

DISCOURSE INFORMATION PACKAGING IN SELECTED CATHOLIC CREEDS**Sade Olagunju PhD**English Unit, Department of General Studies, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology,
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ABSTRACT: *In recent times, a number of different ways of describing the sequencing and ordering of information in spoken and written discourse has emerged in linguistic scholarship. Notable works on information packaging or structure are associated with Functional Sentence Perspective Scholars and Hallidayan Systemic Linguistic Scholars. In Information Structure, the notions of (Given-New) and the Thematic Structure (Theme -Rheme) are very central. Bloor and Bloor (1995) explaining both information and thematic structure and ascertained that 'theme' and 'given' are equivalent and while the 'new' tends to go along with the 'rheme'. However, Hllidayan approach and the Prague' FSP approach both capture the same features of language. Downing (2001) quoting Fries (1983:116) says 'linguists have adopted what Fries terms 'the combining approach', equating Theme with Given, or the 'separating approach' disentangling the two. The former include van Dijk, Firbas, Danes, among others, whereas the latter is propounded by Halliday and the systemic school in general, who separate information structure (Given-New) from thematic structure (Theme-Rheme). The separation of the two appears to be useful, necessary even, for English at least... '. This paper explores the discourse packaging of thematic patterns of selected Catholic creeds. It considers how information are sequenced, organised and packaged in the Catholic creeds and also describes their internal structure in terms of the theme-rheme analysis of the clauses by utilising Danes (1976) model of thematic progression and relates the organisation of information to their speech functions. The paper taps it motivation from the paucity of works on creedal language in Nigeria. Apostle's creed and Nicene creed are purposively selected for the study. Catholic use creeds in their Mass, either as spoken text, or sung as chant. These creeds are selected because they are widely accepted by the early church. The former was the first creed use by early Christians to openly declare their faith while the later came as a result of the heresy or controversies about some doctrines precisely about the nature of Christ and the need to use language to clear the air and to shed light on some controversial ideas and false belief. The secondary data include books, journal articles and the internet. The study reveals that the Constant TP , the Split Rheme and the Simple Linear TP featured in the two creeds. The implied themes are more prominent in the Nicene creed. The study concludes that the understanding of the information structure of the creeds will enhance a proper understanding of the topical development of the creed as a formal statement or brief authoritative formula of religious beliefs and also add to the increasing literature on discourse information structure and language of religion in general.*

KEYWORDS: information structure, given-new, theme, rheme, thematic progression, FSP, creeds.

INTRODUCTION

There are different reasons for which one may want to analyse a written or spoken text. The goal of this study is to investigate how information are packaged or structured in religious discourse such as creeds. Creedal language is a sub -category of language of religion. In christianity as a religion, language is used for different purposes ranging from sermon, prayers, thanksgiving, supplication, worship, writing tracts, lithurgical purposes, performative of religious rites; christening, solemnisation, funeral, Eucharist, and Baptismal rites, among others. A creedal language is associated with of lithurgical language most especially in the Catholic Church.

Language of Religion

Each religion has its peculiar language and such language is best understood by the religious faithful or adherent of such belief. In any religion of the world, language and context play significant roles. Religion shapen the moral conduct of the society and the way we view the world at large. Each religion also has its own law or canon. Pandharipande (2018) states that language of religion is basically a register used in the domain of religion and primarily aims at identifying those structures and functions of religious language (lexicon, syntax, phonology, morphology, prosody etc.), which differentiate it from its non-religious counterpart. Among the elements that distinguish the religious language from the other discursive manifestations Mihaela (2017:3) mentions religious language as a specialized language that acquires its individuality through a range of features such as: the archaic character, the monumentality, the need to maintain distance from everyday speech without losing the communication skills and the emotional involvement, the desire to balance tradition and modernity, the sacredness and accessibility.: the specificity of communication situations and religious practices different from the current ones; the oscillation between solemn / high and accessible / low; the prototypical communication situation: the human / superhuman recipient; the old age (the first document dates from the sixteenth century); the predominance of the conative expressive and magical functions,; the conservative and traditionalist character; marked intertextuality. The individuality of the religious language is conferred by specific linguistic phenomena, at morphological, syntactic and, especially, lexical level. Murray (1989) states that different religious practices select from the entire spectra of linguistic possibilities. There are many religions in the world today. People of different cultures, languages, classes, age, statuses, colours, etc. are free to choose which religion to practice or not. These religions range from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Confucianism, Australian Aboriginal religion, African Traditional religion, Quakenism, Budduhism, etc.

