

A Speech Act Analysis of Editorial Comments of TELL Magazine

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Abstract

In this research paper, there is an argument based on Searle's Speech acts as used by Mey (2006) in the Editorial Comments of TELL Magazine in Nigeria. The various speech acts the manifest in the editorial comments of have linguistic and pragmatic implications in the interpretation of meaning in the Magazine. Four consecutive and recent editions of the TELL Magazines that covered January and February 2014 were selected for the pragmatic analysis. The findings revealed that apart from the cover page, the editorial comments are rich in meaning which can be appropriately explored through speech acts. Thus the of the analysis proves further that the editorial comments go a long way to influence the perception of readers about news items through the perlocutionary effects such illocutionary acts will have on them. The study concludes that editorial comments are important and readers are encouraged to always read so that the purpose of it in the constructed of meaning will not be defeated.

Keywords: Media, Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Editor, Magazines.

Introduction

The English language is the language of mass media, though other major indigenous languages are employed in mass communication, there is no language as dominating as English language especially in the print media. Owolabi (2012:1) observes that Nigeria has become one of the largest populations of speakers of English as a second language (ESL). It is noticeable that the print media is a later development to new media, just as spoken language is primary and preceded written language (Akinkurolere and Kumuyi 2013:1). Hasan (2013), argues that several years were invested into the development of the written form of language. This is premised on the fact that writing is secondary to speech which is primary form of language. The writing and reading skills of language are regarded as literacy skills. Thus, print media involve all forms of writing which range from phonetic writing to alphabetical writing, and it is basically the spread of literacy in the world that led to the universal acceptability of the print media.

There are different types of magazines; news, social, religious, political, business etc. in Nigeria. These magazines are published periodically.

TELL Magazine in Nigeria is one of the prominent news magazines in Nigeria. In fact, it has gained widespread recognition across the globe to an extent that it has won several awards for a clear and unbiased portrayal of social, economic and political issues of the nation. In essence, media as viable tools for projecting the national image of the nation has been adequately captured through the TELL Magazine. The opportunities available in Information Technology have the explored by the publisher of the magazine. It is in consonance with this, that Akinkurolere and Kumuyi (2013:2) submit thus:

TELL magazine is a major News magazine in Nigeria, at present, it is in both print and digital forms. Also, the magazine has gained national and international recognition, and different people subscribed to it from all walks of life especially politicians, academics, administrators, lawyers and judges. More so, TELL magazine has continued to provide up -to -date insightful news as well as creating in – depth investigative feature of stories based on social, political and religious situations of Nigeria in particular, and Africa generally.

It is imperative to state the English language is the sole language of TELL Magazine as there are no versions in other languages yet. Ayeomoni (2012:12) rightly opines that, 'as a result of diversity, it is noticed that the phenomenon of Language Choice has become inevitable on the language use habit of Nigerians as every domain of language use has its language features.' Indeed, in the use of language, there are variations and peculiar discourse features. The language of politics differs from language of media, at the same time there are variation even within various aspects of the media discourse. No wonder Owolabi (2012:1) argues that 'the specific purpose of language will determine the style to be adopted by the user to suit the audience. In other words, there is no uniformity in the use to which language is deployed, and this is what accounts for different varieties of

language. Therefore, the style of editorial comments of news magazine will definitely portray distinct features that are distinct.

The Significance of Editorial Comments

The importance, relevance and function of editorial comment in news magazine can never be overemphasized. The editorial comment emanates from the desk of the editor. Editing is a major aspect of the newsprint. This stage could also be referred to as 'filter stage', and the Editorial board serve as the strainers that remove any text material that have error and thereby make the newsprint good for its purpose(s). No wonder, Ariyo and Abuya (2005:15) aver that the major task of an editor is to avert problems associated with written communication.

Furthermore, editors supervise journalists. No wonder Ogundowole et al (2006) submit that the News Editor is the 'key to the operation and nerve centre of the newspaper industry' while Sulaiman (2008) describes an editor as one of the major gatekeepers before news appear in print. The work of an editor includes deciding what events should be covered and gives instructions on how stories are featured. He combines this supervisory role as the boss of the news writing with the overall responsibility for the quality accuracy and tone of the newspaper (Akinkulore and Kumuyi (2013).

The Editorial comment of TELL magazine usually appear on a page of each edition and it is usually titled 'From the Editor'. In a nut shell, the editorial comment is the official position of the Editorial Board on issues in the newspapers or magazines. The features of the language of the TELL's Editors deserves scholarly attention in a research paper like this.

