



A Speech Act Analysis of Campus Activism Discourse

*Adeoye Adeyinka Olusola

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria.

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.12745905](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12745905)

Submission Date: 28 May 2024 | Published Date: 15 July 2024

*Corresponding author: [Adeoye Adeyinka Olusola](#)

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria.

Abstract

An analysis of speech act selection and sequencing in a communicative event is essentially about the pragmatics of language use. Across genres, the investigation of language use within the scope of speech acts, is worthy of scholarly attention. This study examines language use in campus activism Discourses in terms of how language is used not only to address state-of-affairs, but also to generate expected responses. As a conventional means of communication among human beings, language shapes scheme of things in the social structures of society. In this study, selected corpora from a recorded campus activism speech delivery, is subjected to speech act analysis. The study hinges mainly on a bipartite theoretical anchorage: Bach and Harnish's (1979) speech act theory and Adegbija's (1982) pragmatic theory. However, insights from other pragmatic theories are explored for rich textual analysis. The study concludes that: in campus activism discourses, speech acts are used to target issues that are shared knowledge to group members, discrete speech acts serve the purpose of informing, mobilizing and agitating against unacceptable order.

Keywords: speech act, pragmatics, language, campus activism, Bach and Harnish's pragmatic theory, Adegbija's pragmatic theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1984, p. 15) defines an activist as "a person who works to achieve political or social change, especially as a member of an organization with particular aims." In this regard, "campus activism" concerns students and their leaders. It is common in institutions of higher learning such as colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. In using speech acts to convey messages, a speaker reveals the intentional nature of speech acts; they are acts that target phenomena in the universe of discourse. John T. Kearns, cited in Savas L. T. (1994, p. 50) notes that "a linguistic act, or speech act, is an intentional, meaningful act performed with an expression or expressions ...". The dimension of language use in campus activism discourse is so fascinating that an investigation of speech acts therein is essentially an investigation of the dynamics of "text", "speaker-meaning" and "social action". Scholar's view meaning as "social action" produced in varied communication contexts and situations. Interestingly, Brumfit and Johnson (1979, p. 118) posit that "the ability to compose sentences is not the ability we need to communicate. Communication only takes place when we make use of sentences to perform a variety of different acts of an essentially social nature. Thus, we do not communicate by composing sentences, but by using sentences to make statements of different kinds ... to record, to classify, and so on, or to ask questions, make requests, give orders, etc. Knowing what is involved in putting sentences together correctly is only one part of what we mean by knowing a language, and it has very little value on its own. It has to be supplemented by knowledge of what sentences contain as in their normal use as a means of communication." Indeed, the use of language as actions is immersed in speaker-meaning. This is because illocutionary acts are simply speakers' communicative intentions¹. A speaker's speech is a text in which there should be effective message delivery. Texts are human communication with topic relevance that should be made "easy to mean" via "linguistic engineering" (manipulation of the resources of language). Ruth Wodak and Martin Resigl, cited in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (2001, p. 385) note that "we obviously need to think about what our 'text' is about, since clearly what a person is talking about has a bearing on what is said and how it is said. We also need to think about who said it, or who wrote it or signed it, who is thought, in its particular socio-cultural context, to be

responsible for what it says, who the intended audience was and who the actual hearers or readers were, because who the participants in a situation are and how their roles are defined clearly influence what gets said and how. We need to think about what motivated the text, about how it fits into the set of things people in its context conventionally do with discourse ...” In a similar vein, Elite Olshtain and Marianne Celce-Murcia, cited in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (*ibid.*, p. 716) posit that “when using language for communication, we are faced with two major types of processes: transmitting our ideas and intentions to an addressee or interpreting and understanding the text or message produced by an interlocutor. The first places the initiator for the discourse at the production end of the continuum while the second places the interpreter at the reception end. When producing discourse, we combine discourse knowledge with strategies of speaking or writing, while utilizing audience-relevant contextual support. When interpreting discourse, we combine discourse knowledge with strategies of listening or reading, while relying on prior knowledge as well as on assessment of the context at hand ...” The significance of this study is predicated on its overview of the link between speaker-meaning and the referents of speech acts in an uncommon subject: student activism discourse.

