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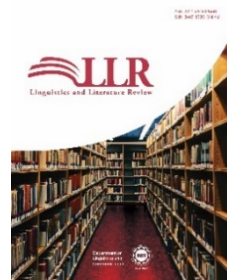|	
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Author (s):	Virginia Simasiku, Haileleul Zeleke Woldemariam
Affiliation (s):	Namibia University of Science and Technology(NUST), Windhoek, Namibia
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Role of Misconceptions and Miscommunications in Theatrical Characters: Analyzing Speech Acts in the Namibian Plays

Virginia Simasiku[*] and Haileleul Zeleke Woldemariam

Department of Communication and Languages, Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), Windhoek, Namibi

Abstract

The current study examines the misconceptions and misunderstandings in the speech acts of the characters within three Namibian plays, namely The Oracle of Cidino written by Francis Nyathi, Checkmate by Maria Amakali, and The Bride and Broom penned by David Stone Ndjavera. Furthermore, this research examines the ways, which depict instances where characters' speech acts lead to misconceptions and misunderstandings in the selected plays. Thereby, delving into these aspects, this study sheds light on the complexities of communication within the selected theatrical works. Moreover, this study examines the impact of miscommunication in discussions, which can culminate differences in understanding of speech acts between the speaker and the listener. The listener, however, is prone to a variety of emotional reactions, which arise from misunderstandings in a conversation - including feelings of joy, humor, embarrassment, regret or self-assumption, and impression of the speaker's utterance. The results of the enquiry evinced that the location-based actions performed by the characters in the three selected plays included declarative, interrogative, and imperative resources that are extracted from three Namibian plays. This is achieved by adopting a discourse analysis research approach, identifying, and explaining speech acts based on five classes of speech acts. Additionally, the current study is established on five functions of speech acts and on the other hand, the declarative statements proliferate the fewest of times since they require specified circumstances to be performed.

Keywords: misconceptions, miscommunications, Namibian plays, and speech acts

Introduction

The spoken language is a representation of an idiosyncratic society. This asserts that humans are represented according to their language, which cannot be separated. As a result, humans use language according to their

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[*]Corresponding Author: simasikusepiso@gmail.com

culture to communicate with one another, which inevitably links individuals and society. Misunderstandings and miscommunications are prime characteristics of human interactions, namely human communicative events (speech acts). Speech acts represent a key concept in the field of pragmatics and this study examines the proliferation of misconceptions and misunderstandings in the speech acts of the characters within three Namibian plays, namely *The Oracle of Cidino* written by Francis Nyathi, *Checkmate* by Maria Amakali, and *The Bride and Broom* penned by David Stone Ndjavera. It is significant to note that people uses language to communicate their demands, requests, notices, apologies, and directions, among other things (Yuniati, 2018). However, there can be situations when the objectives or the speech of the speaker can be misunderstood – and miscommunicated between the speaker and the hearer. Austin (1962) believed that while communicating, people have their own predetermined communicative purposes in their minds and desire, which have a certain kind of communicative impact. For this reason, it is crucial for people to pay close attention to both the speech acts and the intention of the utterances.

Misunderstandings and miscommunications frequently occur during human interactions for a variety of reasons. Therefore, speakers and hearers must understand each other in order to prevent misunderstandings and establish effective communication. There must be an effective transference of concepts from the mind of the speaker to that of the listener can understand the meaning (Sabao, 2013).

Communication is essential for humanity because individuals utilize it to form bonds with other people and groups. It is a medium for individuals to experiment creatively, especially through fictional writings. Theatre or drama is the most prominent literary form in Namibian literature. Therefore, Namibian drama is largely characterized by dialogues between characters who use language to communicate and share their meanings. As a result, plays largely mimic real-life interactions and communicative occurrences in the speech acts of the speaker and audience, which are prone to get misinterpreted individuals. This misinterpretation largely occurs when a statement or an utterance is not comprehended by the listener in the manner that the speaker intended. This rising problematic issue can be resolved by delving into the meaning of an utterance, which occurs in any oral communication and is used in any contextual meaning (Austin, 1962).

According to Rayhana (2020), speech acts are fascinating to investigate since the speaker conducts actions such as requests, warnings, invitations, promises, apologies, and etc., when saying them. As a result, successful communication demands the listener to correctly interpret the meaning of the statement within the given context. Speakers frequently provide listeners with the right to discern the function or communicative aim of their statements and to behave appropriately. When two participants have different perspectives regarding a conversation or speech act, it might lead to misunderstandings.

