

PRAGMATIC FORCES OF SPEECH ACTS USED BY MEMBERS OF COUNTY ASSEMBLY DURING DEBATES IN BOMET COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *Members of County Assembly of Bomet, Kenya, engage in debates over different motions proposed to aid in determining the best course of action regarding important matters affecting the County. However, the actions of the Members as they routinely discuss various motions on the floor of the County Assembly have received little scholarly attention. A knowledge of what participants do during the debating process and the pragmatic forces behind their utterances will provide insights into the nature of interaction at the County Assembly and at the same time show the state of affairs at the County. Therefore, this paper examines the pragmatic forces of speech acts used by Members of County Assembly of Bomet during debates at the County Assembly. The paper relied on Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory and the Five Categories of Speech Acts identified by Searle (2005), which include directives, expressives, commissives, declaratives, and assertives. The study also incorporated insights in the study of speech acts from Sotillo (2017). The paper purposefully sampled three motions from the Hansards recorded between the year 2013 and 2017. The data was downloaded from Bomet County Assembly's website. Textual analysis was used to collect data. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. The results showed that most pragmatic forces were manifested in assertives/representatives (for instance, informing, reporting, claiming, stating) accounting for 47.26%. This was followed by expressives (for example, thanking, apologizing, protesting, congratulating) at 23.63%, then directives (for example, requests, urge, ask, suggest, advise, direct) at 18.15%, declarations (declare, adjourn, christen, approve) at 7.19% and finally commissives (such as promise, vow, guarantee, refuse, assure) at 3.76%. This study contributes to existing knowledge on pragmatics and particularly the use of speech acts to explain the state of affairs in the society. The study therefore proposes that speech act analysis be adopted as an effective tool in the analysis of argumentative discourse.*

KEYWORDS: Speech acts, textual analysis, debates, Hansards, pragmatic forces

INTRODUCTION

From the time they were first proposed by Austin (1962), speech acts continue to be of great interest to scholars globally. Austin (1962), and later Searle's (1969) speech act theory, has been adopted as a tool in the study of texts such as novels and poetry (Oloo, 2019; Leongkamchorn, 2011), courtroom discourse (Tkacukova, 2010; Gatitu Ogutu & Martin, 2018), political discourse in the form of speeches by politicians (Suhair, 2015; Saputro, 2015; Tarham & Miracle, 2013), classroom discourse (Barnas, 2015; Mukhroji, Joko, Edi & Sri, 2019), family discourse (Paymar, 2016), and even in television and social media sites (Mukti, 2008; Bangun, Syahnan & Daulat, 2017), to mention a few. However, the same attention has not been transferred to the study of argumentative discourse and, as a result, this area has received little attention. The present study, therefore, endeavoured to highlight the fact that speech acts play a vital role in debating activities as well. Specifically, it underscored that utterances produced in the County Assembly should be included in speech acts considerations as most of them can be analysed as performative acts. The study recognizes that arguers' utterances during debates have very many pragmatic forces or functions. Because of this, every utterance in the County Assembly is important in advancing the communicative intentions of the participants.

According to Searle (1976), the different types of speech acts show many functions such as exchanging factual information, political information, emotional and moral attitudes, persuasion and socializing. The speaker expects his or her intentions to be understood by the hearer even when the information is implicit in the utterance. Politicians reveal their intentions through their speeches; they inform, accuse, promise, apologize, disagree, criticize, direct, suggest, and persuade among others. In the County Assembly, the adversarial type of interaction may be described as competitive because each side wants to win the debate. At the same time, the debaters know that they have to arrive at a consensus even if they do not totally agree with the side that wins the debate. That means they collaborate to ensure that the debating process succeeds even if they have differences of opinion. Therefore, the study sought to establish the functions of the different types of illocutionary acts used by the participants during debates. These participants were the Members of the County Assembly of Bomet who served between 2013 and 2017.

Individuals engaged in argumentation use speech acts to explain to others what led them to their claims (position). Those who hold divergent views also use various speech acts to challenge the original position and show why original actions or ideas should be discredited. The speech acts used during debates are heavily loaded with meaning. The analysis of these speech acts is of great significance because the real intentions of the participants and their attitudes towards the motions under discussion will be revealed.

