

Pragmatic Analysis of Selected Christian Hymns

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Abstract

This paper explores the differences in the conveyance of intended meaning of messages of the selected Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal hymns. This is hinged on the assumption that the doctrinal disposition of any denomination is often expressed in the language of the hymns. The hymns are categorised on the premise that the content message in each hymn is easily identifiable with the denomination. The Pragmatic analysis of selected Christian hymns is carried out with the intent of showing further the similarities and dissimilarities in language use of the hymns. The theoretical frame work for the paper is derived from a synthesis of Austin's (1962) and Seale (1969) Speech Acts theory which holds that language users make meaningful sounds in order to produce actions. He distinguishes five types of acts performed through speech namely; verdictive, expositive, exercitives, commissive and behabitives. Hence, in line with Austin's Speech Acts, hymns perform various acts whose illocutionary forces and perlocutionary effects would make them more appealing. The study confirms that hymns like other discourse events have the advantage of performing simultaneously all the components of Speech Act in one utterance. Based on the data for analysis, the finding shows that Catholic hymns have one area of non-performance in language use, which is verdictive. It is only the hymns from the Protestant Church that have an index performance in all the five illocutionary acts. Therefore, Protestant hymns have the tendency to be more elaborate in content and lyrics. Pentecostal hymns rank least in the analysis because they have three areas of non-performance in language use, which include, verdictive, behabitive and expositive. This could mean that Pentecostal hymns are short, have less content, short and simple lyrics, and therefore more entertaining.

Keywords: *Austin, Christian, Hymns, Pragmatics, Speech Act*

Introduction

Christian hymns have evolved over the years by their composers to basically express belief, confess, explain, exhort and so on through the use of language. However, with the advent of modern musical instruments, hymns are used not only to communicate the truths of faith but also to defend, attract, stimulate interest, persuade, arouse desire, create conviction and get action.

To a great extent, the sociolinguistic features of the age in which a hymn is composed have a strong bearing on the language used. This is important because people usually interpret linguistic messages in accordance with their own experience, memory, personal associations, environment etc. Therefore, the social environment in which most of the Catholic hymns were composed is different from that of the Protestant, while the

Pentecostal hymns which are more recent, seem to suit the contemporary social environment with the entire angst disposition of the moment.

Besides this, when a hymn is put into music according to Lang (1989:444) it "...displays a dimension of meaning and feeling that mere words cannot do...." In other words, when hymns and songs are accompanied with music, the outcome heightens the effects of words, allowing them to be rendered with a projection and passion lacking in speech alone.

Most great hymns have a story. McClelland (2002:5) observes that:

The compositions of hymns were intensely personal, a reaction to some life experience, some have been born out of life's tragedy or trial. Others have been breathed out of a soul touched by the experience of a fleeting moment. Still others have been inspired by some lessons in scripture.

This paper intends to bring to mind the traditions of three Christian denominations; "Catholicism", "Protestantism" and "Pentecostalism" which lie hidden in the language of hymns. The choice of pragmatics as a linguistic variable for this study stems from the fact that an inquiry into the aspect of meaning of hymns, lies fully within the scope of pragmatics. According to Leech and Short (1981: 290), Pragmatics' major interest is in

that aspect of meaning which is elucidated from "the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered" and the recognition of "what is meant even when it isn't actually said..." based on the "shared assumptions and expectations" Yule (1996:127) of the participants. Thus, pragmatics as the study of language in use is so vast and it is "notoriously difficult to limit the field especially where pragmatics stops and the 'beyond' begin" Mey (2001: 3).

If understanding is the basis of communication through language, the study of what utterance means is very crucial to language study and should be made explicit as expressed in hymns.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this paper is to do a Pragmatic analysis of language use in selected Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations. Thus, the objectives are to:

- i. Investigate the differences or similarities in the language and content of hymns used in Catholics, Protestants and Pentecostal denominations;
- ii. To examine how the lyrics of the hymns in Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations lead their listeners to perform different and similar acts.

- iii. To explore the doctrinal dispositions expressed in the language of Christian hymns.
- iv. To bring to the fore the significant value of the language used in the hymns based on the context.

Research Questions

- (i) What are the significant differences and similarities in the content message of hymns used in Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations?
- (ii) How do the lyrics of the hymns in Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations lead their listeners to perform different or similar acts?
- (iii) What are the doctrinal dispositions expressed in the language of hymns?
- (iv) Is the significant value of the language used in the hymns based on the context?

