

ANALYSIS OF EFFECTS OF NEGATION IN COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The research is aimed at carrying out an analysis of effects of negation in communication using Alex Maiyanga's "*Breast of A Virgin*". Language is invariably the only medium of communication whereby people use to communicate ideas, pass information and express feelings. However, this language may be used in spoken, written or even gestures form to communicate. Words perform different functions when used by speakers. Negation as maintained by the *Merriam Webster's dictionary* refers to "the action or logical operation of negating or making negative". The linguistic expression of negation, the interaction with concord, the mapping between negative forms, the negative meaning all present complex and important problems for syntax, semantics, and speech act analysis. Thus, negation defines the polar opposition of affirmatives, denies the existence or refutes the truth value of a statement. In English language, there are various types of negation. However, there are two major types of negation on the function they perform in a sentence. The distinction between the two types (clause negation and constituent negation) is considered as crucial because it specifies whether the whole utterance or just a portion of it is negated. The speech act theory by John Langshaw Austin in (1962) and John Rogers Searle in (1969) were used as a tool for the analysis and evaluation of the effects of negations in Alex Maiyanga's play. Data were collected through random sampling. The text is divided into twenty-two movements hence, the research collected utterances from all them, at least two negative utterances in each of it. The analysis of the Data revealed that clause negation is mostly used by the characters in the play.

Keywords: communication, language, gesture negation,

Introduction

Language is important of people's everyday life as it is the only tool used to communicate ideas, feelings thought. Thus, people use language in specific situation to give information or make other people to do something and it is therefore important for the speaker to be understood correctly by the hearer. With the statement that "people use language to perform actions", Austin presents the use of language as not only for stating of affairs but also for performing of action. The circumstances surrounding the utterances help the hearer to identify the speaker's intention. As such, communication is very crucial in all of what man does as a human being. The human co-existence is entrenched in the communicative behaviour. This is so because no

human being would wish to exist alone on the face of the earth without a partner to communicate with. Indeed, man has developed more than other creatures of God because of his ability to make meaningful sounds, create meaningful symbols, signs, signals and figures to put down his communicative system.

Language is conventionally accepted as the only tool for every communication; hence this tool (language) has rules and principles (grammar) that govern how the language is used, thus guide how linguistics items are put in sequence to communicate.

Conceptual Review

Pragmatics is viewed as the study of the relationship of signs to interpreters. Morris explains that the scope of pragmatics includes the

aspects of Semiosis, that is, the psychological and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs (76). This broad perspective to the scope of pragmatics is seen by Levinson to be very much wider than the work that currently goes under the rubric of linguistic pragmatics (63).

Concept of Negation

Negation as maintained by Merriam Webster dictionary refers to ‘the action or logical operation of negating or making negative’. In English language, there are various types of negations. However, there are two major types of negation base on the function they perform as they appear in a sentence. The distinction between the two types (clause negation and constituent negation) is considered as crucial because it specifies whether the whole utterance or just a portion of it is negated (Mazzon 2).

a. **Clause Negation**

Verbal Negation

He is not a friend of yours
She doesn't know anything

In clause negation, the whole utterance and not just one element of it will be negated. Therefore, the whole clause is syntactically treated as negative. Example, I didn't go to Spain. The whole of the sentence/utterance is negated. Huddleston and Pullum made a further distinction with clause negation. They distinguish between two types of clauses indicated as verbal and non-verbal (151). Pullum et al clarify that verbal negation is marked either by negative inflection on the verb itself or by using the separate word ‘not’ to modify the verb. Whereas non-verbal negation on the other hand may be accompanied by negating a clause by the use of negative particles such as none, never, nothing etc (152-153).

The differences between verbal and non-verbal form of clause negation can be seen in the following examples

Non-Verbal Negation

He is none of your friends
She knows nothing

b. **Constituent Negation**

As earlier stated by (Mazzon 2) constituent negation involves the negating of one element or constituent, in effect, it does not render the whole utterance or statement negative. For example:

- i. He is tall not short
- ii. She came but did not meet him

As it can be noted in the example above, ‘not’ negated short and meet but not the whole utterance.

Elements of Negation in English

Negation in English language can be marked by various grammatical structures such as:

- a. **Negative words.** no, not, nobody, nothing, nowhere, never, neither and nor.
- b. **The contracted form** of not n't.
- c. **Negative affixes** such as un, dis, in, and non.

The Use of “not/n't”

According to Mazzon, in English language using the negative marker not/n't is the most frequent used method for expressing clause negation. The negative marker usually follows the first auxiliary, however when there is no auxiliary present in the clause the verb ‘do’ is inserted which is then followed by the negative marker (78).

Clause negation can also be expressed by the contracted form of the negative marker- n't. Negative element such as nobody and never are able to express negation on their own without the negative marker ‘not’. Example:

- a. Nobody saw Paul yesterday
- b. George phone nobody yesterday

The Use of “not and no”

The clausal negation expressed with the marker ‘no’ can be considered different from negation expresses with

‘not’ in implication rather than in scope. However, we can encounter cases when both markers produce similar or synonymous sentence, but this is not always the case (Mazzon 99). Example:

- i. He has no money on him.
- ii. He is not a linguist.

