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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Exploring Rhetorical Strategies in Selected Sermons of Chris Oyakhilome

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper is predicated on the assumption that the massive followership and tremendous influence which modern-day Pentecostal church preachers enjoy could be traced to their language skills. This paper explored the rhetorical strategies that are significant in the language choices of Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy. The task of persuading and convincing a congregation with the power of words to positively influence their beliefs and attitudes is not an easy one. In order to unravel the mystery behind the selected preacher's success, two sermons were purposively selected from the preacher's numerous sermons. These electronically recorded sermons were transcribed into written form, vertically represented in numbered lines for ease of reference; The study anchored on Aristotle's "Theory of Rhetoric" because of the assumptions of what constitutes an effective speech (sermon) presentation; since sermon is a kind of speech event. The paper, therefore, discovered that the preacher is conscious of the impact of careful language choice in an effort to achieve effective preaching as well as influence and affect his congregation.

**KEYWORDS**

Rhetoric, preaching, pentecostalism, discourse, and sermon

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**1. Introduction**

Among the priorities of any professional/religious preacher is the successful communication of messages to the target congregation. The preacher succeeds by choosing appropriate rhetorical strategies from the repertoire of the speech community for the expression of religious beliefs and practices. Such choice enables him or her to rightly get at the people's problems or needs, their emotions, impart morals targeted at humanizing them, and most importantly, sustain their interests. This paper hinges on an exploration of rhetorical strategies employed in the selected sermons delivered by Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy. Preaching sermons effectively inheres from the preacher's particular preaching strategies to ensure a change and total conversion, considering the generation of worshipers, whose minds have been beclouded with all sorts of evil thoughts and acts that now make people live in fear.

The language of religion is rhetorical in nature and always aims at persuading and influencing a congregation to act in the desired way. Religious sermons provide social, political, and moral education in society. Such roles are achieved through the effective use of language. In other words, the success of such purposes lies in the sermon- preacher's ability to use language rhetorically, appropriately, coherently, and flexibly, drawing from the repertoire of the chosen language.

In relation to using language appropriately, Okeke (2019) cites George Yule (1996), who explicates that one can be grammatically competent when one uses words and structures in one's language accurately. She agrees that ability to use language appropriately means that we can interpret or produce language appropriately in order to give appropriate messages and feedback, and this is a sociolinguistic competence. Okeke asserts, in the manner of Yule, that a user of language knows when and where to use language. Hence, using language flexibly implies that the user has strategic competence such that he can organize a message effectively and compensate via strategies for any difficulties in what he intends to express.

This study, therefore, identified a linguistic problem that borders on the difficulty of choosing appropriate rhetorical strategies that can penetrate the corrupt hearts of the congregation and convince them through persuasion. Yes, there is power in using words to do things, particularly in preaching sermons; yet, in this situation, the preacher faces the problem of employing the right rhetorical proofs in delivering his sermons since part of his aims include the conversion of souls, promotion and development of the human essence and attracting much followership than other competing churches. Thus, two of Chris Oyakhilome's recorded sermons were purposively selected, played, transcribed, and presented in vertical lines for ease of referencing during the descriptive analysis.

## **2. Brief Review of Relevant Scholarship**

### **2.1.1 Language**

The concept of language has, over the years, attracted the attention of linguists of different persuasions. That we could communicate our ideas, emotions, desires, thoughts, and intentions is because we possess language. This tells why Fromkin et al. (2003) assert that "the possession of language, perhaps more than any other attribute, distinguishes humans from any other animals" (2). Meanwhile, Algeo and Pyles (2004) conceive language as "a system of conventional vocal signs by which human beings communicate" (2). This implies that language is primarily vocal and a deliberate act used by humans to communicate their thoughts and purposes. Anyanwu (2002), on his part, believes that language is "a system composed of symbols, signs and vocal acts arbitrarily created and conventionally used in communication" (4). This view encapsulates all the divergent perceptions about the phenomenon of language since it embodies some unique characteristics of language. Language is therefore conventional (being generally accepted), systematic (having internal plans or principles governing its use), habitual (having a settled practice which cannot easily be given up), a vocal behaviour (indicating that voice is used in language realisation), and a means of communication (indicating that we use language to transmit our ideas and thoughts).

