which results in "weak syntax" (Crystal and Davy 1984:162) as well as the indiscriminate
use of 'and', even at the beginning of a sentence, which does not necessarily have to connect with the previous sentence.

In text D below, the underlined subordinating conjunctions and additives which also aid the direction of the preacher's thoughts, are used to create texture in the following extract.

When we live to the purpose of Christianity, we shall be able to fulfill the righteousness of God. And according to Matthew ..., we are able to see that Jesus and John the Baptist, they consented and, they were able to agree with each other. Without agreement, we cannot see the goodness of God.

The above extract exemplifies that being able to fulfill the righteousness of God is only made possible based on the subordinating clause, 'when we live to the purpose of Christianity'. This initial positioning of the subordinating clause is important for creating texture, as other clauses in the text are better interpreted based on it. Similarly in the second clause above, the second instance of the simple additive 'and', is useful for repeating 'the consent of Jesus and John' which is the same as their agreement, for the purpose of establishing and emphasizing 'the agreement' as the condition for "fulfilling the righteousness of God" or, "seeing the goodness of God.

Moreover, as typical of Nigerian speakers of English, the use of the last 'and' on line 4 is not necessary for linking the second clause to the first. Many Nigerian speakers of English, especially Yoruba speakers employ such additives so indiscriminately, to reflect continuity in the speakers’ thoughts or else, it could have been removed in more formal speeches. In the context of this sermon, the condition for the major theme, 'fulfilling God's righteousness' has been successfully passed across to the audience with the effective use of the conjunctions 'when' (a subordinating conjunction), and 'and',( a coordinating conjunction), to demonstrate the condition for fulfilling God’s righteousness from the Bible. Apart from the endophoric reference relations within the text through these relevant conjunctions, the sermon text is also connected to the Bible exophorically.

This kind of long, clumsy and run-on sentence connected through the generous use of the conjunction of reason, 'because' (occurs on three out of five lines) above, has earned the Yoruba speakers of English a name, 'Ngbati Ngbati'. 'Ngbati' means 'when' and in a typical Yoruba discussion, run-ons are common because of the use of 'Ngbati' ('when') as a conjunction which permits the addition of several thoughts as one. This is a syntactic interference which involves the transfer of the nature of connecting ideas and structures in 'Yoruba' sentences to the English language. The capability of a Yoruba speaker of English to add on information endlessly in this manner, makes it difficult for him to differentiate between a thought (or a sentence) and the other, or distinguish between the simple and the complex sentence. Another instance of congested use of conjunction include 'so that' in the following from text D.

John in his life time was able to make us know what it takes to serve the Lord, so we cannot be an empty Christian, so that we cannot be Christian of no purpose, so that we cannot be Christians of no mission on earth.

Finally, the use of conjunctive adjuncts in the following extracts from texts B,E and G is significant to the texture of the respective sermon texts.

If a man could ask to hire servants, it meant that he had enough money to do it. So, they were rich; they came from a rich background. (text B)

Ye are the salt of life but if the salt has lost its flavor, wherewith shall it be salted. That is to say, the sons of Prophet that came to complain to Elisha ... are supposed to be the salt of the world. (Text E)
You need knowledge, you need information. That is why it is very crucial for you that throughout this year, you don't miss a single holy Ghost service. (text G)

Thus, Nigerian preachers have a wide range of options in linking ideas and producing highly cohesive texts: 'so' in 1 is concluding the reason for the behaviour of both James and John while; 'that is to say' in 2 is re-stating the previous clause for better understanding; and ‘That is why’ in 3 is introducing the consequence of having to need knowledge and information as expressed in the previous sentence.

1.4 Substitutions in the Sermons

Substitutions in Nigerian Christian sermons are often used to create varieties and avoid being boring to the audience; to explicate certain key ideas to an audience of varied levels of linguistic competence; and integrate diverse, but related ideas in order to emphasize the main theme.

In the data for this study, nominal substitutions are used to clarify and elaborate important themes in an unambiguous manner, as well as bring about variety. They are mostly used appositively to achieve this purpose. For example, the preacher of text D says;

Today, Nigeria is in shambles because our leaders, our rulers, all that were in top places, all our ministers, all our directors....

