

A SPEECH ACTS ANALYSIS OF ACHEBE' S *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE* AND *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH*

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Abstract

This study examines the use of illocutionary acts in Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, using Searle's classification of speech acts as the analytical framework. Selected extracts from both novels were purposively analysed to identify how Achebe employs language pragmatically to develop themes and advance the narrative. The findings reveal that the texts prominently feature all five categories of illocutionary acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Quantitative analysis shows that assertive acts account for 23.53%, directive acts 17.65%, commissive acts 23.53%, expressive acts 23.53%, and declarative acts 11.76%. This distribution suggests that Achebe's characters frequently engage in statements that assert opinions, make commitments, express emotions, and issue directives—reflecting the politically charged and socially dynamic contexts of the novels. Overall, the results suggest that Achebe's use of illocutionary acts is not incidental but central to the thematic development and structure of the novels. His strategic deployment of speech acts enhances character development and deepens the socio-political commentary, demonstrating how language functions as a powerful tool in African literary discourse.

Keywords: Achebe, *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, Illocutionary Acts, Pragmatics.

Introduction

Language, beyond its basic communicative function, operates as a powerful tool for action and influence. Speech Act Theory, pioneered by Austin (1962) and expanded by Searle (1976), emphasises that utterances do not merely transmit information but perform acts—such as promising, commanding, declaring, and expressing emotions—that impact social interaction. This perspective provides a valuable framework for analysing literary texts, especially those rich in political and social commentary. Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) are exemplary works that depict the postcolonial Nigerian landscape, marked by political instability, power struggles, and societal transformations. More than narratives, these novels showcase how language becomes an instrument of power, resistance, and identity construction.

The present study adopts Speech Act Theory to examine the illocutionary acts in Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, using Searle's (1976) classification of assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The primary objectives are to identify the types of speech acts employed by characters, analyse their role in advancing political and social themes, and explore how language functions as a mechanism for both reinforcing and resisting authority. Through this pragmatic lens, the study aims to uncover the deeper communicative strategies embedded in Achebe's works.

This research is significant because it offers a fresh analytical angle on Achebe's political novels by foregrounding the performative nature of language. While existing scholarship has explored thematic concerns such as corruption, gender dynamics, and political instability (Aden, 2018; Njemanze *et al.*, 2014), few studies have systematically applied Speech Act Theory to dissect the pragmatic functions of dialogue and narration in these texts. By doing so, this study contributes to literary pragmatics and deepens understanding of how

Achebe's narratives enact, rather than merely describe, the complex realities of postcolonial Nigeria.

Despite Achebe's status as a cornerstone of African literature, there remains a gap in the systematic exploration of the speech acts that animate his political commentary. The problem this study addresses is the underexplored role of illocutionary acts in shaping the thematic and ideological fabric of *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. Without this focus, critical discussions risk overlooking how language in these novels actively constructs power relations, motivates resistance, and conveys political critique. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by analysing how Achebe's use of assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives not only reflects but also performs the socio-political tensions of postcolonial Nigeria.

Literature Review: Previous studies with related analytic tools

Simon and Dejica-cartis (2015) conduct Pragmatic research on written advertisement using illocutionary speech acts to show how an audience is influenced by a written advertisement. The study used a quantitative research design. Various newspapers and magazines were analysed using illocutionary speech acts. The results of the research point out the advertiser's preference of using some speech acts over others with the aim of obtaining the intended effect on the targeted audience. The results showed that illocutionary speech acts in the forms of persuading and informing influenced the addressees to a high significance.

Fitriani et al. (2015) carried out a research work on the importance of advertisement using Searle's theory as the main theory for analysing the data. The source of data was journals. The result shows that advertisement has much informative importance to be reckoned on the audience.

Hanks (2018) investigated the types of speech acts and the function of speech acts in Jordanians' Facebook Status Updates. This

research uses a descriptive qualitative research design. The research work used Searle's theory of illocutionary speech acts. The result of the research showed that status updates posted by young Jordanian on Facebook significantly use expressive, assertive, and directive speech acts.

Srikandi (2020) investigate the types, frequency, and illocutionary speech act effects of using intensifiers in apology and compliment speech acts of Persian speakers. The research used a quantitative research design. Fifty male and female native Persian speakers were purposefully selected. The research used J. L. Austin's speech act theory for the analysis. The result shows that female speakers used more intensifiers than male speakers in both apology and compliment speech acts.