Statement of the Research Problem

Existing studies have focused on Magazines from various linguistic perspectives. These studies involve the employment of Syntax, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, and Semiotics. For examples Ariyo (2014) bothers multimodal discourse analysis of selected paronama of TELL Magazine, and Olowu (2013) focuses multimodal discourse analysis of *Women Mirror* Magazine, paronama of TELL Magazine, It is also imperative to state that Editorial comments of TELL have also been receiving linguistic attention. Akinkulore and Kumuyi (2013) worked on discourse features of selected editorial comments of TELL Magazine (June and July 2013 Edition). They analysed the study through the pragmatic framework of Implicature and recommended speech act analysis of editorial comments of TELL Magazine. Hence, this research is conducting a linguistic enquiry through Speech Acts theory of Searle (1977) as used by Mey(2006) as various works have been done through speech acts framework (see Akinkulore 2012, Abuya 2012).

Aim and the Objectives

The study aims at conducting a pragmatic enquiry into the speech act features of selected editorial comments of TELL Magazine in 2014. Thus, the objectives of the research paper are to

- i) identify speech act features of in the selected editorial comments;
- ii) analyse the identified features; and
- III) relate the features to meaning in the context in which they were made.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study, some copies of TELL Magazines were procured. The magazine is a weekly publication of Nosa Igiebo. The selected copies cover January and February 2014. This is premised on the need to be recent and the purpose of detailed analysis. Two sentences are selected from each edition. Therefore our data comprise sixteen sentences from eight editions. For easy reference, the editions are labelled I-VIII. The selected editions commence from January 6, 2014 to February 24, 2014. The first two sentences in each editorial comment are selected. The sentences are labelled A and B. The data are analysed using the modified version of Searle's (1977) Speech Acts theory as used by Mey (2006). A table is drawn to reflect frequencies and percentages of the speech acts. This formed the basis for our discussion.

Theoretical Framework

Linguists have diverse approaches at their disposal in their analysis of data, but Pragmatics will serve as the linguistic approach for the research work, since Pragmatics is one of the major fields in linguistic that could unravel meaning in language use (Akinkurolere 2012). Grundy (2008:225), posits that pragmaticists are interested not only in the actual use of language, but also in usage principles, in trying to find 'grammar' that accounts for the way language is put to use. While, Yule (1985:4), states that Pragmatics deals with appropriateness of linguistic choice to the context.

The Speech Acts theory is widely known as "How to Do Things with Words Theory" because it was developed from the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Speech acts according to Austin (1962) fall into three classes, which are: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The Theory was further modified by Searle (1977) in which, he classified illocutionary acts into five speech acts categories as explained by (Mey 2006), thus:

- i. Representatives (or assertives)* : These speech acts are assertions about a state of affairs in the world.
 - ii. Directives*: As the name implies, these speech acts embody an effort on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to do something, to 'direct' him or her towards some goal(of the speaker's mostly).
 - iii. Commissives*: Like directives, commissives operate a change in the world by means of creating an obligation; however, this obligation is created in the speaker, not in the hearer, as in the case of the directives.
 - iv. Expressives*: This speech act, as the word says, expresses an inner state of the speaker; the expression is essentially subjective and tells us nothing about the world.
 - v. Declaratives*: Declarations bring about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred to object or objects solely by virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed (Searle 1977:37).
- The speech acts in the editorial comments of TELL Magazines are identified based on the above modified version of Speech Acts theory.

Data Presentation and Speech Act Analysis

Data IA

Locution: The edition you are holding is the first for the New Year.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** declarative

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: cheerfulness

Data IB

Locution: In line with our practice, there is a review of major events that were outstanding in 2013.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: hopefulness

Data IIA

Locution: This is the year of the World Cup.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** declarative
- (b) **Indirect:** representative

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: optimism

Data IIB

Locution: The host nation is Brazil, that South America country famous for its Samba football

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: cheerfulness

Data IIIA

Locution: Life is gradually returning to the nation's ivory towers.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: hopefulness

Data IIIB

Locution: Thanks to the cessation of hostilities between the federal government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** expressive
- (b) **Indirect:** representative

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: hopefulness

Data IVA

Locution: The political crisis in Rivers State took a dangerous bend recently with the shooting of Senator Magnus Abe.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: shock

Data IVB

Locution: He was subsequently flown abroad for treatment.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: hopefulness

Data VA

Locution: When Attahiru Jega, chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, submitted that there may not be any electoral exercise in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states in 2015, because of the insecurity in those states, his statement attracted mixed reactions.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: worry

Data VB

Locution: While people were arguing over the submission, Ibrahim Geidam, governor of Yobe State, swiftly held local government elections in the state to counter the INEC Chairman.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** representative
- (b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: hopefulness

Data VIA

Locution: It is often said that the newsroom is a mad house; Yes and No! Yes, because when deadlines are to be met, editors have no favourites in the newsroom.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** expressive
- (b) **Indirect:** declarative

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: hopefulness

Data VIB

Locution: The creed is that there is a collective responsibility, which is to produce a quality product, and that has to be given priority above any form of affinity.

