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## Speech Acts on Nigerian Classroom Discourse: A Discourse Analysis Approach

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### Abstract

A lot of speech acts have been misused by many classroom discourse participants and because of this, discourse exchanges are characterized by the use of disjointed and unplanned acts, interference, overloaded acts, incessant slot fillers and the like. Again, wrong applications of speech acts by the instructors are indirectly transferred to the students, who imitate them while learning. Also, if the misinformed discourse participants write, their malfunctioned written speech acts may be shown in their scripts. This study therefore investigated how discourse participants apply the speech acts in technical classrooms. Data were randomly selected from lessons taught in selected technical classrooms in Lagos State, Nigeria, and the instrument for data collection was participant observation. The Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics were the theoretical frameworks for this research. One of the major findings showed that discourse participants, specifically the instructors, applied overloaded representatives that originated from retroactive interference of L1 to L2 and that resulted in the learners' inability to understand the instructors' teaching. I recommend that discourse participants (especially the instructors) should carefully select simple words that fit the class that they teach. They should also study their students and apply words in a direct way to assist students to comprehend easily as they learn.

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## 1. Introduction

Speech acts are the lowest, indivisible, and functional units on the discourse rankscale. [Dairo and Onadeko \(2008\)](#) observe that an act is the smallest unit of discourse that is related to functions rather than structure. Acts perform different functions which have been studied and identified. Many scholars such as ([Wisley & Mulatshi, 2022](#); [Weston, 2022](#); [Martinez-Flor, 2010](#)) have identified types of speech acts. For example, ([Sinclair & Courtyard 1975](#) as cited in [Olateju, 2004](#)) identify four main acts namely structuring act, soliciting act, reacting act and responding act. In contrast, [Olateju \(2004\)](#) identifies twenty-four acts. These are frame (Fr), focus (fo), additive (add), adversative (Adv), causative (Cau), contrastive (Cont), elicitation (el), informative (Inf), directive (d), hearing check (h/c), clue (cl), prompt (prom), cue (cue), bid (b), nomination (n), comment (com), accept (acc), evaluations (e), demonstration (dem), restate (rest), illustrate (illu), repetition (rep), expatiate (exp) and re-initiation (re-in). Earlier [Austin \(1975](#) in [Sbisa, 2011](#)) classifies acts into locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces while [Searle \(2014\)](#) classifies acts into four types namely utterance act, propositional act, illocutionary act and intentional act.

From the observations above, researchers ([McIlister 2015](#); [Cameron-Faulkner, 2014](#); [Taavitsainen & Jucker 2007](#); [Carr et al., 2012](#)) have identified different speech acts, but only three acts are prominent and used in classroom interactions in technical classrooms in Lagos state. These are informative act, elicitation, and directive acts. Informative act passes information, ideas and opinions between discourse participants, elicitations are used as questions or requests; and directives are commands or requests on actions to be performed. These acts can require positive or negative responses either from the speaker or the listeners.

Dairo and Onadeko (2008) further maintain that an act should have three pragmatic properties. The first property is that it must have a form (either spoken or written). This means that it must possess locutionary force (Searle, 2014; Cohen, 2013; Sbisá et al., 2011; Kissine, 2008). The second property is that an act must have a specific intention (i.e. illocutionary force), and the last property is that participants must react in a particular manner (i.e. perlocutionary force). It is the illocutionary act that is of interest to us in this study.

It is worth noting that speech act theorists have also done research on the taxonomy of illocutionary acts. For instance, Austin (1962) classifies illocutionary acts into five types, namely verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behavities and expositives. Searle (2014) classifies them into five types namely, representatives, declaratives, directives, expressive and commissives (Nephawe & Lambani, 2021). Allan (1998) however maintains that there are only two major types of illocutionary acts: declaratory illocutionary acts and interpersonal illocutionary acts.

