Analysis of Presupposition in Selected Speeches of Martin Luther King

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Abstract
This study investigated the use of presupposition and the predominant speech acts used in the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. to enhance persuasion/impact. Descriptive research design, which document events as they are, was adopted to conduct the study on two purposively selected speeches of Martin Luther King Jr which formed the corpus of the study. The speeches are: “I have a Dream speech” and “Nobel peace prize Acceptance speech”. The data was subjected to analysis based on descriptive method using socio-psychological theoretical approach to pragmatics, which is speech acts of Austin (1962) Seal’s (1969) classification of illocutionary acts: (Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives, and Declaratives). The study revealed that Martin Luther King Jr. uses appropriate illocutionary acts and presuppositions to make strong his points and to change the mindset of his audience. The author uses all classes of illocutionary acts, i.e. Assertives, Directives, Expressives, Commissives and Declaratives, depending on the intentions he wants to express which have great impact on people mentally. This study also revealed that Martin Luther King Jr’s effective structure along with the usages of all the three rhetorical modes: ethos, pathos and logos with certain rhetorical tropes and schemes were also effective in making his speeches impactful. In line with these; this study recommends that: Speech writers for political leaders should explore these language resources in order to improve on the speeches they write: Students of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), who choose to specialize in speech writing should concern themselves with how to harness language resources to write persuasive and impactful speeches for political leaders in line with the findings of this study. The Nigerian Education policy should as a matter of urgency include speech and public speaking into our national curriculum.

Keywords: Analysis, Presupposition, Speeches, Martin Luther King Jr, Pragmatics
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1. Introduction
Presupposition is a linguistic phenomenon that plays a large portion of literature in linguistic pragmatics. Pragmatics could be viewed as speaker meaning that needs a consideration of how interlocutors prepare their words while interacting in accordance with who they are speaking with, where, when and under what situation (Zia Hisni Mubarak, 2020). However, the definition of presupposition has been based “closely on the actual linguistic structure of sentences” (Levinson, 1987:167). Cognitive and operative strands shared by the interlocutors as well as other ‘conditions’ accompanying utterances related to the physical world, human experience and artefacts remain underemphasized in the discussions. Even studies affiliated to theories of pragmatic presupposition which have enriched the debate with the notion of ‘common ground knowledge’ remain anchored to the grammatico-semantic content of single sentences. On the one hand the analysis makes no reference “to the body of information that is presumed to be available to the participants in the speech situation, or to the attitude and intentions of the speaker and his audience” (Stalnaker, 1999: 48). They leave unexplored the influence the presuppositions can have on the articulation and interpretation of the coherent stretches of discourse which are some basic assumptions which the speaker or writer must make concerning the hearer or reader in relation to the subject of discourse. Such assumptions are made without any challenge from the interlocutors because they are built on assumed common ground. He mentioned two types of presupposition: semantic and pragmatic presupposition.

Presupposition which is a branch of linguistic known as pragmatics, is an implicit assumption about the world or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted in a discourse, is sometimes not easily understood by readers because it is concerned with knowledge which a speaker/writer does not assert but presumes as part of the background of a sentence, knowledge presumed to be already known to the hearer /reader. (Hudson, 2000:322). Salih (2020) points out that “the notion of presupposition has originated within philosophy ultimately and acquired a substantial prominence in the non-conventional study of meaning, as an implicit assumption about the world or background belief relation to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted”. It is assumed that when interlocutors are in clearly understood discussion, there is shared background information well known to them.

It is against this background that this study intends to investigate the use of presupposition in the selected speeches of Martin Luther King JR.

1.1 Statement of the problem
Presupposition which is an essential element of pragmatics plays the role of summarizing more precisely the information referred to in the discourse and can help make implicit conclusion, it
can also bring about a breakdown in communication since the reader or the listener has to understand not only what the words mean, but what the speaker or the writer of those words intend to convey. Speaker rather than statements presuppose. Presupposition is concerned with knowledge which a speaker/writer does not assert but presumes as part of the background of a sentence, knowledge presumed to be already known to the hearer /reader. (Hudson, 2000:322).

