



Descriptive Survey of the Character of English Lexis in Sermons

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Keqing Yao 2213810

Introduction

Need to investigate English lexis specifically in religion contexts is pointed out by Crystal (1995) and Crystal and Davy (1969). They also noted the uniqueness of the sermon genre especially how it exists in the crossroads of orality and literacy and yet how it has attracted little linguistic attention as will be illustrated in the section of literature review. To reveal the difference in traits of English lexis, a sermon corpus against background reference corpus is analyzed. The results of this enhances understanding and appreciation of language as a system and contributes to the existing but limited literature of language and language use.

Data

On methodological basis, the study uses corpus–research method. Data is represented by the investigated corpus. The corpus of the sermons that were investigated were acquired online. For comparability, The British National Corpus (BNC) was selected as a reference normative corpus. It was selected because it a standard and adequate measure of contemporary English. The sample used is a small version of BNC called the BNC sampler. The version has 50% written and 50% spoken English excerpted from the larger BNC.

Methods

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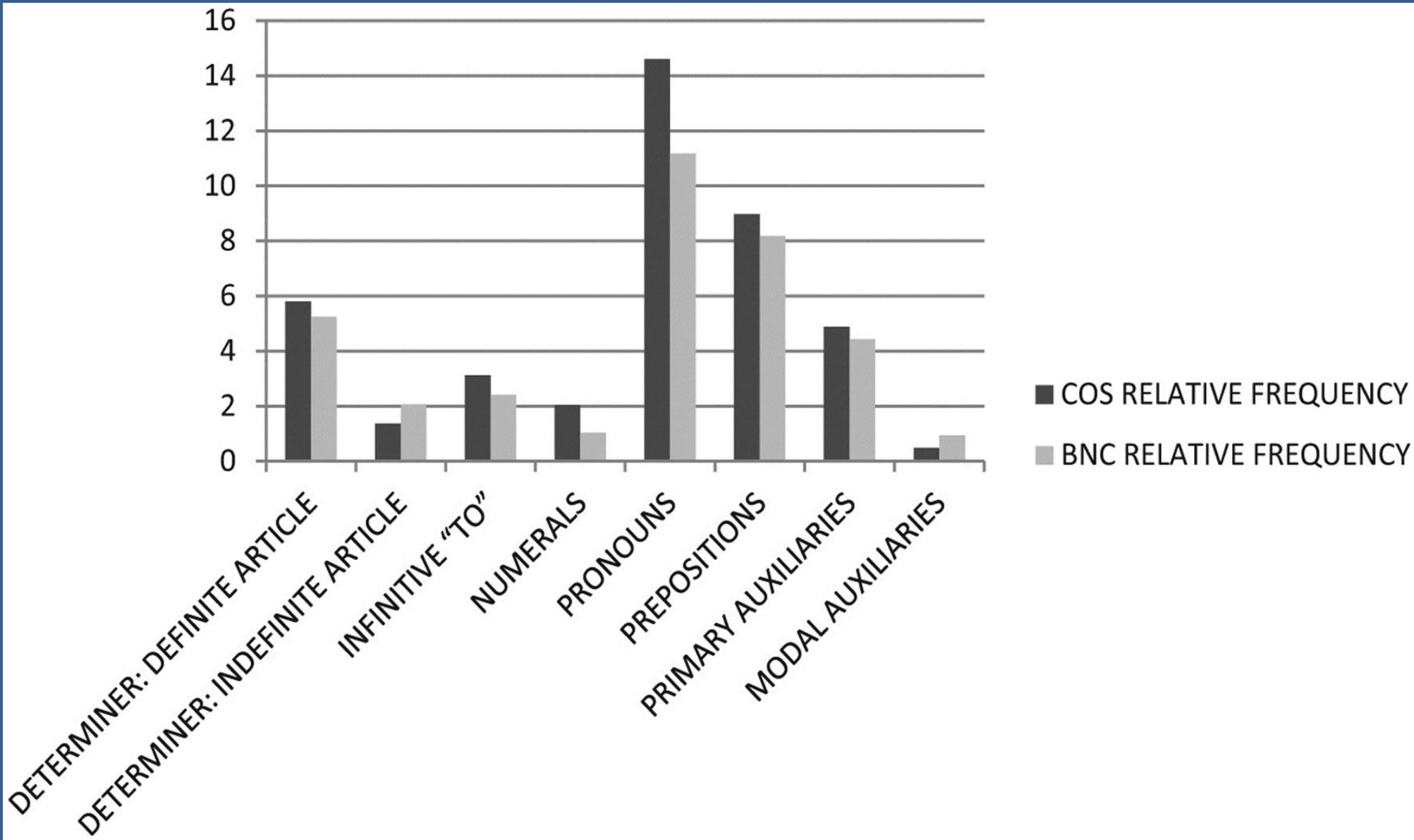


