

N-words in Black Stand-Up Comedy: A Linguistic Reclamation

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ABSTRACT

In the United States of America, the stand-up comedy community consists of comics from a diverse range of ethnicities/races, one of them being African American (black people). Among this particular group, the use of the N-word has been prominent throughout the years. Although commonly used as a slur, the N-word becomes an interesting discussion, as its function within stand-up comedy is not solely derogatory when uttered by black comics. In this research, the functions of the N-word used by black comics in stand-up comedy are investigated. Moreover, its relation to linguistic reclamation is also examined. The data were obtained from a YouTube channel named Laugh Factory in the form of videos by black comics aired in 2020. The analysis of the functions was conducted by categorizing the functions of the N-word. In order to relate the functions of the N-word with linguistic reclamation, a qualitative analysis was conducted by using Illocutionary Force Indicator Account to see whether the N-word succeeds or fails to function as a slur. Despite some of the occurrences of the N-word having derogatory functions, the ends of uttering them are not actually regarded as a slur. Moreover, it is discovered that the N-word used by black comics in stand-up comedy fails to function as a slur, proving that there is a process of linguistic reclamation with the N-word being non-derogatory.

Keywords: *black people, N-word, slurs, reclamation, stand-up comedy.*

INTRODUCTION

N-word, which stands for *nigger* and has a number of variants such as *nigga*, *negro*, and *niggas*, is a euphemism for the derogatory slurs used within the English-speaking community, especially in the United States (Holt, 2018). It belongs to African American English (AAE), a language variety used by African Americans (black people). The euphemism and its variants are mostly used to refer to black people—those of African American descent. The first and original word, *nigger*, was coined as a neutral term until it was first used offensively in 1775 (Nigger, n.d.). The other variant, *nigga*, started to be

used more recently and can function as a derogatory slur or a neutral/positive term, though opinions vary within the black community itself, and out-group uses are still generally considered to be derogatory (Nigga, n.d.).

The controversy revolving around the N-word as a racial slur has been around for a long time, as shown by numerous researches that have been conducted so far. Questions about when to use the word, who can use the word, and what makes the word offensive, neutral, or even positive have all been asked as far as linguistics can cover the discussion. The term ‘speech community’ from sociolinguistics helps in analyzing such a

phenomenon. Yule defines a speech community as a group of people sharing the same linguistic norms and expectations of a certain language and its use (Yule, 2005). A speech community, in this case, the black speech community, must have sets of norms that define the way a certain language is used within the community. Under the scope of comedy, stand-up comedy to be exact, this research was conducted to examine how the meaning of the N-word, when used within the targeted group, differs from when it comes from outside. The change of meaning was analyzed as well to determine whether the use of N-words from within the targeted group functions as a linguistic reclamation—an act of reclaiming a derogatory word that was originally intended to discriminate against a marginalized group by said marginalized group itself (Coles, 2016).

One of the terms explaining the process of linguistic reclamation is amelioration in semantics—where a negative word acquires a new positive meaning as time passes (Curzan, 2014). The struggle of reclaiming such slurs, with the goal to take away the power possessed by the words to bring down the target group, is now being faced by black people with N-words. In Hip-hop culture, N-word has been analyzed and is most of the time treated as a positive term within the community, especially for black and Latino people (Harkness, 2008). For this reason, this research attempts to examine if the use of the N-word is indeed a process of linguistic reclamation, especially in stand-up comedy performed by black comics.

Stand-up comedy was chosen as the data source of this research considering its humorous content that might differ the functions of the N-word within comedy to its default use as a derogatory slur. In particular, the data were taken from stand-up comedy videos performed by black stand-up comics from a YouTube channel, Laugh Factory. This research ultimately aims to determine the functions of the N-word, specifically within the black stand-up comedy community, and to see whether such use functions as a linguistic reclamation of the N-word variants nigger and nigga. This research addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the functions of N-words used by black comics in stand-up comedy?
2. How does the N-words used by black comics in stand-up comedy function as a linguistic reclamation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many linguistic studies regarding the N-word have been previously conducted. For instance, a study of the N-words was conducted by Jacquelyn Rahman in 2012. Rahman argues that despite the banning of the word forms, they are still accepted in the African American community itself. Focusing on the history of the N-word, Rahman examines that it is preserved as a lexicon in African American English as it is closely related to the identity of the people. The findings show that the N-word and its variants act as forms of solidarity, censure, and a stance going toward a positive change (Rahman, 2012).

