

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENTS AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS: USING NEGATIONS IN CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

Mazlin Azizan

Albukhary International University, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The role of positive reinforcements in educational contexts is undeniably crucial in any academic institution. It is perceived to have a significant role in shaping a promising classroom scenario that will help create positive outcomes in both academic and disciplinary purposes. In this paper, discourse analysis (DA) is used to enfold this pedagogical issue at the tertiary level. Pregnant with contexts, DA could provide vital information pertaining to the pedagogical approach used by instructors; the social positions of the people involved in a particular classroom event, and the roles that the instructors play in it. In this study, primary focus was given to teacher talk particularly the use of negations during classroom interactions. The functions of negations observed were then examined from discourse analysis point of view. After analysing the transcripts from the classroom observations, the findings suggest that the authoritative role of an instructor is pertinent towards actualising the positive reinforcements intended. The meaning of negations used was also found to be much more complex than normally perceived, and what is actually conveyed could be exclusively understood from the shared background knowledge that exists between the teachers and the students. These meanings could then be translated into some kind of positive reinforcements depending on the contexts of the speech events. This study will suggest ways in which negations could be properly used in achieving positive atmosphere in tertiary classrooms and most importantly, it implies that the leadership role of an instructor should not be taken lightly.

Keywords: *linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, negations, classroom interactions, education, leadership*

INTRODUCTION

To state that discourse analysis has a very crucial role in the realisation of positive elements in negations could be regarded as a big claim. However, being highly contextualised, it is possible to claim that discourse analysis can be a very useful tool in portraying positive reinforcements in negations used in classroom interactions as what this study suggests. Why do we want to seek positive elements in everything that we do? Is it an irony to look for positive elements in negations as negations will always be regarded as the opposite of affirmatives or anything positive? However, is it just in the term and the literal meaning that suggests the negative notion but in actuality, are negations pregnant with meanings; both negative and positive according

to the contexts they are used? If yes, what kind of positive reinforcements do they imply? And what are the implications of them carrying these positive notions in the contexts of classroom interactions? How great is the instructor's role in determining the positive atmosphere in the classroom? These are among the salient features that will be explored in this paper which will be viewed from one aspect of educational leadership skills: positive reinforcements.

In the midst of the classroom observations and analysing the data, it was realised that we simply use language to convey messages and achieve purposes. But how we do what we do while interacting is so much of a mystery still. It appears as something innately prescribed to us and it just bogs down to how effective we can convey our messages and purposes in an interaction, which might differ from one individual to another. Imagine if our interactions could be structurally determined and performed accurately by us to achieve our specific goals. Imagine also if we could make people respond exactly how we want them to. The idea might be implausible as no human being is programmed as such. We are no robots. We are one unique being after all but undoubtedly complex at the same time.

The complexities of our daily interactions might be underestimated anyway. However, we can be programmed to follow certain guidelines that can be ingrained in us in order to function in the most effective way possible, which means it will vary according to one individual to another which might be rooted to many variables, either good or bad. In this case, we are relying very much on language itself which leads to the focus of this paper; a grammatical element which is looked at from systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) point of view introduced by Halliday (1985). This paper intends to enfold some pedagogical issues which relate to a specific language function, namely negations and explore the possible leadership role of the speakers involved in the multicultural classroom interactions.

Why Discourse Analysis?

Trappes-Lomax (2004), defined Discourse Analysis as “the study of language viewed communicatively and/or of communication viewed linguistically” and “it typically involves reference to concepts of language *in use*, language *above or beyond the sentence*, language as meaning *in interaction*, and language in *situational and cultural context*.”(p.134). Discourse analysis is all about communication, either written or spoken, which also includes the behaviour or gestures involved, and looks closely at the social contexts where discursive analytic studies could be carried out. As it can also be used to interpret the meaning conveyed by the text, what actually entails in the meaning making process can be figured out.

Another definition was given by Hatch (1992), which also related DA to the social and linguistics aspects. According to her, “discourse analysis is the study of language of communication – spoken or written” and that “the system that emerges out of the data shows that communication is an interlocking social, cognitive, and linguistic enterprise” (p.1). She further explained discourse analysis as a study that

looks at how language is used to make it socially appropriate and linguistically accurate. This definition, in particular, fits the objective of the study which is trying to look at discourse analysis as a tool in enfolding linguistic issues that relate to what language is used for socially.

