
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Speech Acts and Communication Practices in Anglophone Cameroon Women Associations' Interactions

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| ABSTRACT

This study set out to explore the illocutionary forces of communicative acts and their functions in group interactions of some selected women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. It also explored the extent to which the illocutionary acts used during groups events mirror women's communication practices. Through collective case design, with random and purposeful sampling techniques, non-participant observation, unstructured, open-ended interviews, audio recorded events of two categories of women associations (faith-based, consisting of Catholic Women's Association and Christian Women Fellowship, and development-based, consisting of One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle, Cameroon Gatsby Foundation and Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers' and Traders' Union) were explored through content analysis. The findings of this study reveal that interactions in Anglophone Cameroon women's gatherings are not only geared towards the content of the talk but members' feelings and welfare are also taken into consideration. Illocutionary acts such as invitations, requests and advice (directives), and greetings, offers, rejoicing and appreciations (expressives) were frequently used. However, threats and refusal (commissives), as well as complaints and criticisms (expressives), were equally used, especially in Development-Based events. These illocutionary acts were used to carry out mostly positive reactions and attempted answers to the interaction process, with minimal negative reactions and questions communicative acts, which indicate cooperation, connection, support, closeness and understanding.

| KEYWORDS

Speech Acts, communication practices, Anglophone Cameroon, women associations, interactions.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Through linguistic and paralinguistic means, members of women's associations perform actions during groups' activities. In the performance of these actions, questions are asked, answers are provided, and negative as well as positive reactions are expressed. As the speech acts theory advocates that the uttering of a sentence is or part of an action within the frame-work of social institutions and conventions (Searle, 1977 as cited in Huang, 2006), the questions we are answering in this paper are: (1) What are the different actions (speech acts) performed by members of these women associations when expressions are uttered during group events? (2) What are the forms of these expressions? (3) What do these actions (speech acts) reveal about these women's gatherings?

The renewed awareness of the welfare of the woman in Cameroon, in particular, and the world at large has resulted in the signing of many pacts and treaties and the creation of ministries in most countries worldwide in a bid to safeguard their welfare and foster their development (National Gender Policy Document: 2010- 2020, 2010, p. 51). This sensitivity cannot be complete if attention is not paid to how women communicate, especially during groups' events. Given that these groups are avenues through which most

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women, especially in African rural areas, assemble to educate one another, to know about what is happening around them and to learn to improve their economic, spiritual, social and financial welfare (Kassea, 2006), there is need to understand how language functions in them.

Generally, previous studies on women have concentrated more on their subordinate roles in cultural settings as well as the linguistic differences in their communication strategies with men. Studies have also geared towards accounting for men's and women's pragmatics strategies' use in everyday interactions. Unfortunately, these studies fail to acknowledge the worth of using a holistic approach: a blend of an interaction theory with a pragmatics theory in the exploration of the unique and multifaceted communication patterns that characterise postcolonial speech communities such as those of women gatherings in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. This constitutes further research problems that this paper addresses. In the context of the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), Christian Women Fellowship (CWF), One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB), Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) and Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU), and with the use of Bales' (1957; 1999) IPA framework and Searle's (1977) speech acts categorisation, this paper articulates that the unique and multifaceted communication practices that characterise women's group interactions can be better assessed through pragmatic theorising. The specific objectives guiding the study are:

1. To ascertain the extent to which illocutionary forces of communicative acts recurrent in groups' dynamics of women associations from Anglophone Cameroon (North West and South West Regions) reveal women's communication practices and speech styles.
2. To critically examine the variations and similarities in the expressions of illocutionary acts and their interaction functions in women's group dynamics.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 On Speech Acts and Interactions

A lot of research has been conducted on how language functions in gatherings. One of such study that lends credit to this paper is Oloo's (2020) study on strategies used by Pentecostal church preachers to enhance audience participation in their sermons. Oloo used Bach, and Harnish's (1979) speech acts classifications, demonstrating how the categories of acts used by preachers of Pentecostal Churches enable them to control discourse in the pulpit, enhance audience participation in their sermons and achieve better communication. According to Oloo, although sermons are monologues, the active listener response used by Pentecostal Churches preachers prompts response strategies such as questioning, repetition, declarations and conventional answers, thereby involving their audience in their sermons. For instance, as a way of controlling their linguistic behaviour, these preachers ask questions to solicit information from their audience. They also ask the audience to repeat statements after them, such as to say things to their neighbours or even to repeat statements they say in their mother tongues or Kiswahili. Equally, in order to affirm audience solidarity in agreeing with their stand, they make declarations whose responses are prompted by the preacher's questions and declarations. Conventional answers such as 'amen', 'Hallelujah' and 'Praise the name of the Lord' are uttered from time to time by these preachers as a way of giving praise to God and also to ensure audience attention. Oloo's (2020) study informs us on the likelihood of exploring language use in gatherings with the speech acts theory, the main objective of this study. However, Searle's (1977) classification remains the tool through which language use in women's gatherings in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon will be viewed.

