

AN ANALYSIS OF PERLOCUTIONARY ACTS IN ERNEST-SAMUEL'S EPISTOLARY NOVELS: *IHEOMA MY DEAR* AND ITS SEQUEL

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Abstract

In every successful illocution there must be in exchange perlocution as a response whether positive or negative but much desire is the former. Perlocutionary act is the resultant outcome based on proper delivery of the illocution. The novel used here *Iheoma my Dear* was in response of earlier one written by *Kelechi's* friend *Iheoma* in order to untie certain grievances. The writer decided to reply the letter received in reaction to the earlier illocution. Thus negative or impolite assumptions about *Kelechi* were resolved with positive responses. Using qualitative information based on the act in the language writing and speech in conveying a meaningful response communication, the work adopts textual analysis in analysing the data by employing the Levinson's Tri-Heuristic Theory to support the acts and force in perlocution. So, for every locution in communication to be effective there must be well organised illocution that will produce an end product of response as a reply, that is the perlocution.

Keywords: Perlocution; Illocution; Polite response; Tri-Heuristic; Communication

Introduction

Speech acts always projects how – speaker in speech or in writing (a writer) do things with words. George Yule (TSoL) views that:

We have been considering some ways in which we interpret the meanings of sentences in terms of what the speaker of those sentences intended to convey. What we have not yet explored is the fact that we also usually know how speaker intend us to 'take' (or,

interpret the function of) what they say. In very general terms, we can usually recognise the type of 'act' performed by a speaker in uttering a sentence. The use of the term **speech act** covers 'actions' such as 'requesting', 'commanding', 'questioning', and 'informing'. (132)

Austin organises three possible ways/acts in conveying utterances (writing) in order to project a dignified message especially between the sender of the message and the receiver which are the locutionary acts by means of coding and decoding of utterances by using words to conform to a particular way of grammatical rules with certain references and inferences in that Language. The second is the illocutionary acts which have various patterns and strategies in delivering the actual words that is sending the signal in line with the rules of the language by act of performance of the rules governing a sentence which must have the aim on the receiver. The third, which this work is based on is the perlocutionary act, which is the resultant effect based on actual delivery of the illocution, that is, it consists of the main production of the effects towards the thoughts, feelings, approaches, assumed actions of the speaker or the writer subjecting the subordinate, the readers or the hearers to act based on the requirements of the sender of the message. Piotr Caps situates that "while the locutionary aspect is the most 'objective' since it concerns the stable language form of the utterance, the illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects involve a dynamic negotiation of meaning between the speaker and the hearer" (62).

As Teun A van Dijk supports that:

Only in those cases where this purpose is realised do we speak of a P-successful illocutionary act, also called a PERLOCUTIONARY ACT, Hence a Perlocutionary act is an act of which the conditions of success are given in terms of purposes of the speaker with respect to some change brought about in the hearer As A CONSEQUENCE OF the illocutionary act. An advice is Perlocutionary successful, for instance, if the hearer FOLLOWS the advice, acts UPON the advice, as purposed by the speaker and as a consequence of the recognition of the illocutionary act. (198-9)

Iheoma my Dear was an epistolary novel which was written in form of a letter writing. The novel was written by Gloria Ernest-Samuel, published in 2016. It was a well-crafted letter sent as a reply to earlier letter sent by one Iheoma to her cherished friend Kelechi. The first sequel novel was *Dear Kelechi*, also written by the same

author in the year 2014. When *Iheoma* decided to write to *Kelechi* in *Dear Kelechi* raising some salient points on what is going on in *Kaycees's* life which she did to make her understand life with her and hear from her soon. She concludes thus, "So I advise you to open up. It is only when you open up and expose your pains and experiences that you let the sun of healing soothe your soul ... Eagerly anticipating your response (Gloria Ernest-Samuel, DK, 99).

