

# THE ROLE OF TENSE, MODALITY AND POLARITY IN SHAPING DISCOURSE IN THE HOLY EUCCHARIST

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## Abstract

The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament observed in churches in commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This paper critically evaluates the functions of tense, modality, and polarity in influencing the social dynamics of communication within the context of this ritual. The paper draws from the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyse temporal anchoring, degrees of certainty, and affirmation/negation in the Eucharistic ritual. The **methodology** involves a **qualitative discourse analysis** approach. The textual analysis presents Tense in the Holy Eucharist as a historical ongoing timeless and enduring communal experience. Modality plays a significant role in constructing the theological, symbolic, and social dimensions of the liturgical ceremony. Polarity is demonstrated as a linguistic device for affirming the communal identity as well as defining the boundaries of inclusion for the participation of the ceremony within the liturgical community. The paper draws intertextually from biblical scriptures and theological writings, to illuminate the ritual's rich theological and symbolic complexity while underscoring how these linguistic elements contribute to both the individual and collective identity of the worshippers. The findings demonstrate how language mediates and constructs the Holy Eucharist as a religious and social event, with the tense, modality, and polarity used in its observance defining the limits of ritual participation, reinforcing doctrinal purity and unity, and uncovering power relations. The paper contributes to ongoing discourse in social cohesion, community development and advancement of knowledge in language studies within the context of religious practices.

**Keywords:** Tense, Modality, Polarity, Holy Eucharist, Social Dynamics, Religious Discourse, Intertextuality

## Introduction

The Eucharist is a foremost ritual in Christianity which was instituted by the Lord Jesus himself. The bible (King James Version (KJV), (1984) declares that the same night Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and declared "This is my body which is broken for you (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26). The beginning of this sacrament can be traced to the last supper the Lord Jesus had with his disciples before his death (Matthew 26:26-27, Mark 14:22-24, Luke22:17-20). Mansour (2008) in his third pastoral letter explains that "Liturgy incorporates chant, procession, ritual, use of material goods, such as water, oil, incense, bread, wine and icons, and takes place in appropriately prepared surroundings". The ceremony is carried out with absolute reverential preparation within the church. The sacrament entails the consecration and the eating of bread and wine which Jesus instructed to be carried out often in remembrance of him and in proclamation of his death (1 Corinthians 11:26, 1 John 2:2). The ceremony holds profound ecclesiastical, communal, and social significance with real-world implications beyond its commemoration as the relationships and identities of believers within the Christian community are continually shaped by this living tradition.

The functions of language in the Holy Eucharist are both theological and a social semiotic tool that shapes the communal and hierarchical dynamics of the church. This paper draws on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as articulated by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), to analyse the grammatical resources of tense, modality, and polarity in the Holy Eucharist. The motivation for this study stems from the need to investigate the linguistic mechanisms that create social interactions within this ritual. SFL offers a robust framework for understanding how linguistic choices create meaning within specific

social contexts. In the context of the Holy Eucharist, applying Halliday and Matthiessen's work on tense, modality, and polarity provides an opportunity to understand the functions of these elements of grammar in broader social communication, specifically within religious rituals. Such analysis illuminates not only the divine narratives embedded in the ritual but also the social dynamics of power, authority, and community participation.

This paper explores these grammatical choices in the way they shape inclusivity or exclusivity in the observance of this ritual, particularly considering contemporary theological debates surrounding issues of access, authority, and participation (Stiff, 2021, Cone, 2018, Stabile, 2019, Shoop & McClintock-Fulkerson (no date), McClintock-Fulkerson, 2014).

In examining the Eucharistic liturgy through the lens of Systemic Functional Grammar, this paper aims to contribute a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between language, power, and communal identity in religious discourse. By drawing on linguistics and religious studies, this paper also encourages interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, demonstrating the value of integrating different perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of complex cultural phenomena. The paper also seeks to enhance the broader academic discourse surrounding the linguistics of religion, highlighting the role of language as a powerful tool for both theological expression and social interaction in sacred contexts. The next section reviews related literature

### **Review of Related Literature**

The study of language in religious discourse has advanced through various theoretical leanings, one of which is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) emphasise that language is a resource for constructing meaning within social contexts. Within religious discourse in particular, tense,

modality, and polarity play a significant role in the expression of social relationships and religious beliefs. These three grammatical resources often help to connect participants with the theological narratives propounded by their religious organisations while shaping their obligations and identities. The use of certain tenses or imperative forms in the Eucharist not only conveys specific religious meaning but can also reinforce hierarchy between clergy and laity. This plays a critical role in the authority structures within the Eucharistic ritual.

