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A Discourse Style of Jesus of Nazareth

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Abstract

This paper investigates the discourse style of Jesus of Nazareth. The features of style of his discourse that will be investigated in this paper are the logical, the journalese, the scheme of verbal repetition, the jurisprudence and the discrete and selective use of diction. The paper argues that the linguistic structures, which the Great Reformer has used in teaching his audience, significantly contribute to his success as a great and respected teacher as well as the greatest man who ever walked our earth. It therefore calls on the classroom teacher to emulate his fine example as a skillful and versatile teacher, who is knowledgeable and master of his discipline. This essay is a sociolinguistic study because sociolinguistics, among other things, has to do with language and society and society in language. Some recommendations are made, which we hope will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers at all levels of education.

Keywords: style, discourse, pedagogy, style features, classroom teacher

Introduction

Language exists basically in literature. It is in (literary) texts, in prose or verse, that levels of language are profoundly laid bare and purposefully studied. These levels and their branch of studies, as categorized by Simpson (2014: 5), are as follows:

The sound of spoken language, the way words are pronounced (**phonology, phonetics**); the patterns of written language on the page (**graphology**); the way words are constructed, words and their

constituent structures (**morphology**); the way words combine with other words to form phrases and sentences (**syntax, grammar**); the words we use, the vocabulary of a language (**lexical analysis, lexicology**); the meaning of words and sentences are used in everyday situations, the meaning of language in context (**pragmatics, discourse analysis**).

As we conduct our inquiry on the discourse style of Jesus of Nazareth, it will be clear enough that our investigation will not be successful without making direct or indirect references to these levels of language; it thus reinforces our contention that language exists basically in literature, showing literature as language in action or better still literature as applied language.

Some Conceptual Terms

We want to interrogate three salient discursive terms contained in the essay, **discourse, style** and **style features**.

Style

Style as a term poses a challenge in defining; reason being that it has diverse application in language use by language users. Before we delve into technical exposition of the term, let us define style in a general and narrow sense as deviation from the norm. When something, or linguistic feature is used contrary from the norm, it attracts attention as *style*. It therefore follows that when a word, a term or expression is presented by a writer or speaker in somewhat irregular manner that it attracts the attention of the reader or listener, we query the whys and wherefores of that usage. For instance, one of the uniqueness of a proper noun, which is a content word or a major word class, is that it is always begun in a capital letter no matter where it occurs in a sentence or in isolation. If the lead essayist, for instance, departs from this conventional norm of grammaticality and goes his way to write his name as *ngozi anyachonkeya*, all in small letters, it constitutes *style*, because this seeming anomaly makes for *graphological deviation*!

Leech and Short (2007:9) add to the definition of style by stating that “it refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on.” Their definition point to the same direction of diverse application of this term in stylistic studies in particular and linguistics generally.

However, some authorities on stylistics or linguistic criticism as well as other language users are at liberty to perceive style as manner of linguistic expression in literary works of all genres or even in literatures generally; as pertaining to a person’s idiosyncrasy or penchant in writing, of a work, period or age, diction, etc. It is from this linguistic trajectory that Abrams and Harpham (2012:384) construe style; they say:

Style has traditionally been defined as the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse – as *how* speakers or writers say whatever it is that they say. The style specific to a particular work

or writer, or else distinctive of a type of writings, has been analyzed in such diverse terms as the rhetorical situation and aim...; the characteristic *diction*, or choice of words; the type of sentence structure and *syntax*; and the density and kinds of *figurative language*.

As we brainstorm on style, we do well also to call to mind that style of this foremost teacher, who walked the earth, makes him a deviant to the Jewish society of his day. His innovation as a social reformer is antithetical to the normative practices of the Jewish hierarchy of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Jewish society is essentially chauvinistic so much that women are looked down on; tax collectors and sinners are more or less pariah; the lowly ones were imposed with heavy burden of laws and judged accordingly, in consonance with the letters of the law, not according to the spirit of the law. Jesus dignifies women, interacts with the lowly ones of his day, dines and wines with sinners and even goes as far as performing confounding miracles (which his critics claim he performs by the power of Beelzebub), and which he claims to be God-sent or son of God, *a blasphemy*. But Jesus' message or mission, which pivoted on the new religious order in which he seeks to entrench, is alien to his society, a total summersault of what the Jewish social order stands for. Indeed, the nauseating dimension of his claim to be son of God, cited above, was nothing but abomination worthy of lethal sentence. In the light of these, Jesus comes up with his discourse styles in order to make his message penetrate the mainstream of the societal fabric of the Jewish society, a daunting task, you may concur. All of this puts in its right perspective makes Jesus the Nazarene a social deviant and societal misfit, a gross deviation from the norm. Those are simmering controversies surrounding Jesus style features, which this essay attempts to demystify.

