



EXPLORING SEMIOTICS IN SOCIAL INTERACTIONS FROM FACE-THREATENING ACT TO POLITENESS: AN INQUIRY INTO A. S. OGUNDIMU'S *THE INSIDERS*.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to demonstrate how speech acts, including all utterances, unfailingly affect the faces of the interactants involved: the speaker and the hearer in Ogundimu's novel *The Insiders*. Indeed, Politeness is directly connected with face assignment and in a broader sense with the identity's construction. Politeness strategies and Speech acts are both the tools and results of socialization. The study of their multifaceted correlations undoubtedly contributes to scrutinize the issues of maintenance of face and identity. The scope of interface between the speech acts and politeness is far from being finally established. Both the quantitative and qualitative research methods are used for data generation, collection, analysis and interpretation. Data analysis shows that directive speech acts rank first with a rate of 51%, followed by assertive speech act with 23.40% and commissive. Expressive speech acts rank third with 12.76%. These data analyses reveal that the use of directive speech act threatens both negative and positive expression of the face of both speaker and hearer. All other speech acts also threaten and violate some politeness principles as well as some conversational maxim.

Keywords: speech acts, politeness strategies, Face Threatening Act, *The Insiders*

RESUME

Le but de cette étude est de montrer comment les actes de parole, y compris tous les énoncés, affectent sans faille les visages des interactants impliqués: le locuteur et l'auditeur dans le roman d'Ogundimu *The Insiders*. En effet, la politesse est directement liée à l'affectation du visage et dans un sens plus large à la construction identitaire. Les stratégies de politesse et les actes de parole sont à la fois les outils et les résultats de la socialisation. L'Étude de leurs corrélations multiformes contribue sans aucun doute à examiner les questions de maintien du visage et de l'identité. La portée de l'interface entre les actes de politesse et la politesse est loin d'être définitivement établie. Les méthodes de données quantitative et qualitative sont utilisées pour la génération, la collecte, l'analyse et l'interprétation des données. L'analyse des données montre que l'acte de discours directif prédomine avec un taux de 51% suivi par l'acte de discours assertif 23,40% et l'acte de discours commissif et l'acte de discours expressif arrivent en dernière position avec un taux de 12,17% chacun. Ces analyses des données révèlent que l'utilisation d'un acte de discours directif menace à la fois l'expression négative et positive du visage du locuteur et de l'auditeur. Tous les autres actes de parole menacent et violent également certains principes de politesses ainsi que certaines maximes conversationnelles.

Mots-clés : actes de discours, stratégies de politesse, Acte menaçant pour le visage, *The Insiders*

INTRODUCTION

Speech acts in line with scientific tradition are actions performed via utterances by

saying that one is doing so, i.e. requests, warnings, invitations, promises, apologies, predictions, promising, asserting, asking, explanation, orders, gratitude, complaints, compliments, etc. Some speech acts threaten the hearer's face and might require compensating actions intended to restore the latter. Such restorative actions might be put under a general umbrella notion of politeness as a set of strategies that aim to mitigate face threats in achieving conflict-free communication and "face saving" balance between proximity and distance. According to Yule (1997, p. 60) politeness is a concept of polite social behavior related to the concept of face as a kind of public self-image, i.e. an image of self-delineation in terms of approved social attributes. Many linguists have developed an interest in digging into the correlation existing between speech acts and politeness. In fact, the pragmatic approach of meaning analysis is quite important. Indeed, it enables to scrutinize and decode meanings encoded in any type of speech. It must be noted that Speech Act Theory emerges with J. L. Austin's (1962) posthumous publication *How to Do Things with Words*. Speech Act Theory is central to pragmatics as it deals with acts performed in making utterances. This study applies Speech Act Theory to nine excerpts from Chapter 1 and chapter 2 culled from Sule Adetunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders* (It most specifically explores how characters such as Kudi, Bayo and Mama Tunde use language to create meanings and make themselves understood. It also aims to demonstrate how conversations abide by the norms of politeness. In order to deliver the set objectives for this research work; it has been absolutely necessary to work along the line of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms of research methodology. As such, the data generated by applying the speech act principles and strategies of discourse have been analyzed following Austin's principles. The findings from the distribution of expressive, commissive, directive and assertive speech acts across the discourse have been construed in line with Sule Adetunji Ogundimu's artifact.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Defining pragmatics

The study of language use is highly important for many reasons:

- Language use is social context dependent. This means that it needs communities to live in (Hasan 1985).
- Much more is communicated than is said or written (Yule, 1996). This means that there are 'visible meanings' and 'invisible meanings.' 'Visible' meanings refer to what is communicated literally, to the conventional meaning of words whereas 'invisible' ones refer to speakers/writers' intended meaning, what they use words to mean in a specific context.

