

---

**A SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF MARGARET OGOLA'S THE RIVER  
AND THE SOURCE AND I SWEAR BY APOLLO**

Nicholas Onyango Oloo, Prof Francis Owino Rew, Dr Robert Onyango Ochieng'

Department of Languages, Linguistics and Literature, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga  
University of Science and Technology, Kenya

**ABSTRACT**

Despite the 21<sup>st</sup> century having witnessed considerable research on the application of pragmatic theory and principles in the analysis of novels, most scholars have studied Ogola's novels using literary theories or stylistics. This study is hinged on the premise that there is paucity of discourse studies of Ogola's novels from the point of view of pragmatics. This study examines speech acts in Margaret Ogola's two novels; *The River and the Source* (1994) and *I swear by Apollo* (2002). In this regard, the objective of this study is to describe the types of speech acts used by the writer in the novels. Austin (1962) Speech Act Theory guided this study. The study employed an analytical research design. A mixed method approach is used to analyze the data. Qualitative method is used to present the data in form of description whereas quantitative is used to count the total number of the speech acts used by the main characters. The findings indicate that every utterance used by a character performs three simultaneous acts namely; a locutionary, an illocutionary and perlocutionary. In addition, the study shows that every utterance produced by a character in the novels could be categorized under one of the five major categories speech acts proposed by Searle; representatives, expressive, directives, commissives or declarations. The study found that all these five major speech acts were used by the writer in the novels with the representative being the most dominant in both novels and the declarations the least. The study also reveals that each major speech act contains a wide range of sub acts or illocutionary forces which are distinguished based on their felicity conditions. For this reason, the findings show that the writer used thirty six sub acts in the two novels with the act of asserting having the highest frequency and declarations the least. The study therefore proposes that speech act analysis be adopted as an effective tool in the analysis of the characters' verbal interactions in novels. In addition, this study recommends further research could be conducted on speech act analysis of novels by other writers.

**Keywords:** Speech act, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, representatives, directives, expressive, commissives, declarations, felicity conditions.

## INTRODUCTION

Speech Acts are part of language use and a speaker or a writer cannot speak or write without using them (Adams, 1985). This fact is derived from Austin's insight that to say something entails performing certain communicative functions with these words (Austin, 1962). This study interrogated whether speech act analysis could be relevant to the analysis and interpretation of literary dialogue in the novel. Bredella (1992) observes that when reading a literary text, the reader has to deal with two kinds of speech acts, the individual speech act of the narrator or character in the text and text as a whole and that it is the relationship between these two kinds of speech acts that elicits the reader's interpretative efforts and enriches the reading experience. Therefore, when reading any literary work, we need to perform a speech act analysis. Adams (1985) noted that speech act theory briefly held out the hope for many literary critics that linguistic analysis had at last provided a golden key for literary interpretation. However, this hope soon faded away and speech acts have not been given the close attention and recognition that they deserve as far as analysis of dialogue in a novel is concerned. This study is therefore based on the assertion that pragmatic analysis of speech acts has important applications in the reading, analysis and interpretation of the characters' conversations and author's meaning intentions in a novel. Ogola's novels *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo* have received considerable attention and analysis from literary scholars (Wahove, 2014). There is however, currently no known study on speech act analysis of her novels. A survey of the available critical works on Ogola's novels reveals that no research has been carried out as far as application of Speech Act Theory is concerned.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech acts in the novel are acts that are uttered within the novel such as requests, promises, thanking, asserting and others said or written by the character or by the author in a novel. The words of a speech act do what they say. "They are speech that acts, rather than describes" (Miller, 2001, p.2). Utterances perform three kinds of acts which include locutionary, illocutionary and the perlocutionary acts and on any occasion, the action performed by producing an utterance will consist of these three speech acts (Austin, 1962). The locutionary act is the basic act of utterance, or producing a meaningful linguistic expression. It is the utterance of a sentence with determinate sense and reference. Austin says that locution is the actual form of words used by the speaker and their semantic meaning (Yule, 1996). The illocutionary act on the other hand is an utterance with some kind of function in mind. According to Austin, the illocutionary act is

what the speaker is doing by uttering those words such as commanding, offering, promising, threatening, thanking, and apologizing and many more. Yule (1996, p.48) states that the illocutionary act is performed via the communicative force of an utterance. The concept of illocutionary force is closely associated with the notion of the illocutionary act, "which is the communicative plan or design behind a speaker's remark" (Leech, 1983, p.200). The perlocutionary act is the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effects being special to the circumstances of the sentence (Levinson, 1983).