This study attempts to examine the use of speech acts in selected technical classrooms in Lagos State, Nigeria. It also aims at identifying and analysing types of speech acts applied in selected technical classroom in question. The objectives of this research are to identify speech act used in classroom discourse, their outcomes; and suggest appropriate measures to take to minimise disjointed and inappropriate use of speech acts. The author believes that this work will be of high value to discourse analysts, researchers, teachers, students, and other educational stakeholders who may consult this as their resource material if necessary.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Classroom Discourse**

Classroom discourse (CD) is a complex concept; it takes different forms. In other words, many activities are categorized as classroom discourse. CD is synonymous with classroom interactions and is best seen as a co-operative activity. Jocuns (2012) explains that it refers to all forms of talk (Singh, 2019) that one may find within a classroom or other educational setting. Al-Smadi and Ab Rashid (2017) opine that CD fall within language classrooms. It is bilateral in nature because it involves the teacher and his/her students who are aware of their unequal status. CD is an interaction between classroom participants especially the teachers and their students. Cazden and Beck (2003) stated that it (CD) is prominent in discussions of school reform. In every classroom, speech acts are necessary in carrying out the teaching and learning aspects of classroom business.

In general, CD is classroom interaction; that is, the interaction between the teachers and their pupils/students uses during teaching and learning and even in informal settings. It is an interaction that is said to be multiform, multi-content and multi-latitude (Zhou (2003) as cited in Sun et al., 2022). CD may be verbal or non-verbal; verbal when it is purely linguistics, and non-verbal, when actions, paralinguistic and other non-linguistic elements are used in interaction. Status, methods, contents, contexts are some potential determinants of CD especially in primary and secondary schools. It is worth noting that in most technical classrooms, I investigated, CD was asymmetrical possibly because of the slim structural and systemic gaps between the instructors and their students in terms of their age, affluence and influence. This blurry status-recognition might have also contributed to the constant disorderliness that characterizes almost all classroom interactions in these centres.

From the above submissions, one can say unequivocally that the structure of classroom discourse is quite different from that of a natural conversation. The teacher who assumes a leadership position determines the topics of classroom conversations; the teachers' direct controls, facilitates and "confuses" conversations. The teachers open and close conversations as they like. The students never challenge or attempt to postpone any topic he introduces. The teacher also allocates turns (Ishino, 2022) in the classroom; the right to speak is returned to the teacher when the pupils'/students' turns are completed; and the teacher has the right to stop and interrupt students' turns. Just as the teachers open the classroom conversations, they also close it. And there may be no negotiation and possible pre-closing (which is a common feature of naturally occurring conversations).

### **2.2 The Structure of Classroom Discourse**

Teaching or pedagogic discourse has its unique structure; the "traditional initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) patterns" (Nathan et al., 2010). Sinclair and Courthard (1975) observe that the predominant exchange structure in teacher-controlled discourse has three phases. These are teacher's

initiations, students' responses and teacher's feedback (IRF). Sinclair and Courthard further stress that a series of exchanges form transactions. A transaction constitutes an episode in the lesson with a unitary purpose. It is possible to identify discourse organization at the level of the lesson. This pattern is violated in technical centres because the instructors do almost all the talking; feedback is not allowed nor received and responded to.

### **2.3 Direct and Indirect Acts**

Direct and indirect speech acts are types of illocutionary speech acts. Direct speech act is the speech act that performs just one function while an indirect speech act performs more than one action. Schiffrin, in her *Approaches to Discourse*, observes that an indirect speech act is an utterance in which one illocutionary act (a "primary act") is performed by way of the performance of another (a literal act). Osisanwo (2003), in his *Introduction to Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics*, observes that a speech act is direct if there is a correlation between the structure and the function the structure performs. If both (i.e. the structure and the function) correspond, then the speech act is direct. If they do not correspond, then the speech act is indirect. He further cites three structural forms, declarative, interrogative and imperative. He adds that, functionally, a declarative is expected to make a statement (Adam, 2022), interrogative should ask a question while imperative should give a command or make a request. He says that once such happens, direct speech act has occurred. According to him, direct speech act occurs because there is a direct relationship between their structures and their functions. In also states that if there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, indirect speeches act results (Osisanwo, 2003).

