

A Prosodic Analysis of English Sermons of Selected Pastors in Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

Sermon as a religious discourse thrives on the use of prosodic features which give extra information to enhance understanding of utterances in oral discourse. This paper investigates the prosodic innovations that manifest in the sermons of selected Pentecostal pastors in Southwest Nigeria. It also identifies some prosodic features in the selected sermons and relates them to their themes. Data was sourced from one sermon-VCD tape each by Pastors Kumuyi (Inf-Kum), Adeboye (Inf-Adeb) and Bishop Oyedepo (Inf-Oyed). The tapes were played back to extract some prosodic features in the sermons; these were analyzed using the pitch extraction software, PRAAT. Analyses of the data reveal that preachers put extra prosodic force on some words in order to emphasize the focus of their messages. But while Inf-Oyed and Inf-Adeb use higher pitch for accented words and lower pitch for non-accented, Inf-Kum uses the same pitch of voice for both. Additionally, the subjects' vowel length (SV-L) rendition appeared longer than what obtains in native English. Moreover, there are specific prosodic features characterizing each preacher's doctrinal persuasions: Inf-Oyed deploys emphatic stress with enthusiastic voice; Info-Kum uses a relatively same level of voice pitch while Info-Adeb's renditions are generally slower in tempo. The paper concludes that Nigerian Pentecostal sermons are replete with prosodic features deployed for achieving thematization of messages and doctrinal identity construction.

Keywords: *sermon, prosodic features, accented and non-accented words, vowel duration, doctrinal identity construction*

1. Introduction

Sermon is a discourse genre with specific linguistic, structural, discoursal and rhetorical skills (Esimaje, 2012). A sermon is a faith-based discourse that is directed at altering the behaviours of a congregation through the use of certain rhetorical strategies to deepen members' faith or beliefs. Some of the rhetorical skills usually employed in this genre, and on which this study focuses, are prosodic cues. Prosodic cues strategically encompass a host of expressive means ranging from linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic features which are often utilized in foregrounding the thematic concerns of the gospel. The fact is established in literature that prosodic features give extra inputs to the understanding of utterances in communication (Wilson & Wharton, 2006). The extra inputs, which the prosody provides, make it possible for speakers to express and depict information on their emotions and attitudes towards the thematic concerns of a discourse.

Sermon delivery in Pentecostalism, a strand of Christian movement, gives pastors some latitude to use language in some special way. The observable unique sermon delivery styles of Pentecostal pastors, globally and in Nigeria in particular, have shown that they largely employ some prosodic features that significantly mark them out from those of other Orthodox Church pastors. Consequently, this study hypothesizes that these features are capable of identifying their prosodic styles, their indexical traits in terms of "voice signature" and different doctrinal beliefs. The prosodic features of English sermons have not been exhaustively analyzed and discussed especially on how they capture the strategies and styles employed by some Pentecostal pastors in southwest Nigeria. The present researchers are struck by the ingenious and novel manner in which prosodic cues are employed by these pastors in their delivery of sermons in English. Given that the effect(s) of religious language transcends a particular group, it can be investigated in relation to the context in which it is employed.

This paper therefore identifies sermons by Pentecostal pastors as one of the natural sources through which some of the distinct prosodic aspects of Nigerian English pronunciation may be investigated. To this end, the paper identifies the prosodic features in the selected sermons of the respondents, relates them to the themes of the sermons, and finally discusses their implications for making the congregants to be in fellowship with their preacher's thematic preoccupation rather than being mere

spectators in the church.

2. Pentecostalism in Southwest Nigeria

Christianity has different strands: Orthodox, Evangelical and Pentecostal (Awonuga & Chimuanya, 2016). The Pentecostals adhere to the principles enshrined in the New Testament. This strand of Christianity is ubiquitous in every corner of Nigeria. Its impacts cannot be ignored because its churches are reshaping the religious, socio-economic and linguistic landscape of Nigeria. Pentecostalism has become a tool for a new orientation to life and for building a new community of worshippers. Many Nigerians have, therefore, embraced this strand of Christianity in order to be freed from the grip of evil spirits and repeated failures which are prevalent in Nigerian world view/cultural beliefs (Ojo, 2010). Ojo identifies three strands of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. They are: (1) the classical Pentecostal churches which resulted from the activities of western missionaries, e.g. the Foursquare Gospel Church and the Apostolic Faith, etc; (2) the indigenous Pentecostal churches which emanated from the visionary experiences of some men of God, e.g. Gospel Faith Mission, the Redeemed Christian Church of God; and (3) the Independent Charismatic Churches which emerged from a revival on university campuses in the 1970s, e.g. the Deeper Life Bible Church and the Winners' Chapel.

Nigeria, a West African country, is made up of six geopolitical regions (Northwest, Northeast, Northcentral, Southeast, Southsouth and Southwest). The southwest region is populated mostly by the Yoruba speaking people. It is made up of Ondo, Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun and Ekiti states. This region was the first zone to receive western education and Christian religion and also has Lagos, a metropolitan state, as home for every tribe in Nigeria. Most of these Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have their headquarters in the southwestern part of the country. It should be stressed at this juncture that in most Pentecostal churches in southwest Nigeria, what to say, how to say it and when to say it are largely determined by the leader of the congregation at any point in time (Ojo, 2010). This could be explained by the fact that religious leaders are seen as representatives of God, given their different appellations as 'men of God' or 'the anointed'. This paper hinges on the belief that because of the high regard the congregations have for their pastors, the congregants are often influenced not only by the spiritual import of their sermons but also by their pattern of English

pronunciation/oral discourse.

