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Creation Account and Scriptures: A Linguistic Meta-Function Analysis of Genesis Chapter One

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Abstract

The study is a linguistically-based analysis of the biblical account of creation. It examines the trilogy of power, forceful use of words, and transcendence in Genesis 1. By drawing on critical discourse analysis and meta-function from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, the article analyses transitivity patterns and discursive strategies that articulate power and the responsiveness of words to their environment especially when deliberately and forcefully deployed. It also examines the peculiar use of cohesion, semantic opposition, ordinal adjectives, and symbolism as discourse markers. The article further illustrates how the intentional use of words impacted nature and the transcendental history of human existence. In other words, language is captured as a life inherent organism and a force that births the universe. More specifically, the study demonstrates that God's creative power is His Word and that existence is an expression of God's deliberate use of words. **Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, meta-function, religion, cohesive devices, symbolism.

Introduction

An interdisciplinary study such as religion and linguistics is not very common. This is because it requires an objective evaluation of linguistic data, adherence to established theoretical framework, tactical contextualization of discourse and scientific emergence of the relatively "new" findings. In the light of this, the present study on religion and discourse is approached with a sense of caution. Language is a primary means through which the social world is constructed (Muntigl, 2002: 49). It models the patterns in which we represent the world.

In this sense, the way we view ourselves and the world is largely formed by the use of language. According to Litosseliti (2002: 130), language helps us construct, express and maintain relations, values, beliefs and identities, as well as participate in social change. Fairclough (2003) also observes that "language is not neutral"; there exists a strong, yet hidden relationship between language, ideology and power relations. Brown and Yule (1983), describes discourse as language in use, or the way language is applied in the social context. Nwagbara (2020) considers language in religious texts as the force of creation. He asserts that "the evocative power of words brought the world into existence." This forceful impact of language further suggests that power relations and social hierarchy exist in the creation discourse (Orlowski 2012; Wodak & Meyer 2009). Moreover, the use of language and its relevance in the history of the material world positions Genesis 1 as a discursive text. Thus, the trilogy of power, language act, and transcendence are taken up in this study.

Biblical studies have greatly benefited from modern theoretical and applied linguistics. The integration of the two fields has enabled linguists to examine biblical texts in the Old Testament and in the New Testament respectively using different theories and methods (Dvorak 2021; Yoon 2019). However, particular interest in the creation account in Genesis 1 has not been given much attention by researchers. In this study, the discourse of the narration is intentionally accorded "divinely inspired" status. It deliberately merges the actual words attributed to God and that of the biblical spokesperson to avoid distortion of the narrative. Also, it aligns with the view that the Bible in its entirety is the word of God whether documented by the biblical persona, the inspired writers or spoken directly by God.

Scriptural texts are largely revered as being transcendental. As a type of discourse, it is described as God's revelation to man, a communicative interphase between the celestial and the terrestrial beings (Hasel 2001; Hickson 2014; Jermo 2017). Thus, the bible serves to mediate communication between two groups (God and man) exploring different codes and symbols. Since language is not just a philosophical abstraction but an expression of feelings, thoughts, and intentions through spoken or written forms to specific recipients, God is said to use language to make Himself known to man and man responds to God exploring language. This is critical because events and ideas cannot be communicated neutrally, they have to be transmitted through some medium with their structural features, and these structural features are already impregnated with social values which make up a potential perspective on events (Banks 2002).

Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and they help explain how existing social relations are reproduced or contested to serve different purposes and interests. Its main concern is to understand how discourse is constructed and the reasons for incorporating certain linguistic structures, rather than others, in realizing particular texts or talks (van Dijk, 1995a). Since social distance and relative statuses which are typical of spoken texts investigate power relations and equality, and also examines how close the speakers are; the scripture is, therefore, deliberately captured as a critical discourse on the

backdrop that it depicts the language of power, and status through certain linguistic structures; specifically, in the creation account as documented in Genesis 1 (Dvorak 2021; Yoon 2019).

Halliday (1994:xv) points out that linguistic analysis has two main objectives: first is to contribute to the understanding of the text. This implies that linguistic analysis enables the researcher to show how and why texts mean what they do as multiple meanings, alternatives, and semantic derivations are made in meaning discovery. Second is its contribution to the evaluation of the text. Linguistic analysis enables one to say why the text is, or is not, an effective text for its purposes— in what respect it succeeds and in what respect it fails, or is less successful. This means that linguistic analysis allows for the evaluation of the extent to which language is effectively exploited in different domains. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), language functions as a map of a speaker's experience. This enables us to gain insights into the speaker's consciousness through mapping their linguistic representations of the world. In this sense, the perception of a certain relationship through linguistic patterns is ideologically significant and cannot be ascribed to the language system as ordering these patterns as so, but to the fact that the speaker's ways of speaking are carriers of their ideology.

The application of linguistic methods to investigate biblical texts is not very common, yet, it is not new. Dvorak (2021) applied Halliday's systemic grammar to investigate interpersonal meta-function in 1 Corinthians 14; Yoon (2019) studied Galatians and the New Perspective on Paul from the discursive perspective. Jermo (2017) examined linguistic variation in Pauline Language and the Pastoral Epistles

using discourse. The integration of the two fields of study (linguistics and biblical studies) provides a veritable site for a linguistically-based analysis of scriptural texts without distorting the form of the text.

