

# Lexico-Semantic Interpretation of Pentecostal Church Posters

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Received: November 17, 2017

Accepted: December 8, 2017

Online Published: December 11, 2017

doi:10.5430/elr.v6n4p69

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/elr.v6n4p69>

## Abstract

This paper examines the lexico-semantic choices in the Pentecostal church posters. The researcher attempts to approach the interpretation of the Christian posters from the stylistic view point. Its meaning was made explicit using the tool of linguistics. It is a known fact, that stylistics is beneficial to both the teachers and students. Using M.A.K Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, as the analytical framework, this paper, examines the lexical semantic choices in the Pentecostal church posters.

Pentecostal church posters happen to be one of the several media of advertisement employed by the churches to disseminate information about the churches' events to the audience/passers-by. Previous studies on the language of advertisements are concerned with the themes of commercial and political posters while the others looked at the elements of pragmatics such as speech acts and implicature etc. This paper reveals that the construction of posters (texts) is a linguistically conscious activity.

**Keywords:** Lexico-semantic, Interpretation, Pentecostal church, Posters, Religious advertising

## 1. Introduction

The study of language, which happens to be the subject matter of linguistics, according to, Siyal and Jindal (2010:18), entails that "we mark or sub-divide the area in order to study analytically or systematically". This position is further expanded by Alo (1995:13) as "a complex phenomenon and be studied effectively; it is broken into major levels or areas. Within modern descriptive linguistics, a language is studied from the following angles. "Phonology, grammar lexis and semantics". Interestingly, stylistics focuses on all the dimensions of language use which are deployed by users of language in various distinctive ways to communicate textual messages to achieve aesthetic effects.

The essence of the view canvassed above is that, Lexis and Semantics are distinctive aspects of language which integrate with other aspects of human communication.

According to Alabi (2008:252), Lexis is "a general term used to refer to the vocabulary or diction of language". The term 'Lexis' originated from Greek and became popularized within linguistics circles in the 1960's. It was used by the British linguists, particularly, for the vocabulary of language especially of its stock of lexemes. Lexis describes the storage of language, in our mental lexicon, as ready-made patterns that can be recalled and sorted into meaningful speech and writing. Lexis as a concept, therefore, has a distinct identity from other traditional levels of linguistic study. This is because it refers to the word stock of a language from which writers and speakers make choices for expression in accordance to their specific purpose and intended meaning.

A writer exploits the vast resources of language which are abundantly provided by lexis for his imaginative creation. To this extent, writers depend on lexical items and their connotations to convey their intended messages as well as achieve aesthetic beauty. Wales (2001:54) not only supports the above position but also adds that "a language user is free to select features from available resources of language at his/her disposal. This choice is partly conditioned by the demands of genre, form, or theme of discourse." This position by Wales, explains why writers make lexical choices with such care to achieve the delicate target of fusing words, meaning, and imaginativeness in language use.

It becomes apparent, from the argument above, that the rationale for studying the nature and functioning of the vocabulary of a text is to decode the meaning of the text which is at the very heart of language study and use. The view is supported by Adedimeji (2006:181), who opines that, "the engine of language is meaning. Without meaning, there is no language. In fact, the essence of language is to generate or convey meaning". The focus on lexical semantics is significant in the sense that it underpins their functional relationship. The relationship of these two

notions (lexis and semantics) were succinctly put by Esan (2005:91-92), when he posits that "...lexis and semantics are so intricately linked to each other that they cannot be separated in the description of texts".

In spite of the fact, that lexical semantics is very critical to language analysis, it is, however, imperative to underscore the fact, that lexical choices become meaningful only in concrete or pragmatic situations or contexts. This is one of the cardinal areas of emphasis of the Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar, which we have adopted for this study.

This paper, therefore, explores the strategic importance and relevance of Lexico-Semantic elements to the overall understanding and interpretation of the linguistic style of Pentecostal church poster writers. What this means is that, this paper critically foregrounds some of the lexical patterning employed in the texts (posters) with reference to both the lexical meaning and context of situation.