2.1 Language of religion

Religious discourse is characterized by peculiar use of language that is largely associated with various social, doctrinal and religious contexts. In an L2 situation like Nigeria with its attendant multilingual and multicultural nature, and the prevalent socio-economic difficulties, the messages of freedom, transformation and faith-building by Pentecostal pastors come with peculiar English texture in terms of field, tenor and mode (Oha, 1994). English is the common medium of sermon rendition in Nigerian churches. The congregants in various churches in and outside the shores of Nigeria are made to listen to the distinctive brand of Nigerian spoken English (NSE). The propensities to use English in religious contexts have attracted the attention of some scholars like Crystal and Davy (1969), Taiwo (2005), Esimaje (2012), Ugot and Offiong (2013) and Awonuga and Chimuanya (2016). Crystal and Davy (1969) identify the different shades of religious language as the language of liturgy, sermon, theological discourse and biblical translation. Similarly, Crystal (1976) explores the prosodic features of four modalities of spoken religious language. In that study, he argues that the basis of most “sociolinguistic distinctiveness in speech is phonological in character and non-segmental in particular” (p. 18). The “non-segmental” in Crystal’s point of view simply refers to the “prosodic systems of pitch duration, pitch range, loudness, tempo, rhythmicality and pause” (p. 19). If, according to Crystal (1976), these non-segmental factors are crucial in identifying the distinctiveness of religious modalities, there is need to interrogate how they have brought about the distinctiveness noticed in the sermon deliveries of some Nigerian Pentecostal pastors.

Several studies have been carried out on the analysis of religious language in Nigeria (Taiwo, 2005; Esimaje, 2012). Taiwo’s (2005) study focuses on the general style of interrogation employed in charismatic Christian pulpit discourse while Esimaje (2012) carries out a corpus-based lexical study of sermons in Nigeria. Awonuga and Chimuanya (2016) investigate the syntactic devices in Nigerian preachers’ sermons. In the same vein, Ugot and Offiong (2013) focus on the examination of non-verbal strategies that are usually deployed by these pastors. In all, these studies were carried out from perspectives which may be discoursal, lexical or syntactic. The prosodic features of English sermons have not been exhaustively analyzed and discussed, especially on how they capture the strategies and styles

employed by some Pentecostal pastors in southwest Nigeria. We attempt to address this issue in the present study.

2.2 Prosodic features of English sermons

It could be explained that prosody typifies the variation in melody, intonation, pauses, tempo, intensity, vocal quality and accents of speech. According to Pattnaik and Dash (2006), prosody is the combination of voice pitch, duration and energy variation during speech. This phenomenon is specific to spoken discourse whose modulations are employed by human speakers to mark grammatical, linguistic, attitudinal and pragmatic functions. It is arguable that sermons, as spoken genres, largely flourish with the use of the aforementioned prosodic features. Crystal and Davy (1969, p. 227) postulate that sermons, be it learned, rehearsed or spontaneous, exhibit some prosodic and paralinguistic variations. Some of the features noticeable in sermons generally share same features with song, chant or oral performance (Rosenberg, 1970). Sermon as a form of oral performance comes in the form of poetry with all the ingredients of melody of voice, loudness, vowel lengthening and gestures which are largely employed by pastors to make their messages vivid. This is because sermons, especially the extemporaneous ones, make use of other extra-linguistic features that can be subsumed under prosodic or non-segmental features of language.

Different prosodic range exists and they greatly influence communication. Brandon (2006) identifies categories of prosodic range as grammatical, pragmatic and affective. Grammatical Prosody recognizes homographic words as words that occur as verbs, adjectives or nouns differentiated by the use of contrastive stress. Also, it enables the use of syntactic information to mark the speaker's utterances as declarative, interrogative, imperative or exclamatory. For example, a declarative tune begins at a higher pitch and gradually declines towards the end of the utterance to a falling pitch.

Pragmatic prosody communicates speakers' intent through the utilization of contrastive and emphatic stress at the lexical, word, syllable and phrase levels. It affects the type of lexical items that receive the emphatic stress or the phrases that are often repeated to underscore the import of messages. Kent and Read (1992) explain that intonation is a measurable category of pragmatic prosody and it is based on the intensity and duration of the speakers' utterances.

Affective prosody conveys the speaker's emotional state and it is reflected through the modal register. It may be based on the listeners' assessment of the speaker

in terms of age, educational status, gender, culture and economic power. Affective prosody, according to Brandon (2006), also provides perceptual information regarding the emotional state of the speaker whether he/she is angry, excited, sober, earnest, showy, pretentious or genuine. How these are reflected or employed in the sermons of selected Nigerian Pentecostal pastors needs to be investigated in order to describe the prosodic innovations in the discourse of sermons in Nigerian English.

3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Data for the present study were drawn from three VCD tapes. The respective tapes contain the sermon of Pastors W. F. Kumuyi of The Deeper Life Christian Fellowship (DLCF), Enoch Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Bishop David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church (aka Winners Chapel International). These sermons were selected to exhibit two out of the three classifications of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria (Ojo, 2010), i.e. the Indigenous Pentecostal churches to which Pastor Adeboye belongs, and the Independent Charismatic Churches having Pastor W. F. Kumuyi and Bishop David Oyedepo as examples. For the purpose of our analyses, these pastors were coded as Inf-Kum (Pastor Kumuyi), Inf-Oyed (Bishop Oyedepo) and Inf-Adeb (Pastor Adeboye). They were also chosen because of the large followership they command among Christians in and outside Nigeria. In addition, they fall within Ojo's (2010) typologies of "faith transformer", "faith seeker" and "faith builder" pastors who have attained social prominence within and outside Nigeria. Finally, they were selected to represent speakers of Educated Nigerian English on grounds of their education and linguistic history (Udofot, 1997; Faleye, 2011). One VCD tape each was purposively selected from the myriad tapes from these pastors based on their thematic preoccupations. These tapes were played back several times to observe as well as extract the prosodic features that accompany the sermons. The features were analyzed using the pitch extraction software, PRAAT. An attempt was made to correlate the prosodic features with the thematic concerns/doctrinal persuasions of the preachers.