All the underlined noun phrases above are one and the same with ‘our leaders'. In other words, they are all semantic equivalents of 'our leaders' and so, they are substitutes for ‘our leaders’ to create variety of ideas that can be understood by the various categories of listeners in the audience.

Also in text F below, ‘injury time’ is reflexively substituted with 'this' and 'it' in several parts of the text to re-echo the title and the varied implications of the said ‘time’ for the listening audience. An example is the following extract;

Injury time, this is the time husbands divorce their wives... Injury time, this is when people who begin the spirit are now ending... flesh Injury time, this is when people think God is late... This is the time a preacher makes his wife a punching bag... It is also a time when people compromise... it has become the time when the world becomes more churchly and the church becomes more worldly.

Similarly, ‘every good gift’ in the following extract from text G,

James 1:17, James 1:17. Every good gift and every perfect thing comes from the Father of light. Every good gift, fruit of the womb, Promotion, Deliverance, Success, Victory, Joy; every good thing comes from the almighty God. How do I get my share? I need revelation for that.

is substituted with ‘every perfect thing’, ‘fruit of the womb', 'promotion,' 'deliverance', 'success', 'victory' 'joy', or, 'every good thing that comes from... God’ as relevant equivalents for the diverse needs of the listening audience.

The various instances of nominal substitutes have made the sermon texts very explicit and less cumbersome to the listeners. The members of the various audience groups are able to focus on the highlights of the sermon texts through the emphasis and various substitutes, used for nominal elements. like, 'Christian', 'our rulers' and 'injury time' in texts E and D respectively to enhance effective communication of the different sermon texts and their peculiar imports.
Generally speaking, the verbal substitute which is usually 'do', functions as the head of a verbal group and so occupies the position of the lexical verb or the entire verbal group. However, since sermons are to be adequately understood when preached, verbal substitutes are rarely used except where they can be properly managed for communicative effectiveness. The use of verbal substitutes can prompt the listening audience to further enquiries and make them lose the track of the discussion in a sermon presentation. Therefore, the use of verbal substitutes in Christian sermons requires maximum attention from the listening audience for effective communication to take place. In the same manner that the nominal substitute, 'one' operates, the verbal substitute, 'do' typically associated with contrasts. The few examples from the data include: 'do' in the following extract and, the substituted verbal elements are further stated as clearly as possible.

We are required to live our lives not as to self, as we find in the first few verses of that chapter, as non-Christians do, living to self; using God's blessings and God's talent and, whatever he has endowed us with to serve ourselves, to enjoy ourselves. That is not what is meant for us as Christians. (Text A)

The underlined 'do' above substitutes for 'living to self,' and; 'using God's blessings and talent, and whatever He has endowed us with, to serve ourselves'. As Christians, the contrary is expected. Therefore, the verbal substitute 'do' is typically associated with contrasts in the same way that the nominal counterpart 'one' functions.

The data for this study displays a sharp contrast between the utilization of the verbal and the clausal form of substitutes. While the verbal variety rarely occurs, the clausal type is mostly used for creating texture in the sermon texts by connecting chunks of ideas and passages into one. Clausal substitutes compared with the verbal and nominal varieties in the select sermon texts are used more often for summarizing whole chunks of previous ideas, as precisely as possible and, for linking them with other ones, to emphasize important points. They usually explicate preponderant complex structures of reported speeches and, quotations or, direct statements, while the theme is sustained through. Such features are displayed in texts A and E in the sermon extracts discussed below.

Sell all what you have and pick your cross and follow me and then, you will have eternal life. He had revelation he knew what he must do, but did he do it? He knew what he must do but did he do it? (text A)

It's used here to substitute for the clause, "sell all what you have and pick your cross follow me" as aptly and cohesively as possible, which is also 'what he must do' which had been revealed to him and, he knew. This is a significant point which buttresses the theme, 'Destined for Greatness'. This process of substitution is a unique one because it is an instance of dual substitution for the clauses directly in the first instance and indirectly in the second instance.

Other instances of clausal substitution are the following from texts A,B, E, and H.