Features of Style

Some features of style harnessed by literary writers in their works have been identified by Anyachonkeya (2005:65-121); they, according to him, include *the cinematic style, the discursive style, the epistolary style, the legalese style, the mass communication style, the memoir style, the military style, the pedagogic style, the polemic style, the propaganda style, the question, Socratic or jurisprudence style, and reality style*. To these features we add those exploited by this great teacher, highlighted earlier, but not contained in Anyachonkeya's list, namely, *the logical style, the journealese style, the scheme of verbal repetition style, and the style of discrete and selective use of diction*.

The primary function of the classroom teacher is to impart knowledge to his learners. In doing this, he aims at *individuality* of his learners, comprising *cognitive domain, affective domain* and *psychomotor domain* as enunciated by Benjamin Bloom and his associates. That is why he employs various teaching strategies and methods in order to reach the heart of each and every one of his learners. The employment of these strategies is all the more expedient in view of the fact that a class may be *a mixed bag*, a class streamed according to mixed ability, besides the individuality of his class of learners.

The classroom teacher as well as his learners needs to grow, bearing in mind his role as “absolutely indispensable” as well as the noble position of the teaching profession in the world of work, the teacher being “the queen mother and kingly father of all professionals” (Anyachonkeya, 2020:14:). He copies what is noble about his colleagues and peers as well as foremost educators of antiquity, such men and women as Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Montessori, Dewey, Herbert, Spencer, Oakeshott, Kohlberg, Loyola, Montagu, Comenius, Piaget, Froebel, Rousseau, Quintilian, Pestalozzi, Cicero, Locke, and above all these, the greatest teacher and reformer, Jesus the Nazarene (Rusk and Scotland, 1982; Peters, 1981).

This paper will do analyses of the discourse (and pedagogic) styles, which has put Jesus of Nazareth in a unique class as the greatest man who ever walked this planet earth. We shall, in this exercise, make ample incursions to the *Bible* essentially as a literary or pedagogic text.

Discourse Analysis

As we embark on the scholarly business of *stylistics*, as we now do in this discourse, we strive to undertake, in the words of Sampson (3), cited above, a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to *language*. The justification of language is so important to (stylists) because its various forms, patterns and levels constitute linguistic structure, which are an important indices of the function of the text. There is no doubt as we do this we not only explore but develop interest in the aesthetics utilities of language use and its primacy.

One of the salient functions of language, as a manipulative tool, is amply used in propaganda to condition or shape people’s thoughts. Propaganda is exceedingly exploited in religion business, politics/government, advertising organizations, and so on. When used in the business of religion, as adroitly used by Jesus and as a stylistic device; propaganda is harnessed by him to “condition the society” as a crusader of unique status (Olateju and Oyeleye, 2005:74).

Without going into the etymological history of propaganda, as a word, we must mention that there are two types of propaganda, namely, *positive* or *beneficial propaganda* and *negative* or *harmful propaganda*. Jesus, in his discursive use of propaganda, relies on the beneficial aspect of it, not as it is used by religious leaders of his day and today also, who fleece and deracinate their flock or parishioners. Whereas this paper does not isolate *propaganda* as Jesus’ teaching style, the fact remains that as a member of the religious society of his day, his mission and commitment is to introduce a new religious order in which he is the founder – *Christianity*; this convinces us that he relies on propaganda to make his mark, and he has succeeded most exceedingly across time and space.

We now proceed on the subtask of this study, *discourse analysis*.

