

## **A Speech Acts Analysis of Aliyu Kamal's *Hausa Land***

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### **Abstract**

The study analyses the use of direct and indirect speech acts in the novel *Hausa Land* by Aliyu Kamal. Searle's Speech Acts Theory is used as the theoretical premise to analyze the relationship between the language used, the context and the speaker's intentions. Through Purposive Sampling, 19 utterances of the speakers serve as the data for the study. The findings of the study reveal representatives are predominantly used and account for the total of 36.84%. The Commissive speech act had the lowest frequency of 10.53%. Moreover, the high percentage of direct speech acts suggest that the speakers are generally explicit or direct in their communication.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, the speech act theory, Searle's speech act theory, direct and indirect speech acts, Hausa land

### **Introduction**

A fundamental question in examining language use in society is, "What are the different ways in which we can use language"? This flexibility of language leads Bloor & Bloor (2004) to assert that using language is a dynamic process which can be studied with appropriate linguistic theories to increase the understanding of the linguistic system and of how it enables speakers or writers to produce and process coherent meaning. Martinez & Castillo (2015) argued that people communicate because they have something to express, and their utterances reflect their self-definition. Therefore, human interaction whether spoken or written, is an essential aspect of social interaction. Levinson (1983) asserts that meaning is shaped by both the structure of language and

the surrounding context. This means that the same words can have different meanings depending on the situation in which they are spoken. Leech (1983) notes that one of the most significant areas within pragmatics is speech acts, which are actions performed through language. The pragmatic theory of speech acts, as proposed by Austin (1962), in his influential work "How to do things with words", underscores the contextual nature of language and its function in facilitating actions. According to Austin, language is utilized to perform specific actions such as requesting, offering, greeting, warning, promising, apologizing etc. These actions, referred to as "speech acts", embody the intentions and objectives that underlie the production of utterances. However, an utterance does not only carry an explicit meaning but also an implicit meaning, which can be inferred from the actions taken by the speaker during communication. The theory was later developed by Searle (1969).

Speech acts arise from an individual's performance and social interaction. Martinez and Castillo (2015) argue that people communicate because they have something to express within a given context. For instance, the utterance "I now pronounce you husband and wife" does not simply describe a state of affairs, but rather brings about a new social reality by indicating the marriage of the couple. The meaning here is derived from the speaker's intention to join them in matrimony, transcending the literal signification of the words employed. Hence, using language involves not only forming utterances but also performing actions allowing the listener to grasp the speaker's message.

Two categories of speech act were identified by Yule (1996). The direct speech act forms a clear relationship between the structure of the utterance and its function. For instance: "Close the

window” uses an imperative sentence to command someone to take an action. On the other hand, an indirect speech act arises when there is an indirect relationship between the utterance and its function. For instance, “It’s cold outside”. This statement implies a request for someone to close the window.

According to Austin (1962) speech acts can be classified into locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary act refers to the speaker’s actual utterance or the act of saying something. For instance, the statement “It will rain today” represents a locutionary act, which involves the act of uttering the sentence. The illocutionary act conveys the speaker’s intention behind the utterance. For instance, when someone says; “I promise to come early in the morning”, it is not just a statement, but rather commits the speaker to a future action, thus functioning as an illocutionary act. On the other hand, perlocutionary act refers to the effect an utterance has on the listener, such as persuading or encouraging them to take an action. For instance, if someone says, “It is cold in here”, and another person closes the window in response, the listener’s action is a perlocutionary act resulting from the initial utterance.

Therefore, if illocutionary act is identified to be the essential building block of communication, then the critical question shifts to, “What kinds of illocutionary act exist”? This paper seeks to identify the illocutionary acts and analyzed them in the novel *Hausa Land*, by Aliyu Kamal.