The bible otherwise called scripture(s) in this study is divided into two parts: the Old and the New Testaments. Originally, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic while the New Testament was written in Greek before they were translated into other languages such English (Childs 1996). Over forty authors drawn from disparate generations spanning over one thousand, six hundred (1,600) years were said to be inspired to write the Bible. Peculiar features such as transcendence, discursive unity, textual cohesion, thematic versatility, performative acts in forms of locution and self-expressions of prophecies, as well as socio-cognitive influence across disciplines like Law, Science, Geography, Medicine, Linguistics, Agriculture, Governance and Commerce makes the academic study of the bible very intriguing, interesting, and relevant. Particularly, since communication is at the heart of every text, the linguistic study of the creation account in Genesis 1 serves to investigate language use in the biblical domain deploying discursive methods (Hasel 2001; Dvorak 2021; & Jermo 2017).

Genesis is a Greek word meaning "source", "origin" or "beginning". It is the first book of the five books of Moses referred to as the 'Pentateuch' (or the law); the first book of the Old Testament and the first book of the Bible (Schneider 2020; Hasel 2001). While the narrative of Genesis extends from the beginning of the world to the death of Joseph, it was probably written between 1445 and 1406 B.C while the Israelites were encamped in the wilderness.   As the

foundation for the theology and transcendental account of creation, the book of Genesis forms a viable resource for this study (Clouser 2016; & Sichone 2021).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

As a field of multidisciplinary research, CDA includes approaches that share common concerns from different perspectives. Fairclough (1995) asserts that discourse is a three-dimensional concept consisting of the text (object of linguistic analysis), the discursive practice (production, distribution, and consumption of the text), and the social practice (power relations, ideologies, and hegemonies which discourse reproduces, challenges or restructures). These multi-facet dimensions are analyzed using textual, discursive, and social analysis. This allows for the examination of vocabulary, grammar, and text structure. It also accommodates interaction to negotiate the processes of text production and interpretation and gives room for aspects that link a text to its wider social context (the force of utterances, cohesion, and intertextuality) to be considered (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; 2014). A prominent linguistic theory correlated with CDA is Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Fairclough (2003) opines that SFL is a valuable resource for CDA from which major contributions have developed. SFL in linguistic theory views language as shaped (even in its grammar) by the social functions it has come to serve (Wodak, 2009:27). The inter-relationship follows that SFL plays a crucial role in exploring studies that use CDA tools. This background therefore informs the adoption of SFL for the study.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

The SFL model is considered significant in the critical interpretation of linguistic expression in various discourses in that it is hinged on grammatical description. SFL establishes the meta-functions of language. That is, texts serve as the study of meaning expressed through words and phrases rather than just the union of words and sentences. It takes into account two perspectives concurrently such as text as product and text as process. A text is considered as a product when it studies the linguistic structures. Simultaneously, it is a process in terms of semantic component or encoding of the meaning. These grammatical systems provide a basis for explaining the meanings of different kinds (Massoud & Elahe 2015). Therefore, Halliday views language as serving metafunctions which have three kinds of semantic units: ideational functions, the interpersonal function, and the textual function. Central to Halliday's model of SFL is transitivity (i.e., ideational meta-function).

Transitivity is a fundamental property of language that enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them (Halliday 1985). Transitivity analysis reflects not only the ideas expressed in the clause, but also the participants world views: "one and the same text may offer alternative models of what would appear to be the same domain of experience" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 173). It manifests how certain choices encode the author's ideological stance affected by social and cultural institutions as linguistic codes do not express reality neutrally but definitely embody ideologies. Our most powerful conception of reality is that it consists of 'goings on': of doing, happening, feeling, and being. These goings on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and expressed through the grammar of the clause. Transitivity is concerned with the type of process involved in a clause; the participants implicated in it,

and, if there are any, the attendant circumstances. Amongst other things, the clause evolves to express the reflective, experiential aspects of meaning which is the system of transitivity. From the view point of Halliday (1985: 53), transitivity as a major component of the clause deals with the "transmission of ideas representing 'processes' or 'experiences': actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations". To do a transitivity analysis it is necessary to identify every verb and its associated process. It is then necessary to identify patterns in the use of these processes as in "say" (verbal process), "think" (mental process) etc. A process is essentially composed of three constituents: the process, participants and circumstances related to that process.

The material process (MP) includes the activities and events that occur in the human's external world (Saragih 2010: 7). It applies action words either abstract or concrete and expresses the idea that an entity performs an action which may be done to another entity (Halliday, 1994). There are two participants in this process namely; the actor and the goal. The actor is one who does the action while the goal is the one who is affected by the action. Traditionally, there are two forms of transitivity namely: (a) clause with one Actor and Process, and (b) clause with Actor, Process and Goal. Material clauses are concerned with participants' xperience of the material world and have the structure of Actor + Material process + Goal. The Actor is the participant that brings about through time change leading to an outcome which is different from the initial stage of the action. The second participant, the Goal, is an inherent participant in transitive clauses.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the mental process (MnP) is concerned with the world within the speaker's inner mind. It includes perception, cognition, affection and desire. Intuitively, the mental process forms a viable semantic category because there is a significant gap between what goes on in the external world and what goes on in the internal world of the mind. It consists of the sensor and the phenomenon. The sensor gives emotional feedbacks through such acts as perceiving the phenomenon which is felt and thought about.