The Use of “neither and nor”

Neither and nor are negative conjunctions that can be used to coordinate constituents, phrases or lexical items occurring as part of phrases. Example:

- i. Neither Professor Gambari nor his students went to the meeting.
- ii. His article has been neither published nor presented to a conference.
- iii. His book is not good nor interested.

Negative Affixes:

Negative affixes such as un- , in- , non- , ir-, and less.

There are cases where negative elements don’t make a clause negative. Pullum et al mentioned that the most apparent case of this is when the negative element is all affix such as in the following examples: dislike, inattentive, unwilling, homeless, irresponsible, useless etc. certain negative affixes such as the ones mentioned are used in negation at the word level which is also referred as lexical negation or affixal negation (86). Example:

1. She is irresponsible.
2. I dislike her attitude.

Thus, in (1) the word responsible is negated and in (2) the word like is also negated.

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory is a sub-field of pragmatics that studies how words are used not only to present information but also to carry out actions. The speech act theory was introduced by Oxford Philosopher J.L Austin in his text *How to do things with words* and further developed by American Philosopher J. R. Searle. It considers the degree to which utterances are said to perform locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. In the philosophy of language, speech acts are sometimes called language acts or linguistics acts. Speech acts are produced with certain intentions either to inform or by such utterances mentioned above, and speech are performed by the utterance of sounds, speech acts is the classification of utterances in terms of promising warning etc, and these are said to have meaning or mean something (Grice 67).

This speech act theory shows the level at which utterances are said to perform locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Many linguists study speech act theory as a way to better understanding human communication, these acts as presented by Austin are as follows.

- i. **Locutionary Act.** The communicative act or performance of an utterance that is, the act that takes place saying something. More so, it is the actual utterance and its meaning is uttered by the speaker.
- ii. **Illocutionary Act.** It is the act that takes place as a result of the speaker making utterances. It could also be seen as a result of the implied request or meaning presented by the locutionary act. It is also the act which depict the intention of the speaker.
- iii. **Perlocutionary Act.** This is the act that shows the effect of the speaker’s utterances on the listener-that is, the actual effect of the locutionary and illocutionary acts such as persuading, warning, etc

Theoretical Orientation

This research employed the speech act theory of John Langshaw Austin in 1962 and John Rogers Searle in 1969 which served as the tool for the analysis and evaluation of the negations in Alex Maiyanga’s “*Breast of a Virgin*”

The choice of the theory is borne out of the fact that people use different actions by their use of words, and

when utterances are made, a particular act is performed. This is what this theory intend to explore in this research through the analysis of data.

Method of Data Collection, Instrumentation and Analysis

The research collected data specifically from the play “*Breast of a Virgin*” by Alex Maiyanga. The instrument used in this research work was sampling techniques and specifically random sampling. The text is divided into twenty-two movements hence, the research collected five utterances from all the movements at least one negative utterance in each of the five movements. Thus, context and the wording of the negations in the text will be considered in carrying out the analysis. Consequently, in the course of this research, the hidden meaning of negations used behind the intentions of interlocutors will be brought out for analysis.

Data Presentation

- a. I didn't meet anybody on this seat.
- b. I pray it is not Idotum.
- c. I am not afraid of death.
- d. As you know, I have no other profession than storytelling and that's why i'm here.
- e. It is not really easy to kill a man.
- f. I'm not a good story teller but a bad one.
- g. Don't bring logic into it.
- h. Nothing near that.
- i. Don't worry about what you will use in school.
- j. I know you don't like the hospital.

Data Analysis

a. I didn't meet anybody on this seat

Locution: The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).

Illocution: (The act performed in saying something) the illocution of the utterance is *representative*- that is, the speaker is stating the condition of the seat which could be true or false.

Perlocution: (The act performed by saying something) that is the effect of the utterance on the hearer. The hearer would perceive the utterance by speaker to be the act of *claiming* the seat.

Negation: the negation used in the utterance is a clause negation-that is, the entire utterance is treated as negative, it is used by speaker to oppose whoever might claim the seat. Contextually the utterance was said in an unorganized gathering where the ownership of seat cannot be ascertained.

b. I pray it is not Idotum

Locution: The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).

Illocution: (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *expressive*-that is, the speaker *expressing* his thought on Idotum.

Perlocution: (The act performed by saying something) that is what the listener would perceive from the utterance. The perlocution of the utterance is that the speaker is *hoping* in the utterance.

Negation: The negation used is clause-that is the entire utterance is treated as negative. The speaker negated the utterance to express his inner wish on Idotum. It can be deduced from the context of the utterance that it is uttered amidst fear of what might happen to the place which the speaker hoped to be somewhere else.

c. I am not afraid of death

Locution: The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).