### **2.1.2 Religion**

Religion is what brings man into a relationship with his creator. Kottak (2004), in his overview, asserts that religion is "a cultural universal which consists of beliefs and behavior concerned with supernatural beings, powers, and forces" (579). Thus, he associates religion with social divisions, just like ethnicity or language, within and between societies and nations (e.g., Nigeria). This reveals that religion has an intricate relationship with a people's culture, which embodies rules that guide their beliefs and behaviour.

Adibe (2008), in his own view, cites Alexander et al., who see religion as "any system of faith and worship. A belief binding the spiritual nature of man to a supernatural being, as involving a feeling of dependency and responsibility, together with the feeling and practices that naturally flow from such a belief" (14). Meanwhile, Uka (1994) observes that religion is a reality in human experience which describes man's relationship with the supernatural world or "Ultimate Reality," generally referred to as God. He distinguishes "religion" from a 'religion' and explains that while religion seeks to answer questions that border on the meaning of human existence, its value, its preservation, and its promotion, a "religion" refers to what a particular religious group does or believes (18 – 19). The understanding here is that generally, the type of language used by a particular group will determine what they perceive about their relationship with God and what meaning and value they ascribe to their existence.

In view of the above, Nwachukwu (2012) believes that religion is a lived awareness of man's relationship with God. He also agrees that religion is "the belief in an everlasting God that is, in a Divine mind and will, ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind" (55). Thus, Nwachukwu asserts that religion touches the man and God and reasons that there cannot be a religion if God and man are not involved. Otherwise, it will not be worthy of the name – 'religion' (55). These views imply that man uses religion to enter into communion with God and the Angelic world.

Today, a mention of the word religion conjures up in our minds such religions as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Shintanism, Confucianism, African Traditional Religion (ATR), and the like (Uka, 1994). This study, however, concerns itself with Christianity which belongs to people who believe in the Trinity and celebrate Holy Communion, which conditions their way of interpreting reality or belief system.

Pentecostalism represents a fast-expanding new trend of Christianity. Uduk (2013) sees it as "the most complicated and socially visible dimension of religion in Africa because, among other things, it is still evolving and changing rapidly" (64). Among the Churches in this category is Christ Embassy, led by Chris Oyakhilome and which forms the focus of this study.

### **2.1.3 Sermon**

The sermon is a crucial concept that forms the crux of this research and requires a brief review in order to situate it in its proper context. In any Christian service, particularly Sunday service, the sermon is regarded as the most important feature, and although the preacher proclaims that the Holy Spirit speaks through him/her, the choice of words is very important for effective communication. Thus, Esimaje (2012) sees sermon as "a special discourse event, having their own lexes and discourse structure"

(31). He explains that communicants must necessarily adopt certain lexis and follow its pattern of discourse for the effectiveness of communication where specific purposes are achieved. As regards the choice of words, Esimaje expresses that “the type and usage of words in sermons are indexical of their contexts, since each context selects its lexis in accordance with the needs of the discourse community” (31).

The sermon is a genre of a religious discourse delivered in public, usually by a clergyman as a part of worship service. Sermon preachers can be seen as symbols of moral examples to their congregation, conduct that has been established by social and religious values. Hence, a sermon can be characterized as a hortatory discourse – a speech or writing that urges or commands an audience to follow (or not follow) a particular desired course of action. It is a discourse that aims at persuading the addressee to fulfill commands that are given in the discourse ([www.sil.org/linguistics/glossary](http://www.sil.org/linguistics/glossary)). The sermon preacher, like a pentecostal preacher, has more ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’ to discuss a particularly problematic issue to which he is equally capable of proffering solutions. He achieves this by informing, stimulating, encouraging, or discouraging them, using different rhetorical support (i.e., tools for persuasion).

#### **2.1.4 Preaching and Interpretation of Meaning in Discourse**

Preaching sermons effectively inheres to one’s particular preaching style. Such style may manifest in a preacher’s use of authentic language that reveals God’s or Christ’s presence and calls the congregation into responsible, authentic existence. This implies that the preacher has a shared knowledge and mutual relationship with his congregation.