1. Some of them offered to be nailed to the cross for a few minutes so that they will have a feeling of what the Lord went through. You might say, it's funny practice today. It's not, (text A)
2. He will kill all the Romans, and then he will establish Israel as the ruling nation. That was the idea they had. (Text B)
3. There shall not be from thence any more death and barren land. That was a prayer and a prophecy; the prayer and prophecy confirming that there will be no more barrenness on the land. So, it is unto this day.(text E)
4. So, your daddy, physical and spiritual, can influence your destiny. That's revelation but, what is the real revelation .(Text H)
Ellipses in the Sermons

Ellipses are cohesive tools that function similarly as substitutes. As syntactic devices that occur in identical structural environments, ellipses can also be nominal, verbal or clausal like the substitute. In the various instances of the three forms of ellipses, the cohesive tool of omission is similarly useful for avoiding boring repetitions of nominal, clausal and verbal items in an utterance. In the discussion of the three categories of ellipses, when the omission is accurately done as indicated by the 'E' positions of the different sermon extracts used for illustration below, the message is consicely highlighted and emphasized, for easier retention by listeners. The location of (E) in any part of the text signifies an omission of a clause, a noun or verb phrase to reflect the implicit nature of the spoken language which is largely dependent on the immediate as well as the extra-linguistic contexts for relevant interpretation.

Nominal Ellipses

The use of nominal ellipses in the following extracts from the various sermon texts reflect a lot of assumptions and shared knowledge between the preacher(s) and the listening church members. These assumptions are usually recoverable from earlier sections in the text, and so repetitions are avoided for a more concise, yet cohesive presentation. However, they demonstrate surface endophoric and exophoric cohesive relations in the text and, enhance the underlying coherence which define the register of the text and interpret them as religious. Though formal, the sermon as a variety of the religious discourse distinctively relies on the mutual knowledge of the Bible, Christian beliefs and practices, and previous discussions in the sermon text to realize the accurate interactional nature of the texts. Examples include the omissions as indicated by the (E) positions in the following imperatives:

1. (E) Shake one hand or two (E) (Text G)
2. And because many will be offended, (E) will betray one another, and hate one another. (Text F)
The E position in 1 above is the assumed subject position of the imperative sentence which is obviously the listeners. The elliptical positions can be filled with 'everyone' or 'you...' in the conversational style. Though exophoric, the ellipted subject is based on the immediate context of the text and so, cohesive. In example 2 from text F, the elliptical position could have been filled with the underlined nominal items but, they were omitted. The omission is rather cohesive because the anaphoric nature of the ellipsis presupposes the omitted noun in the preceding sentence. Like substitution, ellipsis is endophoric and in most cases, anaphoric. For example, in the following sermon extract from text A

Another reaction is for one to bury his talents like the servant who was given one talent while others were given five (E), three (E), one (E). And in Nigeria today, there is much of that...

The E positions are cohesively presupposed by the nominal element 'talent'. Mentioned examples of nominal ellipsis can be located as used in texts B and G as follows:

Don't hold back anything, don't hold back (E)!
Empty yourself (E). You and your finances, you belong to God.
Use them for the service of God (text B).

The first elliptical position in text B presupposes 'you' and 'your finances' cataphorically; and 'anything', anaphorically. Similarly, 'water' can adequately fill-in for the elliptical positions in the extract:

Even the best coach in the world can only take a horse to the river, it cannot force a horse to drink (E). Tonight, by the special grace of God, I will bring you to the river of greatness. Will you drink (E)? Will you drink (E)?

(Text G).

Based on the sermon extract, 'Water' is presupposed by the elliptical position because contextually, the most likely drink from 'a river of greatness' that the horse is taken to is 'water' and not 'juice', 'milk' or, 'oil'; and the double occurrence of the nominal ellipsis in the repeated similar clauses is for the sake of emphasis.

It is quite significant to mention that the use of verbal ellipsis as cohesive tools in the data is rare as it is with the verbal substitution; while their clausal counterparts are extravagantly used for cohesion. In Halliday and Hasan's words, verbal ellipsis means, ellipsis within the verbal group (1984:167). Thus, verbal ellipsis occurs in the position of the lexical verb or the finite component of the verb phrase in order to avoid repeating the same action, whose negative form is being highlighted occasionally, to express cohesive relations and demonstrate coherence. An example is 'stop Him' in the following extract:

He has decided to favour someone here tonight. Nobody can stop Him. Lift your hands and say nobody can" (E) (Text G).

