DISCOURSE FEATURES, PATTERNS AND COHESION IN PRAYER:
A Study of John 17

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Abstract
This paper examines the discourse features, patterns and cohesion of a text; namely, the biblical prayer in John chapter 17. The text is analyzed structurally. Discourse categories and strategies instantiated in the text are identified as well as the cohesive devices which aid in its overall comprehension. The descriptive categories were adapted from Coulthard and Montgomery (1981), Adedun and Mekiliuwa (2010) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). The findings show that the text is a conversational event consisting of three classes of transactions: informing, declaring, and directing. It also consists of main and subsidiary discourses, and thirteen Acts which all lead to its cohesiveness. The thematic focus of the text is the language user's (the Lord Jesus') assertion that he has finished the work His Father gave Him to do which centres on glorification, eternal life, knowing the word, unity of believers and the expansion of God's kingdom.

Keywords: categories, cohesion, conversational features, discourse, prayer

1.0 Introduction

Prayer is a spiritual dialogue between man and God. It is a central feature of religion and core to the lives of religious adherents because it is the indispensable medium through which they express their desires or needs to a supreme all knowing, all seeing, omnipotent, self-existing, self-sufficient God. Heiler (1932: xiii–xv) gave a sweeping view of prayer from the perspective of some religious adherents, scholars and theologians of almost all persuasions and came up with the conclusion that "prayer is the central phenomenon of religion, the very hearthstone of all piety". Prayer is an important act of worship, performed individually or collectively in Christendom. In the Bible, God would always instruct his children to pray (2 Chronicles 7:12-15, Jeremiah 29:12). Many phrases refer to prayer in the Bible; for instance, in Exodus 32:11 and I Samuel 1:15, prayer is "beseeching the Lord" and "pouring out the soul before the Lord" while in 2 Chronicles 32:20 and Job 8:5, it is known as seeking God and making supplication, respectively. It is also known as bowing the knee before the Almighty God (Ephesians 3:14) and lifting up of the eyes (John17:1) or hands towards heaven which is an act of spiritual sacrifice (Psalm 141:1-2). Psalm 141:2 states that prayer is incense (sweet fragrance) of clouds that ascends to God (Revelations 5:8, 8:3-5, Luke 1:10) because as the people pray, the prayers become deposits of clouds which when full empty down as answers (Isaiah 55:10-11).

One of the above descriptions of prayer that stands out is that prayer is a spiritual

conversation; a dialogue between God and man. That man talks to God is not in doubt but some may want to argue the virility of the statement that God talks back to man in prayer because he is not physically present in the conversation. God often times speaks, though not always physically or audibly. The account in the Bible of Moses and the Jews (book of Exodus), and Job in his distress (book of Job) are cases in point that God responds conversationally. The very act of praying is an implicit recognition of the fact that God is present in the conversation. This is evident in Psalm 91:15, in which God states that "He shall call upon me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him". The Bible in the book of Isaiah 65:24 and Matthew 7:7 respectively also reveals that God responds when man prays: "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"; "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you". Christians pray to God because He ordered them to pray and they are confident that when they pray, God hears and answers (1 John 5:14).

The Bible is replete with examples of men and women who had their prayers answered by God. Jacob prayed concerning his brother's anger towards him and God answered (Gen. 32:24-30; 33:1-4). King David's prayer caused God to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15:31; 16:20-23; 17:14-23). Esther, Mordecai and all the Jews prayed and God upturned the writing of death against the Jews which was so desired by Haman (Esther 4:15-17;6:7-8). God heard and answered the prayers of the believers when Peter was condemned to death in prison by Herod in Jerusalem and he was miraculously released (Acts 12:1-12).

