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AN ANALYSIS OF NOMINAL GROUPS IN INSPIRATIONAL WRITINGS: A SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

BY

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Abstract

The Nominal Group (NG), which carries lexical content, is part of a clause that contains nouns, determiners, numerals, epithets, classifiers and qualifiers. This paper gives an overview of how NGs function in response to the concepts found in inspirational writings with Christian themes. The NGs are selected from five different sources on such writings. The NGs are quantitatively and qualitatively described and analysed in both their logical and experiential structures. The theoretical foundations of Systemic Functional Grammar are adapted for use, following the framework espoused by M A K Halliday (1994), for the NG analysis. The NGs are first demarcated, then extracted for analysis, and interpreted for the relationship between function and meaning. The paper finds that this kind of texts has simplified NG structure, possessing no extensive use of modification built on comparatively long Pre-Modifiers. The NG logical structure that displayed the highest frequency of occurrence is the Head-Only structure, followed by the Pre-Modifier + Head structure. The NGs are not complex to understand with the majority of the Pre-Modifier + Head structure consisting only of Deictic and Thing elements. Furthermore, this also reflects that such writings are transparent and not dependent on modifiers to relate their message. In this context of use, the NGs convey the sense of transcendence and simplicity needed for faith and inspiration. The difficulties of differentiating between the Classifier and Deictic elements, and between the Classifier and Epithet elements, are noted and illustrated in this study, but a close reference to the Christian concepts within such texts proves helpful in negotiating through the difficulties. The paper also gives an identification of NG lexical content in such writings. Thus, to write or teach inspirational writings, there is a need to have an in-depth knowledge of their underlying ideas and notions, and also an ability to create simplified NG structures in sentences. This study has attempted to show that NGs are an important grammatical characteristic of inspirational writings for the expression of Christian themes.

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