This research therefore analyses presupposition in the selected speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. In order to examine the speaker’s use of presupposition in persuading his audience, the predominant speech acts used in the speeches and how they help to create impact.

Martin Luther King Jr made his intentions realizable by using appropriate illocutionary acts and presuppositions to make strong his points, effective structure along with the usages of all three rhetorical modes: logos, ethos, and pathos, rhetorical tropes and schemes were also effective in persuading his audience. Learning this speech writing strategy of Martin Luther King Jr is beneficial to ESP practitioners and other researchers, especially those who engage in the lecturing profession, it serves as reference materials to guide them and also to improve their work in the future.

This research is therefore important to journalist as they can learn the skill of writing with impact and passion using literary techniques to move people into action and to make changes in the society. The study is also beneficial to linguistics generally as it will draw the attention of scholars to critically analyze pragmatic presupposition in speeches, texts and utterances.

The study covers presupposition in the selected speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. However, it is limited to two of his speeches entitled: “I Have a Dream” and “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech”, Martin Luther King Jr delivered his dream speech in August 28, 1963 on the Lincoln Memorial steps in Washington, DC as a step in the Civil Rights walk. Martin Luther King Jr was already famous as an orator, having delivered his “I Have a Dream speech” a year earlier. On October, 14, 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At the time, the 35- year-old was the youngest recipient of the award. A few months later, Martin Luther King Jr accepted the award in Oslo, Norway, on December 10, 1964. During his acceptance speech, he spoke about the urgent need for support and the long road ahead to end injustice in the United States.

1.2 A Brief Background of Martin Luther King Jr.
Martin Luther King Jr. was a man who had hoped to be a Baptist preacher to a large, southern, urban congregation. Instead, by the time he died in 1968, he had led millions of people into shattering forever the southern system of segregation of the races.
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He had fashioned a mass black electorate that eliminated overt racism from political campaigns and accumulated political power for blacks beyond any they had ever possessed in the United States. Above all, he brought a new and higher dimension of human dignity to black people’s lives. At the young age of thirty-four famed civil right leader Martin Luther King Jr, shared his dream of a better world on the steps of the Lincoln memorial. Martin Luther King Jr won the 1964 Nobel peace prize, becoming at the time the youngest recipient ever. He was shot to death by James Earl Ray in 1968 while visiting Memphis Tennessee. Martin Luther King Jr married Coretta Scot on the 18th June, 1953. The couple had four children. King was a pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama from 1954-1959 a position he held till his death.

2. Review of Related Literature
Speech is defined by Hudson (2003) as shorter or longer strings of linguistic items uttered on particular occasions for particular purposes. Speech has been simply defined as an act of talking. Adegbija (1982) says speech is a dynamic active and living process of communicative encounter that has the potential for creating conflict or misunderstanding between participants. Speech has also been viewed as action, since language can actually be used to do things. It is seen as an uttered language and it embodies a number of attributes which facilitate the purpose of discourse.

For the functional analysis of the language resources, this study adopted the schema formulated by Searle (1969) in line with Austin’s (1962) performatives and constatives to find how many types of illocutionary acts are there.

Austin (1962) outlined his theory of speech acts and the concept of performative language in which to say something is to do something. “I apologize”, “I promise”, “I thank you”. Are examples of explicit performatives which cannot be judged on true or false scale. He differentiated this with constatives which can be judged on a scale of true or false and they attempt to describe reality at all times. Searle (1969) on the other hand observes that even though the use of language is numerous, he believes there are a limited number of things we can do with language in the structure of illocutionary acts. He formulated the formula F (P) where “F” is the illocutionary acts and “P” is the potential propositional content which is limitless. For example “I order you to go back to the hostel immediately”. “Order” stands for or represents the illocutionary acts “F” “you to go back to the hostel immediately” is the potential propositional content which is represented by “P” and can be changed. For instance, “I order you to go back and finish your cooking now”. With this in mind, Searle developed a schema in line with Austin’s performatives and constatives to find how many types of (F) or illocutionary acts are there and from this he posits five (5) illocutionary points which is the intention behind an
illocutionary act. The schema includes:
1. Representative or assertive: statement that may be judged true or false because they purport to describe a state of affairs in the world.
2. Directive: Illocutionary acts designed to get the addressee to do something. For example: commanding, pleading, inviting, questioning, doing, and insisting or suggesting that someone do something.
3. Commissives: Statements which commit the speaker to action for example promising, offering and threatening.
4 Expressives: Statements that express the psychological state of the speaker. For example; thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating.
5. Declaratives: Statements that effect immediate change in the institutional state of affairs. For example; sentencing to death, declaring war, Christening, declaring marriage etc.