Everything in the terrestrial world is language, furnishing ample material for discourse and discourse analysis. Discourse analysis (DA) deals with the study of language and making meaning out of a written piece or oral presentation. We do this by studying words, phrases and sentences and interpret meaning out of the speech event or written discourse, whether the statement is disjointed or nonsensical in not keeping to syntactic rules. Yule (2004:139) explains:

In the study of language, some of the most interesting questions arise in connection with the way language is ‘used’, rather than what its components are.... We ... in effect (ask) how it is that language users interpret what other language users intend to convey. When we carry this investigation further and ask how it is that we, as language-users, make sense of what we read in texts, understand what speakers mean despite what they say, recognize connected as opposed to jumbled or incoherent discourse, and successfully take part in that complex activity called conversation, we are undertaking what is known as **discourse analysis**.

For us to purposefully interpret discourse in a particular language, whether written, spoken or paralinguistic, we must note *cohesion*, *coherence* in the language user’s discourse or speech event.

Using linguistic tools, we seek to discover linguistic regularities in discourses for a fuller appreciation of DA. In DA linguistic scholars use such linguistic regularities as *grammatical*, *phonological* and *semantic criteria*; *by semantic criteria*, we refer to *cohesion*, *anaphora*, *inter-sentence connectivity* (Crystal, 2008:148), as well as *cohesion*, *coherence*, *etc.*

In speech events, for instance, we note the conversational interaction between the speaker and his audience; with our background knowledge of the language, we will be able to evaluate the speaker in terms of how he keeps faith with Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, in saying all there is to be said, with nothing required, and in not having said that for which he lacks evidence, in being relevant to his speech and in maintaining clarity of expression, brevity and order, etc., the thrust of cooperative principle.

In discourse analysis, linguistic critics and other language users pay attention to isolated units of language in a running discourse, be it in speech event or written discourse, namely, sentences, words, phrases and figures of speech and rhetoric, from the specific variables of utterance in order to ascertain how they make thematic statements. In effect, stylists or linguistic critics query texts of all disciplines as literary pieces “to make generalization on the nature, form and function” of such texts (Olateju and Oyeleye, 2005:74). This way, the reader or listener participates or is carried along in the running discourse to achieve meaning. Abrams and Harpham (2012:89, 80) share our thoughts and state:

Traditional linguistics and philosophers of language, as well as literary students of *style* and *stylistics*, have typically focused their analyses on isolated units of language ... from the specific circumstances of an utterance. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, ... concerns itself with the use of language in a running discourse, continued over a number of sentences, and involving the interaction of speaker (or writer) and auditor (or reader) in specific situational context, and within a particular framework of social and cultural conventions.

A careful reading of the synoptic gospels reveals how Jesus is meticulous in using homely words, phrases, sentences and figures of speech and rhetoric that are familiar to his Jewish audience and others of his immediate environment, such words and phrases as “gnat, rafter, straw, how much more so, verbal repetition, etc.” as well as sentences as “*No man can slave for two masters; you cannot slave for God and for riches. Stop judging that you may not be judged. By their fruits you will recognize or know them; out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, etcetera.*”

A study of Jesus’ conversational manner, vis-à-vis, his discourse styles, enunciated in this essay, we find that he has not derailed as a great teacher and reformer of repute across cultures. As a versatile and astute teacher, Jesus combines formal language style used in official contexts as well as informal language style in use in everyday speech sociolinguistic settings (Akmajian, et al, 2010). Such formal language style is used during the trials that culminate in his execution.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to examine or analyze some discourse and pedagogic styles of Jesus of Nazareth, which enable him to communicate his mission to a society that worship God using concrete things such as *imposing temple* as a place of worship, *written code of law*, *sacrifices with animals*, *scintillating incense*, *observable Sabbath phenomena*, etc., as against the new religion he seeks to introduce, which dwells on abstractions, hence his employment of nominal that are available within the learning experience of the Jews to explain the *Kingdom of God*, such nominal like *mustard seed*, *caramel*, *needle*, *shepherd*, *dove*, *goat*, *bull*, *lame animal*, *sheep*, *denary*, etc.

