

Coherence in a Religious Text: An Analysis of Pope Francis' Homilies

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Abstract: Pope Francis' discourses were at times taken out of context and thus resulted in divided reactions and interpretations, or worse, oppositions among Catholics and non-Catholics worldwide. Hence, a study of his pandemic homilies was put in order to attempt to avert confusion or false impression among his audiences by looking into the connection of ideas in such religious texts. Employing a discourse analysis, this study examined the coherence devices in 10 randomly selected homilies of the Catholic church's supreme pontiff as he fosters his sense of connection with his audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Findings reveal that there are four types of coherence devices, i.e., repetition of keywords, consistency of pronouns, use of transitional devices, and logical division order in his pandemic homilies. The aforementioned devices pertain to the cohesive and coherent interrelation of sentences or paragraphs within the textual context. The findings of this study have reinforced the imperative nature of coherence in textual communication, as it is crucial for the preservation of interlocutory connectivity. The discoveries of this investigation consequently generate ramifications for the examination of the structure and presentation of a sermon or other theological oration that could enhance the hypotheses and methodologies of preaching in scholarly, ecclesiastical, and ceremonial contexts. In consideration of the limited amount of linguistic research conducted on religious discourse, this study provides potential avenues for future investigation.

Keywords: Coherence, pandemic homilies, Pope Francis, discourse analysis

Introduction

Pope Francis, whose real name is Jorge Mario Bergoglio, holds the esteemed position of the chief pastor of the Roman Catholic Church. In his capacity as the preeminent witness to faith and the unifying force among the people of God, he effectively guides and inspires the Central Synod of Bishops in their efforts to efficiently formulate agreements and establish overarching Church policies. There have been instances documented wherein the discourses of the pontiff, specifically his proclamations, observations, and interviews, were misconstrued, leading to divergent responses and construals, or even antagonisms among the worldwide Catholic and non-Catholic communities.

According to Lewis (2020), a burgeoning effort to emasculate the message of Pope Francis manifested in Catholic media outlets and public figures that began to question his words and teachings interpreted as insults to devout Catholics. For instance, his encyclical on care for creation, *Laudato Si'*, was met by critics who decried his reliance on "unsettled science" and his criticism of capitalism (Lewis, 2020). Additionally, when the pope's apostolic exhortation on marriage and family, *Amoris Laetitia*, was released in 2016, many Catholics became openly hostile, as it was believed to have violated immutable Catholic doctrines on marriage, adultery, and objective truth (Cameli, 2017). Likewise, Fields (2015) reported the occasions when Pope Francis was misquoted on various occasions when he spoke on topics like atheism and salvation, the third Vatican council, the fictionality of Adam and Eve in the Creation Story, criticism of the Church's focus on social issues, and animals in Heaven after death. Moreover, the documentary titled Francesco released in 2020 garnered significant international attention due to a particular segment wherein the pontiff advocated for the enactment of civil union statutes to accommodate homosexual partnerships. It has been posited by certain activists and media outlets that the pontifical statements of Pope Francis have resulted in a modification of the Church's inviolable doctrine (Flynn, 2020). Thus, he encountered a schism within the global Catholic Church (Talmazan et al., 2020). Notwithstanding, reports found that the views of the said pope were just taken out of context or purely misreported and did not, in any way, alter the traditional stand of the Church on such a controversial matter (Babu, 2020; Schiller, 2020). In essence, these circumstances show that Pope Francis confuses many observers because his papacy does not fit neatly into some of the pre-established classificatory schemes that impact his principles on economic, social, and environmental policies (Lyon et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the pontiff delivered several homilies during masses which he personally presided over at the Vatican. Whilst no published claims or studies have been presented that address opposition to the linearity of truth in his homilies, it is incontrovertible that he exhibits a propensity for misquotations and misinterpretations in his discourses, as evidenced by Fields (2015) and Cameli (2017). Hence, I was propelled to conduct this study to avert confusion or false impression of the pope's homilies as sacred discourses that, as a form of a divine and moral exhortation, must have possessed the main purposes

to challenge and help, inform, and direct, bring Scripture's inspiration to people and not wreak confusion and dissension on them (Powell, 2017; Sousa, 2020).