Preaching of Christian sermon involves what is said and how it is being said. Essentially, this art can appropriately be performed by someone who is ordained to do so and in whom such features as eloquence, effective speaking, persuasive ability, and power manifest. Interpretation of meanings in discourse is therefore very necessary for a better understanding of messages delivered in sermons. In the theory of preaching, interest is on the careful and deliberate interpretation of texts. Littlejohn and Foss (2008), however, observe that today, virtually any text is open to interpretation - whether the author is alive or not - the text itself, they say, speaks to us; it has meanings of its own apart from the author’s intended meaning. To them, the major challenge is to ascertain the meanings of the text.

In view of the above, *texts* are any artifacts that can be examined and interpreted. Thus, Littlejohn and Foss see a text as “Essentially a recording of an event that has taken place at some time in the past - whether written, electronic...and other records” (132 - 133). Considering the question of how we interpret a message that is no longer part of an actual live event (as in sermon) makes Littlejohn and Foss (2008) agree that the process of the hermeneutic circle can be applied. Using the interpretation of the Bible as an example, they explain that the hermeneutic circle involves interpreting a text by going from general to specific. That is, relating it to what is already understood, looking for unaccounted - details in the scripture, modifying the original interpretation, re-examining text, and so on. In this way, they believe that there exists a dialogue between the meanings in the text and present-day assumptions and understanding.

At this juncture, it is certain that meaning is the crux of the matter. Yet, meaning presents a problem of understanding to language scholars as some see it as either a vague or an ambiguous term. Akpan (2012) observes that “In linguistics, despite the problems associated with it, interpretation of utterances of various sizes - the word, phrase, clause, sentence, and text - continues to be the main preoccupation. The fact remains that there is usually great difficulty in the interpretation of utterances and their meanings. Hence, Mey (2001) thinks that “What a person is saying, and what this person *means* by what he or she says, are clearly an exclusive concern, not to say privilege, of that person; hence semantic ‘rules’ only make sense outside of actual language use... On the other hand, it remains true that as a rule, the person who moves too far away from the normal meaning of the words will have difficulties in being understood...” (68).

However, Lobner (2002) advises that for a content word, the description of its meaning must be specific enough to distinguish it from all other words with different meanings. He expresses that the description of a word must be general enough to cover all cases in which it could be used. To him, since one usually imagines a particular context when one tries to think of a word and its meaning, one tends to take the meaning too specifically, disregarding other cases in which the words, phrases, and sentences, taken out of any particular context, in their general sense, constitute the level of meaning he calls *expression meaning* (5).

Having examined the task of preaching and interpretation of meaning, it becomes clear that applying a linguistic approach such as the theory of rhetoric will go a long way to enhancing meaning interpretation of select sermons by Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy in this study. This review particularly reveals that the meaning of a word or sentence depends on its use in contexts of situation, how it is being said and to whom it is being addressed. The ability to attend to the context of words and sentences essentially facilitates our recognition of the context of meaning.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.2.1 The Theory of Rhetoric**

The nature of this study allows the adoption of rhetorical theory. Rhetoric is a communication theory originally developed by Aristotle as a means of challenging a number of prevailing assumptions about what constitutes an effective speech presentation. By this theory, Aristotle believes that the communication process is dynamic; the communication process is not a single or linear process. This implies that communicating and presenting information is not just sending a static message and hoping the audience reads or listens; the process is considerably more dynamic.

The Aristotelian theory is guided by two assumptions: one is that effective public speakers must consider their audience. This assumption underscores the definition of communication; communication is a transactional process. Within a public speaking context, Aristotle suggests that the speaker–audience relationship must be acknowledged. According to him, speakers should not construct or deliver their speeches without considering their audience. Speakers should, in a sense, become audience-centered. He believes that a speaker should try to know enough about his/her audience to be certain of the information they may find most relevant. Aristotle advises that the speaker should be able to build a strong rapport with his/her audience to get them to accept information they may have been originally inclined to disregard.