Since Lexico-Semantic analysis, essentially, is a blend of linguistic choice with linguistic meaning, the overall comprehension of a text therefore entails an exploitation of the linguistic choices and semantic interpretations, to unearth the concerns of a writer/text.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, as a theoretical model for the analysis, is based on its correlation between form and function especially in the three metafunctions' of language which the model espouses. These metafunctions include; Ideational, interpersonal and textual. The textual metafunctions is relevant to the present study because it is concerned with the mode which deals with the internal organization and communicative nature of a text. Halliday's textual functions of language, according to Leach and Short (1985:209), are "ways of using language to express, organize and understand information for effective communication". In his view, Adeyanju (2008:87), sees it as "the availability of an internal structure which makes it possible for the writer or speaker to construct texts that are not only coherent but also situationally appropriate". The point being made here by these scholars, is that the textual metafunction relates textual messages to ideas which are outside the discourse.

### *2.1 Brief on Posters*

Communication is a means of transmission of ideas, thoughts/feelings. It is made of two major categories; the verbal and the non-verbal means. The most common of the two used for interaction in human societies is the non-verbal. Posters is one of the leading non-verbal means of communication in the society today especially the commercial, political and religious posters. While the commercial posters are commonly designed to appeal to customers to patronize a particular product and the political campaign posters designed primarily to familiarize a candidate to the electorate, the religious posters on their own are also designed specially to attract worshippers to the church/mosque or other places of worship. Posters are a very important form of visual communication; it presents pictures with meaning lying behind it.

Sharndama and Mohammed, (2013) observe that: "a poster is any piece of printed paper designed to be attached to a wall or vertical surface. Typically posters include both textual and graphic elements (although a poster may be either wholly graphical or wholly textual)." Posters are designed to be both eye-catching and informative. They may be used for many purposes. They are a frequent tool of advertisers (particularly for events, musicians, films, crusades, rallies) propagandists, protestors and other groups trying to communicate a message. Posters are used for reproduction of art works, particularly famous works and are generally low- cost compared to the original artwork.

A poster is a message carrier and medium of advertising with variety of functions. As a form of advertising its main function is to attract attention and to manipulate. It is also a socio-cultural medium that transmits artistic and social phenomena and problems. It equally entertains primarily. Posters have been examined from the point of view of advertising and marketing, but their communicative situation and linguistic devices have not been analysed in depth only as part of the characteristics of the language of advertising. Sas, (2007) insists that posters serve as the cave drawing of the modern era. They are icons, since they refer to the object by being similar to it.

Every poster contains some kind of image. The relationship of the image and the meaning assigned to it is sometimes problematic. Moricz, (1999:19) believes that though the image has a great emotional force, it has multiple meanings in itself; therefore, its meaning usually has to be made ambiguous. According to Barthes, (1977), unlike Linguistic signs, every image is polysemous and the viewer or reader selects some interpretations out of an enormous set of possible candidates while simultaneously rejecting other meanings. In the course of interpretation, the text which accompanies the image (i.e language) in addition to the context helps to anchor the meaning, thereby directing the interpreter to the expected interpretation.

It is also important to note that every poster is characterized by visuality, but its creators do not leave the interpretation of the visual images to chance. Text, in addition to image also appears on the poster, either supporting or changing the primary meaning suggested by the iconic image. The attention/attracting force of posters however, is provided by the image rather than the text. Images seem to trigger faster understanding and recollection of relevant data; they help imprint information and evoke emotions more easily than linguistic signs which may be due to the fact that images are stored in memory for longer periods of time (Moricz and Teglassy, 1999:159-160). Posters therefore can be regarded as complex texts and “these text are semiotically ‘thick’, since they use several means and channels at the same time”. Gardner and Luchtenberg (2000:1809). They are found in different sizes and used for advertisement of a product as earlier mentioned.

### *2.2 The Language of Posters*

Posters in their linguistic devices, aim most importantly to employ means of capturing attention and of differentiating from other verbal means of advertising. This is achieved through exaggerated statements, words referring to novelty, quality and excellence, unique word formation; the use of complex meaning of words and language games. The imagery and text of the posters create an effect together and poster viewers usually like interactive posters (i.e. those which involve more than text in the communication process in the play of images and words).

The linguistic characteristics, exaggerations and language use for advertising posters are well illustrated by some of the Pentecostal church posters.

Posters, as veritable means of advertising are often indices of people’s attitudes. This is because in order for an advert to work, it must tap into some thinking ‘out there’ in the market place. But it would be a mistake to think that adverts are a simple reflection of how we are in some natural way. Advertising, according to Goddard (2002:65), as a very public form of discourse, “is also part of the way we construct our ideas about the world around us”. This includes: what people are like, who does what, who is important and why, what we should be worried about and so on”. The implication of this is that advertising often taps into what it (itself) has helped to create. Part of the discourse of advertising is the problematic aspects of life that can be solved by means of a product (in this case, the church’s programme/events).