This study is carried out on the two written speeches by Martin Luther King Jr. The design employed in this study is descriptive. According to Yule (2008), the descriptive approach allows description of the features of language as used in a given context as against how they are supposed to be used.

The corpus of this study consists of two speeches delivered by a world acclaimed American political orator Martin Luther King Jr. The Speeches are “I have a Dream”. This is perhaps the most well known and most quoted address Dr. King delivered. He delivered this speech before the Lincoln Memorial on 28 August 1963 as the keynote address of the March on Washington, D. C for Civil Rights. The television cameras allowed the entire nation to hear and see him plead for justice and freedom. Mrs Coretta King once commented, “At that moment it seemed as if the kingdom of God appeared. But it only lasted a moment”, “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech”. This is King’s acceptance speech on the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace prize in Oslo, Norway, on the 10 December 1964. When once asked by an interviewer what the significance was for him of receiving this much coveted award, Dr King replied, “The Nobel award recognizes the amazing discipline of the Negro. Though we have had riots, bloodshed we would have known without the discipline of nonviolence would have been frightening. “There are about one thousand six hundred words (1,600) in “I have a dream” While in “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech” there are about one thousand one hundred and fifty (1,150) Words. These proved enough prose material to investigate the type of problem that this study is interested in.

The criteria for the collection of data for this study are based on accessibility. Nwogu (1990) asserts that accessibility may mean the ease by which the researcher can obtain the texts that form the corpus of a particular study or may be controlled to mean the extent of knowledge which the
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researcher has about the content of the discourse albeit for different reasons. Speeches of Martin Luther King JR. are widely circulated in print all over the world. The speeches are also available on the internet. The speeches are world acclaimed thus represent standard speeches.

3. Method of data collection.
The corpus of this study is made up of two purposively selected speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. The purposive sampling technique is employed because the two speeches are readily accessible. The two speeches are “I have a Dream” and “The Nobel Prize acceptance speech”. The major tool for the analysis is based on how Martin Luther King Jr used presupposition in his speeches to persuade his audience. The speech acts used in the speeches were analysed and how they help to create/impact and persuasion.

The corpus was analyzed using socio-psychological theoretical approach to pragmatics which is speech acts of Austin (1962), Searle’s (1969) Classification of illocutionary acts (Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declaratives). This have been found to be a straightforward and thorough method of analyzing speeches with respect to identifying the types of speech acts used in them to create impact and persuasion.

4. Results and Discussion
The data presented were analyzed using socio-psychological theoretical approach to pragmatics which is speech acts of Austin (1962), Seale’s (1969) Classification of illocutionary acts (Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declaratives).

4.1 Elements of speech acts and their intentions in the texts analyzed
Davitt and Hanley (2003) defined performative utterance as things one can do just by saying that one is doing them. One can apologize by saying: “I apologize”, promise by saying: “I promise” and thank someone by saying: “thank you”.

4.2 Analysis of Performative
4.2.1 The use of Assertives
Assertive is an illocutionary act which represents a state of affairs.

TEXT 1
“Five score years ago, a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation proclamation.”
Speech Acts: Assertive (constative)
Explicit Performative:
The author asserts that five score years, the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by a great American an attributive adjective shows the signing procedure was not done by ordinary person but by a prominent American.
It is a true statement which is a quality of assertive statement.

Reflexive Intention
The signing of the Emancipation Declaration automatically freed all slaves in America. Hence, the author believes that the Negro has his destiny in his hands, thus if he chooses to remain a slave or get free that was up to him. Some Linguistic features that indicate these are “in whose symbolic shadow” a prepositional phrase identify someone that all Americans respect. Another feature: “we stand” a subject pronoun which shows that the author is inclusive.

