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DISCURSIVE DYNAMICS OF ETHNOSENTENTIAL STRATEGIES IN SELECTED AFROCENTRIC HYMNODY

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Abstract

The distinctive nature of hymnody in Christian religious worship has made it a rich and limitless subject for scholarly examination, offering a unique form of communication that continues to fascinate and inspire academic inquiry in Africa, especially in Nigeria. Existing studies in Christian hymns have examined the contents of hymns as music forms with little or no scholarly considerations on the ethnosentential strategies employed by the hymnists. This study, therefore, intends to fill this gap with the view to identifying and discussing discursive dynamics of ethnosentential strategies in Afrocentric hymnody. This study utilizes relevant insights from Teun van Dijk's socio-cognition model of Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the strategies in the selected hymns. The data were purposively derived from the two hymnists: Bola Ilori and Esther Laosebikan, one hymn each titled "Lord, let your blessings attend us" and The Lord is King arrayed in majesty", was purposively selected with the discuss issues of supplication and praise/worship respectively. The analysis revealed that ethno-sentential strategies such as Africanized imagery, collectivization, language indigenization, culturocentrism, hybridization among others characterized African hymns. The findings further revealed that both hymnists use almost similar structural elements such as imperative sentences and comparative phrases, but different in tone, emphasis and imagery. This study concluded that there is an intersection of linguistic features, ethnosentential strategies and discursive dynamics in religious discourse, with focus on hymnody to uncover the complex ways in which language shapes and reflects cultural, social and theological identities.

Keywords: discursive dynamics, ethnosentential, hymnody, discourse issues, supplication.

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Introduction

Discourse has been viewed from different perspectives by scholars as cited by Ogunsiji (2018). Discourse has been used to refer to "series of connected utterances" and a unit of potential analysis larger than a sentence (Wales 1989, Crystal 1987). Crystal (1992) also defines discourse as "a continuous stretch of (especially spoken), language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit such as a sermon, argument, joke or narrative. This definition focuses more on artificially constructed sentences, which generally language users (especially students) must record success in the world at large. In the formal perspective on discourse therefore, artificially constructed sentences are seen as objects of engagement and are seen as the best materials for language study.

As much as the above explanation in respect to artificially constructed sentences is a fact about language use, language cannot be expunged from its contextual factors and variable. This fact is established by Hymes (1972) that the ability to effectively communicate.

In addition, discourse in some instances is referred to as text in situation, whereas text is seen as discourse, independent of situation (Ostman and Virtanen, 2013). From the foregoing, it is observed that discourse is personal and a function of one's favoured pattern of expressing his worldview, based on the knowledge he has of it. Therefore, whether spoken or text, language is the soul of discourse which is dependent on individual's approach to language use.

Discourse, according to Woods (2006), is the real language that real people use in the real world. This reveals that language transcends just the linguistic elements that compose it but that discourse must be contextually constructed by speakers. As a matter of fact, the social world of reality in which discourse is constructed is vital in the interpretation of discourse. Consequently, discursive dynamics as language-in-use refers to the ways in which language is used to shapen and reflect social relationships, power, structure and cultural norms (Fairclough, 2015). van Dijk (2008), on the other hand, sees discursive dynamics as the use of language to perform social actions such as persuading, convincing or manipulating others. Gee (2014) opines that discursive dynamics refers to the ways in which language varies across different social contexts, reflecting and sharing social identities and relationships.

Looking at the different definitions above by different language scholars, discursive dynamics is defined as language in use, language as social action and language variation respectively. In the context of this paper, discursive dynamics is defined as the various ways in which language is used to convey and negotiate meaning.