Research on speech acts in Cameroon has mostly focused on indigenous languages and on the French Language in mixed conversations and in the school milieu. One such study is Ndimorfor's (2015) study of the speech act of refusal in Mbə̀kum, an indigenous language spoken in the North West Region of Cameroon. With the aid of a discourse completion task questionnaire, Ndimorfor brought out the different realisations of the speech act of refusal among the female and male speakers of Mbə̀kum. The data revealed that there are variations in the uses and realisations of refusals, a consequence of the social status of the interlocutors. The findings reveal that, although there were similarities in turning down requests, offers, suggestions and invitations, variations in their expressions remained at gender levels. While the male speakers of this indigenous language are more direct in refusing requests, offers, suggestions and invitations, the female speakers are more indirect in almost all situations.

In another related study, Farenkia (2017) examined the pragmatics and linguistic choices made by Cameroon French speakers in the expression of the speech act of gratitude. Based on data collected by means of discourse completion tasks questionnaire from two groups of university students, those of the University of Yaoundé I and of the University of Douala, Farenkia revealed that factors such as the weight of the favour granted/received, the level of familiarity between the speaker and the hearer, and the distance between the interlocutors, influenced the choice and combinations of students' use of the speech act of gratitude. Direct expressions of gratitude, which was more frequent with professor situations, indirect expressions of gratitude, the ones higher in friends' situations and supportive acts, the ones most preferred in the friends' situations, were the main strategies used by these students to construct these thanks utterances. As far as the complexity of the utterances was concerned, the findings show that

simple as well as complex gratitude expressions were used, although the complex ones outnumbered the simple ones, with the highest number of them recorded in friends' situations.

Farenkia (2017) and Ndimofor (2015) inform us of the various realisations of the speech acts of refusal and thanks in the school milieu and indigenous communities, respectively. Our study comes in investigating how not only refusals and thanks are expressed and realised, but all illocutionary acts, specifically in women groups' gatherings.

2.2 On Women's Image

A majority of studies carried out on women in Cameroon are geared toward bringing to the limelight their positions in society. One such study that lends credit to this study is Bih's (2014) revelation of how manuals for English used in Cameroon schools depict women's subordinate positions in societies. The study reveals that the manuals for English used in Cameroonian schools propagate male chauvinistic values and the persistent inferiorisation of the womenfolk. According to Bih, the manual's themes, lesson topics and pictures used are carefully selected for the purpose of degrading women, constructing and presenting them as passive, trivial, mostly wives and carers, less intelligent and less powerful than their male counterparts, thereby always needing help, and most often in the company of their children, (p.72). These constructs, according to Bih, reinforce a popular culture that depicts women as submissive and reserved and devoted to their role as "house wife and mothers" (p. 80), backing up a traditional gendered discourse that is biased against women.

In a similar study, Nzung (2011) used the critical discourse analysis theory to examine newspapers of English expression, revealing the role played by the media in perpetrating the ill-treatment, marginalisation and undermining of women in Cameroon. The findings disclosed that in their treatment of news stories, journalists of Cameroon Newspapers of English expressions made use of lexical features which displayed gender differentiations, depicting the woman as inferior. Forms of address and naming practices such as 'female mayor', 'female parliamentarian', 'female journalists', 'female butcher', and 'Dr Mrs Buma' depict these gender differentiations and inferiorisation of women (p.53). Nzung (2011) and Bih (2014) used school manuals and newspapers of English expressions to reveal women's subordinate position in the Cameroonian context. On the contrary, Jua (2001), Kah (2012) and Mbunda (2008) paint an optimistic image of the Anglophone Cameroon woman before and after colonisation, revealing that when given a chance, the Anglophone Cameroon woman can be very influential in practically all domains of life. In this study, therefore, we represent Anglophone Cameroon women not from what is said about them but from what they themselves portray about themselves and each other in their use of conversational rules through networking

2.3 Context

Women associations, as used in this study, are the organisation of women with a common purpose and a formal structure, which exhibit the features of group life that typically emerge as a collection of individuals communing to form a group. Hare (1976) argues that for a collection of individuals to be considered a group, the members of the group should be in interaction with one another. They should equally share common goals and sets of norms which give direction and limits to their activity. Furthermore, a set of roles and a network of interpersonal attraction, which serve to differentiate them from other groups, should be created (p.4-5).

Two categories of women associations were purposefully sampled to provide data for this study. They are development-based associations (One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle, Cameroon Gatsby Foundation and Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union) and faith-based associations (Catholic Women's Association and Christian Women Fellowship). Faith-Based Associations, as used in this study, are groups formed for Christian women in the Catholic and Presbyterian churches, respectively. Their objectives are geared towards helping women exercise their Christian duties through fellowshiping. Development-Based associations, on the other hand, are groups and associations of mostly women, which are apolitical and whose main objectives are geared towards empowering members economically, so they can meet up with the basic expenses in life. Although these women's associations have diverse objectives, their main goals have been to provide members with the opportunity they need to grow economically, spiritually and materially. Charlton (1984 as cited in Fondze, 2012) noted the importance of these women's associations to the wellbeing of women in his statement that these women's associations are significant not just because they facilitate the implementation of development projects but because they are traditionally a means for women to enhance their influence on societal issues.

2.3.1 The Catholic Women's Association (CWA)

The Catholic Women Association, L'Association Des Femmes Catholique (L'A.F.C) - its French appellation, is an apolitical, non-profit making and lay private association of God's faithful of the Catholic Church in Cameroon, which is governed by canons 321-326 of the Code of Canon Law, (Catholic Women Association, Statutes and Bylaws, 2012, p.1). This association was founded in Buea, on the 4th of May 1963, by Mrs Anna Foncha, the wife of the Prime Minister of the then Southern Cameroons. Today, it is found in all the regions of Cameroon. It has a membership of over 20,000 women with 1,412 branches, 396 zones, and 109 divisions distributed in 23 dioceses in Cameroon.

