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Is the Word of God in ELF?
New-Evangelization in Italian Immigration Contexts

ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates how the 'New Evangelization' (NE) process in the Catholic Church is enacted through ELF by Italian clergy offering spiritual practical assistance to immigrants. A case study will show how the NE discourse requires from immigrants the activation a 'suspension of disbelief', epistemically inducing them to believe that the clergy's possible-world 'metaphysical' representations can be true, 'experiential pliability', deontically compelling immigrants to adapt their actual-world experience to such counterfactual constructions.

Introduction

Research focus

This paper focuses on misunderstanding in 'lingua-franca' communication which is not just caused by the participants' typologically-different native languages whose structures are transferred into ELF (Guido, 2008, 2012), but also by their different cultural schemata in contact with each other in need of accommodation. Central to this paper are the religious schemata underlying the ongoing 'New Evangelization' (NE) process in the Catholic Church (Wuerl, 2013), which is aimed at «the proclamation of the Gospel in the contemporary world» characterized by mass migration globalization (Pope Benedict XVI, 2012; Synod of Bishops, 2012). More precisely, the focus of the research at the basis of this study is on the NE discourse enacted through ELF in unequal encounters where the Italian clergy offer practical assistance to non-western immigrants, often on condition that they accept their Evangelization message. The case study under analysis will specifically deal with an Italian Catholic priest interacting with a Nigerian immigrant newly-arrived in Italy.

Research context

The context of this research is represented by the Synod for the *New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*[1], which was convened by Pope Benedict XVI on October 7-28, 2012. The expression 'New Evangelization', however, was coined by Pope John Paul II[2] who can be considered as the father 'voice' of NE since he succeeded in conveying what Roman Catholics believe to be the Word of God through a multiplicity of languages in innumerable occasions. Yet, speaking a multiplicity of languages may be simply functional to a one-way 'transmission' of the Evangelical message meant to remain unaltered, but it does not necessarily guarantee the receiver's interpretative 'appropriation' of such a message. In fact, such an 'appropriation' can be achieved only through a two-way communication in cross-cultural contexts where a language needs to be a 'lingua franca' adapted to different linguacultural uses, schematic associations culture-bound values. The notion of a one-way 'transmission' of a religious message, however, seems to be indeed in contrast with the NE objective of «*inculturation* of faith» aimed «to have the Gospel take flesh in each people's culture» (Synod of Bishops, 2012), which envisages a process of 'appropriation' (or, rather, of actual 'embodiment') of the Word of God that receivers belonging to 'non-western' countries cultures are expected to activate in order to 'authenticate' (Widdowson, 1994) the NE message by making it their own according to their cultural schemata. Yet the implication of the term 'transmission' in the Bishop's document comes to be disambiguated as soon as it appears clear that it is rather in line with the limits of the NE purpose of valuing only «what is positive in every culture» , thus, «purifying [cultures] from elements that are contrary to the full realization of the person according to the design of God revealed in Christ» (*ibidem*) – in this way, actually allowing non-western receivers to activate only a mere 'acculturation' process of uncritical acceptance of the NE message (Schumann, 1978).

This justifies the reactions of a number of bishops representing non-western dioceses across the five continents at the Synod[3], who warned against such an 'acculturation' process covertly required by the NE message. Thus, for instance, Cardinal Pengo, from Africa, argued, «globalization introduces rapidly undigested foreign values, making it hard for Christians on the continent to be truly Africans. Their Christian faith is thus rendered also very much alien.» – Archbishop Reter, from Latin America, pointed out, «the pastoral of the Church cannot ignore the historical context in which its members live. It lives in very concrete

social, cultural contexts.» – which was also supported by Cardinal Gracias from Asia, «The effects of globalization are seen overall affecting our value systems. Traditional Asian values, much cherished traditions, cultures are being impacted and eroded».

More recently, this challenge of conveying the Word of God through a 'new language' meant as a 'lingua franca' for global communication (MacGabhann, 2008) has now been passed onto Pope Francis who, however, avoids using English, rather preferring for this purpose Italian – which cannot, however, be considered a proper international 'lingua franca' since the Pope has to rely every time on consecutive translation into Standard English that would reduce the innovative straightforwardness characterizing his communication style.