Searle (1969) categorizes speech acts into five basic types because speakers can perform different acts depending on the purpose being expressed in the utterance or proposition. These five categories of speech acts are: assertives or representatives, directives, expressives, declaratives, and commissives. Our study employed Searle's approach in the categorization and analysis of speech acts as it is more elaborate and clear. These five categories of speech acts clearly show that the participants in the debates do nothing more than expressing the actual state of affairs, getting their debating partner or those in the executive position at the County to carry out some actions so that the state of affairs can be improved, expressing some psychological state, feelings or attitudes about the state of affairs, bringing about a change in the state of affairs by virtue of their authority as Members of County Assembly, and finally committing themselves to performing some actions in the future so that the state of affairs at the County can be improved for the betterment of the people of Bomet County.

In performing these speech acts, the arguers also perform other acts since each major speech act consists of a wide range of sub acts. These categories of speech acts and their sub-sets help in a better understanding of the participants' use of language and their communicative intentions at the County Assembly. Searle's (1969) categories of speech acts have conditions that must be fulfilled in a certain context if their communicative intentions are to be achieved. These conditions were first introduced by Austin (1962) and are referred to as felicity conditions or appropriateness conditions. The first is the propositional content condition that guides the participants to fulfil the actions expressed by their performative utterances. The second is the preparatory condition, which spells out the appropriate settings in which a performative utterance is to be uttered. The third is the sincerity condition, which deals with the psychological aspects of the participants such as feelings, intentions and thoughts. The fourth is the essential condition, which commits the speaker to undertake the action expressed by their performative utterances.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics

The work done by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) enriches our study with significant insight regarding the nature of argumentation. According to them, argumentation, which is also referred to as debates in our study, is about reasoning on what to do; they call it practical reasoning. Fairclough and Fairclough assert that when participants in an argumentation meet, their main agenda is to discuss the actions that they need to take in order to solve a particular crisis. The agents in argumentation may begin with an open question, for instance: *what should I do (or not do), given the situation I am in and what do I want to achieve?* These observations are pertinent for our study because the subjects of our study come together to deliberate on matters affecting the electorate. They need to assess their current situations and deliberate on what they need to do

to improve on the lives of the people who elected them. By looking at the discussions happening at the County Assembly, the means they use to achieve their goals become clear. Fairclough and Fairclough's approach focuses on the analysis of the structure of argumentation using a new approach, which they refer to as Political Discourse Analysis. In this approach, the argument for action that is being made starts from a description of the context of action and a desirable goal informed by values. They illustrate a form of deliberation, an agent reasoning practically, and weighing options before arriving at the right course of action. It is important to note that the structure of debates at the County Assembly follows the same format as the two scholars describe. The existing gap, however, which our study intends to fill, is on the kinds of actions that interlocutors perform during the entire argumentation process. There is need to know what people are doing as they deliberate. For example, are they complaining, threatening, criticizing, or blaming among other actions. Any successful analysis of debates needs to capture every action of the participants as they attempt to arrive at a consensus. This will also help in arriving at a judgement regarding their intentions or attitudes towards the various motions at the County Assembly.

In the study of the debating process, one major theory that is appropriate for our work is the Speech Act Theory. This theory was proposed by two philosophers of language: Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). According to Austin and Searle, people perform actions as they speak. These actions are: informing, commanding, requesting, criticizing, apologizing, acknowledging, and refusing among others. The acts done in the process of speaking are referred to as speech acts. Our study is a pragmatic analysis of speech acts as they occur in the utterances of Members of the County Assembly of Bomet.

Pragmatics deals with how meaning of words or sentences can be understood by looking at the context of their use. The significance of context in the study of pragmatics is reflected in the various definitions of pragmatics by different scholars. For instance, Finch (2000) states that pragmatics is concerned with the meaning of utterances. He explains that it focuses on what is not explicitly stated and on how people interpret utterances in situational context. For purposes of our study, we focus mainly on the actions that Members of the County Assembly of Bomet perform when they speak as determined by cultural contexts and the motions under discussion.

