

**LINGUISTIC AND RHETORICAL FEATURES OF
TELEVANGELISM AS PERSUASIVE DISCOURSE****RHODORA P. SUAREZ-CRIZALDO***Cavite State University*

The study was an attempt to examine the linguistic and rhetorical features that make televangelism a type of persuasive discourse. Data were obtained from five religious sects in the Philippines, namely, Ang Dating Daan, El Shaddai, Iglesia ni Cristo, Jesus is Lord Church, and Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ. The study revealed five macrostructure patterns with the Claim and Support moves as the obligatory moves, while the Warrant move is optional. In terms of linguistic features, persuasion is realized in Philippine televangelism via the widespread use of first person plural pronouns, simple attitudinal adjectives, direct reference type of repetition, and causal conjunctions. In terms of speech acts, the findings revealed the propensity to use representatives, most particularly, assertion, information and descriptive examples. Directive is another feature of the persuasive function of Philippine televangelism, with the imperative type as the most prevalent. Persuasion is further realized in terms of paralinguistic features, specifically suprasegmentals, i.e. intonation, pitch, stress and length. Of the two types of intonation contour, the falling intonation ascribed to imperatives obtained the highest occurrence, while the rising intonation was prevalent in non-sentence-final intonation. In terms of pitch, high pitch was prevalent in imperatives, while low pitch was pervasive in formulaic expression. There is a widespread use of stress in conjunctions, while lengthening is frequently associated with fillers. The paper further argues that the persuasiveness of Philippine televangelism is further definable in terms of rhetorical features such as logos, ethos and pathos, corresponding to the rational, credibility and affective appeals, respectively. Authority, first hand experience, and emotion in audience's situation were found to be the most frequently occurring types of rational, credibility, and affective appeal categories in televangelism, respectively. Across organizational moves, there is a widespread use of all the linguistic, paralinguistic, and rhetorical features and speech act in the Support move. In view of the findings, it could be concluded that there is a pattern unique to Philippine televangelism that distinguishes televangelism from other discourse types or from other genres within persuasive discourse. The realization of persuasion in Philippine televangelism can be proven at the surface levels with the available linguistic features, speech acts and rhetorical features that make them different from other types of persuasive discourse. Persuasive function is also realized through the interplay of both the verbal and non-verbal components (i.e. paralinguistic features).

1. Introduction

Language is an integral part of almost every attempt to persuade, yet how persuasive discourse works to induce voluntary changes in behavior or how language is

actually used to achieve persuasion in spoken and written contexts remains dimensionally and conceptually complex and even incompletely understood.

Studies on persuasive discourse have dealt mostly with advertisements exploring the potential of linguistic devices to effect persuasion (e.g. Geis, 1982, cited in Schmidt and Kess (1986); Dayag, 1999). How this linguistic aspect extends to other types of persuasive discourse is worthy of investigation. Thus, one of the concerns of this study is to examine another type of persuasive discourse like television evangelism or *televangelism* which has become very popular, yet has remained a neglected area of research. Notable in this area is the work of Schmidt and Kess (1986) on television advertising and televangelism which provided significant findings as to the linguistic features, namely, linguistic novelty, use of imperatives, indirect speech, etc. common to both types of discourse. Although the medium ascribed to both discourse types may already generate such persuasive impact, it is still worth investigating how the language of religion makes use of the television medium to market a free good such as eternal salvation.

In the Philippines, various religious sects such as *Ang Dating Daan* (ADD), *El Shaddai* (ES), *Iglesia ni Cristo* (INC), *Jesus is Lord Movement* (JIL), and *Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ* (PMCC), have penetrated the broadcast media to reach the entire people and ensure that every person hears the gospel. The proliferation of televangelism has made it possible for these religious sects to persuade people to become regular or frequent viewers of the program, and to respond to the program, and later on to gain converts.

There are no available data on nominal members of religious organizations. Estimates of nominal members of the largest group, the Roman Catholic Church, range from 60 to 65 percent of the total population based on regular church attendance. *El Shaddai*, a lay charismatic movement affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, has grown rapidly in the last decade. It claims approximately five million active members within the country and an additional 300,000 members in other countries ("International Religious Report," 2001).

Other Christian denominations comprise approximately 8.7 percent of the population. Followers of the Islamic faith total 4.6 percent and Buddhists 0.1 percent. Indigenous and other religious traditions account for 1.2 percent of those surveyed. Atheists and persons who do not designate a religious preference account for 0.3 percent of the population ("International Religious Report," 2001).