Relational process (RP) is a process of being. It implies that something (represented as A) is being something else (represented as B) where entity A is related to entity B. It employs identification, attribution, and possession to show the link among entities" (Saragih 2010: 8). This process assists the participants to play the roles of connecting one another in a text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). They are in forms of the verbs 'to be' or 'to have', or related synonyms, such as 'seems' or 'represents'. It is identified by two modes: identifying relational process (IRP) and attributive relational process (ARP). IRP implies that one entity is being used to identify another. The verbs that are used in such process are basically the "be" auxiliary and others such as become, etc. ARP "characterizes the participants". This means that "an entity has some characteristics that are ascribed to it" (Halliday 1994: 120). A quality which is labelled attribute is related to an entity called the carrier. Attribute clauses with attributive processes cannot be passivized. The Identifying process is when an entity called the identifier is used to identify another labelled the identified, this process and clauses undergo passivisation.

It is posited that the Behavioural process (BP) is related specifically to human psychological processes (Eggins 2004: 233). One of the main reasons for setting up this category is that they allow analysts to distinguish between purely mental processes and the outward physical signs of those processes. According to Eggins (2004), the Behavioural process functions in the boundary of Material Process and Mental Process. Typically, Behavioural process has only one Participant: the human *Behaver* because they are processes of physiological and psychological behaviour.

In this paper, Verbal process (VP) is captured to operate between the Mental and Relational processes and it is concerned with the verb of *saying*. Eggins (2004) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) report that VP has to do with forms of saying and its related synonyms. They are most times used in reported speeches, and also in interrogative statements.

The Existential process (ExP) operates between the Relational and Material process. Eggins (2004) asserts that the ExP is very easy to recognize simply because of the Subject, 'there'. This is because the existential process (ExP) in the ideational metafunction expresses the mere existence of an entity and it is recognizable because the subject is 'there'. Also, ExP appears to be similar to RP in that it involves a form of the verb 'to be'. However, there is only one 'real' participant, that is, "the Existent".

4. Methodology

Having established in this study that the correlation of SFL with CDA has a significant role in the critical interpretation of linguistic expressions in various discourses, CDA and metafunction from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics would serve as the analytical tool to systematically examine text as a product and text as a process in this study. Both the linguistic structures and semantic components are examined in the attempt to discursively explore the creation account in Genesis 1. It would examine patterns of transitivity (process types, participants and circumstance), interpersonal metafunction (interpersonal acts, status and power reflection, and symbolism), as well as textual metafunction with particular reference to cohesion devices such as conjunction, semantic opposition and ordinal adjectives.

The data consists of a linguistic pool from Genesis 1. The book of Genesis is made up of 38,262 words; 1,533 verses, and 50 chapters. Chapter 1 alone consists of 797 words and 31 verses. A simple mean deviation was used to generate the average percentages based on the frequency of each data. Further analytical details are provided under each section.

5. Data Presentation, Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Transitivity (Ideational Metafunction)

The pie chart on figure 1 gives a visual overview of the ideational metafunction indicating the process types as well as their weight of occurrences on a scale of a hundred percent. The raw score on tables 1-6 and the linguistic data provided are further used to buttress the claims in figure 1. Other components such as participant and circumstance are also discussed.

Figure 1: Transitivity Summary in Genesis 1

From the pie chart in figure 1 above, it can be deduced that the relational process ranks

highest scoring a total of 32%. This suggests that identification, attribution, and possession were heavily deployed in the creation account to show the link among entities. This is consistent with the claim of Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) the Relational Process assists the participants to play the roles of connecting one another in a text. Second is the material process with a total of 29%. This further buttresses the position in this study that the process of creation involves real time activities and "events that occur in the external world" (Saragih 2010: 7). This implies that there is an actor; a process and a goal present in the creation account. The verbal process ranked third scoring 26%. Since this process operates between the mental and relational processes, and it is concerned with the verb of *saying,* the multiple declarations introduced by the verb "said" in the text are therefore justified as instantiations of the verbal process. Further to this, it reinforces the claim that God's creative power is His Word and that existence is an expression of God's deliberate use of words. The mental process ranked fourth with a total of 12%. This is suggestively set upon the backdrop that emotional feedback (perception, cognition, affection and/or desire) exists in the internal world of the sensor (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). It is significant to note that the existential process scored just 1%. This is largely because the ExP expresses the mere existence of an entity. The least ranked among the process types is the behavioral process with 0%. There are no linguistic expressions of the process in the text since it typically involves human psychological and physiological behavior such as looking, listening, crying, laughing, sobbing, or frowning.

5.1.1 Transitivity Analysis by Process Types

The raw score on tables 1 to 6 were generated from the frequency of occurrence of the process types harvested from the data examined in the study.