Others who prayed and received answers include Abraham (Gen. 18:16-33), Jacob (Gen. 39: 9-12), Moses (Exodus 32), and Jonah (Jonah 2). It is no wonder, therefore, that in today's world with so many uncertainties and hardships, men more than ever, have harnessed prayer for God's intervention in the scheme of things. Churches and groups schedule frequent times of prayer and when it is impossible or inconvenient for them to meet face to face and pray, they schedule online prayers. It is this upsurge in prayer that motivated this paper. The Lord Jesus who is the central figure in Christianity prayed oftentimes and received answers to his prayer. He even taught his disciples how to pray. One of such prayers which has received scholarly attention from theologians and linguistsis the Lord's Prayer of John 17. This paper attempts to add to the existing body of literature on John 17.

Analyses of prayer and other genres in religion such as sermons, have been carried out by van der Zwan (2017), Hudgins (2012), Wendland (1992) Hoshikawa and Staudigl (2017), Rotimi Taiwo (2005, 2006), Mekiliuwa (2009), Adedun and Mekiliuwa (2010) Malatesta (1932), among others. Some of these aforementioned studies specifically examine some discourse, pragmatic, literary and stylistic functions of language in prayer. Wendland (1992) for instance, carried out an interactional discourse analysis on John 17 and its communicative implication and concludes that the operation of a literary technique termed 're-familiarisation' serves to effect the prayer's principal interpersonal function of physical, psychological and spiritual reinforcement. Malatesta (1971) examines the literary structure of John 17 in two folding charts; one Greek at the beginning, highlighting the features discovered through the analysis and the other at the end, presented the thematic structure and literary pattern which outlines the strophe divisions with the number of lines in each strophe and the number of words and syllables in each line.

Hoshikawa and Staudigl (2017) investigate prayer with perspectives from linguistic philosophy while van der Zwan (2017) contrasts naturally occurring conversation with the Liturgy of the Catholic Mass in her pragmatic analysis of prayer. He concludes that prayer as human communication with the divine closely resembles interpersonal communication in the ethical realm. This paper corroborates this assertion although its focus is on the prayer in John 17 and the analysis is from the perspective of Discourse analysis.The Society of Biblical Literature in conjunction with the European Association of Biblical Studies at its 2014 annual meeting examined the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6: 9–13, and argued that it is best understood from a discourse perspective and related it [to] the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). They concluded that the sermonhas a coherent and structured unity whose totality interrelates with each part of the Prayer. In this paper, we examine the discourse features, patterns and cohesionas it relates to the Lord Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Prayer is traditionally assumed to be non-reciprocal and monologic in form because God is perceived as not being physically present in the interaction. It is for this reason that Coulthard and Montgomery (1981) proposed a descriptive framework for the analysis of monologues which will be used to analyse the text. The ranks and units they proposed are considered useful in our examination of prayer as a speech event. In what follows, we discuss the method of data collection and analysis and carry out the discourse analysis of the John 17 prayer.

2.0   Methodology

The data for analysis was drawn from the Holy Bible (New King James Version (NKJV) 1982), from the book of John Chapter 17. The verses from the prayer are marked by the most distinctive linguistic features that modern versions provide. This version avoids unnecessarily complicated sentence structures even though many of the characteristic features of the traditional version still remain. The analysis was done using the qualitative method. The verses were used as a unit of analysis where applicable but broken down into clauses in order to identify discourse patterns and features where necessary. The analysis bifurcates into discourse categories and strategies and subsumes discourse features, patterns and cohesion.

