

Illocutionary Speech Act Analysis in Nipashe Newspapers' Headlines

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East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to look at headline writers' intentions from Tanzanian Nipashe newspapers and classify them in accordance with illocutionary speech acts Taxonomy by Searle (1979). The study employed a qualitative research approach and a descriptive research design. The study involved the population of 1095 front-page newspaper headlines. A sample of 130 headlines was chosen and each headline was classified according to the taxonomy of illocutionary Speech Act. Out of the five categories of speech acts developed by J.R. Searle (1979), which served as the theoretical foundation for the study, four speech acts were found to be executed in the sampled newspaper headlines, with the representative speech act type predominating. Claiming, urging, remembering, reporting, recommending, assuring, bragging, concluding and deducing were some of the assertives' or representatives' illocutionary acts that appeared in the headlines. Directive headlines surveyed were used by copy editors to request, order, command, question and suggest that readers of the newspapers do something. Some headlines included commissive speech acts, which copy editors used to commit themselves to future actions. The headlines with expressive illocutionary acts were used by the editors to thank, pardon, apologize, blame, deplore, congratulate, regret and praise. There was no declarative speech act performed in the Nipashe newspaper headlines. The study recommends that the newspaper writers continue executing assertive speech acts in their headlines if they wish to tell the truth, use commissive speech acts if they want to make commitments about future events, use directive speech acts if they want readers to do something, use expressive speech acts to draw the attention of their readers and express their emotions and feelings and use declarative speech acts if they want to change the world and the attitudes of their readers at large.

Keywords: Speech acts; Headlines; Nipashe Newspaper; illocutionary force.

How to cite:

Nyagani, M. R., and Musa, N. (2022). Illocutionary Speech Act Analysis in Nipashe Newspapers' Headlines. East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences 3(6)24-31. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2022v03i06.0234>.

Introduction

Headlines serve as an introduction to the news of the article introduced and they are frequently written in a way that manipulates language to sway the readers. Copy editors make sure that the language used in headlines captures thoughts, feelings and attitudes of readers regarding current

events. Newspaper editors shape societal concerns and establish the limits of what can be discussed and how it may be discussed by the headlines they choose (Henry & Tator, 2002). Abba and Musa (2015) assert that newspapers have a special reputation for sparking debate on important national matters by reproducing remarks and dramatizing activities of well-known national

politicians, personalities and events to expose to their readers. Newspapers frequently add embellishments based on their own points of view of the stories they publish. These stories have a viewpoint and a structure that lend them to linguistic analysis. Within the context of Speech Act Theory, this study examined types of speech acts performed in Nipashe newspaper headlines.

Speech act theory provides us with a tool to analyze the use of language in context. According to the theory, the speaker or writer performs a speech act by using specific verbs known as performatives or constatives in any given communicative event, whether spoken or written. Under this introductory section, the paper reviews the newspaper under study, the theoretical framework employed and taxonomies of speech acts. In the subsequent section, the paper presents previous studies on speech act in the field of mass media and Linguistics. In the next sections, methodology, results and findings are presented. Lastly, the paper presents the conclusions and recommendations.

Nipashe Newspaper

This study focused on analyzing and classifying the illocutionary force in Nipashe newspaper headlines. According to Austin (1976), illocutionary force of a newspaper headline is the writer's or copy editors' intention of publishing the headline. This study therefore focused on headlines intentions from Nipashe newspaper that operates in Tanzania under the umbrella of IPP Media Group. It is a Kiswahili daily which targets the general public and caters to all age groups, carrying a mix of news articles, features, photos, politics, economics, education, sports, and entertainment (RSF, 2018). Furthermore, according to Tanzania Media Ownership Monitor, this daily newspaper reaches all regions of the country and has a daily circulation of 28,000 copies per day and it is the second most popular newspaper by audience share. In addition, Nipashe presents a number of viewpoints in stories whereby arguments from at least two sides are used. In this view, Nipashe represents the majority of Kiswahili newspapers that use headlines to communicate their intents to respective readers.

Speech Act Theory

This study applied the speech act theory by Searle (1979). The theory looks at the role of utterances in relation to behavior or attitudes of the interlocutors in communication. The theory is premised on the belief that language is used to perform actions;

thus, speech acts mean the actions performed through speaking. These are speakers or writers' intentions in the communications they make. This study therefore sought to analyze the headlines from the Nipashe newspapers by giving its taxonomy with reference to Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts which hold that a speech act is an attempt to do something purely by the words for which social conventions and institutions are required. Many speech acts are culture specific and in a particular situation, related speech acts may be carried out differently in different cultures. Based on this fact, the speech acts intended in Swahili newspaper headlines might be different from that of English newspaper for they are culture specific. In light of this cross-cultural speech realization, the purpose of this study was therefore to fill out this speech act cultural divide by classifying the types of speech acts performed in Nipashe Swahili newspapers. This is what copy editors intend with their headlines. Since the central idea in the speech act theory is in its illocutionary force, it was assumed that copy editors perform actions with headlines that introduce the stories they represent.