The Nature of Creedal Language

A creed is a formal statement or brief authoritative formula of religious belief. The word creed comes from Latin *credo* which means 'I believe'. It is a form of confession or statement of faith shared by religious community in form of a fixed formula summarizing particular religion core tenets. A creed is either recited or chanted during the Holy Mass in the Catholic Church for instance. It is chanted or recited as a whole and cannot be done in a part. It is ritualistic in nature. The Apostles's creed is the oldest creed which has its root in apostolic teaching while the Nicene creed was birthed to clear the air on the great controversies in Chritendom about the divinity of Christ and Holy Spirit most especially the Arianism, a doctrine that held that Christ was not divine but was a created being. The Nicene creed is one of the famous and influential creeds in the church

history. It is the first creed to obtain universal authority and it updated the language of the Apostles's creed by including the aspect of divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Council of Nicea was set up in A.D. 325 to address the issue which covered representatives from across the vast majority of Christian world. It represents the first ecumenical council and marks the first time when a civil penalty was used to enforce Christian orthodoxy. One of the most widely used creeds in Christianity is the Nicene creed. Nicene creed is divided into four units in terms of its discursual functions but structurally or physically, it was written without any segregation. 'I believe in one God', 'I believe in Jesus', 'I believe in the Holy Ghost' and 'I also believe in holy Catholic and Apostolic church'. In the first discourse unit of the Nicene creed (Henceforth NC), the confession and affirmation of believe in the Almightyness of God as the creator of all things both visible and invisible is expressed. The superordinateness of God as attribute is shown in the use of implied theme in introducing the second unit 'And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all ages, God of God...' The phrase 'I believe' is implied here and also repeated in the third unit where Holy Ghost is mentioned but resurfaces to introduce the 4th unit in the NC which is the subject of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church as different from the trinity. The NC here is revealing the trinity; God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Studies on Discourse Thematic Progression of Different Texts

Some scholars have analyzed thematic progression of different texts. Among these scholars are Nwogu and Bloor 1991; Dubois 1983; Adegbite and Ajayi; 1995; Adegbite 2007; Olagunju 2004, 2007, etc. Dubois (1987) and Nwogu and Bloor (1991) have analyzed thematic progression pattern of scientific texts and both studies have found that the Simple Linear pattern and the Constant TP pattern to be frequent, while the occurrence of the Derived Theme pattern make the work different. Nwogu and Bloor (1991) find out that the 'derived themes' are represented in their research article data but not in the more popular medical texts.

Adegbite and Ajayi (1995) have analyzed thematic progression of divinatory and incantatory poetry and they have found that the Constant TP pattern predominate the texts. Olagunju (2004) utilizes thematic progression to analyse two novels of Femi Ojo Ade. The study found that the Constant TP predominate the text despite the featuring of all other types of TP patterns. Osianwo (2002) also considered thematic progression of newspaper reports. He deviated from Danes' (1970, 1974) in his identification of TP patterns. Osianwo identified five types of thematic progression as Linear Progression pattern, Constant Topic pattern, Hypertheme pattern, Mixed pattern and No pattern. Although, all these pattern resolve around Danes' own by findings, the Constant Topic Progression pattern is more frequent than the others.

Downing (2001) has also analysed thematic progression of journalese. She found that all TP patterns as identified by Danes (1974) featured with the exception of the Derived TP pattern. The Constant TP is most frequent in the journalese. Downing (2001:1) stresses that.