2. The Literature of Pragmatics and Speech Act

Pragmatics is concerned with how context-driven use of language is processed by the participants in a communicative event. In this regard, the participants (speakers and hearers) rely on different kinds of contexts as established in the literature. According to Austin (1962), crucial concepts in pragmatics include: participants (users of language in context); speech acts (locutionary act which is an utterance with determinate sense and reference; illocutionary act which is the making of a statement, offer, promise, etc. in uttering a sentence by virtue of the conventional force associated with it; and perlocutionary act which is the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence); context (the relevant aspects of the physical or social setting of an utterance or discourse); non-verbal communication (extra-linguistic communication); inference (the process of making logical conclusions from all that a particular context provides to arrive at what a speaker means); presupposition (facts that the participants of discourse take for granted in a particular context of communication); and shared knowledge (common background information shared by the participants of discourse). Crystal and Varley (1993) define pragmatics as “the study of the factors that govern our choice of language (sounds, construction, words) in social interaction, and the effects of our choice upon others ...” See Levinson (1983) and Mey (2001) for additional insights on the definition of pragmatics. A field of language study, pragmatics is speech-act driven. Early (classical) scholars of pragmatics contend illustratively, that the minimal unit of human communication is not a sentence, but acts performed with a sentence (or an utterance). Austin’s (*ibid.*) classification of speech acts is instructive:

- locutionary act (performing an act OF saying something);
- illocutionary act (performing an act IN saying something); and
- perlocutionary act (performing an act BY saying something).

For proper understanding of the concept of speech act, it is necessary to study theories of pragmatics: Austin (*ibid.*), Searle (1969), Grice (1975), Bach and Harnish (*ibid.*), Adegbija (*ibid.*), Mey (*ibid.*) and Acheoah (2015). Pratt (1977) notes that “speech act theory provides a way of talking about utterances not only in terms of their surface grammatical properties but also in terms of the context in which they are made, the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between participants ... rules and conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received.”

3. Theoretical Frameworks

In this section, the theoretical frameworks of the study are examined.

3.1 Bach and Harnish’s Speech Act Theory

Two major aspects of Bach and Harnish’s (*ibid.*) speech act theory are germane to this study: broad-based speech act categories; and the instrumentality of “shared knowledge” in the communication between participants of discourse. The theory emphasizes the importance of “intention” and “inference” in communication. Bach and Harnish (*ibid.*) contend that for speakers to perform illocutionary acts, it is intended that their listeners have the understanding of the acts (mutual contextual beliefs). The hearer (h) relies on Presumption of Literalness (PL) to infer what the speaker (s) says¹. They recognize two broad categories of illocutionary acts: communicative and non-communicative. While the former requires the recognition of S’s R-intention, the latter does not. In their theory, there are four main categories of communicative illocutionary acts: Constatives, Directives, Commissive and Acknowledgements. These four main categories correspond roughly to Austin’s Expositives, Exercitives, Commissive, and Behabitives respectively and closely to Searle’s Representatives (Assertives), Directives, Commissive and Expressives, differing mainly in their characterizations. There are two classes of non-communicative illocutionary acts: Effectives and Verdictives, corresponding roughly to Searle’s (*ibid.*) Declarations. A detailed account of the categories established by them are speech acts which express the speaker’s belief and intention, or, at least the implication or desire, that the hearer form (or continue to hold) a like belief. Fifteen subcategories of this group are recognized as follows: Assertives, Informatives, Confirmatives, Concessives, Retractive, Assentives, Dissentives, Disputatives, Responsives, Suggestives and Suppositives.

Assertives are characterized by S's expression of belief that the hearer (H) also believes that P. Examples of verbs denoting Assertives are: affirm, allege, assert, aver, avow, declare, and deny.

Informatives are speech acts in which S expresses "the belief that P" and also "the intention that H form the belief that P". Examples are advise, announce, appraise, disclose, inform, insist, notify, point out, report, reveal, tell, and testify.

In Descriptives, the speaker declares that "a particular quality is possessed by a person, place or thing"; the speaker expresses "the belief that O is F" and "the intention that H believes that O is F". Examples are appraise, assess, call, categorize, characterize, classify, date, describe, diagnose, evaluate, etc.

Directives express the speaker's attitude toward a future action by the hearer and the speaker's intention or desire that the hearer considers his utterance as reason to act. Six subcategories of illocutionary acts are listed under this category: Requestives, Questions, Requirements, Prohibitives, Permissives, Advisories.