However, Jorgenson and Philips (2002), interestingly, argued that the definitions of discourse analysis are somewhat misrepresented by many linguists as they just provide a definition to it according to their liking. To them, “there is no clear consensus as to what discourses are or how to analyse them”. They, however, proposed a “preliminary definition to discourse as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)”(p. 12), which obviously rings true with what the study generally tries to accomplish here.

On the other hand, discourse analysis, according to McCarthy (1991), is “the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used” (p. 5). He also asserted that the relationship between discourse analysis and speech acts theory is concerned with how the language is used by the speaker, what the language is doing and also how the audience should react to it. This suggests that there is a close relationship between the study of discourse analysis and pragmatics. Therefore, it fits the picture here as the social contexts of the speech events in which the speech acts occur are the basis of this paper.

Classroom Interactions and Meaning

In this paper, discourse analysis is regarded as a tool for analysis that is based on the theoretically acceptable ground. It is therefore undeniable that as ideal as it may sound, the interpretive manner of the framework might lead towards a leakage of accuracy in meaning. It is however understandable that in such complexities of classroom interactions, the reliability of the individual interpretation of meaning conveyed in the speech events can be of an acceptable manner. In negotiating meaning, students may rely on the classroom dialogue to achieve some reasoning and to arrive to conclusions of understanding what have been communicated to them (Mercer, 2010).

According to Halliday and Hassan (1989), the language used in the course of interaction can carry both intra- and interpersonal purposes. Firstly, the purposes and intentions are carried by the means of verbal language that serve as an ideational function. Secondly, they can be regarded as an interpersonal function relating to the personal and social relationships between the interactors. But identifying the language functions might be a bit tricky.

However, Ray and Kumpulainen (2002) might have a solution to this. They asserted that identifying the functions of the language used in peer interaction can be done by looking at how the meaning is implied or what is suggested by the speaker. However, it may not be an accurate account as to what the speaker literally says.

Therefore, literal meanings might have to be analysed closely to determine the actual intended meaning. This only shows that the form used to deliver the content might not go hand in hand with the meaning. However, by looking at the form and content contextually, socially and culturally, we might be able to determine the actual meaning intended.

Looking from a deeper perspective, Halliday (2003), however, explained that the “architecture” of human language is rather complex and fuzzy because it is used as a social tool to function according to situations. He further added that language carries a semiotic system which leads towards meaning intended. He asserted that “to give a realistic estimate of the meaning potential of a language – of its semiotic power – we need to include not only the options in meaning that are available but also the relative contribution that each of these options makes.” It is also therefore important for us to understand that “semiotic power is not simply a product of the number of choice of meaning that are available; their different quantitative profiles affect their semogenic potential – and therefore affect the meaning potential of the linguistic system as a whole”(p. 24). This means that however manifested, the language used has some intended or unintended meaning as it is not as clear-cut as we hope to accomplish whenever we use language to communicate with each other. However, it is undeniable that the real potential that language has in determining or achieving goals of speech depending on the speakers’ credibility and the way it is used to actualize its manifestations can be regarded as positive.

It is, however, undoubtedly difficult when dealing with classroom interactions as the analysis involved can be very subjective in manner. Kumaravadivelu (1999) argued that, “to be relevant, any classroom discourse analysis must be based on an analysis of the potential mismatch between intention and interpretation - between the teacher's intention and the learner's interpretation, on the one hand, and between the teacher's and learner's intention and the observer's interpretation, on the other” (p. 458). He suggested that classroom discourse analysis should be looked at from multiple perspectives and to be regarded as more relevant, any mismatch between intention and interpretation must be put under multifaceted considerations. He also demonstrated how “classroom discourse analysis can facilitate an understanding of the degree to which classroom participants are able or unable to create and utilize learning opportunities in class” (p. 458) which means that discourse analysis carries enormous potential in assisting understanding in classroom learning and if further explored, DA can become a very useful tool in the positive executions of ideal classroom practice.

Negations and the Potential in Positive Intentions

Negations might seem simple to define or understand but it is actually not as simple as it sounds. People accept the common knowledge that negations involve the word ‘not’ or anything that might be interpreted as a negative stand against the affirmative. Blanco and Moldovan (2011), in their study, stated that negations “could be reduced to finding negative keywords, detect their scope using syntactic analysis and reverse

its polarity” (p. 582). However, they also further exclaimed that it is more complex than that. The challenging situations of trying to understand and interpret negations used and the meaning intended might be underestimated by many.