A linguistic analysis of the way these pieces of news are transmitted may reveal a lot about opinions and attitudes. In this manner, a pragmatic analysis of the headlines may represent an active means for viewing the character of headlines in initiating and sustaining intended meanings. According to Chiluba (2007), pragmatic analysis plays a key role in the headlines because pragmatic meanings are based on the writer's intentions. Since language is a means of communication and awarding beliefs, then what is important is to know the way it is used to shape ideas (Beard, 2000). As it is well-known that the use of speech acts is part of activities of human communication, identifying the types of speech act used in newspaper headlines can help the reader infer something that is not expressed by the copy editor.

Classification of Speech Acts in Mass Media

Speech acts can be classified in different ways. Hare (1970) and Austin (1962) originally categorised speech acts into five main kinds as follows: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitive and expositives. In response to this trend, numerous academics, including Kempson (1977), Searle (1969), Allan (1986) and Bach and Harnish (1979) developed their own categories of speech acts. But only Searle's categories will be taken into account in this case. Following his objections of Austin's (1962)

classification and criteria, Searle (1969) establishes various standards for a more accurate classification of speech acts that were adopted in this study.

The first category is declaratives. This group affects a change in the situation. The success of speech acts in this category depends on legal institutions. By virtue of a statement being successfully carried out, it causes some alteration in the world or condition of the referred to item or objects (Searle, 1969). The second one is an assertive or representative speech act. The objective of the assertive class members is to bind the speaker to the truth of the communicated claim (Searle, 1979). Here, the speech acts make claims about the outside world. They use the concepts of "true" and "false" to make their "point." They must "fit" the world in order for them to be true. The third category entails directive speech acts. Speech acts falling under this category are directives which show the speaker trying to persuade listeners to do something.

Expressive speech act is the fourth category. As the name implies, this speech act communicates the speaker's psychological or inner condition. It makes no generalizations about the world. At times, it is arbitrary. However, it conveys one's attitudes or feelings regarding the event. Commissive forms another category of speech act. This category nearly matches that of Austin (1962) which was given the same name. However, unlike directives, which impose an obligation on the hearer, commissives impose an obligation on the speaker. They bind the speaker to taking a specific action in the future. The above types of illocutionary speech acts form the basis for analysis of Nipashe newspaper headlines under this study.

This study sought to answer the following five research questions:

1. Do the headlines in Nipashe newspapers contain any assertive or representative illocutionary speech acts?
2. Do Nipashe newspaper headlines contain any instances of commissive illocutionary speech acts?
3. Are there any instances of directive illocutionary speech acts in the newspaper headlines in Nipashe?
4. Do Nipashe newspaper headlines contain any instances of expressive illocutionary speech acts?

5. Are there any declarative illocutionary speech acts in the headlines of Nipashe newspapers?

Related Literature

A number of studies on headline language use focused on speech acts in various mass media including newspapers, TV channels and websites. This section therefore reviews empirical literature pertaining to headlines' language use with reference to speech theory. Abba and Musa (2015) conducted a speech act analysis of *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers' headline reports on "Boko Haram" attacks and found out that of J.R. Searle's five speech act categories, two (assertives and directives) were used in all of the headlines in both newspapers with the assertive speech act type being the most prevalent. The study came to the conclusion that the ideological stances of the two newspapers were not conveyed in the headlines of the two newspapers, contrary to what readers would have anticipated.

Another study by Ramzan et al. (2020) on print media discourse in Baluchistan newspaper headlines in Iran demonstrated that Searle's taxonomy of speech acts was applicable to the headlines and statements in the chosen Baluchistan newspapers which were loaded with various intended meanings. The statistical analysis of the study showed that representatives' (assertive) speech acts were effectively used in the newspaper headlines. In conclusion, it was hypothesized that the news headlines' designers may have had a specific purpose in mind.