### **Pragmatics**

Human interactions involve utterances which are the fundamental units of communication. Such utterances enable the conveyance of meaning, intentions and emotions. The interpretation of the utterances encompasses various fields of linguistic research, making it a complex and essential

aspect of human communication. Charles Morris , a philosopher, coined the term pragmatics in 1938 to describe the study of the relationship between sign and interpreters (Levinson, 1983). This was part of his larger work on semiotics, which also includes the study of syntax and semantics . Pragmatics is specifically interested in the interpretation of utterances and how they relate to the context in which they occur. Mey (2006) opines that context is a dynamic concept and should be understood as “the continually changing surroundings that enable participants in the communication process to interact, and in which the linguistic expressions of their interaction become intelligible”. On the other hand, Leech (1983) defines pragmatics as the study of meaning in relation to speech situations, where speakers use language in a particular context to achieve a specific effect on the hearer's mind. Meaning is, therefore, goal-oriented based on the speaker or writer's intended communication.

As a linguistic discipline, the foundations of pragmatics are rooted in the works of language philosophers and speech act theorists such as John Austin (1962), John Searle (1969) and Herbert P. Grice (1967).

### **The Speech Act Theory**

Speech act theory, developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) posits that language is used to perform actions rather than merely describe states of affairs. Austin distinguished between performative utterances, which execute actions (e.g., "I do take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife"), and constative utterances, which describe facts. He categorized speech act into three types: locutionary act (the actual utterance), illocutionary act (the speaker's intention behind the utterance), and perlocutionary act (the effect on the listener). For example, saying "I promise

to come early" is an illocutionary act that commits the speaker to future action, while a response to "It is cold in here" that leads someone to close a window exemplifies a perlocutionary act. Successful performance depends on specific contextual and procedural conditions.

### **Searle's Speech Act Theory**

Searle (2014) presents weaknesses of Austin's speech act by pointing out that Austin presents his five categories of illocutionary act as; verdictives (delivering findings), exercitives, (decisions about actions), commissives (the speaker commits to an action), expositives (clarify views) and behabitives (reactions to others' behaviors). However, the weaknesses of his taxonomy include a lack of clear classification principles, overlap between categories, and the inclusion of non-illocutionary verbs. These issues suggest the need for a revised taxonomy based on illocutionary points and related features.

Searle identify twelve key dimensions in which illocutionary acts differ, emphasizing that these variations help classify and understand the functions of speech acts. He aim to outline these differences succinctly, focusing on aspects like the purpose of the act (illocutionary point), the relationship between words and reality (direction of fit), expressed psychological states (beliefs, intentions, desires), strength of presentation (suggesting or insisting), speaker-hearer status (commands or requests), relation to interests of speaker/hearer, connection to surrounding discourse, propositional content determined by illocutionary force, acts requiring speech vs. not requiring speech, acts requiring external institutions, performative use of verbs and style of performance. These classifications build on Austin's work while addressing its limitations, and providing a clearer framework for analyzing how different speech acts operate within language

and communication. Therefore, Searle (1976) proposed five alternatives to Austin's taxonomy of illocutionary acts, which are:

- a) **Representatives:** The purpose of representatives is to commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition. They can be evaluated as true or false. The direction of fit is from words to the world, and the psychological state expressed is belief. This category encompasses many of Austin's expositives and verdictives, as they share the same illocutionary point but differ in other aspects of illocutionary force. A simple test for representatives is whether they can be categorized as true or false. Representatives use verbs such as: 'affirm', 'believe', 'conclude', 'deny', 'report', 'conclude' etc.
- b) **Directives:** The illocutionary point of directives attempts to get the hearer to perform an action. These attempts can vary in intensity, from mild suggestions to strong demands, where the direction of fit is from the world to words, and the sincerity condition is a desire or wish. The propositional content always involves the hearer performing some future action. Examples of directive verbs include 'ask', 'order', 'request', 'beg', 'advise', 'invite' etc. Additionally, verbs like 'dare', 'defy' and 'challenge' which Austin categorized as behabitives also belong here. Many of Austin's exercitives fit into this class.
- c) **Commissives:** Commissives are illocutionary acts that commit the speaker to a future action. The direction of fit is from the world to words, and the sincerity condition is intention. The propositional content always involves the speaker committing to some future action. Commissives include verbs such as: 'pledge', 'promise', 'guarantee', 'swear', 'vow', 'undertake' etc.