However, they also explained negations as to be simply seen as a process that turns a statement into the opposite of the other, which is the affirmative to the negative. According to them, “a negation is normally marked by words (e.g., *not*, *no*, *never*) or affixes (e.g., *-n’t*, *un-*) and that “some other words that might be indicating the negative sense are *neither*, *nor* instead of *either*, *or* that are used in the affirmatives” (p.582). There are also words starting with *any-* (*anybody*, *anyone*, *anywhere*, etc.), that might trigger the negative connotations. Modal auxiliaries *dare* and *need* and the grammatical units such as *at all*, *much* and *till* are among those that can be used as a form of negation. When dealing with verbs, a negation usually needs an auxiliary by which when this happens, the auxiliary *do* is inserted instead (e.g., *I did the assignment* vs. *I didn’t do the assignment*).

According to Mohsen (2011), a negation, because of the universality that it has across different languages and cultural contexts, leads to both the simplicity and complexity of us trying to understand it. Because the function of negations is fairly straight-forward and simple, which is to negate parts of or the entire sentence or clause, the formal realisation, however, ironically leads to complexities of interpretations which will vary “across languages, across speakers, and even in the same speaker across contexts” (p. 1).

This paper will try to address the importance and the complexity of negations and the functions intended in the classroom interactions from discourse analysis point view. However, negations’ role in determining positive reinforcements has to be explored further because of the limited corpora that have actually looked into this matter. Following this very problem of the limited corpora, Blanco and Moldovan (2011) also concluded that the potential of negations carrying a positive role in meaning and function is present but it is also rather difficult to prove. It is especially so in this context which involves classroom interactions and the leadership quality of the instructor through positive reinforcements, if there is any. However, this finding implies that there is a high possibility that negations can be incorporated in our interactions to convey positive meanings which could trigger positive results.

Language as a Positive Reinforcement for Leadership Tool

Language has its witty way of conveying its meaning and functions. We need language in order to communicate with each other, pass on information and convey messages with specific meanings and purposes. Without language, communication is deemed almost impossible. Looking from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) point of view, as introduced by Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). this paper is trying to reveal the possibilities of language conveyed as a positive leadership tool especially in pedagogy.

Kay (1979), in commenting on SFL, mentioned that one of the advantages that he claimed for functional grammar at the outset was that “it places the logical relations that words and phrases contract on an equal footing with relations that expound communicative functions” (p. 18) when analysing grammar from functional point of view. Hence, the use of grammar, with its function in mind, can be quite an issue when it comes to formalizing the approach of understanding it. He further concluded that this might be why Halliday resorted to the systemic functional approach at the first place, as he tried to establish the relationship between grammar, functions (meaning) and social contexts. Therefore, this relationship is undeniably crucial in determining the existence of the leadership quality of educators through the use of positive language.

SFL also does not look at language as an autonomous system but as part of wider social and cultural context and as “social semiotic”. The main goal is “to look into language from the outside and specifically, to interpret linguistic processes from the standpoint of the social order” (Halliday, 1978, p. 3) and grammar as carrying potential meaning which could functionally realised by the speakers and writers themselves to represent experience (the ideational function), manage their relationship with their co-participants (the interpersonal function) and produce dialogue or monologue all at the same time. The language used, whether spoken or written, will also be examined in terms of the cohesion and coherence of the text (the textual function) and all these are done by looking at both the micro-level of clause structure and at the macro-level of context. This is important in ensuring that the complicated process of language use, even in its trivial manner, could lead to conveying messages that are full with intentions and meanings.

Another explanation was given by Johnstone (2008) in terms of intention of the speaker and interpretation of the target audience in shaping a specific discourse. She exclaimed that the different conventions of the speakers’ utterances will be interpreted by the hearers as what forms of the purposes really are; be it “a promise, an apology or and order”. It means that there are specific conventions that are typically used “for indicating or interpreting speakers’ motives for saying what they do: how utterances are taken to function in arguments, how they are taken to fill conversational slots, and how they are taken to be logically connected” (p. 258).