Another study conducted by Gregory Coles (2016) discusses linguistic reclamation and its limitations. The research concludes that not all derogatory words can be reclaimed in the same way. Redemptive reclamation is done by reclaiming a derogatory word to the extent that the word can later be used by both the members of the marginalized group and non-members. On the other hand, there is restricted reclamation, a linguistic reclamation in which a derogatory word is reclaimed by the members of the seven marginalized groups and still cannot be used by non-members even after the reclamation.

Liu (2020) proposes a pragmatic account to deal with slurs called the illocutionary force indicator account, which is an adaptation of Searle & Vanderveken's (1985) illocutionary logic. By analyzing the word *chink* as a slur targeted toward Chinese people, he argues that the non-derogatory use of a slur is a case of illocutionary acts' misfiring. His account provides an explanation of the non-derogatory use of slurs, which is closely related to the process of linguistic reclamation. This case is quite similar to the case of non-derogatory use of the N-word since the N-word is a racial slur targeted toward black people.

The present study aims to combine all different parts of the previous studies. However, it is most similar to the study conducted by Rahman (2012). In

addition, as an attempt to further develop the study, since Rahman focused more on the historical context of the N-word, the studies of linguistic reclamation done by Liu (2020), Coles (2016), and Popa-Wyatt (2020) are used as references as well. In short, the study examines the use of the N-word in American stand-up comedy and highlights it under the process of linguistic reclamation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The SPEAKING Model

The SPEAKING Model is an ethnographic framework proposed by Dell Hymes (1967), which serves as a tool to analyze speech concerning the diversity of language use. The ethnographic framework itself deals with gaining a great amount of data about specific groups of people and their social/cultural lives in a certain period of time, such as the interactions among the groups. This framework falls within the ethnography of communication (formerly ethnography of speaking), consisting of a set of components mnemonically turned into an acronym that is SPEAKING itself: setting (S), participants (P), ends (E), act sequence (A), key (K), instrumentalities (I), norms (N), and genres (G) (Hymes, 1974). The SPEAKING Model provides an analysis of not only the linguistic aspects of a particular speech, but also the non-linguistic ones, such as the communication setting and purposes and the details regarding the participants (Umezina, 2019).

Linguistic Reclamation

Occasionally referred to as linguistic reappropriation, linguistic reclamation is a process of redirecting control of words, typically derogatory ones, by the target group (the one oppressed by the use of the words) back to themselves. This phenomenon occurs socio-politically, reforming repressive customs in society by tweaking the control of words (Popa-Wyatt, 2020). One of many semantic approaches for linguistic reclamation was coined by Hom (2008), who stated that the derogatory content of a derogatory term is completely formed by its literal meaning. Hom added that when a slur is

appropriated by the targeted group, ultimately, a new (non-derogatory) semantic content—amelioration—occurs due to more supporting social factors.

Speech Act Theory

This research focused on the field of pragmatics, mainly those dealing with Speech Act theory, the act of a speaker producing an utterance to a hearer in context (Mey, 1993). In addition, Yule (2005) defined speech act as an action shown via utterances, such as ‘requesting’, ‘commanding’, ‘questioning’ or ‘informing’. From these two definitions, a speech act is basically an act caused by particular utterances. Speech acts possess three levels: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act (Austin, 1962). In its further development, Searle (1969) divided speech acts into more detailed classifications, which are representative, commissive, declarative, directive, and expressive.

Illocutionary Force Indicator Account of Slurs

Based on the theory of Illocutionary Logic by Searle & Vanderveken (1985), Liu (2020) provided a pragmatic account to deal with slurs that is illocutionary force indicator account. Slurs themselves are illocutionary force indicators as well as propositional indicators. An illocutionary act consists of an illocutionary force as well as content, e.g., promising that one will do something has the same content as confessing that one will do something, but the two have different illocutionary forces. Illocutionary force indicators show how the content of a certain utterance should be taken. Meanwhile, propositional indicators deal with the content of a certain utterance; “I promise I will come,” has “I will come” as its content and “I promise” as its force indicator (a promise, not a confession or anything else).

In the scope of linguistic reclamation, which happens when slurs are appropriated through non-derogatory uses by members of the target group, the illocutionary force indicator account deals with the non-derogatory uses of slurs by analyzing whether they succeed or fail in fulfilling certain conditions referred to as ‘success conditions’ based on the framework Searle & Vanderveken (1985) created.