1. Rationale

1.1 Research assumptions

Indeed, the shortcomings of the one-way 'NE transmission' process can be noticed every day in the Italian Catholic clergy's attempts to achieve the «*inculturation* of the Divine Word» by bringing it to «migrant people from far-off-lands»[4]. Misunderstandings in such circumstances occur not simply because of the different ELF variations that clergy migrants use, but because the clergy do not seem to realize that the 'western' Catholic discourse is intrinsically 'metaphysical' (Guido, 2005), that is, constructed on culture-bound patterns of possible-world semantics (Stalnaker, 1987, 2001) characterizing its counterfactual logic. In adopting such a discourse type, the clergy actually seem unaware of the divergent ways by which non-western immigrants differently make 'religious' sense of their existence. In fact, the clergy's purpose is to induce non-western immigrants into an exploration of alternative semantic possibilities underlying conventional meanings. In this sense, the clergy's NE discourse is a clear example of how Modal Metaphysics by its very nature starts from reality to extrapolate beyond it, thus transcending any accepted notion of time, space, social contexts (Laurence and MacDonald, 1998). But such an interpretative procedure may be utterly different from the procedures that immigrants activate in their minds as they interpret the religious experience. Indeed, especially if they are African immigrants (as in the case in point), their religions – the Christianity included – are embedded in shared social contexts sanctioning their interpretation as an expression of

meanings, cultural values ways of thinking of particular social groups – thus making *indexical reference* to specific native communicative contexts. In the NE context, instead, the possible-worlds construct in Modal Logic is essentially iconic representational, not just indexical referential, thus applicable to the description of the imaginary metaphysical contexts that are furthermore devised received through different ELF linguacultural variations. The assumption, therefore, is that recognizing divergent ways of expressing the religious experience in different cultures through different ELF variations may help 'new evangelizers' find alternative, 'hybrid' ways of conveying the Word of God through ELF by making it accessible acceptable to non-western migrants, thus, fostering true ecumenical communication. Yet, such a communication very seldom occurs, the case study under analysis shall illustrate a case of cross-cultural communication failure that occurs despite a successful interaction carried out by means of the two participants' typologically-different ELF variations which do not cause any serious linguistic misunderstanding.

1.2 Research hypothesis

The hypothesis underlying this study is that misunderstanding in the NE discourse may be determined not simply by linguacultural assumptions, reflecting the two contact groups' different typological-syntactic, semantic, sociopragmatic features transferred to their respective ELF usage (Guido, 2008, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011), but also by schematic associations triggered by the participants' different knowledge systems community values related to the religious experience expressed through ELF. In fact, to make sense of the NE discourse, immigrants are required to activate in their minds two specific cooperative maxims here defined as *suspension of disbelief*, epistemically inducing them to believe that the clergy's possible-world representations in their evangelization discourse can be true, *experiential pliability*, deontically compelling immigrants to adapt their actual-world experience to such counterfactual constructions – even though for most African immigrants (the group to which the case-study subject belongs) religion is intrinsically connected with the referential domain of the actual, socio-political world. Failure in the immigrants' application of these two maxims in interacting with the Italian clergy is supposed to be the main cause of misunderstanding.

2. The Model

2.1 Theoretical grounds

In this study, the clergy's NE discourse in ELF is analyzed through a Model of Possible-Worlds Semantics in Modal Logic (cf. Allen, 1989; Stalnaker, 1992, 1996), according to which mental projections of possible worlds exist only within an imaginary dimension, not in reality. The Model focuses on two modality levels:

1. a *representational level of epistemic and doxastic modalities* concerning the expression of the speaker's beliefs accounting for:
   a. the *indexical, referential dimension of the actual world*, determining shared truth-conditions (i.e. the conventional sense of a concept – or 'primary intension' – given by what the concept refers to in reality – Lau, 1995);
   b. the *iconic, representational dimension of the possible world*, where truth-conditions are determined by the semantic value that a counterfactual concept acquires within the possible world (Lewis 1973; Zalta, 1997) – (hence, the referent for a concept – or 'secondary intension' – diverges from its conventional sense in the actual world – Lau, 1995);
2. a *referential level of deontic modality* concerning the displacement of counterfactual even impossible concepts into an actual communicative context where the clergy try to convey their intentionality accessibility conditions to the immigrants whose interpretations, however, may diverge from the clergy's expected interpretation of their thought – vice versa (cf. Pietrovski, 1993). This is furthermore to be contextualized in situations of unequal transactions where the clergy in charge of the interactions offer immigrants assistance services which are covertly exchanged with the immigrants' conversion to the Catholic faith.