The contextualisation cues, known as the discourse markers, are very important in the process of indicating and interpreting motives or intentions based on the social contexts of any specific interaction. Johnstone (2008) added that the powerful way of the speakers’ “performance” will lead us to examine the strategic options for applying the techniques of persuasion and how they contribute towards shaping rhetorical discourse as well as how they are used in different contexts that might lean on either positive or negative results. This implies that the strategies used in imparting meaning and motives can be seriously linked to the “performance” that will potentially be interpreted as what is positively intended.

Interestingly, according to Denton (2008), “teacher language—what we say to students and how we say it—is one of our most powerful teaching tools. It permeates every aspect of teaching”. She further added that our words can elevate students to achieve their highest potential. “It can help them build positive relationships or encourage discord and distrust. It shapes how students think and act and, ultimately, how they learn” (p. 28). This resonates very well with the positive elements in the classrooms that every instructor should hope to achieve and it also shows the relationship between language and positive reinforcements and highlights the role of language as a teaching tool.

Cummins (2000), in discussing the relationship between language, power and pedagogy, maintained that if we want to change the educational practice, and provided that it is the goal of the analysis, an “adequate conceptualization of teacher-student interactions requires an interdisciplinary analysis that draws on, and integrates, different disciplinary perspectives” while also mentioning that “interactions between educators and students represent the direct, determinant of bilingual students’ success or failure in school” (pg. 6). This just implies how the language that is used in pedagogy, while carrying the element of the leadership power of the educators, can have a great impact on the success of an institution as a whole. However, it also needs deeper interpretations and the analysis should be looked at from many different angles of various disciplines. Cummins (2000) also suggested that the educational results, when used properly, with the right amount of language and authoritative power of the educators (as leadership skill), could be positive.

Positive reinforcement is one of the four salient features of the behaviourists’ reinforcement theory as introduced by Skinner in 1938 and this point was discussed by McLeod (2007). It is seen as a form of stimulus in triggering positive behavior or results. According to the theory, positive reinforcements should be followed by positive responses and rewards. In this paper, peeping through a psycholinguistics point of view, language (specifically the use of negations) is regarded as the stimulus that demands positive outcomes. However, with the lack of corpora that deals directly with both language and positive reinforcements, it is still very challenging to prove that language can be the effective tool to lead towards positive reinforcements that stimulate positive reactions from the students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as introduced by Halliday (1985), is mainly chosen as this paper is more interested to look at meanings which are expressed and intentions interpreted in human interactions in a social context rather than what is going on in the brain when the language is expressed. Therefore, SFL was chosen mainly because it is an approach that focuses on examining how language is used in social contexts and for specific purposes. The importance of the language function (what it is used for) is regarded as greater than the language structure (how it is produced).

SFL is concerned with the social semiotic approach to language, which is a systematic approach to analyzing the elements of linguistics involved. Halliday (1994) referred to the term *systemic* to the view of language as "a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning". He referred to the term *functional* as it means that language has evolved itself in terms of its function which has a lot to do with one's meaning, intentions and goals. He also referred to it as "the *multidimensional architecture of language* that reflects the multidimensional nature of human experience and interpersonal relationships" (Halliday, 2003, p.29).

According to Trappes-Lomax (2004), any research that involves discourse analysis is mainly qualitative because it is inherently interpretive in manner. A discourse analysis study of this nature is usually qualitative and it needs quite an analysis in order to find out the elements behind the use of language and its function (meaning). The main reason why SFL approach is adopted here is because of this very nature. Considering all the other approaches in the effort of analyzing the discourse involved, SFL then stands out to be one of the most appropriate methods when it comes to interpreting meaning and functions of the language used. It is also because of the special focus on the social context of where and when and how the text is produced that SFL stands out even more.

The study tried to engage and connect with the texts as much as possible in the process of analysing the data gathered from the general observations, transcriptions and video recordings of interactions in three classrooms. The study was carried out by observing and video recording three Mathematics lessons conducted in a one-hour tutorial session, Statistics, another one-hour tutorial session, Algebra, and a two-hour lecture for Calculus. The three classrooms' interactions that were observed are from the Centre for Foundation Studies at Albukhary International University, Malaysia. Primary focus was given to the teacher talk and their use of negations in teaching when interacting with their students. Close attention was given to the way the instructors use negations that may suggest positive reinforcements towards the students. Secondary focus was put into looking at how the students respond to and interact with their teachers as well as with their peers that might suggest positive understanding or acceptance.