Pragmatic Forces of Speech Acts

Every speaker of a language, Members of the County Assembly of Bomet included, produce utterances that are meant to achieve certain goals. An utterance is a unit of analysis of speech that has been defined in various ways but most commonly as a sequence of words within a single person's turn at talk that falls under a single intonation counter (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). These utterances must be understood by the hearers so that the speaker's messages can be

delivered successfully. It is also important to know the context of the conversation so that proper interpretation of messages is done. Illocutionary forces of utterances differ based on contexts where they are produced. An example of an utterance that is influenced by the context was said by Hon. B. Ngeno, in Motion 1, thus: *"I must say that we have to fight by all means a scam that is going to derail the success and the achievements of our people."*

The sentence above may be uttered in at least two different sets of circumstances, namely a participant in a County Assembly vowing that they will not allow underhand activities that will undermine development at the County. Another context could be a school where learners debate by taking different roles or even a context where actors will be performing some skits. The only context where the above interaction will affect the state of affairs will be the County because the actors have actual authority to change the way things are done. Therefore, utterances like the one above have the same sentence meaning but different illocutionary forces. In producing these utterances, the speaker hopes to influence the feelings or attitudes of their listeners and make them behave in a certain way. When speakers of a language produce utterances in a given context, they also perform actions such as informing, requesting, commanding, complimenting, and apologizing among other actions. Our study focuses on the types of speech acts present in the discussions of Members of County Assembly of Bomet as they carry out the activity of debating.

Suhair (2015) observes that most politicians are unaware of the fact that there is link between what is said, what is meant and the action conveyed by what is said. According to Suhair, politicians articulate many intentions in their speeches and we will only understand what they mean by looking at the illocutionary forces behind their utterances. When the MCAs participate in a debating process, they have some political messages and functions that they intend to pass through their utterances. Therefore, every utterance produced by them should be analysed in order to find out the types and functions of speech acts used during debates as they try to reach the goal of the debating process.

According to Austin (1962), speech acts fall into three classes, namely locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. The locutionary act is simply the uttering a sentence from a language; it is a description of what the speaker says (Leech, 1983). There are three patterns of locutionary act according to which English sentences are constructed. They are declarative if they tell something, imperative if they give an order, and interrogative if they ask a question (Austin, 1962). An illocutionary act is one in which the speaker intends to do something by producing an utterance. Illocutionary acts are considered the core of the theory of speech acts. They are closely connected to the speaker's intentions, such as stating, promising, thanking, congratulating,

apologizing, threatening, predicting, ordering, and requesting (Leech, 1983). The illocutionary force of the utterance is a phonological utterance with an intention while expressing it. This is the act, which is governed by culture and with illocutionary force behind it.

Austin (1962) further distinguishes five types of utterances based on their illocutionary forces. These are verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives. Searle (1969) improved on Austin's SAT and categorized the illocutionary act into five classes, namely assertives or representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. Our study employs Searle's approach in the categorization and analysis of speech acts as it is more elaborate and clear. According to Searle, the hearer plays a very important role in communication. This is because if the hearer does not understand the intentions of the speaker or is unable to accept what the speaker is trying to say, the illocutionary act will not be fulfilled and therefore becomes infelicitous or inappropriate. Thus, the types and functions of utterances occurring in a discourse can be assigned according to Searle's five categories of speech acts, and with the help of felicity conditions, along with other features of context, we can interpret the discourse.

Statement of the Problem

Members of County Assembly of Bomet engage in debates over different motions proposed to aid in determining the best course of action regarding important matters affecting the County. However, the actions of the Members as they routinely discuss various motions on the floor of the County Assembly have received little scholarly attention. A knowledge of what participants do during the debating process and the pragmatic forces behind their utterances will provide insights into the nature of interaction at the County Assembly and at the same time show the state of affairs at the County. Therefore, this paper examines the pragmatic forces of speech acts used by Members of County Assembly of Bomet during debates at the County Assembly.