When *Kaycee* got the letter and after reading it, it got one thinking of what the aftermath will be, of which the effect resulted in sending the response as a means of perlocutionary act in another lengthy letter through *Iheoma my Dear* as the first sentence of the letter reads thus:

I dare not ignore your long and interesting epistle, a piece that has kept me wondering and worrying, a write-up that has ignited sparks in me, and has given me the zeal to pick up my pen.... The urge is so real and natural, so true and right, and so damn overwhelming, that even when I felt I was dead inside, I knew I was truly alive. So here I am, my dear friend, replying to your letter. (7)

Yule (P) further states that "we do not, of course simply create an utterance with a function without intending it to have an effect" (48). So every utterance must have a message which it must pass to the reader or the hearer whether positively or negatively and once decoded there must be a very effective communicative signal passed.

The speaker or the writer might say "the door is open" considering a shared knowledge with the reader or the hearer, might have the effect that the Air conditioner is switched on, or probably that the weather outside is cold therefore the room needs to maintain a certain condition or that there is a noise coming from the outside. Although the locutions did not say 'close the door' but 'the door is open'. Perlocution is rather effective once the message of illocution is well conveyed and interpreted by the hearer according to the desire of the sender with an accurate result.

Statement of the Problem

Every utterance must have its message to the hearer. People often get embarrassed once their messages are not returned with expected result, not minding the shared privileges among them in their utterances. In having effective perlocution, cases of negative or impolite result will be resolved in other to yield a positive or polite act in return.

Significance of the Study

The work will be an eye opener to the hearer or the reader who must deliver a positive feedback as expected by the sender. Perlocution makes someone to be

conscious while reading or studying because onus lies on a student to expect an examination at the end of learning. A reader should go beyond the meaning and infer an effective reply to prove a point.

Research Questions

Some research questions were framed in line with this article especially in addressing the issues raised in the sequel's work that gave rise to the perlocutionary acts on the basic novel here *Iheoma my Dear*, such as:

1. To what extent does the illocutionary act of *Iheoma* yield perlocutionary effect on *Kelechi*?
2. To what degree did locution of calmness and quietness produce perlocution in the novel – *Iheoma my Dear*?
3. How the utterances were triggered negative perlocution in Kelechi's marital life?
4. How was the perlocutionary loads of evidence from *Kelechi* addressed in the novel?

Review of Related Literature

In analysing Perlocutionary act Elena Collavin posits that It is the production of a consequence by the utterance. Contrary to what occurs at the illocutionary level, Perlocutions are not directly achieved by the conventional force of an utterance. They can be intentional or unintentional, and they might involve unexpected effects, different from those of an illocutionary act. (380)

That is, a situation where a desired response must come to play and it must yield an effective response whether intentional or unintentional, there must be a direct or indirect result, but at the end one must expect a reply to the utterance received. If the speech act must be well acknowledged there must be a Perlocution towards the end, after using the locution in illocution. Yule (P) concurs that in uttering these:

‘I've just made some coffee' on the assumption that the hearer will recognize the effect you intended (for example, to account for a wonderful smell, or to get the hearer to drink some coffee). This is also generally known as the **perlocutionary effect**. (49)

Collavin further points that on how the interlocutor's actual reaction will be to this speech act. A Perlocutionary effect of the utterance "the soup you cooked was very poor" might be that one's interlocutor is chagrined, gets angry, pours the soup down the sink, or all three. (381) On the effect of Perlocution, a lot goes on in the mind of the hearer on what to do at least to yield a positive result, if the utterance were well informed, through the right channels like language, setting the force and the content of the locution must be well communicated. Habermas contradicts that

Perlocutionary acts are an indication of the integration of speech acts into contexts of strategic action (126). At times in a low court, the interrogating counsel might decide to put locution to the person on the dock to use some Perlocution inferred in other to judge him. If peradventure the gravity of the consequence was not well interpreted to the bailiff or the plaintiff in question. Sbisá as qtd in Winifred Noth, also adds to substantiate the above that, “a perlocutionary act is the production of a change of context at the material (psychological or praxeological) level of the addressee's reactions” (193). Adegbija is of the view that, “pragmatic factors often change in the course of discourse and this may influence the illocution force of utterances as well as their perlocutionary sequels” (203).

