

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS IN MARGARET OGOLA'S THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE AND I SWEAR BY APOLLO

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to evaluate the uses and significance of speech acts in Margaret Ogola's two novels; *The River and the Source* (1994) and *I swear by Apollo* (2002). The researcher uses Austin (1962) and Searle 1969 Speech Act Theory. The findings shows that every utterance produced by a character in the novels could be categorized under one of the five major categories of speech acts proposed by Searle (1969). The study reveals that each major speech act contains a wide range of sub acts which are distinguished based on their felicity conditions. In addition, each illocutionary force or sub act of speech act has a specific use and significance in a speech situation. Thus, the writer uses the different speech acts to communicate the meaning intentions. The study therefore proposes that speech act analysis be adopted as an effective tool in the analysis of the characters' verbal interactions in novels.

Keywords: Speech act, representatives, directives, expressive, commissives, declaration, felicity conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) argued that speech act has nothing to do with language used in certain particular realms such as in literature. According to Austin, speech act should be uncontaminated by literature as it is nonstandard, non serious, parasitic, and impure (Miller 2001, p.60). However, Austin's notion is opposed by Derrida. According to Miller (2001, p.93) Derrida points out that there is no pure, normal, and standard speech act. When language has been uttered, the sentence is left free to have meanings and ever new meanings in all different contexts. As people cannot tell the real meaning the speaker intends to convey but guess the most possible one, and as meaning itself is not stable and changes in different contexts, one cannot say there is a standard or pure speech act. Thus, utterances in the novel should be included in speech act consideration and should be able to be analyzed for performative acts, as well. The utterances used by the characters in the novel whether with or without the presence of the speaker and hearer, can still function and perform speech acts as much as utterances produced by an existing speaker to a present hearer in everyday conversation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Written conversations in the novels perform different functions depending on the context and the meaning intentions of the speaker. This research paper recognizes that the characters' utterances in the novel have multifunctional uses. According to Page (1988) dialogue in the novel develops the plot, characterization, and presents moral arguments or discussion on some topic (p.55). In novels, the main purpose of dialogue is to develop themes, plot of the story and the character traits of the characters. When reading a dialogue in the novel, the characters

become alive in our minds because they seem to act on their own even though the author controls what happens to them. For this reason, every utterance in the novel is important towards advancing the communicative intention of the characters and the narrators. Thus, behind every utterance in the novel is an intention or a network of intentions. From the authorial point of view, each illocutionary act is designed with a set purpose in mind to serve a function such as imparting a particular piece of information, describing a state of affairs, commenting on a situation, furthering the plot of the story, characterizing fictional characters. Therefore, speech acts in a novel are different in terms of their functions and significance in the larger context of the novel.

The speech acts used in the novels are heavily loaded with meaning. The analysis of these speech acts reveals to us the intentions of the characters as well as the authorial intentions and therefore is of great significance. Searle (1969) came up with five basic kinds of speech act that one can perform in speaking depending on what the speaker's purpose is in expressing the proposition. He classified speech acts into five categories of representatives or assertives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarations. First and foremost, representatives or assertives are those kinds of speech acts that the utterances commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. These are speech acts which state what the speaker believes to be the case or not. This class includes stating, suggesting, criticizing, replying, concluding, predicting, denying, disagreeing and reporting. The acts are used by the speaker to represent a state of affairs. The representative speech act can be illustrated using the following examples:

- i) *Deforestation results in desertification*
- ii) *It was a cold and windy day*

The examples above illustrate the speaker who represents the world she/she believe it is. In the first example (i), the speaker states his/her belief that deforestation causes desertification. In the second example (ii) the speaker describes his/her opinion that the day was cold and windy as his/her belief. In using a representative speech act, the speaker makes words fit the world.

Secondly, according to Searle (1969) directives are those kinds of speech act that speakers use to get someone else to do something, that is illocutionary acts designed to get the addressee to do something such as requesting, questioning, commanding, ordering, and suggesting. It intends to produce some effects through action on the hearer. When speakers utter a directive, they attempt to get the listener to do something such as; ordering, commanding, requesting, advising, and recommending. Therefore, the speaker is trying to get the listener to carry out some action (Yule, 1996). This act represents what the speaker wants. An example is when a father tells his son "*Close the door*". The sentence contains a directive speech act. The speaker in this case the father gives a command to the hearer, the son, to close the door. This speech act embodies an effort to direct the hearer towards the speaker's goal. Another type of speech acts are commissives. Searle (1969) explains that commissives are the utterances that commit the speaker to some future course of action or illocutionary acts that commit the speaker to do something. Commissives also express the speaker's psychological attitude towards the state of affairs such as promising, threatening, offering, refusal and pledges. By uttering commissives, the speaker is committing himself or herself to some future course of action. Some examples are promising, vowing, offering, threatening, and refusing. Commissives express what the speaker intends. Using the following examples:

- iii) *I'll be back*
- iv) *We will not do that*

The speaker in example (iii) commits to the future action that he will come back again. The speaker in example (iv) promises that he/she will not do the same thing again in the future.