Given that homily is regarded as a communicative act, a plethora of motivated linguistic scholars have delved into the enigma surrounding this form of discourse, utilizing various lenses and corpora (cf. Adedun & Mekiliuwa, 2009; Capaldi, 2017; Ferrara, 2014; Guzik, 2018; Hopkins, 2010; Karanja, 2014; Mansouri et al., 2017; Szudrowicz-Gartska, 2012). Notwithstanding, extant data evince that research on religious discourse and the methodical advancement of language and religion as a domain of sociolinguistics remain restricted and inadequate (Darquennes & Vandebussche, 2011; Rahimi & Hematiyan, 2012; Hobbs, 2019). Therefore, in order to mitigate the aforementioned gap, this investigation utilized a qualitative-discourse analysis, a methodology that primarily endeavors to delineate and elucidate linguistic phenomena within various contexts of their utilization and to ascertain linguistic resources. The present investigation was undertaken with the aim of scrutinizing the coherence mechanisms employed in the homiletic discourses of His Holiness Pope Francis, as he endeavors to cultivate a profound sense of rapport with his congregants amidst the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic era. At this juncture of the investigation, the homilies, which constitute the corpora of the study, were broadly characterized as the sacred or religious discourses pronounced by the Supreme Pontiff during the masses he personally officiated in Vatican City amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coherence Devices

The attribute of coherence holds significant prominence in the realm of proficiently composed textual material. The determination is made that the sentences are logically connected and function cohesively to advance the primary concept within the paragraph (Kusumawardani, 2018). The assertion put forth by Oshima and Hogue (2006) posits that the establishment of coherence within a paragraph is contingent upon the interconnectivity of its constituent sentences. This means that the syntactical coherence of the discourse is of paramount importance, as it ensures a seamless transition between each successive sentence. Without it, a written text cannot be properly a text (Hang & Huong, 2012; Elkhayma, 2020). Moreover, according to Oshima and Hogue (2006), cited in Faradhibah & Nur (2017), there are four ways to maintain coherence in writing, that is to say: repetition of keywords, consistency of pronouns, use of transition devices, and logical order.

Repetition of Keywords. The authors Oshima and Hogue (2006) have proposed a technique to ensure coherence in written communication, which involves the strategic repetition of significant nouns throughout the text. It is recommended, in this context, to substitute a personal pronoun with the reiterated usage of a pivotal noun, particularly when the connotation is indistinct or equivocal. The writer can also use synonyms, expressions, or other terms to add some variety to help the writer to develop coherence in writing and also help the reader to stay focused by reminding them of the main idea (Savage, 2007; Elkhayma, 2020). Kusumawardani (2018) noted that it is the easiest way to maintain coherence.

Consistency of Pronouns. The syntactical agreement of pronouns with respect to person and number is a fundamental aspect of written discourse, as posited by Oshima and Hogue (2006) and reiterated by Elkhayma (2020). It can be posited that the accurate utilization of pronouns necessitates a concordance with its antecedent, perspicuous allusion to the antecedent (i.e., the noun that the pronoun replaces), and judicious selection of the appropriate case. The principle of agreement in number between related pronouns and antecedents has been posited by Azpadu (2011), indicating that they must concur either in singular or plural form.

Use of Transition Devices. Transition devices or signals are like traffic signs that tell readers when to go forward, turn, slow down, or stop (Elkhayma, 2020). In essence, they serve as a navigational tool that facilitates the seamless comprehension of written concepts by readers. Conjunctions serve the purpose of linking ideas within paragraphs, elucidating the import of the primary concept to the subsequent one, and evincing the correlation between the main idea and the supporting ideas within a sentence or paragraph (Aprilliya, 2016; Kusumawardani, 2018).

Logical Order. According to Kusumawardani (2018) citing the principles of coherence by Oshima and Hogue (2006), to achieve coherence in writing is to assure the arrangement of the sentences in a logical order, that is presenting the ideas in a manner that is cogent to a reader accustomed to the English style of writing. Additionally, presenting a text in a logical manner is reducing the ambiguity of the text (Kusumawardani, 2018).

Methods

Research Design

The present investigation utilized a descriptive-qualitative research design, employing discourse analysis (DA) as its methodological approach. Through a comprehensive and meticulous analysis of the presentation of information, DA endeavors to elucidate and explicate linguistic phenomena by taking into account the affective, cognitive, situational, and cultural contexts within which they are employed (Budd, 2005; Gee, 1999; Syting, 2018).