The term "ethnosentential" was coined by a linguist – John Edwards (2013) to describe the ways in which language is used to construct and negotiate ethnic identity. Edward

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(2013) defined ethnosentential strategies as the linguistic and discursive means by which individuals and groups create, maintain and negotiate their ethnic identities. In linguistics, ethnosentential strategies refer to the use of language to create and manage ethnic boundaries, affiliations and other linguistic features that signal ethnic or cultural identity. In African hymn analysis, ethnosentential strategies take on a unique significance. Singing of hymns is a vital part of African Christian worship, and language plays a crucial role in constructing and negotiating religious and ethnic identities. African hymns often employ local languages, imagery and metaphorical expressions to describe and reveal cultural and religious values. Ethnosentential strategies especially in hymn analysis help analysts to uncover the underlying cultural, social and historical meaning embedded in hymns beyond their literal interpretation as rightly observed by Ojo (2016)

Ethnosentential analysis of hymns involves placing the hymn within its historical and cultural contexts and analyse the hymn's language, imagery and discourse issues in relation to the cultural norms and values of its time (Wren, 2018 and Loftis, 2020). It examines the hymn's role in shaping social identity, community and power dynamics and interpretes the hymn's meaning in relation to its original purpose, audience and performance context. It also covers gender and sexuality analysis (Guthrie, 2020).

Recent scholarship has employed ethnosentential strategies to uncover the complex dynamics of power, identity and cultural exchange in hymns. For instance, scholars have analyzed how hymns reflect and shapen cultural attitude towards gender within the Eurocentric context (Watson, 2019; Clark, 2020 and Tucker, 2018). Evidence abound that insufficient attention has been paid to African hymnody.

Afrocentric hymnody refers to a style of Christian hymns and worship music that originated from Africa, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and emphasises African cultural, musical and theological perspectives. Ojo (2006:151) opines that Afrocentric hymnody is essential for decolonizing Christian worship in Africa, stating that "the adoption of western hymns and its musical style has led to a lot of cultural identity and autonomy". He advocates for the development of indigenous hymns that reflect African experiences and worldviews. It is therefore necessary to examine the ethnosentential strategies used in selected Afrocentric hymns by unveiling the various ways in which language is used to reveal the underlying cultural social and historical context of the hymns.

Statement of the problems

There are lots of studies that have been carried out on religious discourse, especially Christian hymnody. For instance, Akinyemi (2015) emphasizes the importance of indigenous musical elements in Afrocentric hymnody, stating that the use of traditional musical elements and style is a key factor in the creation of a unique Nigerian sound. He

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also highlights the role of Nigerian hymns in promoting cultural identity and national unity.

Nwosu (2017:42) sees Afrocentric hymnody as a tool for social justice. He states that "Nigerian hymns have the potential to inspire social change and promote justice" . He analyzes several Nigerian hymns, highlighting their themes of liberation, hope and community. This study is similar to the current work in that they both examine African hymnody. However, the current study is different because it examines discursive dynamics of African hymnody.

Moyo (2016) while focusing on Zimbabwean hymns, emphasizes the importance of inculturation and Africanization in Christian music. He recommends that Afrocentric hymns should reflect the cultural, social and political contexts of African communities. This study also fails to look at the different ways in which language is used to reflect ethnosentential strategies. Though Zimbabwe is a country located in Southern Africa, and hence the hymns selected were analysed based only on the importance of Africanization in Christian hymns.

Ayinuola and Iyoha (2020) carry out a research on the discourse form and function of titles in selected contemporary Nigerian Pentecostal gospel music. They discover that the titles of contemporary Nigerian Pentecostal gospel music are ideologically loaded with discourse pragmatic functions of informing, promising, commanding, affirming, threatening, warning, offering and that they reflect socio-cultural happenings in the nation.

Oduola (2021) carries out a critical stylistic analysis of discourse strategies in selected Christian hymns. He looks at the textual metafunctional elements that coalesce with certain textual-conceptual functions, and non-lexical devices used to describe the encapsulating semantic imports of the hymn. He looks beyond the aesthetic exposure but emphasizes the syntactic and stylistic patterns used by the hymnist in projecting the discourse issues in the hymns and provide adequate learning resources for learners of English in, especially, Nigerian second language pedagogy.

The main point of divergence in this study (Oduola, 2021) and this current work is that the data used by Oduola (2021) are Eurocentric hymns, while this study uses Afrocentric hymns. Also, the discursive dynamics of Ethnosentential strategies are the focus of this paper while Oduola (2021) analyzes Eurocentric hymns and accounts for the fact that Gospel hymns and songs have their syntactic and stylistic patterns.

From the review above, it can be seen that previous studies have not paid adequate scholarly attention to discursive dynamics of ethnosentential strategies in Afrocentric hymnody, which is the main focus of this paper. This study considers purely Afrocentric hymns which is a deviation from most of the existing studies.