Both speakers are committing to some future course of action which means they apply commissive speech act.

Expressive on the other hand, are those kinds of speech acts that the utterances express a psychological state that is illocutionary act that undertake to represent a state of affairs. They state what the speaker feels like thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating (Searle, 1969, 1975). They have the function of expressing, or making known, the speaker's psychological attitude towards a state of affairs. These speech acts express the speaker's inner state which says nothing about the world. Some of the examples are thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising and condoling. These psychological states can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow which are experienced by the speaker.

Examples:

- v) *I am really sorry*
- vi) *Congratulations!*

Both the speakers in example (v) and (vi) above show their psychological states. The Speaker in the first example expresses his/her psychological state of apologizing and speaker in the second example expresses his/her psychological state of congratulating. Therefore, expressives are speech acts which express the feelings and attitudes of the speaker. Finally, declarations are those kinds of speech act that the utterances effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions, that is illocutionary acts that bring about the state of affairs they refer to such as declaring war, firing from employment, christening, excommunicating (Yule, 1996). In order to perform a declaration appropriately, the speaker has to have a special institutional role in a specific context. These acts are normally performed by someone who is especially authorized to do so within some institutional framework such as a judge sentencing offenders. When a speaker utters a declaration, his/her words bring about a new state of affairs.

Examples:

- vii) *Priest: I now pronounce you husband and wife*
- viii) *This court sentences you to ten years imprisonment*

All the examples above change the world via utterances. In the example (vii) the priest changes the life of two people from being single to being husband and wife and a new family whereas in example (viii), the judge makes a free man/woman to be an imprisoned man/woman.

The five categories of speech acts clearly suggest the basic kinds of action that one can perform in speaking as well as paradigms of different speech acts. Therefore, characters in the novels do nothing more than expressing actual state of affairs, expressing some psychological state, feelings or attitudes about a given state of affairs, committing themselves to the doing of some action in the future, attempting to get their conversational partner carry out an action and finally bringing about some state of affairs (usually of an institutional sort) by the virtue of the utterance itself. In performing each of these acts, the speaker usually performs other acts as well because each major speech act contains a wide range of sub acts. The categories enable the better understanding of language user's discourse meaning and communicative intentions in social interactions in the novels. As observed by Yule (1996), "The usefulness of speech act analysis is in illustrating the kinds of things we can do with words and identifying some of the conventional utterance forms we use to perform specific functions" (p.58).

Searle's (1969) five categories of speech acts: representatives, directives, expressive, commissives and declarations have conditions which must be satisfied in a certain context for their communicative purposes to be achieved. Therefore, for each of these categories of speech act to achieve its illocutionary force or purpose, certain conditions must be met. These conditions have been called felicity or appropriateness conditions which were first introduced

by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969). The first condition is the propositional content condition that guides the participants to fulfill the actions expressed by their performative utterances. The second is the preparatory condition which determines the appropriate settings in which a performative utterance should be uttered. The third is the sincerity condition that deals with the psychological aspects of the participants such as: feelings, intentions and thoughts. The fourth condition is the essential condition, which commits speakers to undertake the actions expressed by their performative utterances.

Therefore, the five Searle's category of illocutionary speech acts of representative or assertive, commissives, directives, expressive and declarations represent the five different functions or uses of speech acts in the novels. That is, when characters speak in the novel they are doing one or more of the following: asserting, commissing, directing, expressing, or declaring. Assertives or representatives, are speech acts which have a truth value that state what the speaker believes to be the case, or not. In using an assertive, the speaker makes words fit the world. Directives on the other hand, are acts that attempt to get the hearer to do something. They express what the speaker wants such as requesting, ordering, advising, asking, and warning. Commissives are those which commit the speaker to some future course of action. These acts express the intention of the speaker such as promising, refusing, swearing, threatening. Expressives reveal the psychological state of the speaker such as pleasure, pain, likes, joy or sorrow. This group includes apologizing, praising, complimenting. Declarations are those that change the world via their utterances such as e declaring, conferring, blessing and baptizing