Discourse categories are transactions that express one main point or theme. These descriptive categories were adapted from Coulthard and Montgomery (1981) and Adedun and Mekiliuwa (2010). Mekiliuwa (2009) identifies four classes of transactions in sermonic discourse; namely, informing, eliciting, declaring, and directing transactions.However, for prayer, we identify three—informing, directing and declaring—and their discourse members which are categorised into main and subsidiary discourse. The main discourse informs or comments on the subject matter while the subsidiary discourse expatiates [on] and illustrates this (Adedun and Mekiliuwa 2010). There are alsoclasses of Acts; a set of items that initiate and show the direction of discourse. Acts are the lowest category on this scale. Adedun and Mekiliuwa(2010) also identified twenty-seven acts for sermon as follows: starter(s), frame (fr),metastatement (ms), focus (fo), informative (inf), comment (com); elicitation (el), reply (rep), directive (d), react (rea), evaluation (e); restate (res), check (ch), prompt (p), clue (cl), loop (l); asides (as), qualify (q), accept (acc), prayer (pr), declaration (decl); additive (add), adversative (adv), causative (can), recall (rec), conclusion (con), and admonition (adm). Of these acts, thirteen were identified in the text. The following is the analysis.
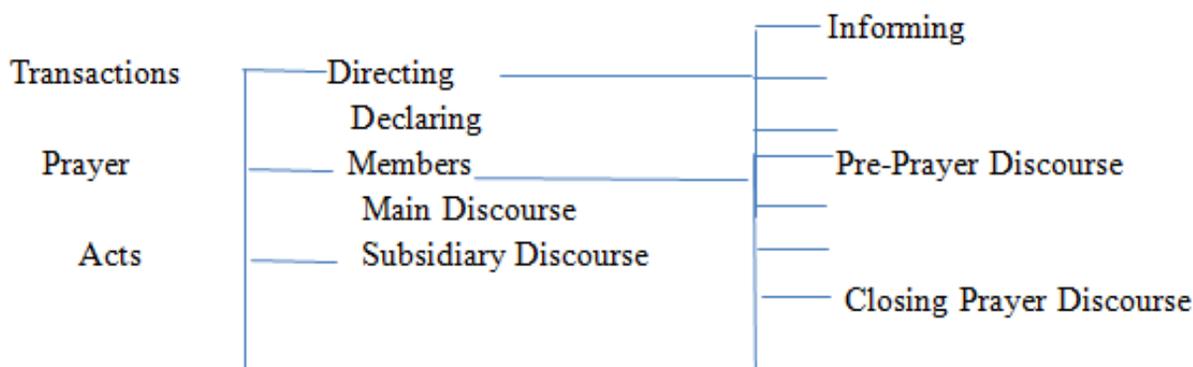
Table 1: The Discourse Structure of John 17 Prayer

Type of Discourse	Classes of Transaction	Examples	Classes of Act
Prayer Discourse/ Main Discourse	Opening Transaction	"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, [2]as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. [3]And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.	Fr Fo Inf Add
Main Discourse	Informing Transaction	[4]I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.	Inf Com
Subsidiary Discourse	Directing Transaction	[5]And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. [6]"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.	Ca Fr/D Inf Ms inf Add
Subsidiary Discourse	Informing Transaction	[7]Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. [8]For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them,* and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. [9]"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. [10]And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. [11]Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world,	Fr/Inf Com Add Add Add Ms Inf Add Add Add Fr/Inf Adv

		and I come to You.	Add
Main Discourse	Directing Transaction	Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.	Pra /D
		[12] While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name.	Res
		Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.	Rec Add
Subsidiary Discourse	Informing Transaction	[13]But now I come to You,	Adv
		and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.	Add
		[14]I have given them Your word;	Res
		and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.	Add
Subsidiary Discourse	Directing Transaction	[15]I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.	Pra/D Adv
		[16] They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.	Res D
		[17]Sanctify them by Your truth.	Inf
		Your word is truth.	Inf
		[18]As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.	Add
		[19]And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.	Add Dec
		[20]"I do not pray for these alone,	Add
		but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;	S
		[21]that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me,	Add
		and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.	Res
		[22]And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:	Rec
		[23]I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one,	Add
		and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as	Add

		You have loved Me	
Main	Declaring	[24]"Father, I desire that they also whom	Pra
Discourse	Transaction /	You gave Me may be with Me where I	Inf
	Closing Discourse	am, that they may behold My glory which	
		You have given Me; for You loved Me	
		before the foundation of the world.	
		[25]O righteous Father! The world has not	Pra
		known You, but I have known You; and	Adv
		these have known that You sent Me.	
		[26]And I have declared to them Your name,	Con
		and will declare *it,*	Add
		that the love with which You loved Me may	
		be in them, and I in them."	Add