2.2 Research objectives

In transcultural asymmetric situations of interaction where different identities may not be mutually recognized – as in the case study analyzed in this paper – some schema divergences need to be explored by accounting for:

a. on the one hand, the Italian clergy's 'western' NE discourse, which is inherently grounded on epistemic representations of mystical

concepts linguistically rendered according to metaphysical cate-
gories of possible-world semantics which are non-logical, abstract
difficult to conceptualize – yet they are employed as strategies of
deontic argumentation aimed at inducing in non-western immi-
grants the unconditioned acceptance of such counterfactual logic;

b. on the other h, the non-western immigrants' religious discourses
which instead are often grounded on a deontic argumentation
meant to prompt actions aimed at the achievement of better social/
personal conditions. Only afterwards can such discourses allow
forms of epistemic, metaphysical representations which, though
counterfactual, are always brought to bear on real-world social life.

Precisely because such divergences are culture-bound, they are here
assumed to be cognitively linguistically inaccessible, conceptually unavail-
able (Widdowson, 1991), often socio-culturally unacceptable respectively
to the 'western' clergy to the 'non-western' immigrants – the latter often
finding 'western' religious concepts totally alien to their native schemata.

Hence, two deviation levels between 'western' 'non-western' religious
discourse through ELF shall be investigated: (1) counterfactual syllogism
vs. factual reports (2) transitive vs. ergative representations of metaphysical
events.

3. Method analysis

3.1 Conversation-Analysis Method

The method adopted in this study is the Conversation Analysis
(Moerman, 1988), carried out on the protocol transcription (Ericcson
and Simon, 1984) of ethnographic data collected during an ELF exchange
(representing the case study) which is part of a larger corpus of recorded
conversations subsequently transcribed annotated in order to identify
marked syntactic pragmatic features characterizing ELF variations by each
group in contact[5]. The aim was to explore how western clergy non-west-
ern migrants interact through ELF make sense of the situations they are
involved in. The issue, in such situations, is represented by the fact that
whereas the Italian clergy use their ELF variations in situations that take
place within their own socio-cultural contexts, the immigrants, instead,
use their own non-western (mostly African) variants of English outside
their geographical experiential contexts. Hence, the immigrants' transfer
of their native features into ELF, the consequent misinterpretation of

such features by the clergy, turn African variants (once they become ELF variations in cross-cultural interactions) into language usages that are 'displaced', 'transidiomatic' (Silverstein, 1998), insofar as their meanings become disconnected from the native contexts of their use to be recontextualized within a non-native estranged communicative situation. The result is that each participant in the conversation engages indexically with his/her own socio-cultural reality to disambiguate the other participant's discourse, thus producing a type of 'schema-biased presupposition' (Guido, 2008: 64) on the borderline between semantics pragmatics, which fulfils neither truth conditions (since the reported metaphysical processes are not actual actions), nor felicity – or appropriateness – conditions (since there is no shared linguacultural knowledge or assumptions between the two participants in the encounter). Such a discrepancy may entail disregarding the original illocutionary force of the narrative. Therefore, recovering the 'situatedness' (Gumperz, 1982) of the immigrants' displaced ELF narrative means recognizing the original socio-cultural pragmalinguistic dimensions that give sense to the referential domains of their discourse.

3.2 Case-study context transcript

The case study analyzed in this paper regards an interaction between two participants: an Italian Catholic priest (P) offering assistance in a reception camp to a Nigerian Catholic man (M) who fled from Nigeria after his family had been slaughtered by the terroristic group Boko Haram[6], which claims to be Muslim, persecuting Catholics in north-eastern Nigeria. P speaks the 'expanding-circle' (Kachru, 1986) Italian-ELF variation, typical of countries (like Italy) where English is a foreign language used for international communication, as such, it makes exonormative reference to the native 'inner-circle' (*ibidem*) Standard-English code. M, instead, comes from Nigeria, a former British colony where English is a second language used for institutional/interethnic communication. M, in fact, speaks Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), an 'outer-circle' (*ibidem*) ELF variation that makes endonormative reference to sanctioned non-native Pidgin/Creole grammar codes.