5.1.1.1 Relational Process

Table 1

	Relational Process	
	Identifying	Attributive
Frequency	14	7
Total	21	

S1	And	the earth	Was	without form, and void;	
	conj	Carrier	RP	Attribute	
S2	And	Darkness	Was	upon the face of the deep.	
	conj	Attribute	RP	Carrier	
S3	...that it	Was	Good		
	Identified	RP	Identifier		
S4	And	the evening and the morning		were	the first day.
	Conj	Identified		RP	Identifier
S5	And	It		Was	So
	Conj	Identified		RP	Identifier
S6	And	the evening and the morning		Were	the second day

	Conj	Identified		RP	Identifier	
S7	And	the evening and the morning		Were	the third day	
	Conj	Identified		RP	Identifier	
S8	And	the evening and the morning		were	the fourth day	
	Conj	Identified		RP	Identifier	
S9	And	the evening and the morning		Were	the fifth day	
	Conj	Identified		RP	Identifier	
S10	And	the evening and the morning		Were	the sixth day	
	Conj	Identifier		RP	Identified	

The data on table 3 and the linguistic data in S1-S10 further emphasizes that God in the creation account predominantly uses language to express the state of being with the identifying relational process occurring fourteen times and the attributive relational process occurring seven times, making a total of 21, the highest among the process types. God identifies and shows the link among entities such as the earth, darkness, evening and morning, and days in the week by deploying the BE verb. His heavy reliance on the copular verb "be" is an indication of equivalence and attribute which is typical of the relational process. Also, the quality of work done was adjudged "good" in the text (see S6), an attributive function that supports the notion that goodness is the state of an entity to the other participants. God constantly affirmed the performance of His task through the identifying statement "and it was so" which underscores the relative tone with which God appraises and ensures the performance of His words.

5.1.1.2 Material Process
Table 2

	Material Process	
	Finite	Non-Finite
Frequency	15	4
Total	19	

S11	In the beginning		God	Created	the heaven and the earth	
	Circumstantial (Time)		Actor	MP	Goal	
S12	And	the Spirit of God		Moved	upon the face of the waters.	
	conj	Actor		MP	Circumstance (place)	
S13	And	God		Divided	the light	from the darkness
	Conj	Actor		MP	Goal	Circumstance (space)
S14	and	let it	Divide	the waters	from the waters	
	Conj	Actor	MP	Goal	Circumstance (place)	
S15	and	God	Made	the firmament		
	Conj	Actor	MP	Goal		
S16	And	divided	the waters	which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament		
	Conj	MP	Goal	Circumstance (place)		

S17	And	the earth	brought forth	grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind:		
	conj	Actor	MP	Goal		

S18	And	God	Made	two great lights	
	Conj	Actor	MP	Goal	

S19	the greater light		to rule		the day	And	the lesser light	to rule	the night
	Actor		MP (infinite)		Goal	Conj	Actor	MP (infinite)	Goal

S20	He	Made	the stars also	
	Actor	MP	Goal	

S21	And	God	Set	Them	in the firmament of the heaven	
	conj	Actor	MP	Goal	circumstance 1 (place)	

to give light		upon the earth,	
circumstance 2 (reason)		circumstance 3 (place)	

S22	and	to rule	over the day and over the night,	
	conj	MP (infinite)	Circumstance (time)	

S23	and	to divide	the light	from the darkness	
	conj	MP (infinite)	Goal	Circumstance (space)	

S24	And	God	Created	great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind:	
	conj	Actor	MP	Goal	

S25	And	God	Made	the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind:	
	conj	Actor	MP	Goal	

S26	So	God	Created	Man	in his own image	in the image of God	
		Actor	MP	Goal	circumstantial (manner)	circumstantial (adv 2)	

S27	Created	He	Him	male and female	Created	he	Them
	MP	Actor	Goal	goal (complement)	MP	Actor	Goal

The material process describes God as being dutiful. This is because the process captures physical action in the real world (Eggins 2004)*. God creates, moves, and makes both physical and metaphysical things in concrete terms (see S11-S27). The actor is God and the goal includes; heaven and the earth, light, firmament, water, two great lights, stars, great whales and sea creatures, winged fowls, grass, herb, trees, man (male and female). The frequency on table 2 further strengthens this claim. The finite verbs have a raw score of 15 while the non-finite verbs score 4 out of 19. They constitute the *doings* and *happenings* in the text. The relevance of this analysis demonstrates that God prioritizes work, labor and productive engagement to facilitate functional existence.

5.1.1.3 Mental Process
Table 3

	Mental Process		
	Perception	Cognitive	Possessive
Frequency	8	-	-
Total	8		

S28	And	God		Saw	the light,		
	conj	Senser		MnP (perception)	Phenomenon		
S29	And	God	Saw	that it		Was	Good
	conj	Senser	MnP (perception)	Carrier		RP	Attribute
S30	and	God	Saw	everything that he had made,		And	Behold
	conj	Senser	MnP (perception)	Phenomenon		Conj	MnP (perception)

The mental process (emotional feedback) presented on table 3 is basically through perception. The instantiations on S28-S30 demonstrates that God perceives the phenomenon which he creates through the sense of sight. The gap between the material world and the internal world of the Creator is brought to bear through the act of perceiving. The verbs "saw" and "behold" capture the mental process and semantic category in the creation discourse.