For analysis, this paper draws insights from Dell Hymes' (1972) ethnography of communication in analyzing and describing the prosodic innovations in the subjects' sermons. Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model identifies some specific elements

of contexts responsible for discourse constructions. Elements in this framework, which are relevant to the present study, include Setting/scene, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms and Genre (S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G.).

Setting/scene describes the conditions under which the communication encounter occurs. It also encompasses the time and place of the discourse. Participants are the people that are involved in the conversation, that is, the speaker (e.g. the preachers) and the hearer (e.g. the congregants), while Ends refer to the result of a speech act, i.e. the likely outcomes of the communication act. Act sequence refers to the form and content of the message of text, which reflects how and what is said. Key, which is another element, refers to the manner/style in which a textual message is delivered. Instrumentalities refer to the different channels of speech transmission like oral, written, telephone conversation or e-mail. Norms, by nature, depict conventions of social and speech behaviour which could be linguistic and non-linguistic, universal or culture-specific. Genre, which is the final element of this model, refers to the linguistic form employed; these may be forms such as sermon, poetry, prayer, prose, drama, letter, story, etc.

The relevance of this theory lies in its identification of contextual factors that are responsible for the form, content and delivery of the sermons. These factors also form the background for understanding these sermons as well as create the framework for anchoring their analysis. The model similarly assisted the researchers to account for the discourse significance of the prosodic manipulations in the sermons especially because such manipulations are driven by different doctrinal teachings, ideologies and goals.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

In line with the stated objectives, analysis of the data is presented in the sub-sections below. The findings are reported in relation to the various prosodic features identified in the data, starting with vowel elongation in focused words.

4.1 Vowel elongation in focused words

Vowel length in linguistics may be described as the perceived duration in a vowel sound. In some varieties of English (the RP and General American English), length is contrastive. On the contrary, reports in existing studies show that phonemic vowel length is non-existent in Nigerian English (NE), especially the southern variety (Gut,

2004, p. 819) to which subjects in the present study belong. Curiously, however, analysis in our study revealed word accentuation and vowel elongation as the common strategies employed by the selected preachers in their sermon deliveries. Analysis revealed that these prosodic cues were deployed in the subjects' sermons to emphasize some thematic concerns and doctrinal beliefs. This is in consonance with what Dell Hymes (1972) describes as "Ends" in his model of speaking.

To validate our claims about word accentuation and vowel elongation, some acoustic properties of selected accented words and elongated vowels within the American vowel duration framework proposed by Peng and Ann (2001) are shown. While it would have been desirable to compare vowel duration in NE with duration in the British English (BE) system, studies on the latter are relatively scarce; there seems to be no study yet "that provides a complete description of vowel duration in British English" (Peng & Ann, 2001, p. 13). We therefore believe that using the established duration in the AmE as the basis for measuring duration in our NE data cannot be counterproductive. Table 1 presents a modified version of Peng and Ann's (2001) AmE vowel duration chart.

Table 1. English vowel duration

ɔɪ	aʊ	aɪ	əʊ	ɒ	ʊ	ɑː	eɪ	Æ	ɜː	uː	iː	ʌ	e	ʊ	ɪ	ɪ	ə
298	202	160	155	146	138	134	133	131	116	114	107	88	82	69	61	60	49

4.1.1 Prosodic strategy of word accentuation

Acoustic analysis of the data shows that the informants seem to rely on word accentuation which is one of the keys used by participants for the purposes of emphasis. This position is at variance with existing literature on NE that words are spoken with tone rather than being accented (Wells, 1982; Fajobi, 2008, 2013) perhaps because the genre of sermons differ from that of ordinary speech. We have also noticed that particular vowels of the accented words are "abnormally" elongated, possibly to draw the attention of the participants (listeners/congregation). In this subsection, twelve test items (six accented and six non-accented) were extracted from the informants' data to draw comparison between the acoustic features of accented and non-accented words spoken by the three informants: Inf-Kum, Inf-Oyed and Inf-Adeb, starting with Inf-Kum in Excerpt 1 and Table 2 below (see also Appendix 1). As detailed in Tables 2, 3 and 4, the test items compared per informant contain the

same number of syllables, i.e. three two-syllable words, one three-syllable word and two one-syllable words, respectively.