The main endonormative syntactic characteristics of NPE that generally contribute to misunderstandings in intercultural communication are: the use of pre-verbal tense aspect markers instead of Standard-English auxiliaries inflectional suffixation, the addition of the pronoun 'dem' ('them') after a noun to signal plural, the use of the all-purpose preposition 'for' to indicate any kind of position movement in spatial orientation (Guido, 2008, 2012). NPE is here conventionally transcribed according to its phonetic

spelling (Faraclas, 1996). Central to this case study are the two typolog-ically-different L1-structures transferred into the participants' respective ELF variations: on the one hand, M's native Ergative constructions of events (in which an animated agent in Grammatical-Subject position is substituted by its Logical Object according to the OV(S) typology – Langacker, 1991: 336), which was identified as a feature of Igbo, M's first language (Carrell, 1970; Nwachukwu, 1976; Agbo, 2009) (also emerging from the corpus of Igbo speakers' oral immigration reports in NPE – partly published in Guido, 2008); on the other hand, P's own native Accusative SVO structures with the animate Agent in Subject position – through which P interpreted M's Ergative structures once they were transferred into the ELF he used, thus identifying the 'dislocated' NP-ELF variation spo-ken by M as a 'defective' inner-circle variation. Yet, despite these typolog-ical divergences in the two ELF variations in contact, this exchange was principally characterized by misunderstanding due to different schematic associations related to different religious experiences, as evident in the following transcript:

P: Allo::ra (.) better now? (..) eh? (..) where are you from?
M: Kano (.) Nigeria (..) >yu must help mi< (.) please *[Kano, Nigeria. You must help me, please]*
P: yes (.) tell me (..) God help all people that believe in him
M: .hhh no (.) no bi so (.) no (..) a bin lef mai kontri (.) bekos Muslim dem bin de kill mai pipul, Igbo pipul, bekos wi dey Catholic dem (..) Boko Haram de kill os >yu know?< *[No, it's not so, no. I left my country because Muslims were killing my people, Igbo people, because we are Catholic … Boko Haram is killing us, you know?]*
P: yes (.) yes I know (..) >they're Islamic terrorist<° (..) so:: you're Catholic?
M: hhh yes (.) a no no (..) Boko Haram bin kill mai wife an tu pikin dem (.) >tu son dem< (..) God eye dem bin see no murder (..) a no sabi (..) a no tink se a believe God now= *[yes … I don't know … Boko Haram killed my wife two children, two sons … God's eyes didn't see any murder. I don't understand … I don't think that I believe in God now]*
P: =no no don't say this (.) you see::? (.) although it seem that God can appear completely absent when happen tra::gedies like this (.) well (.) he's (.) absolutely present (.) he must be present (.) beca::use (.) >he surely do what is right< (.) for realize his kingdom (.) of peace (.) justice [>you know?<]
M: [no (..)] God no tink fo Nigeria (.) no (.) Nigeria wan a beta

go::vment (.) no <u>corruption</u> (.) no <u>murder</u> (..) >a <u>no</u> wan kom fo Nigeria< (.) no <u>now</u> (.) <u>no</u> (..) a beta <u>life</u> (.) a beta <u>job</u> >a <u>permit</u> fo stay< (.) beta <u>education</u> must kom first (..) yu <u>must</u> help mi (.) dem bin tek mai finger-print dem (.) a no won kom fo Nigeria (.) justice no dey fo Nigeria (.) no law *[no, God doesn't think of Nigeria, no. Nigeria needs a better government, no corruption, no murder. I don't want to go back to Nigeria, not now, no. A better life, a better job, a residence permit, a better education must come first. You must help me, they took my fingerprints, I don't want to go back to Nigeria, there's no justice in Nigeria, no law]*

P: but God is <u>love</u> (.) justice (.) listen (.) you <u>cannot</u> separate the <u>wi::ll</u> of God his (.) <u>apparent</u> absence when tragedy happen (..) because (.) <u>although</u> (.) although (.) it <u>seem</u> that God actions appear (.) <u>casual</u> (.) <u>cruel</u> (.) but they (.) they are also <u>completely</u> (.) <u>good</u> (..) <u>premeditated</u> (..) <u>why</u> (..) he give to us his son <u>Je::sus</u> (.) that was <u>killed</u> on the cross? eh? (..) you <u>see::</u>? (.) to save us (.) to give to us the <u>peace</u>

M: .hhh no (..) a have no peace (.) a must <u>kill</u> pipul se bin kill mai wife an mai son dem so so (.) *[no, I have no peace, I must kill the people who killed my wife my sons like that.]*

P: .hhh (..) we can (.) we can think that <u>God</u> killed your family appar-ently <u>only</u> for cruelty (.) <u>but</u> (.) he want that you can forgive the sins of your <u>enemies</u> (..) <u>God</u> will judge them (.) make <u>justice</u> (.) not <u>you</u>

M: (..).hhh maybe <u>Ala</u> go mek justice (.) no <u>God</u> *[maybe Ala will do justice, not God]*

P: <u>stop</u> (.) stop (..) Ala? (..) listen (.) if you have <u>faith</u> in God he can help <u>me</u> to help you for the permit (.) *va bene*?