The analysis was done by extracting crucial parts from the interactions and matching them with the elements of SFL in order to make sense of their meaning according to specific contexts of what was going on in the interactions. From there, further analysis was done in the effort of interpreting the meaning intended by the specific speaker and how it is perceived by the audience while considering the social contexts of the events. The possibility of whether or not the positive reinforcements exist in the interactions in the form of negations and that whether they are used to trigger positive responses are looked at very closely.

RESULTS

The results of the study can be seen as follows:

Excerpts from the three transcriptions that suggest positive reinforcements (presented within the contexts).

Observation 1 - Mr. Rajasegeran

Lecture Theatre 2 / 10 am-12 am

Calculus

T: Can you multiply this?

S: Yes

T: ... good?

S: **No.**

T: **No.** Writing questions on the board.

T: (*Tag* questions asked)

S: (Answered the *tag* questions)

.....

T: **Don't** wait for me to give the answer all the time. It's **not** something new, right?

S: Yes

S 1: What ...? (While trying to do the exercises)

T: **Didn't** you come to class last time?

S: **No.**

T: That's why.

T: The rest of you, please check whether your answer is correct or **not**, ok.

.....

S 1: I **didn't** do this because...

S 2: This function is **not** er, **not**

T: You **don't** lose any marks for that...

T: **Don't** cut ...

T: You **don't** forget the ...

T: That's why I **don't** encourage you to do this. (While trying to address the problem/common mistakes made by students)

T: You learn to expand the formula. What to expand is **not**...

.....

T: Derivative of this function...

T: 2 over 2 etc. is **not** the same answer, right?

T: If you **don't** want to use X, use Y.

T: Anyone still has problem?

S: **No**

T: Then you expand the formula...

.....

S: How to divide?

T: **No** one has to divide

T: Any question?

T: Still remember what is ..., class?

S: **No.**

T: Any **problem** in 2?

S: **No**

T: There are four markers. Please **don't** take back as souvenirs, ok?

.....

T: **Don't** worry...I won't give this kind of questions

S:

T: **Don't** worry

S:

T: Never mind

T: **Don't** worry too much.

T: **Don't** use..... use English. Your English teacher is here to see whether you use English or **not**.

S: (laugh)

.....

T: Oh, you go for the hard one, **not** the easy one.

S: (to another student – after checking his work)

Observation 2 - Mr. Amirul

Tutorial (1hour)

Algebra

T put students into groups

T: Groups of 4, **not** more than that.

S: **Not** ten?

T: **No.** (Shaking his head a few times, gesturing negative response)

- Students moved to form their groups.
- Questions were given by the teacher to each group.

.....

S: Ok.
T: **No, not** that one.
T: **Not** like this.

.....

S1: Explain to me how to answer the question
S2: Ok. You do **not** have to do this.
S1: **No**. Just explain it to me.
S2: **Don't** worry, man.

.....

S3: I **don't** understand how you got the answer
S4: Me too.

.....

T: Do you think this is correct?
T: Did you forget something here?
S: I **don't** know. (hesitantly answered)
T: This is **not** correct. Why?

.....

T: Why **didn't** you answer it this way?
S: I tried it in another way.

.....

T: Ok, that's all for today.
T: **Don't** forget to get the other questions from other groups and answer them as well.

Observation 3 - Mr. Khyasuddeen

Tutorial (1 hour)

Statistics

T: You said median
S: Why you said median?
T: ... , **isn't** it?
T: But does the median change?
S: **No** (all)
T: (Tag questions again and again)
T: Is it going to be less than 3?
S: **No** (all)
T: Is it ...?
S: **No**.

T: **No**, I want you to calculate the answer.
T: You **don't** need to ...
T: I **cannot** find the mean here.
T: Mean **doesn't** make any sense here.
T: It **doesn't** change.
T: I **cannot** simply find the mean.

.....

T: Does it make sense or **not** ?
S: **No**.
T: It **doesn't** make sense.
T: Catfish, dogfish.
T: Have you heard of fogfish? (joking)
S: (laugh)...**No**

.....

T: Have I finished question no. 8?
S: A mixture of Yes / **No**.
T: (Some said yes, some said **no**.)
S: Yes!.
T: In interval, you **cannot** minus the value.
T: It **doesn't** make sense.
T: , **isn't** it?
T: But you **cannot** divide.