Diagrammatic presentation of the discourse structure

3.0   Discussion

Table 1shows the discourse structure of the text while the diagram depicts the structure of prayer generally. Like sermons, Prayer Discourse consists of linguistic categories divided into transactions, members and acts. In the text, there are three kinds of informing transactions,all of which are speech acts for explaining, proving, asserting and stating of facts. They communicate ideas, facts and opinions. In the John 17 prayer, they are realisedas assertive sentences. The second type of transaction is "the declaring transactions which are realised by acts such as petitions, declarations and other utterances through which speakers perform their institutional roles and functions" (Adedun and Mekiliuwa 2010). In the text, they are indicated by expressive acts that communicate the speaker's specific intention. The third type of transaction is directing transaction realized by acts of commanding, requesting and urging. Examples in our data include acts of requesting, and their force can be identified by recourse to the meaning of the sentences. The discourse is also made up of members – main and subsidiary – that help to develop the thematic progression of the prayer through informatives, directives, comments and additives. The discourse acts identified in the text are sentences or clauses that perform structural and functional roles in the discourse. Some of these acts(for example, declarations) are peculiar to prayer discourse. The pre-prayer discourse consists of an opening prayer that establishes the focus of the prayer. The

expression "father, the hour has come" is an indication that there were prior events whose activities have culminated into this decisive moment of "the hour which has come". It is an indication of background knowledge between the Father and the Son.

The prayer begins and progresses through an alternation of main and subsidiary discourse members. The first twelve (12) Clauses introduces the participants in the discourse; the son who is talking to the father (verse 1 - clauses 4, 5 and 6). This clearly marks it as a conversation between two people that are space apart physically but spiritually close as there is no distance in the spirit. Clause 2 in verse 1 states that he lifted up his eyes to heaven where the father is. This is an indication of superiority in status as God is high up and looked up to. However, the son has equal powers with the father who gave him authority over all flesh so much so that he can give eternal life to those that God has given him. This is the point of departure in this prayer and the next clauses develop this further by the son declaring that he has finished the work the father gave him to do, (verses 4 -clauses 13, 14) which is making the Father known and as such the Father should glorify him (verse 5 - clauses 15, 16). The other verses of 6-19 (clauses 18-39) reiterate and expand this message of doing what He was commissioned to do by the Father and as such the Father should cause all participants (the Father, Son, the disciples and all who will believe) to operate in unity of purpose, oneness and love (verse 11 which contains 7 Clauses). The prayer therefore, has main discourses centering on glorification, eternal life, unity or oneness and expansion of God's kingdom, which are further developed through its subsidiary discourses. It closes with a summary of the request for unity in love and oneness and with a pledge to continue declaring God's name. The structure of this prayer fits into the pattern: pre-prayer discourse + main discourse + subsidiary discourse + closing or concluding prayer discourse.

The transactions are the vehicle that drive the thematic proposition of the prayer. They are utterances in the prayer that make assertions about the state of affairs in the world, with particular reference to the work Jesus was given to do by the Father. These are reflected in the thirteen classes of Acts used in the discourse. The following are extracted from the text.

Extract 1
[4]**I** have glorified You on the earth. (Informative)
I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. (Comment)

Extract 2
[6]**I** have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. (Informative)

Extract 3
[8]For **I** have given to them the words which You have given Me; (com)
[9] "**I** pray for them.
I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. (adv)

Extract 4
[10] and **I** am glorified in them. (Add)
[11] Now **I** am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, (Adv) and I come to You. (Add)

Extract 1 is an informing assertive statement that reveals the status of the speaker. Jesus explains to the Father that the hour has come for him to be glorified. The deictic pronoun "I" reveals the speaker's personality as it points him out as the one sent by God to carry out the specific assignment of glorifying God here on earth.