2.3.2 The Christian Women Fellowship (CWF)

Christian Women Fellowship is a church group based in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. It was created as a result of the activities carried out by the Basel Missionaries who brought Christianity to Cameroon in 1886 (Yinyuy, 2011). The group got its vigour from intensive Bible studies, prayers and songs composed by the women themselves. It was through these gatherings that the concept of "fellowship" with its different appellations of 'Christian Women's Work', 'Women's Group' or 'Ndola Bito' which in Duala means "the love of women", developed among the women, (Yinyuy, 2011, p.81). As is obtained in CWA, so too is it in CWF, as the main language of communication is Pidgin, although standard English is allowed. However, in areas where members are uneducated, the local languages are the means of interaction during meetings and gatherings (G. Besong, personal communication, April 16, 2016). The CWF in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon has a membership of 17,455, in 16 presbyteries, with 287 congregational groups in 64 zones (G. Besong, personal communication, April 16, 2016).

2.3.3 One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB)

One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle is a Common Initiative Group (CIG) that is composed of 45 members; 42 women and three men, with the men playing the function of patrons. The CIG is situated in Owe-Muyuka, in the Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. This association, started as a 'njangi' group, where members went to work in farms of individual group members on a rotational basis, was founded in 1994. The aim was that if all the members came as a group to work on one member's farm, the surface area of work done would be more than that of an individual who worked alone. With this objective, the association was created and given the name "One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle" (R. Che, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Due to the fact that most members of OHCTB are illiterate, Pidgin remains the main language spoken during group activities.

2.3.4 Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF)

Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) is an assemblage of groups made up of women, registered under a Charitable Trust set up and supported financially by the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust in the UK. Its main mission has been to assist less privileged people, especially women, by giving them loans with low interest rates. Because CGF groups are made up of representatives of associations (the presidents, the secretaries and financial secretaries of each of the member groups), they are coordinated by field coordinators, employed individuals paid by the foundation. These field coordinators help supervise and coordinate the activities of various groups which are under their jurisdiction. Three of the foundation's associations: Muyuka, Buea and Bamenda, provided data for this study.

2.3.5 Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU)

Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union is an association of mostly female traders and farmers located in Mankon, Bamenda, in the North West Region of Cameroon. It has a membership of 28 members, with 6 men and 22 women. This association was created when a group of women observed that it was only by forming an association that financial and material assistance could be obtained from government agencies and non-governmental organisations. The term "biwon", a word from Lamnso, an indigenous language spoken in the North West Region of Cameroon, which means 'because of children', was chosen as the name of the association. The name also serves as a reminder to members of the call by nature of every mother to do whatever it takes to bring up a child. Pidgin is also the language of communication during meeting sessions in BSRFTU.

3. Methodology

The collective case design was adopted in this study to explore the illocutionary forces of communicative acts in groups' interactions of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. Random and purposeful sampling techniques were used to select the population of the study. While the random sampling technique was used to select the towns in the Anglophone Regions where data was collected, that is, Muyuka, Buea, Limbe, and Kumba (from the South West Region) and Kumbo, Ntambeng, Bamenda, and Mankon (from the North West Region) of Cameroon, the maximum variation and critical case sampling techniques were used to select the faith-based and development-based associations whose groups' activities provided data for this study. Because the maximum variation sampling technique enables the selection of cases with markedly different forms of the same experience of the same aspects (Dörnyei, 2011, p.132), it gave us the opportunity to explore the variations and commonalities in the expression of illocutionary acts in the two categories of women associations. Furthermore, the critical case sampling technique was used to choose the study's area; the two Anglophone Regions in Cameroon- the North West and South West Regions. This is because the main language of communication in these two regions is English Language and Pidgin. Also, membership in these sampled associations cuts across tribes and regions, as women doing business and living in these localities and those working there are members of these associations.

Through non-participant observation and audio recording of meetings and events that took place between October 2014 and September 2017, the data was gathered, and 24 groups' events were purposefully selected for analysis. Because we were dealing with transcripts which involved the identification and counting of instances of the use of an aspect of pragmatics in the context of women's associations' gatherings, we used the latent content analysis to analyse the data. This is because we did not only focus

on identifying these communicative acts but their meanings and functions in the context in which they were used were equally significant to this study. The data, therefore, passed through the following latent content analysis procedures: First, with the help of Dr. Mbonwuh Hans Fonka, a linguist specialised in Cameroon Pidgin of the Department of English of the University of Bamenda, audio-recorded meetings were transformed into textual forms through broad-based transcriptions. These communicative acts' pragmatics functions, with reference to Searle's (1977) speech acts categorisations, were apportioned. Third, their interaction roles were assigned with the use of Bales' (1957, 1999) IPA Framework.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Because one of the objectives of this study has been to assign group interaction functions to illocutionary acts used during events, Bales' IPA Framework has been selected to complement Searle's speech act categorisation in assigning meaning and functions to communicative acts used during events organised by women associations from the two Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. This is in conformity with Mey's (1998, p.254) suggestion that although speech act theory may provide important clues for our understanding of human linguistic behaviour, it cannot be decisive all the time in assigning the correct contextual value to all people's utterances. It is our intention, then, that in integrating the IPA framework with a pragmatic approach in the understanding of group dynamics of these women associations, we shall reveal what the theory of speech acts alone would not have disclosed about interaction ethos in women's gatherings.

