

AN ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS IN ERNEST-SAMUEL'S EPISTOLARY NOVELS: *DEAR KELECHI* AND ITS SEQUEL

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Abstract

Pragmatic illocution deals with communication in well-formed utterances, whereby the language users must understand one another in order to encode and decode locutions and once the speaker or the writer performs with the words, it sends signals to the hearer or the reader with appropriate meaning, especially in solving the issues on negative response from the hearer or the reader. The novel analysed with this work was Dear Kelechi, an epistolary written by a friend Iheoma to her bosom friend Kelechi. The work extensively used the four Grice's Cooperative Principles as the theory applied in analysing the research questions raised and the data were analysed based on textual analysis guided by the research questions with its finding of the writer used the illocutionary effects in creating a new raised world to the receiver. Finally, well-articulated illocution must produce a positive thought especially in return.

Keywords: Illocution, Locution, Speaker, Writer, Reader, Hearer, Epistolary, Cooperative Principle.

Introduction

It is of great importance to note that language when well utilised, sends a powerful message to the receiver through the sender by a well-coordinated locution and every locution carries its force and interpretation peculiar to the receiver. At times, the encoding of the message between the sender and the receiver must be effective by a special code the duo shares in common. In sending any locution, that is utterance or word it always brings about an illocution especially what the sender has in mind via a micropragmatic sequence. Piotr Cap states that "micropragmatics can be defined as the study of illocutionary force at the utterance level." (54)

Although these utterances take effective meaning through the discourse and global intention of the sender of a message which he captures also as the intentionality resulting from different speech act configurations, often referred to as speech events and as initiators of complex effects in projecting illocutionary act. There are deictic in projections and are analysed especially from the point of

views of the hearer and what the hearer decodes the message as he receives them from the initiator as Ernest-Samuel states and discusses on the issue of marriage and how people understand it:

This is where you come in. Only you understand and see the world from the same perspective as I. You always tried to be objective even when presented with a subjective viewpoint. Only you understand the woman that is Iheoma. You are the only one who has always laughed and cried with me. Simply put, you are my kindred spirit (8).

In understanding the perspective of *Iheoma's* point of view there must be a shared assumption deixis between her and *Kelechi*. There is a clear understanding in the concept of *you* at the lexicalised point of view of the speaker and the hearer, and the grammatical view in the expression of *my kindred spirit*.

My kindred spirit must have an illocutionary force over Kelechi to understand the locution from the speaker and effectively encode the latter messages. The speaker here might be interested in an implicit illocutionary act reminding the hearer to perfectly move into spiritual realms of encoding her message or be in the right thinking mood in order to follow in the thoughts of their deliberations. She further states that, "Your situation has turned me into a storyteller. And I have no intention of stopping my storytelling, if only it will pass my message across" (90). Yule expresses that "Mostly we don't just produce well-formed utterances with no purpose. We form an utterance with some kind of function in mind. This is the second dimension, or the illocutionary act. The illocutionary act is performed via the communicative force of an utterance. (48)

Sadock submits that in illocutionary acts, Austin's central innovations are acts done in speaking ... especially that sort of act that is the apparent purpose for using a performative sentence: christening like I named you *Claribel* during such rites and from there, the child starts bearing that name, marrying - I pronounced them husband and wife which yield greater effect on the couple than the priest who made the pronouncement. Austin called an attention to the fact that acts of stating or asserting which are presumably illocutionary acts are characteristic of the use of canonical constatives and such sentences are, by assumption, not performatives

Furthermore, acts of ordering like "Get out!" has its special illocution on the hearer whether to leave an environment or a mere utterance to just bark at one; also in requesting "Salt please" the hearer might encode the construction as

whether to pass the salt across or that the taste of the soup in question is so salty are typically accomplished by using imperative sentences, and acts of asking whether something is the case are properly accomplished by using interrogative sentences, though such forms are at best very dubious examples of performative sentences the conclusion was drawn that the locutionary aspect of speaking is what we attend to most in the case of the standard examples of performative sentences, attend as much as possible to the illocution,.

van Dijk in his acts of language explicitly states that:

A first issue requiring attention is the ACTION character of speech communication. It has been assumed that realising a sentence or discourse of a language is an act, but that statement encompasses a great deal of theoretical complexity of which only some partial aspects can be dealt with here.