Statement of the Problem

Drama or plays are characterised by the fact that the characters should ideally interact and communicate in the most effective ways when performing together or through dialogue. However, pragmatic problems do not only occur in daily conversations but also in plays when characters interact and communicate through dialogues, which is often for dramatic effect or artistic creativity. In this situation, misconceptions and miscommunications might occur in their speech, so the reader/listener have to understand on his own the intended meaning of the speaker. Locutionary and illocutionary utterances need to match otherwise the speaker and the hearer would misinterpret one other, while the characters are performing in a play (Searle, 1969). Preliminary far readings of the texts, *The Oracle of Cidino, Checkmate, and The Bride and The Broom*, revealed language failures and language intricacies, which were quite persistent in the selected Namibian plays. Problems observed are such as the difficulty and vocabulary not suitable for the audience. The target audience is important because it is part of the play. Language is important in plays as characters in any play interact or communicate by conversations and dialogue. These instances of use of language in the plays are considered as speech acts, which chiefly convey the meanings through the utterances. Therefore, the current study is essential as it seeks to identify the speech acts in the three selected Namibian plays and to evaluate themisconceptions and misunderstandings in the speech acts of the characters within three Namibian plays.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to investigate the speech acts of the characters within the Namibian splays, namely The Oracle of Cidino, Checkmate, and The Bride and The Broom to evaluate their rhetorical and

communicative potentials. Thus, the current research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the relevance and communicative effects of locutionary acts uttered by the characters in the selected plays.

2. To evaluate the functions of illocutionary acts employed by the characters in the selected Namibian plays.

3. To interpret the impact of perlocutionary acts uttered by the characters in the selected Namibian plays.

The Significance of the Research

It is envisaged that the current research would contribute to the existing literature on speech acts, especially concerning the Namibian context and Namibian literature. The research may be used as a reference for researchers, students, educators and practitioners who have an interest and conduct the similar research as it would contribute to the understanding of the reality of communication through fictional writings.

Operational Definition of Terms

1. Misconception: an idea that is wrong because it is based on a failure to understand a situation (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus)

2. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/misconception

3. Misunderstanding: an occasion when someone does not understand something correctly (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus)
   https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/misunderstanding

Review of Literature

Namibian Drama: An Overview

Drama is distinguished by the fact that the characters must interact and communicate as effectively as possible during the whole performance or through their speech and dialogues. However, pragmatic concerns increasingly arise not just in daily human interactive contexts but also in plays when the characters interact and converse. Dramas usually incorporate dramatic effects and creative inventions to make an impression on their audience. These circumstances and misunderstandings of

utterances or statements may arise as the reader/listener attempts to comprehend the speaker/writer's intended meaning. Misunderstandings occur more frequently when listeners have trouble deciphering the speakers' intentions. Resultantly, such misinterpretations could result in communication breakdown or failure of speech acts.

Through a close reading of the selected Namibian plays, *The Oracle of Cidino*, *Checkmate,* and *The Bride and the Broom*, it was revealed that these plays had constant blunders and linguistic faults. The concerns uncovered include the high proliferation of jargon that is not suitable for the general audience. By analyzing the language patterns of plays is important to know that the characters in any play interact through discourse and dialogue that mirrors human dialogues in real-life interactive contexts .Similarly, this enquiry is essential as it tries to analyze the speech acts used by the characters in three selected plays –they represent the potential flaws of the characters.The purpose of such an exercise is to assess the communication and interpersonal skills of the characters and how this can be reflected on the creativity of the playwrights as well as the communicative potential of the plays themselves. This can be achieved through an assessment of the communicative and rhetorical potential of the characters' speech acts. In endeavouring to examine and evaluate the speech acts that occur inside the speech events of the characters in *The Oracle of Cidino*, *Checkmate* and *The Bride and the Broom,* the researcher examined the misconceptions and miscommunications of the characters' locutionary acts in the three plays. Further, assessed the illocutionary acts used by characters and analyze the characters' perlocutionary acts in the three selected plays.