The Concept of Pragmatics

Pragmatics as a linguistic field has its origin in the philosophy of language. Its philosophical roots can be traced back to works of philosophers such as Charles Morris, Rudolf Carnap, and Charles Peirce in the 1930s (Seigfried: 2006: 730/731. Cf. Popkin and Stroll). According to Huang (2014:4), “The publication of Stephen Levinson’s celebrated textbook *Pragmatics* (1983) systematised the

field and marked the coming of Pragmatics as a linguistic discipline in its own right”.

Levinson (1983:3) defines Pragmatics as “the study of the general cognitive principles involved in the retrieval of information from an utterance”. This definition does not have any place for interlocutor and perlocutor rather; it gives priority to retrieval of data. According to Wolfgang (1995:245)

The Pragmatic analysis of language can be understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from formal properties of words and construction, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered.

This definition emphatically states that meaning differs, it is also unconventional, depending on the users and context used, and it therefore means that meaning is not static. To support this definition, Mey (2001:41), states that Pragmatics “is the Science of language seen in relation to its users”.

Dijk (1992:46) is of the opinion that Pragmatics is concerned with certain social acts we accomplish when we speak in certain social contexts. He stresses that our intentions for such actions as well as the interpretations of the actions by other speech participants are based on a set of knowledge and beliefs. This definition gives consideration to shared

knowledge as a basis for the interpretation of utterances. Adegbija (1991:189) seems to be more exhaustive when he says Pragmatics may be seen as the study of language in particular communicative context or situation of necessity. This definition takes cognisance of the message being communicated or the speech act being performed, the participants involved, their intention, knowledge of the world and impact on the interaction; what they have taken for granted as part of the context (or the presuppositions); the deductions they make on the basis of the context; what is implied by what is said or left unsaid, the impact of the non-verbal aspect of interaction on meaning). The above definition, though lengthy is all encompassing.

The application of pragmatics in the analysis of hymns in this paper would be a useful tool in determining the language used in the hymns, meanings beyond the convention embedded in the lyrics of hymns, illocutions and inferred effect on the worshippers, as well as to present a dichotomy of the hymns of the various denominations.

The Christian Church

According to Stanford (2011), the story of the beginning of the Church is to be found in the pages of the New Testament. It is a highly organised society, with its beliefs set out in a

scientifically ordered theology, and its moral life similarly related to its beliefs, while an elaborate code of law safeguards the detail of its organisation and the procedure of its corporate life.

According to Whitehead (1996) the name “Catholic” comes from the Latin adjectives *Catholicas* which comes from another Greek word *Catholickos*. The Greek word is made up of two words “Kata” and “Holon” which means “Universal” or “genera”. Geographically it is said to have begun at Jerusalem as a small nucleus of disciples who shared faith in the resurrection of Jesus, their crucified leader, and it spread to countless cities of the Roman Empire and the world at large.

Protestantism was formed from the split with Roman Catholicism, 1517 to 1555 when a most formidable religious revolution occurred. Wittenberg, Geneva and London were its starting points with Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII as its leaders. Within a decade of Luther’s protest, all Germans were unanimous in their response of approval. Soon the movement spread on the part of Europe, Pettegree (1999). It was a matter of time before the development spread like wild fire across many parts.

Akuh (2003) posits that the term Pentecostal is a general name used to “describe the group and

sets which have traditionally placed emphasis on the receiving of certain gifts of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophesying and healing as a sign of the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The Pentecostal movement was inaugurated by Charles Fox Parham in the early 1900s at his Bethel Bible School in United State of America. Pentecostals also adopted the Protestant Bible-only approach tradition instituted by the Protestant reformer Martin Luther at Dresden in 1580. At its inception, Pentecostal movement tried to survive within Protestantism, but later they broke away from their parents churches and formed new sects. According to Otonko (2001), further countless splits and breakaways from these sects in the quest for independence and freedom occasioned the emergence of a wide array of world-wide loose network of Christian religious groups.