Dada, Adagbonyin, & Anyanwu (2022) investigates the interpersonal meanings made by the semiotic resources of language and gestures in the Holy Eucharist. The paper applies the systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis framework (SFMDA) to analyse the downloaded *YouTube* video of the daily mass (2019). The Mood element with particular attention on the use of personal pronouns and hand gestures are examined with findings revealing that the use of the first person plural personal pronouns of "we" and "us" reconstructed as a gestural process through hand gestures contribute to the construction of inclusion, exclusion, and collectivism in the Holy Eucharist ceremony. These elements intertwine to culminate in the entire event and to project the ideology of a communal lifestyle. The intersemiotic connectivity of these semiotic resources produced convergent and divergent meanings in their co-contextualising and recontextualising relations, resulting in intersemiotic polysemy and semiotic metaphor as well as semiotic harmony. This led to the conclusion that it is only by exploring the verbal and nonverbal elements as well as their interconnectedness in a text can a wholesome interpretation of the meanings made in an event be arrived at.

At certain times in the observance of the ceremony, the priest engages the congregation in responsorial which along with the linguistic markers of inclusion ("This is my body broken for you", "as we partake" "as often as you do this") help to reinforce a shared sense of belonging within the Catholic community. The way the Eucharistic ceremony is

structured can also, either reinforce or challenge traditional authority and may influence how inclusive or exclusive the ritual feels to participants. Liturgical Language, as it relates to tense, modality, and polarity, contributes to the formation of collective identity, and continues to mediate social interactions in Christian communities. Wang (2014) analyses Mood and Modality in the Bible through the SFL framework. The paper gives a detailed analysis of the interpersonal meaning in the conversations among God, God's chosen people and other people using statistics and illustration. The findings reveal that mood and modality in biblical language help construct positive interpersonal relationships as they directly or indirectly help to make the relationship between God and his people closer.

Bourdieu (1991) also addresses the role of symbolic power in religious rituals, particularly how language and ritual practices maintain the power structures within the Church. For example, in the Eucharist, the use of modality and polarity helps to establish who is empowered to speak and who has the right to partake in the sacrament. This creates a distinction between the sacred and the profane, as well as insiders and outsiders within the community. Foucault (1977) provides useful insights into how language is employed to mediate power relations in society. His analysis of discourse and power can be applied to the language of the Eucharist, where imperatives, modality, and polarity are used to assert authority.

Language plays a crucial role in maintaining hierarchical power structures in religious rituals, particularly in the Eucharistic context. The priest, for example, through the language of the liturgy, functions as an intermediary between the divine and the community, a relationship reinforced through linguistic structures that command or invite action. Language is used to express ritual authority and to define the limits of ritual participation. Exclusive language such as only the baptised members can take the Holy Eucharist contrasts with more inclusive language such as "take this, all of you, and drink from it".

These choices serve to reinforce or challenge traditional power dynamics within Christian communities, making the Eucharistic ritual a site for ongoing theological and social negotiation.

The Holy Eucharist also known as the Holy Communion in other denominations of the Christian faith has been investigated through the ideational metafunction. Dada & Adagbonyin (2022) examine grammatical transitivity in the holy communion service of a new generation church through the application of Halliday's grammatical system of transitivity under the ideational (experiential) metafunction. The grammatical system of transitivity is used to clarify syntactic features and their semantic implications in social events. The paper focuses on how the six process types (material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential) are represented in the communion service. The findings reveal the role of each process type in serving to deepen the worshipper's experience whether through the physicality of the ritual or the internal, personal, and communal expressions of faith. It also discovered that the Material, verbal, relational are the three main types of processes in the language structure of the Holy Communion as against Halliday's three principal processes of material, mental and relational in any discourse.