METHODOLOGY

The sample size for the present study consisted of three motions selected through purposive sampling. The motions were those appearing in the County Assembly's Hansards that were recorded between 2013 and 2017. The researchers downloaded the data from the e-version of Hansards available at Bomet County Assembly's website. After downloading the Hansards, the researcher read through the selected motions in order to identify the speech acts contained therein. The researchers did this by sorting out words, phrases and sentences that were significant for the study. The researchers then grouped together the speech acts based on Searle's five categories of speech acts. This ensured that the speech acts with the same communicative purpose were grouped together. After this, the researchers calculated the frequency of occurrence

of speech acts so that reading the data could be done easily. This involved using words or sentences as well as figures and tables to explain the data. This paper takes note of only two speech acts that were used by the members of the County assembly of Bomet during their debating sessions namely: assertives and expressives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table below shows the overall relative frequencies and percentage distributions of speech acts of Members of County Assembly of Bomet from the sampled motions. The frequencies show the occurrence of each speech act while the percentage was calculated by placing the frequency over the total number of speech acts present in the utterances and thereafter multiplied by one hundred. The data is analysed using Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts.

Table 1: Distribution of Speech Acts from the Data

Types of Speech acts	Motion 1		Motion 2		Motion 3		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Assertives	45	42.45	65	48.50	28	53.84	138	47.26
Expressives	25	23.58	31	23.13	13	25	69	23.63
Directives	22	20.75	24	17.91	7	13.46	53	18.15
Declarations	10	9.43	9	6.71	2	3.84	21	7.19
Commissives	4	3.77	5	3.73	2	3.84	11	3.76
Total	106	100	134	100	52	100	292	100

From the table, it was observed that the Members of County Assembly used utterances that were mainly assertives/representatives accounting for 47.26%. This was followed by expressives at 23.63%, directives (18.15%), declarations (7.19%) and finally commissives at 3.76%.

The reason for using assertive acts more than the other acts may be attributed to the type of discourse that the participants are engaged in. In argumentative discourse, participants make claims and use arguments to support their positions while those opposing use arguments to disagree or rebut the claims. Generally speaking, the specific speech acts performed in our data are composed of acts such as informing the hearers about the state of affairs at the County and promising them of a better future if things go according to the speaker's expectations. It is therefore important to discuss the performance of each of these speech acts from the data.

Assertives

Assertives, also referred to as representatives, are the most common illocutionary acts in the corpus, representing 47.26% of all the utterances performed in the data. Assertives refer to

speech acts in which the speaker asserts a proposition to be true using verbs such as affirm, believe, conclude, report, deny, etc. (Searle, 1969). This type of speech act also includes stating, informing, reporting, suggesting, criticizing, replying, concluding, predicting, denying, disagreeing, etc. Although most assertive acts are expressed through declarative form, they can also be expressed through the imperative and interrogative forms. The high frequency of assertives revealed that the participants meant to commit themselves to the truth of what they were saying.

There are three features that distinguishes assertives from other illocutionary acts. One of them is that assertives commit the speaker to the truth of the proposed content. This means the speaker should defend his/her utterances as true even if the hearer thinks otherwise. The second feature is their direction of fit is words to the world which means that words should describe the reality (or perception of it). The third one is that by uttering an assertive, one expresses a belief (even if it is an insincere one) (Kroupa, 2017). Consider the following example from our corpus:

Extract 1:

If the honourable member is now driving a Rav4, his people are actually moving barefooted. We do not have second class human beings in our republic and we need to treat each individual with dignity... (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 27/02/2014).

The utterance above was said by Hon. R. Bett while opposing the motion tabled by Hon. Julius Korir (motion mover). The speaker shares some information with the listeners in which he seems to suggest that the motion mover lives lavishly while the people who elected him are suffering. The direction of fit is words-to-world. The first part of the utterance has this direction because it explains something that is happening in real life. The second part of his utterance starting with *We need* explains something that needs to be done to alleviate the sufferings of the people. This talks about a future where all individuals are treated with dignity. The world should, therefore, be changed to ensure every individual is treated with respect and this makes the utterance to take the direction of world-to words. Moreover, as an assertive act the audience should assume that the speaker actually wants this to happen. An assertive act should also express the belief of the speaker, a belief that whatever he/she is saying is true. The action verbs like *driving* and *moving* help to paint a picture that the speaker might have seen the motion mover's car and his people walking barefooted. The three features combined clearly shows that the utterance belongs to the class of assertives. This approach was used in determining the class of assertive acts from the corpus. Assertives are further divided into several classes based on the illocutionary forces of the verbs used in the utterances. All the 138 instances of assertives found in our data were analysed in order to reveal the most dominant type of assertive act and even further to assign a valid

illocutionary force to each act. Assertive acts in our data include claiming, reporting, stating, affirming, predicting and informing.