The author reminds the Negro that 100 years ago he was declared free, in case some of them did not know, the author is also telling the American authorities that they resist all forms of discrimination and segregation policies against them.

Conversational implicature:
By implication the utterance above says that the Negro is free and also that a category of Americans do not respect the American constitution.

Presupposition:
There exists a great American.
The Negro is not free despite signing the Emancipation Declaration 100 years ago.

TEXT 11
“I accept the Nobel Peace Prize for peace at a moment when twenty-two million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a creative battle to end the long night of racial injustice”.
The author hooks the audience by stating a reality – that 22 million Negro people are fighting racial injustice while he is accepting an award.

Speech Acts: Assertive (Constative)
Explicit performative
In the utterance above the author affirmed that people all over the world are fighting against inequality and he is on the world stage accepting a speech on their behalf.
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Reflxive intention:
The author begins his speech in a way that lets the audience know that he has seen what he speaks of, that he has experienced the inequality he strives to end.

Conversational implicature:
By implication the utterance above says that the author is living out the same reality they are, the Negroes.

Presupposition
That the author is accepting the Nobel Peace Prize at a time when the world is starved for peace and equality for its people.

4.2.2 The use of Expressives
An expressive is an illocutionary acts that describes a performative. According to Levinson (1985), an expressive utterance expresses the psychological state of the speaker towards some state of affairs. Paradigm case eg. (Congratulating, thanking, deploring, condoling, welcoming, greeting etc.)
“So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition”

In the text above, the use of attributive adjective: “appalling condition. Shows the deplorable condition in which the Negro lives.

Speech Acts: Expressive (Performative)

Reflxive Intention:
The author meant that all Negroes, himself inclusive were very unhappy. The Negroes have gathered to express their plight to the people of America.

Conversational implicature:
The author is disappointed in the leadership of America. No American Citizen deserves to be in the deplorable condition the Negroes find themselves. That America should dismantle all laws supporting discrimination and segregation.

Presupposition:
That there was an appalling condition.
That it is the Negro suffering under this condition.
TEXT I
“I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind”

Speech Acts: Expressive (performatif)
Explicit Performative: The author expresses his faith in America and in the future of mankind.

Reflexive Intentions: The author expresses his strong belief that racial segregation will end and he expresses his faith in the bright future of mankind.

Conversational implicature: The author has a lot of faith in America and in the future of mankind.

Presupposition:
- There is faith in America.
- There is hope in the future of mankind.

4.2.3 The use of Directives.
These are illocutionary acts designed to get the addressee to do something for example (commanding, pleading, inviting, questioning, daring and insisting that someone does something.)

TEXT I
“We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great Vaults of opportunity of this nation”.
“We” is a pronoun showing that all the Negro in America including the author refuse to believe what America wants them to believe.

Speech Acts: Directive (performatif)
Explicit Performative:
The author told the American authorities that the Negro insists that America has opportunity for people of all races whether black or white.

Reflexive Intentions:
The author is saying that opportunities abound in America for all. The Negro has refused to believe that there are no opportunities.
Conversational Implicature:
The utterance implies that the American leaders are not sincere. There is opportunity for all races in America and the opportunities are the right of all Americans, and should be given to all irrespective of colour.

Presupposition:
There are vaults of opportunities in America.
That the opportunities can be made available to everyone

TEXT II
“I refuse to accept despair as the final response of the ambiguities of history.”
“I refuse to accept” “I” is a first person pronoun, showing that the author talks personally about what he refuses to accept.

Speech Acts: Directive (performative)
Explicit Performative:
The author told the American leaders what he refuses to accept about humanity and the way people are treated.

Reflexive Intention:
The author is saying that he refused to accept despair as the final response to the mistreatment of the Negro and encourages them to be hopeful.

Conversational Implicature:
The utterance implies that the Negroes should not give up and should not accept to continue to be treated as slaves in their own country.

Presupposition
There is encouragement for blacks to be hopeful
There is mistreatment of the blacks.