The meaning encoded in language cannot be rightly decoded out of its context since language is highly used in a social context. Thus, it is important to study language

use and its context for the purpose of decoding language users' intended meaning. Taking into account the dimensions of meaning as communicated by a speaker, the interpretation made by a listener, the influence of the context, the invisible aspect of the meaning and the notion of distance, Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as:

- (1) the study of speaker meaning.
- (2) the study of contextual meaning.
- (3) the study of how more gets communicated than is said.
- (4) the study of the expression of relative distance (Yule, 1996: 3)

The above definitions highlight the importance of the study of language use for the purpose of decoding a speaker's intended meaning. All the above lead Yule (1996) to contend later that "in many ways, pragmatics is the study of 'invisible' meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said (or written)" (Yule, 1996: 127).

Korta & Perry (2006) excellently illustrate this while they assert that: "A diplomat who says 'yes' means 'maybe'; a diplomat who says 'maybe' means 'no'; and a diplomat who says 'no' is no diplomat" (Korta & Perry, 2006). This clearly shows how much more is communicated than is said or written. On this basis, Korta & Perry (2006) contend that 'pragmatics deals with utterances, by which we will mean specific events, the intentional acts of speakers at times and places, typically involving language' (Korta & Perry 2006). Crystal (1987) puts particular emphasis on language users and the effects of their utterances on other participants as he defines pragmatics as: 'the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of the language has on other participants in the act of communication' (Crystal, 1985: 240). In the same line, Watson and Hill (1993) view pragmatics as 'the study of language from the view point of the user, especially the choices, the constraints he meets with in employing then use of the language and the effects the use has on the communication situation' (Watson & Hill, 1993: 46). For Mey (2001), 'pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society' (Mey, 2001: 6). On his part, Leech (1983) simply views pragmatics as 'how language is used in communication' (Leech, 1983: 1). The above definitions stress the importance of pragmatics and how it contributes to decode 'visible' and 'invisible meanings' conveyed by language users.

1.2. *Speech Act Theory*

Speech Act is, in Yule's (1997) terms, 'the act performed by a speaker with an utterance' (Yule, 1997: 132). As mentioned in the introduction, Speech Act Theory can be dated back to Austin's (1962) posthumous publication *How to Do Things with Words*, in which he distinguished between constatives and performatives: constatives

are utterances that can be evaluated along a dimension of truth whereas performatives are utterances which cannot be said to be true or false but can be evaluated by a dimension of felicity. Furthermore, he classified linguistic acts into three components: locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is 'performing the act of saying something' (Leech, 1983: 199). In Nordquist's (2015) terms, it is 'the act of making meaningful utterance' (Nordquist, 2015).

Perlocutionary act is 'performing an act by saying something' (Leech, 1983: 199). According to Nordquist (2015), it is 'an action or state of mind brought about by, or a consequence of, saying something' (Nordquist (2015). Illocutionary act is 'performing an act in saying something' (Leech, 1983: 199). In other words, illocutionary act refers to 'a speaker's intention in delivering an utterance or to the kind of illocutionary act the speaker is performing' (Nordquist2015). Austin (1962) categorized illocutionary act in five classes: verdictives, exercives, commissives, habitives and expositives. But Searle (1969; 1976) proposed an alternative classification as follows:

- i. Assertives:** commit speakers to the truth of some proposition e.g. stating, claiming, reporting, announcing, describing, concluding, suggesting, predicting, etc.
- ii. Directives:** count as attempt to bring about some effect through the action of hearer e.g. requesting, ordering, demanding, questioning, pleading, inviting, begging, etc.
- iii. Expressives:** count as the expression of some psychological state e.g. thanking, apologizing, congratulating, appreciating, complaining, greeting, condoling, etc.
- iv. Commissives:** commit speakers to some future action e.g. promising, offering, swearing, threatening, warning, betting, guaranteeing, challenging, etc. to do something.
- v. Declarations:** speech acts whose successful performance brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality e.g. baptizing, resigning, dismissing, accepting, arresting, marrying, etc.