According to Al-Hindawi and Ali's (2018) study on pragmatic analysis of CNN and BBC news headlines about the Syrian crisis, CNN and BBC news stations most frequently used assertive speech acts in their headlines. The findings further demonstrated that although the headlines of the BBC news channel prominently employed expressive, those of CNN news channel predominately used commissives. On the contrary, Ghitheeth (2021) discovered that all two speech acts of assertives and directives were employed to transmit specific intentions meant for two categories of recipients: the government and citizens in Iraq.

Wiana and Khairani's (2020) examination of speech acts on Medan newspaper headlines found that the most common pragmatic function of the speech acts with a total of 1,030 (36.4%) was assertive. Since the

newspaper headlines were published in order to give information about the truth, more truth was discovered on the headlines of newspapers published between May and July 2020. The primary goals reached were to report relevant speech acts and to ensure that messages presented were understood by the general audience.

Based on Searle's theories on speech acts, Indriyani and Trioktawiani (2019) 's study on expressive speech act functions in the *Suara Publik* column of the Merapi newspaper revealed eight variations of expressive speech acts in the newspaper column, including commending, thanking, expressing sympathy, admiring, quipping, complaining, blaming and criticizing.

Tanzania has a variety of social environments, including natural, social and manmade environments which collectively make up the cultural milieu of Nipashe newspaper. Local religious practices, the ethnic and gender structure of the area, artistic influences and historical influences can all be considered social milieu of the newspapers published in Tanzania. Therefore, this study identified speech acts performed in Nipashe newspaper headlines of the Tanzanian press and how the illocutionary acts of these news headlines translated to the copy editors' intentions.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach which allowed the researchers to make a narrative based on the research objectives. This approach helped the researchers to capture the illocutionary speech acts used in the newspaper headlines. The study used the descriptive research design to explain in detail the different types of illocutionary force in Nipashe newspaper headlines. This design was employed because it was the best in an attempt to identify and classify the communicative intents (illocutionary acts) of each newspaper headline.

Study Location

Data was collected in the Dar es Salaam region, particularly in Kinondoni Municipality, where the IPP Media Group headquarters of Nipashe Newspaper is located. Dar es Salaam was selected because it would make it possible to collect data from the Newspaper archive at the IPP Media Group offices in Dar es Salaam.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study was 1095 Nipashe newspaper headlines published in 2021. The selection was based on the availability of data in the newspaper archive. The study purposively sampled three front page headlines per newspaper published in 365 days. Since it was hard to predict the total number of headlines, the study assumed that three (3) headlines per newspaper, forming a total of 1095 of all front headlines, would be the target population. Using saturation data collection procedure, 130 out of 1095 headlines that appeared on the front pages of Nipashe newspapers were sampled.

The front-page headlines were selected because they are the most read sections of a newspaper. Using the data saturation method, the study collected headlines until no additional speech act categories were identified and data began to repeat to the point where further data collection was redundant, indicating that an adequate sample size was reached. In this way, the study managed to analyze 130 newspaper headlines through content analysis, along with a checklist with descriptors of illocutionary act categories as suggested by Searle (1976).

Statistical Treatment of Data

Despite the fact that the study was more qualitative, there were few instances of statistics. Using the newspaper headline corpus, it was possible to determine the occurrence of each category of illocutionary speech act as suggested by Searle (1976). This helped to establish the most dominant speech act under the speech act taxonomy. Data was organized into tables that showed the frequency and percentage of speech acts identified from Nipashe Newspaper headlines.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers received a permit from the Vice Chancellor of Tanzania's St. Augustine University to conduct the study. The researchers further received a permission from the Dar es Salaam Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) to conduct the study at the IPP Media Office. The researchers avoided any kind of plagiarism by adhering to the APA's seventh edition documentation style. To uphold ethics during data collection and analysis, the researchers guaranteed the media owner that all information gathered would be used solely for research purposes.

Results and Discussion

As the study sought to establish whether assertive, commissive, directive, declarative and expressive speech acts were performed in Nipashe Newspaper Headlines, table 1 presents the summary of speech acts performed in each category.

Out of 1095 newspaper headlines examined, 96.07% were representatives, 1.28 % were directives, 1.37% were commissives and 1.37% were expressives. Surprisingly, there was no declarative speech act in any headline.

Table 1: Types of Illocutionary Speech Acts in Nipashe newspaper Headlines

SN	Speech Act Types	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Representative	1052	96.07%
2.	Directive	14	1.28%
3.	Commissive	15	1.37%
4.	Expressive	14	1.28%
5.	Declarative	0	0%
	Total	1095	100%

Therefore, the majority of the headlines published by Nipashe were representative. Results confirm those by Abba and Musa (2015), Indriyani and Trioktawiani (2019) and Ramzan et al. (2020) that assertive speech acts are commonly used speech acts of in headlines.