However, the non-usage of the other forms of the mental process such as cognition and possession as evident on table 3 further emphasizes the Omniscient nature of the Senser-God. He is neither thinking of what to create nor imagining an illusion. This resonates with the true existence of an animate Creator whose eyes are open upon His phenomenon (the creation).

5.1.1.4 Behavioral Process
Table 4

	Behavioral Process
Frequency	-
Total	-

Since typically, the behavioral process has only one Participant: the human *Behaver,* and because it consists of processes of physiological and psychological behavior, it is therefore not surprising that the text has 0% occurrence of this process type (see table 4).

5.1.1.5 Verbal Process
Table 5

	Verbal Process
Frequency	17
Total	17

S31	And		God		Said		Let there be light:		
	conj		Sayer		VP		Verbiage		

S32	And		God		Called	the light		Day,	
	Conj		Sayer		VP	Receiver		Verbiage	

S33	And		the darkness		He	Called		Night	
	Conj		Receiver		Sayer	VP		Verbiage	

S34	And	God	Said	Let there be a firmament			in the midst of the waters,	
	Conj	Sayer	VP	Verbiage			Circumstance (place)	

S35	And	God	Called	the firmament		Heaven	
	Conj	Sayer	VP	Receiver		Verbiage	

S36	And	God	Said	Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place,		And	let the dry land appear:
	conj	Sayer	VP	Verbiage 1		Conj	verbiage 2

S37	And		God	Called	the dry land	Earth;	
	Conj		Sayer	VP	Receiver	Verbiage	

S38	And	the gathering together of the waters		called		He	Seas:
	conj	Receiver		VP		Sayer	Verbiage

S39	And	God	Said	Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed,	And	the fruit tree yielding fruit after his … upon the earth:
	conj	Sayer	VP	Verbiage 1	conj	verbiage 2

S40	And	God	said	Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night;	and	let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

	Conj	Sayer	VP	Verbiage 1		conj	verbiage 2
	And	*let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth:*					
	Conj	verbiage 3					
S41	And	God	said	*Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.*			
	conj	Sayer	VP	Verbiage			
S42	And	God	blessed them saying	*Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas,*		and	*let fowl multiply in the earth.*
	conj	Sayer	VP		verbiage 1	conj	verbiage 2
S43	And	God	Said	*Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind:*			
	conj	Sayer	VP	Verbiage			
S44	And	God	Said	*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have* *dominion over the fish of the sea, and over ... upon the earth.*			
	conj	Sayer	VP	Verbiage			
S45	And	God	Blessed	Them			
	Conj	Sayer	VP	Receiver			
S46	and	God	said unto	Them	*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion ... the earth.*		
	conj	Sayer	VP	Receiver	Verbiage		
S47	And	God	Said	*Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, for meat.*			
	conj	Sayer	VP	verbiage 1			
	And	*And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat:*						
	conj	verbiage 2					

From Table 5, there are 17 occurrences of the verbal process identified in the study. It features the *Sayer* (God) communicating his intentions in the forms of directives, declarations, and assertions. As typical with the verb of *saying,* the lexical items "called", "said", and "blessed" drawn from S31-S47 were employed. The verbal process indicator "called" suggests a process of naming. The verbiages of day, night, heaven, and earth had receivers such as light, darkness, firmament, and drylands. God names His creation accordingly and makes certain assertions through His verbiage. Another typical item is the use of "said". This is used to make certain forceful declarations quickly accompanied by "let (there be) the…" to call into existence non-existing elements such as material and metaphysical entities. Also, God makes certain pronouncements (over His creation) through the use of "blessed". He sets the natural law of reproduction in motion through His verbiage; He delegates authority and empowers His creation to function effectively in their respective domains and places boundaries, a kind of organogram or hierarchy that makes man the head of all His creation. These pronouncements are in the forms of declaratives backed by transcendence to bring about procreation, replenishment, fruitfulness, abundance, and multiplication of what is called into being.

5.1.1.6 Existential Process
Table 6

	Existential Process
Frequency	1
Total	1

S48	*And*	*there was*	*light.*
	conj	*ExP*	*Existent*

The Existential process is rather scanty in the text. The Subject, *there* which expresses the mere existence of an entity and together with a form of the verb *to be* occurred once as evident on table 6 and S48. As typical of this process, there is only one 'real' participant, that is, the existent which is *light* in this context. This lean occurrence suggests that God rarely uses language to show mere existence. Rather, He judiciously shows relations between and among entities; engage in active labor; name His creation; confer authority, and set natural laws in motion through the use of words.