Statement of the Problem

The Jewish hierarchy – the Phrases – imposed manmade laws that are heavy and almost impracticable to the lowly and even the women. Again, the innovation he seeks to put in place is novel and strange to the people. Above all, in spite of the simple lifestyle of Jesus as well as his message, yet he pulls a large crowd to his side, making it obviously impossible for the Jewish leaders to have their normal followership, which brings Jesus at a great loggerhead with the Jewish leaders. It is therefore incumbent for this study to convince us that his discourse and pedagogic styles are sellable to the classroom teacher so that he or she will be able to cope with the challenges (negative psychological and sociological factors) that assail him and teach, shape and mould his or her learners at the formative stages of their lives – from *sensory motor*, *preoperational stage*, *concrete operational stage*, *adolescent state* (the controversial age of *stress and storm*), and navigate them ashore for the good of humanity and continuity of the human family.

Research Questions

The study has identified the discourse and pedagogic styles of Jesus of Nazareth, which, among other things, are tied up in the following jurisprudence statements.

1. What is the discourse and pedagogic styles of Jesus listed for analysis in this study?
2. How may we explain style to the man in the street?
3. What is the relevance of Jesus’ discourse and pedagogic styles to the classroom teacher at all levels of education?

4. Why should Jesus be considered a deviant by the Jewish society of his day?

We now begin to attempt to open our goatskin bag of this study.

A Discourse and Pedagogic Styles of Jesus of Nazareth

The Logical Style of Teaching

Jesus reasoned with his listeners. A common way to convince and persuade people is to *reason* with them. Such reasoning must be logical. It must provoke logical thinking, *thinking about thinking*. Reasoning is something known or believed to be true and which is repeatedly used to arrive at other supposed truths (Anyachonkeya 2007).

Jesus, the Nazarene, adopts the logical teaching method since his goal is to entrench a new religion on the Jewish society of his time. The logic has to do with propaganda inasmuch as he engages in organized spreading of doctrine, which is true, of course, with the intent to bring about change or reform. So Jesus exploits propaganda to, among other things, convert and to attract followers and to keep them in line with the new faith he is propagating (Ndimele 1999).

To achieve his righteous objective, Jesus has used irrefutable logic. The Nazarene has been described as a master and genius at reasoning logically with people. Yet he never misused this ability. In his teaching, Jesus has always employed his keen mental faculties to advance Bible truths. At times, he uses very strong logic to refute false charges of his religious opponents; prominent among them are the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

He, also, has employed logical teaching method to teach his followers important lessons (Watch Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2002). For instance, there is an occasion Jesus has healed a demon-possessed man, who was blind and unable to speak. His traditional opponents, the Pharisees, upon learning of this feat, say that he expels demons by means of Beelzebub – Satan – the ruler of the demons. They, of course, acknowledge the truthfulness of this superhuman feat; however, their goal is to keep the people away from believing him. Jesus, the master craftsman, replies them, saying: “Every kingdom divided against itself comes to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. In the same way, if Satan expels Satan, he becomes divided against himself; how then, will his kingdom stand? (*Matthew 12: 22-26*).”

Refuting the assertion further, Jesus comes up with a simple but devastating question which he poses to the self-righteous Pharisees: “If I expel the demons by means of Beelzebub, by means of whom do your sons (or disciples) expel them?” (*Matthew 12:27*).

Jesus, in effect, puts it to them that if, in actual fact, he expels demons by the power of Satan, and it then follows that their own disciples must be acting under the same influence or power. With this irrefutable logic, Jesus has been able to reduce their charge against his person to an absurdity.

Apart from using logic to silence the people most critical of him, Jesus also uses persuasive reasoning to teach positive, heart-warming truths about his Father. For example, a number of times, Jesus adopts what may be called *how much more* phrasal *so* line of reasoning. In the process, he assists his audience to advance from a familiar truth to further conviction. We want to cite a textual reference. While answering his disciples who have asked him to teach them how to pray, Jesus describes the willingness of parents to “give good gifts” to their children. Having thus advanced the thesis of his argument, Jesus concludes: “Therefore, if YOU, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to YOUR children, *how much more so* will the father in heaven give Holy Spirit to those asking him” [Emphasis added] (*Luke 11:13*). Jesus also uses a similar style of argument in the following linguistic structures: “*Of how much more...* (*Luke 12:24*). (*...how much rather...* *Luke 12:28b*).

Having access to these powerful logical linguistic arsenal at his beck and call, no wonder then some of Jesus’ audience think aloud: “*Never before has another man spoken like this* (*John 7:46*).