Familiarity with a variety of genres might lead to predilections that particular text-type would display sequences of choices as regards thematic progression.

Fries (2001:3) also hypothesizes that:

Different pattern of thematic progression correlate with different genres, i.e. patterns of thematic progression do not occur randomly but are sensitive to genres...

Furthermore, the assertion of Downing (2001) and Fries (2001) need further investigations because if thematic progression of a text is genre sensitive, it must be fully confirmed and well established. Moreover, Ortega (2001) considered thematic progression of a story. His work which he called *Extended Thematic Progression* is a deviation from Dane's theory. He follows Scinto's (1983, 1986) notional system whose main purpose is the graphic representation of the passage analysed through a limited number of abbreviations and symbols. His work is relevant to this study because of the recognition of Danes' work on thematic progression and also, he sees other work on TP as emerging from Danes' initial conception of the theory as a pillar of textual organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is concerned with the information packaging of Nicene and Apostles creeds. Many scholars have looked at information structure of different texts from the perspective of Prague school approach to analysing organisational structure of texts. Works on creedal language utilising thematic progression model are on a rare side in linguistic scholarship. Nicene creed and Apostle's creed were purposively selected for this study. They were selected based on their popularity among the liturgical texts of Christianity as a religion. The theme-rheme analysis of the clauses of the two selected Catholic creeds will be done via Dane (1976) TP model to unravel how the information contents of the creeds are packaged for a better understanding.

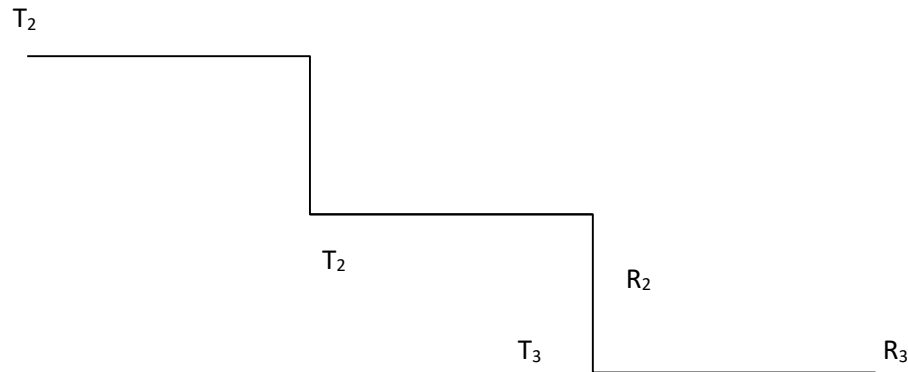
Framework of Discourse Thematic Progression

Information packaging is a subdivision of information structure (Halliday, 1967) and comprises notions like Topic, Focus, Comment, Background, Theme, Frame, Rheme, etc. The term information packaging was coined by Chafe (1976). In linguistics, information structure, also called information packaging, describes the way in which information is formally packaged within a sentence. ... The basic notions of information structure are focus, givenness, and topic, as well as their complementary notions of background, newness, and comment respectively. Most of the studies on thematic progression focus on the given language, and academic or scientific writing is the favorite text type... Gregory et al (2017) state that information structure deals with the question of how—and specifically, in what order—we choose to present the informational content of a proposition. In English and many other languages, this content is structured in such a way that given, or familiar, information precedes new, or unfamiliar, information. Because givenness and newness are largely matters of what has come previously in the discourse, information structuring is inextricably tied to matters of context—in particular, the prior linguistic context—and this is what makes information structure quintessentially pragmatic in nature. While it has long been recognized that various non-canonical word orders function to preserve a given-before-new ordering in an utterance, a great deal of research has focused on how to determine the specific categories of givenness and newness that matter for information structuring. Danes (1974) defines thematic progression as 'the choice and ordering of utterance theme, their mutual concatenation and hierarchy, as well as their relationship to the hyperthemes of the superior text unit such as paragraph, chapter...), to the whole text and the situation'.