2. Method of analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to carry out this work. On the basis of quantitative method, some extracts of chapter one and chapter two have been selected and Speech Act Theory has been applied to each of them. The speech acts theory has not been applied separately to each chapter.

Indeed, the different speech acts have been identified and their corresponding statistics have been carefully provided for a thorough analysis. Thereafter, the statistical results found from the quantitative research have been qualitatively analysed, interpreted and more importantly, the reasons that underpin those

statistics have been explained as well.

3. Data analysis

3.1. Statistical distribution of speech acts

The different speech acts identified in the excerpts in general and in the utterances in particular are recapitulated in table 1 and 2 below:

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of speech acts.

Speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Assertives	11	23.40%
Directives	24	51.06%
Commissives	06	12.76%
Expressives	06	12,76%
Declaratives	00	00%
TOTAL	47	100%

Table 2: Frequency of Speech Acts Used by each Character

Characters	Assertives	Directives	Commissives	Expressives	Declaratives
Kudi	2	8	00	2	00
Bayo	5	4	2	4	00
Mama Tunde	4	12	4	00	00

3.2. Analysis of speech acts used by interactants

In order to facilitate the reading and understanding of the analyzed extracts, the following keys have been adopted:

Keys : P=page; Se=Sentence;

3.2.1. Some speech acts used by Bayo

- Assertive speech acts

“Yes we are in love”, he repeated, keeping disappointment from his voice and introducing some enthusiasm instead (**P15, Se4**). You are wrong. My father wouldn't have attempted to wreck a home (**P19, S3**). My business is my concern (**P 19, Se4**). “I will not”, Bayo spat; I used to respect your words and deeds; I never thought you could go slow as to cast aspersions on other people (**P 21, Se5**). But, if you now think you can cook up a calumny to smear my girl and scare me, you are mistaken (**P21,**

Se6).

Here Bayo uses assertive speech act to stating as in (P 15, S4) and in other utterances to express his point of views regarding the feelings she has for her lover.

- **Directive speech acts**

Watch your words, Kudi. I'm not a liar (P 9, Se5). "Must I cram her mother's CV"? Bayo Said (P 17, Se4). Please leave me alone and go your way (P18, Se2). And please, don't come back to me in this issue (P22, Se2).

Here, Directive speech acts consist of commanding and question.

- **Commissive speech acts**

I do not intend to ruin a union, I am labouring to establish (P18, Se2). It may be true, but your age cannot affect my taste (P22, Se1). Then, you will be inviting trouble (P22, Se5).

Here, indirectly, the commissive speech acts consist of promising and Threats. Bayo intends to perform some future action.

- **Expressive speech act**

"I'm sorry I did not inform you earlier"; "Kudi and I are in love" (P15, Se2). I do not believe I need to study psychology for that (P17, Se5). Bayo turned an angry look from Alaba to his aunt and snapped, "I don't like any slander against Kudi and her mother" (P17, Se8). I want to sustain the choice without any interference; I will not need your advice (P 18, Se4).

Bayo uses the expressive speech act for apologizing, liking and disliking.

3.2.2. Some speech acts used by Mama Tunde

- **Assertive speech acts**

She is a dreaded woman; no serious-minded person likes to deal with her (P17, Se7). "But I shall not, on that account, run away from my responsibilities, when I see your future threatened" (P18, Se7). "Now open you ears and let me tell you something: this Kudi you are running after has a curse on her head (P21, Se1). She fell from her mother's back when she was a baby (P21, Se3).

Here, the assertive speech acts consist of reporting. And this reporting can be considered as a threat because it is a kind of warning.

- **Directive speech acts**

"What are you driving with Kudi? She queried in answer (P15, Se1). "In love"?