As part of written advertisement, posters have another way of teasing the brain because of their very nature as written language. “They can remain written language but, with the knowledge that we are using our “inner voice” when we are reading, play themselves off against spoken language. This applies not just to hooks but word play is likely to occur frequently in that position because of the hook’s function as an attention getter”. See Goddard, (2002). This play, sometimes, involves the alteration of conventional spellings, changes in sounds are suggested (for example, phoneme substitution, where one sound is replaced by another), sometimes written elements regroup when spoken, producing new configurations and therefore new meanings.

Separating posters from the other forms of written adverts is achieved by playing with images and on words for unique and surprising effects. This however, has to be achieved as economically as possible since the available space and reception by the viewers present limitations to expression.

Posters are however characterized by compression and condensation in both imagery and language which can be achieved most easily through the use of figures of speech, linguistic imagery and language games. “A figure of speech’, according to Szikszaine (2007), ‘is usually defined as a deviation from the linguistic norm. This deviation from the usual norm always has a great stylistic effect”.

Figures of speech, in the case of advertising, are often used to introduce a brand name or product name into the advertising slogan or as a source of linguistic humor. Language games therefore, become indispensable requirements of posters since they can attract and maintain the attention of their target audience only through it due to limited conditions of their reception. A visual way of expression is easily transmitted linguistically by figures of speech. Posters often contain metaphors, symbols, similes, examples of metonymy, allegory, personification, etc since these can communicate a lot of meaning in condensed form. A transfer of features of animals to humans is very frequent in posters. Personification is also a frequent device used in posters, attributing human characteristics to non-human beings or depicting one as being human.

### *2.3 The Importance of Posters to Pentecostal Churches*

Advertisement mainly used to be the tool of the entrepreneur. But things have changed now as the advertising spaces are being competed for by the entrepreneurs themselves, Christian churches/organizations, politicians and other non-profit making organizations. These organizations, other than business organizations, engage in advertisement to persuade (and most times to manipulate) people into acting in certain ways to the advantage of the advertisers.

According to Philips (1997:15-16), “Manipulation is a deliberate and successful attempt by one person to get another person by appeals to reason to freely accept beliefs, attitudes, values, intentions or actions”. In the case of Pentecostal church adverts, the main purpose is usually to get people to attend a programme in which the preacher, through persuasive strategies influence the audiences’ belief, to modify or change it or to make such audience to behave in a certain way.

Furthermore, Pentecostal (church) adverts on posters, handbills and billboards are linguistically (sometimes semiotically) meant to invite people by creating suspense, making the readers to see lack or needs in their lives and also to see the church programmes as a means of solving the perceived lack and needs. The implication is that advertisements are by nature subtle attacks on people’s emotions and sensibilities.

Most posters and handbills contain names of the churches, host pastors (even the photographs of both the pastors and their spouses plus that of the guest preacher(s) or minister(s)) venue, time, themes and other phrases or sentences that serve as side attraction to encourage the posters’ readers to come. Some of these phrases/sentences include: salvation message, choir ministration, testimonies (or film show) etc. As stated earlier, posters/handbills help to invite people to church for fellowship with the host. It is worthy of note that advertisers take delight in an audience who see advert to be harmless nonsense for such an audience is made defenseless its belief that there is no attack taking place. Instances of this abound in Pentecostal church posters adverts which appear innocuous, especially as it is generally believed that any piece of writing that bears the nature of God (or Jesus Christ) is purely evangelistic with no pecuniary motive on the part of the author hence, no manipulation is meant – all they want are some of the “lost Souls” restored for God.

Studying the Pentecostal church adverts via posters and handbills with a bit of pragmatic details exposes some later devices and strategies used by authors/advertisers to break the defensive walls of the audience.

### 3. Previous Studies

Several attempts have been made by scholars towards unraveling the concept of the language of advertising with particular interest in religious (Pentecostal church) advertising using different linguistic stylistics and pragmatics approaches. This section therefore is devoted to a review of such previous relevant scholarly works.