Scholarly works exist in the analysis of the linguistic and ritual dimensions of the Eucharist as well as in integrating the linguistic features of Mood and modality (Noor et al. 2016, Jasper 2018, Jones 2021, Umeh 2023). However, there is paucity of work in integrating tense, modality, and polarity within a single framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics as it relates specifically to the social dynamics of the Eucharistic rite in religious discourse. This paper fills this gap by providing a systematic systemic analysis of how tense, modality, and polarity interact to shape both theological understanding and social dynamics in the Eucharistic rite.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (2014). This approach views language as a resource for meaning making, focusing on how language functions in social contexts. Specifically, the paper utilises the Mood system within SFL, which encompasses Tense, Modality, and Polarity. SFL's emphasis on the relationship between language and context is crucial for analysing the Eucharist as a rite and social event. The paper also draws on Kristeva's (1966) principle of intertextuality for intertextual analysis while providing context for the Holy Eucharist. This includes drawing from other scriptures to give an understanding of the theological interpretations of the ritual, the symbolic meanings of its elements, and its social functions within the liturgical community.

## **Methodology**

The paper employs a qualitative approach, focusing on the interpretation of linguistic data within its religious and social context. The primary methodology involves a detailed textual analysis of the Holy Eucharist. This includes identifying and analysing the various stages of the liturgy for tense, modality, and polarity and how they contribute to the overall meaning and function of the Holy Eucharist.

The paper incorporates intertextual analysis, drawing on biblical texts and other relevant sources for the linguistic and symbolic dimensions of the Eucharist which allows for a deeper understanding of the historical and theological dimensions of the ritual's language. The methodology emphasises the importance of contextualising the linguistic analysis within the specific context of its religious significance. This involves considering the social, cultural, and religious factors that shape the meaning and function of the language used in the ceremony.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### **Mood**

Mood is the major interpersonal system of the clause which consists of the Subject and Finite, and with functions of the clause as exchange in English. The Subject is the warranty of the exchange and the element the speaker makes responsible for the validity of what he is saying (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). The Finite is the first functional element of the verbal group and is one of a small number of verbal operators expressing tense or modality combined with the specification of polarity for something to be arguable as either a proposition or a proposal (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). In the next section an attempt is made to explain these three terms; tense, modality and polarity and investigate their contribution to the understanding of the Holy Communion event.

### **Tense, Modality and Polarity**

A proposition or proposal becomes arguable when given a point of reference in the here and now, that is, in terms of the time of speaking. It could also be by reference to the judgement of the speaker. The former is tense while the latter is known as Modality which could imply likely or unlikely (if a proposition), desirable or undesirable, if a proposal (Haliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Temporality and modality both have interpersonal deixis in common. Primary tense (past, present or future) now of speaking construes times interpersonally, while in modality the dimension is that of assessment. Modality construes a region of uncertainty where the speaker can express or ask the listener to express an assessment of the validity of what is being said (Haliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Another essential concurrent feature of finiteness is polarity. This is the choice between positive and negative. For something to be arguable, it must be specified for polarity: either 'is' or 'isn't' (proposition), or 'do!' or 'don't!' (proposal). Thus, the Finite element,

as well as expressing primary tense or modality, also realises yes and no - that is, positive or negative polarity with each of the operators appearing in both positive and negative form: did/didn't, can/can't, amongst others (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014).

### **Critical Examination of Tense, Modality and Polarity in the Context of the Holy Eucharist**

Tense, modality, and polarity are fundamental concepts that contribute to the interpretation of meaning in discourse. These linguistic resources are vital tools for expressing temporality, possibility, affirmation, or negation in communication. The proceeding analysis demonstrates how these concepts shape the theological and ritual language of the Holy Eucharist.