Representative Speech Acts

As reported in table 1, the majority of speech acts were assertive (representatives). According to Searle (1979), an assertive speech act is a statement

or expression in which the speaker or writer confidently asserts a point of view or a statement of fact. In the headlines, some of these acts included claiming, hypothesizing, insisting, believing, reminding, suggesting, reporting, assuring, agreeing, boasting, complaining, concluding and deducing. Data set presented in [1] below is an illustration of the representative headlines extracted from the Nipashe newspapers.

- [1] a. *Majaliwa: Serikali haijazuia barakoa* (Nipashe, February 21, 2021)
[Majaliwa: The government has not banned face masks]
- b. *JPM aombwa katiba mpya* (Nipashe, February 2, 2021)
[JPM has been requested for a new constitution]
- c. *Assad: Sikumaliza muda nafasi CAG* (Nipashe, October 7, 2021)
[Assad: I didn't finish my time as CAG]

In representative speech act [1a], the newspaper writers' intention was to assert the speaker's belief, Majaliwa, in this case, that the government had not banned face masks. The intention of this newspaper headline was to show Majaliwa's intention of making the public know that the government had not banned the use of face masks in Tanzania. The representational function, according to Searle (1976), refers to the writer's intent of speech to suggest the truth. In this case, the writer of the newspaper wished to state the underlying truth in the headlines. The headline writer in [1b] reported the truth that JPM had been requested for a new constitution, whereas in [1c], the newspaper reported that Assad did not finish his time as CAG in Tanzania.

As for business, *Nipashe* journalism — like other newspapers in Tanzania — turns to increase the

quest for journalistic truth. The situation that the majority of Nipashe headlines were assertive (representatives) is supported by previous studies (Abba & Musa, 2015; Ramzan et al., 2020; Ghitheeth 2021; Wiana & Khairani, 2020) which indicated that copy editors use assertive headlines to transmit beliefs, attitudes and values to readers.

Commissive Speech Acts

According to Searle (1976), commissives are those types of speech acts that speakers or writers use to commit themselves to some future actions. They express speakers or writers' intentions. Through content analysis of the Nipashe Newspaper headlines, the study gathered various commissive speech acts that expressed pledging, promising, refusing, offering, volunteering and threatening. The data set presented in [2] is an illustration of the

commissive headlines extracted from the Nipashe newspapers.

The headlines [2a-d] present a good example of commissive speech acts. According to Searle (1976), commissive is that speech act that a speaker or writer uses to commit himself to some future action. In principle, they express the speaker's intention. The author of headline [1a] presents a compassionate speech act of President Samia's threat to sack irresponsible leaders in her government.

- [2] a. *Rais Samia: Nitawaondoa wasiowajibika*
[President Samia: I will sack irresponsible ones (Nipashe, 18, 2021)]
 - b. *Gwajima: Nitasema ukweli* (Nipashe, August 23, 2021)
[Gwajima: I will tell the truth]
 - c. *Mbowe: Hatutashiriki Uchaguzi Mkuu 2025* (Nipashe, May 27, 2021)
[We won't take part in the 2025 national elections]
 - d. *NABI: Yanga Sports Club tutaweka rekodi* (Nipashe, September 23, 2021)
[NABI: Yanga FC will set a record].
- [3] a. *WAZIRI: Marufuku Kufuta Likizo za Watumishi* (Nipashe, December 16, 2021)
[MINISTER: It is prohibited to cancel civil servants leave days]
 - b. *Shoo: Acheni kutesa watu* (Nipashe, December 26, 2021)
[Shoo: Stop torturing people!]
 - c. *PM: Taasisi za Serikali toeni huduma pamoja* (Nipashe, September 7, 2021)
[PM: Government agencies should provide services in unison]

In contrast to headlines in [1], headline [2d] depicts a promise made by the Young Africans Sports Club Coach Nabi to set a record in Tanzanian football. To function successfully as a promise, it must commit the speaker/writer truly to a future deed that the hearer/reader desires and that the speaker/writer can actually carry out (Searle, 2008).

Searle, in his 1965 article "What is a Speech Act?", characterises threats as commissive but distinguishes them from a prominent member of that group, promises: One crucial distinction between promises on one hand and threats on the other is that a promise is to do something for you, not to you, but a threat is to do something to you, not for you (Searle, 1979)]. Others have suggested that threats should be classified as directives. This viewpoint, however, is based on the widely held belief that threats include a condition that the addressee is required to fulfil. This study classified threats as a type of commissive speech act.