Babatunde, (1986) studies the Language of Electronic Mediated Evangelical Christian Messages in Nigeria and observes that language is characterized by verdictive, directive, and expressive speech acts. In describing the style of electronic media advertisements in English in Nigeria, Odeunmi, (2007) states that the language of electronic media in Nigeria is characterized by blending, conversion, compounding, locative prefixation, derivative suffixes, and inflectional suffixes. According to Denovan (1976:10), a religious language which he studied, is an effective one because it often affects people’s sub-consciousness and feelings.

On his part, Onoja, (210) examines one of the varieties of language employed by Christian religious adherents within the context of church sermons. The essence of his work is to enhance familiarization with different aspects of church language, especially for non-Christians as well as the laity. His work focused on the Pentecostal setting and was based on a sermon by Bishop David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. He examined some peculiar linguistic/stylistic features such as the use of complex sentences, register diction, anaphora, repetition, archaism, tone, and rhetorical questions.

Ugot and Offiong (2013) dwell on language use and communication in the Pentecostal church of Nigeria with particular reference to Calabar in Cross Rivers State of Nigeria. Their work observed that language use and communication arise out of the doctrine characteristics of the church which shapes all aspects of language and communication use in the church including literary devices in preaching and prayers.

Nwankwegu et.al (2014) examines some features of language use in advertising discourse. They sought to reveal the pragmatic strategies employed by the advertisers to persuade or manipulate the audience. Their study, like this present study, focused on church advertisements as displayed on handbills and posters with a view to raising the level of awareness of the audience/readers on the persuasive and manipulating techniques used in this genre of advertising. They adopted the pragmatic theoretical approach because advertisement messages are usually highly sub textual and emotive, thereby adopting persuasion techniques and supra-semantic expressions meant to massage and amplify the inadequacies of the audience. According to them, their major findings is that virtually all advertisements are presupposive and implicatural, drawing from varieties of contexts.

In a similar vein, Nwankwegu (2016) sees Christian advertising as a specific domain which draws largely from Christian ideological assumptions and communicates certain overt and covert messages. For him, the audiences’ background knowledge and assumptions are crucial factors in the relevance-theoretic interpretation of advertisement

messages. His work examined how ideological meanings and implicatures are communicated, what they communicate and how they are interpreted in Christian advertisements. He employed the relevance theoretical framework for the analysis of data. He observed that Christian advertisers and their target audience share common values, which according to him, usually form the background based upon which they both interact within the platform of language of advertising.

Adedun and Mekiliuwa, (2010) in 'Discourse Features and Patterns in a Nigerian Pentecostal Christian Sermon', consider the features and patterns of discourse in a Nigerian Pentecostal sermon. They also looked at the discourse strategies employed by the preacher in communicating biblical truths. Furthermore, the study examined the relationship of formal structures in discourse to communicative and socio-functional goals of the preacher.

Their research findings revealed that sermons are indeed highly structured speech event consisting of linguistic categories and units which are however functionally determined and interpreted. It further demonstrated the interrelatedness of language, knowledge, action meaning and context in discourse. The research findings is a kind of confirmation of Cook's (1989) assertion that " *if we are to find answers to the problem of what gives stretches of language unity and meaning, we must look beyond the formal rules operating within sentences and consider the people who use language and the world in which it happens as well*".

Adeyanju (2008) did a critical "stylo-semantic analysis of pastor Adeboye's New Year compliments. Accordingly, the preacher used the contents of the greeting cards, which were sent to members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God by Pastor Enoch Adeboye, to commemorate the beginning of 2003 as his corpus. His study is a painstaking one in that it reveals a cohesive use of linguistic and literary resources in handling two main themes: the passage of time and the brevity of life on earth on the one hand, and prayers for revival and abundant life on the other hand. Adeyanju's study is based on Halliday's systematic functional Grammar. It reveals that the message deviates from the normal pattern of complimentary expression in greeting cards. Rather it focuses on the vanity of life the worldly riches and the accountability of man on the last day. The study adopts certain graphological (lexico-semantic and rhetorical features in order to aid better understanding of the text.

The study above is similar to this present one in that, it deals with Christian religious advertisement (greeting cards) and also uses aspects of the systemic function Grammar. The slight different with this current study, is that it deals with Pentecostal church poster in general and not restricted to the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Odebode and Dabi (2015), carried out a study on "Speech Acts in Billboard Messages of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Redemption camp, Nigeria: A Pragmatic Study." Their study was based on Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory. They carefully examined about seventeen billboards in order to validate certain search questions which they raised. They wanted to know in their research questions the different pragmatic elements interest in the billboards; the types of speech acts used and equally wondered if they could establish that the billboards communicated meaningful messages to the worshippers. Their study however indicated a preponderance of the illocutionary acts of infirming and advising and demonstrated also that the billboards are inundated with various meaning making strategies which enhances their multifarious interpretations.