3.3 Case-study analysis

The analysis of this exchange shows how, at the *representational level*, P uses propositional attitude sentences representing 'belief reports' signalled by a modal operator – i.e. epistemic verbs adverbs (Stalnaker, 1987; Schiffer, 1996) – expressed by:

1. an indexical mode-of-presentation referred to a specific possible world under which the Subject believes that the proposition is true (Lau 1995) which, in the following statement (a), is ambiguously expressed through the use of the modal verb 'must', to be interpreted either as an epistemic logical deduction, or as a deontic obligation fulfilled by the Agent (God):
   a. he's [God is] absolutely present, he must be present because he surely do what is right.

2. a *that*-clause whose semantic value corresponds to the intension of
    the embedded sentence:
    b. it seem[s] that God can appear completely absent […]
    c. it seem[s] that God actions appear casual cruel […]
    d. we can think that God killed your family apparently only for
        cruelty […].

Belief reports (b) (c) are agentless indirect as they are introduced by an impersonal clause with 'it' as Subject placeholder. Also (d) is an instance of indirect belief reports. In these cases, the propositional attitudes are expressed by the epistemic verb 'seem' which introduces the *that*-clauses, as well as by the verbs 'appear', 'can' the adverb 'apparently' within the *that*-clauses – hence, there is no direct affirmation of belief within the main clause. M, therefore, is expected to understand, consequently, share P's belief by activating in his mind a process of semantic presupposition (Levinson, 1983: 199-204).

The 'suspension of disbelief' the 'experiential pliability' processes that M is required to activate in his mind in order to accept P's metaphysical message are however hindered by the non-logical complexity of the clauses which require from M a cognitive effort to process them. The concepts expressed by the propositional attitudes in P's clauses are in fact assumed to coincide with the secondary intensions of the corresponding embedded clauses. These embedded clauses, in their turn, have truth-conditions that are equivalent to the truth conditions of the embedded clauses in the corresponding semantic presuppositions. In processing such clauses, M has to deduce the semantic presupposition either by a process of *entailment*, involving the concept of *necessity*, or by a process of *compatibility*, involving the concept of *possibility*. In both cases, however, M needs to account also for the primary intensions underlying embedded sentences. This means that he has to make reference to the indexical dimension of the real world if he wants to determine the truth-conditions the modal status of the *that*-clauses in the iconic possible world represented within the metaphysical discourse.

Yet, with reference to the metaphysical concept of God, this indexical/iconic interaction between real possible worlds seems useless as regards the case of an hidden indexical belief which relies neither on primary nor on secondary intensions for its belief attribution (Pietrovski, 1993; Lau, 1995). This being so because its truth-conditions can be inferred from the representational context within which it is framed. Such truth-conditions may appear inconsistent in the actual-world dimension (mainly for the lack of a concrete indexical referent for the Agent 'God'), but they can be

considered veritable in a possible-world dimension of representation. In it, the given anthropomorphic properties of God are epistemically possible even deontically necessary to deny the allegation of 'absence' – as in statement (a) above in the following statement (e):

> e.   you cannot separate the will of God his apparent absence when tragedy happen[s] […]

Within the counterfactual world introduced by (a) (e), *de re* modal claims stating that something is *necessarily* ('must be') or *possibly* ('can be') something else, can be asserted without being 'prefixed by expressions of 'angle, containing or implying the 'according to […]' operator (Divers, 1999). Divers defines such modal claims as 'extensional', which indicates that they define their truth-value at the possible-world level independently from the truth-values at the actual-world level. This means that modal-logic processes, such as entailment (claiming that a thing is 'necessarily' as it is) compatibility (claiming that a thing is 'possibly' as it is), are essential in the activation of a possible-world context. In this case, entailment creates a representational context within which the semantic presupposition to statement (e), inconceivable in the actual world, becomes conceivable as a logical deduction within P's possible world.

