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COMMUNICATIVE APPROXIMATION AS A MEANS OF SUCCESSFUL ORAL DISCOURSE

The object of the present research is oral discourse in its various forms, with a particular focus on religious discourse as a rich and complex communicative environment.

The aim of the study is to investigate communicative approximation as a key mechanism that enables effective communication across ontological, cultural, and conceptual gaps between interlocutors.

The term approximation in linguistics broadly refers to the use of imprecise, adapted, or adjusted language forms that allow speakers to bridge gaps in knowledge, competence, or shared context. Communicative approximation, more specifically, describes the strategies by which participants in discourse adapt their messages – lexically, semantically, pragmatically – to achieve mutual understanding despite existing asymmetries.

In the broader theory of discourse, communicative approximation encompasses any act of linguistic or semiotic adjustment through which a sender makes a message more accessible or interpretable to a receiver – whether by simplification, metaphor, analogy, ritual form, or symbolic gesture. The mechanism assumes that perfect communicative symmetry is rarely achievable, and that successful discourse depends on the parties' willingness and ability to approximate meaning across the gap.

A religious ritual can also be considered as a specific type of multi-level communication in which the world of the transcendent, the transcendent Personality are involved in the communication process, that is, a religious ritual is a communication in which sacredness plays a defining role. Ontological differences between the Transcendent world and the profane world of man should make such communication impossible. However, these differences are overcome by the

mechanism of communicative approximation. Approximation here consists in the fact that the other side acquires forms that are more or less familiar and understandable to a person and determines the rules of his behaviour.

In traditional Christianity, two special types of approximation are represented by the dogma about the incarnation of the Son of God and the dogma about Liturgical Transubstantiation. The first dogma is accepted by the Christian as an immutable fact on which the Christian religion as such is based. The second dogma is understood by believers through a ritual (the sacrament of the Eucharist - communion), which enables a layman to penetrate deeper into the essence of the divine service and synergistically participate in the Liturgy.

One of the most distinctive features of Anglican worship is its sustained attention to liturgical language. The Book of Common Prayer (1662), and its modern successors such as Common Worship (2000), represent deliberate acts of communicative approximation: the translation and reformulation of Latin liturgical texts into English that is at once dignified, accessible, and theologically precise.

The goal was never mere simplification, but rather a form of mediation — bringing the language of sacred tradition close enough to the worshipper's own tongue that participation becomes genuine and not merely formal. The sonorous cadences of Cranmerian prose serve an approximating function: they signal sacred register, create a sense of otherness and elevation, while remaining sufficiently comprehensible to allow congregational engagement.

This tension between the elevated and the accessible is itself a communicative approximation – the liturgy must sound different from everyday speech (marking the holy) while remaining intelligible enough to draw worshippers into authentic dialogue with the divine.

Within the Anglican Eucharist – the central act of Christian worship – communicative approximation operates at multiple simultaneous levels. The words "*This is my body... This is my blood*" perform what speech act theorists would call a declarative function: they do not merely describe reality but are understood, within the faith community, to constitute it.

The physical gestures – the lifting of the bread, the breaking, the pouring of wine – function as embodied signs that approximate the invisible reality of Christ's sacrifice and presence. These actions make tangible what is ontologically intangible, translating transcendent meaning into sensory experience accessible to human participants.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the success of oral religious discourse depends not on the elimination of the gap between speaker and hearer, between human and divine, but on the skilful, faithful, and reverent management of that gap through the mechanisms of communicative approximation. It is in the space created by approximation – neither fully closed nor fully open – that meaning, encounter, and transformation become possible.

REFERENCES

1. Church of England. *Common Worship: Services and Prayers*. London : Church House Publishing, 2000. 800 p.

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