Misunderstandings and the Communicative Intents of Speech Acts

According to McRoy and Hirst ([1995](#)), speech acts can create misunderstandings that occur when two participants have different perspectives on their respective discourse functions regarding a particular utterance/statement. For instance, one speaker may interpret a given utterance as an assertion, while another may interpret it as a request. Furthermore, they defined misconceptions as errors in the prior knowledge of a character. As a result, communication fails because ideas are not successfully conveyed from the speaker to the listener. Communication is defined as "one person (a source) actively encoding and transmitting a message through a channel to an intended audience (receivers) in order to induce a particular attitude or action" (Samovar et al., [198](#)1, p.13). Qin

([2011](#)) claimed that in a specific situation, the speaker uses specific language in anticipation of the hearer's interpretation and the hearer apply that interpretation in the light of assumptions about the intent of the speaker.

Grice (1969), stated that an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is expressed and recognition of intentions. Both the speaker and the hearer are motivated to understand and make themselves understood in order to establish effective communication. Grice believed that communications are coordinated efforts by the speaker and hearer. McRoy and Hirst ([1995](#)) in their study suggested that listeners expect that a speaker's utterances will have some coherent relation to the discourse so far. As a result, they may rule out interpretations, which are incompatible with the discourse when they assess multiple possible meanings of a speech or utterance.

Causes of Miscommunications and Misconceptions in Communication

Misunderstandings in communication are so common that they are hard to be ignored even by ordinary people because everyone has had the experience of being misunderstood or of misunderstanding by others. Qin ([2011](#)) explained that communication misunderstanding is the root cause of many breakdowns. Misunderstandings do not, however, account for all instances of communication breakdown. Miscommunication or misunderstanding may occur for other reasons, such as disagreement or a conflict of interest. Misunderstanding does not always result in poor communication. Instead, communication often continues if the parties involved are unaware of the misunderstanding or if it is handled carefully. Qin ([2011](#)) exemplified that diverse speaking styles can lead to misunderstandings due to various factors including age, personality, ethnicity, socioeconomic backgrounds, and developing environments. Moreover, McRoy and Hirst ([1995](#)) argued that a breakdown in communication could result from misunderstandings – where one party is unable to understand an expression or utterance, which leads to misunderstandings and miscommunications. Participants may acquire various opinions regarding their accomplishments due to various misunderstandings. On the other hand, misconceptions do not happen by chance. Instead, their occurrence is complex and causal with often happen due to speech functions. In explaining their causes, Jung ([2020](#)) stated that when the knowledge that is instinctively comprehended in daily life does

not accurately reflect the content of the notion, misconceptions are likely to happen.

Levels of Misunderstanding

Hinnenkamp (Macora, 2020), identified that there are seven major kinds of misunderstandings:

1. Extended variant: The misunderstood segment may be reconstructed by virtue of identification or localization, which may even become specified by an explicit "diagnosis" (realization of the characteristics of the issue at hand) or "anamnesis" (case history) of the misunderstanding's trajectory.
2. There is an immediate recognition of a misunderstanding, which is indicated by a repair at the next possible opportunity, but there is no return to the status quo ante. The misunderstanding itself becomes a resource of continuation.
3. The likelihood of a return to the pre-misunderstanding state decreases as the mistake's trajectory lengthens. Instead, the likelihood of a continuance based on the misunderstanding increases.
4. There is a gradual recognition of a misunderstanding, which may be indicated by disturbances in the flow of the conversational course, by signs of incoherence, by detours or recyclings (repetitions, paraphrases, circumlocutions), by unresponded repair initiations, by suddenly or gradually developing traces of verbal, nonverbal, or paralinguistic insecurity
5. There is a period of gradual awareness of a misunderstanding, which may manifest as disruptions to the conversation flow, signs of confusion, detours or rephrasing (rephrasing, paraphrasing, circumlocution, walking down, etc.), unresponsive repair initiations, sudden or gradual appearance of signs of vocal, non-verbal, or paralinguistic uncertainty, or simply the indication or registration of 'uncomfortable' moments, until the misunderstanding has been identified.
6. There is not a clear indication of a misunderstanding, even though an outside observer sees one. Alternatively, one of the participants may have received specific information later on that has caused them to reconsider the interaction (or specific parts of it) as a misunderstanding.
7. To an outside observer there is no indication that a misunderstanding has occurred, but one interlocutor may have the feeling that s/he was

misunderstood – the misunderstanding,although noticed, remains unnegotiated

Armistany and Zamzani (2019), on the other hand, argued that the use of speech acts are not limited to what the speaker is saying but also to the interlocutor perception of what is said. Searle (1969) accepted the challenge of expanding on and refining Austin's concept of speech acts. Searle(1969) extended Austin's theory and proposed his own ideas. Explanations, directives, inquiries, promises, are examples of speech acts suggested by Searle.