In a situation where a speech act does only one thing, it is termed direct speech act, and where it performs more than one action, it is termed, indirect speech act (Green, 2007). Some utterances perform more than one function because one act is being performed by way of another. Once this happens, it means that the utterances that perform more than one functions are systematically related to the multiply acts that they perform. Discourse participants in technical centres employ direct and indirect speech acts in classroom discourses. Most of their speech acts follow an awkward pattern; they are completely dominated by the instructors who are not bothered about how their lessons are presented but just what they present. Full concentration of the content of presentation against the manner and style of presentation informed the disorganizations that characterize CD in technical centres in Lagos State.

## **3. Method**

This is qualitative research that adopted an ex post facto design. Data were randomly selected from classroom lessons taught in technical centres in Lagos State. Three hundred and ten (310) classroom participants consisting of three hundred and five (305) students (250 females, 55 males) and 5 instructors (3 females and 2 males) made up the sample population randomly selected for this study. Eight classes which comprises 80 students from Catering class, 30 students from Physics class, 70 students from Pestering classes 1, 2 and 3, 50 students from Accounting class, 25 students from Tailoring and Fashion Designing class; and 50 from Baking class.

Having obtained permission from the authority of the centres, the researcher visited the classes and presented the letter of permission to the instructors. The instructors then gave the researcher individual periods to come and gather data. The researcher visited the centres on the fixed periods given to her. In each of the classes, the instructors introduced the researcher to the classes and her purposes. The researcher then sat at the back of each class, recorded each lesson. Also, she had a note where she used to write the lessons taught by each instructor. After having collected enough data for this study, the researcher listened to the recorded lessons many times; and extracted relevant data from them. Also, the researcher compared the written notes with the recorded lesson, and harmonized data from the two instruments before she extracted the excerpts that she presented and analysed in this study.

### **3.1 Instrumentation**

This research adopted participant observation methods to gather instruments from technical institutions in Lagos State. Observation was the instrument used in obtaining data from randomly selected classrooms. Osuala (2001) observes that "observation is the act of recognizing and noting facts or occurrence; a much more dependable way of collecting data (215). Osuala further states that events are recorded as they occur and that data collected through observation are "more objective and usually more accurate" (Osuala, 2001, p. 215).

Observation can be said to be participant and non-participant in nature. Participant observation occurs in a situation where the observer seeking information participates in the activities. “With this method, the observer joins in the daily life of the group or organization he is studying. He watches what happens to the members of the community and how they behave, and he also engages in conversations with them to find out their reactions and interpretations of the events that have occurred” (Osuala, 2001, p. 216). The information so gathered is usually original and thorough. The more the observer participates, the greater the degree of thoroughness and reliability of information gathered. However, the observer may be biased and observe only the things he wants to observe.

On the one hands, Adedokun (2003) maintains that direct observation occurs where the observer is at the scene of the information and collects the information directly as it happens by watching or observing the events without making use of mechanical, electrical or electronic devices. He further opines that the observer may or may not be part of the setting. Adedokun states that indirect observation method is the method of collecting and recording the needed information involved in the use of mechanical aid, electrical or computerized devices. In also adds that what the observers should do is to “position mechanical or computerized devices like tape recorder, video camera, hidden camera and automatic counters in the scene of the information” (Adedokun, 2003, p. 63).

### 3.2 The Speech Act Theory

The Speech Act Theory was first propounded by John Austin in 1962 in his work, *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1975). Austin observes that illocutionary acts imply saying and doing things at the same time with words as wishing for something alone, does not make that thing happens (Jones & Yoon, 2012; Anil et al., 2023). Acts, according to him, have multifunctional purposes and these are performed by utterances as parts of interpersonal communication. He classifies utterances into three groups namely, locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act respectively.