Excerpt 1 (Inf-Kum):

That's the very essence of God picking up this man **Daniel** and making him a **worthy, useful, effective** and competent instrument of **trust** in His hands. Look at **that** again, Daniel chapter one verse eight. (The emboldened words are the accented while the underlined are the non-accented)

Table 2. Duration and pitch compared between elongated and non-elongated words by Inf-Kum

Elongated/Accented Words			
<u>Word</u>	<u>No. of Syllables</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Mean Pitch (Hz)</u>
Daniel	2	0.604	179.30
Worthy	2	0.799	189.61
Useful	2	1.098	199.25
Effective	3	1.027	180.04
Trust	1	0.770	166.86
That	1	0.418	121.94
AVERAGE (i.e. per word)	-----	0.786s	172.83Hz
Normal/Non-accented Words			
<u>Word</u>	<u>No. of Syllables</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Mean Pitch (Hz)</u>
Essence	2	0.491	197.32
Picking	2	0.421	182.19
Again	2	0.411	138.81
Instrument	3	0.643	177.68
Up	1	0.133	205.83
And	1	0.270	124.35
AVERAGE (i.e. per word)	-----	0.395s	171.03Hz

The analysis in Table 2 reveals that accented words in the top panel are elongated when compared to the non-accented ones in the bottom panel. If the lengths of the words are compared by the number of syllables contained in each, one discovers that the accented three-syllable word, which incidentally is one each in the top and bottom panels, lengthens with about 40% more than its non-accented counterpart in the bottom panel (i.e. $1.027s - 0.643s = 0.384s$). Similarly, the average of the three two-syllable words compared in the top and bottom panels reveals that the

accented words are uttered by Inf-Kum with a slightly longer duration (52.9%) than the length of the non-accented (i.e. 0.834s compared with 0.441s). The case is not different from the one-syllable words where two test items each were compared between accented and non-accented words. The accented one-syllable words are, on average, about triple the duration for uttering the non-accented (i.e. $0.594s - 0.202s = 0.392s$). On average, Table 2 shows that the non-accented words are uttered with about half the length of time used for uttering the accented words. All the words in bold letters in Excerpt 1 are emphasized to draw attention to them. They are therefore focused, accentuated and deliberately elongated as can be deduced from their durations and F_0 s in Table 2.

Unlike duration, there seems to be no direct correlation between the pitch for uttering accented and non-accented words. As a matter of fact, Inf-Kum uses relatively similar pitch heights for both accented and non-accented words. As Table 2 reveals, the mean pitch for the accented words is 172.83Hz while it is 171.03Hz for the non-accented. The only exception seems to be the non-accented word “**up**” which records the highest mean pitch of 205.83Hz (see the bottom panel in Table 2)—a behaviour that may be explained away as an anticipatory effect towards the target word **Daniel** which records a mean pitch of 179.30Hz in the phrase “... of God picking up this man **Daniel** ...”

Further analysis shows that when a word is accented for the purpose of emphasis, the syllable that is considered stressed (from the speaker’s point of view) tends to bear the brunt of both lengthening and higher pitch as demonstrated in Inf-Kum’s renditions of *Daniel* in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1. Accented version of the word Daniel; duration is 0.604s.

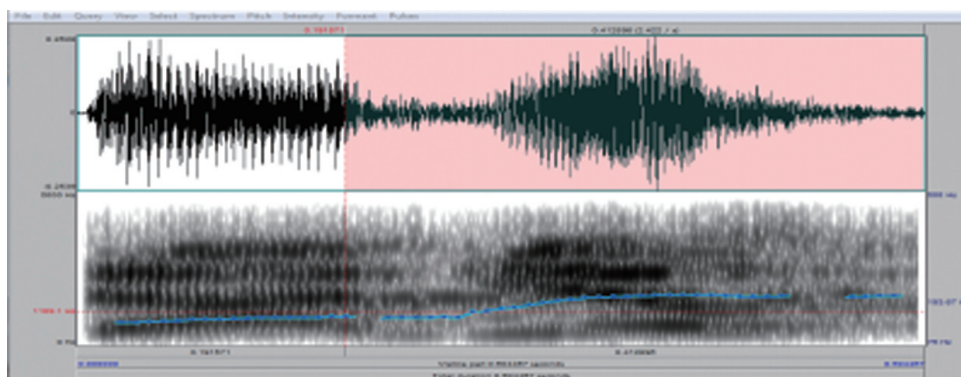
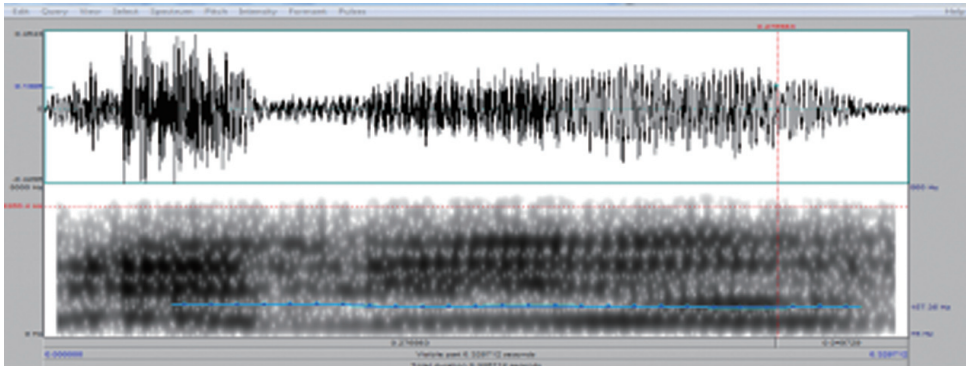


Figure 2. Non-accented version of the word Daniel; duration is 0.323s.



The highlighted part in Figure 1 reveals that the lengthening is realized in the unstressed second syllable “-niel”, which, strangely seems to be the carrier of stress, even perceptually, for Inf-Kum. When subjected to a further acoustic analysis, the first syllable “Da-” (Figure 1) is uttered with a mean pitch of 147.32Hz and 0.192s duration while the second syllable “-niel” (the stressed) is uttered with a mean pitch of 194.54Hz and 0.413s duration to show that the accented syllable has longer duration and higher pitch, but duration seems the more obvious variable for distinguishing between the two.