- d) Expressives: Expressives aim to convey the speaker's psychological state regarding a state of affairs. Examples of expressive verbs include 'thanking', 'apologizing', 'congratulating', 'condoling', 'welcoming' etc. Notably, expressives do not have a direction of fit, instead, the truth of the proposition is assumed.
- e) Declaratives: They create state of affairs simply by being performed. Examples include "I resign," "You're fired," "I christen this ship," and "War is hereby declared." The defining feature of declarations is that their successful performance ensures the correspondence between the propositional content and reality. Declaratives uniquely alter the status or condition of the referenced objects solely through their successful performance, distinguishing them from other categories.

### **Direct and Indirect Speech Acts**

A direct speech act conveys the speaker's intention through the literal meaning of the utterance. Searle (1975) introduced the notion of an indirect speech act, which occurs when one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by performing another. In an indirect speech act, the speaker communicates more than they literally say by relying on shared background information and the hearer's powers of rationality and inference. Searle distinguishes between the primary illocutionary act (the indirect one that is not literally performed) and the secondary illocutionary act (the direct one performed in the literal utterance). For example, in the exchange:

1. Speaker X: "We should leave for the show or else we'll be late".
2. Speaker Y: "I am not ready yet".

The primary illocutionary act is Y's rejection of X's suggestion, while the secondary illocutionary act is Y's statement that "I am not ready yet". By dividing the illocutionary act into primary and secondary parts, Searle explains how a speaker can say something and mean it, while also meaning something else indirectly. Searle argues that the forms of indirect speech act are partly conventionalized, distinct from normal idioms. When an indirect speech act is performed, both the literal and primary acts are understood as part of the meaning. On the other hand, Adebija (1988) defines indirect speech acts as "cases in which the primary illocutionary force of an utterance is different from the secondary illocutionary force." This aligns with Searle's distinction between the primary and secondary illocutionary acts in indirect speech. Mey (2001), notes that such acts are prevalent in everyday language.

### **Hausaland**

*Hausaland* is a novel authored by Aliyu Kamal and published in 2003. It holds an important place in Northern Nigerian literature. The story delves into the historical and cultural interactions between the Fulani and Hausa communities. It follows the journey of Fillo, a herdsman, and weaves in elements of mythology and adventure, showcasing the intricacies of Hausa culture and traditions. The story also portrays the region's rich heritage and challenges, making the novel a crucial work for understanding the identity of Northern Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Searle's taxonomies of illocutionary act serve as the foundational framework for this study. The choice of speech act becomes crucial because it offers valuable insights into the functions of authentic speech and equips linguists with tools to analyze language usage within specific contexts.

Searle's work in 1969 was a response to perceived shortcomings in Austin's classification of illocutionary acts, highlighting issues such as the lack of clear criteria for distinguishing between illocutionary forces. Searle pointed out confusion between verbs and acts, noting that not all verbs are illocutionary, and identified significant overlap among the categories. Performative verbs in each of the five categories exhibit different syntactical properties. Searle presented a list of what he regarded as the basic categories of illocutionary acts. Such illocutionary utterances, in appropriate circumstances are said to have the illocutionary force. These are: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. Representatives have truth or false value; the point is to commit a speaker to the truth or falsity of the expressed utterances. Commissives commit the speaker to some future course of action. Expressives express the psychological and emotional state of the speaker. Declaratives effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and they tend to rely on social events.

### **Data Presentation and Discussion**

This section of the paper presents extracts from the novel. The focus is on the various speech acts involved in the text as well as the discussions of them. The section attempts to emphasize whether the speech acts are direct or indirect.

#### **Extract 1**

In this extract, the narrator reflects on a significant event involving the Queen and the aftermath of a snake being killed (p.17).