What is usually meant by saying that we DO something when we make an utterance is that we accomplish some specific social act, eg making a promise, a request, giving advice, etc. usually called SPEECH ACTS, or more specifically illocutionary acts. (195)

So, for illocutionary act to be effective and successful, when the result is in line with the utterance are perfectly understood at these two levels: the intentional-successful stage, if the speaker's intention actually had a successful execution to the perceived hearer if not illocutionary act are A kind of imposition on the hearer because the meanings of the utterance are interpreted differently. Nolle states that "with the help of the modalities of enunciation the speaker can in fact make commentaries which directly concern illocutionary acts or the act of enunciation in which he is engaged" (85).

Statement of the Problem

Illocutionary act is a principle in pragmatics that occur "here and there" in peoples' utterances and writings, and to effectively achieve this both the sender and receiver must have the locutionary standpoint in their relationship. Language users at times need to dig deep into certain utterances with which they might encode the outcome of the messages and various signs wrongly. When people speak, write or do thing with words in the form of speech or written acts, their expression is always with the outcome of an illocution either positive or negative, and to solve the problem of impoliteness in our speech or writing; Leech directs employing general principle of indirect kind of illocution in order

to be more polite and more indirect an illocution is more reduced when its force have a tendency to be.

Research Questions

The research questions were formulated to address the issues raised in the novel that are related to illocution effects and some of the questions are as follows:

1. To what degree was the locution used by *Iheoma* to address the issues of marriage in our society?
2. In what ways were illocution of child bearing in Africa addressed?
3. To what extent did the Gricean Cooperation principle applied in the novel to pass the following message to the reader such as:
 - a. How was the issue of quality applied in the novel;
 - b. Where there enough information on quantity of maxim used;
 - c. In what manner was the advice achieved and the aim of its use;
 - d. What are the relevance to the present marriages around us?

Review of the Related Literature

... 'the daughter of Idi Amin,' a name that changed after I proved myself a true daughter of Idi Amin (Gloria Ernest-Samuel; DR, 14). The writer equates her father's highhandedness prevalent to a former tyrant leader of Tanzania as people assumed that the father was, because of his disciplinary attitude in making things and people yield to their actual duty especially at the laissez-faire attitude of some of his subordinate.

Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices

Jef Verschueren upholds that:

It is usually assumed that the major sentence types – serving as IFIDs have a typically associated literal force: an assertive force for declarative sentence, a question force for interrogative sentences and a directive for imperative sentences. When this pattern is broken, as in *Can you call me a taxi?*, which is literally a question about the addressee's ability to call a taxi but which functions as request to do so, the label indirect speech act is used. (25)

The force obtained from the above sequence is more primarily an illocutionary effect at the point of request while the effect on the hearer towards the utterance is more of the secondary illocutionary act which results in producing confirmation of the capability in getting the taxi. Searle as qtd in Sadock, (68) distinguishes between effects that are achieved by getting the hearer to recognise that the rules governing the use of an illocutionary force indicating device are in effect, which he called illocutionary effects, and those effects that are achieved indirectly as by-products of the total speech act, for which he reserved the term perlocutionary effects.

Elena Collavin, is of the opinion that “the illocutionary force of an utterance can be isolated by asking in which sense we were using a given utterance, (380). Such, taking for example in describing metapragmatically as an illocutionary force such as: utterance to issue order, make a request, statement, suggestion promise, warning. As *Iheoma* states in Ernest-Samuel, (70) “When I think that, the still small voice in me keeps reminding me, “*flee from adultery and fornication, flee from all appearances of evil.*” Each time this happens, that seed of God in me warns me and I realise that I am not of capable of doing it.”