Sembing and Ambalegin (2019) investigate the types and functions of illocutionary speech acts in Aladdin's movie. The research used qualitative research design. The data found in the movie was classified into five categories namely, directives, assertives, declarative, commissives, and expressive. The data was analysed using the theory of Searle. The result shows that the movie has much evidence of illocutionary speech acts as they function in different types under different linguistic contexts.

Cao (2009) investigates illocutionary forces of speech acts in legal English. The research used qualitative research design. The data was analysed using Austin's theory and supported by Searle's theory. Cao also involved performative modal verbs for the research of illocutionary forces. The research showed the illocutionary functions of legal language and the tendency to use performatives in legal texts and to use fossilised words across different languages.

Del Percio et al. (2017), examined the language of politics. The research identified speech acts used in Buhari's address at the 71st session of the UN General Assembly. A qualitative research design was used. The research used Searle's theory. The result identified

illocutionary acts in the speech through tabulated statistics which shows that there were 52.56% of representative acts, 19.23% of directive acts, 16.66% of expressive acts, 11.53% of commissive acts and 10% of declaration acts.

Widayanti and Kustina (2018) investigated speech acts from the movie Frozen. A qualitative research design was used. The purpose of this research was to identify speech acts in the movie Frozen. Data analysis was based on the speech act theory of Levinson. Data source from this research is a movie transcript of Frozen which examines suggesting, asking, requesting, and stating speech acts. The result shows that the movie: Frozen has significant records of illocutionary speech acts.

McDermott et al. (2015) argue that hypocrisy is an unavoidable part of politics, and it's unrealistic—and even dangerous—to expect complete sincerity from politicians. They explore this idea through the works of major political thinkers like Hobbes, Jefferson, and Orwell, and by examining historical and modern politicians such as Oliver Cromwell and Hillary Clinton. Their key point is that instead of trying to eliminate hypocrisy or find perfect leaders, voters should focus on distinguishing between harmless and harmful forms of hypocrisy and concentrate only on preventing its most damaging types.

Previous Studies on Achebe`s *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of Savannah*

Aden (2018), using Critical Discourse Analysis, examines Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, showing that education serves as a key tool for role transformation and women's empowerment in the socio-political landscape. The study finds that education is the main factor driving women's emancipation and political advancement.

Krook (2017), through a qualitative approach and content analysis of the same novels, explores the strength of women in politics.

The findings reveal that highly educated women are fearless, strong, rebellious, and effective as political activists and agents. The study highlights the power of educational empowerment in driving deep social transformation, concluding that modern African women have new political roles beyond their traditional ones.

Honderich (2005) conducts a stylistic analysis of *Anthills of the Savannah* from a systemic functional linguistic perspective, exploring Nigeria's socio-political situation. The study reveals how narrative situation, transitive patterning, and symbolism interact with the characterisation of Chris, tracing his journey from powerlessness and fear to self-reformation and bravery. Chris's transformation and his symbolic act of saving a girl represent the theme of struggle and change, with Achebe urging enlightened but apathetic citizens to rise and transform society.

Njemanze et al. (2014) use structuralist analysis to study Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, focusing on corruption, radical struggle, and political instability. They examine how language and narrative structure build these themes, revealing the novel as an archetypal critique of the military's role in Nigerian politics and how military behaviours undermine their societal duties.

Similarly, Crisp and Cowton (1994) explore hypocrisy and moral seriousness, analysing 302 participants' accounts of hypocrisy in themselves and others. They identify five forms of hypocrisy—direct inconsistency, pretence, blame, complacency, and indirect inconsistency—showing how both political systems and personal morality often fail to meet their stated ideals, sustaining cycles of moral failure.

Both studies reveal the deep complexities of power and morality. Njemanze et al. show how political systems, like the military in *Anthills of the Savannah*, often fail in their duties, leading to corruption and instability. Likewise, Crisp and Cowton expose how

individuals struggle with moral inconsistency, revealing the gap between ideals and practice. Together, they demonstrate how unchecked power—whether political or moral—can perpetuate failure and undermine legitimacy in society.