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. In a study carried out by Leongkamchorn (2011), the findings revealed that all categories of speech acts and their sub acts have their own sets of the

four felicity conditions -propositional, preparatory, sincerity and essential- which make the utterances achieve their communicative intentions in the speech situation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data in this study was taken from the utterances of the characters in the two novels. The data was in form of words, phrases, and sentences extracted from the novels. Therefore, the study adopted 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 study, 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 study 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.

## **DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the characters' utterances from the two novels, demonstrate that each of the utterances performs specific speech acts depending on the speech situation and the felicity conditions. The analysis of the 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 as discussed in chapter two of the literature review. In addition, the findings from the study indicate 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. In the two selected novels for the present study, 121 excerpts were selected for analysis of their pragmatic speech act interpretations. The study reveals that all the five illocutionary speech acts, namely: assertives, commissives, directives, expressive and declarations are used in the selected novels with varying frequencies with the representatives being the most dominantly use while the declarations are the least. The analysis of the data found that within the five major categories of speech acts used in the two novels, there were a total of thirty six (36) sub acts or illocutionary forces. 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 with 27 utterances represents 22.3% of the total 121 utterances whereas the directive speech act with 26 utterances represents 21.5%. The commissive speech act with 9 utterances represents 7.4% of the total 121 utterances. Finally, the declaration speech act has the least frequency with 4 instances representing 3.3% out of the total 121 utterances in the two texts.

**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	<b>121</b>
Percentage	45.5%	21.5%	22.3%	7.4%	3.3%	<b>100%</b>

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 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%

<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>
--------------	-----------	-------------

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

<b>Illocutionary force</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

<b>Illocutionary force</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

<b>Illocutionary force</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Threatening	04	44.4%
Refusing	03	33.3%
Promising	01	11.1%
Swearing	01	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings as shown in table 6 show 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.

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

<b>Illocutionary force</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Baptizing	01	25%
Conferring	01	25%
Declaring	01	25%
Blessing	01	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>100%</b>

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown that every utterance uttered by a character in the novel is used to serve a particular purpose or function in the novel. The analysis has also revealed that every utterance in the novel produced by the characters can be categorized under one of the five major categories proposed by Searle (1969). The study reveals that representatives are the most dominant with the highest frequency of use in the utterances of the characters in the two novels with 45.5% of the total 121 utterances. The expressive speech acts, come second in terms of frequency with 22.3% and the directive speech acts, third at 21.5%. The commissive speech acts, are fourth with 7.4% and the least in terms of frequency are the declaration speech acts with a paltry 3.3% of the total 121 utterances. The study therefore concludes that Ogola in her novels is more inclined to use representative speech acts in the dialogue of her characters than declarations. The study also showed that there are thirty six sub acts used in the two novels. These sub-acts are distributed among the five major categories of speech acts with the representatives having nine sub-acts of asking, pleading, warning, advising, encouraging, ordering, instructing and requesting. The expressive had eight sub acts of asking, pleading, warning, advising, encouraging, ordering, instructing and requesting. The expressive had the highest sub acts with eleven illocutionary forces of liking, praising, happy, sad, thanking, apologizing, despair, fear, greeting, dislike and pitying. The commissives had four sub acts of threatening, refusing, promising, and swearing.

Finally, declarations speech acts had four sub acts of baptizing, conferring, declaring and blessing.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, J.K. (1985). *Pragmatics and Fiction*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. New York: Oxford University Press. Babbie,
- Bredella, L. (1992). *The Pragmatics of Literary Texts*. Berlin: Monton de Grayter.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative and Mixed Methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Immaculate, F.W. (2014). Margaret Ogola's Imagination of Masculinities in Three Novels. (Unpublished Master's dissertation). Kenyatta University, Nairobi.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman
- Leongkamchorn, S. (2011). *Speech Act Analysis of British and American Poetry*. Unpublished MA Dissertation, National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok. doi:10.2916/AFORA v 4i2.1.
- Miller, J.H. (2001). *Speech Acts in Literature*, Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Morton, J. (2001). *How to Succeed in your Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*. Pretoria: Van Shaik Publishers.
- Ogola, M. (2002). *I Swear by Apollo*. Nairobi: Focus Publishers.
- Ogola, M. (1994). *The River and the Source*. Nairobi: Focus Publishers.
- Oloo, N.O. (Forthcoming). A Pragmatic analysis of Speech Acts in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source and I Swear by Apollo*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology.
- Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In Cole, P. & Morgan, J. L. (Eds), *Syntax and Semantics: Vol 3. Speech acts* (pp.59-82). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Searle, J. (1979). *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J. (1981). *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. London: Cambridge University.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*: Oxford: Oxford University Press