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Aim and Objectives

This study aims at investigating the discursive dynamics of ethnosentential strategies of selected Afrocentric hymnody. The specific objectives are to: identify the discourse issues in the selected hymns, examine the discursive dynamics of ethnosentential strategies in the selected hymns, identify and discuss the ethnosentential strategies in the selected hymns.

Justification of the study

Most studies on hymnody have been generally studied from the Eurocentric perspective and insufficient attention is paid to the gender difference of the authors and its effects on their compositions. This study therefore attempts to fill this gap by examining discursive dynamics of ethnosentential strategies in two selected Afrocentric hymnody.

Significance of the study

Apart from the fact that hymns are very rich in linguistic contents and exposes other areas of research to language scholars and analysts, Afrocentric hymnody reflects the cultural, social and spiritual identity of both the hymnists and the singers. It also helps to understand how African communities reclaim and reframe their cultural heritage in Christian worship. This study helps in the organization and structure of hymn text which reveals how African discourse patterns, such as call-and-response or communal affirmation shape worship experiences. It also helps in studying how hymns convey meaning in context, including performative and illocutionary forces, highlighting the dynamic interplay between language, culture and spirituality. The study helps in playing a vital role in promoting man's spirituality and bridging the gap between him and his creator as rightly observed by Adeyanju (2011).

Theoretical Framework

CDA views language as a form of social action, not just a neutral medium for conveying information (Fairclough (2010). This perspective emphasizes that language use is shaped by and shapes social relationships, power dynamics and cultural norms. There are three traditional approaches to CDA namely: Norman Fairclough's socio-semiotic approach, van Dijk's socio-cognition and Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach.

It should be noted that many theorists in CDA present its principles from different perspectives, or common ground. Some are more controversial, but the most widely cited view is Fairclough and Wodak (1997) principles of CDA. In their view, power relations are discursive. That is, CDA explains how social relations of power are exercised and negotiated in and through discourse and that discourse constitutes society and culture.

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This implies that whenever language is used, there is a reproduction of society and cultural transformation including relation of power.

Another main principle of CDA is that discourse ideologies are often produced through discourse. That is, in the analysis of a text, the discourse practice must be considered. This means that there should be consideration of how the text is interpreted, received and its social effect. Also, the importance of historical context is necessary in comprehending a given text. This refers to extralinguistic factors such as culture, society and ideology in historical terms (Fariclough and Wodak 1997).

In addition to the above principle, CDA is concerned with making connection between sociocultural processes and structures on one hand, and properties of texts on the other hand (Fairclough & Wodak 1997, 2001, Wodak 2001). That is, there is a mediated relationship between text and society by looking at the order of discourse.

Also, CDA goes beyond textual analysis. It is not only interpretive but also explanatory in intent (Fairclough & Wodak 1997, Wodak 1996, 2001). The interpretation and explanations are dynamic and open, and may be affected by new contextual information.

The principle aim of CDA therefore, is to uncover opaqueness and power relationships of causability and determination and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and text arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (Fairclough, 1998:135 cited by Ayinuola 2020).

In this study, M.A.K Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Grammar is also used to complement van Dijk's Socio-cognition model of C.D.A. This theory was a development on the initial work of Bromislaw Matinowski, who believed that language is used to perform and action and came up with the term "context of situation". Halliday sees text as meaning and meaning as choice (Bloor and Bloor, 2005) and also believes in context, while explaining meaning, leading to a functional grammar (language form and function). He came up with what is known as 'Metafuntions', which are the three functions language performs – experiential, (speaker's inner world of experience), interpersonal (Social relationship among speakers) and textual function (role of language in meaning explication) respectively. The textual function is the aspect used to complement van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of CDA. Some of the textual linguistic elements used by the hymnist are examined and the functions they perform in the hymns are also analysed.

Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the theoretical framework adopted in this paper. The reason for this choice is because CDA emphasizes the role of discourse in reproducing or challenging power relations and ideologies with the study's focus on ethnosentential strategies and their implications for cultural identity

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and spirituality. Also, van Dijk's Model of CDA known as social cognition highlights the importance of context in shaping discourse, suitable for analyzing Afrocentric hymnody's cultural, social and historical context. This theory better provides detailed analytical tools for examining discourse structures, strategies and linguistic features, suitable for the analysis of the selected Afrocentric hymnody selected in this paper.