Building on these insights, the current research aims to contribute new knowledge by applying an illocutionary acts approach to Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. This study introduces a pragmatic dimension, highlighting the diverse impacts of language use and focusing specifically on how illocutionary acts shape meaning and influence in Achebe's texts, offering a fresh perspective beyond existing analyses.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Speech Act Theory, a branch of pragmatics that explores how language functions as a form of action rather than merely a vehicle for conveying information. Developed by J. L. Austin (1962) and later expanded by John Searle (1969), Speech Act Theory posits that when people speak, they do not just say things—they also perform actions. These actions, known as speech acts, are categorised into three levels: locutionary acts (the act of saying something), illocutionary acts (the intended function or force behind the utterance), and perlocutionary acts (the effect the utterance has on the listener).

Central to this study is Searle's (1976) classification of illocutionary acts into five categories: assertives (statements of fact or belief), directives (commands, requests), commissives (promises, threats), expressives (statements of feelings and attitudes), and declaratives (utterances that change the reality, such as pronouncing someone married). These categories provide a systematic framework for analysing the linguistic patterns and communicative strategies

employed by characters in Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*.

By applying Speech Act Theory, this study seeks to uncover how Achebe's characters use language not just to communicate, but to exercise power, negotiate relationships, express resistance, and construct social realities within the politically charged environments depicted in the novels. Through this framework, the analysis will highlight the pragmatic functions of language as a tool for thematic development and character interaction in Achebe's political narratives.

Speech Acts Theory

The origin of the development of Austin's views on language begins with his growing disquiet over logical positivism, or at least over a version of logical positivism filtered through his personal discussions with A.J. Ayer and subsequently through his reading of Ayer's polemic *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936). Ayer explained that, for the logical positivists, the fact that a statement could be expressed in everyday language was no guarantee that it was meaningful (Ayer, 1971, p.7.).

J.L. Austin's speech act theory argues that everyday language is not just about statements that can be verified as true or false. Instead, many utterances are actions that produce real-world consequences. Expanded by Searle (1986), this theory sees language as capable of influencing behaviour and changing situations. As Ezeifeka (2018) explains, utterances like "I fire you" are not mere words—they perform an act that leads to immediate results, such as someone losing their job.

Austin challenged earlier philosophers who focused only on truth-conditional semantics, which dismissed phrases like "safe journey" or "happy birthday" as meaningless because they can't be tested for truth. He pointed out that such phrases, which he called speech acts or performative utterances, do not state facts but perform actions that impact social reality. According to this theory, the meaning of language

lies in its social function—we understand utterances by recognising the actions they accomplish, as every use of language is, in fact, a form of doing.

According to Austin (1962), every time we use language, we perform three types of **speech acts**:

1. **Locutionary act**: This is the basic act of saying something with **literal meaning** and **truth value**. It includes making sounds (phonic), using words that follow grammar rules (phatic), and conveying a clear sense (rhetic). For example, saying "I am eating food" simply states a fact that needs no deeper interpretation.
2. **Illocutionary act**: This goes beyond the literal meaning to express the speaker's intention or purpose. It's the act performed in saying something—such as requesting, commanding, promising, or persuading. For instance, saying "I am hungry" to a mother is intended to prompt her to provide food, not just to share information. Austin further divides illocutionary acts into five types:
 - **Expositive** (linking utterances in argument)
 - **Exercitive** (expressing power or influence)
 - **Verdictive** (giving judgments or appraisals)
 - **Commissive** (committing to future actions)
 - **Behabitives** (showing attitudes or emotions)
3. *(Perlocutionary acts, though part of Austin's original model, were not covered in your text excerpt but complete the trio: they refer to the actual effects an utterance has on the hearer.)*

In essence, while locutionary acts convey surface meaning, illocutionary acts carry the deeper function and purpose behind an utterance.

Perlocutionary act: The illocutionary act functions as providing an intended meaning behind an utterance, thereby affecting certain actions performed by the listeners. These actions elicited from the listener are called perlocutionary acts. This has to do with how one is trying to affect one's audience. According to Searle (2003), it is

concerned with what follows an utterance, the effect or take “take up” of an illocutionary act (p.228)

In advancing and expanding this speech act of Austin, John Searle (1980) modified this locution, illocution and perlocution. **Locution:** the first attempt by Searle according to (Smith, 2003, p. 490) was the development of four different acts participant can perform in saying something, namely, 1 utterance act of uttering something and takes care of Austin`s phonic and phatic acts. 2 Propositional act is the act of referring to and predicating how speaker can perform one propositional act.

Searle`s classification of illocutionary acts

The illocutionary act is the core of any speech act theory. It is interesting to analyse illocutionary acts in terms of understanding the functions and the intended meaning of utterances as regards the two novels under study namely, *The Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*.