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is mainly library based as it involves textual study in which data presented for analysis is collected from the primary text and other secondary sources as guided by the study objectives. For this reason, the paper adopts an analytical research design that uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. In an Analytical Research design, the study has to use facts or information already available, and analyze them to make a critical evaluation of the material (Kothari, 2004). Therefore, analytical research involves the in-depth study and evaluation of available information in an attempt to explain a phenomenon and is primarily concerned with testing hypothesis and specifying and interpreting relationships, by analyzing facts or information already available.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data in this study is taken from the utterances of the characters in the two novels. The data is in form of words, phrases, and sentences extracted from the novels. Therefore, the study adopts content analysis methods of data collection, findings, interpretation and analysis. Content analysis consists of analyzing the contents of documentary materials and texts such as books, magazines, newspapers and the contents of all other verbal materials which can be either spoken or printed (Mouton, 2001). For the purposes of this research, content analysis technique involved critically reading the novels and making notes on the pages that might contain the required data in form of utterances containing Searle's speech acts classification. The research applied analytical research design by adopting both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the data. Qualitative method was applied to analyze the data in form of utterances in the novel. Dornyei (2007, p.24) states that "qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Quantitative method was used to count the number and percentage of speech acts and their

illocutionary forces used by the characters and to draw conclusions on which types of speech acts and illocutionary forces were predominantly or least used.

RESULTS

Table 1: Breakdown of speech acts in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*

| SA | Representative | Directive | Expressive | Commissive | Declarations | Total |
|------------|----------------|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Frequency | 55 | 26 | 27 | 09 | 04 | 121 |
| Percentage | 45.5% | 21.5% | 22.3% | 7.4% | 3.3% | 100% |

From **Table 1** it is evident that the representative speech act has the highest frequency of occurrence in the two novels with 55 utterances out of the total 121 utterances representing 45.5%. The expressive speech acts comes second with 27 utterances representing 22.3% of the total 121 utterances whereas the directive speech act comes third in terms of frequency with 26 utterances representing 21.5%. In the fourth position is the commissive speech act with 9 utterances representing 7.4% of the total 121 utterances. Finally, the declarative speech act has the least frequency with 4 instances representing 3.3% out of the total 121 utterances in the two texts.

Table .2: Breakdown of Representative speech acts in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*

| Illocutionary force | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Asserting | 35 | 63.64% |
| Informing | 05 | 9.09% |
| Criticizing | 05 | 9.09% |
| Predicting | 02 | 3.64% |
| Reminding | 02 | 3.64% |
| Introducing oneself | 02 | 3.64% |
| Blaming | 02 | 3.64% |
| Introducing someone else | 01 | 1.81% |
| Wondering | 01 | 1.81% |
| Total | 55 | 100% |

Since each major speech act contains other sub acts or illocutionary forces indicating the specific use of the utterance in the speech situation **table 2** shows that the representative speech act in the two novels performs other acts such as asserting, informing, criticizing, predicting, reminding introducing oneself, blaming, introducing someone else and wondering. The illocutionary force of asserting has the highest frequency in the two texts with 35 occurrences representing 63.64% of the total 55 utterances. The illocutionary forces of informing and criticizing have 5 utterances each representing 9.09 % of the total 55 utterances. The illocutionary forces of predicting, reminding, introducing oneself and blaming have 2 occurrences each representing 3.64% .The illocutionary forces with the least frequency are; introducing someone else and wondering which appear only once representing 1.81% of the total 55 utterances.

Table 3: Breakdown of Directive speech acts in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear* by Apollo

| Illocutionary force | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Asking | 03 | 11.5% |
| Pleading | 03 | 11.5% |
| Warning | 01 | 3.8% |
| Advising | 07 | 26.9% |
| Encouraging | 04 | 15.4% |
| Ordering | 04 | 15.4% |
| Instructing | 02 | 7.7% |
| Requesting | 02 | 7.7% |
| Total | 26 | 100% |

The analysis of the utterances in the two novels show that the characters use the directive speech acts in their interactions for the purposes of encouraging, ordering, asking, pleading, instructing, advising, warning and requesting. The illocutionary force of advising has the highest frequency with 7 occurrences representing 25.93% of the total 27 utterances of directive speech act in the two texts as the information in **table 3** shows. The illocutionary forces of encouraging and ordering have the second highest frequency with 4 utterances each representing 15.4% of the total 26 utterances. Asking and pleading illocutionary forces have 3 instances of occurrences representing 11.5% whereas the illocutionary forces of instructing and requesting have 2 instances of occurrences each representing 7.7%. The illocutionary forces with the least frequency of occurrence is warning with 1 instance of occurrence representing 3.8%.