An assertive speech act has an illocutionary force of the speaker's belief and an utterance like Extract 1 above could either be true or false. It is a claim made by the speaker that commits him to the truth of what he has expressed. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), a claim expresses a view of the speaker who may be expecting some kind of objections as claims are often not proved. Assertives can also be used to report about a state of affairs. This can be seen in the following extract.

Extract 2:

Hon. L. Kirui:..Recently we have cancelled a process meant for recruitment of Health officers. We cancelled another one for Chief officers and another one for drivers. In all these Honourable speaker, in my own understanding, I think public money is being used...meaning misuse of funds. (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 15/07/2015).

Extract 2 expresses the worries experienced by the speaker because of the cancellation of the recruitment process. He shares this information with the audience. He is aware that money is being lost and yet nobody seems to be concerned about it otherwise they should have stopped the process until issues get sorted out. He emphasizes his opinions in the last part of the sentence starting with *I think* which makes the direction of fit to be words-to-world. He believes that *money is being misused* and this commits him to the truth of what he has expressed. One of the functions of illocutionary acts is reporting. The aim of reporting is to inform someone that something has been done (Hornby, 2015).

There are cases, however, when the difference in the illocutionary forces of the utterances can be rather small or unclear. For example, the illocutionary forces of claiming, blaming, informing, and stating in our corpus.

Extract 3:

Hon. B. Ngeno: If we compare with Machakos County, we cannot say that our people are sicklier than those in Machakos so that we go for the higher value... (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 27/02/2014).

From the above extract, it may not be clear whether the speaker is blaming someone for paying a higher amount for which Machakos County paid less for the same services or the speaker is simply stating a fact. Extract 3 in our data is classified as reporting because reporting refers mainly to the past and it can be proven. Statistics can be provided to show the lower value that Machakos is paying for the ambulances. A claim on the other hand cannot be proven. The

illocutionary point of an assertive act focuses on persuading the hearer to form a parallel belief. Given the importance of the motions in the County Assembly, that is to convince the listeners to agree with the speaker's position, it might be understandable that this class of illocutionary acts is, in fact the most numerous.

Table 2 provides an overview of the types of assertives appearing in the corpus.

Table 2: Distribution of Assertives in the Corpus

Types of Assertives	Motion 1		Motion 2		Motion 3		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Informing	16	35.55	20	30.76	11	39.28	47	34.05
Reporting	17	37.77	18	27.69	8	28.57	43	31.15
Claiming	6	13.33	12	18.46	5	17.85	23	16.66
Predicting	2	4.44	6	9.23	0	0	8	5.79
Stating	4	8.88	9	13.84	4	14.28	17	12.31
Total	45	100	65	100	28	100	138	100

The findings show that informing led in the illocutionary forces of assertives with 47 occurrences. The second most common illocutionary force was reporting with 43 occurrences, followed by claiming with 23 instances, then stating with 17 occurrences, while predicting appeared rarely in the data with 8 occurrences. Given the nature of the debates at the County assembly reporting, informing, and claiming would indeed be expected to appear quite often. This is because politicians like informing others of the happenings in their areas of jurisdiction. They also report about the state of affairs in the County and how they would want to change these states to better ones in the future. Reporting also uses facts like statistics and real life cases. Similarly, they use claims to explain how they found themselves in the current situation (which is not so good in most cases). For example, the speaker says in the following utterance:

Extract 4:

Hon. Julius Korir: If you look at the contract, it says that the sum to be paid per ambulance per day is sh. 20,000 and if you multiply by 6 vehicles it comes to sh. 120,000. So let us be practical, this County losses sh. 120,000 per month and as leaders, we know how much that money is. (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 27/02/2014).