By the same token, twelve test items each were extracted from the sermons of Inf-Oyed and Inf-Adeb to examine elongation or otherwise in their data, i.e. in accented and non-accented words. Excerpts from which the test items were drawn are Excerpts 2 and 3 (see Appendices 2 and 3). We present the comparisons in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

Table 3. Duration and pitch compared between elongated and non-elongated words by Inf-Oyed

Elongated/Accented Words			
<u>Word</u>	<u>No. of Syllables</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Mean Pitch (Hz)</u>
Issue	2	0.297	187.63
Never	2	0.497	303.98
Boldness	2	0.683	155.92
Connected	3	0.529	280.57
Word	1	0.325	167.91
Small	1	0.182	295.21
AVERAGE	-----	0.419s	231.87Hz
Normal/Non-accented Words			
<u>Word</u>	<u>No. of Syllables</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Mean Pitch (Hz)</u>
Service	2	0.367	152.04
Perfect	2	0.285	243.15
Wonders	2	0.458	356.13
Possession	3	0.650	155.35
World	1	0.235	83.315
Made	1	0.093	222.48
AVERAGE	-----	0.348s	202.08Hz

Table 4. Duration and pitch compared between elongated and non-elongated words by Inf-Adeb

Elongated/Accented Words			
<u>Word</u>	<u>No. of Syllables</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Mean Pitch (Hz)</u>
Hungry	2	0.433	214.19
Bible	2	0.326	228.98
Duty	2	0.507	277.50
Almighty	3	1.006	172.47
Things	1	0.570	190.23
Times	1	01.092	181.46
AVERAGE (i.e. per word)	-----	0.656s	210.81Hz
Normal/Non-accented Words			
<u>Word</u>	<u>No. of Syllables</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Mean Pitch (Hz)</u>
Closely	2	0.581	180.80
Whether	2	0.318	183.11
Success	2	0.627	206.11
Promotion	3	0.456	179.80
Stop	1	0.230	237.88
With	1	0.117	117.18
AVERAGE (i.e. per word)	-----	0.388s	184.15Hz

As revealed in Tables 3 and 4, the accented words, on average, have longer duration compared to the non-accented ones in the bottom panel. Also, the accented words seem to be projected with higher pitch than the non-accented ones. This is contrary to what Table 2 reveals about Inf-Kum, whose accented and non-accented words were articulated with relatively similar pitch heights. Figures 3 and 4 below show the accented words in Inf-Oyed and Inf-Adeb's utterances:

Excerpt 2d (Inf-Oyed): **Small** girl is **connected** to the set of just men... made perfect

Figure 3. “Small” and “connected” are accented by Inf-Oyed in the utterance

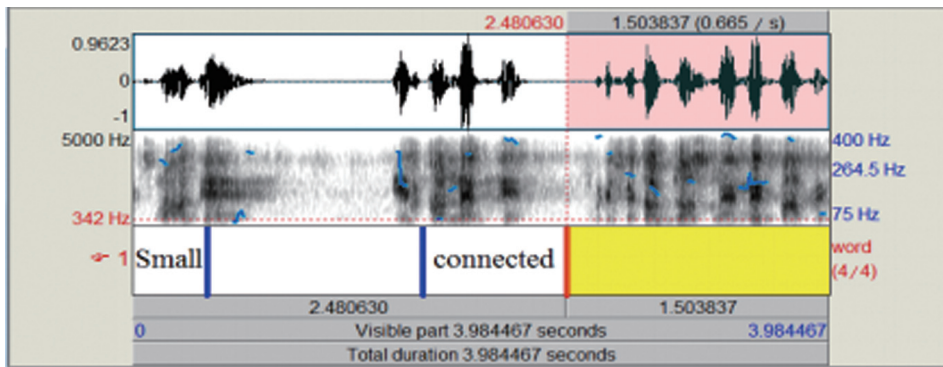


Figure 4a. Inf-Adeb accents “bible” in “The bible says in 3rd John verse 2...” (See Excerpt 3b in Appendix 3)

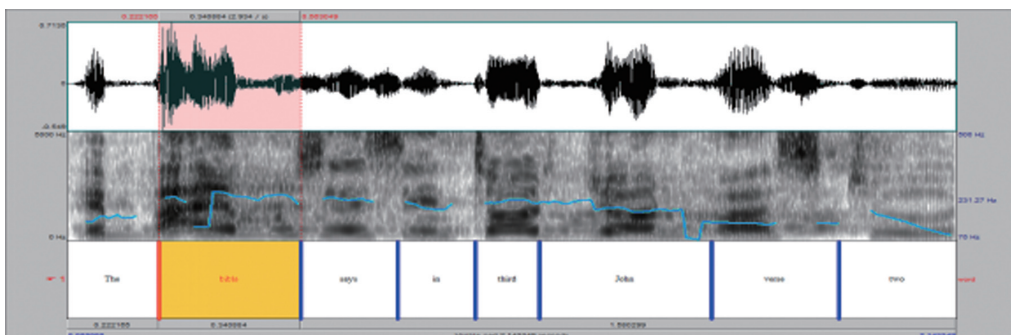
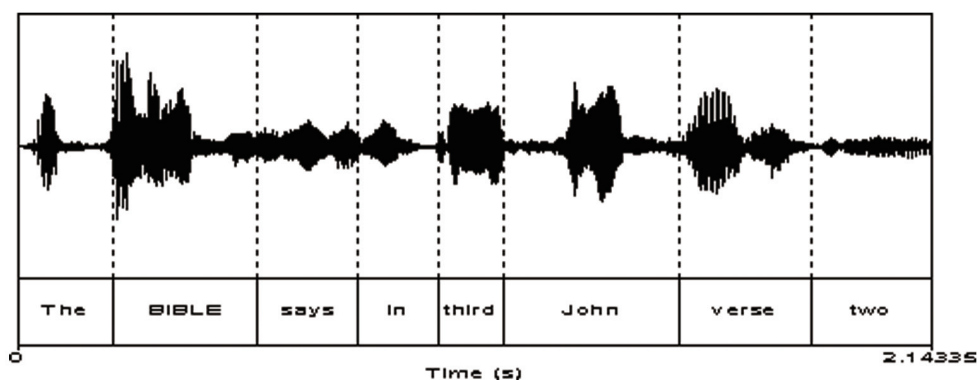