On the other hand, at the *referential level* of bimodality, it can be observed how P organizes his metaphysical discourse on two pragmatic dimensions:

> a.   an *overt illocutionary dimension* through which he intends to convey information about his beliefs,
> b.   a *covert perlocutionary dimension* through which he introduces his religious beliefs to M and expects him to accept it.

In this perspective, P's discourse may be said to simultaneously account for the two speech roles that Halliday (1994: 68) defines respectively as *proposition* (statement of information about beliefs, knowledge, etc.) *proposal* (offers or commands) in relation to the Interpersonal Metafunction of language underlying communication. As a *proposition*, P's discourse expresses a stance that is both *epistemic doxastic* as he overtly makes his illocutionary point by means of constative utterances that convey his religious/metaphysical beliefs through the projection of the non-logical image of the anthropomorphic figure of God, representing both the Psychological Subject (the Theme) the Logical Subject (the Agent) (*ibidem*: 31), though it does not always coincide with the Grammatical Subjects of the clauses. In this way, God loses its Thematic position as the Psychological Subject of the clause to be dislocated into a *that*-clause introduced by 'it' as Subject-placeholder – thus downgrading such a metaphysical concept to the level of a detached 'fact' in a Rhematic position.

Yet, the 'facts' represented in these clauses are only purely possible-worlds projections of beliefs, to be rather classified as wholly imagined 'chances', 'possibilities', or even 'impossibilities' (*ibidem*: 267) rendered linguistically as 'projections' in the embedded form of *that*-clauses through a declarative mood (*ibidem*: 115). In P's discourse, the abstract counterfactual concept of God is adapted to the conventional image-schema of a powerful male human being who performs the semantic role of Actor in material processes where the transitivity system does not represent any truth-functional semantic pattern applicable to a real-world context. This 'counterfactual logic' (cf. Lewis, 1973) aims to fulfil P's pragmatic function of allowing M's accessibility to his non-consistent thought-development. Yet, accessibility to the semantic structure of such a complex metaphysical discourse does not automatically facilitate M's sense of experiential proximity to the non-logical processes represented in it. Indeed, the pronoun 'it' employed as a Subject placeholder may convey precisely the opposite sensation – namely, P's intention to keep an experiential distance from the 'metaphysical fact' that he represents which is projected impersonally in a separate, embedded clause to create an 'objective modulation'. In this way, P covertly disclaims responsibility for his semantic abstraction (*ibidem*: 269).

In sum, at the level of the 'clause as a message', projections of 'possible-world facts' through impersonal *that*-clauses can be seen as:

   a. *epistemic doxastic propositions*, whose overt illocutionary point is to present objectively a metaphysical view of a 'possible fact' (i.e. an epistemic 'noun of modality' concerning hypothetical chances, possibilities, or impossibilities – *ibidem*: 267). This may not imply P's personal involvement in the message he conveys, thus emphasizing his assertion of a 'universal truth' that cannot be doubted;
   b. a *deontic proposal*, whose covert perlocutionary point is to induce M into concluding that what P asserts is not just about a 'possible fact', but it is rather a 'need' (i.e. a deontic 'noun of modulation' representing a category of 'facts' that requires the speaker's and the receiver's commitment in believing in it – *ibidem*: 268).

As a result, this double-message coming from the language of P's discourse can produce an ambiguous disconcerting *distance-proximity effect* on M. On the one hand, he is overtly elicited to consider P's discourse as a mere exposition of abstract ideas, on the other, he is covertly induced to feel committed to P's stance, which introduces the level of *proposal*. On this level, P's stance is *deontic*, as he covertly makes his perlocutionary point by means of utterances whose pragmatic function is performative, as they are employed to bring M to share his metaphysical beliefs. This

objective is pursued through an argumentation typical of the discourse of persuasion (Billig, 1996) which contains circumstantial elements of 'angle' (Halliday, 1994: 158) that are, unexpectedly, impersonal, as they do not specify whose perspective they report. This is achieved by P's use of the 'it' as Subject placeholder meant as a disclaimer for the assertions reported in the *that*-clauses where P seems to keep his distance from his own metaphysical contention, probably to reassure M that his discourse is objective, detached, thus, unchallenging. Consequently, M may experience a sense of displacement at perceiving that his interpretative freedom is limited by P's use of non-logical semantic constraints which may divert his cognitive operations of information processing. This is illustrated by the Transitivity system underlying P's discourse built on a *hypothetical syllogism* based on both 'contraposition' and 'vacuous truth' – which are typical features of Possible-Worlds Semantics (Lewis, 1973). The clauses in P's discourse can therefore be ranked into two main counterfactual types, here defined as:

1. *Clauses of illogical compatibility*, semantically constructed as a mental projection of opposing polarities, at the same time, epistemically modalized within a conditional logic. Furthermore, they are structured impersonally, with the pronoun 'it' as Grammatical Subject in the Thematic position, the Logical Subject as the Rheme (see instances (a)-(b)-(c)).