Their study relates, in a way, to the present study in the sense that, it deals with billboard/poster advertisement of a Pentecostal church. It is however different from it, in that, while it adopted Austin's speech Acts theory, this study adopts Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and examines Pentecostal church posters in general.

Sharndana and Muhammed (2013), examine 'Stylistic Analysis of selected campaign poster and slogans in Yola metropolis of Adamawa State of Nigeria'. In their research, Crystal and Davy's (1985) Linguistic Stylistic Model of Analysis was used as a model of analysis. They wanted to know via their research questions, the graphic, graphological, lexical features interest in the posters. They also examined and discussed the syntactic and semantic implications of the use of political poster and slogans in campaigns. The results showed that the poster, at the graphological level, are of different shapes and sizes and are beautifully designed to attract attention of the electorates or passers-by.

This study, though looks at posters, which is the only related area to this present study, differs from it in that it looked at political campaign posters. It also used as a model, a linguistic stylistic model of analysis while this current study used a pragmatic-stylistic model of analysis.

"A Pragmatic Stylistic Analysis of John 3:16", by Dada (2012), is yet another previous study. In his study he demonstrates, that a major stylistic meaning inducing technique in a text composition can manifest at the graphological level. The graphological study of John 3:16 features the use of gothic printed letters, re-arrangement (verse paragraph), capitalization, and punctuation marks. He manipulated a fusion of gothic printed letters, and

capitalization in the text to coin **Valentine** out of this verse of scripture. Other pragmatic channels such as speech acts, presupposition, inference, implicature and his termed “Mutual Contextual Beliefs” (MCB’s), were also used to interpret the meaning of the text.

The study above, though deals with the analysis of a verse of the Christian scripture, using the pragmatics/ stylistics model of analysis, however, differs from the current study, in obvious ways. The difference in the present study is the fact that it looks at the analysis of Pentecostal Church Posters. It also looks at the analysis of the language of posters in the Pentecostal church and their effects on the readers or audience.

#### 4. Lexico-Semantic Features

Lexico-semantic analysis refers to the examination of texts in relation to a writer’s diction and the manner in which his choices affect the meaning of his work. It is one of the forms/levels of stylistic analysis of texts. This method provides a broader view of literature.

According to Oha and Dada (2012:206), “Stylistics in African literature can thus be seen as a linguistic method of analyzing the various styles in which African writers bring out the striking elements of aesthetics through linguistic choices with linguistic meaning. The question here is; how does the text mean? In order to properly interpret this, both the linguistic choices and semantic interpretations are exploited in order to unearth the thematic concerns of a particular writer or text.

Lexis refers in linguistics as the entire vocabulary of a given language. The major concern in stylistic analysis is on how words are selected from the language of the users’ linguistic store house to meet communication needs “The lexis of religious language generally are subject-specific and abstract nouns are quite common since decisions are often theoretical though they may be directly linked to a proposed plan of action” (Thorne, 1997). The analysis of the texts reveals that the key words are mostly descriptive and emotive. A lot of them are presented in metaphors, imagery/symbols etc, which embody the religious mission of the preachers/pastors. As typical of the language of advertisement, the lexis of religious language are carefully selected in order to entice the readers/passers-by in order to abandon their opinion and hold on to that of the pastors/preachers (or the posters’ writers).

Posters like any other form of written advertisements carry meanings beyond the conceptual and denotational level. Virtually, all the inscriptions (in phrases and sentences) are connotational. Connotation in religious context refers to feelings, attitude, moods implied by a term or phrase employed by speakers/writers to help them achieve their goals. Beyond the literal meaning, there lies implied value judgment or feeling which the writers (i.e pastors/preachers) hope to be considered as positive by the adherents/readers. To this extent, the lexical and even syntactic features are mostly connotations. What this means is that they are subjective and emotional as well as objective and substantive. These features are always interpreted as positive by the Pentecostal church pastors/preachers and their followers/adherents while some of the orthodox preachers/pastors and their followers, on the other hand, interpret them in negativity. For instance, the theme in datum (11) “Open Door” cannot be objectively interpreted within the sphere of religion. They are however, selected purposely by the Pentecostal church pastors/poster writers in order to motivate and entice the followers to attend and participate in the said programme/church event.