The original conditions required to be met in order for an illocutionary act to be successful, as explained by Searle & Vanderveken (1985) are shown below:

- The speaker successfully achieves the illocutionary point of the illocutionary force (from here on out F) on the proposition P with the required characteristics mode of achievement and degree of strength of illocutionary point of F.
- He expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F.
- The preparatory conditions of the illocution and the propositional presuppositions obtain in the world of the utterance, and the speaker presupposes what they obtain.
- He expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F.

The ‘success conditions’ proposed by Liu (2020) for slurs as derogatory illocutionary acts are as follows:

- The illocutionary point of derogation is an expressive point; to express the speaker's negative evaluative attitudes toward a target.
- Derogation encompasses a range of strengths of illocutionary points; it is possible to derogate a group strongly or weakly.
- Derogation has a special content condition; it takes persons or groups of people as its content.
- Derogation has a preparatory condition, i.e., the speaker must intend that the hearers have negative attitudes (e.g., hatred or contempt) toward the target of derogation.

Liu implemented his approach by presenting an analysis of the word *chink*, a racial slur targeted toward the Chinese, as an example. He argued that when a Chinese activist uses *chink* in a rally against racism, it is considered a non-derogatory use of the slur since the illocutionary acts misfire. To be considered a derogatory use, it requires meeting the preparatory condition (see point number 4 in the list of success conditions), that “the speaker must intend that the hearers have negative attitudes (e.g., hatred

or contempt) toward the target of derogation.” As opposed to when a white supremacist uses the slur, the use by the Chinese activist holds no hatred/contempt towards Chinese people.

METHODS

The process of data collection started with watching the videos. Since they were free to access on YouTube, there was no issue regarding this step. In total, there were 33 videos closely watched. Out of this number, seven videos contain N-word. Next, the videos that were still in audio-visual form were then transcribed using a transcription tool, Transcriber. After the transcription process, with the data having been converted into text form, the N-word occurrences in the data were manually extracted and resulted in the findings of 17 N-word occurrences. Then, a clear categorization of the N-word occurrences, as well as the exact parts of the stand-up comedy performances in which they occurred, were able to be drawn.

In answer to the first research question, an analysis of the functions of N-words was done as the first step. The next step was to use Hymes' SPEAKING Model (1967). After the functions of the N-word were analyzed, the next step was relating them to the theory of linguistic reclamation. Meanwhile, to answer the second research question, the functions of the N-word previously found were analyzed using the theory of linguistic reclamation. The analysis was done by proving whether the N-word slurs found in the research data succeed or fail in functioning as slurs. In the end, the success and/or failure were connected to the process of linguistic reclamation and presented as the result of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Function of N-Words

In order to specify their functions, the N-words found within the data of this research were categorized using the list of categorizations, senses

referring to people, provided by the online *Oxford English Dictionary* (<https://www.oed.com/>). An important note concerning the results in this part of the research is that only the categories that were found within the data are presented. Those that were not found within the data were excluded from the data presentation. It was discovered that ten occurrences fall into the category of N-words used by black people (esp. African Americans) as a depreciatory term to refer to a dark-skinned person of sub-Saharan African origin or descent. Eight occurrences of N-words refer to (Esp. the U.S.) people who are socially, politically, or economically disadvantaged or exploited; victims of prejudice likened to that endured by African Americans. Five occurrences of N-words refer to people or fellow (regardless of skin color) in African-American usage. There are two occurrences of N-words used by black people (esp. African Americans) as a neutral or favorable term to refer to a dark-skinned person of sub-Saharan African origin or descent. One N-word occurrence refers to a person who does menial labor; any person considered to be of low social status (regardless of race).

Employing the SPEAKING Model, the analysis in this part was done at each speech event. For the purpose of analyzing the function of the N-word found within the data, not all of the SPEAKING elements were employed in the analysis. Only ends (E) was utilized in this section of the research, with the consideration that the other seven elements, setting (S), participants (P), act sequence (A), key (K), instrumentalities (I), norms (N), and genres (G), all showed the same results when employed in the analysis of each skit, meaning that the seven elements do not contribute to the functional differences among each N-word occurrence in the data.

The next part of the N-word function analysis was done by utilizing the ends component in the SPEAKING model. The speech events are the skits containing the stand-up comedy performed by the comics, which came into a total of seven skits/performances. Therefore, each analysis was not limited to one N-word occurrence only since some skits contain multiple N-words within the performance.