Methodology

Out of many Afrocentric hymn writers in Africa, we have chosen two hymnists – Bola Omodun Ilori and Esther Laosebikan Oyinlola. They are both Afrocentric hymnists and still composing today. The titles of their hymns are: Lord, Let your Blessings Attend us (Bola Ilori) and The Lord is King arrayed in Majesty (Esther Laosebikan).

Data presentation and analysis

Lord, let Your Blessings Attend us

(1) Let Your blessings Lord attend us,
As we go out of this place,
And abide Your presence
Basking Your joy and grace

(2) Let us in Your sight find favour,
In all which our hands lay,
Make Your face Lord shine upon us
As You lead us on our way

(3) May Your heavenly peace surround us,
Turn over darkness into light,
Give us strength now and forever
So to live within Your might.

(4) God, our compassionate Father,
Look upon us with mercy,
Let Your name receive our praises,
Now and for eternity.

Out of many Afrocentric hymn writers in Africa, we have chosen two hymnists – Bola Omodun Ilori and Esther Laosebikan Oyinlola. They are both Afrocentric hymnists and still composing today. The titles of their hymns are: Lord, Let your Blessings Attend us (Bola Ilori) and The Lord is King arrayed in Majesty (Esther Laosebikan). The discourse issues of the hymns are supplication and praise/worship.

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The Lord is King arrayed in Majesty

(1) The Lord is King arrayed in majesty,
Robbed is the Lord seated with might is He,
The world which He established on its base
Cannot be moved from its appointed place.

(2) Before the world was, He set up His throne,
From everlasting, You are God alone,
The waters, to Him lifted up their voice,
The mighty waters their resounding noise.

(3) More mighty than the billows of the sea,
Mightier still than all the floods is He,
The Lord who far transcends the earth and the sky
Is filled with power the Lord who dwells on high.

(4) The precepts of Your law are firm and sure,
Worthy of trust they ever shall endure,
O gracious Lord, Your temple's sanctity,
Is beautiful through all eternity.

These are stanzas of four lines each. While the first hymn reveals the fact that relationship in the African setting is basically communal through the use of "our" and "us", the second hymn focuses on the greatness of God and His exaltation.

Data Analysis

The discourse issues in the selected hymns are **supplication** (Bola Iloris "Lord, Let Your blessings attend us") and **praise/worship** (Esther Laosebikan's "The Lord is King arrayed in majesty"). The lexical choices and expressions that inform the discourse issues in Bola Ilori's hymn are "let", "find favour", "may", "turn", "give", "look", while in Esther Laosebikan, words like majesty, mighty, everlasting, gracious, beautiful, sanctity, king and Lord have connotations of reverence, awe and admiration, and are used to express praise and worship in the hymn.

Discursive dynamics in Bola Ilori's "Let Your blessings attend us"

The discourse issue as earlier stated in Bola Ilori's "Let Your blessings attend us" is supplication. Supplication refers to the act of making a request or asking or begging for something, especially in a humble manner from a higher power or deity (God).

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However, the discourse dynamics (the way language is used to negotiate meaning) in Bola Ilori's "Lord let Your blessings attend us" through the use of petition and supplication: Bola Ilori employs petitionary language, seeking God's blessings, sight, peace, strength and mercy (Line 1 of stanzas 1, 2 and 3). He also uses divine-human relationship. He reveals power relation between a supreme being (God) and human (man or the singers). The language emphasizes a personal relational dynamics between God and the faithfuls through the use of words like "us", "our" and "we".

His hymn reveals spiritual journey and daily endeavours. Stanzas two and three describe a spiritual journey seeking God's presence, peace and strength for the journey ("And abide Your presence", "May Your heavenly peace surround us", "Give us strength now and forever"). The language used by Bola Ilori seeks transformation, asking God in line 2 of stanza 3 to "turn over darkness into light" and "grant strength". Line 3 and 4 of stanza 4 offer praise and worship, acknowledging God's compassion and mercy.