The point being made here is that phrases and or sentences used by way of themes/sub-themes in Pentecostal church posters are highly emotive but can hardly be interpreted objectively. Themes/slogans are the most important aspect of a poster with text. “A good slogan (theme) according to Sas,(2007) carries a simple, brief, rhythmical, condensed and filling message, has a transferable meaning and a wide association range and is easy to remember (150)”. Cases in point include:

**OPEN DOOR (11)**

**Prophetic Declaration (19)**

**Overflowing grace (21)**

**Changing Family pattern (14)**

**This case has a solution (1) and**

**That Goliath must GO-DOWN**

The list of themes (or slogans) above supports Sas’ Position that they carry simple, brief, rhythmic, condensed and filing message. In fact, the brevity of the themes makes it easy to remember. This research shall therefore undertake the lexico-semantic analysis of the Pentecostal posters from the angles of the use of metaphor, imagery/symbols and other figurative language in the conveyance of meaning.

## 5. Metaphor

This simply involves a direct comparison of two things. It is opposed to simile which uses ‘as’ or ‘like’ in its comparison. According to Abrams, (1981:58) “It is the metaphoric meaning of a word in most cases that is derived from usage and association”. By this definition, it seems apparent that metaphor has no precise definition because of its complex nature, rather what it does is that it identifies two things and compares them by transferring the quality of one to another. A careful look at some of the themes presented above reveals the following metaphorical usages.

The word “**DOOR**” in the ‘open Door’ is a direct comparison to the person and character of Jesus Christ in the Holy Bible where he is referred to as the **door** which leads to eternal life. It is obvious to Christians who read the bible that God places before them an ‘open door’ which no man has the ability to shut. From this stand point, one sees open door as representing unlimited progress, prosperity, access and success. This is opposed to closed door (which signifies backwardness, stagnation, poverty, want etc.)

Another strong metaphor that is used is ‘**goliath**’ in the theme “that goliath must GO DOWN”. This usage is a direct reference to the biblical Goliath of Gath in the Old Testament book of 1st Samuel who posed as a serious threat to all Israel. Goliath from the Bible account represents terror, oppression and bondage. It is these characters of Goliath of Gath that is compared to the physical/spiritual challenges and or hindrances that bedevil Christians. To this extent, the posters theme pronounces a verdict of death to whatever that has the semblance of Goliath in the lives of people. This of course, is a good catch/trap into which people must fall as everyone is constantly in search of solutions/miracles.

“The **ODUMA** of Judah” in (8) is yet another metaphor that is employed by Pentecostal church posters in the dissemination of the messages. ‘Oduma’ is an Edo word for lion. “The Oduma of Judah” simply is translated to mean the lion of Judah. Lion is the strongest animal in the jungle and that is why it is referred to as the king of the jungle (forest). These attributes of the lion are used by Bible writers in comparison with Jesus Christ who is referred to as the lion of the tribe of Judah.

As stated earlier, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of expressions like these based on the denotation. The poster writers, I believe, chose this theme, having at the back of their minds the knowledge that when a lion roars, all the animals scamper for safety; and in the same vein, when Jesus Christ steps on to the stage, problems, crisis or challenges vanish into the thin air.

Finally on the use of metaphor, we have the word “Mara” taken from the theme “Turning my Mara to Sweetness” (2). The word ‘Mara’ seems to refer to bitterness. It is used to represent every form of bitter experience/situation. The original usage of this term dates back to the period of the biblical story of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt as they journeyed up to a place called ‘Mara’ and ‘Meriba’ where the water was so bitter that Israel cried up to God. Another mention of ‘mara’ from the scriptures is the place where Naomi, out of her bitter experience of losing both her husband and two sons in the land of exile, preferred to be called ‘mara’ (bitterness) in place of Naomi (sweetness which her name signified).

Pentecostal church posters writers in choosing this theme, made a direct comparison of whatever discomfort, distress or challenges to the experience of Naomi on the Old Testament book of Ruth.