.....

T: It **doesn't** make sense.
T:because we do **not** know the true zero. We do **not** know.
T: What is the answer?
S: Interval
T: Why interval, and **not** ratio?

.....

T: Do you get it or **not**?
T: What is the answer?
S: ...(still not answering)
S: You **don't** know the answer.
T: Is it nominal or ordinal?
S: Ordinal.
T: ... **not** ... ?

.....

T: ... but it **doesn't** change the data.
T: You **don't** ask me, but the other group asked me.
T: Anybody...
T: **No** idea?

Table 1: *A brief summary of the negations used and the possible positive meaning*

Examples of negations used	Positive meaning /goals in context
1. T: It is ok, isn't it? S: No	confirming, checking for understanding
2. T: ... don't forget the ... T: Don't use this here ...	reminder, advice
3. T: Don't worry...I won't give this kind of question.	reassurance, showing understanding and empathy
4. T: It doesn't make sense.	reasoning, emphasizing the content
5. T: ...I don't encourage you to..	disapproval, advice
6. T: You cannot do this ...	disapproval, gentle warning

DISCUSSION

In any classroom interactions, it is fairly hasty to assume that motives and success could easily be achieved. Certain techniques to be applied during interactions that can vary from very minimal to various and extensive interactions might be the key to achieving the specific goals. The nature of the subject or the pedagogical approach adopted by the instructors to tackle the subject matter or content in the particular lessons being delivered might also be a trigger factor. As can be seen from the results, the interactions that were observed were mostly done by the teacher. This shows the main authoritative role played by the teachers themselves. This also leads us to understand that the teachers were the ones who will be taking the leadership role in creating and shaping the right atmosphere that might be desirable by the students.

When the functions of the negations used in the interactions were analyzed, they are likely to suggest that the functions could be seen as to influence the students positively to a certain degree. This was done to ensure that the students were following the lesson as well as for them to be engaged in the discussion that was carried out in the interactions. Therefore, the results mostly suggest that teachers play an important role in suggesting or implying the meaning behind the use of negations in classroom interactions. This is mainly because in this particular case, teachers' social position as the authoritative figures allows the teachers to convey what is intended and at the same time can be understood by the students, who carry the social position as the subordinates to the teachers.

This is implied because the interactions involved were mostly one-sided and the students would interact and respond from a cue signaled by the teacher or when it was only necessary. One main factor that might contribute to this was due to the nature or the goals set by the teachers for the specific lesson that might not require much interaction especially from the students' side. For instance, at one point, the students seemed to be too engrossed with how to tackle the questions or exercises given rather than asking questions or responding to the teachers. However, this does not indicate whether it impedes the understanding of the interactions going on in the classrooms or not.

Another observation made is in the form of repetitions of the negations used in conveying the goals and intentions of the teacher. When a negation is used repeatedly, it is actually to emphasise whether something should be avoided when it comes to answering the questions in a more important setting. During an examination, as an example of this kind of setting, it might require the students to be reminded of the don'ts of something which also lead the students to the affirmative action behind it, which is the do's in exams. Here, the negations used serve as a reminder or a kind warning to the students. One might also see this as advice given from the teacher to help the students to be more focused in dealing with the subject.

Negations used in the interactions in some instances could also suggest that the teachers are just confirming about a concept or something in the lesson or the previous shared knowledge. In some parts, negations were used to suggest that the teacher was also reassuring and consoling the students, and sometimes disapproving of something the students had done or gently reprimanding them when they did something wrong. The gentle approach was indicated by the tone used by the teachers and the contexts of the events. Therefore, this also suggests that negations do have a role in the positive reinforcements that were created or shaped by the teachers as the authoritative figure in the classroom, either intentionally or unintentionally.

The negations used, together with the existence of other conventions that were used in specific contexts, do lead to some form of positive reinforcements. However, it may be unconsciously done due to our innate ability in conveying meanings. The persuasive strategies applied while teaching or imparting knowledge are apparently useful and necessary and should be done effectively. However, an observation on the different personalities of the teacher might also be a crucial factor to consider when trying to accomplish desired outcomes. Another important variable of a successfully positive lesson that is similarly important is the language competency of the instructor. Being able to use the language, or in this case, the use of negations, might be a big contributing factor towards achieving the positive goals intended.