Data Sources

The corpora utilized in this study were the homilies of Pope Francis which he delivered amid the pandemic. Criteria in selecting the homilies included date of delivery, language, and credibility of the publisher. These homilies had been delivered during the pandemic; those that had been translated into English (since the homilies were in Italian); and those were from the book titled

Data Collection

A certification from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the University of the Immaculate Conception with protocol code AL-GS 35-12-2020 was obtained. Then, I downloaded the e-book titled *Strong in the Face of Tribulation: The Church in Communion – A Sure Support in Time of Trial*. Each title of the homily with its corresponding date when it was delivered was written on a strip of paper and placed in a bowl. After which, the random picking of 10 from them was done. Only 10 homilies were chosen to be the corpora. Braun and Clarke (2013) in Fugard and Potts (2015) mentioned that a minimum of 10 for analysis coming from generated texts would suffice for a discourse study. After the random sampling selection, a code was assigned to each homily. A code for each homily was based on the homily number, the date of delivery (first letter of the day of the week, the complete day of the month, and the first letter of the month), and the initials of the liturgical season when the homily was delivered. For example, H1S3MET as a code means Homily 1, Sunday, 3 March, Easter Triduum. Each sentence in the homilies is also numbered for the sake of the analysis.

Data Analysis

Utilizing Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis framework, as referenced in Creswell's (2009) scholarly work, I considered data reduction, data display, and the process of drawing and validating conclusions. The aforementioned constituents encompassed the processes of encoding, memoization, and theorizing. In the present investigation, a sample of 10 homilies was randomly selected and subsequently printed out and labeled for analysis. Following the coding process, each homily underwent meticulous scrutiny through the implementation of ample margins on both sides of each printed copy, with spaces between sentences to facilitate coding and memoing purposes. In addition, I utilized a reflective commentary methodology to document my perceptions in analyzing each corpus and employing necessary theories and published studies to oversee the evolving conceptualizations. Finally, the analyses with all the findings and discussions underwent rigorous validation by esteemed experts: seven applied linguists and one priest.

Results

Coherence Devices

There are four types of coherence devices, i.e., repetition of keywords, consistency of pronouns, use of transitional devices, and logical division order in the pandemic homilies of Pope Francis as seen in Table 1.

Repetition of Keywords. It pertains to the recurrence of salient nominal entities within the textual corpus. The homiletic passages presented herein serve as a prime illustration of the utilization of the coherence mechanism, whereby a term is reiterated within the structure.

This Sunday is a beautiful **Sunday**, it is a **Sunday** of peace, it is a **Sunday** of tenderness... (H1S3MET)

We are near to each other, because the inheritance we have received from the Lord is **closeness**, that is, the gesture of **closeness**. (H2W18ML)

It is not the **time** of your **judgement**, but of our **judgement**: a **time** to choose... a **time** to separate what is necessary... a **time** to get our lives back on track... (H10F27ML)

Additionally, there are also instances when two words were repeated in construction, like in the following statements: And **this idea** of the pastor, **this idea** of the flock and of the sheep, is a Paschal idea. (H1S3MET)

He tells **the truth**. He does not hide **the truth**. Because He Himself in this passage says, "I am **the truth**" (see Jn 14:6). And **the truth** is, "I will go", that is, "I will die" (see vv. 2-3). (H9F8MET)

In the aforementioned instances, Pope Francis has demonstrated a preference for substituting a pronoun with the repetition of a key noun, specifically in cases where the intended meaning of his homily may be unclear or ambiguous. This technique involves the repetition of a keyword or key phrase within the construction, as exemplified above. With this, the ideas of the utterances flowed naturally and clearly. Moreover, the use of repetition contributes to the construction of the homily serving the purpose of emphasizing the importance of a person, theme, or event, hence adding to the powers of persuasion, i.e., convincing people of the message's truth. Using the same word or phrase over and over again can add emphasis and catchiness while listening to the discourse where a

listener's attention might be more limited. The findings express that something is repeated over and over again. It carries a great deal of importance not only from the one giving it but also to the one receiving it.

Consistency of Pronouns. The second coherence mechanism pertains to the uniformity of the pronouns employed throughout the written discourse. This apparatus pertains to the resolution of pronominal anaphora, whereby the agreement in person and the number of the antecedent and the pronoun are ensured in the discourse. The following statements prove the consistency of the use of personal pronouns:

In addition, **a good shepherd** is tender; **he** has that tenderness of closeness, **he** knows the sheep...to the point that when **he** returns home tired after a day of work...