3.2 The Speech Act Theory

The Speech acts theory was propounded by John L Austin and later on expanded by his student, John R Searle. This theory advocates that all utterances, in addition to meaning whatever they mean, perform specific acts via the specific communicative force of each of them. That is to say, in the same way, that we perform physical acts, we also perform acts by using language; for example, using it to give orders, to make requests, to give warnings and to give advice. In other words, to do things that go beyond the literal meaning of what we say.

Two important observations moved John Austin into developing this theory of language analysis. First, he observed that specific sentences such as *Good afternoon!* and *Come in, please!* are usually not employed to make statements, and as such, could not be said to be true or false, thereby refuting the descriptive fallacy which disputed that "unless a sentence can, at least in principle, be verified (i.e., tested for its truth or falsity), it was, strictly speaking, meaningless, (Austin 1962, as cited in Huang, 2006, p. 1000). Second, Austin observed that there exists ordinary language declarative sentences such as 'I now pronounce you man/husband and woman/wife', that similarly resist a truth-condition analysis, where in uttering them, one is not just saying things, but also actively doing them, (Huang, 2006, p.1000).

Austin went further, dividing these utterances (performatives) into implicit and explicit performatives. While explicit performatives, such as declaratives, contain verbs that make explicit what kind of acts is being performed, implicit performatives are those utterances in which there is no such verb that makes explicit what kind of act is being performed, (Huang, 2006, p.1001).

Austin realised later that just basing the condition of performatives on certain restrictions, such as having an overt performative verb, with it hereby enforcement, does not make them 'successful or felicitous'. He then proposed that utterances must also meet certain sets of conditions for them to be considered speech acts, among which are:

- (a) (i) There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.
- (ii) The circumstances and persons must be appropriate as specified in the procedure.
- (b) The procedure must be executed (i) correctly and (ii) completely, and
- (c) Often
 - (i) the persons must have the requisite thoughts, feelings and intentions, as specified in the procedure, and
 - (ii) if the consequent conduct is specified, then the relevant parties must do so (Austin, 1962, as cited in Huang, 2006, p. 1001).

The violation of any of the above conditions, according to Austin, will render a performative 'unhappy' or 'infelicitous' (Austin 1962, as cited in Huang, 2006, p. 1002).

After realizing that the two-way distinction between performatives as action-performers and constatives as truth-bearers was not working, given that constatives are nothing but a special class of performatives, Austin declared that all utterances, in addition to meaning whatever they mean, perform specific acts via the specific communicative force of the utterance, through the three-fold distinctions of locution, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.

The locution/locutionary act is the basic act of speaking, which in itself consist of three related sub-acts: a phonic act of producing an utterance-inscription, a phatic act of composing a particular linguistic expression in a particular language and a rhetic act of contextualizing the utterance in the inscription and assigning reference, resolving deixis and disambiguating the utterance-inscription lexically and/or grammatically, (Huang, 2006, p. 1002). The illocutionary act refers to the fact that when we say something, we usually say it with a purpose in mind. It refers to the type of function the speaker intends to fulfil or the action the speaker intends to accomplish in the course of producing an utterance, usually defined within a system of social conventions. These functions (actions), which are also referred to as 'illocutionary forces or forces' of the utterance, are what we refer to in this study as speech acts. They include naming, ordering, promising, refusing, asserting, stating, accusing, blaming, declaring war, apologizing, congratulating, permitting, joking, marrying, swearing and thanking. Lastly, the perlocutionary act is the effect an utterance may have on the addressee. That is to say, it is an act by which the illocution produces a certain effect or exerts a certain influence on the addressee; a consequence or by-product of speaking, whether it is intentional or not. Austin classified utterances functions (actions) under five categories with reference to their functions. They are verdictives; utterances used in giving verdicts, exertives; those used in expressing power, right or influence, commissives; those used during promises or undertakings, behavitives; those showing attitude or social behaviour and expositives; those used in fitting an utterance into the course of an argument or conversation.

3.2.1 Searle's Speech Acts Theory

J R Searle, Austin's follower and student, reclassified Austin's classifications under five headings of Declaratives, Representatives (Assertions), Directives, Commissives and Expressives along four dimensions of (i) illocutionary point, (ii) direction of fit between words and world, (iii) expressed psychological state and (iv), propositional content. To Searle, therefore, to perform these illocutionary acts is to obey certain conventional rules that are constitutive of the type of act. They are the Propositional content rule, the Preparatory condition, the Sincerity condition and the Essential condition.

While the propositional content rule is concerned with what the speech act is about, the preparatory conditions state the real-world prerequisites for the speech act. The sincerity condition, which must be satisfied if the act is to be performed sincerely, deals with the genuineness of the speaker's intention. Lastly, the essential conditions define the act as being performed in the sense that the speaker has the intention that his/her utterance will count as an act and that this intention is recognized by the addressee (Huang, 2006,p. 1003-1004).