The Christian Hymn

A hymn is a song of praise. The word hymn is derived from the Greek word “hymons” which means “a song of praise”. A collection of hymns is known as hymnal or hymn book. According to Trimble (1956: 6),

The hymn-book of a Christian community, next to the Bible, is most generally read and much often read by all true Christians. It is assumed that it does, and certainly it ought, to contain the marrow and the fatness of the gospel and exercises of the

Christian faith, hope and love. It is the best substitute in the world of what is usually called a confession of faith, an exhibition of Christian doctrine and Christian instruction. It is, moreover, a sort of stereotyped preached gospel, and to unconverted persons it is the next thing to a sermon or exhortation on the great themes of Christian salvation.

In Christianity, hymns are directed to the one true God. A hymn remains a hymn even when it is not set to music (Eskew: 1980). The shortest definition of a hymn would thus be a “special poetry set to music and are addressed to God”, Berry (2002:239). Hymns are valuable aids to worship because they help to focus our attention on the goodness and glory of the Lord.

Review of Previous Studies

Ever before Crystal (1965) published his article on language and religion, language has been an important aspect of religion. Religion on its own can never be reached without the use of language. Pragmatics in the field of Linguistics as Mey (2001: 206-207) says,

...is where the action is... If you want to know what a particular religion is all about, you are of course entitled to ask what its beliefs are; but you will be more interested in, and enlightened by, the practices that are characteristic of such a religion.

The action of a religion is its Pragmatics. Therefore pragmatic attitude towards religion leads to the expectation that different cultures, and different historical periods will have different forms of religious expression because their goals, needs, and values are quite different.

The Pragmatics of the Delphic Hymns by Lattmann (2015) presents the sacred embassy that performed two hymns in Delphic during a so-called Pythais. The study proposes that although both poems are strikingly similar as to their contents-they are prayer to Apollo praising the same or comparable feats-, they are significantly different with regard to at least one remarkable aspect: whereas the “Paian and hyporchem” contains the description of an offering on an altar, the “Pian and prosodion” contains the description of Apollo’s voyage from Delos. The fact that both hymns deal with Apollo and his feats; the differences between hymns headings turns out to be the key to an adequate understanding of the poems and their pragmatic interrelation.

In the structure of selected Sabon Rai (New Life for All) Songs, Butari (2013) presents Sabon Rai (New Life for All) , a choir group mostly found in Protestant Churches in Northern Nigeria. He presents the song as a form of discourse, laying emphasis on the lyrics of the song, performance of the singers

and its effect on the audience. The ongoing study does not focus on performance. Meaning, effect and the idea of hymns as a form of discourse or communication are vital to this study.

Houben (2000) explores the relation of the “riddle hymn”, Rgveda with the Pravargya ritual. The paper shows that several other enigmatic verses yield a convincing interpretation when placed in the context of the Pravargya. This is similar to the ongoing paper because of the role of context. Context has a greater influence on the kind of hymns used in a particular denomination.

Pragmatics is viewed in all aspects of human existence. Mey (2001: 207) says “pragmatics tells us it’s all right to use language in various unconventional ways, as long as we know, as language users, what we’re doing”.

Speech Act Theory

The framework for analysis adopted for this paper is derived from a synthesis of Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The term Speech Act refers to the utterances made by a language user in order to perform certain actions. It is the combination of three simultaneous acts in an utterance namely:

- i. The Locutionary Acts (communicative words) in each of the hymns presented.

ii. The illocutionary Acts (The act performed by the word e.g., worship, request etc.) in each hymn.

iii. The Perlocutionary Acts (effect on the addressee)

In agreement with Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) the researcher has also adopted the five acts performed by speech to mean five acts performed via hymns as the procedure for data analysis. Austin (1962) suggests that it is possible to distinguish a number of broad classes of speech act, classified according to their illocutionary force as outlined below.

Verdictives: They are typified by the giving of a verdict as the name implies, by a jury, arbitrator, an umpire. For instance, an estimate, reckoning or appraisal. It is essentially giving a finding as to something; fact or value.

Exercitives: They are the exercising of powers, rights or influence. They are exemplified by ordering, voting, appointing, urging, advising, warning, etc. An exercitive is also the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it.

Commissives: The whole point of a commissive is to commit the speaker to a certain course of action. “They commit you to doing something, but include also declarations

or announcement of intention, which are not promises, and also rather vague things which we may call espousal, as for example, siding with.” Austin (1962:152) other examples are: covenant, contract, undertake, propose to, guarantee, vow, intend, swear, declare for and so on.