Danes (1974) postulates four main types of thematic progression thus:

- (i) Simple Linear TP Pattern

Each rheme becomes the theme of the next utterance. Danes (1974; 18) considered this pattern as the most elementary or basic TP. It is represented thus



Example 1:

T₁

R₁

Infrared spectroscopy method of analysis/was employed in characterizing some vegetable seed oil namely; palm kernel, akeeapple, pumpkin, soyabean and

T₂

R₂

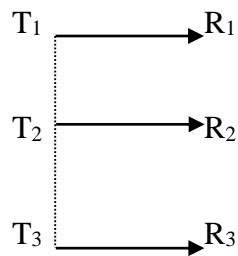
Gourd seed oil. Some physic-chemical properties of these oil samples/were determined, which include the acid value, saponification value and iodine value.

T₃

R₃

The iodine value of soyabean, gourd and pumpkin seed oils/have a close range (137.4, 134.5 and 131.0mgVg respectively).

(ii) TP with Constant (continuous) Theme: This is the pattern of TP in which the same theme appears in sequence in a series of utterances, though not necessarily making use of identical wording. Fries (2001) describes this as a topically linked TP pattern, Danes (1974) represents it thus:



Example 2

T₁R₁

The occurrence of asymptomatic significant bacteriuria during pregnancy/is of

T₂

increasing concern due to attendant risks. Asymptomatic significant bacteriuria

R₂

/was investigated in 502 apparently healthy pregnant women attending antenatal

T₃

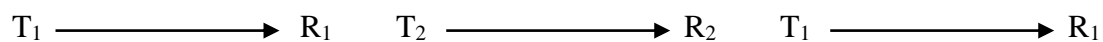
Clinics in Ado Ekiti. The types of bacteria associated with asymptomatic bacteriuria

R₃

/were identified.

(iii) Tp with Derived Theme

Themes are derived from a hypertheme. Fries (2001) describes a hypertheme as the superordinate term to which all the themes relate. Danes (1974: 114) represents it thus:



Example 3:

T₁R₁

A critical analysis of the traditional African theatre forms/ suggests that they are suitable sources for evolving television drama, since the traditional theatre presents a unique aesthetic principle for the demonstration of theatre forms

T_2

R_2

In Nigeria. This/ means an examination of the concept of aesthetic in general and how aesthetic quantities re-define the traditional theatre in particular because

T_3

These quantities exert full impact on Televisions drama. The history of Television

R_3

drama in Nigeria, which a close look at its form and content/ was investigated and predicated on those productions that had already been done on the Nigeria Television screen.

(iv) The Split Rheme TP Pattern

Danes (1974: 120) ascertained that the combination of patterns 1 – 3 gave birth to the forth one, which is called the Split Rheme TP. It is illustrated thus:



Example 4:

T_1

R_1

All substance/ can be divided into two classes, elementary substances and

T_2

R_2

compounds. An elementary substance/ is a substance which consists of atoms of only one

T₁R₃

kind ... A compound/ is a substance which consists of atom of two or more different kinds ...4.0

Analysis of Data

This section is devoted to the analysis of the selected catholic creeds. The analysis of each of the selected Catholic creeds will be done in the subsequent sections.

4.1 Information Packaging in The Apostle's Creed

CLAUSE	THEME	RHEME
1.	I	believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.
2.	Who	was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
3.	Q	born of the Virgin Mary,
4.	Q	suffered under Pontius Pilate
5.	Q	was crucified, died, and
6.	Q	was buried.
7.	He	ascended into Hell; the third day.
8.	He	arose again from the dead;
9.	He	ascended into Heaven and

10.	Q	is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
11.	From thence, He	shall come to judge the living and the dead.
12.	I	believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting, Amen.