- (1) And no, I'm not- I'm not trying to get on the soapbox, I'm just sayin', right? 'Cause people hear trigger words, like, uh, '**nigga**,' "Oh my God, someone said '**nigga**!'" Well, how did they say it? (AB.TW.N2.F1D)

The N-word in this part of the performance is used as a negative term. However, the purpose is to open up a discussion about trigger words in a stand-up comedy performance. The comic uses the words as examples, not as tools to attack a specific group of people.

- (2) What was the context, right? 'Cause it- say, 5 brothers playing ball, and then, like, "Man, that **nigga**' crazy." Nobody got hurt. (AB.TW.N2.F1C)

The word *nigga* here is used neutrally to explain a situation where the N-word is allowed to be uttered by black people to other black people (brothers) in a friendly manner.

- (3) Right? That- that's just talkin' shit. That's just how they talk, how we- we playin' balls and shit. Right? Now, if there's 5 middle-aged white men..., at the bank..., lookin' at a loan application..., and they say, "This **nigga**'s crazy." That's a different context right there now. I believe we have the beginning of a lawsuit, right? (AB.TW.N2.F1D-F6)

The N-word in this part of the performance is used as a negative term to explain a situation where the N-word is not allowed to be uttered by white people to black people in a derogatory manner. This example is explained with the repercussion a white person may face if they utter N-word in this manner: a lawsuit.

- (4) It's all in the context, right? I was taught- little people. Little people, right? They don't want you to say 'midget' anymore. 'Midget' is an insult, like, "There's a midget," like, you know? So, I was talking to this little person. I know I'm right. And he said- he said, "You can't say 'midget,'" and I said, "Well, that's relatively new. You know, about 10- 12 years ago you could say 'midget.'" Then, oh, he looked at me and he said, "A hundred years ago, I could say '**nigger**.'" I was like, "Alright." (AB.TW.N1.F1D-F2A-F6)

The N-word in this part, *nigger*, is generally understood to be more offensive as the other variant, *nigga*. The comic uses the variant with the hard 'r' in the end to refer to the history of the N-word in which it used to be pronounced that way with a derogatory meaning in the past. He uses the word in the performance to explain that *midget* is a slur that is not allowed to be used anymore in the present time, just like N-word.

- (5) My mind is a fucked-up place, you don't wanna get in here, 'cause the moment he said that I got to thinking about, is it- you know, if you come across a black little person and you call him a **nigga** midget..., which is more offensive? You know what I'm sayin'? "Hey, you little **nigga** midget," and you like, "Don't say that," and I'm like, "Which part?" "Which part of that is politically incorrect?" (AB.TW.N2.F1D-F6)

The N-word in this part of the performance is uttered as a slur, combined with another slur, *midget*, to explain in a joking manner that both are politically incorrect to use. The purpose is to wrap such a difficult topic about slurs in a comical manner so that it can be digested more easily.

- (6) Don't try that joke at home. I don't want you runnin' around calling little black people **nigga** midgets, right? (AB.TW.N2.F1D-F6)

Combined with another slur, *midget*, *nigga* in this part of the performance is uttered in an educational manner that within the context of stand-up comedy, the word is allowed to be used, but it is not the same when the word is uttered "at home" even as a joke. The comic intends to explain to the audience that the word is still not allowed to be used despite his using it as a joke in a stand-up comedy performance.

- (7) Finally, you loosened up. That's what it took, ah, **nigga** midget get- gets them all the time. Right? He was all fuckin' upset and worried, and a little **nigga** midget joke just brings people together. (AB.TW.N2.F1D-F6)

The comic refers to some members of the audience who laugh at the jokes after appearing to be tense at the beginning of the performance. Despite the possible offensive meaning of the N-word uttered, under the context of stand-up comedy, it can

still be enjoyed as a piece of comedy. This is the ultimate purpose of the comic: to use N-words as offensive as they may sound, to entertain the audience and possibly educate them at the same time.

- (8) I want y'all to know something. I always let retarded people say '**nigga**' because..., (BS.WMD.N2.F1D-F6)

The comic uses two slurs in the stand-up comedy performance; *retarded* and *nigga*. From his observation, some members of the audience get offended by his use of the former slur. So, *nigga* performs as a punch line used by the comic with the intention to even out the degree of offensiveness previously expressed.

- (9) Uh, I am a- um, a- a black poor gay man. Um, specifically in that order. I'm 'black' first 'cause I say '**nigga**' a lot. (DP.BPGM.N2.F4)

The N-word is used by the comic to explain that he is black because he says the N-word a lot, implying that it is a common and accepted thing when N-word is used by black people. There is no negative connotation to this N-word use, just that black people say the N-word.