In Extracts 2 and 3, Jesus asserts his personality the more by linking his personality to that of the Father as He declares that He has manifested the Father's name and has given to the disciples the words which the Father gave him. He then goes ahead to pray for them specifically.
[9] "**I** pray for them. **I** do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours".

In Extract 4, Jesus informs the Father that he is glorified in the disciples.
[10]"and I am glorified in them [11] Now **I** am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and **I** come to You". Here, the use of deictic pronoun "l" reveals the speaker as one who has accomplished the assignment Hewas given and can therefore, relocate to where He came from; which is to the Father. Other classes of acts used in the discourse includethose that involve directing transactions which are discussed next.

Directing Transactions
Directing transactions are identified in the text through acts of requesting and urging. Examples in the data areinferred in the meaning of the sentences. The following are extracted from the text.

Extract 5
[5] And now, O Father, **glorify** Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (Fr/D/Pra)

Extract 6
[11]Holy Father, **keep** through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they **may be** one as We are. (D/Pra)

Extract 7
[15] I do not pray that You **should take** them out of the world, but that You **should keep** them from the evil one. (D/Pra)

[17]**Sanctify** them by Your truth (D)
In the following extracts, the Lord Jesus made use of active verbs like **"glorify, keep, take, sanctify"** in his request to the father to glorify him, keep the disciples in unity of oneness and from the devil, and to sanctify them by His truth.These Acts sound commanding as one giving directives on what should be done.

Extract 8
[5]And **now,** O Father, glorify Me
[7]**Now** they have known that all things which You have given Me are from you.
[11]**Now** I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You.

"**Now**" in verse 5 means consequently. There is also some element of urgency in the "now" since it is time bound. It, therefore, foregrounds the urge to make something happenand highlights the urgency of the time. The use of the adverb **"now"** intensifies the urgency for God to act swiftly.

In discourse, context refers to everything surrounding a particular situation or a communicative act. This implies that utterances carry meaning based on their context of use. Some utterances made by the Lord Jesus are interpreted based on their functions or context of use. **Extract 7**is an imperative statement because the request sounds like Jesus is commanding God. The use of the verb **"sanctify"** before the subject gives intensity to the request.

The third kind of main discourse is realised through declaring transaction. This form of transaction uses acts ofpromising, pledging, offering, vowing and swearing. John Searle's (1979) classification of illocutionary acts known as commissive Actsrealises this function. In commissive acts, information is supplied regarding the participants' intention to carry out a future action. The following are some commissives identified in the prayer:

Extract 9
[2]as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He **should give** eternal life to as many as You have given Him**.**

Extract 10
[15]I do not pray that You **should take** them out of the world, but that You **should keep** them from the evil one.

Extract 11
[11]Iin them, and You in Me; that they **may be** made perfect in one, and that the world **may know** that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Extract 12
And **I** have declared to them Your name, and **will declare** it, that the love with which You loved Me **may be** in them, and I in them."

Inthese utterances, the Lord Jesus commits himself to future actions by the use of the modal auxiliary verb **"will"**.He states that he has declared God's name and will continue to declare it. Hespecifies this future action by the use of "will" which is a promise and solemn declaration of what he vows to do. On the other hand,in **Extract 10**,the use of the verb phrase **"should take"**, **"should keep"**, **"may be made"**, **"may know"** emphasizes what ~~he~~ wants the Father to do. Extract 12 has a double function in that he uses the deictic pronoun **"I"** toidentify himself as the one who declared the name and pledges to continue in it. The verb phrase **"may be"** shows some elements of uncertainty but since it depicts his utmost desire for his disciples and it is a request to a higher authority, it means that it is attainable. We will now look at how every part of the prayer cohere together through a brief cohesion analysis.