Televangelism, like any form of discourse, has distinct elements and structures and function. The complexity of the language of televangelism as a persuasive discourse and the specific forms and structures that go along with its creation certainly make the study worthy of investigation. Of particular concern of the present study is to provide an account of the persuasiveness of televangelism in terms of the linguistic and rhetorical features.

The study generally aimed to describe televangelism as a persuasive discourse in terms of linguistic and rhetorical features. Specifically, the study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What moves constitute the macro-structure of Philippine televangelism?
2. What linguistic features are used in Philippine televangelism in terms of:
 - 2.1 lexico-grammatical features
 - a. pronominals
 - b. attitudinal adjectives
 - c. repetitions
 - d. conjunctions
 - 2.2 speech acts
3. What paralinguistic features are used in televangelism in terms of suprasegmental features such as intonation, pitch, stress, and length?

4. What rhetorical appeals in terms of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* which correspond to credibility, affective and rational appeals, respectively, are employed in televangelism?

2. Conceptual Framework

The theoretical/conceptual framework of the study is anchored on several concepts and some theories reflected and explicated in studies which bear the findings that there are certain linguistic and rhetorical features that contribute to the persuasiveness of a particular discourse type like televangelism. These include Schmidt and Kess (1986), Dayag (1999), Madrunio (2003), Cheong (1999), Connor and Lauer (1985), and Jibrin (2003).

In an attempt to define the macrostructure pattern of televangelism within a persuasive orientation, Rottenberg's (1985) version of Toulmin's Argumentative Model served as the basis for the analysis of the organizational moves that define the macrostructure of televangelism. This macrostructure pattern implies the use of the organizational moves (Claim, Support and Warrant) that make up the macrostructure within an argumentative structure.

In addition, the concepts given by O'Grady, et al. (1997) and Schachter and Otnes (1972) offered insightful bases for the analysis of the paralinguistic features, specifically the suprasegmentals (e.g. intonation, pitch, stressed linguistic feature, and lengthened sounds).

Another important aspect of the study is the investigation of Searle's (1979) Speech Act theory which states that saying something is doing something, and that every utterance has a particular function in that particular context. It is assumed that the use of these particular functions can be closely related to the persuasive function performed by televangelism.

In the study, persuasive appeals were examined in terms of the evidence of credibility, affective and rational appeals corresponding to Aristotle's *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, respectively. That is, for an effective persuasion, the audience relies on the speaker's credibility, uses reasons to convince the audience, and attempts to appeal to the audience based on emotion (Pope, 1998).

Another interesting feature of the framework which may be considered part of the new trend in several studies is the intercoder agreement that is drawn from Connor and Lauer's (1985) persuasive scale.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Data

The corpus of the study consisted of 30 televangelism programs, six from each of five religious sects in the Philippines: *Ang Dating Daan* (ADD), *El Shaddai* (ES), *Iglesia ni Cristo* (INC), *Jesus is Lord Church* (JIL), and *Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ* (PMCC). Televangelism shows were audiotape recorded and transcribed from television signals received over the local broadcast TV system. Recording of the televangelism shows was done from September 7 to November 9, 2002.

Simple frequency counts and percentages were used in tallying the data for the evidence of linguistic, suprasegmental and rhetorical features including the evidences of episodic boundaries, and in determining the agreement level of the intercoders' classification of the evidences of rhetorical appeals.

3.2. Research Procedures

The research procedures consisted of the following steps: (1) Collection of data; (2) Transcription of the data using a combination of the transcription conventions of Tannen (1989), Ochs (1979) and Jefferson (1979), as cited in Schiffrin (1994) with a slight modification; (3) Identification of the organizational moves in Philippine televangelism; (4) Identification of the macro-structure patterns in Philippine televangelism using Rottenberg's (1985) version of Toulmin's Argumentative Model; (5) Identification of the linguistic features in televangelism; (6) Identification of the lexico-grammatical features pertaining to attitudinal adjectives, pronominals, conjunctions, and repetitions; (7) Identification of speech acts and classification into Assertives, Directives, Expressives, and Commissives; (8) Segmentation of the episodic boundaries using van Dijk and Kintsch's criteria (1983); (9) Identification of the paralinguistic features, specifically the suprasegmentals such as intonation, pitch, length of phoneme, and word stress in televangelism; (10) Identification of the evidence of rhetorical appeals in terms of *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos* which correspond to credibility, affective and rational appeals, respectively, in televangelism; (11) Classification of rhetorical appeals of all the episodes; (12) Intercoders' classification of rhetorical appeals using only five randomly selected episodes for each televangelistic program; and (13) Examination and interpretation of the reliability of the intercoders' classification in terms of agreement level.