The Aristotelian theory also reveals that knowing the best method to reach your audience means a speaker must engage in ‘audience analysis,’ which is the process of evaluating an audience and its background (such as sex, age, educational level, and so forth) and tailoring one’s speech so that listeners respond as the speaker hopes they will. He felt that audience is crucial to a speaker’s ultimate effectiveness. Aristotle observes that of all the three elements in speech-making: speaker, subject, and person addressed – it is the last one, the hearer, which determines the speech’s end and objective.

The second assumption underlying Aristotle’s theory pertains to what speakers do in their speech preparation. He believes that effective public speakers (like the clergy) utilize a number of proofs in their presentations. Aristotle’s proofs refer to the means of persuasion, and, for him, three proofs exist: ethos, pathos, and logos. In his explanation, ethos refers to the perceived character, intelligence, and goodwill of the speaker as they become revealed through his/her speech. He believes that the speaker can be influenced by the audience in much the same way that the audience can be influenced by the speaker. In this regard, Aristotle felt that a speech by a trustworthy individual was more persuasive than a speech by an individual whose trust was in question.

The second rhetorical proof, logos, is what Aristotle uses to refer to the logical proof that speakers employ; their arguments and rationalisations. For him, logos involve using a number of practices, including using logical claims and clear language. Finally, Aristotle explains that pathos pertains to the emotions that are drawn out of listeners. He argues that listeners become the instruments of proof when emotion is stirred in them; hence they judge differently when they are influenced by joy, pain, hatred, or fear (The Rhetoric Theory, [www.ign.com](http://www.ign.com)).

The rhetor always aims at persuading others to change their positions (beliefs) and act in the desired manner. In other words, the speaker must have the skills to speak effectively for effective communication to take place. So far, the above observations show that rhetoric is a good component of communication, especially in religious parlance where the preacher (or rhetor) must employ all available rhetorical support in order to succeed in persuading his target audience.

### **3. Presentation and Analysis of Data Showing:**

#### **3.1 Partnership and Exclusiveness (Pronoun of Non-Specificity)**

This study observes that Pastor Chris Oyahkilome as a Pentecostal preacher, makes lexical choices of personal pronouns ranging from first to third persons and sometimes indefinite pronouns in order to achieve discourse partition in the form of inclusion or partnership and exclusion. To achieve a logical proof, which is part of a rhetorical strategy, he makes himself a partner as he connects with the congregation through the use of the first-person plural pronoun (we) or an indefinite pronoun (everyone). Exclusiveness is what he achieves as he tends to segregate and become judgmental through the use of “you” or “those of you” (non-specificity). Such expressions indicate the preacher’s ability to employ logos in proving his rationalisations. The congregation who, on their part, perceive the preacher’s intelligence and level of spirituality and trustworthiness are positively influenced to living a “prayerful life” in order to attain a “graceful life.” Thus, he uses the second-person pronoun “you,” bearing no particular person in mind while excluding himself.

The major function of pronouns is to replace a noun in order to avoid repetition and monotony. Thus, every pronoun should have a noun that it is replacing or refers to specifically. However, a pronoun could be made to refer non-specifically, especially in the use of inclusive “everyone,” “us,” and “we” to maintain ideological neutrality. Let us take some instances from the sermons: *A Lesson from Lot* referred to here as TEXT I and *Stop the Wickedness*, referred to as TEXT II for illustrations.

Chris Oyakhilome, in his sermon entitled *A Lesson from Lot*, tries to be non-specific in making references as in the excerpts below:

- i. *Some people* are always talking; *they're* always talking until *they* talk themselves to sleep ... The only time *they're* not talking is when *they're* sleeping or when *they're* eating ... And *some of them* will still talk when *they're* eating (T. I: 5-6; 7-8).
- ii. How old is *he*? Forty-five (Line 31)

From the above excerpts, it is evident that there is an established connection (cohesive tie) among these elements: *some people*, *they*, *some of them*, and *he*. It is this established link that holds the trend of thought, understanding, and interpretation of the message by the congregation. Thus, the preacher consistently avoids being specific in his references but rather adopts logoi (logical proof and rationalisation) in order to achieve politeness and neutrality. See also the use of this strategy in line 18:

- iii. "I tell *some people*, how come *you* know the names of all the footballers in the world; *you* don't know the names of the disciples of Jesus?" (T. I: 18)

The referential use of the pronoun "he" in line 31 in excerpt ii above, however, raises an ambiguity since the pronoun "he" cannot be said to be anaphorically referring to "you" (line 18), "they," "some people," "some of them" previously identified. This is because "he" cannot collocate in number with these items. It, therefore, requires an exophoric interpretation of the context of the sermon where the previous reference pattern is the non-specific or the generalized form. Thus, if "he" in line 31 is taken to have a non-specific or generalized reference, it, therefore, implies that it operates in the same form as the previous references. The essence of non-specificity is to avoid hurting the congregation's emotions. Exophorically, the preacher interchanges the use of second and third-person pronouns to show that he was not referring to anyone in particular. This effect could also be created with the use of lexical qualifiers outside pronoun, as can be seen in the use of "some people" in line 18 (in excerpt iii above).

Notably, it is not in all cases that the pronouns are used inclusively in the sermons. Based on ideological interest, they are also used inside outclass or inclusion and exclusion relationship. Consider the use of "I," "we," "us," "they," and "you" in the excerpts below:

- i. ... I'm talking about the level of wickedness... how could a woman carry a baby stuffed with drugs? Twisted minds! It's important that *each one of us* would come to terms with reality... (T. II: 432-434).
- ii. *They* know all the actors and actresses of Hollywood; *they* can give you all their names and their films; but *they* don't know anything about the Apostles, and I'm not talking about others, I'm talking about Christians; Christians who spend much time watching videos and video games. *Some of you* now even use your telephone for games (T. I: 21-24).
- iii. Now... now, let's read about Lot in verse 5. I think that will be very instructive... (T. I: 123).

### **3.2 Lexical Choices Indicating Quotidian Experiences**

In the texts also, there is a special use of quotidian experiences as the preachers draw them from the congregation's daily life encounters. The preacher's intent is to make the sermon relevant to their lives and needs. Thus, in most cases, the preacher employs the use of logoi to logically clarify his messages by relating appropriate anecdotes or allusions that relate to life situations with the aim of making them believe in the messages conveyed. The preacher's appropriate choice of lexical items indicating quotidian experiences are seen in the excerpts below:

- i. On a sudden day, God, having been fed up with the wickedness of Sodom, decided to destroy it; but He remembered Abraham that his nephew, Lot, was in Sodom. So He decided ... (T. I: 275 – 276).

By this story, the preacher intends to update the congregation's background knowledge about Abraham's relationship with his nephew, Lot. This is evidence of a logical claim that he believes that his congregation share in that background knowledge. With reference to the above lines, the preacher employs pathos to stir up a feeling of courage in some of his congregation so that they can serve God faithfully.

### **3.3 Audience Participation**

Another notable persuasive strategy that characterizes the tenor of the Pentecostal sermons (texts) is the spontaneous expressive call for audience participation by the preacher during preaching sermons. This study observes in the sermons understudy peculiar mode of audience participation as the preacher directly asks the congregation to repeat after him as if in classroom discourse and occasional interjections or intervening holophrastic expressions from the audience aimed at encouraging the preacher.

The excerpts below from TEXT II entitled: *Stop the Wickedness*, aptly illustrate the above explanations:

- i. Pst.: Wherever you are, I want you to wave your hands like this... (Waves his right

hand)  
 ... so I can see you ... and then when you wave it, say thank you, Jesus.  
 Cong.: (Wave their hand, respond) Thank you, Jesus.  
 Pst.: Wave your hands again and say, thank you, Jesus.  
 Cong.: (Waving their hands) Thank you, Jesus.  
 Pst.: Thank you for giving me a special life.  
 Cong.: (Repeat) Thank you for giving me a special life.  
 Pst.: Thank you for giving me a divine favour.  
 Cong.: (Repeat) Thank you for giving me a divine favour  
 Pst.: Thank you that your hand is upon my life;  
 Cong.: (Repeat) Thank you that your hand is upon my life;  
 Pst.: ...because, I'm special to you.  
 Cong.: ...because I'm special to you.