Illocution: (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *representative* –that is the speaker is only stating about himself which could be true or false.

Perlocution: (The act performed by saying something) that is the effect of the utterance on the

- hearer. The perlocution of the utterance is *courage*.
- Negation:** The negation used in the utterance is clause-that is the entire utterance is treated as negative. It is used by the speaker to express bravery. In context, the utterance is uttered by the speaker amidst fear of an attack that may likely claim his life.
- d. As you know, I have no other profession than storytelling and that's why i'm here.**
- Locution:** The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).
- Illocution:** (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *representative*- that is, the speaker is only stating about himself which could be true or false.
- Perlocution:** (The act performed by saying something) that is, the effect of the utterance on the hearer. The perlocution of the utterance is *emphasizing*.
- Negation:** The negation used in the utterance is constituent- that is, it is not the entire utterance that is negated but a part of it. The negation is used by the speaker to express the expertise of his profession.
- e. It is not really easy to kill a man.**
- Locution:** The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something)
- Illocution:** (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *representative*- that is, the speaker is stating his view as regards killing which could be true or false.
- Perlocution:** (The act performed by saying something) the effect of the utterance on the hearer. The perlocution of the utterance is *claiming*.
- Negation:** The negation used in the utterance is clause negation-that is the entire utterance is treated as negative. The utterance is negated by the speaker to express the burden and gravity involve in the act of killing.
- f. I'm not a good story teller but a bad one.**
- Locution:** The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).
- Illocution:** (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *assertive* – that is, the speaker is *stating* about *himself* which could be true or false.
- Perlocution:** (The act performed by saying something) that is what the listener would perceive from the utterance which is *apologizing*.
- Negation:** The negation used is constituent- that is, it is not the entire utterance that is treated as negative. The speaker negated the part of the utterance to indirectly apologize to his listeners for not being a good storyteller because what he's about to tell them might not amuse them. Thus, it can be deduced from the context of the utterance, it is uttered by the speaker in an open gathering where it is open for awareness.
- g. Don't bring logic into it**
- Locution:** The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).
- Illocution:** (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *directive*-that is the speaker is *ordering* the listener against a submission.
- Perlocution:** (The act performed by saying something) That is what the listener would perceive from the utterance. The perlocution is *commanding*.
- Negation:** The negation used in the utterance is clause- that is the entire utterance is treated as negative. The speaker used the negation to counter the perspective of the hearer on the topic under discourse. From the context, there is an existing argument between the speaker and the hearer in the discourse.
- h. Nothing near that.**
- Locution:** The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).
- Illocution:** (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *representative*- that is the speaker is only stating about the thing under discourse which could be true or false.
- Perlocution:** (The act performed by saying something) that is the effect of the utterance on the hearer. The perlocution of the utterance is *claiming*.

Negation: The negation used in the utterance is clause-that is the entire utterance is treated as negative. The negation is used by the speaker to portray the superiority, uniqueness and the preference of the topic under discourse, also the utterance is negated by the speaker to counter the thought of the listener.

i. Don't worry about what you will use in school

Locution: The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).

Illocution: (The act performed in saying something) is *commissive* – that is, the utterance has committed the speaker to a future action.

Perlocution: (The act performed by saying something) that is, the effect of the utterance on the hearer. The perlocution of the utterance is *assuring*.

Negation: The negation used in the utterance is clause-that is then entire utterance is treated as negative. The negation is used by the speaker to give hope to the hearer.

j. I know you don't like the hospital

Locution: The utterance is a locution (the act of saying something).

Illocution: (The act performed in saying something) the illocution is *representative*-that is, the speaker is stating the disapproval of the hospital by the listener which could be true or false.

Perlocution: (The act performed by saying something) that is, the effect of the utterance on the hearer. The perlocution of the utterance is *claiming*.

Negation: The negation used in the utterance is clause-that is, the entire utterance is treated as negative not a part of it. The negation is used by the speaker to reaffirm his view to the hearer on the hospital.

Research findings

The analysis reveals that clause negation is mostly used by the characters in the play as compared to its constituent negation's counterpart. Negations may appear to have same form but are used to perform different act depending on the application and usage of the negation which would in turn determine the meaning of the utterance by the speakers in the use.

Conclusion

Language is seen as the medium through which communication takes place. It is used to communicate feelings and emotion via words that Austin and Searle believe that these words that are used are not only used to state the affairs of the world but are also used to carry out actions. Thus, the choice for the speech act theory is necessitated

because it captures the objectives of the research work, in that it is a linguistic theory that looks at what the speaker does with his words.

Hence, the negations of the play were analyzed in line with the Austin's division of speech acts into locution, illocution and perlocution from which the effect of illocutionary act of Searle as either expressive, declarative, directive, commissive or representative are also considered in the process of the analysis. The main thrust of the speech act theory is to understand what the speaker does with words. The research showed that illocutionary act performed by the characters in their use of negations are mostly representative with some few directives, commissive and expressive. All these are to show the effect of speech act analysis in communication.

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