Illocutionary-Perlocutionary Relations

Austin states that the distinction between illocution and perlocution is not quite given a clear difference and that it is not at all apparent that the perlocutionary level can be fully considered as a single level of action embodied in a given utterance (108-18)

Some debates have been generated on the relationship at the level of the locutionary and the perlocutionary from Searle (1969, 1973) Warnock (1969), Davis (1980), while Collavin, (381) puts that the illocutionary level is the nucleus of the Austinian theory and with later developments. Also, Austin points that the illocutionary act is connected with the production of the effects in the following way that the force and the content of the utterance must be understood; the illocutionary act needs to take effect and that in many instances, there are needs to be the manifested cooperation of the audience for the illocutionary act to come into being. Caps captures in their relations that:

The illocutionary-perlocutionary relation not only mirrors the complex process of meaning evolution as sketched at the beginning of this subsection; it also inscribes in the distinction between explicit (direct) and implicit (indirect) ways of communicating a speech act. Consequently, it invokes the notions of deixis, presupposition, implicature, since they all situate themselves at some specific yet different points of the conceptual axis which links 'what is said with 'what is effected' (62)

Locutionary Effects on Perlocution

In achieving the end product of locution, which is the actual utterance on speech acts or the initial writing. Some actual formation and creation of sound, signs and words solve the difficulties in locutionary production. Yule states that there is first a **locutionary act** which is the basic act of utterance, or producing a meaningful

linguistic expression (48). It can also be achieved either through utterance/writing or by using certain principles through the grammar, phonology, syntax, semantics etc. of that particular language. In a situation where these utterances/writings, have greater effect/response in the hearer such can come in the form of positive or negative responses, and produce perlocutionary effect. As Kelechi confesses in Ernest-Samuel (IMD) thus:

If I sound optimistic and unscathed now, it is due to your letter. The last few months before that letter were troubling ones. I battled with sound reasoning, with the strength to live and with hatred. I had tried to bury my hurt, my pains, betrayal and grief without success. Your letter singularly worked the magic of making me see a glimmer of light in a dark tunnel, hence, this song of hope you hear today. (12-13)

As Yule also concurs that the perlocutionary effect is of “The assumption that the hearer will recognize the effect intended (for example, to account for a wonderful smell, or to get the hearer to drink some coffee)” (49). So in every locution there must be an intended effect the communication will yield and not just any effect to be recognised but rather an effective communication of the words and rightful hearer’s perception. According to Adegbija, “Perlocutionary acts are limited to the intentional production of effects on (or in) the hearer” (15).

Methodology

This article has its concentration, based on the text *Iheoma My Dear* and its sequel which was a reply to the earlier points raised in its sequel by the epistolary writer *Iheoma* herself through the author, the novel was analysed based on the pragmatic acts on perlocutionary act which was the resultant effect from *Iheoma* and now *Kelechi* writes back, replying some salient points raised as she said in Ernest-Samuel’s (IMD) “You demonstrated a clear understanding and analysis of my actions, indicating that you never forgot my antecedents. Yet, I need to give you in-depth details of some of the causes of my torpid state” (14). The work was analysed based on an in-depth textual analysis through the heuristic theory of Levinson.

Theoretical Framework

This article has an element approach in pragmatics through the principles of perlocutionary effect on the novel used. Here, there is a Locution uttered and written by *Iheoma* after pondering and reminding *Kelechi* where they started from, in their relationship at the early stage of their meetings in life, Ernest-Samuel (DK), came up with this assertion “*Kelechi*, my *Kaycee*, how is it possible that you forgot all those days, all those incidents that punctuated our lives like bright beads on a rosary ” (16)?