3.2.1.1 Representatives

Representatives, according to Searle (1977), are those utterances which express the speaker's belief. They state what the speaker believes to be the case, committing him/her to the truth of the expressed proposition. In performing them, the speaker expresses his belief about something as he/she believes it is or sees it. For instance, the reading of previous minutes during meetings is an example of a representative. Other examples include statements, assertions, announcements, claims, conclusions, reports, insistence, and predictions.

3.2.1.2 Directives

Directives are utterances that express the speaker's desire or wish for the addressee to do something. In using them, the speaker intends to elicit some future action on the part of the addressee. Invitations and requests for members to participate in meeting deliberations are sample utterances of directives. Other examples include commands, orders, questions (inquiry), warnings, forbidding, suggestions, pleas, advice, reminders and persuasions.

3.2.1.3 Commissives

Commissives are utterances which express the speaker's intentions to do something or not to do something, creating an obligation not on the hearer but on the speaker. Their expression commits the speaker to some future course of action. Pledges and motions of support, such as promises, are communicative acts in this category. Other examples are offers and refusals, threats, vows, volunteering, dares, and guarantees.

3.2.1.4 Expressives

Expressives, according to Searle (1977), state what the speaker feels. They are statements of joy, pain and sorrow. They are communicative acts that express a psychological attitude or state of the speaker, such as joy, sorrow, likes and dislikes. Criticisms and complaints about members' behaviours and issues concerning associations' welfare are sample communicative acts of expressives. Other examples are apologies, blames, complaints, praises, congratulation, criticisms, appreciations and thanks, greetings, scolds and rebukes, and welcoming.

3.2.1.5 Declaratives

Declaratives or declarations are words and expressions that change the world by their very utterance, bringing to effect an immediate change in some current state of affairs. According to Searle (1977), because declaratives tend to rely on elaborate extra

linguistic institutions for their successful performance, they are usually called institutionalised performatives. This is because, in using them, the speaker brings about changes in the world. For instance, in proclaiming the results of the election, a flour member of an association becomes the leader. Other examples are resignations, baptising, court sentencing, declaring war, nominating a candidate, officially opening a bridge, excommunicating, and firing from employment.

3.2.2 Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

In his speech acts categorisations, Searle equally advocated that a speaker using a direct speech act (where there is a direct relationship between the form of the words and their functions), as evident in the utterance: give me a hand, he/she intends to communicate the literal meaning that the words conventionally express. But if, on the other hand, he/she says *wuna han dem de hot?*, (Are your hands hurting?), (an indirect expressive speech act of complain), where there is no direct relationship between the sentence type and the illocutionary force, this speaker may be communicating a different meaning from the apparent surface meaning, triggering implicatures and rendering form and function not directly related, (Searle, 1977 as cited in Cutting, 2003, p.19). Searle concludes that most of what we mean when communicating is actually not in words themselves, but in the implied meaning, given that most utterances express different illocutionary forces from the literal meaning of the words. This is significant to this study which is carried out in a context where utterances and expressions are used in unique ways for various intentions. This is because women, especially in gatherings, communicate their intentions in multiple ways, as utterances are usually complemented by signs and symbols, sounds, colours, songs, actions and gestures. Also, these intentions are expressed directly as well as indirectly.

3.3 Bales' Interaction Process Analysis (IPA)

Bales proposes that in order to make meaning out of behaviours and the conditions in which they take place, these behaviours have to be broken down into component parts known as single acts of communication or expressions (1957). While these acts function separately as single communicative intentions, they can equally be grouped under headings with reference to their communicative function in group dynamics into what is termed the problem-solving process or procedure. This process, according to Bales, usually commences with Questions, followed by Attempted Answers, which are then followed by Negative Reactions and, lastly, Positive Reactions, "visualised as a system of interaction in time and between members" (p. 59).

In this Bales' classification, questions are a group of behaviours employed by speakers in demanding orientation, opinion, suggestions and inquiries. They function to elicit a response from the addressee, thereby giving a push to the smooth flow of interaction during group discussions. Directives sub-acts such as requests, questions (inquiries), and invitations are typical examples of questions.

Attempted answers are suggestions, opinions and orientations, which are behaviours that function to provide answers to doubt and questions raised during interactions. Representatives such as announcements, assertions and reports, and commissives such as pledges and guarantees are typical examples of attempted answers.

Negative reactions are behaviours that express disagreement, anxiety, fear and antagonism. They are utterances and communicative acts which represent actors' dislikes and constraints during group discussions. Negative expressives speech acts such as complaints, criticisms, rebukes, and commissive sub acts such as refusals and threats are typical examples of negative reaction acts.

Positive reactions, according to Bales (1957), are communicative acts of expression of solidarity, satisfaction, agreement and camaraderie by members during group discussions. Commissives sub acts such as offers and promises and expressive sub acts such as greetings, rejoicing, appreciations, and apologising are communicative acts in this category.