Figure 4b. Inf-Adeb's rendition of "The bible says in 3rd John..."



Further acoustic analysis of the utterance represented in Tables 4a and 4b reveals 261.76Hz and 80.05Hz as Inf-Adeb's highest and lowest pitch, respectively. The highest pitch was realized on the word "bible", to confirm it as the accented in the utterance while the lowest pitch was realized on the last word "two". It should be noted in addition that Inf-Adeb articulates 'bible' with a mean pitch of 228.98Hz and 0.326s; and two with a mean pitch of 142.16Hz and 0.247s. If one compares this phenomenon with Inf-Kum's renditions of accented and non-accented Daniel in Figures 1 and 2, one may conclude, as earlier observed, that when a word is accented for the purpose of emphasis (i. e. the ends), the syllable/word that is considered stressed by the speaker tends to bear the brunt of both lengthening and higher pitch.

4.1.2 Vowel elongation as marker of focus

Vowel elongation or lengthening, which is another key element, was equally examined. We believe that when a monosyllabic word is accented, a degree of lengthening is attracted to it. That lengthening is realized in the peak or vowel element of the syllable/word. To this end, vowels of five accented monosyllabic words each from the informants constitute the data for analysis in this section. The vowels examined across the three informants are /ɒ/, /æ/, /aɪ/, /ɪ/ and /ʌ/ as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Vowel duration compared among the three informants

SN	Subj.	Item	V	NEV-L	SV-L	V-P
1	KUM	N <u>o</u> t	/ɒ/	0.146	0.330	>[ɔ:]
	ADEB	F <u>ro</u> m			0.089	<[ɒ]
	OYED	G <u>o</u> d			0.175	>[ɒ]
2	KUM	Th <u>a</u> t	/æ/	0.131	0.230	>[a:]
	ADEB	H <u>a</u> ve			0.334	>[a:]
	OYED	H <u>a</u> ve			0.296	>[a:]
3	KUM	L <u>i</u> fe	/aɪ/	0.160	0.436	>[aɪ]
	ADEB	L <u>i</u> ght			0.423	>[aɪ]
	OYED	T <u>i</u> ed			0.171	>[aɪ]
4	KUM	W <u>i</u> ll	/ɪ/	0.60	0.293	>[i:]
	ADEB	K <u>i</u> ll			0.250	>[i:]
	OYED	G <u>i</u> ves			0.085	>[i:]
5	KUM	Tr <u>u</u> st	/ʌ/	0.88	0.301	>[ɔ:]
	ADEB	C <u>o</u> me			0.246	>[ɔ:]
	OYED	D <u>o</u> ne			0.378	>[ɔ:]

Legend: V = The Vowel tested; NEV-L = Native-English Vowel Length; SV-L = Subject's Vowel Length; V-P = Vowel Produced (i.e. Phonemic representation of the acoustic interpretation of the vowel as articulated by the Subjects).

It is noteworthy that, apart from Inf-Adeb who realized his short /ɒ/ with a shorter (“<”, i.e. lesser than the expected) duration than the native English vowel length (NEV-L), all other vowels were realized with longer duration than NEV-L.

Figures 5 to 7 show the acoustic representations of the respondents' production of /ʌ/ in the test items.

Figure 5. Duration of vowel /ʌ/ in Inf-Kum's accented *TRUST* (= 0.301s)

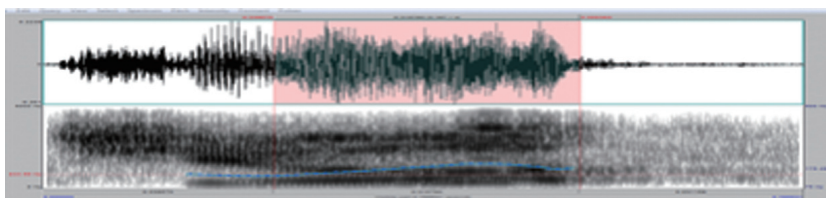


Figure 6. Vowel /ʌ/ in Inf-Oyed's realization of *DONE* (= 0.378s)