Discursive dyanmics in Esther Laosebikan's "The Lord is King arrayed in majesty"

The discourse issue in Esther Olaosebikan's hymn is praise/worship. Praise/worship constitutes a discourse issue which expresses the greatness of God and His wondrous works and reverence to a super-natural being (God). The discursive dynamics through which Esther Laosebikan uses to portray praise and worship in her hymn is through **affirmation of divine power.** All the lines of the hymn assert God's majesty, might and sovereignty over creation.

For example:

The Lord is King arrayed in majesty (line 1, stanza 1)
More mighty than the billows of the sea (line 1, stanza 3)
Mightier still than all the flood of the sea (line 2, stanza 3)
The world which He established on His base (line 3, stanza 1)
Before the world was, He set up His throne (line 1, stanza 2)

The lines above firmly affirm God's sovereignty and power (The Lord King arrayed in Majesty). This creates and image of God's grandeur and majesty emphasizing divine power. The comparison (Mightier still than all the floods) emphasizes God's power as surpassing even the most powerful natural forces. "The word which He established…" highlights God's control over creation and ability to maintain order. Therefore, language is used in this hymn to create a strong affirmation of divine power emphasizing God's authority, control and majesty.

Esther Laosebikan describes God's establishment of the world, throne and laws, emphasizing divine control and order. For example: "The world which He established on its base", "cannot be moved from its appointed place" (line 3 and 4 of stanza 1), "Before

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the world was, He sets up His throne" (line 1 of stanza 2). The hymnist contrasts God's power with natural phenomena (water's billows, flood), emphasizing divine superiority. For example: "More mighty than the billows of the sea", "Mightier still than the flood"
Bola Ilori offers praise and worship, acknowledging God's power, law and sanctity in the last stanza:

The precepts of Your law are firm and sure
Worthy of trust they ever shall endure
O gracious Lord, Your temple's sanctity
Is beautiful through all eternity

The hymnist acknowledges God's law as "firm and sure", indicating trust and confidence in God's guidance. She expresses admiration in line 3 and 4 of the last stanza. These convey a sense of awe and wonder at God's temple and sanctity.
The hymnist therefore uses language to offer praise that is characterized by reverence, trust and admiration to offer praise and worship to God.

Ethnosentential strategies in Bola Ilori's "Lord, let Your blessings attend us"
Ethnosentential strategies are the linguistic and discursive means by which individual and group create, maintain and negotiate ethnic identities (Edward, 2013). It refers to the use of language, to create imagery and rhetorical devices that appeal to the emotions, cultural values and shared experiences of a particular ethnic or cultural group.
Africanized imagery: This refers to the use of language, symbols and visual representations that are rooted in African cultures, traditions and experiences (Irele, 2001). This include allusions to African customs, rituals and practices, use of African symbols and imagery and use of African languages, dialects or linguistic patterns. The expression "Make Your face Lord shine upon us" uses a common African imagery of divine favour and blessing.
Collectivization: Collectivisation in the context of this paper refers to the use of language and imagery that emphasizes shared identity, communal experience and collective emotions, creating a sense of unity and shared belonging among a group of people. Gillespie (2017) defines collectivization as the process of creating and emphasizing a shared identity, shared experience and shared emotions among a group of people often through language symbol and rituals. The hymnist employs the strategy of collectivization through the use of the plural pronouns "us", "our" and "we" to stress collective spiritual experience. This means that making supplication to God in a spiritual gathering is not seen as an individualized exercise but as a collective engagement.
Language indigenization: Language indigenization refers to the process of adapting and transforming external linguistic and cultural resources to create a localized form of

expression that reflects the unique cultural, historical and social contexts of a community (Canagarajah, 2013). In the context of this paper, language indigenization refers to the process of incorporating local languages, imagery and cultural references into the hymn's lyrics, making it more relatable and meaningful to the local congregation. There is the flavour of Yoruba language mixed with the English language in some of the expressions. For example the expression "Look upon us with mercy may reflect Yoruba language patterns where "look upon" is a common idiomatic expression.

Culturocentrism: This term captures the idea of centering or prioritizing cultural values, beliefs and practices in the hymns reflecting the importance of cultural identity and community in Afro-Christian expression. Bola Ilori reflects Yoruba cultural values like the importance of divine guidance and protection. For example, stanza 2 and 4.