As shall be presented in the section below, interaction processes of utterances and communicative acts during gatherings of members of women associations in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon have been examined through Bales (1957; 1999) IPA framework. This result has been presented in the proceeding section.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

This paper aimed to explore the extent to which illocutionary forces of communicative acts used during groups' dynamics of women associations from Anglophone Cameroon (North West and South West Regions) reveal women's communication practices and speech styles. It also explored the variations and similarities in the expressions of illocutionary acts and their interaction functions during women groups' dynamics. The findings from the observation and analysis of the illocutionary forces of communicative acts during groups' activities of the Catholic Women Association, Christian Women Fellowship, Cameroon Gatsby Foundation, One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle, and Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union reveal cooperation, connection, support, closeness and understanding; communicative strategies usually employed to establish and maintain cordial relationships with others, (Wood, 1994, as cited in Verderber 1995, p.21). The data shows that for all events held in these women's associations, the highest number of speech acts were used to express positive reactions- 1,557, and this constituted 33.7% of the total speech

acts recorded. This was closely followed by attempted answers (1,492 illocutionary acts were used during this stage of meeting deliberations, constituting 32.3% of the total speech acts recorded). Negative reactions came third with 875 speech acts, constituting 19%. Questions were the fourth, with 689 speech acts, constituting 14.9%. The frequency of use of these speech acts categories, and their sub acts have been displayed in table 1 below.

Table 1
Distribution of Speech Acts Categories in Women Associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon

S/N	Speech Act category	Faith-Based		Development-Based		Total	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Directives	1137	34.9	419	30.8	1556	33.7
2	Expressives	947	29.1	552	40.6	1499	32.5
3	Representatives	914	28.1	273	20.1	1187	25.7
4	Commissives	216	6.6	104	7.6	320	6.9
5	Declaratives	33	1	0	0	33	0.7
6	Others	11	0.3	11	0.8	22	0.5
Total		3,258	70.6	1,359	29.4	4,617	100

As table 1 shows, of the 4,617 communicative acts used during interactions in the 24 analysed meetings, 3,258 of them were of Faith-Based Associations' events, and 1,369 were those of Development-Based Events. Among these acts, directives were the most frequently used, with 1,556 occurrences, a total percentage of 33.7. Comparing Faith-Based and Development-Based Associations on the use of directives reveals the following for Faith-Based: Invitations (31.4%), requests (13.2%) and advice (11.1%), and invitations (24.1%), questions (14.6%) and requests (12.2%) for Development-Based. These findings on the high use of invitations, advice, questions and requests in these women association events reveal an important feature of women's speech style—"conversational maintenance work" as observed by (Beck, 1988; Fishman, 1978), which Woods (1994 as cited in Verderber, 1995, p.22) attests involves efforts to sustain conversation by inviting others to speak and by prompting them to elaborate their experiences. This is confirmed in communicative Act 1 from CWA Gate of Heaven Divisional Congress and the 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebration of the CWA below, in which nominated candidates were invited to declare their willingness to serve the association before the whole assembly before standing in for election.

Communicative Act 1: Mami dem, abeg, wuna fit kam fowod meik wuna tel wi if wuna bi wilin fo wok fo mami Maria yi yunivesiti. (Mothers, will you, please come forward and declare if you are willing to work at mother Mary's University)

Context: CWA Gate of Heaven Divisional Congress and 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebration of the CWA

In this question interaction process, an attempt and an invitation to get members to act, the national animator, an executive member of the CWA Arch Dioceses of Bamenda, was inviting nominated candidates to declare their willingness to serve the association. With these invitations, members pledged their desire to serve the associations through utterances such as 'May thy will be done', 'Let thy will be done', 'Ai bi wok man fo God meik e bi fo mi as yu tok' (I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to his words); 'Wen wuna chus mi, ai go du mai best', (If elected, I will do my best). Songs such as 'Come and join us in the morning train' (CWA NW01, CWF SW01) and 'Na deh wi deh oh' (CWA NW01, CWA SW01) were equally used to invite members into activities. This confirms Woods declaration that women ask a number of questions that initiate topics for others, thereby opening the conversational door to them, maintaining interactions (1994 as cited in Verderber, 1995).

The second most frequently used speech act in the activities of these women associations' gatherings was expressives. A total of 1,499 sub-acts of expressives, that is, 32.5%, were used during these events. The data reveals that while complaints (30.6%) and criticisms (13.6%) featured more in the events of Development-Based Associations greetings (22.4%), complaints (18.6%), appreciations (12.1%) and rejoicing (10.5%) featured more in Faith-Based events. The high use of complaints and criticisms in development-based events was a result of members' non-compliance to 'njangi' and Gatsby loan terms. In their expression, members expressed anger, disappointment and sorrow. In communicative Act 7 from a meeting session of One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle, a late corner is complaining, expressing her disapproval of being constrained to pay a fine despite her inability to get a seat at the time of speaking.

Communicative Act 2: *Wich pan? Mi ai de fain chie, yu de shou mi pan?* Meik ai shidon fo pan? (What do you mean? When I am busy looking for a seat, you are showing me a pan. Is a pan a seat?)

Context: One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle

Also, in communicative act 3 below, gestures and words are used to perform a sub-act of thanking to appreciate the divisional secretary for a job well done in her presentation of minutes of the previous executive meeting,

Communicative Act 3:

President: *Has she done it well?*

Members: *O yes! (They clap)*

President: *Has she done it well?*

Member: *O yes! (They clap)*

Context: CWF, Nitop 11 Branch Meeting

This result of the high use of both negative and positive feelings during women interactions confirms Aries' (1982) declaration that women usually emerge as affect specialists characterized by yielding, with positive and negative expressive behaviour rampant in their talk exchange.