We can equally recognise a warning, an order, promise etc. once we read, hear or see any. Also, some of the verbs of the English are made up of force of illocution when used with the first person present indicative like in the above, ‘I realise’, ‘I think’, ‘I am not capable’ provide an explicit performative while some do not act in an explicit performative as Austin exemplifies thus:

I want to discuss a kind of utterance which looks like a statement ... and yet is not true or false – in the first person singular present indicative active – if a person makes an utterance of this sort we would say that he is doing something rather than merely saying something. (20)

Illocutionary Utterances and Utterances Cluster

Searle states that “a speaker’s utterance meaning and the sentence meaning frequently diverge, (59). Such that in novel utterances like: idiomatic expression, proverbs, metaphors, irony and insinuations do cluster in their meanings. That at times the three major English sentence forms declarative, imperative and interrogative have no correspondence but the forces that prototypically correspond to them as in stating, ordering and requesting. “Ah, Mama, I thought you’re here for the weekend, (Ernest-Samuel, 50), which is an interrogative

although with the declarative form of a statement. Collavin corroborates that it is a common occurrence in English ... "Utterances that have the illocutionary force indicators for one kind of illocutionary act can then be used to perform another kind of illocutionary act." (385)

Verschueren opines in his submission that:

Utterance for any stretch of language, no matter how long or short and no matter how many voices it may contain, with a clear beginning and end, produced by the same person(s). examples range from one-word sentences, over speech acts constituting a turn in a conversation, to multi-volume novels. Utterance clusters are organised conglomerates of utterances ..., many of the more complex utterances may contain various kinds or layers of embedded utterances (or utterance^E), as when quotations are used in newspaper reports or even embedded utterance clusters (or utterance cluster^E), as when a novel contains conversation between some of the characters. (131)

Also, this particular work was hinged in the novel *Dear Kelechi* with embedded utterances attributed to the various characters emerged in the work by the writer.

Illocutionary Acts as Communicative Acts

Clark states that "language seems orderly when it is found in novels, plays, and news broadcast, but much less so when it is heard in cafes, classrooms, and offices" (365). This in his previous work of 1996, he supported that in spontaneous language it has its root in joint activities. More especially when people use words in communicating at cafes, classroom, stadium etc. they also try to communicate effectively in that given action with various illocutionary acts that will suit the situation. Such as Primary System of communication and the Collateral System of communication; the former deals with the official course in their discourse while the latter rely on the system in which the principles will work effectively especially on how to deliver the discourse and pattern to adopt to effect communication.

van Dijk thus supports that "illocutionary acts typically do not come alone. They are part of SEQUENCES OF ACTION in general or of SEQUENCES OF SPEECH ACTS in particular. These sequences must satisfy the usual conditions for action sequences." (202)

In exchanging illocutionary acts in communication at times when the speaker has the intention of delivering a particular knowledge to the hearer and the hearer has the instinct knowledge of the speaker's intention in the delivery, there is less and minute strength in exercising the full delivery of the message. He thus agrees that to have an accomplished and successful communicative act that the speaker must have to add some proportional information to the knowledge of the hearer. Thus:

My semantics acts acquire a pragmatic function only if I have the additional assumption that the hearer does not possess certain knowledge (about the world, about my internal states) and the purpose to change the knowledge of my hearer as a consequence of the interpretation of my semantic (meaning, referential) act, by which I express my knowledge or other internal state. (219)

Summary

Illocutionary force can be obtainable anywhere, at any time depending on the occasion and there must be actual contextual variables to consider in determining the essential suitable principle for using an illocution as Peter Grundy is of the view that:

Because speech acts are to some extent formulaic. For example, if my neighbour at dinner is an overseas student studying in Britain, she may turn to me and say ... can you give me the salt, I notice the slight difference between this and the UK formula ... can you pass the salt. Because speech acts are to some degree culturally institutionalised, we have expectations about preferred and dispreferred formulas. And as we cross cultures, we sometimes notice slight (and even not so slight) differences in the way that illocutionary force is conveyed. (82)

The illocutionary force at the breakfast at home will definitely differ from the lunch had at the university canteen especially if the same student was involved in these two places with different sets of people. The effect and the meaning of words and utterances in *Dear Kelechi*, the receiver and the writer *Iheoma* will definitely be decoded by the duo same to *Iheoma my Dear*, been an epistolary, written to *Kelechi*.