Austin observes that locutionary act, “the actual words used in an utterance” (Degand, 2006) is the act of uttering words with meaning (a mere act of uttering meaningful and perhaps useful words). Illocutionary acts can be imperative, an interrogation, a request, a declarative or a warning. An illocutionary act is the action performed as the speaker utters words. Perlocutionary act is the particular effect achieved through the speaker’s utterance on the listeners. The effect may be hope, aspiration, happiness, fear, amusement, persuasion or satire. In other words, the effects may be positive or negative. A positive effect informs hilarious moment of excitement and hope while a negative effect brings despondency, frustration and sadness.

The aspect of Austin’s theory that is of interest to us is his illocutionary act. Illocutionary act is the action realized once meaningful words are uttered. Austin (1975) observes that as parts of interpersonal communication, utterances perform many functions. He further stresses that many utterances are not mere information but equivalent to actions. He explains that these utterances are called performatives.

Also, Searle (1969) observes that speech act (Holtgraves, 2013) is the basic unit of communication. Searle’s view places the speech act at the crux of the study of language. Speech act rules are argued to be “part of linguistic competence” (Schifrin, 1994, p. 54). The Speech act theory is integrated into linguistic theory because of Searle’s principle of expressibility, which means that “what is meant can be said”. It is established that in theory it is possible for speakers to say exactly what they mean by “either increasing their knowledge of language or enriching the language” (54). Searle (1969) explains that the principle of expressibility helps the speakers and the hearers to equate the rules for performing speech act with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements, (Schifrin). In addition, Searle’s principle of expressibility removes ambiguity, vagueness and other forms of confusion from the theoretical essence of linguistic communication thereby helping the interlocutors to express themselves clearly.

Again, Searle (2014) and Searle and Vanderveken (2005) associates speech acts with the study of language. He observes that there are a many of analytical connections between the notion of speech acts, i. e. what the speaker means, what the sentence and other linguistic elements uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are (Schifrin, 1994, p. 55). In addition, Searle (2014) equally states that speaking a language is equivalent to engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour. The rules that are responsible for speech acts are what he calls constitutive and regulative rules. Constitutive rules are definitional while regulative rules are expressive. He also observes that there are utterance acts (i.e. the uttering of words, morphemes and sentences), the propositional acts



(Harris & Moss, 2018) (i.e. referring and predictions), illocutionary acts (such as stating, questioning, commanding and promising) and intentional acts (what the speakers (H) are doing with words in relation to the hearers (H)). Illocutionary act is of interest to us. He classifies illocutionary acts into five basic types, namely representative, directive, commissive, expressive and declaration.

Besides these, Allan (2015) presents a more recent work on illocutionary act. Allan (2015) classifies illocutionary act into two major types, namely interpersonal illocutionary acts and declaratory illocutionary acts. Interpersonal illocutionary acts are concerned with the interactions between the speaker and the hearer at an individual level while declaratory illocutionary acts are concerned with the speaker alone. The hearer's interaction is not needed for the act to take effect. Declarative illocutionary acts are baptizing, finding, pronouncing a judgment and other declarative acts.

Both interpersonal illocutionary acts and declaratory illocutionary acts have subgroups (Anana, 2018). For interpersonal illocutionary acts, constatives, predictives, commissives, acknowledgements, requestives and interpersonal authoritatives are their subgroups. Constatives comprise assertive, informatives, retrodictives (report, recount), concessives (acknowledgement, agreement), dissentives (disagreement), supportive (assumption, hypothesis, postulation, stipulation) and constative verdicts (judgment, approval). Predictives include performative predicative verbs such as forecast, predict and prophesy. Commissive is divided into two groups namely promises and offers. Performative promising verbs, on the one hand, include promise, vow, bet, guarantee and surrender. Performative offering verbs (Cummings and Clark, 2006), on the other hand, include offer, propose and volunteer. Acknowledgment includes congratulations, thanks, greetings, farewells, apologies, condolences, acceptance and rejection of acknowledgement. Directive includes requestives, questions, requirement and prohibitives. Requestive performative verbs include asking, begging, insisting, imploring, pleading etc. while questioning performative verbs are asking, inquiring, querying and questioning. Requiring performative verbs include bid, charge, command, demand, direct, enjoin, instruct etc. and prohibitives performative verbs include forbid, restrict, proscribe, prohibit, etc. Interpersonal authoritatives comprise permissives (allowed to, permitted) and advisories (admonished, advised).