Austin's (1962) Speech Acts Theory divided the speech acts into three sub-categories: Locutionary acts, which are divided into three kinds, namely, declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives. Secondly, the locutionary act, which is the actual utterance made by the speaker and the illocutionary act, which is the genuine intended meaning of the utterance, are the three parallel levels of activity carried out in Speech Acts. Austin described an illocutionary act as "the act of stating anything." Some utterances may necessitate the explanation of certain terminology, depending on the situation.

According to Septiani (2019), a speaker's words are likely to have an effect on other people based on their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. For example, persuasion, fear mongering, and other emotions are all prime examples of perlocutionary acts, which fall under the umbrella term "perlocutionary deed." Furthermore, Searle (1969) developed the taxonomy of speech acts, namely assertive, commands, commissives, expressive, and declarations.

Woldemariam (2015) also conducted a test to find out the pedagogic relevance of speech acts in teaching indigenous poetry in English and the abiding relationship between the methodology and the development of pragmatic competence. Two poems were taught to the experimental class by following the active learning and the pragmatics stylistics methods. Each group was tested, which was rated out of 20 (there were four other tests out of 80%).

Summaries of the Plays

The Bride and the Broom begins with a letter from Steven to Charlotte in which he expressed his regret for missing the previous week's meeting due to work demands. However, he makes a promise to return the following

week. Charlotte and Steven were engaged and were expected have their wedding soon. Sadly, their wedding has been postponed because Steven fails to show up. Charlotte has had enough of waiting for him to marry her and strikes a deal with the priest to marry them, even in the absence of Steven. Steven gets furious when he reached home and learned about his marriage that had been conducted already in his absence

Sara's supervisor challenges her about her tardiness and shows his disapproval in the beginning of the play, *Checkmate*. They are, however, in an extramarital relationship and his wife was willing to divorce him if she (Sara) had an intimate relationship with him. Sara becomes pregnant and has a child. After discovering that her boss had not divorced his wife, Sara quits her job. Neither the wife nor Sara's unborn child know that their husband is having an extramarital affair with his secretary. The wife divorced her husband after discovering that her husband and Sara had a child. Later Sara abandoned her employer.

Major Findings

The Impact of Locutionary Acts on Misconceptions and Miscommunications

The first section of the analysis focuses on classifying and examining the misconceptions and miscommunications of the characters' locutionary acts in the selected Namibian plays. The significance of locutionary acts were proven in all three selected plays through data analysis. Locutionary act which is the basic of utterance or producing a meaningful linguistic expression (Yule, 1996). Declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives are all examples of locutionary acts. Additionally, the researcher observed that there are instances of misunderstandings, which are rooted in the speech taxonomy of the plays. These are instances in which the listener interprets a speaker's utterance through different speech acts and label the speaker's intended meaning. Some misconceptions arise from disparate interpretations of the taxonomic classification between the speaker and the listener.

Declaratives

Declarative utterance refers to the act of a speaker's speech to transmit information to the audience. In the three plays, the researcher provides samples of the characters' narrative utterances.

Voice: Dear Charlotte, I am sorry I couldn't come last month as we planned, the work got more and more and we had to stay, but I will be coming home next week. How are the children, and my mom? Keep well, I love you! See you soon! Your darling Steven (p. 101).

Charlotte: (approaching the stand where the PRIEST is standing) Oh, this is the happiest day of my life. (she has a broom in her hand. A portrait of a man is fixed on top of the broom)

Priest: Madam, do you think we should proceed with this?

Charlotte: Yes, why not?

The above conversation between Charlotte and the Priest is taken from *The Bride and the Broom*, the first data shows the event when Steven writes a letter to Charlotte informing her about his busy schedule at work and explaining that he would be coming in the following week. This conversation evinces a declarative locutionary act because Steven simply provided the relevant information to Charlotte about his work. Charlotte felt annoyed that Steven did not come for their wedding as promised. In this situation, Steven truly means to save face by making the courteous request in his capacity by writing a letter to Charlotte to explain his work schedule and promise to come in the following week.