## 6. The Use of Imagery/Symbols

Imagery is a literary device/techniques used by writers to paint vivid pictures with words on the minds of their readers/listeners. These pictures/visions enhance the interpretation and better understanding by the reader/audience. A lot of imageries and symbols are employed by Pentecostal church poster writers which make the readership interesting and that comprehension a bit easier. Some of the imageries and symbols used in poster include:

“This **Case** has a **solution**” (1)

“Oh Lord! Settle my **Case**” (3)

“That **Goliath** must Go Down” (5)

“My **Battle** is Over” (7)

“The**Oduma**of Judah” (8)

“Who Dig this **pit** for me go fall inside” (9)

“Give me Back my **Birth-Right**” (10)

“None shall**Escape**” (13)

“**Evilpot** must catch **Fire**” (25)

“A city set on a **HILL**” (26)

“Oh Lord Empty my **SEAT** my death” (27)

“My **Star** will shine again” (28)

“**Pursue** me no more” (30)

(Please note that the emphasis on the highlighted words are personal)

From the various themes presented above, it is evident that each of the highlighted words has a strong impression on the mind of the reader/listener. For instance, “**case**” as contained in data (1) and (3) paints a picture of a serious challenge on the minds of both the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader. Case refers in the local context, to a matter either in court or at the police station. Also at the different local hospitals or health centres, patient’s health history is contained in what is called a case file. Depending on the angle it is looked at, it refers to something serious that has the ability of affecting one negatively. Also in datum (7) the word “battle” easily presents a contest of serious magnitude. Warfare and struggle especially in the military context as in the battle against Boko Haram. So its usage in a church environment connotes a kind of spiritual warfare. Therefore the usage in the theme signifies the end of all struggles/rivalries. “**Goliath**” in the same vein, reality presents a picture of a mighty warrior who seems indomitable in the lives of people going by the knowledge of the story of David and Goliath in the old testament of the Bible. The theme “That Goliath must go-down” is a declaration of a resolve to ensure that all forces of oppression and delays and challenges of any sort, must go down as the biblical giant went down before a little boy (David).

In “**The Oduma of Judah**” ‘Oduma’ is to an Edo person means lion. This imagery is made easier for none Edo language speakers by the vivid picture of a lion on the poster. The fact that the lion is pictured in a resting position, suggests a kind of security for those who are within the supervising eyes to the lion. This is the lot of Christians, who have Jesus Christ, as the lion of the tribe of Judah, in their lives.

Other imageries as used in the posters include: **Pit, Birth-right, Escape, Evil pot, Fire, Pursue** in the datum 9, 10, 13, 25 and 30, respectively seen to have similar background and paintings of violence, oppression, struggle and a declaration of war on the oppressors.

### The Use of Alliteration

This is the repetition of similar consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close together. It is a variable element of sound employed by writers especially poet for the creation of pleasant rhythmic effects in the works (poems). Readers’ attention to certain words in a line of poetry is drawn with the use alliteration. Examples of this element of sound are found in some of the Pentecostal church posters examined. These include;

“The **p**ower of his **p**resence”

“**R**epent, **R**estore **R**ejoice”

“A **C**ity set on a **h**ill”

Apparently it is observed that there is a repetition of “P” in the Theme on Datum (12). The power of his presence. Also, the consonant “R” is repeated in the three words present in that theme. “Repent Restore Rejoice”. Obviously, one is tempted to see the musical notes that accompany this particular theme. Finally, there is the repetition of “S” consonants in the theme, “A city set on a Hill”. All these consonant sounds are employed in order to draw the attention of readers/audience to the posters. It should be noted that the vocabularies of the theme used in these posters are everyday words but they are used in such a way that make them appear descriptive, emotive and metaphorical.

The point being made here is that phrases and or sentences used by way of themes or sub-themes in Pentecostal church posters are highly emotive and can hardly be interpreted objectively. Religious themes in general and Pentecostal church themes on posters in particular are best seen at the semantic level as connotative-subjective, personal and idiosyncratic. They are usually interpreted on the religious/ideological leanings, beliefs and affiliation of the pastors/ preachers.

From the foregoing discussion therefore, conclusion may be drawn to the effect that Pentecostal church posters carry inscriptions that are mostly ambiguous since they are open to more than one interpretation. They are idiosyncratic, personal and subjective as they vary in their consideration by the audience (readers/followers).