- (10) Oh, man, what up, what up? What up? Yes, surprise, it's me, **nigga**. (JT.FM.N2.F4)

The N-word in this part of the performance is used by the comic as a neutral reference to the audience. The intention is simply to greet the audience in a friendly, informal manner. This use is the same as saying, "Hi, guys!" or "Hey, fellas!"

- (11) If you saw *Get Out*, right? I'm the best friend at the end of the movie that turned to the main characters like, "**Nigga**, I told you not to go in that house." (RP.CMO.N2.F1C)

The comic uses the N-word in this part of the performance as a punch line, explaining that he is the type of black person who is careful and does not make risky decisions. With reference to the movie *Get Out* and being the best friend of the main characters, the N-word uttered is meant to be expressed in a neutral or even favorable manner.

- (12) So, yes, so- so I bring the phone to me, all kind of shit get knocked over- all kind of shit get knocked- what get knocked over- a lamp with no lampshade, a jar full of pennies, an

empty bottle Axe- all kind of **nigga** nightstand noise was made. (TE.EP.N2.F4)

The N-word uttered by the comic in this part of the performance is intended to explain a nightstand with stereotypical male stuff on top of it (a lamp with no lampshade, a jar full of pennies, an empty bottle of Axe). The N-word refers to nothing but to the person in the story as a male, and there is no indication of his race.

- (13) And I- and I found a message from him to his ex, saying [scoffs] that I am like a sister to him. And the first thing I thought to myself was, "Thank God I'm fucking two other **niggas** myself 'cause this could've had the power to destroy me." (TE.EP.N2.F4)

The N-word in this part of the performance is a part of the punch line of the joke. The comic utters the word to refer to two males with whom she is cheating, making her feel relieved when she finds out that she is being cheated on as well. The purpose of this part is to deliver the climax of the joke, which happens to include the word men that the comic refers to as *niggas*.

- (14) So, Planned Parenthood, right? The one in Santa Monica where all the Asians go, that's the good one. That's the good one. Like, look, look- look at your Yelp reviews. Don't fuckin'- right? Don't be afraid to Yelp. So, [laughs] I thought they were all like that- no, **nigga**, no. (TE.EP.N2.F4)

The comic utters the N-word in this part of the performance as a neutral reference to the audience. She intends to greet the audience in a casual manner. This use is similar to when a person says, "No, dude, no."

Linguistic Reclamation

In understanding how the N-word occurrences found in the data act as a process of linguistic reclamation, illocutionary force indicator account of slurs was employed in this research. The N-word slurs found in the research data and whether they succeed in functioning as slurs according to the illocutionary force indicator account are to be discussed. The results were then displayed as proof of whether the process of linguistic reclamation occurs in the research data.

The data presented are only representatives of the function categories that were found in the research data previously.

- (15) And no, I'm not- I'm not trying to get on the soapbox, I'm just sayin', right? 'Cause people hear trigger words, like, uh, 'nigga,' "Oh my God, someone said 'nigga!'" Well, how did they say it? (AB.TW.N2.F1D)

The illocutionary point of derogation is an expressive point, i.e., to express the speaker's negative evaluative attitudes toward a target. This condition is not met. The speaker shows no negative attitude towards black people. He himself is a black person, using the N-word in a way to educate and not hate on his own people.

Derogation encompasses a range of strengths of illocutionary points. It is possible to derogate a group strongly or weakly. This condition is also not met since the speaker does not intend to derogate. The degree of strength is non-existent.

Derogation has a special content condition. It takes persons or groups of people as its content. This condition is not met. The failure in fulfilling condition 1 renders this condition irrelevant.

Derogation has a preparatory condition, i.e., the speaker must intend that the hearers have negative attitudes (e.g., hatred or contempt) toward the target of derogation. This condition is also not met: the speaker does not intend for the hearers to see black people in a negative manner. Similar to the explanation in condition 1, the speaker himself is a black person, using the N-word in a way to educate while making the hearers laugh at the same time.

- (16) It's all in the context, right? I was taught- little people. Little people, right? They don't want you to say 'midget' anymore. 'Midget' is an insult, like, "There's a midget," like, you know? So, I was talking to this little person. I know I'm right. And he said- he said, "You can't say 'midget,'" and I said, "Well, that's relatively new. You know, about 10- 12 years ago you could say 'midget.'" Then, oh, he looked at me and he said, "A hundred years ago, I could say 'nigger.'" I was like, "Alright." (AB.TW.N1.F1D-F2A-F6)

The illocutionary point of derogation is an expressive point: to express the speaker's negative

evaluative attitudes toward a target. This condition is not met: the speaker does not utter the word directly but in a story-telling and joking manner, which proves a point of 'do not call little people with a slur if one does not wish for them to use a slur back.'