Behabitives: Bahabitives have to do with attitudes and social behaviour. It also includes the notion of reaction to other people’s behaviour and fortunes and expressions of attitudes to someone else’s past conduct or imminent conduct. Examples are: apologizing, congratulating, commending, condoling, cursing and challenging.

Expositive: They are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of users and of references. Examples are I argue, I concede, I reply, I illustrate, I assume, I postulate, I cite, I repeat that, I mention that, etc.

The communication which is expressed in hymns, is made concrete by the illocutionary force (verdictive, exercitive, commissive, behabitives and expositive) of the utterance, which influence and commit the worshippers to perform certain action such as repentance, forgiveness, supplication and many others.

Methodology

The sources of data for analysis are the actual original English version of the hymns of Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations. The primary source of data for the research are the lyrics of hymns as contained in the various hymn books of Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations. A total of nine hymns were selected (three from each of the denominations) were selected from the following hymn book: Catholic Hymn Book, Catholic Missal, Baptist Hymnal and Sacred Songs of Solomon (SSS). The hymns include Catholic; *Sweet Sacrament Divine, Exulted and We Offer Thee the Holy Mass*; Protestant; *How Great Thou Art, A Mighty Fortress and Stand Up for Jesus*; Pentecostal; *Have Faith in God, Pentecostal Power and Blessed Assurance*.

Because hymns contain sentences that have meaning (locutionary) with a particular force (illocutionary), in order to achieve a certain effect on the listener or singer (perlocutionary), the hymns are also analysed by the illocutionary force; verdictive, exercitive, commissive, behabitives and expositive.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The locutionary are presented. Their illocutionary acts are analysed based on the contexts of use. Their anticipated perlocutionary effects are inferred as could be seen in the tables below. These tables highlight data sourced and analysed based on the occurrences of five speech acts: Verdictive, Exercitive, Commissive, Behabitives and Expositive proposed as performed by the content message in the lyrics of the selected hymns to determine their pragmatic significance.

Table 1. Showing the Illocutionary Force of Catholic Hymns

	Hymn	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
1.	Sweet Sacrament Divine, Sweet Sacrament of Rest, Sweet Sacrament of Peace. Jesus, to you our voice we raise	Expositive (Praises)	The first effect is security and shelter which is what the “home” indicated in the hymn gives. This “earthly home” refers to the tabernacle. Another effect would be peace and calm when at last the ocean is quiet and restless yearnings cease completely. Lastly, there is also the effect

			of understanding of true joy symbolized by light which dispels darkness.
	Save us for still the tempest rave; save, lest we sink beneath the waves.	Exercitives (urging)	Mercy (from God), deliverance
	Therein your ear, all trustfully we tell our tale of misery.	Exercitives (urging)	Secure attention and sympathy from God; deliverance from misery and pain.
	Sweet light, so shine on us, we pray	Exercitives (urging)	Release of blessings from above
2.		Illocutionary Act	Perlocutionary Act
	Rejoice O Mother Church! Exult in glory. Christ has risen.	Commissive (declare)	Joy, gratitude, praise.
	Lift up your heart.	Exercitive (ordering)	Lifting up the heart
	We lift them up the Lord	Commissive (giving)	Lifting up of the heart
	That with full hearts, minds and voices we should praise the unseen God	Behabitives (singing)	Praise, thanking
3.		Illocutionary Act	Perlocutionary Act
	We offer thee the Holy Mass	Commissive (declare)	The first instance of perlocutionary act that could be seen is in the second stanza expressed as the gift of unmerited favour and forgiveness. The indicative words are grace and pardon. Consequently life is transformed as a further illustration of perlocutionary act in the hymn.

			The exact words of the hymn reads 'To change the life that we have led'.
	We pray for pardon and for grace	Exercitive (urging)	God may grant pardon and grace
	Thee our Creator to adore	Commissive (declare)	Adoration
	To thank thee for thy gracious gift	Behabitives (commending)	Thanksgiving
	We bring our gifts, we bring our hearts.	Commissive (vow)	Gratitude, thanksgiving
	O Lord receive them, bless them all	Exercitive (urging)	Acceptance, plea

Table 2. Showing the Illocutionary Force of Protestant Hymns

		Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
1	Sing my soul	Exercitive (ordering)	The perlocutionary acts in the hymn are expressed in the feelings of excitement. Thus, the language used there is persuasive. 'What joy shall fill my heart'. The effect of this hymn lies with the fact that God is a great artist, and all He made is beautiful, without the advice or strength of any human person. It is therefore natural that when one is praised for doing good he is encouraged to continue the good works.
	How great thou art	Commissive (declaration)	Praise, gratitude
	I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder	Expositive	Confirmation of God's greatness and manifestation
	When through the woods, and forest glades I wonder	Expositive	