Illocutionary Act:

- (a) **Direct:** expressive
- (b) **Indirect:** commissive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: acceptance

Data VIIA

Locution: Every week as we strive to probe every nook and cranny of the country to bring you news behind the news, we often have to ride through the gullies and caves, sometimes scale the logs, which in most cases are deliberate obstacles.

Illocutionary Act:

(a) **Direct:** representative

(b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: commendation

Data VIIB

Locution: But the norm here is never to give up until the mission is achieved.

Illocutionary Act:

(a) **Direct:** representative

(b) **Indirect:** commissive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: hopefulness

Data VIIIA

Locution: This is the year of World Cup.

Illocutionary Act:

(a) **Direct:** declarative

(b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: applause

Data VIIB

Locution: And football tournaments come with lots of excitement.

Illocutionary Act:

(a) **Direct:** representative

(b) **Indirect:** expressive

Expected Perlocutionary Effect: cheerfulness

Summary Table of the Speech Acts

Table A

SPEECH ACTS(DIRECT AND INDIRECT)	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTAGES
		%
Representatives	13	40.6
Directives	--	--
Commissives	2	6.3
Expressives	13	40.6
Declaratives	4	12.5
Total	32	100

Discussion of the Analysis Result

The table of analysis reflect that representatives and expressive have the highest percentage with 40.6% each. The reason for this is not far-fetched, the major function of news magazine is to inform the readers. Hence, the editorial board of TELL magazine has lived up to expectation in the discharge of its duty by being highly assertive and expressive in the introduction of their editorial comments. They have been able to effectively combine stating of state of affairs with their opinions about the state of affairs in relating information.

12.5 % of the acts in our analysis are declarative. The editors employ declarative acts to strengthen decision and present verdict that have been made on certain issues and subjects. For example, 'This is the year of World cup' as the first sentence in the February 24 Edition titled Clearing the Way for 2015...But More Traps Ahead' is performing a declarative act in respect of year 2015. This is deliberately performed to create cheerfulness in the hearts of readers because the edition borders mainly on the challenges that country and President might likely face as they prepare for 2015 General Elections.

The commissive act is only 6.3%. In fact, it has two occurrences, which implies that editors depend little on commissive acts. They employ it to raise the hope of readers on their potentials, ability and decision to offer rich service in the dissemination of information as obvious from the rather few examples in our analysis. This goes a long way to assure and encourage readers by increasing their interest in the detailed news.

From our analysis, there was no significant employment of directive act in the construction of meaning in the introduction of the editorial comments. This is based on the fact that journalists are only beaming light on the society and not leaders that usually lay claim to power by directing the people (see Akinkurolere 2012). The best they can do is to appeal to readers but not directing them. Furthermore, this shows the directive act of Searle (1977) is not a popular speech act in the editorial comments of TELL Magazine. Therefore, making the discourse a distinct variant through our analysis.

Recommendation

Considering the significance and functions of editorial comments in print media, we wish to suggest that other linguistic approaches should be applied to the study in various types of magazines. Speech acts could be explored in other areas such as political speeches, courtroom discourse, legislative discourse and conversation. We are recommending, in strong terms, a lexical analysis of editorial comments of TELL Magazine.

Conclusion

From our analysis, Speech Act theory has been able to bring to fore the various acts performed by Editorial Board of TELL Magazine in constructing meaning in the introduction of the editorial comments. These speech acts have perlocutionary implicature on the readers in the process of constructing meaning that is achieved through direct and indirect speech acts.

The choice of the introduction of the editorial comments for speech act analysis have demonstrated the importance of this major aspect of newsprint with the hope that readers will avail themselves with the reading so that the purpose and function of the comment in the enhancement of meaning in the magazine will not be defeated.

This analysis is by no means exhaustive since only the introduction of selected editions have analysed. A research study that will capture the full text of editorial comments might give varying but similar result. The introduction remains the most important aspect of the editorial comments.

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