The "God who is near" speaks to us of humility. **He** is not a "great God", no. **He** is nearby. **He** is at home. (H2W18ML)

We have an anchor: by **His** cross, **we** have been saved. **We** have a rudder: by **His** cross, **we** have been redeemed. **We** have hope: by **His** cross, **we** have been healed... (H10F27ML)

Based on the presented sample above, in H1S3MET, the subjective pronoun *he*, objective pronoun *him* and possessive pronoun *his* all refer back to the antecedent *a good shepherd*, based on the premise that being a shepherd is mainly a job of solitary males without children. In H2W18ML, the pronoun *He* which is used thrice in the construction refers back to *God*, as *God* is always referred to in the Bible as a father, cf. Psalm 103:13, hence the use of the singular, masculine pronoun. And, in H10F27ML, the pronoun *we*, a first-person plural personal pronoun in the nominative case, refers exophorically to Pope Francis and his audience, which then gets consistent with the use of *us*, a first-person plural personal pronoun in the objective case. Moreover, the reverential pronoun *His* must obviously refer to Jesus Christ, by virtue of the lexical context and of the Roman Catholic dogma.

The provided excerpts evince the grammaticality of the constructions through the proper utilization of pronouns, including their agreement with antecedents, precise reference to antecedents (nouns that pronouns replace), and appropriate case selection. However, there is one instance in the homilies when the inconsistency of pronouns was apparent. Consider the statement below from the fifth homily:

It is not the moment to make changes. **It** is the moment of fidelity, of faithfulness to God, of faithfulness to the things [decisions] we had made before.... (H5S2MET)

To prove the violation of the rule in pronoun consistency here, the preceding sentence, i.e., the sixty-second sentence in the fifth homily, must be taken into consideration, and it states:

Moments of crisis demand perseverance, silence; staying where **we** are, steadfast." (H5S2MET)

Now, based on the two statements above, the latter presents the subject *moments* or *moments of crisis* to be more precise. Therefore, in the former, the use of *it* to refer to its antecedent *moments* must be a discernible inconsistency in the use of pronouns.

Nonetheless, the consistency in the use of pronouns in the homilies is intensified by the appropriate use of reflexive and intensive pronouns. There are plenty of times when reflexive pronouns are used in the discourses. The following are just a slice of them:

God humbles **Himself** when He draws near. (H2W18ML)

What had that holy nun kept for **herself**? (H6S19AET)

In each of the aforementioned instances, the reflexive pronoun serves as an anaphoric pronoun that is coreferential with another nominal present within the same clause. It refers to a previously named noun or pronoun, like in H2W18ML, to *God*; in H6S19AET, to *nun*.

Meanwhile, one instance in the homilies tells that when referring to a generic person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context, pronouns to be used are *he/she* or *himself/herself*. An excerpt from the eighth homily goes:

A person is Christian because he or she has encountered Jesus Christ, has let **him- or herself** be encountered by Him. (H8S26AET)

With this statement from H8S26AET, Pope Francis shows that to address a person, like a Christian who is generally referred to as a follower of Christ and who could be either a male or a female, both pronouns for two genders must be indicated in an utterance. However, this single instance in the homilies could not really imply that the pope always uses gendered pronouns in his other discourses.

In terms of intensive pronouns used in the discourses, on the other hand, some instances are found like:

Jesus **Himself** rebukes us... (H3M23ML)

We turn our backs on death and open our hearts to You, for You are Life **itself**. (H4S11APT)

Apparently, the intensive pronouns above are used to add emphasis to the subject or antecedent of the sentence, as they are not really essential to each of the sentences' basic meanings. Nevertheless, they serve the important function of making the statements composing the homilies more interesting as well as more meaningful.

Use of Transitional Devices. The next indicator that there is coherence in a text is the use of transitional devices, deemed as lexical items and collocations that function as cohesive devices, facilitating the inter-sentential flow of information by regulating the pace and direction of discourse, akin to traffic signals. Such devices prompt the recipient of the message to decelerate, reorient, or halt their cognitive processing. Moreover, these apparatuses can be employed to project idea or thought addition, as exemplified in the ensuing statements:

A pastor who is not meek is not a good pastor... **In addition**, a good shepherd is tender... he knows the sheep one by one, by name, **and** he takes care of each one... (H1S3MET)

Jesus "had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him". **And** in the face of this crisis, He reminds them... (H5S2MET)