Declaratory illocutionary acts are made up of only two subgroups, namely, effectives and verdictives. Effectives include honouring, naming, baptizing, consecrating, marrying etc. while verdictives include vetoing, deciding, declaring, voting, etc.

### 3.3 Pragmatics

Another theoretical model used in this study is Pragmatics. Pragmatics is formed from a Greek word "pragma" which means deed or action. It is traced to Morris (Morris, 2023) who considers Pragmatics as an aspect of semiotics. Many other scholars have offered different definitions of pragmatics. Some consider it as language in use. The act of using language to achieve various purposes (functions) dominates the views of these linguistic scholars. One of such views is the one presented by Osisanwo (2003) who observes that Pragmatics is the message being communicated; the participants involved in the message; the knowledge of the world which they share; the deductions to be made from the text on the basis of the content; the implications of what is said or what is left unsaid; and the impact of the non-verbal aspect of interaction on meaning. Also, Watson and Hill as cited in Osisanwo (2003) maintain that Pragmatics is the study of language from the viewpoint of the user, especially the choices, the constraints he meets with in employing the use of the language and the effects the use has on the communication situation.

Pragmatics studies factors that rule one's choice of language and the effects of the choice on social interaction. These factors influence one's selection of sounds, grammatical constructions and vocabularies from the source of the language. For instance, children are taught the importance of courteous communication at their tender age. Pragmatics distinctions of politeness and intimacy spread throughout the phonological, lexical and grammatical systems reflecting matters of status, role and social class.

As an approach to discourse analysis, Pragmatics is concerned with the analysis of discourse that deals with meaning, context and communication. It shares both philosophical and linguistic notions developed to handle the way information is distributed within sentences and the notion of conversational maxims. These are maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner.

#### 4. Results

In this section, excerpts of data are first presented in groups in boxes as DP1 to DP8 before their analysis (tagged DA1 to DA8) which both the Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics are used for it. DA1 to DA8 are also used for the analysis of data here.

Table 1. Dataset 1

DP1		
T1: Oya! High tea cover	T3: Another set to lay up breakfast	T5: A local what?
T2: Oshomole wins, Oshomole wins	T4: What do you want?	T6: A local what?
		T7: A local food

In the excerpt in Table 1, there disconnections in all the utterances uttered by the instructor. T1: Oya! High tea cover” has no relevance with “T2: Oshomole wins, Oshomolo wins.” This shows that the instructor was not paying maximal attention to teaching alone, rather she was getting information from a newspaper she was actually reading. T2 is an expressive, T3, an elliptical representative; T4, a self-response elicitations or a near elicitation. T5 and T6 are false elicitations and T7, an elliptical representation. All these are applied inharmoniously. Again, T1 to T4 show hanging discourse; the instructor did not fully teach any of the above topics but touched and left them hanging incompletely. The self-responses or near elicitations applied in T5 and T6 here act as emphasizeers. These are elliptical representations used by the instructor here to emphasize her points. T7 is an elliptical representative which acts as self-elicited feedback.

Also, the teacher initiates with the application of elliptical elicitations as shown in T1, T3 and T5 and gives follow-up responses in T2, T4 and T6, making this lesson poetic and rhythmic in nature. Looking at T1, a code-mixed elliptical representative, this may post difficulty to non-bilinguals (who do not understand Yoruba) in this class. One can infer that both the instructor and the students may be confused as to what he means. This is depicted in “T3: another set of laying breakfast.” “T4: What do you want, T5 to T6, “A local what and T7,” A local food.” All these are elliptical illogical utterances rendered exclusively by the teacher. Students are not given the opportunity to express their minds or contribute to the ongoing discourses. This class is completely teacher centred.