At the stage of replies certain notions come to play assumptions become the order of the day and other moves to resuscitate and fill the words well emerged. Such was seen on the reply by *Kelechi* to *Iheoma*. So the work employed Tri-heuristic theory of Levinson which has three levels of meaning. It was an adoption of Griceans Maxim, Quantity and Manner by the combination of Horn's initial work on Q-and R-based inferencing but decided to come up with three principles which are Q, I and M heuristics (35-139). Grundy supports that:

Utterance-type meaning results from Quantity, Informativeness and Manner - based **heuristics** or insights that govern the process of inferential enrichment. These heuristics then enable **principles** to be formulated. (112)

Traugott (546) also summarises them thus

1. The Q HEURISTIC: "What isn't said, isn't." Making the contribution as informative is needed by providing a statement that is not informationally weaker than your knowledge of the world allows by constant studying the actual fact.
2. THE I HEURISTIC: "What is expressed simply is stereotypically exemplified in other words minimal specification get maximally informative or stereotypical interpretations this do not make the contribution more informative than is required.
3. THE M HEURISTIC: "What's said in an abnormal way isn't normal, being perspicuous avoiding the obscurity of expression.

Data Analysis

The data for this work were analysed based on the research questions that are in line with the drawing effect of the illocutionary-perlocutionary device into limelight especially using the tri-heuristic theory of Levinson in doing the textual analysis, the excerpts taken from the sequel were enclosed with abbreviation DK after the pagination to make difference from the main work of this article.

1. To what extent does the illocutionary act of *Iheoma* yield perlocutionary effect on *Kelechi*?

Iheoma tried bringing to the fore every circumstance of locution: (shared stories of their friendship, family, school, marriage institution, work etc.) that can break the hedges of *Kelechi's* taciturn mood in other to make her open up to the perlocutionary acts in the opening of the letter she started with shared beliefs of separation. She also narrated the ordeal in her home more especially her husband's act of sheer wickedness towards her.

Even our parents failed in their bid to separate us, do you remember, Kelechi? So what tore us apart? Men. But are men so powerful that they come into our lives and completely disorientate and possess us, and while at it, rob our hearts of every vacancy, so there is no space to accommodate a cherished friendship? No, I daresay no; Kaycee, you are to blame. (DR, 7)

Kelechi on her own part surrenders and reverts on what she understands men to be and the accolades women have been giving to the men and states thus:

I have come to realise that men cannot be God's gift to us. If at all there is such a gift then it is courage, the type that made you tolerate with Iyke and still urge me to live again; the mettle that made you tolerate all the ill-treatment you received from your husband and his family, and yet move about with hope and expectation ... the courage that powered my dead life.

Iheoma, truly we took men for granted. That is why our lives have been in shambles. We underestimated them. We grew up to love, to trust and worship them. We mistook them for God ... but they are not even a tin or demigod. (12)

On *Iheoma's* part of reminding her, what friendship is all about, she employed strong words that will surely make *Kelechi* to voice out whatsoever she has piled up in her heart not to relate with any person, despite the affections her parents-in-law have shown to her and that now is the actual time to talk to the best friend ever.

I have lived a quiet life, bottling up my predicaments and realities of my life in my mind. To say that I've been dying quietly and unconsciously is an understatement. Some months ago, I ached and hurt in my chest. So I went to a doctor for medical attention. After series of tests, the doctor confirmed it – my ailment is of the mind. Hence, if I have to cure myself and live a fulfilled life, there is every need for me to unbottle those pains. So I decided I had to talk to someone who can listen, someone who cares and is close to me....This is where you come in. only you understand and see the world from the same perspective as I Simply put, you are my kindred spirit. (DK,8)

Kelechi seems to understand the thoughts of her friend and decided to align herself with her friend's views. She also assures her, how she cherishes the relationship and utmost respect so far, by bringing out the perlocution that will soothe the situation:

.... My parents-in-law, with their strong Christian inclination would die of shame and heartbreak if they hear this detail. So, you can understand why I could not divulge this side of our relationship to them. I have to open up to you, Iheoma, because of the depth of our relationship. Besides, you have given me intimate details of your experiences. One good turn, they say, deserves another. So, why should I not confide in you now? (19-20)

2. To what degree did locution of calmness and quietness produce perlocution in the novel – *Iheoma my Dear*?

Kelechi's taciturn, calm, solitude attitudes that are supposed to be quite overlooked, ultimately attracted some kind of questions from his closest friend *Iheoma*, which presented the illocution making her present her own perlocution; her husband's family especially the elders of the family, her parent-in-law had to return from United Kingdom just to attend to her silent rage and even her own family. As she confesses, "Although it was a gruelling experience; I mean, my hibernation experience, it helped me appreciate my parents-in-law much more than even my mother" (79). She expresses thus:

Later that evening, when his second wife came to inform him that I had not eaten, had not had my bath and had not opened my door to anyone, Nze Ejikeme became alarmed. After shouting my name several times without receiving any response, a carpenter was rushed in with Nze Ejikeme. I was lying passively on my bed, awake but unconcerned. (78)

Her reticent mood also attracted various medical attention to see if she will be resuscitated from that uncommunicative life and the conversation on one of the medical attention really caused her to bring to the fore the actual perlocutionary effect required. With the following lines of thought:

I was delighted when I woke up one day after taking some drugs administered by one particular doctor, and heard the doctor pronounce that I had symptoms of emotional

trauma. I watched the old folks break into tears for my sake. My father-in-law looked crushed and spent. Then, he told my mother-in-law: “Her sickness has something to do with Tony’s refusal to return home. Something is amiss. Kelechi is suffering because she has a burden she can’t share with anyone.” Then, he wept like a baby, likewise my mother-in-law. (79)

Her discreet insolence brought in perlocutionary effect of division among her people resulting in counter accusation and pointing accusing fingers against those that are innocent of her present predicament. The epistler presents that:

It seems everyone has accepted me the way I am, but I am sure the entire community will be delighted the day the true me, which you seek for, will return. Already, two myths are existing here on my behalf. Some people are of the opinion that my lifestyle was a fallout of the trauma I suffered because of Tony. Those who believe in this, I am sure, got this impression from my in-laws; while another school of thought, mainly spearhead by village women, believes I was bewitched by Nze Ejikeme and the elders. This opinion has since made Nze Ejikeme a very sad and subdued man, hence, I am sure he will be happy to see me return to normal. (80)

3. How the utterances were triggered negative perlocution in Kelechi’s marital life?

Marriage is a sacred institution in African setting, but there are some locutions that can elicit harmful perlocution to that institute, like the ‘M’ heuristic states that what is said in an abnormal situation is totally abnormal in essence avoiding obscurity of expression, such was the Tony’s expression towards his spouse that caused the whole rot in that marriage. Such as in:

“Kelechi, we never had a sex life, you and i. honestly, our sex life died long ago, though I don’t blame you at all. It was my fault. You are so ... so ... too orthodox in bed,” he broke off, then, concluded, “We cannot continue like that.” Before I understood what he meant, he had slipped out of the room into the guestroom. The more I understood his utterance, the more it dawned on

me that my marriage was heading for the rocks. Still numbed by this discovery, I decided to let him cool off for the night. But by the time I returned from lectures the next morning, he had taken away some of his personal belongings That was the beginning of our estranged relationship that cost me my only son. (19)

When the journey of the marriage finally crashed, she was very quick in reminding him, his previous locutions that caused the great rift in their marriage and blows in this manner:

The peace-making neighbours had succeeded in separating us. "And why did I divorce you, Kelechi?" Tony fired at me, in defence of his partner. The crowd, many of whom were Africans became excited. "Because I happened to be orthodox in bed. Isn't that your language?" I asked, staring at him. He was shocked beyond words.