4. Results and Discussion

The corpus of the study revealed five different macrostructure patterns. It is worthy to note that the distinction of these patterns may be evident in terms of the presence and absence of the Warrant move. Following Rottenberg (1985), an argument contains at least three moves: Claim, Support and Warrant. As shown in Table 1, these moves are evident in the three macrostructure patterns found in televangelism, such as *Claim + Support + Warrant*, *Claim + Sub-claim + Support + Warrant*, and *Claim + Support + Warrant + Support*.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of macrostructure patterns of televangelism

MACRO-STRUCTURE PATTERNS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	RANK
Claim + Support	95	32.99%	1
Claim + Support + Sub-claim + Support	32	11.11%	4
Claim + Support + Warrant	75	26.04%	2
Claim + Sub-claim + Support + Warrant	57	19.79%	3
Claim + Support + Warrant + Support	29	10.07%	5
Total	288	100%	

However, there are also instances of macrostructure patterns without the Warrant move such as the *Claim + Support* which is the most prevalent pattern at 32.99 percent and the *Claim + Support + Sub-claim + Support* with 11.11 percent.

Since more than 50 percent of the macrostructure patterns constitute the patterns without the Warrant move, the finding may suggest that the Claim and Support moves appear

to be the most favored moves in televangelism.

This may also indicate that televangelists seem to find the Claim and Support moves indispensable in their Bible teachings and expositions. Claim accounts for the main arguments and propositions of the televangelists. Suffice it to say that it serves as the premise by which the televangelists' beliefs and convictions are established. In order to determine whether a claim is sound or valid, support or evidence is made available for the televangelists to see what they have to convince the audience or adherents. On the other hand, support serves as the sole basis for the justification of the claims. The finding may also suggest that Philippine televangelism as a persuasive discourse is developed more fully on claims and supports which may also give the picture of the televangelists' attempts to express more arguments and positions backed up by support evidences.

The absence of the Warrant move in Philippine televangelism, however, may affirm Rottenberg's (1985) argument that "warrant is a belief and principle that is often taken for granted." Thus, persuasiveness in Philippine televangelism may not necessarily end always with a warrant. This may then give an idea as to the nature of the Filipino televangelists as being more inclined to the development of more arguments and evidences.

On the other hand, in instances when the Warrant move is used, the audience may have greater chances to see the relationship of the claim and support. After all, the Warrant move may guarantee the connection between the claim and support. In using all the moves, the discourse seems to illustrate what Georgakopoulou and Goustsos' (1997) describe as a piece of argumentation that "starts with a position, progresses to evidence for justification and ends with a disclaimer about its generalisability" (p. 85).

A closer scrutiny of the findings further suggests that the persuasiveness of Philippine televangelism is enhanced through the use of certain linguistic and rhetorical features. In terms of the linguistic features, the persuasive function may be realized through the prevalence of the first person plural pronouns, simple adjectives, direct reference, causal conjunctions, and representative type of speech acts. With the prevalence of the first person plural pronouns, the findings most likely affirm the typical Filipino televangelists' way of expressing a common view and experience in order to reach out to the audience. With the common view and experience implied by the use of the first person plural pronouns such as *atin*, *natin*, *tayo*, etc., there seems to be a feeling of belongingness that the televangelists may share with the audience. To put it simply, it is when such common view and experience shared with the audience that the televangelists may have developed a stimulating effect on the minds and emotions of the audience directly or indirectly.

The excerpt in ES #1 shows the frequent use of the first person plural pronominals *atin* and *natin*.

ES #1

<178> Ang sambahayan ang siyang haligi ng lipunan kaya minsan ibinahagi ko sa inyo ang pakiusap ng **ating** mga Obispo na salungatin **natin** ang panukalang batas na magbibigay sa **atin** ng karapatan sa babae.....