However, there is a miscommunication, Charlotte, the hearer, misinterprets Steven's statement as a face-threating act, while she understands it as a face saving one – humiliation (expressive). She believed that Steven has embarrassed her publicly by not fulfilling his commitment for the wedding and she was furious about it. The priest believed that the reason given by her husband's absence made sense for her to wait for him to be physically present at the actual wedding, as it is significant for both husband and wife to attend.

The next conversations were taken from *The Oracle of Cidino* where a fool is misleading the King.

Fool: (Impersonating the Town Clerk) You have called, Father (p.62)

Fool: Very well, my Lord.

King: Come, kneel at my front and   let me place my hand on your skull the first that the gods may smoothe the new path of your life.

> Fool*: (Walks to the front of the king and kneels) My knees are exalted at your front, father.

> King: Your voice sounds peculiar today, my son. Why does it crackle today?

The above conversation shows an event in which a fool was impersonating the town clerk who was the son of the king and was sitting on the throne   as the Town Clerk. However, a misunderstanding appeared in the conversation when King as the hearer, confused the voice of the fool as that of his son's voice. He was quite aware of his son's voice and this happened because the King has become sightless now and the fool took an advantage of the situation by mimicking like his heir. This level of misunderstanding falls under level 7. Furthermore, the King's statement, "Come, kneel at my front and   let me place my hand on your skull the first that the gods may smooth the new path of your life" is a declarative locutionary act.

Interrogatives

The definition of an act of inquiring is a style of speaking used to provoke an inquiry. The following examples in the play, *Checkmate* depict the use of interrogatives between two characters, namely the Wife and the Boss.

> Wife: Hi boy. *What is your name?* (she puts him down) *What are you doing here anyway?* (p.160)

> Boss: Having lunch. *Are you finished with your shopping?* (she looks at the baby again, this time for a long while) Marianne, I asked you a question.

> Wife: (startled) Ha … Something is not right here. *What is going on? Is it my eyes or does this kid look too much like you?* (look again at everyone and stands up) Bloody hell?!

In the above conversation, the interrogative locutionary act occurs when the Wife and Boss were both asking questions in the above conversations. Firstly, the Wife wonders why the Boss is at the restaurant with his secretary and the baby. Boss questioned his wife whether she was done shopping and Wife also wanted to know what was going on.

There was a misunderstanding and miscommunication happened in the above conversation, especially when Wife commented on the likeness of the baby to Boss. Wife wanted to know the name of the baby, especially when she realized that the baby just looks like her husband. This brings about a misunderstanding between them. The Wife felt offended after finding out that the baby is her husband's child. In the end, the Boss tried to explain and apologies to his Wife but she does not accept the apology.

Imperatives

Austin ([1962](#)) define. an imperative statement as one that is an order, permission, demand, request, recommendation, advice, or warning (p. 76). Imperative locutionary acts are used by the speaker to give command, order, or request to the listener.

> Boss: Please Marianne, don't make   a scene. (SARA just looks on) (p, 161)
> Wife: Me make a scene? It is bad enough having an affair, but a child with her, that is embarrassing. *(*to SARA) How could you? How could you? Taking on a married man. You can't find your man or what? Slut!!

The above conversation is between Boss and Wife. Boss requests his Wife (Marianne) to not make a scene in the restaurant but a misunderstanding between Wife and Sara begins when Wife insulted Sara publicly.

Representatives

A representative demonstrated whether or not the speaker thinks something to be true. Representatives are the most fundamental intra-speech acts, which individuals utilise in a wide range of discussions and everyday interactions, as they simply convey the state of the world (Searle, [1969](#)). For example, The Oracle of Cidino represent the impact of misunderstandings and miscommunications in speech acts.

> Neo: … Your uncultured daughter is so wicked. Look at the rag on her waist (pointing at the girl's clothing). My son was seduced (p,5).

> Girl: No, no (in tears), he held my arm as I walked from the well of water and he dragged me…

The above conversations represent the impact of misunderstandings between Neo and the girl as Neo misinterpret the girl's rape as uncultured and wicked because of her clothing that she wore.

Stating. A statement is the act of carefully, entirely, and clearly stating something, either vocal or in writing (Searle, 1969). It is used to foreshadow, correct or proclaim anything. People say comments that describe something in words to explain what they are thinking. This characteristic kind of discourse was evinced in all the three selected Namibian plays.