The Apostle's creed begins with the use of personal pronoun 'I'. The simple linear TP is employed in clauses 1-2. The rheme of clause 1 forms the theme of clause 2. In clauses 3-6, the zero or implied themes are used in sequence to maintain the constant TP starting from the theme of clause 2 which is realized by a relative pronoun 'who' that has an antecedent. In clause 7-11, the constant TP is employed with the use of third person singular pronoun 'He' but the theme is only implied in clause 10. Most of the themes in these clauses have identical wording. In clause 12, the personal pronoun 'I' is used to wind up or wrap up the confession or declaration of faith. In the last unit of the Apostle's creed, the declaration of beliefs such as Holy Spirit, Holy Catholic Church, Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and life everlasting all what constitute the tenet of Catholic faith are summarized. The constant TP and the simple linear TP featured in the Apostles creed but the Constant TP have the highest degree of occurrence in projecting the messages of the creed which are: the divinity of Christ, corroboration of scripture, clearing pervasive believe and doubts, affirmation and strong confession of faith, declaration of faith, clarification of heretical speculations, affirmation of the virgin-birth of Jesus, forgiveness of sins, the suffering and death of Jesus, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the universality of the church, among others.

INFORMATION PACKAGING IN THE NICENE CREED

CLAUSE	THEME	RHEME
1	I	Believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.
2.	Q	and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father,
3.	by Whom all things	were made;
4.	and for Who for us men our salvation,	came down from Heaven,
5.	Q	and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary .
6.	Q	and was made Man;
7.	He	was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate,
8.	Q	and was buried.

9.	And the third day, He	rose again according to the Scriptures,
10.	Q	and ascended into Heaven.
11.	He	sitteth at the right hand of the Father:
12.	and He	shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead:
13.	And His kingdom	shall have no end.
14.	Q	and in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life,
15.	Who	proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
16.	Who, together with the Father and the Son,	is adored and glorified:
17.	Who	spoke by the prophets.
18.	And I	believe in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church.
19.	I	confess one Baptism for the remission of sins.
20.	And I	expect the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, Amen.

Nicene creed starts off with the split rheme TP which is a combination of simple linear and derived TP patterns. In clauses 1-6 where the believes in God the Father and The Lord Jesus Christ constitute the topical issue. In clause 7, third person pronoun 'He' is used to introduce the clause.

From clauses 7-12, the constant TP is realized with almost all the clause with identical wording save for clauses 8 and 10 where there are implied or zero themes and also clause 13 where the pronoun is in genitive or possessive case. From clause 14, there is another topical issue of the believe in 'Holy Ghost... the giver of life' with zero theme but can be inferred. From clause 14-17, the constant TP is demonstrated and were realized by the relative pronoun. Clauses 18-20 are another topical issues in the Nicene creed, the believe in the Holy Catholic Church and summary of Christian faith such as Baptism, resurrection of the dead, life of the world to come, among others. The themes of these clauses are realizes by personal pronoun 'I' with the coordinating conjunction 'and' with the exception of clause 19.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The constant TP and the split-rheme TP featured in the Nicene creed unlike the Apostle creed where the constant TP and simple linear TP featured. The constant TP dominates the information packaging of the Nicene creed like that of the Apostles' creed. The differences and the similarities of the two creed are (i) The Nicene creed is longer than the Apostles's creed and also more comprehensive. The variation in length may be borne out of the fact that Nicene creed came after the Apostles creed to clear some ounce of controversies and heretical beliefs in the early church.(ii)Both creeds establish the divinity and Virgin-birth of Jesus Christ, corroboration of scripture, clearing pervasive believe and doubts, affirmation and strong confession of faith, declaration of faith, clarification of heretical speculations, affirmation of the virgin-birth of Jesus, forgiveness of sins, the suffering and death of Jesus, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the universality of the church, among others.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the information contents of the Apostles creed and Nicene creed via theme-rheme model of the Prague school enhances a better understanding of the messages of the creeds in particular and also contribute to the existing literature on the language of religion in general. The work also strengthens and makes explicit how information contents can be reveal through theme-rheme analysis which is a tool of organization of information packaging in discourse structure.

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