In this sermon extract, 'stop Him' is presupposed by the E position, as it is typical of short responses, in the conversational use of language, to the Preacher's commands. Another instance of such verbal ellipses includes the following:

Can you drink the cup?
They said, yes, we can (E).
And Jesus said" of course Yes, you will (E). Sure you will (E). (Text G)
The elliptical positions after 'can' and 'will', presuppose the verbal group 'drink the cup' which can be recovered right in the previous interrogative clause. Thus, the presupposed main verb, 'drink' and the complement 'the cup' in text G are instrumental to achieving endophoric cohesive relations and contributory to the texture of the sermon text. The first clause which is interrogative and constitutes the source of the ellipted items rhetorically elicits positive attitudes towards the theme of the sermon, 'destined to achieve greatness'. Although the affirmative response may not be given in the course of the presentation at all, it is understood within the immediate context of the sermon. This implicit trait of the verbal ellipsis as a cohesive tool is likely to be responsible for the scarce use in the data for this study.

Based on the sermon samples for this study, the clausal ellipsis is the most common type Ellipsis used in Nigerian Christian sermons. Clausal ellipses used are cohesive because they are most often endophoric and anaphoric in nature as explicated in the various instances within this data to reflect the knowledge of the sermon shared by the preacher and the listeners, and consequently enhance the level of comprehension and retention of the information of the text. Thus, some instances of clausal ellipsis within this data are used as rejoinders to a promise or a major thought. For example in text A, the following clausal omissions are maturely done for the production of highly consolidated texts:

1) You are not in this world by accident No! (E) No! (E) NO! (E)!
2) We do not need to suffer or to share in His suffering for the remission of our sins. No! (E)
3) The enemy was not there when God was taking a decision. NO! (E)

In the sermon extract from text A above, the three instances of 'NO' in (1) and one instance each in both (2) and (3), are used as rejoinders to basically presuppose the clauses that they succeed. The presupposed clauses could have been repeated after each 'NO' in the elliptical positions. However, for the sake of consolidating the text to show a high level of assumptions and shared ideas between preachers and their audience groups, the clauses are not repeated, thereby creating such cohesive relations within the sermon texts that can help the preachers avoid boring the audience.

The various forms of ellipsis ranging from the nominal, the verbal, to the clausal that have been illustrated from the samples of the different sermon texts to display the level of communicative dynamism within the sermon texts for adequate comprehension by such a heterogeneous audience. They are all omissions that can be retrieved from the clause(s). Thus, the various sermon texts reflect a very common characteristic of conversational language (Greenbaum and Gerald 2002:212).

**Conclusion**

This work has explored the concept of cohesion as a means of accounting for the textual function of the Christian sermons in Nigeria, with a focus on the grammatical cohesive properties of Christian sermons in Nigeria, in order to explicate the texture of the selected sermon texts for communicative efficacy. Cohesion has thus been enhanced by the redundancy created for the purpose of achieving communicative effectiveness and dynamism, needed to enhance comprehension in spite of the diverse heterogeneous audience groups. Thus, this study has highlighted the importance of the language of Christian sermons as a variety of English, Language in Nigeria that is capable of defining a Nigerian Christian religious speech community. In addition, the use of the SFG theory in this study has enabled an objective and comprehensive register analysis through relevant linguistic resources of grammatical cohesion of the data. Consequently, this study has emphasized the fact that Christian sermon texts in a second language situation are semantic units whose unity can be exhibited through the semantic relations of cohesion, within the various contexts (immediate and cultural) in which they occur.

Finally, having defined typical Nigerian Christian speech community with respect to the employment of cohesive ties in sermons, this study is expected to stimulate future researches that will explore the formal connectedness of other texts such as political, economic, dramatic, poetic and, discover the contributions of their textures to the communicative efficacy of the different registers within any mother tongue or second-language linguistic circumstance.
References