#### **Tense in the Holy Eucharist**

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), tense functions as a mechanism for anchoring an event in time. In the context of the Holy Eucharist, tense serves a critical role in framing the event of Christ's sacrifice as both historical and transcendent. The Holy Eucharist commemorates the death of Jesus Christ who instituted the sacrament, traditionally considered a past event. However, it also exists in the present moment of the liturgy, as participants re-enact and re-experience the event in a ritualistic form. According to Iedema (2001, 2003), this is also known as resemiotisation, which in this context means a past event is re-enacted as a recurring event in the present. This is a Semiotic Metaphor because it is not simply a repetition of the same meaning, there is also a symbolic meaning attached to the whole action of the breaking of the bread, eating and drinking of the wine. A functional shift in the status occurs as what is represented as an entity in speech is resemiotised as transubstantiation.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) suggest that tense can articulate the relationship between the present and the past, and this is

especially significant in the Eucharist, where the past (the historical death of Christ) is continuously brought into the present through the liturgical practice of observing the Eucharistic rite.

During the consecration of the bread, the priest lifts the host up and declares “This is my body, broken for you” (Luke 22:19, KJV). In this consecration, the priest utilises the present tense to emphasise the immediacy of Christ’s presence in the bread and wine, despite referring to a past historical event. He does this as instituted by the Lord Jesus himself. The simultaneous presence of past and present, anchored by the present tense, is a feature of religious discourse and reflects the “timelessness” of the divine act of salvation.

### **Modality in the Holy Eucharist**

Modality refers to the speaker's attitude toward the likelihood, necessity, or desirability of an event occurring (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). In the Holy Eucharist, modality plays a significant role in shaping how the event is understood and approached by the participants. In the language of the Eucharist, expressions of necessity and obligation exist as seen in the use of modals like “shall” (Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. In the words of institution (“take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body”), the necessity of participating in the sacrament is underscored. The use of modality in the imperative form (“Take” and “Eat”) conveys both an imperative command and a moral sense of obligation. The believer is not simply invited but called to partake in this sacred act as a means of salvation.

In another instance, the priest implores Christ to “make holy, therefore, these gifts, by sending down your Spirit\_so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” The word “make” also conveys both an imperative command and a moral sense of obligation. This aligns with theological teachings about the Eucharist being an essential part of the spiritual life of the Church, as the

sacrament is viewed as a means of receiving grace and maintaining communion with Christ. Furthermore, the Eucharistic ritual is often framed with a sense of possibility and promise using modals like “may”, and “will” in expressions like “it will become for us the bread of life. it will become our spiritual drink” invoking a sense of future hope and divine grace. Other examples include the following:

- i. For this is my body, which will be given up for you.
- ii. May the peace of the Lord be with you always
- iii. Pray, (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be made acceptable to God, the father almighty

Modality in the Eucharist, then, communicates not only the necessity of the ritual but also the potential for transformation and spiritual renewal, as in the belief that the Eucharist provides access to eternal life and divine forgiveness “The blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins”.

### **Polarity in the Holy Eucharist**

Polarity in Halliday and Matthiessen’s framework refers to the presence of affirmation or negation in a clause. In religious discourse, particularly in the Eucharist, polarity is central to defining the theological assertions of the liturgy. The language of the Eucharist is often framed in positive terms, affirming the presence and sacrifice of Christ. For example, the Eucharistic prayer frequently affirms the reality of Christ's sacrifice and presence with expressions like:

- i. “Blessed are you O Lord God of creation for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life”

- ii. “Pray, (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be made acceptable to God, the father almighty” and
- iii. “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church”.

These serve as positive affirmations of the believer’s communion with Christ. However, negation also plays a role in defining the boundaries of participation in the observance of Holy Eucharist. In the Catholic church, there are those who do not participate in everything the church does because they are not baptised members or are not in a state of grace (meaning they may have committed a sin). Such people do not participate in the taking of the Holy Eucharist. This introduces polarity in the form of negation and tallies with the scriptural verse (1 Corinthians 11: 27) which instructs that the communion should not be taken unworthily otherwise, such a person will bring damnation upon themselves. Here, negation helps establish the requirements and conditions for participation, which also aligns with the concept of the Eucharist being a sign of covenant and symbol of community.

The Eucharist is simultaneously an affirmation of divine grace and forgiveness, but it also implicitly negates sin and separation from God. The polarity in the language mirrors this tension between the already and the not-yet of Christian eschatology. This duality of affirmation and negation in the observance of the Holy Eucharist also reflects the theological tension between life and death, sin and redemption where God declares “I bring before you life and death, choose life that you might live”.