Table 2. Dataset 2

DP 2	T5A beam is what?	T9: We say it is what?
T1: We say that light travels in what?	T6: A collection of ray	S10: The origin of sensation in vision
T2: In a straight line.	T7: So what have we been able to	
T3: It allows what?	discuss today?	
T4: Light to pass through	S8: Source of light	

DP2, a Physics class, is equally dominated by the instructor as shown from T1 to T7. T1, T3, T5 are false elicitation; the instructor responds to them in T2, T4 and T6. In T7, the instructor uses an elicitation and the students give feedback in S8. Again, the instructor gives an elliptical elicitation in T9 and the student’s responded in S10 which acts as an elliptical representation. Students’ participation in S8 and S10, makes this discourse interactive and comprehensive as their feedback indicate. The instructor dominates this class as shown from T1 to T 7 and refuses to allocate slots for the students because his utterances are actually continuous teaching mechanisms that allow lessons to flow easily. Obviously, the students understand him as expressed in their responses in S8 and S10. Therefore, continuous delivery can be fruitful where the students pay maximal attention.

Table 3. Dataset 3

DP3	T3: Otito oh!	S6: No, I no wan again
T1: Oya! Oya! have you taken your own	T4: Oya! Oya! Oya! Let’s serve	
T2: Oya! Come and prepare it	T5: Go back joo	

DP3 is fully dominated speech acts by the instructor as shown in T1 to T5. T1 to T4 are code-switched representatives. There is only one response in S6 where a student gives a reason for his refusal to obey the instructor’s instruction. Here, speech acts are teacher-centred and are replete with directives. No questions for clarity or comments are given.

Table 4. Dataset 4

DP4	T2: We have liability in this class	S4: Sir you're using this to waste our time
T1: Two accounts are involved; there are capital account and cash account	T3: They wanted to introduce a bride, behold she slept.	

DP4 contains only four (4) utterances and the instructor allocates three (3) turns to himself. The only response here is S4: Sir you 're using this to waste our time." One begins to wonder why a student has such an audacity to respond this way to an instructor. This can only make one to infer that there is no clear status demarcation between the instructor and this student. This might have been informed by the fact that the teacher has lost his charisma as a teacher.

Again, utterances are disjointed representatives; as indicated in the irrelevances between T1 to T3. Also, the instructor applies a flip-flop in T1; and this sometimes helps to explicate direct and indirect acts.

Table 5. Dataset 5

DP 5	T6: Find the probability of getting A...	T10: May be something have ( )
T1: Group A	T7: Draw with your pencil and not biro	T11: Greeting the guest
T2: Go and pick a string	T8: Use ruler; draw the way I am drawing	
T3: Michael, pick up a string	T9: My beautiful girl	
T4: Pick a string		
T5: Group B		

DP5 is made of seventeen (17) utterances. The instructor completely takes all the seventeen (17) slots. The utterances are directives and elliptical. T1 and T5 are elliptical representatives used as the onset of a transaction. T2 to T8 are directives applied to urge the students to do things with the instructor's word. Another exchange is introduced from T9, which is the instructor's expressive; T10 and T11 are incoherent elliptical representatives.

Table 6. Dataset 6

DP6	T5: Excuse me, I thought ( )	T10: To silver serve means
T1: Don't pour and this	T6: Serve it along with your ( )	T11: Ok
T2: The first thing you put in the cup when you are ( ) silver serving is	T7: No bread or ( )	T12: A round silver tray
T3: Arranging the things on the table for guests to be serving themselves	T8: Let them lay a bag they have because ( )	T13: No one is talking
T4: The guests can do all things	T9: Then we are attending to the guest ( )	T14: Afternoon tea

DP6 contains 16 utterances, all dominated by the instructor. The instructor's T5 seems to be disconnected from the T4 and the preceding utterances. T1 to T14 are all disjointed directives. There is no slot allocated to the students. Most of these directives are elliptical as depicted in T5 to T12 and T14. The use of a possible terminator, "Okay" in T11 is ambiguous, the instructor's intention may be to show her satisfactory stage of her lesson or her perception that the students have understood what she had been teaching.