4.0   Cohesion
According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), "lexicogrammatical systems originate in the

textual metafunction and are collectivelyknown as the system of Cohesion"(603). There are four ways by which cohesion is created in English: by (i) conjunction, (ii)reference, (iii) ellipsis, and (iv) lexical organization. We find all four types of cohesive strategies at work in creatingtext-internal cohesive links and interpreting the text; John 17 is an expository form of prayer that contains long, wordy and structurally complex sentences in verses. Consider the following instances.

[8] For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.
[12]….Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

[13]But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

In the above extract, the sentences are compound and compound-complex, connected severally with the coordinator "and" (paratactic clauses) and the subordinator "that"(hypotactic clauses).Through these complex structures, the Lord Jesus informs the Father of the present state of things and the next steps to take in the complete fulfilment of the Father's mission and vision. Other examples of paratactic clauses are in verses 15, 16, 18; while hypotactic instances are in verses 13,14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24, where the speaker emphasizes the oneness of all believers (verse 23), or for contrast(as in verse 20, where Jesusdistinguishesbetween those He is praying for as against those He is not).Some of the hypotactic clauses are marked with vocatives (verse 1 clause 4, verse 5 clause 16, verse 11 clause 43, verse 21 clause 74, verse 24 clause 87, verse 25 clause 94). These utterances are delivered with deliberateness, accurate rhythm, purposeful pauses and with falling intonations, thus contributing to the force observed in the prayer.

Jesus made references to God, as [3]"you – the only true God",and to spiritual or divine concepts linked with God such as to himself as God's [S]on [1]"your son" toGod's name as "your name" (verses 6,11,12,26), his word as "your word" (verses 6, 14, 17) and,consequently, half of the determiners are possessive. Acts such as restates (realised by statements that repeat an earlier point or idea), additives (realised by statements which give additive information to main discourse and start with conjunctions such as **and**), adversatives (realised by statements that bring a contrary idea into the main discourse; initiated by words such as **but**), are used for the purpose of cohesion and coherence in the prayer. There are cataphoric references such as in verse 1 and 2. Son in verse 1 is him in verse 2. In verse 7, "all things" are "the words" in verse 8. Anaphorically, "they" in verse 3 refers to "as many as you have given him" in verse 2, while in verse 8 "receive them" refers back to "the word" in the same verse. Father is a direct address in verse1, and "you" refers back to Father who is being addressed in verses 2,3 and 4. In verse 26 "and I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it", the pronominal "it" refers back anaphorically to "name". These references create text internal cohesive links that run through the expository prayer.

Spoken exchange or interactions are characterisedby shared unspoken assumptions between speaker and addressees with which they determine meaning. In the prayer, there are clauses, or contextual cues that assist in determining the meaning of the entire discourse. The schemas give cues as to when the prayer begins or comes to an end.This relates to the use of opening and closing

strategies.Jesus, for instance, exalts the fatherhood of God at the beginning of the prayer (pre-prayer discourse).

Extract 13:[1]Father, the hour has come. (opening)
[25] O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. [26] And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (closing or concluding)

The overriding principle as realised from this opening and closing discourse is that the linguistic context is not sufficient in the interpretation of meaning. Rather, background knowledge, co-text or sequential relationships in the discourse account for speaker's meanings. It is, in fact, the ability of the hearers to do this that aids the interpretation of the prayer and facilitates the understanding of the entire communication process.

5.0   Conclusion

The above analysis has examined the features, patterns and cohesion [the text; namely,] of the Lord's Prayer in John 17. The discourse strategies employed in the prayer were categorisedin order to reveal the thrust of the prayer which is that Jesus has finished the work his Father gave him to do. This work centres on glorification, eternal life, knowing the word, unity of believers and expansion of God's kingdom. The paper furthermore has revealed that prayer is a structured conversational event like any other religious discourse speech event. The analysis shows that prayer can consist of linguisticcategories and units which are functionally determined and interpreted like sermons.

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