The statements above show the use of transitional devices like *in addition* and *and*. In H1S3MET, the additive conjunction *in addition* is used to introduce a new sentence consisting of additional information about the subject, after two previous sentences mentioned details about it. Hence, the use of the device here is intra-sentential, i.e., linking two separate sentences. However, in the same sentence introduced by the conjunction *in addition*, there are inter-sentential transitions, since another additive conjunction, viz, *and*, is used, to suggest the joint consideration of concepts in one sentence. Meanwhile, in H5S2MET, the additive conjunction *and* is used to create transitions between sentences, i.e., intra-sentential. The use of such a conjunction here to start a sentence clearly provides a picture of transition, either to support the previously stated idea or to introduce a new one. More so, the use of *and* as a transitional device in this case notifies the audience that something else is worth still their attention.

In the homilies, transitional devices are also used for the purpose to contrast. These transitions point out alternatives or differences, like in the following statements from the homilies:

Perhaps we cannot draw near physically to others... **but** we can reawaken in ourselves a habit of drawing near to others... (H2W18ML)

The grave is the place where no one who enters ever leaves. **But** Jesus emerged for us... (H4S11APT)

Among the many contrastive transitional devices, the homilies make use of *but*, *even though*, and *yet*. The data show that *but* is most commonly employed. Like in H2W18ML, such a transition device is used to present two opposing ideas in one sentence. The first sentence is first constructed negatively characterized by the term *cannot*, and then opposed by the statement following the use of the said conjunction. While in H4S11APT, the device is used to introduce justifications to seemingly lighten up the mood brought by the first statement in each of the statements.

On the other hand, transitional devices are also used for the purpose of giving examples and showing time. Consider the following excerpts:

Let us think, **for example**, of Jesus' closeness to the anguished disciples of Emmaus... (H2W18ML)

He makes us talk... **And then** He answers, He explains, up to the necessary point. (H8S26AET)

The use of phrases *for example* in H2W18ML is used to present an example of the closeness of God with His people during times of tribulations by stating Jesus's closeness towards his disciples. In H8S26AET, the transitional device *and then* is used to indicate that the previous statement has to happen first before the completion of an action in the statement characterized by the mentioned device.

In terms of indicating a logical relationship between elements in a sentence using transitional devices, the following statement from the homilies demonstrate such a purpose:

He is the God of closeness. **For this reason**, we are not persons in isolation. (H2W18ML)

Based on the sample statement from H2W18ML, the phrase *for this reason* is used as a transitional device to show that the action it introduces in its sentence is dependent on the assertion of the previous sentence. Moreover, there are transitional devices in the homilies that serve the purpose of indicating result, to wit:

So many times, we adopt a theology thinking of a God who is a judge. **And so**, I hide myself, I am afraid. (H2W18ML)

He does it for our own good, **so that** we take it seriously. (H3M23ML)

He...can also remove the stones in our hearts. **So**, let us not give in to resignation... (H4S11APT)

Characterized by the terms *and so*, *so that*, and *so* in H2W18ML, H3M23ML, and H4S11APT respectively, the transitions in each of the sentences above are clearly fulfilled. The use of these words implies that the preceding statement brings cause, and the proceeding statement, the one introduced by any of the above-mentioned transitional devices, explicates effect or result.

Finally, in two of the homilies, the transitional device *indeed* is used to serve the purpose of showing repetition. Consider the following excerpts:

Indeed, “What great nation is there that has its gods so near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him?” (H2W18ML)

Indeed, “What great nation is there that has its gods so near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him?” (H2W18ML)

Indeed, once they have called on Him, He saves His disciples from their discouragement. (H10F27ML)

In the second homily, one identical statement or sentence is mentioned twice, both introduced by the term *indeed*. In the said homily, Pope Francis first makes mention of the quoted part from the First Reading in the third sentence, “Moses says, ‘What great nation is there that has its gods so near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him?’ (Dt 4:7).” Hence, in the eighth sentence of the mentioned homily, the same statement is expressed to restate the essence of the message, after having stated the preceding sentence which goes, “And we know through revelation that there is a paternal nearness of a father accompanying His people, giving them the gift of the law – a God who is near.” Decisively, to bring emphasis on the beauty and significance of the quoted part in relation to the homily’s title, “Our God is Close and Asks Us to be Close to Each Other,” he once more uses the transitional device *indeed*, then beautifully ends the homily by repeating the said Biblical statement. Meanwhile, in H10F27ML, the same transitional device, i.e., *indeed*, is used to repeat, or better yet, rationalize and justify an assertion in its preceding sentence in the tenth homily that states: *Because He, more than anyone, cares about us*.