### **Intertextual References and Theological Context**

The language of the Eucharist is deeply intertextual, drawing on biblical and theological references. Kristeva’s (1966) work on intertextuality has been widely applied to the study of liturgical language. According to her, texts are never isolated; they are always

embedded in a network of references. In the context of the Eucharist, this means that the words, phrases, and sentences call upon a network of scriptural sources. Intertextually, the Eucharist is linked to the events of the Jewish Passover in Exodus 12: 1-28 (KJV Bible, 1970). The Passover is a ritual that commemorates the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The children of Israel were instructed to kill and smear the blood of the Lamb on their doorposts, and to eat the Lamb with unleavened bread, so that the death Angel will Passover their houses that night and they will be protected from the plague of death which God visited on the Egyptians (Exodus 12).

The Last Supper is a recontextualization or resemiotisation of the Passover because Jesus reinterprets the meaning of the Passover by identifying himself as the Lamb of God who will be sacrificed for the salvation of mankind (John 1:29) just as the Lamb was sacrificed to save the Israelites from death in the event of the Passover narrative. In the last supper Jesus ate with his disciples, he instituted the Eucharist as he equated his body and blood to the meal eaten during the Passover (Luke 22:7-20, Matthew 26:17-29, Mark 14:12-25). He instructed that the ceremony be carried out not only in remembrance of him but to be done often in proclamation of his death (1 Corinthians 11:26). This intertextual connection is profound because the Eucharist becomes the new Passover meal, where the bread and wine are no longer symbols of the Lamb's sacrifice but of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ which serves as both a continuation and fulfilment of the Jewish tradition.

Our understanding of how tense, modality, and polarity function in the Eucharistic ceremony is enriched through the incorporation of these intertextual references. These references in the synoptic gospels are replete with both modality (necessity and possibility) and polarity (affirmation). These references with promise of spiritual nourishment also connect to the Old Testament, specifically the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16), where the polarity between

life (manna as sustenance) and death (the absence of manna leading to death) is starkly present.

The Pauline Epistles, particularly 1 Corinthians 11:23-27, provide a theological foundation for the Eucharist, emphasising the memorial nature of the event and its biblical significance. The tense in these passages, especially in “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26), reflects a tension between the past event of Christ's death, the present proclamation, and the future expectation of Christ's return. The Eucharist is for salvation, a concept underpinned by modality (necessity and obligation).

### **The Social Dynamics of Communication and Power Structures in the Eucharist**

The extended functions of tense, modality, and polarity in shaping the social dynamics of communication in relation to the Holy Eucharist influence not only the individual understanding of the sacrament but also the collective, social, and communal experience of the participants in the event. These extended functions also reflect in the shape of interactions, beliefs, and practices within religious communities.

Firstly, tense serves as more than just a temporal marker. It frames the shared experience of time between individuals and the divine community. In the elements used for the celebration of the ceremony there is an establishment of an ongoing timeless presence of Christ whenever the priest declares over the host and cup “this is my body”. This use of the present tense creates a collective experience where participants in the Eucharist transcend the historical moment of Christ's death to participate in the here-and-now of the re-enactment of His sacrifice. This collective experience of being in the "now" with Christ in the Eucharist reinforces a communal bond, an act of presentification and a ritualistic bringing of the past into the present

moment, making the participants part of an eternal action. This makes the event universally accessible and immediate, creating a shared temporal reality in which all believers, regardless of time and space, are united in the act of Communion.

Modality plays a crucial role in determining social norms in the speaker's expression of possibility, necessity, or probability. In the context of the Holy Eucharist, modality influences expectations and determines inclusivity within the religious community. In the Eucharistic liturgy, modality is often expressed through imperatives (commands) and conditional statements, signalling obligations and desired actions. For instance, when the priest says, "Take, eat, or drink" these are imperatives that carry the weight of obligation. In this context, modality functions socially to reinforce the communal and religious obligations of the participants. These commands imply that partaking of the Holy Eucharist is not a matter of personal choice but a necessary act of belonging to the faith community. This directly affects the social dynamics of the Church, establishing rituals of participation and rites of inclusion, while defining those who are eligible to partake in the ritual (the baptised members and those in a state of grace).