2. *Clauses of illogical contingency*, semantically constructed as hypotactic expansions 'by concession', at the same time, interconnected by means of relational processes of an 'intensive', attributive type equating two wholly contradictory concepts.

The following two statements from P's discourse are instances of counterfactual clauses (i.e. clauses of illogical contingency):

    f.   although it seem that God can appear completely absent when happen tragedies like this, well he's absolutely present, he must be present because he surely do what is right […]

    g.   although it seem that God actions appear casual cruel but they are also completely good premeditated […].

In these complex sentences there is a circumstantial element of *contingency* (Halliday, 1994: 155) marked by the concessive conjunction 'although', which normally enhances a causal-conditional logical-semantic relation among the clauses (*ibidem*: 324). Yet, in this metaphysical discourse, logical-semantic relations do not follow 'normal' cognitive routes – in fact, they are patterned according to what Lewis (1973) defines as a *paraconsistent hypothetical syllogism*. Thus, for example, the concessive clause in (f) introduces a relational process of an intensive type, where the

intension is signalled by a high degree of attribution, conveyed by the positive-polarity adverb 'completely', which ascribes the attribute 'absent' to its Carrier – namely, the personified entity of 'God'. Yet, the sense of indifference conveyed by 'absent' is immediately denied by the obligation-adjunct of modality represented by the adverb 'absolutely'. This adverb is strengthened by 'surely' to stress the contradiction with a different entity of 'God' as an Agent, this time, whose processes are believed to have a high value of certainty («he surely do what is right»). again, God's 'absence' is denied by the simultaneous deontic-obligation/epistemic-deduction verb/adjunct 'must' 'surely' («he must be present because he surely do what is right»), personifying God as an active Agent of high-certainty actions. In (g), once again, the image of God is characterized by the opposite notions of 'cruelty' 'goodness', which make the 'moral' processing of this Entity quite challenging. Furthermore, here the concessive enhancement by means of the causal-conditional element 'although' reiterates the same non-logical correlation between the opposite concepts of 'premeditation' 'casualness' attributed to God, only that this time it is directly expressed through a relational process of an intensive type since the intension is represented by the relation between God's 'actions' the opposite attributes 'casual', 'cruel' 'premeditated' 'good', emphasized – as in statement (f) – by the polarity-adverb 'completely'. In the previous statement (e), P abandons the impersonal stance and tries to involve M directly in his paraconsistent thought-processes. This is signalled by the second-person pronoun 'you', associated with the deontic operator 'cannot' denoting an expected response of inclination. Yet, 'cannot' signals a dimension of ambiguity as it may be interpreted as being simultaneously 'overtly epistemic' 'covertly deontic', entailing M's avoidance of an autonomous exploration of a possibility, but also God's denial (sanctioned by P's words) of the permission for P to conceive 'divergent truths' («*you cannot* separate the will of God his apparent absence»). Also in statement (d), P tries to involve M – but on an epistemic level, this time. This is represented by the expression of possibility 'we *can* think', triggering in M a mental process which is, however, soon denied by the projection of an 'impossibility'-type of conditional sentence by means of a *that*-clause («that God killed your family apparently only for cruelty»), minimized by the intensity-adjunct of mood 'only' (Halliday, 1994: 83).

So far, analysis has regarded the possible plan of propositional attitudes illocutionary points intended by P. But, what are the possible perlocutionary effects that P's metaphysical discourse may induce in M?