4.2.4 The use of commissives.
According to Levinson (1985) Commissives are illocutionary acts that commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigms cases: Promising, threatening, vowing, offering.)

TEXT I
“This momentous decree comes as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who
had been seared in the flames of withering injustice”

“Great beacon light”: Is an attributive noun which defines this “beacon” that will light the path of Negro slaves to freedom

Speech Acts: Commissive (performative)

Explicit Performative:
All Negroes, the author inclusive see the decree as a promise of freedom for the American Negro.

Reflexive Intention:
The utterance above implies that all American Negroes are supposed to be free citizens,
The decree came as a source of inspiration and hope to the Negroes.

Conversational implicature:
The decree is aimed at changing the situation of the Negro in America and setting the Negro free.

Presupposition:
There exists a decree against racial discrimination.
The decree is a victory to all those who have fought against the ills of racial discrimination.

TEXT II

Martin Luther King JR described the award as a reminder to the civil rights workers that:
“The tide of world opinion is in our favour” and pledged to “work even harder to make peace and brotherhood a reality” (King, “Mighty Army of love;” King, 27 January 1965).

When king decided to speak out against the Vietnam War in April 1967, he reflected on this promise, calling the prize a “commission”, that required him to go “beyond national allegiances” to speak out for peace (King, “Beyond Vietnam,” 145).

Speech Acts: Commissive (performative)

Explicit performative:
He talked about how although he had made a lot of great strides in the war against racial injustice there is still a lot to be done.

Conversational Implicature:
The fight does not end just because he got an award for it; he had just made a great start.
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Presupposition:
Here is a war against racial injustice.
The fight is not over
The award is a sign of a beginning.

4.2.5 The use of Declaratives
Levinson (1985) defines declaratives as those utterances which affect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to reply on elaborate extra linguistic institutions (paradigm cases’ declaring war, christening, firing from employment, blessing, fining and bidding).

Speech Acts: Declarative (performative)
Explicit performative:
The author metaphorically suggests that they have come to cash a check with which they can purchase their freedom, security and justice. They are bidding for their freedom.

Reflexive Intentions:
The author says that “they” the Negroes” have come to cash this check which should give them the freedom, security and justice in return.

Conversational Implicature:
Negroes want the riches of freedom, security and justice, so they have come to cash it. The demand of the Negroes is not something unattainable.

Presupposition:
That there is a check.
The check is cashable
Negroes could have freedom, security and justice from cashing the check

TEXT II
“After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I receive on behalf of the movement is a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time – the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression. Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts.
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Speech Acts: Declarative “performative”

Explicit performative:
The utterance is a declaration of a nonviolent war or a revolution against injustice in America.

Reflexive Intention
The Second World War ended just 20 years ago and people still remember the horrors of it. Martin Luther King Jr. is fighting a type of war without resorting to violence.

Conversational Implication:
The author appeals to the idea of waging a revolution without violence, an ideal he is holding unto.

Presupposition:
The black Americans are oppressed by the whites
The black Americans are brutalized by the white Americans
Nonviolence war is the solution.

5. Conclusion
This research investigated the use of presupposition and the predominant speech acts used in the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr to enhance persuasion and impact. The speeches analyzed include “I Have a Dream” and “Nobel Prize acceptance Speech”.

The study identified some speech Acts elements that enhanced persuasion and impact in Text 1 which opened with a “constative” making an assertion that many years back a great American signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Martin Luther King Jr. knew his intention and is able to select words that made his intentions realizable, to do this; he uses appropriate illocutionary acts and presuppositions to make strong his points. He used constative, making an assertion that: “I accept the Nobel peace prize for peace at a moment when twenty-two million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a creative battle to end the long night of racial injustice” in Text2. This assertion is affirming what he has seen and experienced. The two texts use all classes of illocutionary acts i.e assertives, directives, expressives, Commissives, and declaratives depending on the intentions he wants to express.

Arising from the findings of this research, it is obvious that Martin Luther King Jr. made his intentions realizable by using appropriate illocutionary acts and presuppositions to make strong his points, effective structure. In view of these it is recommended that speech writers for political leaders should explore these language resources in order to improve on the speeches they write.
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