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(17) I want y'all to know something. I always let retarded people say 'nigga' because...
(BS.WMD.N2.F1D-F6)

The illocutionary point of derogation is an expressive point; to express the speaker's negative evaluative attitudes toward a target. This condition is not met: being a black person himself, the speaker intends not to express negative attitudes towards black people by uttering the N-word, but simply to deliver a joke which translates to 'I say the slur retarded so retarded people are allowed to slur at me.'

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negative attitudes (e.g., hatred or contempt) toward the target of derogation. This condition is not met: the speaker does not intend for the hearers to see black people in a negative manner. Similar to the explanation in condition 1, the speaker is attempting to deliver a punch line of his joke by uttering the N-word. The intention is to make the hearers laugh, not to tell them to slur at black people or even dislike/hate them.

(18) Oh, man, what up, what up? What up? Yes, surprise, it's me, nigga. (JT.FM.N2.F4)

The illocutionary point of derogation is an expressive point; to express the speaker's negative evaluative attitudes toward a target. This condition is not met: the speaker utters the N-word to members of a diverse audience, not specifically to the black ones. He expresses friendliness by uttering the N-word.

Derogation encompasses a range of strengths of illocutionary points: it is possible to derogate a group strongly or weakly. This condition is not met since the speaker does not intend to derogate. The degree of strength is non-existent.

Derogation has a special content condition. It takes persons or groups of people as its content. This condition is also not met. The failure in fulfilling condition 1 renders this condition irrelevant.

Derogation has a preparatory condition, i.e., the speaker must intend that the hearers have negative attitudes (e.g., hatred or contempt) toward the target of derogation. This condition is not met: the speaker does not intend for the hearers to see black people in a negative manner. Similar to the explanation in condition 1, the speaker is greeting the audience in a friendly manner with no intention to make them hate black people or he himself as a black person.

(19) If you saw Get Out, right? I'm the best friend at the end of the movie that turned to the main characters like, "Nigga, I told you not to go in that house." (RP.CMO.N2.F1C)

The illocutionary point of derogation is an expressive point: to express the speaker's negative evaluative attitudes towards a target. This condition is not met: the speaker is expressing closeness towards people of his own color in a story that is meant to be a joke in the performance.

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Derogation has a special content condition. It takes persons or groups of people as its content. This condition is not met. The failure in fulfilling condition 1 renders this condition irrelevant.

Derogation has a preparatory condition, i.e., the speaker must intend that the hearers have negative attitudes (e.g., hatred or contempt) towards the target of derogation. This condition is not met: the speaker does not intend for the hearers to see black people in a negative manner. Similar to the explanation in condition 1, the speaker intends to express closeness in a scenario in which he is friends with black people, which is a part of his stand-up joke.

In conclusion, it is proven that the N-words found within the data function in non-derogatory ways. The success conditions were not met by the N-word utterances for them to function as derogatory slurs successfully. The default derogatory meaning that is originally possessed by the N-word as slurs is non-existent in the in-group use of the N-word in black stand-up comedy. This can be seen as a part of the linguistic reclamation process when members of a target group collectively reclaim derogatory words from one or more oppressors.

CONCLUSION

The research aims to identify the functions of N-words found in stand-up comedy, specifically American stand-up comedy performed by black comics, and their correlation to the phenomenon of linguistic reclamation. Having employed the SPEAKING Model in the analysis of the N-words in the research data, some conclusions were drawn. The derogatory meaning that N-words originally and generally contain may become obsolete under the concept of comedy as a means to discuss heavy and difficult topics.

In conclusion, it is proven that the N-words found within the data function in non-derogatory

ways. The success conditions were not met by the N-word utterances for them to function as slurs that are derogatory successfully. The default derogatory meaning that is originally possessed by the N-word as slurs is non-existent in the in-group use of the N-word in black stand-up comedy. This can be seen as part of the linguistic reclamation process when members of a target group collectively reclaim derogatory words from one or more oppressors.

The scope of the data source of stand-up comedy in this research is arguably narrow and can be explored more for further research. This research also dealt only with N-words as nouns, which may encourage further research in the analysis of N-words as adjectives or other forms. Areas other than stand-up comedy may also be explored in the future. In spite of its limitations, the newness of this research may help in further research regarding linguistic reclamation.

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