"Neo: I bred a healthy herd for your kraal. My son Akapelwa wishes to marry your daughter Thelma" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 38).

The utterance is taken from *The Oracle of Cidino*, which was performed by Neo when he goes to ask for a wife for Akapelwa (his son) from the King. Neo's utterance "*I bred a healthy herd for your kraal*" demonstrates that he believes that his herd of cattle are good for the King's kraal.

Informing. Giving or telling someone, facts or knowledge about something, which is known as informing them.

"King: *She has arrived.* She is on recess with another female companion who is a descendant of clans afar" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 10).

and

"Queen: Before you leave, (she holds him back): *we are making a big fire in the compound. Your sister has gone to fetch firewood. It is an important fire. Your father wishes to pass on the mantle to his successor*" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 26).

The above dialogues indicate a conversation between two characters the King and the Queen with a prime purpose of informing the audience. The King information to Neo. By stating '*She has arrived*' then he concludes that she is on recess with another female companion who is a descendant of clans afar. However, the second example indicates the Queen's information for the Town Clerk (his son), by stating that '*We are making a big fire in the compound. Your sister has gone to fetch firewood. It is an important fire. Your father wishes to pass on the mantle to his successor*'. She informs the audience regarding why they are having a big fire in the compound.

Agreeing. When you say "yes," you are saying that you are willing to do something or allow something to happen. In a Likewise manner, the below stated examples depict how characters agree with each other.

"Neo: *Yes*, my Lord, that is the plant" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 9).

and

"Sara: Okay if that is what you want" (Amakali, 2000, p. 158).

In the above examples, Neo in the play *The Oracle of Cidino* uses the affirmative "yes" to demonstrate that he accepts what has been spoken or requested to them as real. Neo says "Yes" to signal his agreement with the King's request for the plant known as Libombozo and "Yes" is used to simply accept an offer. Contrastingly, in the second example, Sara from the play *Checkmate* employs "Okay" as an agreeing statement representing an agreement between characters. Hence, "Okay" reflects Sara's perception of what Boss would do for her as a husband.

Expressives

Expressives refer to the speaker's tendency to express themselves verbally primarily how they express their emotions (Searle, 1969). Thus, an expressive is a phenotypic in-speech act expressed by characters in a discourse. It presents itself in emotion statements or phrases such as welcomes, thanks, joyful expressions, apologies, praises, attitudes, surprises, and rage.

Greetings. People use greetings to communicate the arrival of the hearer. Greetings contain phrases like hello, and good morning.

"Mother: *Hallo* Steven" (Ndjavera, 2000, p. 111).

and

"Wife*: Hi boy*. What is your name? (She puts him down). (Amakali, 2000, p. 160).

The characters in the above examples performed the act of greeting, while communicating with other characters in the plays. The first utterance contains the speaker's greeting for the hearer. Here, the speaker greets the hearer by saying "*Hallo Steven*". In the second utterance, the speaker greets the hearer by saying "*Hi boy*". All the utterances are psychological

expressions because the speakers express their happiness in their expressions when greeting the hearers.

Expression of Anger. This is a speech act, which is performed to convey displeasure or someone's unfavorable treatment of words. Anger is a powerful feeling, which one experiences when they believe someone has acted unfairly, cruelly or in an undesirable manner (Searle, 1969). Below stated examples depict how characters express anger with each other.

"Steven: Get out of my path, lady…" (Ndjavera, 2000, p.117).

"Charlotte: Voertsek! (Afrikaans for "go to hell")" (Ndjavera, 2000, p.117).

The first example occurs when Stephen finds that a marriage (between him and Charlotte) took place in his absence, which upsets him. The verbal act of rage is contained both the utterances above as "Woman, get out of my way..." and "Voertsek" illustrate the speakers' rage or anger.

Directives

Directives imply that the speaker directs the listener to do something in the future and causes them to obey the speaker's claims. By performing this act, the speakers attempt to make an impact on their audience.

Asking. When a person asks a question, they engage in the speaking act of asking. It may be used by anyone who wants to learn something new or improve his or her knowledge of the world. It is the act performed with the goal of eliciting an answer.

"Thelma: The Great Fire? Why is there such a large fire?" (Nyathi, 2003, p.14).