Research Methodology

This paper hinges on Gricean's Cooperative theory to describe and analyse the texts of this research, *Iheoma's* usage in the four maxims adopted in the novel *Dear Kelechi* and also in its sequel. The textual analysis of illocutionary utterances of the writers helped in analysing the texts, with the framed research questions which guided the analysis. The analysis was based on these four Grice's maxim: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner including the illocutionary effects on the reader, the receiver and the writer of the works as well.

Theoretical Framework

The work is under a pragmatic approach well restricted to the illocutionary act and that is, what the locution acted upon the hearer of the utterance or during the reading. The Grice's cooperative principle was employed to account for the locutor and locution; the illocutor and its illocution. Grice in his observation projects that when we talk or write we try to be cooperative by incorporating those attributes into what he termed the "Cooperative Principle" which he states that "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (45).

The Grice's Cooperative Principle is discussed under four conversational maxims:

Maxim of Quality: Making one's contribution one that is true - do not say what you believe is false and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence;

Maxim of Quantity: Making one's contribution as informative as required for the current purposes of the exchange and do not make your contribution more informative than as required that is not more or less informative;

Maxim of Relation: Making one's contribution to be relevant;

Maxim of Manner: One's contribution to be perspicuous and specific in nature, thus avoiding obscurity of expression, ambiguity, unnecessary prolixity, rather be brief and orderly.

Although these maxims were flouted to an extent in the texts but focus was on achieving the maxims on the texts where they were properly guided and used. Grundy (2008), Saeed (2011), Fetzer (2011).

Data Analysis

The data for this paper were analysed based on research questions that guide the work especially bringing illocutionary effects to the limelight in places that it affected the work using also the Grice's Cooperative Maxim Theory in the textual analysis.

1. To what degree was the locution used by *Iheoma* in addressing the issues of marriage in our society?

She pressed in reminding her friend *Kelechi* in understanding what marriage is all about especially from the point of views of Christian marriages since the environment of the novel centred on the South-Eastern part of Nigerian that predominantly practise Christian religion and also in line of how Africans respect the sacredness in the marriage institution:

I hope you know the early European recognised the great loving, tolerable and persevering spirit of the African woman in her marriage. That necessitated the marriage vows of 'for better, for worse; in sickness and in health, till death do us part.' Believe me, that coinage is clearly African. The Europeans themselves, including the Americans, do not believe in, nor conform to, that oath. That explains why they indulge in divorces and serial adultery. In the face of domestic crises, we hurt, learn to forgive and accept the situations we cannot change. That is why I still maintain my title in my marital home against all odds. (88)

Iheoma also responds what an African marriage looks like especially from the home front and illocutionary effect on the side of the woman how to uphold the marriage in other to secure a brighter and happy future on the woman in securing the African marriages:

In our culture, your major marital problem begins when your in-laws are at war with you. Yet, notwithstanding your husband's misadventure and neglect, your in-laws are in solidarity with you. They have failed to see the loss of your only son, which would have normally placed you in a disadvantaged position, as a problem; they have disregarded your husband. You are a very lucky woman. Kaycee, one of the things that I admired so much about you throughout our childhood and youthful days was your wisdom. I guess that wisdom is still there to remind you that mourning, grieving or crying over situation like yours may be healthy initially, but detrimental in the long run. (91-2)

The locutions on comparison of their different families will play another major role on illocutionary effects on African marriages, she brings the comparison to

soothe the agonising soul of her friend *Kelechi*: in which the writer's marital and parent's home could not afford to stand with her as in her friend's own:

You have a doting mother and loving parents-in-law, who worry stiff about you, but I am blessed with an egocentric clan of in-laws who are demented by what they failed to understand was their son's inability to father a child. My highly opinionated family members are too rigid to welcome me back to what used to be my home.