Representatives came third with 1,187; that is, 25.7% of thought units used during these events were sub-acts of representatives. The use of assertions was very frequent in both Faith-Based and Development-Based events, 47.1% and 44.3%, respectively. However, while announcements (12.7%) and reports (10.6%) were more significant in Faith-Based, reports (16.1%) were common in Development-Based events. Members of these women's associations demonstrated cooperation, solidarity and understanding with one another as songs, anthems, the motto of associations, mission statements, slogans and utterances were used to assert their beliefs and commitment. In activities of OHCTB, members asserted common ground, solidarity and cooperation by using the association's name- One Hand Cannot tie a bundle. Can one hand tie a bundle? No. In CGF, the Cameroon Gatsby Foundation's mission statement- Gatsby in! Poverty out! was used. In CWA, Through Mary! To Jesus! was used. Lastly, Christ is coming! Coming with your pay! and When anyone is in Christ! He is a new creation! Behold, the old has gone! The new has come! was used in CWF events. The recitations of these mottos and mission statements counted as members' beliefs.

Commissives were the fourth and one of the categories of speech acts which were minimally used in these women's gatherings. There were 320 sub-acts of commissives, and this constituted 6.9% of the total speech acts. However, the use of commissives followed different patterns in the two sets of associations. In Faith-Based Associations, the trend was as follows: Offers, 31%; pledges, 25%; refusals, 13.4% and threats, 9.7%. In Development-Based Associations, the trend was: Threats at 28.8%, offers at 23.1%, and refusals at 22.1%. The high use of threats and refusals in Development-Based Associations' events was a result of members non compliance to 'njangi' and Gatsby Foundation's loan terms. These sub-acts of threats and refusals were typically used on defaulters of 'njangi' and members who refused paying back the Gatsby loan. For instance, the coordinator of Gatsby North West sector, together with other members, mostly males, expressed intentions of suing those who had defaulted in paying back loans. As communicative act 4 illustrates, a disappointed 'njangi' beneficiary threatened suing members who defaulted.

Communicative Act 4. Ai wan ol mai moni. Man weh yi no plei mi, ai go kut yi komvokeishon. (I want all my money. Anybody who fails to contribute for me will be convocated).

Context: Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Trader's Union meeting session.

The communicative act counts as a threat and an intention to take legal action against members who have not yet sent their money, given that the speaker has already contributed to the defaulters. This finding is in line with Ndimofor (2015) findings which revealed that as opposed to females, male speakers of Mbə̀kum used more direct criticism, reprimand and refusals sub-acts (p.269). He attributes this high use of direct criticism, reprimand, refusals to the chauvinistic tendencies of the Akum men, as it makes them direct in speech and gives them the license to be blunt and careless when it comes to minimising the forces of the criticism, reprimands and refusals. This is also in conformity with assertions that men tend to express themselves in fairly absolute, assertive ways, as compared with women, their language is typically more forceful, direct, and authoritative (Beck, 1988; Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Stewart et al., 1990; Tannen, 1990a, 1990b).

The fifth in the ranking of speech acts was declaratives. These category of speech acts was only used in Faith-Based events. It is interesting to note that the uttering of a declarative changes the world by their very utterance, bringing to effect an immediate change in some current state of affairs (Searle, 1977); they were most often expressed by higher authorities such as chaplains, spiritual directors and delegated authorities. This explains their absence in most meetings, especially those of Development-Based. Of the 33 occurrences of declaratives, an overall percentage of 0.7, none of them was used in a Development-Based event. For instance, in the declaration *Balot de tok sei wi divishonal presiden na lukong Teres* (The election result show that our divisional

president is Lukong Therese), the spiritual Director changed the status of a floor member of CWA Gate of Heaven Division to the head of the association.

Communicative Act 5: Balot de tok sei wi divishonal presiden na lukong Teres. (The election result show that our divisional president is Lukong Therese).

Context: CWA Gate of Heaven Divisional Congress and 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebration of the CWA.

The last and the least category of acts used during events organized by these women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon is what has been termed in this study as 'Others'. This class of communicative acts which were made up of jokes, was used to ease tension during events. A total of 22 instances of these acts, an overall use of 0.5% occurred during these events. Although not accounted for in Searle's (1977) classifications, these communicative acts contributed to the smooth flow of interactions as their use mirrored a relaxed and cordial interaction atmosphere in meetings. Their uses in events reflected the spirit of closeness and connection, important traits that enhances solidarity and cooperation in interactions. In CWA Gate of Heaven Divisional Congress and 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebration of the CWA, for instance, one of the activities of the event was a blindfold game.

4.1 Variations and Similarities in the expression of illocutionary forces in Women Faith-Based and Women Development-Based Associations' Interactions

The results from the observed associations' events show that there were commonalities as well as differences in the frequency and composition of speech acts during interactions in the two categories of associations. In addition to sentences and gestures, members of women associations from the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon made use of Bible Verses, proverbs, slogans, themes and watch-word of Bible Study Materials, associations and groups' goals, mission statements, anthems and mottos, to perform illocutionary acts. One of the most common means through which members of women's associations performed illocutionary acts was through the use of Bible verses. While some of these Bible verses were quoted for instructional purposes, others were transformed into songs and used to perform specific acts. This is true of the word 'amen', which comes from IChron 16:36, Neh 8:6, and Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48, where it is used to indicate strong agreement. It was used by groups in the two categories of associations to perform specific actions. For instance, it was used as a representative sub-act of concluding in CWF events. It was equally used to perform the representative sub-act of assertion in CWA, CWF, CGF and OHCTB events. It also functioned as a directive sub-act of inviting during activities in CWF and OHCTB. Lastly, it performed the expressive sub-act of rejoicing in CWF, CGF and OHCTB events.