	I hear the birds sings sweetly in the trees	Expositive	Relevance and show of the supremacy of God
	When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur	Expositive	Praise
	When I think that God, His son not sparing	Expositive	Trinity, praise
	I shall bow in humble adoration	Expositive	Reverence, respect, submission to God
	And then proclaim my God how great thou art.	Commissive (declare)	Testifying God's greatness and goodness
2	A mighty Fortress	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Act
	A mighty fortress is our God	Verdictive (reckoning)	In the proper context of the hymn, the lyrics serve to prop up hearts, failing faith in the midst of great danger, persecution and violent opposition. Thus lyrics of hymn comforts and reassures. And this will have the effect of encouraging endurance as the perlocutionary act performed in the hymn. This effect is expressed in the third stanza as 'His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure.'
	His craft and power are great	Verdictive (reckoning)	Testimony of God's marvelous needs
	We will not fear	Commissive (declare)	Faith and courage
	For God had willed	Exercitive (warning)	God's abundant promises
	We tremble not him	Commissive (declare)	God is the savior
	His rage we can endure	Behabitive (challenging)	Mercy from God

3	Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
	Stand up for Jesus	Exercitive (ordering)	The perlocutionary acts that could be seen are the feelings of confidence, courage, strength, determination, and tenacity. Another perlocutionary act that is felt from the lyrics of the hymn is striving and never giving up attitude. The overall language use here could be said to inspiring and exciting. God is the addressee who will lead His army <i>from victory unto victory</i> .
	Lift high his royal banner	Exercitive (ordering)	Proclamation of his reign, confidence, courage
	Till every foe is vanquished	Exercitive (advising)	Victory, salvation
	And Christ is Lord indeed	Commissive (declare)	Supremacy of God
	The trumpet call obey	Behabitive (commending)	Response to the call of God, service to God
	Forth to the might conflict	Exercitive (urging)	Secure attention
	Stand in his strength alone	Exercitive (warning)	Reconciliation, faith,
	Put on the gospel amour	Exercitive (advising)	Faith,
	Watching onto prayer	Exercitive (advising)	Release of blessing from above

Table 3. Showing the Illocutionary Force of Pentecostal Hymns

	Have faith in God	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
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1	Have faith in God	Exercitve (urging)	The lyrics of hymn inspire the feelings of certainty in divine provision. This is the main effect of the hymn. There is also the effect of patient waiting as a result of what is promised. There is again, the perlocutionary act of anticipation. And there could also be the feeling of anxiety.
	Your earnest plea he will never forget	Commissive (vowing)	Plea, release of blessing from heaven
	He will answer yet	Commissive (vowing)	God's blessings, mercy from God
	He cannot fail, he must prevail	Commissive (vowing)	Supremacy of God, praise
	Cast all your cares on Him	Exercitive (advising)	Depending on God for blessings
	And leave them there	Exercitive (advising)	Depending on God for blessings, secure attention
	He provides for his own	Commissive (guaranteeing)	Release of blessings from heaven
2	Pentecostal Power	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
	Descend on us today	Exercitive (urging)	The perlocutionary acts that would be felt as a result of the illocutionaries of the hymn will include the feelings of anticipation. It would inspire patience and confidence. Other perlocutionary effects are believing, trusting and relying on something or someone.
	Come, take possession of thine own and never depart	Exercitive (urging)	Trust and reliance on God
	O Lord, our faiths renew!	Exercitive (urging)	Faith, courage
	O Lord, send the old-time power the Pentecost power	Exercitive (urging)	Calling on the holy spirit (Pentecost power)

	And will not let thee to until the blessing we receive.	Commissive (vowing)	Release of blessings, thanksgiving, gratitude
3	Blessed Assurance		Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
	Jesus is mine	Commissive (declare)	The perlocutionary effects that could be inferred directly from the above identified illocutionary acts are the feelings of expectancy, certainty fearlessness and fulfillment.
	Oh what a foretaste of glory divine	Commissive (declare)	Happiness, love of God
	Praising my Saviour all the day long	Commissive (declare)	Praise, joy
	Perfect submission, perfect delight	Commissive (declare)	Submission, reverence
	I in my Saviour am happy and blest	Commissive (declare)	Blessing, joy, peace
	Watching and waiting	Commissive (declare)	Free from sins and holiness
	Looking above	Commissive (declare)	Hoping in God
	Filled with his goodness, lost in His love.	Commissive (declare)	Abundance of God's blessings, joy