Jesus’ Journalese Style of Teaching

The journalese style as used here does not specifically apply to the electronic or print medium. Rather, a common ring of similarity, in terms of diction, cuts across all of them to which they may logically be grouped or considered as *mass communication*. Among the features of mass communication for the dissemination of information from source to sender is normally public in nature (Ndimele 1999). The message from source to destination is produced for the consumption of people from virtually all socio-economic status (ses).

To produce a message that will reach all the heterogeneous population, the language should be simple and easy to understand. There should not be ambiguous elements which may impede comprehension. It is against this backdrop that we argue that Jesus, the Nazarene, has exploited the journalese style during his discourse sessions with his listeners. He maintains simplicity and clarity of expression in his speech act. When he deems it fit, Jesus applies felicity conditions in his discourse presentation (Kempson 1993).

It is not unusual for the highly educated people to use complex linguistic structures that are high and above the heads of their audience. Unfortunately, our listeners will not benefit from our knowledge when we use highfalutin words and expressions, for we impress, not express. A good classroom teacher should go for a style or diction that will enable him to impart knowledge to his class of learners especially classes that are streamed according to mixed ability.

As a knowledgeable teacher, Jesus never talked over the heads of his listeners. Granted he has a vast knowledge, yet he chooses simple and clear words and expressions to communicate effectively. Even the illustrations he harnesses to express the novel and abstract things about the new religion are within the learning experience of his listeners and disciples. The truths contained in those simple expressions are most profound.

Jesus is not unaware of the fact that his disciplines and a great number of his listeners are “unlettered and ordinary” (*Acts 4:13*). Meticulous critics state that Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount we read in Matthew Chapters 5:3-7:27 may have taken him just twenty minutes to deliver. Yet his teachings are deep, getting to the very heart of such matters as adultery, divorce, and materialism (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2002). Watch Tower notes that at the end of each discourse session, the crowds, who likely include numerous farmers, shepherds, and fishermen and, of course, the lettered, “were astounded at his way of teaching” (*Matthew 7:28*).

Some of those clear and simple statements of Jesus end up becoming popular platitudes of moral precepts on everybody’s lips. Let us consider some of them as x-rayed by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002:9).

- + *No man can slave for two masters; you cannot slave for God and for riches.*
- + *Stop judging that you may not be judged.*
- + *By their fruits you will recognize or know them.*
- + *Persons in health do not need a physician, but the ailing do.*
- + *All those who take the sword will perish by the sword.*
- + *Pay back Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.*
- + *There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving, etc.*

Watch Tower observes that “(t)o this day, nearly 2000 years after they were spoken by Jesus, such powerful (but simple) sayings are easily called to mind.”

Jesus recognizes the efficacy of clear and simple linguistic structures. His style of teaching is not only simple but also friendly, sympathetic and natural and appropriate to one who is a servant, not a master (Sir Gowers 1975). Here lies Jesus’ journalese or mass communication style!

The Illustration Style

Apt illustrations in teaching are seasoning discursive instrument that make our classroom instruction more appealing to our learners. Illustration impresses meaningful pictures on our mind. They help us more to have a full grasp of new ideas (Watch Tower 2002). Jesus as a master craftsman is skillful in the use of illustration and analogy.

The Son of man employs illustration to fulfill the prophecy about him. Besides, he explains that he uses illustrations to sift out those whose hearts are unresponsive. The illustration he uses comprises examples, comparisons, similes and metaphors. For instance, Jesus is well known for his use of parables from which moral or spiritual truths are drawn. One of such illustrations is that based on the separation of people. In all the cases, his listeners have to dig, so to say, in order to get the full meaning of his words. In the process, humble individuals among his audience are moved to ask for more information. But the haughty members of his listeners go about in their foolery. Those illustrations unveil the truth to those whose hearts hunger for it.

On the contrary, those illustrations conceal Bible truths from those with proud and arrogant hearts. Thus, to the humble minds, those illustrative teachings of Jesus appeal to the higher level of the cognitive domain. They provoke thought-provoking questions. Therefore, as a committed and versatile teacher, Jesus is flexible and purposeful in his use of teaching methods to achieve the best objectives. That is why his illustrations are related to the lives of people – *everyday life*.