Logical Order. Described as a measure of logical consistency whereby the exposition of concepts is presented in a lucid fashion that is familiar to a reader well-versed in the conventions of the English literary tradition, the organization of information can be achieved through various means such as a chronological arrangement, logical partitioning of concepts, or a comparative analysis of similarities and differences between multiple items. In this scholarly investigation, it has been determined that the entirety of the homilies, specifically a total of ten, have adhered to the second mode of discourse, i.e., logical partitioning of concepts or ideas. This method entails commencing with a topic sentence, followed by supportive sentences, and culminating with a concluding sentence. In the first homily, the pope posits the thesis statement subsequent to a succinct synopsis of one of the scriptural passages on the fourth Sunday of Easter. Consider the following excerpts:

The First Letter of the apostle Peter, which we have heard, is a passage of serenity (see 2: 20-25). It talks about Jesus... **Jesus is the shepherd – this is how Peter sees Him – who comes to save, to save the sheep which had gone astray: they were us.** (H1S3MET)

In the third homily, he opts to begin the homily with a description of the main character in the Gospel reading. It was immediately followed then by the statement of the homily’s topic sentence. The homily states:

This father asks for health for his son (see Jn 4: 43-54); the Lord rebukes everyone a little... And Jesus answers, “Go, your son will live” (v. 50. **It takes three things to make a true prayer.** (H3M23ML)

In the same vein, the sixth homily, with excerpts presented below, provides a picture of how a topic sentence could be presented. In the following passages, it is observed that the topic sentence, based on the Church’s feast on that day, i.e., Feast of the Divine Mercy, was revealed by presenting an open-ended question and instantaneously answering it. The construction of the answer to the question was elucidated by injecting quotations from the passage and then pursuing a life application that serves as the topic sentence. The lines express:

What does Jesus do in the face of this timorous lack of belief?... He wants us to see him... as our Father who always raises us up... **The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground, that in order to keep walking, we need to be put back on our feet.** (H6S19AET)

Therefore, it can be deduced that the subsequent sentences following the initial topic sentence serve as corroborative evidence to reinforce the main idea. The corpus of the homily employs corroborative clauses to buttress, explicate, exemplify, or furnish substantiation for the notion articulated in the thesis statement. Moreover, they explicate the primary concept conveyed in the thesis statement. In one of the homilies, the supporting sentences are presented in forms of explanation and illustration:

The presence of the Lord as a pastor, as a shepherd of the flock. **And Jesus, in chapter 10 of John, which we have read, presents Himself as a shepherd.** (H1S3MET)

Jesus' style must be the style of the shepherd. There is no other. But even Jesus the good shepherd... **He was meek... In addition, a good shepherd is tender; he has that tenderness of closeness...** This is a good shepherd, this is Jesus, this is the one who accompanies us all on the path of life. (H1S3MET)

In the statements above taken from the first homily, the supporting sentences are well-founded and clear to explain the text's topic sentence, which goes, "Jesus is the shepherd... who comes to save, to save the sheep which had gone astray..." The body is strengthened by the use of quotations from the reading and the expansion of the thought on what characteristics Jesus has as a good shepherd. From H1S3MET, the homily also states, "He was meek..." and "In addition, a good shepherd is tender; he has that tenderness of closeness..." In this sense, the body is able to bring clarity and explication to the core message of the homily. Moreover, the following statements constitute the body of the third homily:

The first is faith... Faith in prayer... The first condition for a true prayer is faith. (H3M23ML)

The second condition that Jesus teaches us is perseverance... (H3M23ML)

And the third thing that God wants in prayer is courage... This virtue of courage is so necessary, not only for apostolic action but also for prayer. (H3M23ML)