Another Bible verse that was mostly used in events in the two categories of associations is *In Jesus name/ we ask all these in Jesus' name/We ask all these through Christ Our Lord/Through Christ our Lord*. These various versions of the same Bible verse comes from Phil 2:9-11; Jn 14:13-14; Jn 14:14; and ICor 1:2. It performed different illocutionary acts in the various associations' events. While the versions of *We ask all these through Christ Our Lord/Through Christ our Lord* was mostly used in CWA events, that of *In Jesus name/We ask all these in Jesus' name* was used in CWF, CGF and OHCTB events. This Bible verse also performed the illocutionary act of inviting in CWA, CWF, CGF and OHCTB events. In addition, in CWA, CGF and OHCTB events, it performed the representative sub-act of concluding. Furthermore, while the slogan:

CWA women: Golden women
Sowers of hope: Reapers of joy
Blessed are the peace makers: They shall be called children of God
Working together: For a better future
Unity of purpose: Unity of action
Through Mary: To Jesus,

was used to perform the expressive sub act of greeting and the representative sub act of assertion in CWA events, the indigenous proverb and name of the association: One han e no de tai bond!! Was used for the same purpose in One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle's events.

Lastly, songs, especially religious-based songs, were used in the two association categories to perform illocutionary acts. This was true of the song:

He reigns oh, He reigns oh
He reigns oh, He reigns oh
He reigns, He reigns oh, He reigns oh
This time oh na Jesus de reign,

that performed the expressive sub-act of rejoicing and the representative sub-act of asserting in a CGF and CWF event. Likewise, the songs:

Up on the Mountain Top,
Down in the valley below,
Go and tell the love of Jesus,
Go and tell it everywhere.
and

Bend Low, bend low, bend low
Bend Low, bend low, bend low
Bend Low, and see what the Lord can do.

Were used to perform the directive sub-acts of inviting and advising in a CWA and a CWF events. It is interesting to note that songs were equally used to criticise and to complain. This was evident in the songs

Midwaiv kam oh, Midwaiv kam oh
Cham, cham.
Mai weis oh, mai weis oh,
Cham, cham.
Tu man wok oh, wan man kari yam oh
Cham, cham.

English rendering

Midwife come oh, Midwife come oh
Cham, cham
Oh, my waist hurts. Oh, my waist hurts,
Cham, cham.
Two people have worked and one person bears the pains
Cham, cham.
and
Noah yu laik sofa
Evri dei yu dik keinyui
Wich kan taim yua rein go fol,
Noah!

English rendering

Noah, you enjoy suffering
You spend the whole day digging a canoe
When will you rest, Noah?

They were used to complain about the injustice meted on the woman during child bearing and to chastise members who lack faith in God, respectively, in the OHCTB born-house ceremony and CWA Gate of Heaven Divisional Congress and 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebration, respectively.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to ascertain the extent to which illocutionary forces of communicative acts recurrent in groups' dynamics of women associations from Anglophone Cameroon (North West and South West Regions) reveal women's communication practices and speech styles. The study also sought to understand whether there were commonalities and differences in the use of illocutionary acts. The findings reveal that all of Searle's (1977) proposed speech act categories were employed during deliberations in Women's Faith-Based and Development-Based associations' gatherings, with declaratives used only in Faith-Based associations. In addition, the category 'others', which has not been accounted for in Searle's 1977 classification, was used during these gatherings. As far as the typology of the acts is concerned, the data reveals that directives were the most frequently used illocutionary acts, with invitations and requests featuring more. The advice was Faith-Based specific, while questions were Development-Based specific. Expressives and representatives were equally significant in these women association events, with greetings and complaints being widely used in the two categories of associations. However, appreciations and rejoicing were Faith-Based specific, and criticisms featured more in Development-Based Association events. With reference to representatives, reports and assertions were commonly used in the two association categories, although announcements were specific for Faith-Based events. Commissives were the least used illocutionary acts, with offers and refusals common in the two association gatherings. However, threats were common in Development-Based events. Utterances and gestures were generally used to perform these acts, although songs were more frequently used in Faith-Based Association events. Also, colours and instruments such as gongs and whistles were solely used to perform acts in Faith-Based Associations' events. The majority of these illocutionary acts were

used to express positive reactions and attempted answers. This demonstrates the spirit of connection, support, closeness and understanding, important traits that enhance solidarity and cooperation. This study, therefore, asserts that the unique and hidden communicative styles inherent during Anglophone Cameroon women's gatherings can be captured through pragmatic theorising. This is because Anglophone Cameroon women use multiple ways of expressing intentions, as songs, gestures, and even instruments function as communicative acts in their gatherings.

This study used Searle's speech act theory and Bales Interaction Process Analysis theory to examine the functions of communicative acts in Women's Faith-Based and Development-Based events in Anglophone Cameroon during meetings, rallies, congresses and seminars. It will be interesting to examine what politeness strategies accompany these communicative acts during these events.

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