Hybridization: Hybridization involves the creation of new cultural forms, identities and meanings through the intersection, interaction and intermingling of different cultural traditions, genres and styles (Pieterse, 2015). Bola Ilori blends Christian theology with African cultural and linguistic elements demonstrating complex dynamics of Afro-Christian identity. For example:

Make Your face Lord shine upon us (line 3, stanza 2)

The line of this stanza combines African cultural imagery. "Make Your face shine" is a common African idiom for seeking divine favour and blessing. Also, Christian theological concept – "Lord" refers to God in Christian theology. This echoes Biblical reference of Psalm 67:1 – "God be gracious to us and bless u, and cause His face to shine upon us". This strategy is also observed in line 4 of the first stanza ("Basking Your joy and grace"). This combines African cultural imagery (basking in joy) with Christian theological concept (joy and grace).

Bola Ilori also employs various grammatical structures and literary devices in order to have a better understanding of the hymn. For example line 1 of stanza 1 – "Let Your blessings Lord attend us", reverses the typical subject-verb order, leading to structural inversion. This is used for the sake of emphasis. It emphasizes the importance of God's blessings. He also uses imperative sentences in the first lines of the first three stanzas – "Let Your blessings Lord attend us", "Let us in Your sight, find favour" and "Make Your heavenly peace surround us". These express the hymnist or singer's desires and request, creating a sense of urgency and supplication. Dependent clauses such as "As we go out of this place", "As You lead us on our way" are used to provide context and conditions for the main requests, emphasizing the hymnist's dependence on God's guidance.

There is the use of apposition in line 1 of stanza 4 – "God, our compassionate father" by providing additional information about God's nature, emphasizing compassion and fatherly love. Line 2 of stanza 3 – "Turn our darkness to light" reveals the use of

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juxtaposition (contrasts darkness and light) and highlights the transformative power of God's presence and blessings. The lexical item "let" is used anaphorically in stanzas 1, 2 and 4 of the hymn to emphasize the hymnist's desires and requests, creating a sense of rhythm and urgency.

Ethnosentential strategies in Esther Laosebikan's "The Lord is King arrayed in majesty"

Below are some of the ethnosentential strategies used by the hymnist in the hymn.

Africanized imagery: In line 3 of the second stanza – "The waters lifted up their voice", Laosebikan uses African oral tradition's personification of nature. In African oral tradition, nature is often personified, giving human-like qualities to elements like water, wind and trees. This phrase uses that imagery to describe the power of God, making the divine more relatable and accessible to an African audience.

Afrotypoloism is also an Ethnosentential stratey used by Laosebikan in her hymn. Olofinjana (2020) defines Afrotypoloism as an hermeneutical approach, that seeks to uncover the cultural and theological resonance between African traditional religious practices and biblical narratives, with a view to constructing a distinctly African Christian theology. Afrotypologism refers to the interpretation of biblical texts through the lens of African culture and experiences.

In Laosebikan's "The Lord is King arrayed in majesty, Afrotypologism is evident in the use of imagery and language that resonates with Yoruba culture. For example in line 1 of stanza 1 – "The Lord is King arrayed in majesty", the line echoes the Yoruba concept of 'Oba' (king), emphasizing the majesty and authority of God, similar to the reverence for Yoruba monachs. Line 2 of stanza 1 – "Robbed is the Lord, seated in might is He" presents the image of God as the reminiscent of the Yoruba "Orisa" (deity) shrine, where the deity is believed to reside with power and authority.

Also, line 3 and 4 of stanza 2 – "The waters to Him lifted up their voices", "The mighty waters their resounding noise" (personification) is an imagery which is similar to the Yoruba reverence for "Osun" (the goddess of rivers and fertility), who is believed to communicate through the sound of waters.

In stanza 3, line 1 and 2, Laosebikan expresses the greatness of God thus: "More mightier than the billows of the sea", "Mightier still than the flood is He". The language is reminiscent of the Yoruba mythological stories of "Olokun" (the god of the ocean), who is feared and respected for his power.

Line 3 and 4 of stanza 4 – "O gracious Lord, Your temples sanctity", "Is beautiful through all eternity" reflect the Yoruba reverence for sacred spaces, such as shrine and temples, which are believed to embody the divine presence.