The speaker in extract 4 tries to persuade his hearers by using statistics to explain the amount of money the County is paying for ambulances. According to him, the contract they entered with The Kenya Red Cross should be revoked because the County is losing a lot of money. Though he uses figures to explain his position, his opponents treat his utterances as mere claims because the

ambulances have saved lives and according to some of them, one cannot put a value on human life. As Hon. T. Rotich asserts:

Extract 5:

I think let us put aside just thinking of the cost. How much is the cost of our lives on us? How much do we contribute during the time for funerals? How much do we contribute even to have a mother who is stuck in hospital out after delivery? But this particular time, I think all of us are getting relieved because we are not contributing... (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 27/02/2014).

The study found that the distribution of illocutionary forces of assertives are different in the sampled motions. While the illocutionary forces of informing are almost fairly distributed across the 3 motions, there is great variance in the distribution of other illocutionary forces in the data. For instance, motions 1 and 2 have fairly equal distributions of illocutionary forces of reporting with 17 and 18 occurrences, respectively, while motion 3 has only 8 occurrences. Similarly, the illocutionary force of claiming stands at 6 in motion 1 and 5 in motion 3 while in motion 2 there were 12 occurrences. This therefore, means that the occurrence of some illocutionary forces were influenced by the topic of the motions under debate. The illocutionary force of predicting was found to be the least used in the data with only 2 occurrences in motion 1 and 6 occurrences in motion 2 while motion 3 registered none. In cases where the act of prediction is used, it appears as a warning that if things do not work at the County, the future may be bleak. Politicians in most cases are tasked with improving the standards of living for their electorates and painting a picture of hopelessness is not in their best interest. They do not want to be portrayed as incapable and this could explain why prediction of negative consequences for their people is rarely used. In debates at the County assembly, the participants support the motion but in most cases use different arguments to give their own points of view.

Expressives

Expressive acts were the second most dominant class of illocutionary acts in our data accounting for 23.63%. Expressives state what the speaker feels. The form of expressives can be statements of pleasure, pain, like, dislike, joy, or sorrow. In using expressives, the speaker makes words fit the world (of feeling) using acts such as thanking, apologizing, congratulating, and praising. By using expressives, the participants shared how they felt about the state of affairs in the County. In doing this, they had to reflect on previous events that are supposed to provide a background for their political intentions and how they intend to change the state of affairs into better ones in the future.

Based on various dimensions, Searle and Vanderveken (1985) describe 13 illocutionary forces for expressives. These include; apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, complain, lament, protest, deplore, boast, compliment, praise, welcome, and greet. Out of the 13 class of expressives provided by the two scholars, only about 6 were found in our data. Let us consider the following examples:

Extract 6:

Hon. B. Ngeno: We are discouraging this young children going to school. It is wrong for the members to attend the funds drive for educating children and the same qualification is not recognized... (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 15/07/2015).

The honourable member is disappointed because according to him, merit in recruitment processes is not taken into account. He therefore wonders if education is of any value because those who are qualified are not employed. Other factors seem to play a role in recruitment at the County. The illocutionary force is that of complaining because those mandated with recruiting staff are doing it the wrong way. Similarly, Hon. T. Rotich uses personal experience to explain his feelings thus:

Extract 7:

I personally lost my sister in-law because of losing time while just being rushed to the hospital. But for all those that these ambulances have supported, they have all lived. (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 27/02/2014).

Hon. T. Rotich uses his experiences to persuade others not to revoke the contract with The Kenya Red Cross because the ambulances were of great help to the people of Bomet. According to him, many lives have been saved by the ambulances and implicitly states that had these services been available when his sister-in-law needed them, she would not have died. The table below shows the distribution of expressive acts in our corpus.

Table 3: Distribution of Expressives in the Corpus

Types of Expressives	Motion 1		Motion 2		Motion 3		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Thanking	14	56	13	41.93	7	53.84	34	49.27
Apologizing	1	4	1	3.22	0	0	2	2.89
Protesting	1	4	1	3.22	1	7.69	3	4.34
Congratulating	3	12	1	3.22	3	23.07	7	10.14
Complaining	4	16	14	45.16	2	15.38	20	28.98
Complimenting	2	8	1	3.22	0	0	3	4.34
Total	25	100	31	100	13	100	69	100