Table 5. Structural Types of Collocations Found in the Sermons.		
S/n	Collocation structure	Examples of collocations
1	ADV + N	Forbidden Fruit, Heavy Anointing, Abundant Mercy, Continual Anointing
2	N1 of N2	Kingdom of God, Agent of Salvation, Word of God, Blood of Jesus
3	V + V	Confesses Saved, Baptized Saved, Recorded Crucified, Redeem Crucified
4	V + N	Seek Salvation, Praise God, Conquering faith, Committing Sin
5	V + NP	Take the helmet of salvation, Receive your Salvation, Praise the Lord
6	N + V	Faith subdues, Prophet Anointing, Grace Saved, Praise Offer
7	N + N	Mercy Deeds, Faith Heroes, Trials Challenges, Substance Fruit
8	ADJ + N	Strong Praise, Universal love, Rich Mercy, Backslidden Christians
9	ART + N	The Anointing, A Believer, A Watchman, The Faith, The Word
10	NP	The Body of Christ, The kingdom of God, The name of Jesus

Table 8. Showing the Semantic Prosodic Relations of the Selected Words in COS and BNCs.				
Keywords/multi-word items	COS semantic sets	BNCs semantic sets	COS semantic prosody	BNCs semantic prosody
God	Attribution, possession, and intangibility	Physical objects, tangibility	Positive	Positive
Christians	Negative, number words, difficulty, and uncertainty	Identification, description	Negative	Neutral
Crucified	Regeneration	None	Positive	Neutral
Salvation	Caution, deliberate effort, and negative words	Description	Positive	Neutral
Love	Uncertainty and demonstration	Description, pet name, word list	Positive	Neutral
Faith	Verbal/speech acts	Verbal acts, possession	Neutral	Neutral
Praise	Appreciation	Description, appreciation	Positive	Positive
Mercy	Emotive words of plea	Description, emotive words	Negative	Neutral
Anointing	Power and utility	None	Positive	Neutral
Sin	Undesirable states, negativity	None	Negative	Neutral
Covenant	Obligation	None	Neutral	Neutral
Miracle	Performative/action words	None	Neutral	Neutral
Word	Direction, verbs of speech, communicative words	Identification	Positive	Neutral
Fruit	Transition words	Descriptive	Positive	Neutral
Saved	Human objects and negative words	Inanimate objects	Negative	Neutral
Challenges	Difficult situations	Difficult situations	Negative	Negative
Life	Words of description	Description	Positive	Neutral
Name	Words of identification, utility, and authority	Description, identification	Positive	Neutral
Walk	Directional and action words	Physical action	Positive	Neutral
People	Words of quantity and description	Number	Neutral	Neutral
The word	Verbs of action and place expressions	Identification, utility	Positive	Neutral
Born again	Descriptive words	None	Positive	Neutral
First fruit	Words of physical action	None	Positive	Neutral
A believer	None	None	Neutral	Neutral
Blood of Jesus	Process words	None	Positive	Neutral

Table 6. Semantic Framework of the Selected Keywords and Key Multi-Word Items in the Sermons.		
Keywords/multi-word items	Semantic preference	Semantic prosody
God	Words of attribution, possession, and intangibility	Positive
Christians	Words of negativity, number, difficulty, and uncertainty	Negative
Crucified	Words of regeneration	Positive
Salvation	Words of caution, deliberate effort, and negativity	Positive
Love	Words of uncertainty and demonstration	Positive
Faith	Verbal words/speech acts	Neutral
Praise	Words of appreciation	Positive
Mercy	Emotive words of plea	Negative
Anointing	Words of power and utility	Positive
Sin	Words indicating undesirable states, negativity	Negative
Covenant	Words of obligation	Neutral
Miracle	Performative/action words	Neutral
Word	Direction words, verbs of speech, communicative words	Positive
Fruit	Transition words	Positive
Saved	Human objects and negative words	Positive
Challenges	Words indicative of difficult situations	Negative
Life	Words of description	Positive
Name	Words of identification, utility, and authority	Positive
Walk	Directional and action words	Positive
People	Words of quantity and description	Neutral
The word	Verbs of action and place expressions	Positive
Born again	Descriptive words	Positive
First fruit	Words of physical action	Positive
A believer	None	Neutral
Blood of Jesus	Process words	Positive

Results

The wordsmith keyword tool results showed the existence of a general/core vocabulary in contrast to a specialized vocabulary. Comparing 100 most frequent words found revealed that functional words are used more frequent and with supporting reasons as See Table 1, Figures 1 and 2 illustrate on lexical patterns, 10 main kinds of word combinations were found. 5 of the 7 known English lexical collocation kinds were found. Collocational analyses established that there is a difference in language use in sermons and in general use.: both grammatical and lexical patterns were revealed Findings show that sermon words have prosody with results that sermon words are often positive contrary to the prosodies of individual words.

Conclusion

The study confirms that sermon lexis is unlike English lexis. The incontrovertible evidence provided by the corpus validates these findings and gives conclusion credibility. Owing to the limited literature in this area, this is substantial evidence of impact of context on language content, usage and lexis and this is an enough warrant for further research.

Reference

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