P opens the exchange by a covert proposal aimed at inducing M to

'suspend his disbelief' – as the condition for M to receive P's assistance – to adopt a 'pliable' stance on P's counterfactual representations of the NE message («tell me, God help all people that believe in him»). M replies to P's NE metaphysical argumentations with a series of dispreferred conversational moves (most of which start with a stern denial 'no') aimed at challenging P's religious stances. As hypothesized, on the one hand, the syntactic-typological divergences between the two ELF-variations in contact (i.e. Italian ELF Nigerian-Pidgin ELF) do not cause serious misunderstandings – only in one case, does P misinterpret M's pronunciation of the word 'law' (NPE [lo]) for 'love' (It-ELF [lov]). On the other hand, M's NPE ergative structures extensive use of the deontic modal 'must' contribute to determine the illocutionary point M intends to make. Indeed, the Noun Phrases «beta ['better'] life, a beta job, a permit fo ['for'] stay, beta education» as Ergative 'abstract Objects' in Subject position emphasize their semantic status as a 'medium' (Halliday, 1994) for the fulfilment of his life's goals. M's determination to succeed is then stressed by the high deontic modal 'must' («a beta life, a beta job, a permit fo stay, beta education *must* kom first»), which is also employed as a strong request for help addressed to P («yu *must* help mi» – repeated twice), as a strong commitment to his revenge plan («a *must* kill pipul se bin kill mai wife an mai son dem so so» / «*I must kill the people who killed my wife my sons like that*»). M's strength of mind may be seen as a reaction to the sense of confusion probably triggered by P's representation of God personified according to the blurred experiential categories of an unsympathetic, punitive 'Strict Father', at the same time, a caring 'Nurturant Parent' (Lakoff, 1996). Hence, M resolves instead to represent God according to his own socio-cultural parameters: on the one hand, he reinstates the African social archetype of the Biblical God as a 'Strict Father' in conflict with Man as the responsible Agent for social good justice; on the other, he makes reference to Ala, the African Creator Goddess – i.e. a 'nurturant' Mother Earth – very popular among Igbos.

This exchange ends with P's reiteration of his proposal of assistance on condition that M unreservedly accepts the metaphysical NE message («if you have faith in God he can help me to help you for the permit»).

4. Conclusions

The conversation analysis presented in this paper has examined the NE discourse by which P, an Italian Catholic Priest, tries to make his religious belief acceptable to M, a Nigerian immigrant, who feels a sense

of alienation towards P's NE discourse. In fact, though conveyed through ELF, P's discourse actually makes M realize that its concepts are semantically pragmatically 'divergent' from his own culture-bound religious experience. As argued, the communication failure in this exchange is not so much generated by typologically-marked syntactic divergences between the two ELF variations in contact (i.e. P's Italian ELF M's NP-ELF), but it is rather produced by two socio-cultural religious schemata in conflict conveyed through ELF. P's NE message is an instance of metaphysical discourse requiring from non-western immigrants (like M) a readiness to transcend the everyday experience of reality by displacing it into the modal logic of different possible worlds. Such possible worlds are suggested by the semantic structure of the NE metaphysical discourse which sets its own 'rules of inference' that do not correspond to the conventional ones of the real world. The case study has illustrated that the bimodal structure of P's religious/metaphysical discourse is mainly concerned with the representation of the epistemic/doxastic modalities by which he represents his beliefs through ELF. M, thus, is expected to 'suspend his disbelief' activate in his mind a 'conceptual pliability' in order to make sense of the semantic patterns of P's metaphysical discourse (which he perceives as non-coherent according to his actual-world experiential logic), by projecting them onto the possible-world dimension of an alternative, paraconsistent logic that would make them meaningful.

In conclusion, the outcome of this case study suggests that to achieve true ecumenical communication, the clergy in charge of such interactions should first recover the 'situatedness' (Gumperz, 1982) of the immigrants' displaced ELF by recognizing the original socio-cultural pragmalinguistic dimensions determining sense reference in their religious experience. Then, the clergy should also develop accommodation strategies of ELF reformulation hybridization to make culture-bound religious discourses conceptually accessible and socially acceptable to all the participants in cross-cultural NE interactions.

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[1] Retrieved from: <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html> (last access 09.02.2016).
[2] Retrieved from: <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte_en.html> (last access 09.02.2016).
[3] Retrieved from: <http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b05_02.html> (last access 09.02.2016).
[4] Retrieved from: <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110921_world-migrants-day_en.html> (last access 09.02.2016).

[5] To this purpose, the following conversation transcript symbols (Edwards 1997) were adopted: [ ] → overlapping speech; <u>underlining</u> → emphasis; → quieter speech; (.) → micropause; (..) → pause; :: → elongation of prior sound; .hhh → breathing in; hhh → breathing out; > < → speed-up talk; = → latching.

[6] The expression 'Boko Haram' in Hausa means «Western Education is Sin».

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