His illustrations and parables also reveal his acquaintance with plants, animals and the elements as well as experiences and examples from which lessons can be drawn.

The Verbal Repetitive Style

Verbal repetition is associated with linguistic and stylistic categories where figures of speech belong. Under linguistic and stylistic categories we have lexical and grammatical categories, figures of speech, cohesion and contrast (Leech and Short 2007: 61-64).

Jesus has harnessed from the four groups of linguistic and stylistic categories in practically all his discourse sessions with his audience. Of particular interest to be discussed here is his adroit use of hyperbole as an effective teaching method. Hyperbole as a figure of speech is an intentional exaggeration or overstatement for emphasis, effect or humour (Anyachonkeya 2007).

Jesus has used the figure of speech to create mental picture that are hard to forget. In his famous Sermon on the Mount he has used the following linguistic structures as he emphasizes the need to “stop judging” others. He queries: “Why, then, do you look at the straw in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the rafter in your own eye?” (*Matthew 7:1-13*). The lexical categories – *straw* and *rafter* – “... in the eye...” are hyperbolic, contrived to draw his listeners’ attention that everybody is frail, alluding, in effect that, according to Kempis (1979:21), if you “see another sin openly or do some grave wrong, you still should not think yourself the better: for you know not how long you may be able to stand in goodness. We are all frail, but *you should account yourself the frailest of all*” (Emphasis ours).

The grammatical structure used here by Jesus contains some nucleus of verbal irony though a hyperbole. In this way, we can visualize the scene – “the kettle calling pot black! The kettle is currently investigating the pot...the transformation cannot be complete unless the pot also investigates the kettle” (Chukwemeka Ike 1996: 189). Thus, it is an unforgettable way of stressing how foolish and naïve it is to criticize the minor faults of our brother or sister when we may have major faults of our own (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2002). Brother or sister as used here refers to both the spiritual and temporal. This must be an object lesson for the academics and intelligentsia that populate our tertiary institutions!

Jesus makes use of the rhetorical device of hyperbole while denouncing the Pharisees, calling them “blind guides”, who strain out for the gnat but gulp down the camel (*Matthew 23:24*). This is an exceptionally powerful use of hyperbole. Why? One may ask. Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2001:11) furnishes us an answer: “The contrast between a tiny gnat and

a camel, which is one of the largest animals known to Jesus' hearers, is striking. It is estimated that it would take up to 70 million gnats to equal the weight of an average camel!"

Jesus is aware that the Pharisees strain their wine through a cloth sieve. Those who indulge in this practice do so to avoid swallowing a gnat and in the process became ceremonially unclean. Nevertheless, they, in a figurative sense, gulp down the camel which is unclean also. Of course, Jesus of Nazareth has a point there to make. It is because these Pharisees meticulously comply with the smallest of the law's requirements and prescriptions. Unfortunately, they disregard the weightier matters of the law, namely, "justice and mercy and faithfulness" (*Matthew 23:23*). There are myriads of Pharisees in our society, especially in our Ivory Towers today. Who knows how many they are!

We want to cite other instance of hyperbole, though briefly. Let us reflect on the following: Faith the size of "tiny mustard grain" that could move a mountain. The master craftsman could hardly have found the good expression and contrivance, a more elegant and effective way to emphasize that even a little faith can accomplish a lot.

The other linguistic structure of hyperbolic proportion is that of a huge camel trying to squeeze himself through the eye of a sewing needle. It well illustrates vividly and graphically too the difficulty that faces a rich person who tries to serve God and at the same time holds on to a materialistic lifestyle or even has mortgaged his soul or life in the demonic realm.

All the linguistic and stylistic categories exploited by Jesus attract our delighted attention as we appraise his ornate use of figures of speech and his ability to achieve maximum effect with minimum lexical categories or words.

The Jurisprudence Style

Succinctly, the jurisprudence or Socratic Method in education refers to the pedagogic style of imparting knowledge using questions. Jesus excelled here as well. He makes remarkable use of questions which he often does when it would be less-time consuming in a bid to teach his audience some vital lesson. At times, he employs the Socratic Method to expose the false motives of his religious opponents and in the process silence them.