T1 is an elliptical directive; the utterance is incomplete, and the listener is confused in attempting to indicate what the word, "this' actually means. T2 seems to be the follow-up pseudo-explanative as the students are unable to get the exact point that the instructor tries to explain. As the instructor continues to explain her point, she utters T3, an ambiguous indirect speech act. The students were sometimes unable to hear what the instructor said as the inaudibility aspects indicated in the bracketed areas in T2, T5 to T9 show. Again, constant application of flip-flops does not only waste the time of the discourse participants but confuse them, as indicated in T10 to T14. They further result in extreme disjointed ideas and disorganization of thoughts, possibly due to the applications of incomplete, elliptical elicitation and representatives by the instructors. From this analysis, it is obvious that the students were unable to completely understand what the instructor meant.

Table 7. Dataset 7

DP7	T2: Did you raise up your hands?	T5: That is the caramel is on top.
T1: I don't like hearing sorry ma, sorry ma	T3: Did you raise up your hands?	
	T4: Are you hearing our discussion?	

In DP7 all utterances are instructor's elliptical expressives, false elicitation and incomplete representatives. T1 is a representative which may be considered as a warning from the instructor to the students to be serious with the class assignment that she gave them. T2, its repetition in T3 and T4 are elicitation. These are mere locutionary acts as their illocutions and perlocutions are not felt at all.

Also, T1 suggests that students had offended her (the instructor) several times and always turned to express their apologies, so she gives a final warning for them to desist from such action. Students seem to understand the instructor's intention and as such refuse to respond to T4; and she utters T5, a deliberate mechanic used for delivery flow. It is equally worth noting that "T5: That is the caramel is on top," an ill-formed utterance, can be ambiguous as its reconstruction may suggest a directive, "That is a caramel on top, go ahead and use it;" an informative, "There is always a caramel on top of a cake" and a representative. "Just note that there is a caramel on that cake."

Table 8. Dataset 8

DP 8	T6: I don't know why you want to wound yourself	T11: Group C
T1: Group A	T7: Group B	T12: Now what happens?
T2 Flat plate	T8: How do you present it?	T13: The yoke, bulker, lectus, bread butter, eggs and milk with sugar and fruit
T3: Nobody	T9: Open part of the rice	T14: Slide bread
T4: Bode, come over here	T10: The waiter will serve it	
T5: Stop talking there		

DP8 has fourteen (14) utterances all, taken by the instructor. T1 and T3 are elliptical representatives, T4 and T5 commands, T6 an expressive. T7 and T8 are elliptical representatives. T8 and T12 are false elicitation (used as a delivery mechanism for continuous delivery). The instructor responses to them in T9, T10, and T13. T11 and T14 are elliptical representations. This class is equally teacher centred. The instructor's use of these fragmentations encourages incomprehensiveness on the learners. The instructor's use of elliptical representatives in T1 to T3 may also act as elliptical elicitations; it could be that the instructor actually had the mind to ask them questions. This is applicable to T7, T11 and T14. Be as it may, these disharmonized acts are sure indicators that the instructor's lesson is unplanned. The listener may be left to decide which act the instructor actually applies. In other words, T7, T11 and T14 are indirect acts.

From the analysis, it is shown that many patterns of speech acts in selected technical centres in Lagos are mainly malfunctioned because the instructors incessantly use them (erroneously). Also, some instructors directly transfer some elements of L1 to L2 in their discourse exchanges. They used overloaded representatives that originate from retroactive interference of L1 to L2. They also used speeches characterized by dangles and thrusts. In addition, some instructors were unable to use repair mechanisms

Directives characterise direct and indirect speech acts used in practical classes in technical centres. Misused direct and indirect speech acts such as disjointed and unplanned speech acts, awkward near representatives, over-generalized representatives, inaudible representatives, confused indirect and multifunctional speech acts, superfluous representatives, elliptical elicitations and fragmentations were characteristics of speech acts applied by instructors in teaching students' lessons in technical centres in Lagos. The instructors' direct and indirect speech acts are characterized by thrusts. (i.e. random thoughts that just pop into the teacher's heads). Code-switching has both positive and negative impacts. It assists in quick understanding where classroom participants are proficient in the languages used; and at the same time acts as a barrier where students do not comprehend the languages used in classroom interactions.