Helping build the clear logical division of ideas in the homily is the use of transitional devices for enumeration, i.e., first, second, third, etc. With the third homily's topic sentence being centered on three things to make a true prayer, the body consists, indeed, of three things. In H3M23ML, the first condition, faith, is elaborated by starting with a description of how prayer must and must not be done and ending with an invitation to pay attention to prayer. Additionally, the homily also presents, "The second condition that Jesus teaches us is perseverance." In this part of the body, the virtue of perseverance as a requisite to prayer is explained through the use of a refutation, i.e., "Some ask, but grace does not come: they do not have this perseverance, because in the end they do not need it, or they do not have faith..." Pope Francis, in this part, is aware that some listeners might be dubious to live a life with perseverance, especially in challenging times. But this part is reinforced by another invitation to continue persevering in prayer as "at the end, the Lord will give you the grace." Finally, the third and last condition to make a true prayer is described. He starts with a question that could be regarded as a mild refutation of his point. Eventually, he presents an answer using exemplars from the Bible to convey the essence of the virtue of courage. He makes mention of Moses' and Abraham's experiences for the purpose of bringing out the power of courage in making a true prayer.

Ultimately, to logically end all the homilies of Pope Francis, a concluding sentence in each of those is presented. In some instances, the concluding sentences are stated to reinforce his argument by reiterating the main points stated in the homily or restating a point differently to clarify the argument, like in the following sample statements:

This Sunday is a beautiful Sunday, it is a Sunday of peace... (H1S3MET)

Faith, perseverance and courage. In these days, in which it is necessary to pray, to pray more... (H3M23ML)

In other cases, the concluding sentences are in a form of an optative sentence, i.e., a sentence structure that expresses a wish or a desire.

May the Lord give us the strength not to sell out our faith in moments of crisis. (H5S2MET)

May the Lord give us all this grace to meet Jesus every day... (H8S26AET)

With the use of the structure *May the Lord* as used in H5S2MET and in H8S26AET, the pope prays for the goodness and wellness of his people, for strength and for the grace that they need in times of plights and challenges. Additionally, there are concluding statements that are appealing in nature, viz. means to personally respond to the truth in a way that will please God. These are used to stimulate the hearers to the corresponding action. The following are sample statements using appeals to conclude the homilies:

Today... **let us accept mercy**, the salvation of the world. And **let us show mercy** to those who are most vulnerable; for only in this way will we build a new world. (H6S19AET)

Let us ask the grace to learn to let ourselves be comforted by the Lord... (H9F8MET)

Pope Francis ends his homilies by challenging the audience to accept mercy and show compassion towards others who are also suffering at present, as depicted in H6S19AET above. In H9F8MET, he also makes an appeal to allow God to comfort them and to give them consolation and hope while enduring the gravity of the world's present health situation. In essence, the sample statements mentioned above and in the preceding page that portray the conclusion of Pope Francis' utterances imply that a conclusion is an important part of a homily. The presence of a conclusion provides closure for the audience while reminding them of the contents and importance of the communicative act that has occurred.

Discussion

The establishment of coherence in a written work pertains to the manner in which sentences or paragraphs are interrelated through the utilization of various mechanisms such as recurring vocabulary, congruous pronouns, fitting transitional cues, and a rational sequence of concepts. The present investigation has demonstrated that the establishment of coherence is a necessary condition for the speaker or writer to establish and sustain a connection with the listener or reader.

Repetition of Words. Sample statements in the homilies provide examples of repetition of words that bring significance to the core message. The use of repetition as a coherence device in the homilies of Pope Francis provides a style to achieve coherence, which Oshima & Hogue (2006) call the first and the most natural and the easiest way. This device helps to focus the pope's ideas and to keep his listeners and reader on track. This finding is in congruence with the assertion of Regan (2002) on the function of repetition in coherence. Sherman et al. (2010) also claim that repeating keywords or phrases helps connect and focus idea(s) throughout the text or discourse. Catching a word or phrase is considered to be important to a reader's comprehension of a piece, and replaying that word or phrase creates a 'musical motif' in that reader's head (Burchfield, 1996; Nordquist, 2019; Paturusi, 2016).

Consistency of Pronouns. Excerpts evince that the pronominal constituents employed in the discursive exchanges are intrinsically linked to the identical individual or entity and grammatical category throughout the written composition. The present study's results indicate that the implementation of uniform pronoun usage facilitates Pope Francis' avoidance of tedious noun repetition in his homilies while simultaneously ensuring subject-pronoun concordance. Nordquist (2014) claims that pronouns help readers track essential sentence elements, and through verbal cues, e.g., pronouns, they can forge connections between information in the paragraph to trace a unified sequence of ideas. Thus, the pronoun causes the reader to sum up, quickly and subconsciously, what has been said before going on to the subsequent part of the composition (Astari, 2019; Jarrad, 2012).