Mama Tunde echoed (P15, Se3). Mama Tunde glanced at her friend, shook her head and asked Bayo, "How much do you know about Kudi for the two of you to marry? (P 17, Se1). How much do you know about her background? (P17, Se2). How much do you know about her mother? (P17, Se3). "You need to know Iyalode", Alaba said emphatically (P17, Se6). "Slander"? Mama Tunde Echoed. Is it a slanderous to tell you about the moral of a shameless woman who has gone round half a dozen husbands in less than a decade? (P17, Se9). "Shock? Where will that come from (P18, Se1)? Mama Tunde sprang to her feet: "Sit down and and think" She said. (P19, Se1). "Sit down and consult your common sense (P19, Se2). You hear" (P21, Se2)? Now, will you step back from self-destruction or not (P21, Se4)? "Why not"? She said. Are you threatening me? (P22, Se3)

Here, the directive speech acts consist of questioning, and commanding.

- **Commissive speech acts**

"I shall provide it", Mama Tunde countered (P18, Se5). "True, I cannot afford financial contribution towards your marriage (P18, Se6). I shouldn't come back eh! I shall come here twenty times, if I have to (P22, Se4). Well, let me invite trouble, I shall host it (P22, Se6).

Mama Tunde uses commissive speech acts to promise, threat Bayo what she will do soon.

3.2.3. *Some speech acts used by Kudi*

- **Assertive speech acts**

I knew it would. But you didn't realise that you were trapping yourself by straining the truth (P9, Se3). You liar! (P9, Se4).

Kudi uses assertive speech act to state her opinion concerning Bayo who she qualifies as a liar.

- **Directive speech acts**

Bayo Kudoro, "you are bloody cheat. Keep away from me. (P4, Se1). "Did you read my note"? She asked (P8, Se1). You've got nothing to talk to me about (P8, Se2). You'd better go back, I don't want any explanation (P8, Se3). "You needn't have come, it is my handwriting (P8, Se4). "You ought to have recognised my signature (P8, Se5). "Why should I" She said with a sarcastic smile on her lips (P9, Se1). "Why don't you want her name mentioned" (P9, Se2)? Here, the directive speech acts consist of commanding, questioning.

- **Expressive speech acts**

I don't want to see you anymore (P4, Se2). I no longer can associate with a double dealer (P8, Se6).

The expressive speech acts used here consist of disliking and refusals.

4. Discussion of findings

From the above tables, the analysis of the speech acts reveal that the directives speech acts are dominant with 51.06% and it is Mama Tunde who has used it more with 12/24. She uses it more sometimes to command or ask questions for explanation or request. A lot of direct questions which required yes/no answer have been asked. The second person who uses it is Kudi. She uses it to command Bayo and to ask some explicative question that he knows himself the answers. These questions and commands threaten both the negative face and positive face of Bayo as it is an imposition to answer and Bayo sees himself neglected. Bayo is the last person who uses it. He uses it to reject the suggestion of Mama Tunde who he considers as the destructor of his relationship and his life

Assertive speech acts rank in the second position with 23.40%. It is used more by Bayo 5/11. Bayo uses here it to express the state in which he is and also to show his point of view concerning what Mama Tunde Says. Tunde shows that Mama Tunde are wrong and what she thinks is only to mislead him. Mama Tunde uses it to explain why she is refusing to Bayo to marry Kudi. It is a description of the bad behaviour of Kudi's mother and the curse which is in the head of Kudi. She uses it also to show that she has a duty to give a piece of advice to Bayo who thinks that she is a destructor.

Commissive as Expressive speech acts rank in the third position with 12.76% respectively. For commissive speech acts used more by Mama Tunde 4/6 she uses it to show that she will continue to advise Bayo even if he doesn't want to follow her and also to warn him for the coming danger and that she will not be there for help. These expressions constitute a threat to Bayo who in turn will threaten Mama Tunde as he warns her not to see her even if the trouble shall be.

The expressive is used more by Bayo, 4/6. He uses this pragmatic principle to first and foremost express apologies; secondly, he makes use of it to express his willingness and intentions to continue his relationship with Kudi. The analysis of these speech acts reveal that Mama Tunde uses them more than other characters, in particular the directive speech act, applied to direct questions. The direct questions which required yes or no answer are in line with the polite way used in a conversation. She portrays just like Bayo the same lack of politeness in discourse. In fact, Bayo uses interruption that can damage the positive face of Mama Tunde. Kudi also uses assertive to threaten the positive face of Bayo by accusing him as a double liar.