Questions are "special cases of requests; the hearer is requested to provide the speaker with certain information. A speech act is considered a question if S expresses "the desire that H tell S whether or not P" and "intention that H tell S whether or not P because of S's desire". Examples are: ask, interrogate, query, questions, quiz, etc.

Advisories express the belief that "there is (sufficient) reason for H to A (act)" and "the intention that H takes S's belief as (sufficient) reason for him to A". Examples are: advise, caution, counsel, propose, recommend, suggest, urge, warn, etc.

Commissives involve "the undertaking of an obligation or proposal to undertake an obligation". Two main types of this category are distinguished: Promises and Offers. S promises H to A if S expresses "the belief that his utterance obligates him to A", "the intention to A", and "the intention that H believes that S's utterance obligates S to A and that S intends to A". See the theory for more insights on speech act categories and the verbs that denote them.

3.2 Adegbija's Pragmatic Theory

Adegbija's (ibid.) theory is anchored by the "pragmasociolinguistic" concept which concerns discrete contextual underpinnings for the elucidation of language use: pragmatic context, social context and linguistic context. The pragmatic context concerns presuppositions and shared knowledge that are engaged in written and spoken communicative events. The social context concerns speaker-hearer relationship, and how it impinges on the use and interpretation of utterances. The linguistic context has to do with the words deployed by speakers/writers. In this regard, words that are used before and after a particular word (linguistic patterning), determine meaning. Adegbija (ibid.) evolves the "Master Speech Act" concept which encapsulates the total, comprehensive layer of interpreting language use. At the Master Speech Act layer of interpretation, the environmental and diachronic underpinnings of an utterance produce a higher level of meaning or interpretation.

4. Methodology

The source of the data of this study is recording (viewed as macro-structure in the study). Part of the speech (micro-structure) is selected for analysis. The selection is basically based on the pragmatic elements in the linguistic stretches. The selected structures are grouped into utterances (henceforth U.1 – U.8) for ease of reference and analysis. The illocutionary acts performed in each utterance (locutionary act) are first identified before an integrative analysis is done. The analysis examines the pragmasociolinguistic underpinnings therein.

5. Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section of the paper captures the presentation and analysis of data.

5.1 Presentation of Data

The entire recorded speech is presented below:

Our positions on the disturbing issues are clear: facilities for maximum academic performance have to be put in place. Sorry, I welcome you all to this emergency meeting. Do you want to continue the way you are? Do you want things to remain the terrible way they are? I can see your faces. You are sad because of the issues: no electricity to do this and that; no water to freshen up. A now there is an unbelievable increment in tuition fee. Our ladies will be the once to block all entrances at 12 noon today.

5.2 Analysis of Data

The selected corpora are analyzed below:

U.1

Locutionary Act:

Our position on the disturbing issues is clear: facilities for maximum academic performance have to be put in place.

Illocutionary Acts: assertive (asserting), requestive (requesting), informative (informing)

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

The speaker asserts that the students are worried about the status-quo and requests the provision of things that they lack in the institution. The speaker also informs the addressees that given the usefulness of their demands, the resolution of their representatives (their leaders) is non-negotiable. The pronoun “our” establishes speaker-hearer bond (fraternity). In the larger society, there are different pressure groups with common interests; this is a matter of world knowledge. Members of such groups elect or nominate leaders to coordinate their agitations; U.1 is simply an example of such pressure groups. The psychological context of the communicative event is tense, thus necessitating the speaker’s brevity and precision in choice of words. Considering the fact that the students are dealing with their superior (the authorities of their institution), the use of the expression “have to be”, which means “must” and implies “obligatory clause” signals insubordination, disgust, revolt and daring enterprise on the part of the students (conventional implicature). Indeed, it is expected. Language is inflated when it is unleashed against suffocating inhuman treatments. In saying “Our position ...” the addressees are made to infer that there was a deliberation before the decision was reached by the students’ leaders (presupposition). Language use in campus activism discourse shows that discrete speech acts are embedded in utterances, thus making communication more effective. Searle (1976) categorizes discrete acts in certain types of utterances:

1. Representatives, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding, etc.);
2. Directives, which are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (paradigm cases: requesting, questioning);
3. Commissives, which commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigm cases: promising, threatening, offering);
4. Expressives, which express a psychological state (paradigm cases: thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating);
5. Declarations, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (paradigm cases: excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment).