Use of Transitional Devices. The present study's analysis reveals lexical items and expressions employed to establish semantic and pragmatic connections between adjacent sentences, thereby contributing to the overall coherence of the homiletic discourse. Drawing from the homiletic discourse, it is evident that transitional mechanisms serve to facilitate comprehension amongst the audience of His Holiness Pope Francis, thereby illuminating the import of the principal concept vis-à-vis the subsequent concept, and establishing a nexus between the principal concept and the ancillary concepts within a given paragraph (or sentence) (Djahimo, 2018; Lynch & Anderson, 2013; Mahendra & Dewi, 2017; Rahmawati & Susanti, 2016). Henceforth, coherence, indubitably, is achieved through the appropriate use of various transitional devices. Ampa et al. (2019) propound that as noteworthy signals, these devices let the reader know the previous idea, sentence, or paragraph is connected to what follows, and connect words or phrases to strengthen the internal coherence of the text. Most particularly in religious discourses, Mead (2020) avows that the use of transitional devices makes efficient and unproblematic movements in a message. These devices are disproportionately significant as they can radically support the message as a whole.

Logical Order. The findings concur that the utilization of logical sequencing serves as a determinant of coherence in the homilies. By means of this approach, the concepts are expounded in a coherent fashion that is comprehensible to an audience familiar with the conventions of English. It can be inferred further that the first discourse through the tenth discourse have utilized the technique of logical segmentation of concepts. Every homily manifests the existence of the thesis statement, which is elucidated by the corroborating sentences, and the denouement or the concluding sentence. Through an examination of the structural composition and presentation of the homily, it has been determined that the utilization of logical division of ideas serves to mitigate ambiguity and promote coherence among the various points expounded upon within the discourse. In each homiletic discourse, a subject matter is dissected into distinct components, namely the exordium, the main argument, and the peroration, which are expounded individually, thereby resulting in a lucid exposition of the pontiff's message and a vivid comprehension on the part of the listeners. The use of logical division of ideas as the logical order in all the homilies corroborates the framework from Cheong's (1996) study on the generic structure of homilies that includes three typical stages, namely: introduction, body, and conclusion. Alamis (2013) and Harper (2010) posit that the logical division of ideas sustains the unity of ideas set to determine how sentences and paragraphs are constructed logically.

Conclusion

Upon analyzing the coherence devices present in Pope Francis' homilies, it becomes evident that readers or listeners are able to discern significant interconnections within the text. These interconnections are logically related to the main subject being discussed and are perceived among clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. The establishment of linguistic coherence has effectively ensured a systematic arrangement of discourse components in accordance with a set of regulations. Consequently, the attainment of coherence is facilitated by the seamless connection and flow of sentences and ideas within the homilies.

The implications derived from the findings of this study hold significant relevance for the scholarly investigation of the composition and delivery of a sermon or any other form of religious discourse. The academic implications of this phenomenon may serve to amplify the theories and practices of preaching in academic, pastoral, and liturgical contexts. It is imperative to instill a profound understanding that coherence holds paramount significance. As a linguistic instrumentality, it engenders intertextuality among all textual constituents within the situational milieu, via a seamless progression from one constituent or concept to the subsequent, thereby guaranteeing the perspicuity of the macrocosmic construct. Similarly, it is imperative for scholars to bear in mind the manner in which coherence is established, as it creates significant linkages that are perceived by readers or listeners in a written or oral discourse, such as a sermon.

Additional investigation may be pursued utilizing a greater number of homilies that were conveyed by His Holiness Pope Francis amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of broadening the extant literature and inquiries pertaining to the crucial function of language in holy discourses. It is recommended that fellow researchers contemplate the examination of pandemic homilies delivered by cardinals, bishops, or local priests through the lens of the theoretical framework utilized in this particular study. The homilies of non-Catholic ecclesiastics, such as pastors and ministers, may also be deemed worthy of contemplation. Moreover, given the purely linguistic nature of the present investigation, it is advisable for forthcoming scholars to direct their attention toward the hermeneutic perspective of the homilies, emphasizing the significance of interpretation, its fundamental essence, extent, and legitimacy, along with its position within and consequences for human existence. Subsequent scholars may express interest in alternative linguistic modalities and methodologies for discerning patterns within homilies, thereby facilitating comprehension of prevailing forces and ideologies.

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