When someone asks a question, he/she perform the speech act of asking. People who desire to learn something new or enhance their knowledge of the world can utilise it. The act is performed with the intention of obtaining an answer.

Making a Request. Requesting something from someone is a kind of request. It is a type of directive speech act, which is an illocutionary function primarily used to persuade the hearer to do something when it is not evident that he or she would do so in the regular course of events (Searle, 1969).

"King: Would you want to remain for a bit and enjoy my brew?" (Nyathi, 2003).

The utterance above represents acts of requesting or inviting. The speaker intends to request/invite the hearer to do something – in this case, partake in drinking a brew. It is apparent that the King's utterance is a directive illocutionary act performed in the form of request. The speaker and the King, requests Bo Neo to stay for a while and share in the partaking of a brew and Bo Neo agreed with the King's statement.

Commanding. A command is an utterance in which the speaker who has the power, right or duty gives a command to the hearer.

"King: ... *Take this girl out of my sight"* (Nyathi, 2003, p. 5). (The messenger drags the girl of stage...)

The example above is taken from the play *The Oracle of Cidino*, in which the King explicitly commands the messenger "*Take this girl out of my sight*." This utterance is classified as a command because it perform the function of instructing the listener to do exactly what they have been ordered to do without question the command, which has been given by the authority.

Declaratives

This type of speech act is unique because it can change the world via utterance. Declarative programming is an act of speech that has a direct impact on the institutional situation and is supported by a sophisticated language structure. The types of descriptions observed in the play were further explored here.

Declaring. The declarative speech act is performed to announce or express something clearly and publicly. Several examples are taken from the plays to express declarative expression for a large number of people.

"Priest: ... so *I hereby pronounce the bride and groom ... Aagh I mean Broom, wife and husband.* You may kiss the each other..." (Ndjavera, 2000, p. 102).

and

"King: *Mbeha, I find your daughter guilty of the following felony*. She deliberately wore that rag to expose her lavish forbidden part of herself... *She is guilty*" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 5).

Both the above utterances illustrate the speech act of announcing. The speaker announces to the hearers (attendees at the wedding) that "*I hereby pronounce the bride and broom ...*". This act of declaration changes the reality as Charlotte and Steven officially got married after the Priest says "*I hereby pronounce you...wife and husband*". The act in the second example is performed by the King in *The Oracle of Cidino* and here the King declares that Mbeha's daughter is guilty because she deliberately wore that rag to expose her lavish forbidden parts of her body in order to seduce men.

The Impact of the Performed Acts Uttered by Characters

A perlocutionary act, according to Austin (1962), is the act of convincing, persuading, or deceiving another by the use of words. People might participate in diverse perlocutionary activities, which may differ from one another to prevent misunderstandings. The current research observed the following Namibian plays with regards to perlocutionary acts

"Neo: I have bred good herd of cattle for your kraal. My son, Akapelwa seeks the hand of your daughter Thelma" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 38).

"King: (*Laughs joyfully)* You tickle my armpit, Neo. The shower of praise you pour on me is sweeter than the request you propose to my family. How many cattle are we talking about?" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 38)

and

"Sara: Well, boys tend to look like their fathers

Boss: (*Almost to himself)* I can't believe I am a father. Marianne will have a fit if she finds out" (Amakali, 2000, p. 159).

In the first example, the King feels happy to hear that Neo has bred a good herd of cattle to pay for the dowry of Thelma and he wants to know how many cows Neo would bring. In the second example, the Boss as the hearer cannot believe that he is a father. Boss was so excited to know that he is the father of the little boy and that the boy looks exactly like him.

"King: Is it the plant you refer to as 'Libombozo'? Neo: That is the plant, my Lord" (Nyathi, 2003, p. 9).

and

"Boss: I'll give it a go. Trust me on this. Sarah: All right, if that's what you want." (Amakali, 2000, p. 158)

The speakers' targeted perlocutionary acts in the above statements, which were effective since the listeners responded favourably. The existence of plants was confirmed by Neo's reply. In the second example Sara agreed to give the boss another opportunity to be in the little boy's life.

Discussions

Austin ([1962](#)) established three distinct kinds of speech acts, which were also evinced in the findings of the current investigation. As indicated in the analysis above, the selected works provide multiple textual examples of speech acts from the selected Namibian plays. This demonstrates that speech acts have a major impact on pragmatics in which language is viewed as an action rather than a mode of communication or expression.