Jesus makes out time to ask questions for a number of reasons. For instance, he asks questions to convey truths and gets his audience to express what is in their minds. He makes skillful use of Socratic Method also to stimulate thought and train the thinking of his followers. Probably, some textual references will be relevant here, where Jesus has made graphic use of questions to achieve the objectives stated above. For example, Jesus poses the following questions to his apostle, Peter: "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the Kings of the earth receive duties or head tax? Is it from their sons or from the strangers?" (*Matthew 17:25*).

The truth about Jesus' question is obvious to Peter and that is why he has answered in the affirmative. The family members of the monarchs in Jesus' time are known to be tax exempt. The

implication of those questions he has posed to Peter is that as the only-begotten son of God who is worshipped at the temple, Jesus logically should not have been required to pay tax. So in this way, Jesus rather than giving Peter a straightforward answer applies jurisprudence method to assist Peter to arrive at the proper conclusion and probably to help Peter to appreciate the need to think more carefully before he could speak. His question schedule covers various facets of questions, namely, lower order questions, higher order questions, probing questions and divergent questions.

The question, no doubt, is a direct appeal to the reader. Leech and Short (2007) and many other scholars attest to the efficacy of question in discourse. Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2001:236), also observes:

Questions call for a response – either oral or mental – help to get listeners involved. Questions can help you to start conversations to enjoy a stimulating exchange of thought. As a speaker and teacher, you may use questions to arouse interest, to help someone reason on a subject, or to add emphasis to what you say. When you make good use of questions, you encourage others to think actively instead of listening passively. Have an object in mind and ask your questions in a manner that will help to achieve it.

Watch Tower explains further that questions that are effective help the audience to get involved. It adds that answers to well-chosen questions may also provide feedback for a teacher. In a pedagogic style, this source observes further that questions enhance conversation; can be structured to introduce important thoughts; to reason on a subject; to draw out inner feelings and to add emphasis to expose wrong thinking.

In view of the foregoing, Jesus demonstrates a rare remarkable use of the grammatical categories of questions to reach his audience and to communicate not only his unique vision and “stylistic effect”, but also, to express his sensations, perceptions, themes, etc., essentially by means of (the) language” code (Yankson 1987:1).

Discrete and Selective Use of Details

In his discourse and pedagogic styles, Jesus is discrete and selective in the use of details. When preciseness and specifics are expedient in a story, he exercises great caution to provide them. Jesus, for example, says exactly how many sheep (ninety-nine) are left behind while the shepherd goes in search of the strayed sheep. He does similarly by telling his listeners how many hours workers have labored in vineyard, and how many talents are given in trust and to each labourer. The details of these short stories are found in *Matthew 18:12 – 14; 20:1 – 16 and 25:14 – 30*.

While handling such essential details about his stories, Jesus is meticulous in leaving out nonessential details that may creep in, in the way of his audience in grasping the meaning of the illustrative and didactic stories. In his account of the unmerciful slave, for instance, Jesus does not offer any explanation as to how this slave has managed to run up a debt of 60, 000,000 denari. This is because his tale is didactic in intent; he is stressing the need to be forgiving. So what is important for him and his audience is that his debt is forgiven or written off and how he in turn

treats a fellow slave who owes him relatively little money. The literary thrust of his story has nothing to do with how this slave has fallen into this huge debt but the need for *forgiveness*.

When we come to Jesus' story of the prodigal son, the account described as the best short story ever told, Jesus does not offer any explanation why the younger son unexpectedly or suddenly asks for his inheritance and his subsequent squandering of it. Rather Jesus gives the relevant detail how his father has felt and reacted when his son has had a change of heart and returns home. Thus, such details about his father's response are useful to the point the Great Teacher wants to make, that is, his heavenly Father, Jehovah, forgives in a large way (*Isaiah 55:5, 7*).

In the same vein, in his portrayal of his characters in parables, Jesus is judicious in handling details. So, instead of giving us elaborate description of those characters' physical appearance, Jesus pays attention to what they do or how they respond to the events he has presented in his narrative.

In his story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells us something rather far more significant. It is how the compassionate Samaritan promptly comes to the aid of an injured Jew, who is lying helpless along the road. He simply provides relevant details that are germane to teach; that the *love of neighbor* should extend to people other than those of our own race or nationality (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2002).