We have both been abandoned by our husbands. While your husband had the decency of sticking to one woman, mine has become the fleeting honeybee moving from blossom to blossom, mixing injury and proxy pleasure. (97)

In conclusion she reminded her reader that:

I have come to appreciate the problems and difficulties I have encountered in my marriage as the price I must pay for first being female, then an Igbo, a Nigerian and particularly for being an African woman. Every African woman should see it as such. If not, nothing stops me from walking out of my marriage as our European counterparts do, or divorcing my unfaithful husband as most American women would prefer to do. (87)

2. In what ways were illocution of child bearing in African addressed?

The question of how African society views women that do not have children arose and the ideas of what they used their wealth and earnings for, *Iheoma* stated thus:

To the society, a childless woman has no problem, no child to feed, no fees to pay. They fail to realise that some medical examination fees are enough to buy a *tokunbo* car. My colleague, like others, didn't know that a set of fertility treatment at Premier Hospital, Abuja, is enough to buy a plot of land at the World Bank Estate. They fail to know that ordinary hormonal enhancement at Dr. Ojei's can pay for a Dubai return ticket. (59-60)

The work made an illocutionary points on what some African can do and where they can go in search of a child, what women folk can contribute at the period of childlessness more especially contributions of some mother-in-law. *Iheoma* brought these techniques to calm the spirit of *Kelechi* down and make her to

rethink in opening up to whatever trauma she is passing through since she returned from Kenya to Nigeria, with these locutions:

Mother-in-law was told by some spiritualists again that I needed to undergo some cleansing, so that my spirit husband would allow me produce children for my husband. Ikem agreed that it was necessary for me to embark on the ritual cleansing so that we could have children. When I mentioned same, my mother did not mince words.

“Theoma, please, anything they tell you to do, don’t ask questions. Nwabugwu”

My brothers equally supported the prescription.

“Prevention is better than cure. And a stitch in time saves nine,” they remarked. (62)

She further advises on the woman’s stand in the midst of all these aspects of childlessness no matter all odds:

Unfortunately, not having children of my own does not give me the credibility or confidence to face the society to say, “I am a fulfilled woman, I know what is going on and this is what I want to do.” I feel ridiculous amongst other women. The end result is that my most noble thoughts end up in mental shelves, gathering dust.

Do I feel like a failure? Oh Kaycee, yes I do.

I’ve watched the numerous women I got married in the same year with get pregnant and have their babies. I’ve watched them, taciturn, as they discuss the mischievous things their children do. ...

I’ve watched as many a woman stands before the altar to give testimonies of their conceptual miracles. It seems my case is irredeemable. It seems mine is a problem without solution.

As a child, I had promised myself that nothing would break my marriage. Way back in high school, I had debated against infidelity – whether justified or unjustifiable. Do you remember? I believe in the power of God to do miracles. I also believe altogether that God is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Hence, he is capable of intervening in my case. (71-72)

3. To what extent did the Gricean Cooperation principle applied in the novel to pass the following message to the reader such as:
 - a. How was the issue of quality applied in the novel;

Although the novel is a fictitious story written in Nigerian environment but the storyteller put up some places that are well known to Nigerians, and even names peculiar to the easterners and some other nomenclature of Nigerian peculiarity like: NYSC etc.

But my father was a fair man. At Oguta Community, where we lived before we came to Orlu as a result of a transfer, he was passionately hated. (10)

A couple of days later, Papa was summoned by the State Primary Education Board. He was accused of instigating the local community to write a petition against his removal. Papa's surprise, which was as clear as the furrows on his brows bailed him out. ... My father explained this to the Zonal Education Commissioner and insisted that his transfer be sustained.

This was how Papa was posted to St. mary's primary school, Ezennachi. (12)

Our performance in the final examination in which I came first and you came second with an overall difference of only seven marks, marked the watershed. Your parents designed a twin-locker for us. During the holidays, with your parents' permission, you joined us to spend the Easter break in the remote former Biafran Command Headquarters of Ihitte Uboma, my humble hometown. (15)

You were there with me two years later, during the Christmas holiday, when I first met his parents. We paid them a visit in their Ehime hometown. I still remember it was a dry boxing day, a couple of days after he returned finally from Sokoto, having concluded his national assignment as a youth corps member. (20)

The wedding took place at the Assumpta Cathedral. (22)

- b. Where there enough information on quantity of maxim used;

Theoma in her writings were so explicit in providing information which her reader *Kelechi* is also aware of in other to bring locutionary points that will affect her illocutionary state of affairs, such was so common when she cited example of notable ladies *Kelechi* has known even in their school, the deaths she might be aware of to buttress some points:

She brought the story of one Pastor Jovita who was their classmate in their secondary school days that passed series of ordeal for child bearing issues and later got pregnant after years of waiting. (80-5)

After all, good news did spread for Madam Ogboru also. You know her, our Home Economics teacher at St Margaret's.