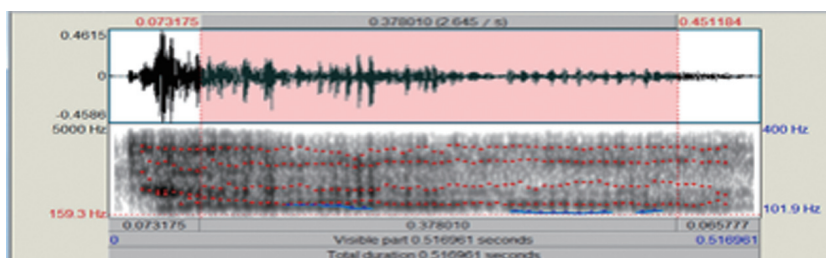
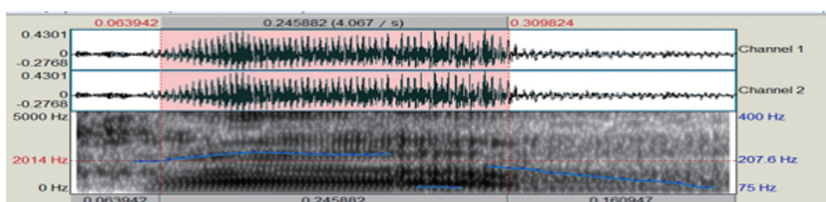


Figure 7. Inf-Adeb's realization of vowel /ʌ/ in *COME* (= 0.246s)



The highlighted parts in Figures 5 to 7 illustrate the duration of vowel /ʌ/ in the accented words *trust*, *done* and *come* as uttered by Inf-Kum, Inf-Oyed and Inf-Adeb.

4.1.3 Repetition

In line with the sermon architecture by Rosenberg (1970), our analysis shows that repetition is another key element deployed by informants to drive home their points. These repetitions are lexical, syntactic and phonological. For example, Inf-Kum retains the basic syntax of the first phrase, but changes the diction as he progresses in Excerpt 1b (See Appendix 1)

Excerpt 1b:

//the pattern ↗ / the portrait ↗ / the picture ↗ / the practice of an uncompromising Life ↘ //

The excerpt shows some syntactic repetition of *modifier head* (mh) pattern. Also, the repetitive nature of article ‘the’ /ðə/ and the rhyming of the initial voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ in the headwords of all the phrasal constructions in the excerpt are strategic in that they draw the participants’ attention to the exact personality portrayal of an uncompromising Christian life, epitomized in Daniel.

Repetition equally occurs in the intonation patterns of the subjects’ utterances. For instance, in a three-unit tune utterance by Inf-Kum in Excerpts 1c and 1d, a rise on the nuclei of the first two units and a fall on the nucleus of the third unit as shown below was observed:

Excerpt 1c: //...but the day ↗ / of the Lord ↗ / Jesus ↘ //

Excerpt 1d: //He cleaved ↗ /to their brethren ↗ / their noble ↘ //

The pattern of rising and falling demonstrated in these excerpts supports the conventional assumption that the rising tune may be used for listing while the falling tune may be used to depict finality. Furthermore, findings revealed that Inf-Kum tended to accent the last word whenever there was a brief pause. This is in line with the prosodic expectation about the last word of a neutral tone unit (e.g. Roach, 2000).

However, a different scenario is found in the intonation patterns used by Inf-Oyed and Inf-Adeb who employed falling tunes for all tone units in their utterances, as shown in Excerpts 2a and 3c below:

Excerpt 2a:

//Every age long issue ↘ /you brought to Shiloh ↘ /wherever you may be
around the world ↘ / in this service ↘ / you will NEVER return back with
them ↘ //

Excerpt 3c:

//...of Satan to steal ↘ to kill ↘ and to destroy ↘ //

The falling tunes used by these two preachers indicate their assertiveness and authoritative conviction about the efficacy of their doctrinal exposition.

4.1.4 Fluency

Fluency refers to relative non-appearance of hesitations, stuttering and other speech errors. Our analysis shows that the three informants are fluent in the discussion of the themes of their sermons because their utterances are devoid of hesitations, fillers or false starts. Fillers are sounds or non-lexical vocables which contain no formal meanings while false starts are words and sentences that are cut off mid-utterance. The informants' fluency in English foregrounds their mastery of the subject matter and communication skills. We observe that in Nigeria, people 'erroneously' believe that the degree of a preacher's fluency in English sermon delivery points to the degree of anointing on such pastor. This, in our belief, is in tandem with the unwritten rules in Nigeria that if one wants to be a pastor in a Pentecostal church, one must be very fluent since sermons are often delivered in extempore.

4.2 Prosodic cues and thematic emphasis

The act sequence of the sermons which focus on the forms and the contents as revealed in our data shows that the subjects tend to characteristically employ similar prosodic features such as word accentuation, vowel elongation and raised pitch of voice as markers of their thematic import. These features seem to suggest a peculiar style common to Nigerian Pentecostal pastors. The features are deployed by the preachers to foreground their themes and doctrinal persuasions. For example, in Inf-Kum's seemingly repetitive utterances "*I will NOT; I can NOT; I must NOT do that...; THAT is the essence of an uncompromising LIFE*" (Excerpt 1e), he elongates the unrounded half open back vowel /ɒ/ of the negative particle '*not*', which is the accented in the three clauses, realizing it instead as greater than NEV-L's /ɔ:/ (i.e. >[ɔ:]) in a bid to emphasize the crux of his message about the need for Christians to be steadfast in their resolve to live an uncompromising life like the biblical Daniel in the sermon. On average, /ɒ/ in the test item *not* is uttered as > [ɔ:] with an average length of 0.330s by the three informants (i.e. 0.358, 0.342 and 0.290), whereas in native English, the duration of the vowel is just 0.146s.