Jesus is also discrete enough to draw his materials from everyday life, from creation, events familiar to his listeners, all in line with the educational principles of teaching from known to unknown, simple to complex and concrete to abstract.

Jesus' discourse and pedagogic styles is a compendium of convergence of stylistic features. Style as a convergence of stylistic features, in the words of Fowler (1981:23), "could...be said to be present in any utterance...", be it in spoken or in written discourse session.

Implication of Findings

Jesus' discuss and pedagogic styles are in tandem with the revised taxonomies of educational objectives of Benjamin Bloom's and his associates, which advocate higher order thinking skills (HOTS) and which teachers at all levels especially in the teaching programmes of English Language and literary Studies (ELLS), and which as well teachers of ELLS should emulate. It has become necessary we do this since the future is here with us; we are in the digital space and so have to embrace the digital technologies and go beyond the rudiments of lower order reasoning; those of remembering, understanding, analyzing, etc. as demanded by the exigencies of new normal literary expressions in Nigeria. Egbe (2022:12) pointedly shares our optimism, when he, among others, suggests as follows:

(We) need to revisit what the cognitive demands should be in line with Bloom's taxonomy as revised. In order words, the learning objectives and outcomes which we set for (learners) should go beyond the rudiments of the lower levels of remembering, understanding, applying and even analyzing, to concentrate on the

highest level of creating change in ELLS programmes and classrooms as well as focusing on higher order thinking skills (HOTS)... Even in the postgraduate research, we need to move beyond analysis so that we don't succumb to the syndrome of 'analysis paralysis.'

(We) need to broaden engagement in ELLS programmes to include critical English pedagogy, (and) include issues of global citizenship and the English language, critical literacy practices, issues in English in education policies in Nigeria, digital humanities in the enterprise of ELLS, creating voice for teachers of English and literary studies in Nigeria in what we do in and outside the classroom. Indeed, the teaching of English and literary studies in Nigeria should go beyond classroom techniques, language proficiency, material development, communicative competence and out-come-focused professional development which are inherently practices of performativity to ... "tackling language issues from the perspectives of critical discourse analysis and critical literacy".'

Against this backdrop, ELLS and their counterparts have a lot to glean from the discourse and pedagogic styles of Jesus of Nazareth as briefly examined in this essay.

Recommendations

Having gone this far in our linguistic criticism of the discourse and pedagogic styles of Jesus of Nazareth, the following recommendations are made. Classroom teachers should keep simple in their language use as well as the illustrations they make, bearing in mind that to be clear is to be efficient; to be obscure is to be inefficient (Gowers 1975). They should use words with precise meanings rather than vague and ambiguous ones.

Classroom teachers should make effective use of the Socratic Method of teaching, where expedient to ensure learners' participation in classroom business. Teachers should inject a good dose of logic in order to appeal to the higher level of the learners' cognitive domain and to stimulate their logical and imaginative thinking. Teachers should use apt and fitting illustrations which will make learned tasks permanent in the minds of learners. Again, such illustrations make teaching more appealing and appetizing to learners.

Flexibility, not rigidity, should be the watchword of classroom teachers in harnessing linguistic structures and in their choice of instructional materials in order not to make the classroom business a passive one or a bore. Above all, all teachers, especially ELLS, should be adept with the revised taxonomies of educational objectives and be part and parcel of the digital space by being compliant in the digital technologies if they must make real the future which is here with us.

Conclusion

Our stylistic analysis of the discourse and pedagogic styles of Jesus of Nazareth shows that Jesus has excelled as a Great Teacher of no mean repute. His linguistic and pedagogic styles put him in

a class of superior position, a position of *primus inter pares*, over and above all other social reformers and great educators of antiquity.

We have observed that Jesus has not exploited linguistic structures and pedagogic style to impress, but to communicate his unique vision and thus has excelled as a master craftsman and thus has achieved his objectives profoundly. We are absolutely convinced that as a language user, Jesus well knows what to do with language; in other words, speech act semantics – to teach, to persuade, to reprimand, to inspire, to entertain, to inform, to praise and to indict, etc., in righteous indignation when occasion calls for it. No wonder he has aptly been described as the greatest man who has ever walked the earth.

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