.... Kaycee, my dear, last year August was Madam Ogboru's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. In October of that same year, she turned forty-three. But the good news is that that same October, precisely on the twenty-ninth, Mrs Theresa Ogboru was blessed with a healthy baby boy, and not an adopted child. (85-6)

I know that losing Tony was difficult for you, then Junior's death made it worse. The question of rescuing Junior is out of the question but not Tony's case. It's possible he may fall out of his new found love and come back to you. It's possible that your children may bring you both together. It is also possible that your in-laws or the death of any of the parents may bring you back together. There are lots of possibilities as far as there is life. (94)

c. In what manner was the advice achieved and the aim of its use;

Theoma purposely delves into her stories with enough illocutionary perspicuous and specificity, in other to avoid lies and ambiguity in her letter pointing out these examples with biblical injunction too to drive home some points:

You were there at the very beginning, Kelly, when the problem of childlessness began to rear out slow tentacles like a snail's feelers around me. Today, after twelve years of marriage, the ugly tentacles have grown accustomed to their environment. I am wrapped completely. There is just slow death or insanity. Am I speaking in tongues? (50)

Childlessness is a touchy situation. No wonder King Solomon, in all his wisdom in Proverbs, noted that among four things that are never satisfied is the childless woman. Childlessness makes one perpetually

suspicious of people and their intentions. It makes one hyper-sensitive and emotional. It is simply a crazy condition, an insane sanity. Yet, in this situation I have triumphed. (77)

Knowing the Bible as I do, nobody needs to advise me on this. I know it's morally wrong. I'm married. On second thought, the question comes up: How does one screen one's lover of the dreaded HIV or any other sexually transmitted infection? You also know that I am AS, how do I ask an intending lover for his genotype? Each time I think of these, I rule out another relationship. (96-7)

d. What are the relevances to the present marriage around us?

The story writer employs other illocutionary effect through her reader's views especially on *Kelechi's* previous outstanding locution and other relevant marital stories in the past:

And those days, I prayed that you meet someone as nice and loving as Ikem, to make our dreams complete. That prayer was not far in materialising as the first letter I received later from you, from your place of primary assignment in Benin, was that you had met your dream man. Part of the letter read:

"I want you to thank God for me. At last, I believe I've met my Mr. Right. He is one simple guy that happened to be our Parade Commander in camp. He is so mischievous, so very humorous and, above all, so very loving to me. Although I told him that his proposal is rash, I think I want to share my life with him. Are you happy for me, or will you wait till you see him?" (25)

Do you want to be another of Charles Dicken's Miss Havisham? Even Miss Havisham takes delight in Estelle. So, what am I saying? Come out from that torpor! We've both experienced the ups and downs of life, its joys and accompanying sadness. Yours is even better. You have three beautiful daughters, who send you pictures of every summer holiday they spent abroad, I have none. (97)

Conclusion

The work tries investigating illocutionary effect, on what and how peoples' words go a long way to achieve a positive or negative effect upon the hearer. The novel used in achieving this purpose is on how *Iheoma's* locutions succeeded in bringing out the achieved purpose from the torpid and miserable life and

situation of her friend *Kelechi* who has been in a state of absolute confusion and dejection. And for a locution to yield meaningful evidence, an illocutionary act must follow up to achieve that desirable principle on the hearer or receiver of the message. As Kent Bach states thus:

Conventional illocutionary acts, the model for Austin's theory, succeed not by recognition of intention, but by conformity to convention. That is, an utterance counts as an act of a certain sort by virtue of meeting certain socially or institutionally recognized conditions for being an act of that sort. They fall into two categories, effectives and verdictives, depending on whether they effect an institutional state of affairs or merely make an official judgment as to an institutionally relevant state of affairs. (467)

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