Searle (1975) proposed five classifications of illocutionary acts. The classifications he calls **Representative/ Assertive, Directive, Commissive, Expressive and Declarative**. According to Searle, illocutionary acts are used to analyse any utterance that the listener or speaker produces.

a. **Representative / Assertive:**

The first in the categorisation is the representative or assertions relating to true or false value. Representatives or assertive are kinds of speech acts, which state what the speaker believes to be the case or not. The type of utterances in this assertive is stating, arguing, asserting, boasting, claiming, complaining, criticising, denying, describing, informing, insisting, reporting, suggesting, swearing, etc.

b. Directive

The second in the categorisation according to Searle is directive. The speaker in the directive sounds to make the listener do something. Directives are kinds of speech acts, which the speakers use to get someone else to do something. The speech acts involved are ordering, commanding, requesting advising, asking, forbidding, recommending and suggesting.

c. commissive

The third in the category is commissive. The speaker in this category pledges or obliges. In this case, the speaker commits himself or herself to do something. He or she commits himself or herself to future course of action using words like guaranteeing, offering, promising, and threatening. The speaker uses words like I guarantee, I pledge, I promise, I swear, I vow, I undertake, I warrant, etc.

d. Expressive

The fourth category is expressive which expresses feelings and attitude of concern of the speaker. In the expressive, the speaker expresses an attitude of concern for the situation in question. Expressives are kinds of speech acts, which state what the speakers feel. The acts are apologising, complimenting, condoling, congratulating, deploring, praising, blaming, pardoning, thanking, regretting, etc.

e. Declarative.

The fifth category is the declarative. It is an utterance that brings a being from none being. In this case, someone`s status is changed from mere utterance. Words like appointing, dismissing, naming, resigning, declaring, sentencing, cursing, disapproving, betting, blessing, confirming, baptising. In this case, by the utterance of a speaker the condition or status of someone changes by using such verbs like, I pronounce, I declare, I baptise, I sentence. The present

study is interested in the linguistic features in the two novels using Searle's illocutionary approach in their analysis.

This study adopted a qualitative research design, which is appropriate given its focus on the collection and analysis of non-numerical textual data. The primary data were drawn from the utterances of characters in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. These data consist of words, phrases, and sentences carefully extracted from both novels. For data analysis, the study employed the content analysis method, which involves the systematic examination of documentary and verbal materials (Mouton, 2001). Specifically, a critical qualitative analysis was conducted on the selected textual extracts. Furthermore, the analysis was guided by Searle's classification of illocutionary acts, providing a structured framework to interpret the communicative functions and deeper meanings within the characters' utterances.

Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section, certain abbreviations shall be deployed namely *Anthills of the Savannah* (ATS); *A Man of the People* (MOP).

Assertive acts

Assertive acts, as classified by Searle (1976), are speech acts where speakers commit to the truth of a statement, aiming to convey information or describe reality. Examples include affirming, claiming, and reporting. Unlike directives or commissives, assertives focus on expressing belief rather than influencing behaviour. In Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, assertive acts are crucial for characters to establish authority, challenge corruption, and reflect social realities. Achebe uses these acts to critique political failures, expose moral decay, and highlight postcolonial tensions in Nigeria. Thus, assertive acts in his novels not only advance the narrative but also serve

as powerful tools for socio-political commentary and thematic development.

Extract 1.

Tell them, if you like, that I am on the telephone with the President of the United States of America or the Queen of England. Peasants are impressed by that kind of thing you know. (ATS, p.16).

In extract 1 above, the speaker used the assertive speech act of informing in making his intention known. This utterance was made in the novel by His Excellency, the President as he was telling Prof. Okong to go and inform his visitors that he would not be able to attend to them because of his busy schedule. There is also an instance of the use of assertive in extract two below.

Extract 2.

Now if indeed, they have brought a petition, accept it on my behalf and tell them they can be rest assured that their complaints or rather problems not complaints will receive His Excellency`s personal attention. (ATS, p.17).

This statement above is another use of an assertive speech act of informing. In this utterance, the speaker Mr President instructed Prof Okong to inform his visitors that their petition has been received and will be attended to adequately. In the extract below is the use of assertive concluding speech act.

Extract 3.

I appreciate your strong feeling, Professor, but I must do these things my way. Leave all alone (ATS, p.18).