U.2

Locutionary Act: I welcome you all to this emergency meeting.

Illocutionary Acts: apologizing, welcoming

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

U.2 is uttered in a student forum (a kind of social gathering) where it is conventional to greet or welcome the participants (world knowledge). Unfortunately, the psychological context (tense situation) of the communicative event, makes the speaker forget to welcome or greet his audience. The speaker realizes that his disposition is unconventional, and corrects it by uttering U.2 (apologizing). This implies that some utterances had been uttered by the speaker before uttering U.2. It is worthy of note that in real life social gatherings, “welcoming” often counts as greetings in decoders’ understanding. Emergency meetings (as in U.2) are usually products of crucial developments in scheme of things; in U.2, this claim is presupposed by the audience. The preceding utterance (U.1) shows that two factions are contending over certain issues revolving around students’ welfare. In U.2, language captures the psychological background of the communicative event. Scholars hold the view that the psychological context of a communicative event is crucial for any meaningful interpretation of the communication. As a matter of fact, the common interests of the participants are revealed in U.2 via language use (brevity). Fowler (1981) contends that “linguistic structure is not arbitrary. It is determined and motivated by the functions it performs.” In a similar vein, Adegbija (1981) posits that “language use is not incidental. It is of credit.” The anger of the students is a reflection of the the pains they suffer (psychological state). Cognitively, they know what counts as an ideal learning environment for students of tertiary institutions. This is why they are resolute about the protest regardless of the consequences. Bara (2000) posits that “... cognitive pragmatics is defined as a study of mental states of the interlocutors, their beliefs, desires, goals, and intentions (cf. Bara 2010: 1) produced and interpreted by human individuals interacting with one another ... If language use (discourse) is, as the tenets of CDA assert, connected to the construction of knowledge about social objects, identities, processes, etc., then that construction can only be taking place in the minds of (interacting) individuals.”

U.3

Locutionary Act: Do you want to continue the way you are? Do you want things to continue the terrible way they are?

Illocutionary Acts: asking, condemning, persuading

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

The primary illocutionary act of the question “Do you want to continue the way you are ...” is “condemning” while its secondary illocutionary act is “asking”. In this sense, the question is rhetorical (not expected to elicit response). Questions in succession, as in U.3, convey a clear message: the students are tired of their condition. Essentially, U.3 is

used for persuasion; the speaker is persuading the hearers to ponder on the status-quo, and react swiftly. In linking “you”, “things” and “continue” (components of the linguistic context), the speaker achieves total illocutionary coverage, considering the fact that the discourse is all about people and unacceptable order. Thus, the adjective “terrible” amplifies the message, even though the topic relevance (See Sperber and Wilson 1986) for good understanding of the term “topic relevance”) of the utterance is successfully processed by the audience. In using language to change unacceptable social order in the larger society, as in its micro unit such as a university community, language must be unleashed as actions rather than mere linguistic units with formal properties. In U.3, there is speaker-hearer uptake. According to Austin (ibid.), “surely, to state is every bit as much as to perform an illocutionary act. Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility not seeing that stating is performing an act. It is an act (stating) to which, just as much as to other illocutionary acts, it is essential to “secure uptake” ...”

U.4

Locutionary Act: I can see your faces

Illocutionary Acts: asserting, ascriptive (ascribing), acknowledging

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

In asserting, the speaker subtly concludes that the addressees are not happy (as shown in their countenance). If the facial appearances of the addressees negate the psychological background of the communicative event, U.4 would not be uttered. There is mutual contextual beliefs on the reason for the non-verbal communication. Acheoah (2015) evolves the notion “Behavioural Implicature (BI)” to capture communicative non-verbal contributions of the participants of discourse. Such contributions are part of P-crafting features. By ascribing qualities to the appearances of his fellow students, the speaker acknowledges that indeed, the addressees are very angry, frustrated and prepared to change the status-quo. Even if some of the students do not reveal they’re their emotions through facial appearance, the utterance is potent enough to evoke speaker-hearer bond and fraternity. Therefore, U.4 is a demonstration of persuasive speech delivery. In campus activism discourse, the language choice of speakers is sensitive to the referents (societal issues) that language picks. Thomas (1984, p. 74) rightly notes that discourse analysis is “that aspect of linguistics which is concerned with the study of socially situated speech ... and a sensitivity to social context.”