Locutionary act	Illocutionary act	Illocutionary force	Direct/ indirect
Follow me to the court, said the Queen.	Directive	Command (instructing someone to accompany her to the court).	Direct
The snake...has been killed!	Representatives	Assertion (Stating a fact about the event that has occurred.	Direct
How can she be that?	Expressive	Expressing disbelief or confusion about the title given to the queen.	Indirect

In this extract, the Queen's speech "Follow me to the court" is a direct command, showing the Queen's power and expectation of obedience of those around her. The statement about the snake being killed is an assertion that states the truth about a fact. The response, "How can she be that?" reveals confusion or disbelief as well as hinting at potential conflict. Moreover, the Queen's command is a direct speech act, as it is straightforward and clear. The statement regarding the snake is also direct, presenting a factual information. In contrast, the reaction of disbelief functions as an indirect speech act conveying emotions and thoughts without directly addressing the Queen.

## **Extract 2**

In this extract, Filo and Kado devise a plan to escape by disguising as a women and creating a scene to distract the guard (p. 127).

Locutionary act	Illocutionary act	Illocutionary force	Direct/indirect
Then why shouldn't we cooperate now?	Directive	Asking for justification to work together on their plan.	Direct
We would need a set of women's clothes, a thick whip and an empty sack of dry pepper.	Representative	Stating the items required for their plan.	Direct
Open the door! Save me from him!	Directive	Command (urging the guard to take action to help).	Direct

The speech acts in this extract, particularly the directives (asking, commanding) and representative (stating) illustrate the characters' determination and the critical nature of their escape plan. The directive force of the question "Then why shouldn't we cooperate now?" suggests a call to action, urging the characters to reconsider and work together. The statement regarding the items needed is a clear assertion that outline their necessary requirements. The command "Open the door, save me from him!" encapsulates their desperation. The utterances in this extract are predominantly direct speech acts such as the request for cooperation is straightforward, as is the list of items needed for their plan. The command to "Open the door!" is also a direct speech act.

**Extract 3**

This extract portrays Filo in a conversation with Kado about the power of love and the use of various methods to attract girls (p.77).

Locutionary act	Illocutionary act	Illocutionary force	Direct/ indirect
How did you do it?	Directive	Asking about how something was accomplished.	Direct
It wasn't me. It was love.	Representative	Stating that love was responsible.	Direct
You still believe it?	Expressive	Expressing doubt about the belief in love.	Direct
You win a girl's love through persuasion not trickery.	Representative	Stating a belief about the proper way to gain a girl's love	Direct

The analysis identifies various speech acts including directives (asking), expressive (doubt) and representatives (stating), which contributes to the overall meaning of the conversation. The question "How did you do it?" implies an inquiry that seeks to understand Kado's approach to love. Kado's responses to "It wasn't me. It was love," and "You win a girl's love through persuasion not trickery," serve as assertions that attribute the success in attracting a girl, rather

than personal effort. The follow-up question, “You still believe it?” expresses doubt and invites Kado to reflect on his belief about love. However, the speech acts in this extract are primarily direct. Each question and statement is unambiguous.

#### Extract 4

In this extract, the conversation reveals Ardo’s concern for his cattle and the dynamic trust and responsibility within the nomadic community (p.90)

Locutionary act	Illocutionary act	Illocutionary force	Direct/ indirect
I will come back before noon.	Commissive	Promise (committing to return at a specific time).	Direct
They are all safe.	Representative	Reassuring the Ardo about the cattle’s well-being.	Direct
I am thinking of moving.	Representative	Affirming the Ardo’s intention to relocate	Direct
Isn’t it too early to move?	Expressive	Doubting the timing of Ardo’s decision to move.	Direct

The promise “I will come back before noon” is a clear commitment made to bind the speaker to a future action. The reassuring statement “They are all safe” serves as a factual assertion that

addresses Ardo's concern about the cattle. The question "Isn't it too early to move?" expresses doubt about the timing of Ardo's decision. However, the affirmation of Ardo's decision to relocate is a representative speech act that confirms his decision. This extract is rich with various speech acts of commissive (promise), representatives (reassuring, affirming) and expressive (doubting). The speech acts in this extract are predominantly direct. The promise, reassurance, affirmation and questions are all unambiguous.