## 7. Conclusion

This study has revealed that advertisers operate within the limits of language use just as other users of the English language. It has equally broadened the scope of knowledge in the area of stylistics. It has further revealed that Pentecostal church posters are essential visual communication means by which the pastors/preachers and church leaders alike advertise and draw attention of their target audience to their churches and churches' events. The posters are usually large and attractive as they are particularly designed to entice their target audience/passers-by to change their opinion. The Pentecostal church posters play virtually the same role with both commercial and political posters in terms of persuading and influencing the people's opinion. The colorful photographs and inscriptions, give the posters attractive background. The key words are not only descriptive and emotive but also presented in phrases and simple sentences. The simplicity of the syntax makes it possible for majority of the audience/passers-by to read and quickly interpret the themes. It can be deduced from the analysis carried on various linguistic components that, Pentecostal church posters like the commercial/political types are very important means of communication to the consumers of the advertisers' goods and services.

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**Appendix**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Theme of Posters</b>	<b>Name of Church/Ministry</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	This case has a Solution	Liberation Power Ministry, Benin City	Tuesdays and Thursdays
2.	Turning my Mara to Sweetness	Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Benin City	14-16 July 2017
3.	Oh Lord Settle my Case	Liberation Power Ministry, Benin City	20 <sup>th</sup> -22 <sup>nd</sup> July, 2017.
4.	Oh Lord Fight the Battle	God Answers Prayers Ministry Benin City	24 <sup>th</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> August, 2017.
5.	That Goliath Must Go Down	Urgent Intervention and Fire Ministry, Uromi	1 <sup>st</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> August, 2017
6.	I shall be Congratulated		26 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> July, 2017
7.	My Battle is Over	Christ Grace Ministries Breaking Arena	23 <sup>rd</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup> February, 2017
8.	The Oduma of Judah	Pillar of Fire International Church	20 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> July, 2017
9.	Who Dig this pit for me will Fall inside	African Pastors International Assembly	25 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> April, 2017
10.	Give me Back my Birth-Right	Miracle City Prophetic and Deliverance Ministry	9 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 23 <sup>rd</sup> July, 2017
11.	Open Door	Gethsemane Fire Ministry Int'l	8 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> August, 2017
12.	The Power of his Presence	Believers Ministries, Benin City	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> August, 2017
13.	None Shall Escape	Channel of Solution Power Ministry	12 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> June, 2017
14.	Changing Family Pattern	Assemblies of God Church, Uromi	30 <sup>th</sup> June, 2017
15.	When a prophet is Involved	Kingdom Ambassadors Ministries Int'l, Uromi	19 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> August, 2017
16.	Heirs of God	Christ Royal Treasure Ministry Inc., Uromi	4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> August, 2017
17.	Anointing to take Over	City of Grace Miracle Ministries Int'l, Uromi	16 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> August, 2017
18.	Repent, Restore, Rejoice	Word of His Grace Mission, Benin City	3 <sup>rd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> August, 2017
19.	Prophetic Declaration	Favour House Int'l Gospel Centre, Uromi	27 <sup>th</sup> -29 <sup>th</sup> June, 2017
20.	The Lord Who Can Do Much More	Creation World Bible Church	21 <sup>st</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> June, 2017
21.	Overflowing Grace	His Glory Tabernacle of Liberation Ministry Int'l, Uromi	23 <sup>rd</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> March, 2017
22.	Manifesting Grace and Mercy	Chariot of Fire Gate Assembly Inc., Uromi	19 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> July, 2017
23.	D gathering of Spirits	Rest and Bless Glorious Assembly Int'l Inc., Benin City	30 <sup>th</sup> July, 2017
24.	Season of Fire	Omega Fire Ministries Int'l Inc., Uromi	27 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> September, 2017
25.	Evil Pot Must catch Fire Season 4	Mount Olive Christian Assembly, Benin City	9 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> October, 2017
26.	A City Set on a Hill	New Covenant Gospel Church, Benin City	23 <sup>th</sup> -29 <sup>th</sup> October, 2017
27.	Oh Lord Empty My Seat of Death	Omega Fire Ministries Int'l Inc., Benin City	18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> October, 2017
28.	My Star Will Shine Again	The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Benin City	1 <sup>st</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> October, 2017
29.	That Witch Must Die	Mercy and Grace Bible Church Inc., Benin City	1 <sup>st</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup> June, 2017
30.	Pursue me No More	Renewal Evangelical ministry Int'l Inc. Benin City	6 <sup>th</sup> may, 2017