5.1.2: Participants Analysis in Genesis 1
Table 7

Participant's role		Number	Percentage %
Actor	Animate	11	17.74%
	inanimate	4	6.45%
	identified	14	22.58%
	carrier	7	11.29%
Sensor		8	12.90%
Sayer		17	27.42%
Existent		1	1.64%

From the participant analysis on table 7, the *sayer* ranked highest with a total percentage of 27.42%. This foregrounds the claim that God's creative power is His spoken Word and that existence is a response to speech. The *identified* ranked second scoring 22.58%. This score demonstrates that God is highly relational; He expresses relationship through His creation in the text. The *animate actor* ranked third with 17.74% reinstating the reality of God as a living entity rather than an abstraction. The *sensor, carrier, inanimate actor*, and *existent* ranked fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh respectively with a total score of 8%, 7%, 4%, and 1%. This practically depicts the preferences of God as a participant in the creation process.

5.1.3: Circumstance Analysis in Genesis 1

Table 8

Type	Number	Percentage%
Manner	2	16.66%
Location (space)	2	16.66%
Location (time)	1	8.33%
Location (place)	6	50.00%
Reason	1	8.33%

The examination of circumstance in the study is very critical. Table 8 shows the location (time) and reason each scored 8.33%, manner and location (space) had 16.66% each while location (place) scored 50%. It is also observed that location of occurrence rated highest with a total of 50%. This is largely a self-evident claim that the scriptural account of creation is largely material, situated on the earth rather than some illusion or concocted fables. Also, the circumstantial detail of manner and location in space rated 16.66% each. This gives circumstantial details of how God did His work and reinforces the actual creation and existence of the metaphysical world. The circumstance of time and reason rated least in the study, and explains God as rarely answerable to man; confirming His magnificent status as the unquestionable One. However, God sometimes provides answers to human questions upon the backdrop of choice, power expression, and divine prerogative or in response to a challenge call (Wahlberg 2020).

5.2 Interpersonal (Speech) Act Features in Genesis 1

Every human possesses some level of capacity to use words to create and re-create events, right or wreck situations, heal or hurt fellow human beings, and raise or ruin lives (Ope-Davies, 2018). Austin (1962) asserts that language performs speech acts (SAs). With speech acts, one can give orders, make declarations and pronouncements, ask questions, and make promises. The main insight from speech act theory is that linguistic utterances do not just express propositions that are true or false, but are acts that change the social reality in which humans live (Austin 1962). This is in line with the view in this study that all sorts of linguistic communication comprise linguistic actions. As realized from the text, the speaker performs various actions through the use of words. This is largely because when utterances are made, a particular act is performed. SAs are in the forms of directive, assertive, declarative, commissive, and expressive (Searle 1979). Prominent in the study is the use of assertives, declaratives and directives. Generally speaking, the declarative act is used by the speaker to perform actions such as baptizing, arresting, or marrying. In the assertive act, the speaker becomes committed to the truth of the propositional content (assertion, claim, description, etc.). In the directive speech act, the speaker tries

to get the hearer to act in such a way as to fulfill what is represented by the content of the proposition. Examples are commanding, instructing, giving order, or making certain language to create a relationship between them and their hearer(s), define roles of speech participants, and suggest issues relating to equality and status.

pronouncements. This could be based on the backdrop that interpersonal meta-function allows the speaker to use

Table 9: Interpersonal Acts in Genesis One

Declarations	Assertions	Directives
Let there be light Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.	And God saw the light, that it was good And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And God called the firmament Heaven God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called the Seas: … and God saw that it was good. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.	Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat:

As indicated on table 9, the language of creation is strictly formal and contains linguistic acts enacted in the forms of declaration, assertion, and directive. In the declarative act, God makes forceful declarations, pronouncements and set natural laws in motion. He blesses and confers specific authority to humans, the crown of His creation. He further uses the assertive act to make claims, describe, conclude, report, and predict. All of which depict his commitment to the truth of the propositional content. Finally, he uses the directive act to get nature and man to act in certain ways as to fulfill the content of the proposition. More specifically, the response of nature ("and there was light"/ and the six times occurrence of "and it was so") to the pronouncements ("let there be light" and the multiple "let the …") positions language as a life inherent organism and a force that births the universe. The three speech acts identified is premised on two notions. First, people perform various actions through the use of words. Second, when utterances are made; a particular speech act is performed.

5.2.1 Status and Power Reflections in Genesis 1

Discourse is often used as an instrument of power to influence, discriminate, and dominate certain people or groups of people by language actors (Adeline et. al 2021). Wareing (2000) describes power as the force in a society that gets things done; and by studying it, one can identify who controls what, and for what benefit. Nahrkhalaji (2011) conceptualizes power in twain ways; both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed in particular socio-cultural contexts. Wodak (1995:33), interprets power as "discursive control"; the more powerful the people, the larger their verbal possibilities in discourse become. The attempt to analyze inter-disciplinary texts such as religious texts through the lens of discourse analysis in a linguistic domain is the prime interest of CDA. The selected excerpt is therefore aligned to fit critical linguistic analysis to examine how power is enacted in Genesis 1.

   i.   lesser vs greater

   *And God made two great lights; **the greater** light to rule the day, and **the lesser** light to rule the night: he made the stars also.*
   ii **…to rule/…to rule over…**

   *And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And **to rule over** the day and (to rule) **over** the night…*
   iii …**have dominion over.** *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them **have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and (**have dominion**) **over** the fowl of the air, and (**have dominion**) **over** the cattle, and (**have dominion**) **over** all the earth, and (**have dominion**) **over** every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