The primary goal of this study was to examine the utterances of characters in three plays by focusing on their speech acts, which represent instances of misunderstanding and miscommunication. According to Austin (1962), locutionary activities are "fundamental acts of expressing anything in the regular meaning" (p. 94). A locution is a word that conveys information. The characters in the analyzed plays commonly used locutionary acts in two ways: to provide information about the world and to describe a current situation. These classifications are identical to those proposed by Arifin ([2021](#)) and other previous scholars. A locutionary act, on the other hand, is a speech with a specific purpose.

The study observed that locutionary acts are divided into declarative, interrogative, and imperative speech acts. However, the plays emphasized declarative locution in the plays. This study's finding agrees with Indriafeni ([2020](#)) who argued that a declarative is a locutionary act that is performed by a speaker to tell something to the hearer. Interrogative locutions are also emphasized in the plays when characters pose questions to other characters. Indriafeni ([2020](#)) observed that an interrogative is a locutionary act that is performed to ask a question. Questions used in the plays helped the speakers to know or find out more about certain things, which are happening and fulfilling the requirements for interrogative speech acts. Austin ([1962](#)) suggested, "a sentence can be an imperative if it is an order, permission, a demand, a request, an entreaty, a suggestion, a recommendation or a warning" (p. 76). Imperatives are evinced in all three plays, which is demonstrated by several textual examples given in the analysis. In the plays,

the characters have been observed to give orders, request something from other character, and give warnings.

The second goal of the current study was to evaluate the functions of the illocutionary acts employed by the characters in the three selected plays. Parera (1991, as cited in Budiasih et al., 2017) observed that the act of illocution, which is also known as "The Act of Doing Something", is a spoken act, which focused at accomplishing a goal. The illocutionary act "is the heart of the speech act and it plays a very important role in the intended meaning" (Searle, 1969). Each kind of illocutionary act has multiple functions depending on the context and the situation of the words uttered. For example, if people want to gather information, they would ask someone. The utterance to ask is one of the functions of the directive illocutionary act.

The study observed how the illocutionary acts are used to evince speech acts in the three selected plays and noted that only four kinds of illocutionary acts were used more frequently in all three selected Namibian plays. The declarative acts were less used in the plays because those illocutionary acts when used, will probably change something. This is in line with Yule's (1996) observation that declarations are the kinds of speech acts that change the world via words. These types of illocutionary acts usually occur in cases like marriage and court. People who can do these illocutions are people who have special positions, which enable them to change the world via utterances. In this case, for example, the King in *The Oracle of Cidino* and the Priest in *The Bride and The Broom* are people who can perform this kind of illocutionary act because they have authority.

This study studied the impact of perlocutionary acts uttered by the characters in the three Namibian plays. Austin (1962) contended that a perlocutionary act is what people bring about or achieve by saying words, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even surprising or misleading. As people interpret what others say differently, they may engage in various perlocutionary acts, which may result in misunderstandings. Rayhana (2020) argued that in perlocutionary, acts, there is an influence effect because the speaker tries to influence the listeners to do what he or she wants them to do. The findings support the notion that indeed speech acts are applicable to the study of drama.

Conclusions

The current study applied a pragmatic approach to study the characters speech acts by deploying a Speech Act Theory in Nigerian plays. To undertake a speech act analysis within the three selected Namibian plays: *The Oracle of Cidino* by Francis Nyathi (2003), *Checkmate* by Maria Amakali (2000) and *The Bride and The Broom* penned by David Stone Ndjavera (2000) this study focuses on the misconceptions and miscommunications within the speech acts performed by the characters in the plays. The major conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is that misunderstanding can happen in every communication domain. It is also important to observe that all three types of locutionary acts were performed by the characters and the most dominating type of locutionary act was the declarative.

These characters in plays also performed illocutionary acts. The characters performed all the five illocutionary acts and the least used illocutionary act was noticeably   declarative acts. This is because only a certain group of people can perform it, mainly who have authority such as the King and the Priest in this case. Finally, the impact of perlocutionary acts uttered by the characters were those of persuading the hearer, enlightening the hearer, surprising the hearer, etc. The current study concluded that plays could be used as a literary way to study pragmatics of speech acts..Speech acts can be studied to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications between the speaker and the listener because some people misinterpret and have different interpretations of what the speaker intended to mean or say.

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