In lines 1-3 of the above excerpts, the preacher's strategy is that of pathos to create the needed emotion that will prepare the congregation (who themselves form the instrument of this rhetorical proof) for effective listening to his sermon. Thus, he introduces a prayer context before the sermon and employs a multi-modal pattern of expression or oral-gesture, (waving of his hand and saying "thank you Jesus") to invite the congregation to participate in the prayer session. The preacher also uses ethos to prove that he has control of the communication setting as he repeatedly requests the congregation to "wave their hands" and say "thank you Jesus" (Lines 1, 2, 3, 5, & 7), to which they promptly respond implying that the preacher is credible and being in such status possesses the spiritual power to make them act the way he desires.

Then, he uses a polar question: *Did you hear what I said?* (line 95) to involve them in a participatory session and, having gained their attention, engages them in a 'listen and repeat' session which is more emotive and effectual arising from the subject matter. All these go to show the extent the preacher can employ pathos as a rhetorical strategy to make his congregation exercise freedom of expression. For instance, the congregation in line 116 feels excited and thus encourages the preacher thus: "Well done Pastor. Ride-on Pastor ...". Such an atmosphere of liberty is deliberately created by the preacher to trigger and sustain the interest of the congregation, arouse their emotion, make them active participants, and feel relaxed.

In TEXT I: *A Lesson from Lot*, instances of audience participation are also evident in the following lines:

- i. **Pst.:** ... Somebody say hallelujah!  
**Cong.:** Hallelujah!  
**Pst.:** Thank you Lord.  
**Cong.:** Thank you, Lord (lines 160- 163).

Audience participation is also achieved by the preacher in the same text, lines 390 – 398, as he speaks and receives a congregational response in adjacency pairs that fall in a paradigmatic structure. The repetition, however, is for cohesive and rhetorical import.

It is obvious that the preacher, in delivering his sermons, a typical speech event, employs relevant rhetorical proofs that make the congregation perceive the preacher's character, intelligence, and goodwill. He makes logical claims in clear language and succeeds in arousing desired emotions in the congregation who judge situations differently. Therefore, the preacher finds his congregation as instruments of proof when he stirs their emotion and psychological readiness. Hence, as Aristotle believed, the preacher is influenced by the congregation in much the same way that the congregation is influenced by the preacher.

Generally, all the identified modes of audience participation have been discussed under rhetorical strategies: ethos, logos, and pathos with their affective effects on the psyche of the congregation. They seem to be consciously harnessed and manipulated in accordance with Aristotle's view about effective speaking to accommodate the feelings and general dispositions of both the preacher and the congregation.

## 4. Summary and Conclusion

### 4.1 Summary

During the analysis, the study paid particular attention to how the preacher employs logos to logically and appropriately make lexical choices from the repertoire of the English language to concretize the presence of God. Through his rationalisations, he elevates the status of his congregation in order to close the tenor gap and make them feel the physical presence of God. Thus, the preacher employs logos to tactically ensure full participation of the congregation, who, because of their perception of the preachers' credibility (ethos), willingly behave in the manner that is desired of them. Furthermore, the preacher's choice of words

shows the appropriate use of pathos to appeal to the congregation's sense of reason in understanding the logical claims he makes, which are targeted at convincing and rooting deep their belief in the supreme authority of God.

This effort on the evaluation of the lexical choices made by the preacher, whose sermons have been examined, has revealed that the choices he made are logical and appropriate and help to reflect common background knowledge that he shares with the congregation. This, it is believed, enhanced to a great extent the congregation's ability to understand the messages. From the viewpoint of rhetorical theory, such choices are motivated, with the congregation in focus. Again, the choices evolve from the preacher's logic of expression which intends to remove the affected ideas and concepts from the realm of abstractions to issues that can be conceptualized.