Therefore, by using Afrotypologism, the hymn writer has successfully woven Yoruba cultural elements into the fabric of the hymn, creating a unique and meaningful expression of faith that resonates with African cultural experiences.

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Collectivization: In line 3 of stanza 1, the hymnist uses the expression "The world which He establish on His base" to emphasize the collective identity and shared destiny of the community. In African cultures, community is central to identity and purpose. By using "world" instead of individual, the hymn writer prioritizes the communal aspect of faith.

Culturocentrism: This term captures the idea of centering or prioritizing cultural values, beliefs and practices in the hymns, reflecting the importance of cultural identity in Afro-Christian expressions. For example: line 3 and 4 of the first stanza: "The world which He established on His base", "Cannot be moved from its appointed place" reflect African cultural values of honouring ancestors and tradition. The phrase connects the physical world to spiritual foundation, reflecting an African cultural emphasis on interconnectedness.

Esther Laosebikan also uses parallelism to create a sense of balance and symmetry (For example "Mightier than the billows of the sea" "Mightier still than all the floods") and also to emphasize the similarities and contrasts between ideas, for example, God's power vs natural phenomena. It enhances the overall aesthetic appeal of the hymn.

From the foregoing, it is observed that Bola Ilori uses imperative sentences in virtually all the stanzas ("Let Your blessings… attend us", "Let us… find favour") and subordinate clauses ("As we go out of this place") to invoke God's presence and favour. This creates a sense of dependence on God's blessings and guidance. He also uses metaphoric expressions ("Turn our darkness to light") to request God's transformation. This reinforces the idea of God's active involvement in the believer's life.

The hymnist also uses an apposition ("God, our compassionate father") and imperative sentences ("Look upon us with mercy", "Let Your name receive our praises") to provide an additional information about God, acknowledging His compassionate nature and invoke God's mercy and praise. This creates a sense of intimacy and reverence.

Repetition is also observed in Bola Ilori's hymn. This is used to emphasize certain words or phrases, for example "Let Your" in line 1 of the first 2 stanzas and line 3 of the fourth stanza. This is used to create a sense of rhythm and musicality, reinforce the main discourse issue and ideas (God's blessings, guidance and mercy) and build a sense of unity and cohesion throughout the hymn.

Esther Laosebikan in her hymn uses structural inversion ("Robbed is the Lord") and copular clauses ("Seated in might is He") to emphasize the Lord's power and authority. This creates a sense of awe and reverence, establishing God's superior status. She also uses comparative phrases (simile and hyperbole) to exaggerate the Lord's might, comparing it to natural phenomena ("Mightier than the billows of the sea", "Mightier than the floods"). This reinforces the Lord's superiority and power.

Similarities and differences in selected African hymns

It is clear from the analysis of Bola Ilori (male hymnist) and Esther Laosebikan's (female hymnist) hymns that although they both use imagery and language that reflect African

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cultural and linguistic patterns and portray collective spiritual experience, using words like "us", "our" and "we". There is also the blend of Christian theology with African cultural linguistic elements, demonstrating complex dynamics of Afro-Christian identity. There exist some differences in their hymns. For example, Bola Ilori's "Lord, let Your blessings attend us" has a more reverent and supplicating tone, seeking God's favour and guidance unlike Esther Laosebikan's "The Lord is King arrayed in majesty" which has a more assertive and declarative tone, emphasizing God's power and majesty.

Bola Ilori uses more gentle and nurturing imagery, such as "Let Your blessings attend us", "Basking Your joy and grace", and "Turn our darkness into light", while Esther Laosebikan uses dramatic and powerful imagery, such as "Robbed is the Lord", "Mightier than the billows of the sea" and "filled with power".

While Bola Ilori's hymn focuses on God's guidance, protection and presence, Esther Laosebikan's hymn focuses on God's sovereignty and power. However, it is essential to note that these differences and similarities might not be solely due to gender but also reflect individual styles, experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that a nuanced understanding of hymnody's linguistic and literary features, can provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of religious communication, highlighting the need for further research into the intersections of language, culture and theology.

Future research could be an investigation into the applicability of these findings to other forms of religious discourse, exploring how ethnosentential strategies and discursive dynamics shape meaning and identity across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

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