Selected excerpts from the creation account demonstrate that power dynamics, class system, and institutional organogram predate human existence and are self- expressions of the Creator. The force of creation is the Omniscient expression of the unlimited God. Having created a prototype of Himself (man), God bequeaths a limited

fraction of power to him. Thus, if a man being a type of God was created to have "dominion over", then, the reflex of power and status in the Scriptures cannot be contested. This is expressed through such lexemes as *rule, have dominion,* and *have dominion over.* To rule implies there are subjects; to have dominion or have dominion over suggests there are entities to bring lower. These words express power relations, inequality, and dominance and are

therefore captured in CDA. The import of lesser and greater in the text is evident in a class system. It is significant that while the two lights are great, yet they differ comparatively in size. While one is greater, the other is invariably lesser.

5.2.2 Symbolism as Discourse Tool in Genesis 1

Symbolism is the representation of objects, moods and ideas through the medium of symbols (Mohan 2019). It is the idea that things represent other things. In light of the inherent significance of symbols and their

variety of meanings, this study contextually examines the contrast - light and darkness as symbols in Genesis Chapter One.

5.2.2.1 Light

Light is one of the most universal and fundamental symbols. St. Augustine (354-430 cited in Emedolu et. al. 2020) explains that the nature of light is in-explainable even though humans see and seem to know what light is. Lindberg (1992: 77) describes it as a material emanation… Koons (2015) relates light to goodness. It is illumination and intelligence and accompanies transcendence (Wierenga 1989; Koons 2015; Yiu & Vorster 2013). Light is the source of goodness and the ultimate reality. It has both physical and philosophical aspects. The position taken in this study is that the light created in Genesis 1is the very knowledge, word, power, and righteousness of God shining as His word was uttered. And this light that was spoken was not created, *per se*, but a sudden revelation or translation of the knowledge, goodness, power, love, and the righteousness of the very God into the physical medium (Wierenga 1989; Emedolu et. al. 2020; Susan 2017). In another part of the scriptures (John

1:1-5), Apostle John says, *In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life* **was the light** *of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.* In this case, the apostle equates God's word with God and personifies the Word with the pronoun "him", because God's Word is viewed as the fullest expression of Himself. The Psalmist further gives the same interpretation of the light as God's word (Psalm 119:30 - *The entrance of His word gives light)* by asserting that light (illumination, knowledge, and goodness) proceeds from God's word. As a discursive action, light symbolizes the emergence of goodness, a self-expression of God in His creation and a sudden burst of illumination that displaces darkness. It is the first visible

creative act in Genesis 1, and it signifies life, purity, truth, strength, beauty and power.

5.2.2.2 Darkness

Everything bad, unpleasant, and undesirable is often associated with darkness (Anders 1999; Duntley & Buss 2004; Kekes 1990; Hickson 2014) However, starting from the very first page of the Bible, God holds full control over darkness, because he has separated it from light. Light and darkness could also be captured as an oxymoron, two incompatible phenomena. While the former belongs to God, the latter belongs to evil (Susan 2017; Hickson 2014).

5.3 Textual Meta-function: Cohesive Devices in Genesis 1
5.3.1 Conjunction as Discourse Strategy

Cohesion is the linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit and demonstrates how actual texts are unified lexically and grammatically (Osisanwo, 2003: 31). Opeibi (2009) further posits that conjunction as a cohesive device makes a piece of discourse both meaningful and goal-directive, and makes the discourse textural. Cohesion occurs when the interpretation of one item depends on the other, (i.e., one item presupposes the other). Lexical cohesion may be realized through repetition, superordinate, synonym or near synonym while grammatical cohesion is expressed through devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. According to Halliday (1985) cohesion is categorized into two groups namely: grammatical cohesion (reference, Ellipsis, substitution and conjunction) and lexical cohesion (content words such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives which are meaning significant). Conjunction as a discourse marker could signify grammatical cohesion in forms of additive, causal, temporal or adversative functions. The speaker uses "and" as a linguistic element to link words, phrases, clauses, and sentences within the larger unit of the text. This way, specific semantic relations are established and meaning is enhanced. The use of the additive conjunction "and" occurred sixty-six (66) times in the thirty-one (31) verses of Genesis Chapter One. For example:

> ... *and* the earth...*And* the earth ... *and* ... *and* darkness was ... *And* the Spirit of God ... *And* God said... *And* God saw ... *and* God divided ...*And* God called ... *and* the darkness ... *And* the evening *and* the morning...*And* God said, ... *and* let it ... *And* God made ... *and* divided ... *and* it was ... *And* God called ... *And* the ... *and* the morning... *And* God said... *and* let the ... *and* it was so... *And* God called ... *and* the gathering together ... *and* God saw ... *And* God said...etc.

The foregrounding of the linking device "and" is enhanced through repetition and its overly marked presence as the initial word for multiple sentences and phrases in the text. The significance of this style is the expansion of the continuum and connective to suggest progress and intention. It is also pertinent to mention that the other primary conjunctions (*but* and *or*) did not feature at all in the text. This is probably to present the

speaker as being focused and committed to his already preplanned agenda rather than being indicative of contrast or alternatives. The overly use of conjunction as a cohesive

feature in Scriptural texts to connect sentences at varying stages makes it prominent as a marked text.