<179> Sapagkat iyan ang daan upang ang **ating** lipunan ay tuluyang mawasak sapagkat kapag nawasak na ang sambahayan ang lipunan ay susunod at kapag nawasak na ang lipunan ano pa ang mangyayari sa **atin**?

<180> Purihin **natin** ang Panginoon purihin ang Diyos.

As to the considerable evidence of simple adjectives, the findings may clearly show

the evaluative and subjective nature of the Filipino televangelists in expressing their judgment and description.

In the study, simple adjectives include adjectives in their base form and those affixed with *ma-*. Examples of this type of attitudinal adjectives which suggest the speaker's judgment or evaluation of certain entities are *simple* to refer to paksa (topic) in line <175> of ADD #1 and *malalim* to refer to pagkaunawa (understanding) in Line <24> of ES #1.

<175> Ang akin pong paksa **simple** lang. (ADD #1)

<24> Subalit yaong malalayo ay tila бага **malalim** ang pagkaunawa. (ES #1)

With the prevalence of the direct reference type of repetition, this may be construed as a manifestation of the Filipino televangelists' preference for what would make the intended message more recognizable. As revealed in the study, this seems to be realized through the manipulative use of recurring words, phrases, and sentences, which may likewise mean that the more certain words are repeated, the more the message is remembered.

The examples below show how the words and phrases were repeated to reiterate a shared topic or subject under discussion.

ADD #1

<41> Pero ang itinayo fellowship **crusade** ang itinayo wala namang **crusade** sa bibliya.

ES #1

<119> Pagkaraan ng ilang taon nagbago ang **kanilang theme song** at ganito na ang **kanilang theme song** (sings Panginoon Maawa Ka)

Equally important is the prevalence of causal conjunctions, which seems to be a manifestation of the nature of the Filipino televangelists as being logical thinkers, thus making them appear more convincing. The Filipino televangelists' tendency to rely on reasoning strategies as implicated by causal conjunctions seems to make their discourse logical.

The excerpts below show the causal conjunctions *subalit*, *kaya*, *kaya nga* and *sapagkat* in ES #4 Line <17> and INC#3 Line <76>. These conjunctions seem to show the development of more reasons and results in presenting an argument.

ES #4

<17> **Subalit** hindi po buo yung ating pundasyon **kaya** marami pa rin na pagdating ng panahon kaunting pagsubok ay medyo nawawala **kaya nga** gawain ng pag ah unawa ay dinadaan po **kay**at tintatawag na Life in the Spirit Seminar yun po ay isang pag-aaral tungkol sa buhaty na pinaghaharian ng espiritu ng Panginoon.

INC #3

<76> **Kaya** napakahalaga na matiyak ng tao na: sa maraming pinagkakaabalahan nya sa buhay na maraming pinagkakaabalahan ang tao lalo na nga pahirap ng pahirap ang buhay dapat po na bigyan nya ng panahon na sundin o gawin ang mga kautusan ng Panginoong Diyos **sapagkat** ang pagsunod sa mga aral o paggawa sa mga utos ng Panginoong Diyos ito naman ang maghahatid sa kanya sa pagtatamo ng buhay na walang hanggan.ito

FEATURES OF TELEVANGELISM

The recurrence of the representative type of speech acts may reflect the tendency of Filipino televangelists to be more assertive and aggressive in expressing their views and opinions just as most preachers would do. True to any type of persuasive discourse, what may sound more convincing would most likely depend on the consistent use of assertions.

It is worthy to note that the pervasiveness of representatives in Philippine televangelism affirms the findings in Schmidt and Kess (1986) which reveals the prevalence of claims and assertions in television advertising and televangelism. Similarly, the result further finds support in Dayag (1999) which revealed the propensity of this type of speech act in Philippine print ads. With this information at hand, it is worth mentioning that representatives are indeed indispensable to any type of persuasive discourse, and the Filipino televangelists, for example, may not be an exemption to the kind of assertion and aggression that most preachers would do.