It was also discovered from the analysis that the preacher makes lexical choices of personal pronouns to achieve discourse partition in the form of inclusion (partnership) and exclusion. He succeeds in doing this by employing logos to prove himself as a partner and then connect with the congregation through the use of the first-person plural pronoun (we) or an indefinite pronoun (everyone). Again, this study discovers that the preacher logically achieves exclusiveness when he wants to be judgmental through the use of the non-specific pronoun, 'you.' This appeal to logos enables him to prove his rationalisations and, by so doing, makes the congregation see his intelligence, level of spirituality and trustworthiness (proof of ethos). It is therefore worthy of note that pronouns are used by this preacher to refer to nouns previously mentioned and to avoid repetition and monotony, although he sometimes uses them to refer non-specifically in order to maintain ideological neutrality, which is an aspect of logos.

This study discovers from the analysis that the preacher makes lexical choices that indicate quotidian experiences, which are considered in line with Aristotle's rhetoric theory. He logically employs appropriate anecdotes as well as makes allusions to biblical characters and certain events that relate to the congregation's needs, situations, and life experiences so as to convince them to believe his messages. It is evident that this preacher has made his congregation the centre of his speech and, through his use of rhetorical strategies, proves that he knows enough about his congregation. This tells why he strives to meet the spiritual, moral, economic, social, and political needs of the congregation through the declarative and assertive utterances he makes during prayers infused into the sermons.

The preacher also involves his congregation in the sermons, thereby building a strong rapport with them, as was discovered from the analysis under 'Audience Participation.' In line with Aristotle's ethos, logos, and pathos, the preacher engages in the process of audience analysis with which he evaluates the congregation and their background in order to tailor his speeches the way he elicits the response he hopes to get. The rhetorical proofs he uses, however, show how certain he is of the relevant information he gives to the congregation. Thus, the act of asking them to 'speak after' him or to 'wave their hands' is used to prove that he has control of the communication setting.

The proof of pathos is seen in the way the preacher allows his congregation freedom of expression, and by creating this atmosphere of liberty, he arouses the emotion of the congregation, triggers and sustains their interests, and makes them participate actively in the sermons. The significance of this is that the congregation encourages and stirs up the preacher's rhetorical power. There is an interplay of ethos, logos, and pathos as they are effectively employed by the preacher to create a situation where he could influence the congregation as well as be influenced by them. .

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

This study has successfully explored the rhetorical proofs employed by Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy in his sermons: *A Lesson from Lot* and *Stop the Wickedness*. It was discovered that the preacher succeeded in harnessing and manipulating language in accordance with Aristotle's view about effective speaking to accommodate the feelings and general dispositions of both the preacher and the congregation. Although the tenor relationship in the sermon as speech event is that of top-down or bottom-up, the preacher, in keeping with a rhetorical concern of making the audience the centre of speech, sometimes acts as if he were equal with the congregation in order to make the addressee "feel good." The rhetorical implication is that the preacher succeeds in effectuating the right feelings in the congregation; hence, his ability to attract tremendous followership of worshipers to his church. Therefore, this study relied on the notable assumption of linguists that every field of discipline has a manner of affecting language use. Consequently, religion is underscored here as a unique field that is different from journalism, law, medicine, and so on. Suffice it to say that each field has sub-fields. For instance, despite the fact that sports are a field different from engineering, literature, and so on, it has other sub-fields such as football, boxing, wrestling, with each exerting influence on the use of language. Against this background, the study has recognized Pentecostal church sermon as a sub-field with a peculiar mode of language use within the broader field of religion.

Thus, an exploration of rhetorical strategies employed by the Pentecostal preacher in his sermons is necessary and topical because it has not only contributed to the existing body of knowledge but will enhance readers' understanding, by extension, Pentecostal

preachers' dexterous manipulation of appropriate words to accurately meet the needs of their congregation as well as attract large followership to their churches.

### 5. Suggestions for Future Research

This study is limited in scope that it could not extend its search to other strategies that Pentecostal preachers could employ to create semantic relations of meaning or perform certain illocutionary acts. Based on this, it suggests that further research should be made to explore significant, cohesive devices and speech act that enhance meaning interpretation in sermons.

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