5.3.2 Semantic Opposition as Discourse Strategy in Genesis 1

Semantic opposition otherwise called semantic antonyms are used to mark the starting and ending points of a change, create comparison along the dimension, and imply mutual exclusivity (Nataša 2015). In this study, they are used to show how semantic

and syntactic roles of co-present antonyms determine the semantic and referential functions they perform. Some instances in the study are presented below:

> *And God called the **light Day**, and the **darkness** he called **Night**. And the **evening** and the **morning** were the first day… So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; **male** and **female** created he them.*

Grammatically, antonyms fall within the three categories, namely, Relational, Graded, and Complementary**.** Relational Antonyms are the sets of word pairs that show the relationship between two opposites. *A* does not exist without *B*, likewise, *B* does not exist without *A*. Graded Antonyms show variation between the two opposites; while Complimentary Antonyms strictly have no degree of meaning. Only two opposites are

possible in this variant. From the excerpt above, the speaker deploys the use of antonyms to show opposition and achieve a sort of relative balance. For instance, light vs darkness (relational); morning vs evening (graded); day vs night (relational), and male vs female **(**complimentary) are instances of the deployment of antonyms to achieve cohesion.

5.3.3 Ordinal Adjectives as Discourse Strategy

Generally, ordinal adjectives belong to the category of numeral adjectives since they provide a numerical characteristic on the noun they modify. Crespo (2012) asserts that they are used to basically indicate numerical order in time-position, and secondarily with the expressions that alternate with ordinals in the same context.

They serve the function of ranking; ordering or providing information about the position of the noun they accompany (Abdullah 2021) such as *first, fifth, tenth, last.* Ordinal adjectives are used in the excerpt below to depict order and rank.

> *… And the evening and the morning were the **first** day… And the evening and the morning were the **second** day… And the evening and the morning were the **third** day… And the evening and the morning were the **fourth***

*day… And the evening and the morning were the **fifth** day… And the evening and the morning were the **sixth** day.*

The speaker deploys the ordinal numbers first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth consecutively to define the position and show progression in a series. The author deploys these adjectives to pre-modify the noun day and suggests hierarchy regardless of similarity. By this, he can demonstrate a systematic sequence and present a chronological order of his task. This further suggests that the Bible and particularly the creation account is largely systematic and consistent.

6. Conclusion

This study has attempted a linguistic analysis of the creation account in Genesis 1 adopting Halliday's meta-function approach to Systemic Functional Linguistics. The inter-disciplinary study focuses on the ideational, interpersonal and textual meta-functions of language in the creation story. The ideational meta-function examined transitivity patterns which entails process, participant and circumstance. The process was further sub-divided into material, behavioural, mental, existential, relational and verbal classes. Of all the process types, the relational process ranks first followed by the material, verbal, mental, existential and behavioural process in the preponderance of 32%, 29%, 26%, 12%, 1% and 0%. This was particularly contrary to the prior assumption of the researcher that the verbal process would rank highest given that the creation account documented in Genesis 1 is largely discursive. The numeric data obtained from the text demonstrates that the Creator (God) prioritizes showing relationship (link) among entities and connecting participants above the other process types. This view is corroborated in Saragih (2010: 8), Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) and Halliday (1994: 120). Also prominent is the material and verbal processes. In consonance with Saragih (2010: 7), the material process captures the physical actions of the Creator in the physical and metaphysical world through the usage of certain verbs such as "created", "divided", "made", "divide", "moved", "brought forth", "set", and "to rule". The goals were the heaven, earth, light, firmament, water, etc., The material process in the text validates the physical birthing of the material and atmospheric worlds by God. The verbal process is very critical to this study. It relates to the process of saying, a kind of speech or spoken discourse. It is primarily introduced by the verbs "said" and seconded by "called" in the study. This process demonstrates that God's creative power is His Word and that existence is an expression of God's deliberate use of words. This claim is further strengthened by the speech acts features in the text and the participant analysis which ranks the Sayer (God) as the highest participant with a total of 27.42%. Other constituents of the transitivity structure are the participant and the circumstance. The participant featured entities like the sayer, identified, animate, sensor, carrier, inanimate actor, and existent while the circumstance examines the location (time, space, and place), reason and reason for the creation discourse in Genesis Chapter One.

The interpersonal meta-function examined speech acts features in Genesis 1 such as the assertive, declarative and directive speech acts. It also considers status/power

reflection, and symbolism in the study. The textual meta-function examined the use of conjunction, semantic opposition, and ordinal adjectives as discourse strategies. This paper concludes that language is discursively a living entity, it has the capacity to give life when deliberately, creatively and forcefully deployed; and that nature responds to the evocative use of words. Also, the paper demonstrates that power resides with God as the authority and status of the participant (sayer-God) significantly impacts the forceful impact of words with particular reference to the creation account in Genesis 1. Further to this, the ranking of the relational, material and verbal processes in the study signifies that God prioritizes relationship, productive labour and the intentional use of words for the furtherance of functional healthy existence.

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