U.5

Locutionary Act: You are sad because of the issues.

Illocutionary Acts: acknowledging, ascriptive (ascribing), assertive (asserting)

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

The speaker acknowledges that the preceding utterance (U.4) conveys the meaning of the subsequent utterance (U.5). Sadness is ascribed to the faces of the addressees because of issues that are shared knowledge to the speaker and the addressees. The linguistic context is obvious in the utterance, as conveyed by the use of “the”. As a (definite) determiner, “the” appropriately asserts the participants shared knowledge on issues that anchor the psychological context of the communicative event. Thus, the speaker’s non-use of the indefinite article “a” is communicative as it conveys the antecedent (topic relevance of U.5). Considering the kind of relationship that the participants have, their common interest cannot be unknown to them. Deborah Schiffrin, cited in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton (ibid., p. 54) submits that “the production of coherent discourse is an interactive process that requires speakers to draw upon several different types of communicative knowledge that complement more code-based grammatical knowledge of sound, form, and meaning per se. Two aspects of communicative knowledge closely related to one another are express and social: the ability to use language to display personal and social identities, to convey attitudes and perform actions, and to negotiate relationships between self and others. Others include a cognitive ability to represent concepts and ideas through language and a textual ability to organize forms, and convey meanings, within units of language longer than a single sentence.”

U.6

Locutionary Act: No electricity to do this and that. No water to freshen up.

Illocutionary Acts: assertive (asserting), ascriptive (ascribing), persuading, rejecting

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

The expression “this” and “that” is used as a cover-term for the various things the students do with electricity: reading, cooking, charging their phones, etc. The speaker echoes these utilitarian functions of power supply in the minds of the addressees by using the demonstrative pronouns that way. Indeed, the second sentence in U.6 implies that electricity is also used for pumping water into the various units of the school. The youth, being what they are, need sufficient water to appear attractive the way they are known to be. As the speaker makes assertion about the status-quo, he also ascribes features to the same status-quo; he qualifies the status-quo as being deficient. The speaker is simply rejecting the scheme of things and persuading the addressees to see reasons for the wanted revolt or agitation. The topic relevance of the

utterance and its contextual underpinnings are obvious. Commenting on “participant”, “topic” and “context” as features of a text, Johnstone, cited in Olugbenga Ibileye (*ibid.*, pp. 6-7) submits that “we obviously need to think about what our ‘text’ is about, since clearly what a person is talking about has a bearing on what is said and how it is said. We also need to think about who said it, or who wrote it or signed it, who is thought, in its particular socio-cultural context, to be responsible for what it says, who the intended audience was and who the actual hearers or readers were, because who the participants in a situation are and how their roles are defined clearly influence what gets said and how. We need to think about what motivated the text, about how it fits into the set of things people in its context conventionally do with discourse, and about what its medium (or media) of production has to do with what it is like. We need to think about the language it is in, what that language encourages speakers and writers to do and what it is relatively difficult to do in that language. We need to think about the text’s structure, and how it fits into larger structures of sets of texts and sets of interactions.”

U.7

Locutionary Act: And now, there is an unbelievable increment in tuition fee!

Illocutionary Acts: dissentive (dissenting), ascriptive (ascribing), persuading

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

The speaker does not accept the increment in tuition fee; he is dissenting. The increment is qualified (ascriptive) through the use of the adjective “unbelievable”. The whole essence of the utterance is to persuade the audience to really understand why an agitation is justifiable and urgent. By using the expression “and now”, the speaker instigates the audience even more. The expression presupposes that there were other preceding wrong actions on the part of the authorities of their institution. The text (U.7) captures the scheme of things in the larger society whereby there are usually preceding mobilization, sensitization and appraisal of the preparedness of pressure group members before actual agitation, strike or face-off (world knowledge). In student activism discourses, speakers establish and make their stance clear. This is a good way of inducing engagement between contending parties. Hyland, cited in Ayo Osisanwo (2017, p. 149) submits that “... ‘stance’ expresses a textual ‘voice’ or community recognized personally. Stance can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and include features which refer to the ways speakers or writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments about a particular topic. It is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments ... stance is the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgments or commitments concerning propositional content of a message. Specific word choices are made to convey such judgments and opinions. Other scholars have used words such as appraisal, attitude, evaluation, among others, to represent the concept stance. Stance, therefore, gives the speaker an opportunity to present his views on a propositional content ... Engagement ... is “an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations².”