The results reveal the illocutionary act of thanking leading in the class of expressives with 34 occurrences out of the total number of expressives. This is attributed to the parliamentary routine style of thanking the Speaker of the House and thanking the motion mover for tabling the motion of the day. This was followed by the act of complaining with 20 instances showing that the participants are highly dissatisfied with the state of affairs at the county whether it is the way contracts are done or problems with recruitment processes and even naming of streets. The acts of congratulations come at a distant third with only 7 occurrences, still pointing at the kind of dissatisfaction of the participants. There is not much to congratulate anyone for anything. Apologizing and complimenting have 3 occurrences each while acts of prediction come last with only 2 instances. Apologizing as a speech act was used when one was pressed to tender an apology. For example:

Extract 8:

Hon. B. Ngeno: (*He rose on a point of order*). After informing him that he is out of order, he was supposed to withdraw and apologize because no one is praying for people to die.

Hon. D. Rotich: *I apologize and withdraw Mr. Speaker.* (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 27/02/2014).

Other participants apologized after realizing they made a mistake in their utterances. For example:

Extract 9:

Hon. Speaker: *Honourable member, did you impeach? You have no powers to impeach a CFO.*

Hon. E. Chepkemoi: *I am sorry honourable Speaker. We removed her from office.* (Bomet County Assembly Hansards, 15/07/2015).

Information on the use of expressives is important because it reveals whether or not the use of expressives is related to the type of motion.

Contribution of the Paper

This paper enriches previous research in speech acts by looking at how the Members of County Assembly of Bomet employ various speech acts during debates at the County Assembly in an African context. The study also contributes in testing the claims of Speech Act Theory involving the Kipsigis community of Kenya that is culturally and linguistically different from the western contexts upon which the claims of Speech Act Theory were first applied (Al-Kahrani, 2005).

The research was undertaken with the assumption that successful communication depends on adequate knowledge of the language and an understanding of what is appropriate to say in

particular situations. For debaters particularly, an understanding of what hastens consensus is critical. Participants engaged in argumentative discourse can benefit from a deeper understanding of the various types of speech acts at their disposal, which they can use to minimize the confrontational nature of their interactions. When the debaters fully comprehend the illocutionary forces of utterances, effective communication can be attained. The illocutionary force of an utterance is determined not only by form but by a complex interaction between form and context.

The role of culture in contexts such as the County Assembly cannot be overlooked. Successful communication often depends on shared information about contexts, traditions, and attitudes. That language, particularly speech acts, is laden with culture. Speech acts include real-life interactions and require not only knowledge of the language but also appropriate use of that language within a given culture. That is why the usual confrontational nature of parliamentary debates was very minimal at the County Assembly of Bomet. Almost all the participants shared similar linguistic background and therefore same culture. However, this is not always the case everywhere; there are County Assemblies where participants come from different linguistic backgrounds. In such contexts, the participants should be encouraged to use speech acts that do not threaten the 'face' of other participants because their speeches often attract attention and the information that they convey might affect the citizens as well. We hope that this study can provide real-life examples from the Kipsigis community as well as data to researchers in pragmatics.

CONCLUSION

All the utterances used during debates were accounted for using Searle's categories of speech acts. As a result, the researchers have tried to show how speech act theory could be extended to the analysis of argumentative exchanges. The findings further showed that the participants use speech acts at the County Assembly to achieve their goals. The fact that members of the County Assembly from Bomet use speech acts when interacting illustrates that context does not matter in the application of speech acts. As such, African contexts, particularly among the Kipsigis community from Bomet, use speech acts just the same way that western contexts (where the theory was first applied) use them. To sum up, we can say that speech acts are used during debates at the County Assembly, but considerable differences exist in the way they are used. The frequency of their realization varies depending on the motion under discussion and the number of participants.

The use of speech acts during debates at the County Assembly is a clear indication that the participants are willing to act based on their deliberations. In other words, the speakers are not

only saying something but also there is an action embedded in their utterances. Being representatives of the people their goal is to ensure that people benefit from devolved government and that every elected leader should play their role effectively and efficiently. Most problems that arise at the County, however, are a result of lack of proper communication and consultation. Therefore, the Executive and the County Assembly are encouraged to improve on their communication skills so that they lessen misunderstandings and ensure their people benefit from the devolved functions.

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