Table 4. Summary Result of the Illocutionary Force of Christian Hymns

Christian Hymns	Verdictives	Exercitives	Commissives	Behabitives	Expositives
Catholic Hymns	0	6	5	2	1
Protestant Hymns	2	9	5	2	5
Pentecostal Hymns	0	7	13	0	0

Findings and Discussions

Following a content analysis of the pragmatic features of the message contents in the selected

hymns, the following are the findings of the study:

- i. It is found that differences exist in language use and content message that express expositive and commissive acts. Therefore different acts are performed by different hymns with regard to the origin and use. According to this study, the Protestant hymns have the highest expositives. It can also be inferred that protestant hymns have more power to inform and educate.
- ii. The findings of this paper also indicate that the lyrics of the hymns of Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations manifest extensive use of persuasion, urging, ordering, reckoning, commanding and declarative language, as seen in the hymn blessed Assurance. These lyrics, with the use of such forms or language as shown spur or instigate the users or listeners to perform diverse or similar acts through the meanings conveyed by the words. One can therefore say that the literal meaning these words convey differ from the underlying or deeper meaning they connote. Arguably, it is the opinion of this researcher that the hymns of these denominations have both connotative and denotative meanings. In sum, different or similar acts are performed by the listeners through language. Again, interpretations also vary accordingly. Consider the hymn 'Stand up! Stand up for Jesus'. The connotative meaning of this hymn is quite beyond the physical act of standing. The hymn is a call to identify and be firm in Jesus. It connotes the act of striving and never giving up.
- iii. Doctrinal dispositions are expressed in the language of the hymns of the three denominations. From The Catholic hymns, the use of "Sweet Sacrament", 'Holy Mass', "Mother Church" etc are all attributed to Catholics. For instance, Catholics claim that there are seven Sacraments in the Church and the one that is expressed in one of the hymns analysed is the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. This is referred to as "Sweet Sacrament". In addition Catholics also claim that the "Holy Mass" is exclusively for Catholics.

- However, other denominations such as Pentecostals and Protestants perform Church “Service” on the holy day of worship. Furthermore, Protestant hymns lay more emphasis on “God” other than any other name; for instance, the use of “stand in HIS strength alone” in one of the hymns. In the hymn “Pentecostal Power”, one can say that the Pentecostal denomination believe so much in the activities of the Holy Spirit.
- iv. The need for the hymns in consideration to suit the doctrinal and theological predisposition of the denominations is largely responsible for the difference in the content message of hymns and the different percentage scored in relation to the different speech acts performed in the lyrics of the hymns. The findings also show that the collective thoughts, moods, emotions and experiences of each denomination are captured and conveyed/communicated easily and even far better in hymns than in mere prose.
- v. Based on the analysis, it can be inferred that different shades or interpretations of meanings are attributed by the various acts performed by the hymns. For example, Pentecostal hymns have three inactive areas of language use (verdictive, behabitve and expositive) therefore it can be inferred that Pentecostal hymns have less content, short and simple lyrics and are more entertaining.
- vi. Protestant hymns have more excercitive acts in language compared with Catholic and Pentecostal hymns. Therefore the language used in protestant hymns could be said have more powers, rights or influence. The analysis shows that Protestant hymns have the highest frequency count in expressing verdictive acts. This could possibly imply that protestant hymns give verdict while Catholic and Pentecostal hymns do not.
- vii. The expositive acts are expressed more in the lyrics of Protestant hymns in comparison with the Catholic and Pentecostal hymns. It can be inferred that they convey doctrinal teaching of the Church to

the audience more, compared with the hymns of Catholic and Pentecostal.

Conclusion

From the analysis of language use in the Christian hymns, this paper concludes that Christian hymns perform speech acts. This is in agreement with Austin (1962) and Searle's

(1969). Although the hymns analysed are mutually intelligible, they however, show notable differences and similarities in language use. Despite the differences in language use, this study concludes that the hymns are mutually intelligible and meaningful to be recognized as Christian hymns.

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