U.8

Locutionary Act: Our ladies will be the ones to block all entrances at noon day.

Illocutionary Acts: informative (informing), persuading

Pragmasociolinguistic Underpinnings:

The encoder of U.8 informs the decoders that although it is unexpected, ladies (female students) will be assigned to block entrances to the school premises. Using their world knowledge, the decoders expect such a task to be given to male students of a protesting group. In this regard, the utterance strongly demonstrates the level of defiance to be unleashed by the protesters when the protest begins. It shows absolute preparedness, strong opposition and unflinching resolve. Indeed, the utterance is a mockery-laden speech act in the sense that the authorities of the institution will definitely be embarrassed if female students take up such dimension of revolt against constituted authorities. The linguistic context is conveyed via the use of the modal auxiliary “will” which means “certainty” rather than “probability”. This means that the students will definitely execute the actions as stated. The utterance is a persuasive speech act; that is, it has the potential to “charge” the male students of the protesting group who cannot imagine that ladies will be given a masculine task such as blocking entrances to the premises of an institution. In student activism discourse, language reveals speakers’ social consciousness about societal order. Speakers and their listeners therefore rely heavily on shared knowledge for effective use and interpretation of language. In such communicative events, language does not exist in a vacuum as its referents (animate and inanimate references) are known to members of a protesting group³.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are crucial. In analyzed data (U.1 – U.8), the speaker and his audience are conscious of their condition and how it affects them. Language is used and interpreted within the framework of such consciousness. Mey (*ibid.* p. 313) submits that “language, in Marx and Engel’s immortal phrase, is our ‘practical consciousness’ ... it tells us what we’re doing; but at the same time, it is the conscious instrument of our planning: it tells us what to do ... thus,

language is both the record-keeper of reality, in that it reflects our actions, and its rule and guideline, in that it, through our actions, continually creates and re-creates reality ...” The participants know that they are part of their institution and its untold hardship. This study shows that in student activism discourse, language is used to engage two categories of people in logical reasoning: school authority and agitating students. The speaker and these two categories of people are usually not alienated from the topic relevance of the discourse.

Notes

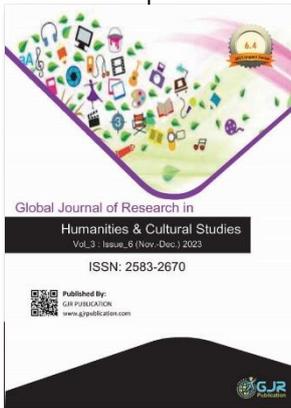
- ¹ James R. Hurford, Brendan Heasley and Michael B. Smith (2007) submit that “SPEAKER MEANING is what a speaker means (i.e. what he intends to convey) when he uses a piece of language. SENTENCE MEANING (or WORD MEANING) is what a sentence (or word) means, i.e. what it counts as the equivalent of in the language concerned.”
- ² Hyland, cited in Ayo Osisanwo (ibid.) acknowledges that stance and engagement overlap; they are two sides of a coin and contribute to the interpersonal aspect of discourse. The four elements of engagement as identified by Hyland include Reader-pronouns, Directives, Questions, Shared knowledge, Personal asides.
- ³ Charles Ogbulogo (2012, p. 9) posits that “reference relates to things, people and events in the world. It is the object or entity to which a linguistic expression relates. Thus, the referent of the word “boy” is a human being called boy. If meaning were restricted to reference, many words without obvious referent would be left out. It will be difficult to explain the meaning of prepositions, conjunctions and other grammatical units. Again, several linguistic expressions may relate to single referents. To avoid these limitations, semanticists use the word’s denotation and connotation to distinguish between meaning based on ostensiveness (that is, pointing) or reference and extension ...”

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CITATION

Adeoye A. O. (2024). A Speech Act Analysis of Campus Activism Discourse. In *Global Journal of Research in Humanities & Cultural Studies* (Vol. 4, Number 4, pp. 16–22). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12745905>



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