As the results of the speech acts analyses exude throughout Tables 1 and 2 directive speech acts are predominant. This speech act is used to demonstrate how the orders are enacted; direct questions are used. Directives are speech acts in which an obligation is placed by the speaker on one or more addressees. The polite face effects of directive are essentially those described by Brown and Levinson (1987): to mitigate the inherent negative face threat of a directive, the speaker may appeal to the addressee's positive face to make them feel good about fulfilling the request; they may also counteract the face threat with an appeal to negative face; or they may phrase the request indirectly to give the addressee greater freedom in their response. The use of these directive speech acts show that Kudi, Mama Tunde and Bayo use the Face Threaten Act (FTA). The use of "You have got nothing to talk to me about" by Kudi threaten the positive face of Bayo who sees himself rejected. For negative face threatening, it is used by Mama Tunde in this sentence "Sit down and think, sit down and consult your common sense". It is imposed upon Bayo to do something he does not intend to do. The predominance of directive speech act reveals that the face threaten act is more used. The high proportion of question shows that the speaker wants to know more from the hearer which kind of imposition it is. The rhetorical question "you hear" shows that the "Off Record" is observed. Referring to Culpeper et al. (2003) it can be inferred that the threat of listener's face is impolite.

Assertive speech acts commit S to the truth of the expressed proposition. Traditionally, it is believed that "such illocutions tend to be neutral as regards politeness" (Leech1983:105). But, here, through assertive speech acts, one can see that Bayo, Kudi and Mama Tunde do not minimize threats. The sentences "You liar", "but if you think you can cook up a calumny to smear my girl, you are mistaken", "She is a dreaded woman; no serious-minded person likes to deal with her" show it. Through also this assertive speech acts, the approbation maxim is violated as Kudi didn't minimize dispraise of other and also Bayo didn't do it "You liar", "You are a bloody cheat", "You are wrong". Off Record is fewly observed as Mama Tunde indirectly threatens Bayo and minimize threats "She fell from her mother's back when she was a Baby".

The commissive act intrinsically threatens H's negative face. S imposes himself a future action that will certainly affect H. The use of commissive speech acts show that the FTA is committed both by Bayo as by Mama Tunde. The use of "True, I cannot afford financial contribution towards your marriage", Then you will be inviting trouble. The use of all theses commissive speech acts show that Bayo don't take care of what Mama Tunde is saying and if she continues it can lead to a trouble. Bayo as Mama Tunde see themselves refused by each other's.

Expressives are speech acts whose illocutionary force addresses the nature of the relationship between speaker and addressee. Randquit, in her (2007) study of apologies, calls this relationship the "social balance sheet". However, not all

expressives seek to restore balance in fact, some are used impolitely to increase the status of difference between speaker and addressee. The expressive speech acts express the dislike of Kudi to go with Bayo. She shows disagreement. Bayo uses it to first to apologize "I'm sorry, I did not inform you earlier" and in the following sentences to express his discontent to what Mama Tunde is saying concern their relationship with Kudi. Approbation Maxim which expects the speaker to praise the listener is violated by Kudi. The sentence "I can no longer associate with a double dealer" expresses it.

The analysis of speech acts show that the strategies of politeness are violated even some principles of politeness which we did not develop in this article. The use of more directive speech acts show that the discourses are less polite with tension between the speakers. The assertive as commissive speech acts show the presence of threat which consist of positive as negative face threatening. The expressive which reveal some point of view are enacted with less polite form. All of them violate the strategies of politeness which normally must be observed so as to maintain peace and socialization.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored how politeness is reproduced through the application of Speech Act Theory. The analysis has revealed valuable findings. To mention but a few, the study has shown that directive speech acts are predominant with direct questions which have been asked and which create a lack of politeness because it threaten the negative as the positive face both of the speaker as of the hearer. The command is also made through these speech acts. This command threatens the negative face of the hearer who automatically is viewing himself in a position of obligation and not free from action. Through the use of assertive speech acts which rank in second position Mama Tunde uses an off-record to minimize the threat to Bayo. Kudi uses it to threaten the positive face of Bayo. Bayo also uses and threat the positive face of Mama. The conversation seems to be hot. The use of the expressive speech acts leads us to understand that there is a disagreement between Mama Tunde and Bayo who is her nephew. The use of this speech acts reveal the violation of Approbation Maxim as the hearer doesn't receive a praise from the speaker.

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