### Extract 5

In this extract, Fillo is in a precarious state of health, surrounded by friends who express concern for him (p. 206)

Locutionary act	Illocutionary act	Illocutionary force	Direct/ indirect speech act
I can't die without seeing Grandmother and Kado again.	Expressive	Deploy a desire to fulfil before his death.	Direct
Go and get him some food, while I quieten him down.	Directive	Requesting someone to fetch food for Fillo.	Direct
Someone wants to see me outside the house.	Representative	Informing others about a visitor's visit.	Direct

Bring the food after you have seen him, said the diviner.	Directive	Instructing someone to deliver the food after attending to the visitor.	Direct
After this man dies, we will come back and take his body away.	Commissive	Promise	Direct

Filo's statement "I can't die without seeing Grandmother and Kado again," expresses a deep emotional desire that reveals his longing for connection with loved ones before facing his death. The request "Go and get him some food, while I quieten him down," is a clear directive that indicates Filo's need as well as a form of care and support. The factual assertion "Someone wants to see me outside the house," informs others about a visitor. The diviner's instruction "Bring the food after you have seen him," is a direct command that emphasizes the need for priority in a time of urgency. Moreover, the statement "After this man dies, we will come back and take his body away," serves as a commitment regarding future action. The speech acts are predominantly direct.

**Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of Speech Acts**

Speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representative	7	36.84%
Directive	6	31.58%

Expressive	4	21.05%
Commissive	2	10.53%
Total	19	100%

Table 1 summarizes the occurrences of various speech acts, including representatives, directives, expressives and commissives.

**Table 2: Frequencies and percentages of direct/indirect speech acts**

Direct/indirect speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Direct	18	94.74%
Indirect	1	5.26%
Total	19	100%

Table 2 summarizes the use of direct and indirect speech acts

A total of nineteen utterances from five extracts form the basis of the analyses. According to Table 1, the most frequent speech act is Representative, which occurs 7 times, accounting for 36.84% of the total percentage. This could be seen in E1, E3, E4, and E5. This suggests that the data contains a significant number of statements that represent facts, beliefs or assertions. Direct speech acts are the second most common as presented in E1, E2, E3 and E5, making up 31.58% of the total. The

utterances occur 6 times. These speech acts according to Searle (1969) are used to express commands, requests or instructions.

Expressive speech acts, which convey feelings or emotions, account for 21.05% of the total percentage, with four occurrences. These are shown in E1, E3, E4 and E5. Commissive speech act as cited by Searle, commits the speaker to a future course of action, and have the lowest frequency at 10.53%. These are presented in E4 and E5.

Table 2 shows that direct acts dominate the data, with a frequency of 18 out of 19 total occurrences with a total of 94.74%. This indicates that most of the speech acts are clear, unambiguous and straightforward in their meaning and intent. Indirect speech acts, which convey meaning through implication or suggestion (Yule, 1996), are much less common, accounting for only 5.25% of the total occurrences. However, the high percentage of direct speech acts suggests that the speakers as presented in the data are generally explicit or direct in their communication by minimizing the use of indirect language.

## **Conclusion**

The five extracts from the novel demonstrate various speech acts that illuminate the characters' intentions, emotions, and interpersonal dynamics. Extract 1 showcases the Queen's direct command and the expressions of disbelief, which highlight the power dynamics within the court. Extract 2 features Filo and Kado's use of directives and representatives as they plan an escape. Extract 3 includes expressive and representative speech acts that convey the characters' beliefs

about love and the importance of sincerity in relationships. Extract 4 reveals the Ardo's promises and directives, which reflect the responsibilities within the nomadic community. Extract 5 captures Filo's emotional state through expressive speech acts, highlighting his desire for connection amidst vulnerability. The interplay of direct and indirect speech acts across these extracts enhances the reader's understanding of the characters' intentions.

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