Table 4: Breakdown of Expressive speech acts in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear* by Apollo

| Illocutionary force | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Liking | 03 | 11.11% |
| Praising | 02 | 7.41% |
| Happy | 02 | 7.41% |
| Sad | 01 | 3.70% |
| Thanking | 06 | 22.22% |
| Apologizing | 05 | 18.52% |
| Despair | 03 | 11.11% |
| Fear | 02 | 7.41% |
| Greeting | 01 | 3.70% |
| Dislike | 01 | 3.70% |
| Pitying | 01 | 3.70% |
| Total | 27 | 100% |

The findings presented in **Table 4** shows the frequency of occurrences of the illocutionary forces of expressive speech acts in the two texts. The table indicates that the illocutionary force of thanking has the highest frequency at 6 instances representing 22.22% of the total 27 utterances. The illocutionary force of apologizing has the second highest frequency with 5 instances accounting for 18.52% of the total. This is closely followed by despair and liking illocutionary forces which have 3 instances of occurrence each representing 11.11%. The illocutionary forces of fear, being happy and praising appear in 2 instances each representing 7.41%. Dislike, greeting, pitying and being sad are the illocutionary forces with the least

frequency of occurrence at 1 (one) instance each representing 3.70% of the total 27 utterances of expressive speech acts in the two texts.

Table 5: Breakdown of Commissive speech acts in *The River and the Source and I Swear by Apollo*

| Illocutionary force | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Threatening | 04 | 44.4% |
| Refusing | 03 | 33.3% |
| Promising | 01 | 11.1% |
| Swearing | 01 | 11.1% |
| Total | 09 | 100% |

The study also found that the characters in the novels use commissives in their utterances. As Table 5 indicates, the data analysis indicates that there are four illocutionary forces of commissive speech acts in the two texts. The data shows that of the four, the illocutionary forces of threatening have the highest frequency with 4 instances representing 44.4%. The act of refusing has the second highest frequency at three instances of occurrences representing 33.3% of the total 8 utterances. The illocutionary forces of promising and swearing have one instance of occurrence each representing 11.1%.

Table 6: Breakdown of Declaration speech acts in *The River and the Source and I Swear by Apollo*

| Illocutionary force | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Baptizing | 01 | 25% |
| Conferring | 01 | 25% |
| Declaring | 01 | 25% |
| Blessing | 01 | 25% |
| Total | 04 | 100% |

The data analysis table 6 indicates that the declaration speech acts are the least performed in the two novels. This is because declarations are used in legal or institutional contexts which are rare in the two novels. Information in Table 6 shows the breakdown of illocutionary forces of declaration speech acts in the two texts. From the table, it is evident that each of the four illocutionary forces of baptizing, conferring, declaring and blessing occur in just one instance each in the two texts each representing 25% of the total 4 utterances of the declaration speech act.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the characters' utterances in the two novels reveals that the characters' speech acts could be analyzed within the framework of Searle's five major categories of speech acts, namely representatives, directives, expressive, commissives and declarations. In addition, the findings from the study show that each of the major categories of speech act contains a wide range of other sub acts or illocutionary forces determined by the felicity conditions of the utterance. The different illocutionary forces give the utterances the different uses or functions in a particular speech situation in the novels. In the two novels, 121 excerpts were selected for analysis of their pragmatic speech act interpretations and significance. The analysis of the data found five major categories of speech acts with a total of thirty six (36) sub acts or illocutionary forces as shown in table 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively. Therefore, characters in the novels through their utterances express actual state of affairs, express some psychological state,

feelings or attitude about a given state of affairs, commit themselves to the doing of some action in the future, attempt to get their conversational partner carry out an action and finally bring about some state of affairs usually of an institutional sort by virtue of the utterance itself.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this research paper was to establish the uses and significance of speech acts in Ogola's novels *The River and the Source* (1994) and *I Swear by Apollo* (2002). This study shows that each category of speech act used in the novels has its own significant role to play in the context of the utterances. The study demonstrates that the characters in the novels under consideration use representative speech acts to assert through their utterances the facts or beliefs and the actual state of affairs which they believe to be true. In other words, by representatives, they represent the world as they believe to be the case. The characters use representatives to assert and justify their actions, beliefs and assumptions. On the other hand, the characters in the novels use expressive speech acts to express their psychological state, feelings or attitude such as praising, pitying, greeting, apologizing, likes and dislikes. Through words, the psychological condition and inner feelings of the speaker is expressed. Directives are used by the speakers to make their addressees to do something or by ordering, requesting, asking, and warning them. The writer has used commissives to express the intentions of the speakers by making the speakers commit themselves to some future course of action such as promising, threatening, refusing and swearing. Declarations are used in the novels to bring about some change in the state of affairs. The performances of these acts bring about immediate change in the world. In the novels under consideration the declarations include declaring, conferring, blessing and baptizing. As shown by the data analysis, each speech act has a specific use and significance in a speech situation. Thus, the writer uses the different speech acts to communicate the meaning intentions.

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