On the other hand, students, while interacting with the teachers, used negations very rarely. This is again due to the lower social position in the classroom as opposed to the teacher. They sometimes used negations to indicate confusion or to seek guidance from the teacher. In peer interactions, not much negations were observed but when negations were used, the functions were merely to seek guidance from a

friend or to console the other party. However, there were instances whereby students do respond and also interact with their instructor. Even nodding and shaking their heads can be regarded as responding, as well as when the students were just reflecting things on their own or trying to solve the questions. These responses also imply that the positive reinforcements might be well-received.

Therefore, the results suggest that the functions of the use of a certain form of language grammatically could influence the students to behave and learn in a certain manner as dictated by the teachers. The negations used were to show intentions and goals of the speaker, but they could only be understood exclusively by having the shared knowledge between the parties involved in the interactions. However, somehow, there were also instances whereby the meaning could be understood by considering and understanding the social context of the speech events. The intentions of the use of negations might be positive or negative. However, since the focus of the study is on the positive elements that exist in the use of negations specifically as well as of language as a whole, only the positive sides of the meanings or intentions are discussed. The results, thus, also suggest that the positive reinforcements do exist in classroom interactions and that the instructor, who is the authoritative figure, plays a huge leadership role in shaping the positive ambience in a classroom.

CONCLUSION

Language is used to indicate meaning and purpose. It allows us to express what we think and feel given the different contexts that we are in. But why we use certain forms or structure of language to mean what we mean in those different contexts is still very much mysterious for the brains of human being to decipher. It is also perplexing to think of how we can figure out the meaning and intentions of speakers in front of you. However, this approach of the study from discourse analysis point of view might give an idea of how language is used as it is. This also suggests that human interactions can still be understood by looking closely at the marriage of form and function in the given social context.

The findings imply that the shared knowledge in one particular context might assist understanding of the content being discussed in the classroom. In this case, practitioners should look at the importance of the use of negations as leading towards shaping more shared knowledge to be carried on to the next sessions. The importance of the role of the teacher as an authoritative figure in confirming, reassuring, consoling, disapproving or penalising in appropriate contexts understood by both the teacher and the students at the receiving end is also implied here as the functions conveyed by the use of negations. This also implies the necessity of the leadership skills in every instructor as well as in using negations as representing some form of positive reinforcements in pedagogy.

This study was done to establish an understanding on how discourse analysis could be a useful approach in examining spoken texts in classroom setting. It also tried to enfold the mystery behind the use of negations in implementing positive

atmosphere in the classrooms. Due to the limitations encountered, this study needs further and deeper analysis and interpretation in terms of how the positive meaning and function are actually conveyed from a more systematic approach of the grammatical item chosen as the focus of the study. A closer examination on the SFL as the method of analysis of this nature might also be in dire need.

REFERENCES

- Blanco, E. and Moldovan, D. (2011). *Semantic Representation of Negation Using Focus Detention*. Proceedings of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics, 581-589.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1975). *Learning How to Mean: Explorations in the Development of Language*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K and Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 2nd ed. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (2003). On the "Architecture" of Human Language. *On Language and Linguistics*. Volume 3 in the Collected Works of M.A.K. Halliday. Edited by Jonathan Webster.
- Hatch, E.(1992) *Discourse and Language Education*. Cambridge University Press.
- Johnstone, B., *Discourse Analysis* (2008). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Jørgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kay, M. (1979). *Functional Grammar*. Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, 142-158.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (Autumn, 1999). Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Critical Approaches to TESOL., 453-484.
- Kumpulainen, K. & Wray, D. (2002). *Classroom Interaction and Social Learning*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- McCarthy, M. (1991). *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- McLeod, S. A. (2007). B.F. Skinner: Operant Conditioning, *Simply Psychology*. Retrieved from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html>
- Mercer, N. (2010). The Analysis of Classroom Talk: Methods and Methodologies, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, No.8, The British Psychological Society, 1-14.
- Mohsen, K.H. (2011). *Negation in English - Compared to Norwegian*, Master's Thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Education: University of Agder.
- Trappes-Lomax H. (2004). "Discourse analysis", in *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. ed. by A. Davies & C. Elder. Oxford: Blackwell, 133-164.
- Denton, P. (September, 2008). The Power of Our Words, *The Positive Classroom* , Vol. 66, No. 1, 28-31.