In the novel, the speaker, Mr. President, wanted to conclude a long discussion dominated by the pieces of advice of Prof. Okong. In his

speech, he used the utterance that will bring the discussion to a stop hence, he uses an assertive speech act of concluding as can be seen above. In the extract below is another use of speech act of informing.

Extract 4.

That is why I sent for you. Find some nice words to say to them. Tell them we are tied up at this moment with very important matters of state. You know that kind of stuff. (ATS, p. 17).

The speaker in the novel, who is the head of State sent his agent to go and inform his visitors that it would be very difficult for him to come and see them given his tight schedule in the office, he decided to communicate his situation through one of his staff. He uses the assertive speech act of informing to send across his words to his visitors.

Directive Acts

Directive acts, as defined by Searle (1976), are speech acts where the speaker aims to influence the listener's actions. These include commands, requests, suggestions, advice, and warnings. Unlike assertives, directives are interactional, seeking to shape behaviour. In Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, directive acts play a key role as characters use them to assert authority, challenge power, and call for action. Political leaders issue commands, activists make appeals, and citizens voice warnings, reflecting the struggle for power and resistance in postcolonial Nigeria. Analysing these acts reveals how Achebe's characters navigate authority, resistance, and the political tensions that define his works.

Extract 1.

Busy or no busy he must see his master. If you fail, I will send my orderly to arrest you. (MOP, p. 10)

In the novel, Minister Nanga passionately invites Odili to his house. In a commanding force, he insisted that Odili must come to his house as he had the intention of hosting him. In the invitation, he used a directive commanding speech act.

Extract 2.

Humour them is what I am saying. Gauge the temperature and pitch your message accordingly. (ATS, p. 17).

His Excellency, the President in the extract from the text avoided seeing his visitors and used directive speech act of commanding to stamp his order as he would like Prof. Okong to address the people properly on his behalf. The directive speech act of commending is also used in the extract below.

Extract 3.

Where have you been? (MOP, p. 9).

In an excitement of joy of meeting an old colleague in the novel, Hon. Mr. Nanga showed a visible familiarity between him and Odili. This visible familiarity proved itself in the manner with which Hon. Nanga mentioned Odili's name and asked him of his whereabouts.

Commissive acts

Commissive acts, as described by Searle (1976), are speech acts where the speaker commits to a future action. These include promises, vows, threats, and offers. In Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, commissive acts highlight political promises, personal commitments, and threats that reflect the characters' intentions and betrayals. Leaders pledge reforms, only to break them, while other characters use promises and threats to negotiate power. Studying these acts exposes the gap between political rhetoric and reality and shows

how Achebe critiques failed leadership and unfulfilled commitments in postcolonial society.

Extract 1.

Yes sir, yes sir (ATS, p.19).

Prof; Okong has a perfect idea of servant-boss relationship. In the novel, he usually makes unequivocal pledges of absolute loyalty to the Prime Minister. He uses commissive speech act of promising in almost all the demands of the Prime Minister stating his readiness to obey his master always. The commissive speech act of refusal is used in the extract 2 below.

Extract 2.

No to the plan, the dismissed ministers were conspirators and traitors who have teamed up with foreign saboteurs to destroy the new nation. (MOP, p.4).

In the text, some of the colleagues in the government had reasons to co-opt some of the past leaders. During one of the discussions, somebody raises an issue which didn't go down well with the Prime Minister and in his rejection of the opinion he uses the above speech act of refusal. In that commissive speech act of refusal, Nanga the Hon. Minister was able to put across his opinion and wanted no further discussion on that issue. Another commissive speech act of refusal is still used in extract 3.

Extract 3.

In this case, the meeting stands adjourned. (ATS, p. 6).

The above statement came up in an occasion in the text where the Honourable Commissioner insisted that His Excellency, the President must listen to a team of visitors before the end of a particular meeting

which the President was not disposed for. His Excellency, the Prime Minister used commissive speech act of refusal to turn down the request as aforementioned and immediately stopped the meeting. In Extract 4, there is another use of Commissive speech act of promise.

Extract 4.

Perfectly Your Excellency, you can count on my absolute discretion.
(ATS, P.16).

In the text, Prof. Okong was requested by His Excellency, the Prime Minister to represent him in a function which he could not attend given the nature of his engagements. Prof. Okong thereafter uses commissive speech act of promise in voicing out his acceptance the request of the Prime Minister.