Another instance is the realization of /æ/ in *that* as greater than /ɑ:/ (i.e. >[ɑ:]). *That*, as used in the excerpt, should naturally attract the strong form /ðæt/ but it seems to have been projected as a "heightened-[ðæt]" for emphasis and as a cataphoric reference to the thesis of the informant's sermon, which centers on making a Christian live an 'uncompromising life'. Similarly, the closing diphthong /aɪ/ in *life* /laɪf/

articulated with *0.436s* duration compared to the normal *0.160s* in SV-L suggests that Inf-Kum should have realized the vowel with two different peaks [VV] and not as a glide; a behaviour that corroborates Adetugbo's (1997) view that glides seem to be articulated with two separate peaks in Nigerian English.

As demonstrated in Table 5, vowels of the accented words are “abnormally” elongated by the informants for the same purpose of drawing attention to their thematic concerns. Elongating the vowels thus enables the preachers to deliberately draw attention, vehemently, to the commitment required of everyone seeking such level of Christian faith.

4.3 Prosodic cues for attracting attention

The data analyzed has shown that the different prosodic cues noticeable in the sermons of the three pastors are geared towards making the participants (congregation) to be in fellowship with them. The congregants are not just left as spectators but as active participants in the religious discourse. For example, Inf-Oyed strategically deploys emphatic stress on NEVER in Excerpt 2a below:

Every age-long **issue** you brought to Shiloh, wherever you may be around the world in this service you will **never** return back with them.

The accentuation of “never” draws the congregants’ attention to chorus “amen” to the prophetic pronouncement by the pastor. Emphatic Stress, which is a form of voice modulation according to Richard and McCully (1987, p. 3), is connected with “pragmatic factors”. Inf-Oyed uses this prosodic element to draw attention to salient issues and ideas in his sermons. He renders the disyllabic word, “NEVer” /'nev.ə/ as NEVER ['ne'væ] thereby producing the two syllables with about the same length, relatively (e.g. [ne] = 0.259s; [væ] = 0.270s). Inf-Oyed also does this in a bid to build up his congregation’s faith to the level of assurance that on no account will they return to the “age long issues” which may be ailment, financial misfortune, joblessness, barrenness, etc. In addition, Inf-Oyed employs emphatic stress with enthusiastic voice to stir up the congregation to unprecedented release from worldly thoughts and distractions, thereby making them participants in the sermons rather being mere spectators. It is observed that sometimes a louder pitch, as seen in Inf-Oyed’s sermon renditions may mean that sensitive socio-economic cum emotional topics like poverty,

efficacy of anointing oil, entrepreneurial skill attainments and prosperity are the epicenter of his callings.

5. Conclusion

The paper concludes that the selected sermons of pastors Kumuyi (Inf-Kum), Adeboye (Inf-Adeb) and Bishop Oyedepo (Inf-Oyed) represented their doctrinal orientation or typology as “faith-transformers”, “faith-seekers” and “faith-builders” respectively. The sermons are replete with specific prosodic cues that foreground the thematic focus of the preachers’ doctrinal persuasions. Insights from Dell Hymes’ ethnography of communication assisted greatly in situating the various prosodic features identified within their real contexts which drew out the appropriate intonemes in the sermons. The study shows further that Nigerian Pentecostal pastors deploy distinct voice signatures that are both phonological and prosodic in nature. Our findings reveal as well that while Inf-Kum is associated with the use of emphatic stress produced with enthusiastic voice, Inf-Adeb and Inf-Oyed use relatively same pitch level and slower tempo, respectively. These speech styles are suggestive of the branding deployed by the pastors in getting the congregation to buy into, as well as identify with the messages.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Info-Kum

Excerpt 1a: That's the very essence of God picking up this man **Daniel** and making him a **worthy, useful, effective** and competent instrument of **trust** in His hands. Look at **that** again, Daniel chapter one verse eight.

Excerpt 1b: I will NOT; I can NOT; I must NOT do that; **THAT** is the essence of an

uncompromising LIFE”

Excerpt 1c: “If you are going to live an uncompromising life, the two words I WILL not...”

Appendix 2. Inf-Oyed

Excerpt 2a: Every age-long **issue** you brought to Shiloh, wherever you may be around the world in this service you will **never** return back with them.

Excerpt 2b: And **boldness** is what gives you command of signs and wonders. They were there speaking boldly in the lord. Acts chapter 14 verse 3: “which gave witness to the word of his grace and granted signs and wonders to be **done** by their hand”.

Excerpt 2c: You cannot possess your possession without the spirit of boldness.

Excerpt 2d: Small girl is **connected** to the set of just men... made perfect.

Excerpt 2e: God never backs out on his **word**.

Excerpt 2f: God never backs out on his word.

Excerpt 2g: Again, we have some awesome testimonies this morning; amazing testimonies from the Lord.

Excerpt 2h: No matter who is tied down together, heavens will break it together.

Appendix 3. Inf-Adeb

Excerpt 3a: He was **hungry**.

Excerpt 3b: The **bible** says in 3rd John verse 2, 3rd John verse 2; it said I wish above all **things** that you prosper...

Excerpt 3c: It is the **duty** of Satan to steal, to kill and to destroy.

Excerpt 3d: Whatever darkness has used to stop your fruitfulness; whether it is in child bearing or in success in examination or in being able to produce papers for promotion, etc, the **Almighty** light of the world will deal with it tonight.

Excerpt 3e: But when you observe very closely, you’ll discover that at **times** loneliness is as a result of the works of darkness.

Excerpt 3f: Because light stands for prosperity.

Excerpt 3g: He said that I am come that ye might have life and have it more abundantly.

Excerpt 3h: From the story of Bartimaeus, and I’m about to close.