As to the evidences of the paralinguistic features that are associated with certain linguistic features, its use in televangelism may be considered a means of reverberating the persuasive function of a particular linguistic feature. For instance, notwithstanding the prevalence of the rising intonation for non-sentence final words (e.g. enumeration, sentence-initial phrases of direct address, and non-final clauses), the persuasiveness of televangelism seems to be dependent on the function of the representative type of speech act where these types of non-sentence final intonation are mostly found. Since these forms of non-sentence final intonation are mostly found in representatives, the findings may further suggest the nature of the Filipino televangelists' as being more assertive in expressing a claim or a belief. The prevalence of the falling intonation and high pitch associated with imperatives, on the other hand, would simply be considered a way of verbalizing the persuasive function of imperatives in televangelism, highlighting the preference of Filipino televangelists for a more direct involvement and interaction with the audience. Similarly, the stress associated with conjunctions seems to give emphasis to the function of the conjunction. In the case of causal conjunctions, the extra loudness ascribed to them appears to reaffirm the audience about the logical nature of the Filipino televangelists in expressing their ideas and views. In the case of length ascribed to fillers, the findings seem to be typical of any spontaneous spoken discourse. For the Filipino televangelists, the constant attempts to prolong certain utterance would seem to be a way of directing the audience to pay more attention to the whole utterance.

In addition, the role of rhetorical features in Philippine televangelism cannot be discounted. For one, the preponderance of several types of rational appeals particularly the use of authority, seems to suggest the potential of the Filipino televangelists to become rational and logical in expressing their views and opinions. The considerable evidence of certain types of credibility appeals most particularly the use of first hand experience, may mean that the Filipino televangelists may have obtained a considerable level of credibility in terms of background and experience needed to stand and defend their respective religious affiliations. Finally, Filipino televangelists appear to possess a characteristic that may address the emotional needs of the audience, thus creating a considerable level of stimulating effect on the audience.

As to the prevalence of these linguistic and rhetorical features in the Support move, the findings show how the Filipino televangelists put some considerable weight of importance on the use of supporting evidences, which indeed may be considered a characteristic of any persuasive discourse.

5. Conclusion

This study highlighted the fact that there is a pattern unique to Philippine televangelism that distinguishes televangelism from other discourse types or from other genres within persuasive discourse. The realization of persuasion in Philippine televangelism could be proven at the surface levels with the available linguistic features and speech acts that make them different from other types of persuasive discourse. Aside from the persuasiveness of Philippine televangelism, its totality as a type of spoken discourse is further enhanced through the suprasegmental features that define Philippine televangelism. The persuasive function is also realized through the interplay of both the verbal and non-verbal components that make up Philippine televangelism.

Philippine televangelism is further definable in terms of the rhetorical strategies that are employed by televangelists to realize the function of persuasiveness. Consistent with the works of Connor and Lauer (1985) and Cheong (1999), the study has found that the persuasiveness of a discourse type could be proven by both the linguistic and rhetorical approaches inherent within any type of discourse. Inter-coder agreement has been proven very helpful in validating of the classification of rhetorical appeals.

While so much speculation has been made on the mutual-exclusive poles that speech and writing may share, the linguistic properties that make up Philippine televangelism may be considered evidence of the structural differences of speech and writing. Indeed, this conforms to what Jahandarie (1999) documented about the differences of spoken and written discourse. As evident in Philippine televangelism, spoken discourse may be characterized as prosodic, involved, contextualized, natural, etc. as opposed to written discourse which may be considered punctuated, detached, autonomous, and taught.

On top of this, Philippine televangelism possesses a language of its own, unique to other religious discourse or to any other types of persuasive discourse. Given the linguistic and rhetorical properties that shape the language of Philippine televangelism as persuasive discourse, this study also provides some insights on the nature of Filipino televangelists as being assertive, attached and involving, logical, and credible, to mention a few. It is also worthy to note that in evaluating the quality of this piece of discourse, its function should be viewed from a perspective that is conditioned by the discourse type and the context in which the discourse is performed.

In the light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made: (1) A comparison of the linguistic and rhetorical features of other religious discourse may be investigated to find out whether the same properties of Philippine televangelism as persuasive discourse will conform to the language of other religious discourse; (2) A similar study which focuses on the comparison of Philippine televangelism across religious sects could be done to determine the persuasiveness of each televangelist in terms of linguistic and rhetorical features; (3) Another study which focuses on other linguistic and syntactic features may be conducted in order to provide a comprehensive account of the persuasiveness of Philippine televangelism; (4) There should be an assessment of the strength and quality of persuasiveness of Philippine televangelism; and (5) A comparison of the persuasiveness of Philippine televangelism with other types of persuasive discourse may also be done in order to arrive at a comprehensive account of the language of persuasion, regardless of any type of discourse.

FEATURES OF TELEVANGELIS

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