The Eucharist has a promissory modality, where sentences like "...it will become our spiritual drink. "...it will become for us the bread of life", express the possibility of divine life and grace. Others include expressions of **possibility clothed in humility** used to suggest something that could happen, but with elements of uncertainty. "...they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ". "...may we come to share in the divinity of Christ. These expressions are spiritually encouraging but reflect elements of contractions for an institution that believes in transubstantiation. Nevertheless, these expressions of promissory modality symbolise hope within the community, reinforcing the collective relationship between the church and the community of believers. It creates a sense of social cohesion

promoting the shared belief in divine grace, divine favour, and spiritual transformation.

In a wider sense, the necessity of the Eucharist in the life of a Christian codified through modal expressions of obligation shows that modality also governs church doctrine by sustaining doctrinal purity. The Eucharist, through its modal language, functions as a social institution that ensures continuity of established teachings, belief, and practice across generations.

Polarity, in its grammatical sense, involves the use of affirmation and negation. In the observance of the Holy Eucharist, polarity functions to define membership in the Church because only those who are baptised and are in a state of grace participate in the ritual but those who are not baptised and are not in a state of grace are excluded from taking the Holy Eucharist. The presence of affirmative polarity communicates solidarity, communion, and inclusion. When believers affirm the body and blood of Christ, they assert their shared faith and participation in the divine life. This communal affirmation through the Eucharist serves as a social marker, creating a strong sense of group identity and communal belonging. The shared affirmation of Christ's presence reinforces the unity of the Church, both locally and universally.

On the other hand, the negation of participation for certain individuals (non-members Christians from other denominations and those in a state of sin) introduces a social exclusion that shapes group dynamics. The exclusionary polarity reinforces the idea of the Eucharist as not just an inclusionary act but a sacred event with moral and doctrinal boundaries. This social boundary is crucial in preserving the integrity and purity of the ritual and the church community. However, it also functions as a rite of passage, as individuals must meet certain conditions such as baptism and repentance from dead works before they can participate in the eating of the body and drinking of the blood.

Polarity thus plays a critical role in maintaining social norms and expectations.

Tense, modality, and polarity also help shape the social hierarchy within the religious community. The minister or priest, by virtue of their role, has authority over the ritual and its language and shapes the linguistic practices of the congregation. The interpersonal dynamics within the Eucharistic context are shaped using modality and polarity. When a participant is instructed, "Take, eat," they not only receive an invitation but also an imperative, reinforcing the ritual's authoritative social structure. This dynamic speaks of the social roles of the priest and the congregation, where the priest is seen as the mediator between the divine and the faithful worshippers.

## Conclusion

This paper has addressed the role of tense, modality, and polarity in the observance of the Holy Eucharist. The concepts of tense, modality, and polarity in Halliday and Matthiessen's *Functional Grammar* offer valuable tools for analysing the language of the Holy Eucharist. Through tense, the sacrament is framed as both a historical event and a timeless ritual. Modality communicates the necessity, obligation, and potential transformation inherent in the Eucharist while Polarity establishes theological boundaries, affirming the presence of Christ while excluding those who are unprepared or unworthy (1 Corinthians 11:27). The Eucharist, through its linguistic construction, is a powerful example of how functional grammar operates within religious discourse to convey complex theological truths.

The concepts of tense, modality, and polarity are not simply theoretical constructs in Halliday and Matthiessen's framework but can be deeply embedded in the social dynamics of religious practice. Through their roles in shaping time (tense), obligation (modality), and inclusion or exclusion (polarity), these elements serve to define

communal identity, regulate participation, and reinforce doctrinal beliefs in the Holy Eucharist. The ritual itself, framed by these linguistic tools, becomes a social act that transcends mere personal piety, influencing social structures, norms, and power relations within the Christian community. The size and selection of the corpus limits this study to the observance of the Holy Eucharist and so findings might not be generalisable. The study is also limited to written texts. A purely linguistic analysis might not fully capture the richness of the discourse. Future works can therefore be in these directions.

The Eucharist, therefore, not only represents a theological act but also a socially significant event that is enacted through language, reinforcing both individual and collective participation in the life of the Church.

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