Expressive

Expressive acts, according to Searle (1976), are used to convey the speaker's emotions or psychological state. These include apologies, thanks, congratulations, and complaints. In Achebe's novels, expressive acts reveal characters' feelings about corruption, oppression, and social change. Through complaints, laments, and praise, characters express frustration, hope, or disillusionment. Analysing expressive acts in *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* helps uncover the emotional undercurrents that drive political struggles and personal conflicts, adding depth to Achebe's portrayal of Nigeria's turbulent socio-political landscape.

Extract 1

I think Your Excellency that you are being too generous. Too generous by half, I am sorry to say. (ATS. P.18)

Expression of praise-singing in the text is craftily used in the context as observed in the Extract above. In the discussion where Prof. Okong

demonstrates in speech the level of generosity of his boss His Excellency, the Prime Minister, he deploys expressive speech act of praise in appreciating his Master. The use of expressive speech act of regret is observed in the Extract below.

Extract 2.

I am in disgrace; God I am in disgrace. What did I do wrong? (ATS. P.20).

People's actions or inaction in administration can either make or mar the outcome of an administration. A high record of administrative performance is always the concern of those in administration. His Excellency in the novel uses expressive speech acts of regret to point out the ugly situation in his administration born out of his inactions. Another expressive speech act of praise is used in extract 3.

Extract 3.

He is one of the pillars of this school. (MOP. p.9).

In the presence of Honourable Mr Nanga in the novel, the Proprietor of the school where Odili was working said so many beautiful things in praise of Odili's performance in the school using a speech act of praise. Another expressive speech act of praise is used in extract 4.

Extract 4.

Your Excellency is right. I never thought of that! It is surprising how Your Excellency thinks about everything. (ATS. P.19).

In the text, it happens that Prof. Okong could not stop eulogising His Excellency on how he has become a superman, a man little less than a god, hence, he could not but use expressive speech act of praise in expressing His Excellency's uncommon performance.

Declarative

Declarative acts, as Searle (1976) explains, bring about change simply by being spoken. These include declarations, appointments, resignations, and pronouncements. In Achebe's works, declarative acts are tools of power—used by political leaders to enforce authority or by citizens to assert change. In *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, declarations mark shifts in political status, social roles, and public identity. Studying these acts shows how Achebe uses language as an instrument of both oppression and liberation within the complex realities of Nigerian politics.

Extract 1.

They deserve to be hanged. (MOP. P.5).

Mr. Nanga was not happy with his political opponents in the novel. He sees them as enemies of the country. In his assessment and pronouncement of them, he uses the speech act of sentencing to make the conclusion. The following extract uses the declarative speech act of declining below.

Extract 2.

I ask for your pardon Edna, do not misunderstand me. You are right. None of this is my business really. Forget everything I have said. (MOP. P.107)

Odili saw how determined Edna is in the marriage proposal from the utterance of Edna in the text. Odili does not want to continue with the advice and in his tactical withdrawal, Odili got disengaged in the discussion using declarative speech act of declining above.

Summary

Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory with a focus on Illocutionary speech acts is used to analyse two novels of

Achebe namely, *A Man of the People* and *Anthill of the Savanna* to reveal the use of illocution as obviously inherent in those novels, observing critically the different speech acts used, which show how different speech acts were used in the two texts. The study reveals that there are features of illocutionary speech acts in the two novels. The study further finds out in the discussion that among the five taxonomies of Searle, there are variances in the degree of their occurrences in the texts understudy. The study examines the total occurrence of the assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative in the two texts. Assertive has three (4) illocutionary features of speech act (23.53%); Directive has three (3) illocutionary features of speech acts (17.65%); Commissive has six (6) features of illocutionary speech acts (24%); Expressive has four (4) features of illocutionary speech acts (23.53%); Declarative has only two (2) features of the illocutionary speech acts (11.76%).

Conclusion

Human beings and language cannot be separated from one other in society. Created as social beings, people need a language to communicate and to build a relationship with each other in social interaction. This study uses the illocutionary speech acts as advanced by Searle to analyse Achebe's *The Man of the People* and the *Anthills of Savannah*. In the theme development of the novels and their characterisation, the researchers can see with Searle that language can be deployed for many other linguistic services beyond the idea of word-to-world verifiable relations. In the case of the current study, the analysis has shown how speech acts in the selected texts reveal the entire linguistic arrangement in the texts under study and the theme development of the texts thereby proving the point that language realities go beyond the verification principle as propagated by the logical positivists.

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