"Yes, let everyone hear this now," I said. "Hear, oh Kenyans, Nigerians, whoever! I didn't make love to this man with his hands and legs tied to the bedpost, like his demented, pervert bedmate. For that, I got myself a divorce!" (65)

The illocutionary effects of these brought the Q heuristic to bare which encourages making the contribution as informative as it is needed by saying the actual fact. This also made *Kelechi* to state the actual fact in her perlocutionary ideas of the cross of the matter that caused the downfall in her marriage, through these locutions:

Anthony deflowered me, deceived me into believing in him, and abandoned me afterwards, for an irresponsible woman that sought for a change of scene and partner. For that singular misfortune, I lost my only son, lost my home and my sanity. The only personal worldly possession that I had, which was capable of uplifting my self-image and empowering me, he burnt. I would be stupid to take that lying low I ached in my heart, in my head and on my feet. I itched all over my body, each time I thought of what he put me through, just because he was excited by the attention of a white divorcee; plain inferiority complex, you might call it. (67)

4. How was the perlocutionary loads of evidence from *Kelechi* addressed in the novel?

Tony's unsavoury extreme acts of burning some certificates of *Kelechi* was the height of the wickedness that threw her off balance in that fracas of which he later informed his children; about his indirect actions towards their mum. *Kelechi* understands the scenario when she returned and searched for them at the usual place, it dawned on her what Julia, one of her daughters told her that:

Daddy said you'd never work here again, except perhaps in Nigeria. Since we are not with you, it has been real hard for all of us. But, Mum, do know that we miss you dearly

It was a bombshell. It was unimaginable. If he seized them to torture me I could understand, but to burn them? Why? Why? I kept muttering. (62)

Kelechi's life was totally in the state of disarray by virtually everything around her and perlocution exhibited meticulously proved that her life was seriously tied down without any single headway as she articulates thus:

I had managed to live my life as a married woman with my husband, but he had rejected me and equally kicked me out of my base. Back in Nigeria to where I have returned. I cannot live like a married woman because I have no husband, and cannot live as a single woman either. Culture determines my life pattern and behaviour. Although Tony has formally divorced me in Kenya, because he has not come home to collect my bride price, in other words tell our families of this development, I am still answerable to him and his people. It means I cannot even live my life, and I cannot go home to my people. (76-77)

Conclusion

This is purely an analytical based research work of which the main novel used is a reply to the epistolary work the writer received from a friend, the conceptual work was framed within the scope of pragmatics restricted to the perlocution's effect. Stating what and how the receiver reacts to the locution and its effect in a given utterance as well as its effect on the receiver or the reader. If peradventure there must be another third epistolary from the author, I am sure that Iheoma will be happier because her friend *Kelechi* finally opened up and stated her version of reply on the novel *Dear Kelechi*. Some of the outpours *Kelechi* wrote down in the analysis will

make one to understand the locution in the first epistolary yielded a powerful illocution that later produced a strong in perlocution in the second novel.

For locution to be effective on the illocutionary there must be an end product or the result which is the perlocution. Although, enough have not be said on perlocution as Adrian Akmajian et al state thus:

Perlocutionary acts have not been investigated to the extent that illocutionary acts have been, partly because they are not as intimately related to linguistic structure, semantics, and communication as are illocutionary acts. (396)

Recommendation for Further Studies

Since the work was restricted to perlocution; further researchers can still do a thorough analytical research on the novel based on pragmatic implicature, presupposition, politeness etc. The novel can serve as a good purpose on gender researches including feminism such in the areas of extremism. A thorough investigation on Tony's part could be outstanding because nobody heard or read the side of his own story. A chauvinistic adventure in the text can be another area one needs to cover and come up with a resounding research.

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