Likewise, head [2b] implies a warning that Gwajima would tell the truth. Similarly, headline [2c] depicts an opposition political party leader in Tanzania threatening not to participate in the 2025 national elections. For a threat, both the speakers/writers and the listeners or the readers do not want the act to occur. The writers do not need to plan to undertake the action, merely to make the statements. However, the listener is afraid that s/he will not perform the act (Searle, 2008).

Directive Speech Acts

Newspaper headlines employ directive speech act when the editor requests something from the readers. According to Searle (1969), requesting, directing, inquiring and proposing are all examples of directive speech acts performed in newspaper headline. The dataset in [3] is an illustration of the directive headlines extracted from Nipashe newspapers.

Headlines in dataset [3] represent headlines that performed the speech acts of directives. The newspaper writer performs this pragmatic function to instruct the readers to do something.

Headline [3a] through the performative verb 'MARUFUKU', 'prohibition' displays an order or directive that commands the respective civil servant leaders to comply with an order given by the Minister. Similarly, headline [3b] performs the speech act of a directive in which Shoo orders people not to mistreat or torture people. Likewise,

headline [3c] is a good example of a directive speech act where the Prime Minister (PM) directs the government agencies to provide services in unison. The headline designers normally employ directives to capture the attention of readers and deliver the information (Wiana & Khairani, 2020). According to Al-Saedi and Jabber (2020), directives provide an explicit and implicit meaning when readers interpret the newspaper headlines.

When they want readers to take action, newspaper writers use the directive speech act. They can ask, order, recommend or command anything to their readers by employing directive speech actions in

headlines. Generally, Nipashe headline designers opted for headlines that were directive to present the message for their readers to do something. The headlines surveyed were requesting, ordering, commanding, questioning and suggesting readers do something.

Expressive Speech Acts

The researchers gathered expressive acts which involved thanking, apologizing, pardoning, congratulating, blaming, deploring, regretting and praising. Dataset [3] below is an illustration of the expressive headlines extracted from Nipashe newspapers.

[4] a. *BAWACHA: Tunalaani polisi kwa kutuvuruga* (Nipashe, September, 20, 2021)
[BAWACHA: We condemn the police for disturbing us]

b. *Rais Samia: Niko tayari kusamehe* (Nipashe December 16, 2021)
[Preident Samia: I am ready to forgive]

Data Set [4] presents Nipashe headlines with expressive speech acts. Headline [4a] is an expressive speech act that serves to indicate the psychological attitude of the speaker towards a situation, which is reported in the form of sadness or sorrow. The headline uses the performative verb *vuruga*, 'disturb' to show feelings of BAWACHA towards the disturbance caused by the police. Likewise, headline [4a] contains the performative verb *laani* (condemn) to express feelings. Headline [4b] is the expressive speech act which is in the form of apologising, marked by the appearance of the word 'kusamehe' (forgive) in the headline as indicated in the theory of speech act.

According to Rustam (2013), expressive speech acts include praise, which facilitates appreciation for a good state of affairs in newspaper headlines. Rizki and Golubovic (2020) suggest that an expressive act extols gratitude and welcomes the addressees. Therefore, the researchers unveiled the expressive acts that are employed to open the lines of communication and begin the process of repairing relationships with the other person, especially from newspaper editors or writers to readers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The study concludes that the newspaper headlines contained a variety of expressive speech acts. The newspaper writers commended, praised, expressed sympathy, appreciated, complained, blamed and criticised through headlines. Therefore, the primary

intention of headlines on news services is largely to give information to the public. This is evidenced by the statistical analysis of the newspaper headlines which revealed effective employment of representative speech acts in the newspapers. The use of assertive speech acts implies that the copy editors or writers of the news headlines may have had specific intentions. The headlines further conveyed a variety of meanings connected to commitment to future acts, prospective actions, declaring future actions, conveying speaker intentions regarding future activities and making promises for the future.

Recommendations

Since representative or assertive headlines contain intrinsic truths that professional journalists should convey, newspaper writers are advised to use assertive speech acts in headlines if they want to express the truth. Second, this study recommends copy editors to employ commissive speech acts if they want to commit to future events. Thirdly, newspapers should use the directive speech act when they want the audience to perform actions. Fourthly, since expressive speech acts are inextricably linked to human beings in everyday conversation, headline designers using Nipashe should incorporate them.

Additionally, headline designers ought to express their feelings and emotions toward both themselves and the outside world through the expressive speech act type. Because declarative speech acts change the world, Nipashe headline

writers should consider using it if they want to change the world and the attitudes of their readers.

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