## 5. Discussion

Data obtained from participant observation (PO) from selected technical centres in Lagos State are strong resources for instructors to study and apply them appropriately in interactions in classrooms. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) in Kawulich (2005) observe that PO helps to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study as objective and accurate. Instructors must avoid ill-formed speech acts, completely



informal speech acts and disruptive speech acts that emanate from unstructured and unplanned lessons. Instructors who aspire to teach well should prepare and present lessons that allow students to comprehend what they teach easily.

Code-switched speech acts are difficult to non-bilinguals to understand. Considering the difficulties in code-switching, [Muthusamy et al. \(2020\)](#) find out that lack of linguistics confidence is one reason that leads to code-switching; (which is considered as a rule governed system with social and grammatical constraints ([Gutierrez-Clellen et al., 2009](#)). The results found that there are mixed themes in DP1. The mixed-themes displayed in DP 1 can be seen as representing the instructor's unorganized delivery style. This affirms [Moore and Dickson-Deans \(2014\)](#)'s opinion that delivery styles produce knowledge paths that learners may find unorganised and ineffective. This necessitates us to adhere to ([DeCoske et al., 2010](#))'s observation that even the best contents can be overlooked if its delivery is poor or with mediocrity. In addition, the seemingly displayed elicitation in T4 violates Searle's sincerity theory ([Ridge, 2006](#); [Mabaquiao 2018](#); [Mann & Kreutel, 2004](#)) that states that utterances should be truthful. Instructors ought not to have asked what they don't actually need. In other words, these are not question per se but delivery techniques for continuous flow of classroom discourse. All the speech acts here also serve as continuous mechanisms ([Anana, 2015](#)) for lesson delivery.

Where teachers dominate classroom interactions, students can hardly benefit from what they are teaching. [Sultan \(2016\)](#) identifies among others that teachers' domination affects students' mental development, underestimates students' competence; creates fear and pressure. He further observes that the "emergences of this dominative act can bring a bad impact to the students' academic development" (p. 995). What then is the essence of teaching if it is only the teacher that speaks? This dominance violates [Sinclair and Coulthard \(1975\)](#)'s IRF structure and renders what we may tag Instructor's Initiation, Continuous Response and Incomplete Follow-up (I-I-C-F) structure continuously applicable in classroom discourses. Furthermore, code-switched representatives may assist the students (who understand the languages used) to easily understand classroom discourses as the language of the environment (Yoruba) is mixed with English to make the lesson conversational. Direct and indirect speech acts in classroom discourse in selected technical centres are characterized by the interchange of Pidgin, Yoruba and Standard English, highly conversational tones, flip-flops, thrusts, directives and slot fillers. The instructors used these languages in highly conversational tones ([Yang et al., 2017](#)). Their tones made the classroom atmosphere a relaxed one and every participant was able to communicate freely and at will.

Disconnected and unconnected speech acts violate the maxim of relevance and render the listeners (in this case, students) to grope from one line of thought to the other to decipher what the instructor actually means. The instructor's incessant shifts from one idea to another violate the Gricean maxim of relevance ([Sripada, et al. 2003](#); [Eskritt & Lee, 2008](#); [Machali, 2012](#); [Vogel, et al., 2013](#); [Mohammed & Al-Ebadi, 2022](#)). The researcher may infer from these unconnected utterances that the instructor did not plan this lesson well. This might have been what necessitated one of the students in S4 to forcefully allocate a turn to himself and utter a representative which further suggested that the student's observation of the instructor's disorganized nature might have informed his utterance of S4 which might be considered as a means of salvaging the delayed time. Although the student's utterance may not be recommendable based on the cultural reality of the environment (Nigerian culture); it might have the potential of reminding the instructor of the central theme of the day's lesson. Moreover, the instructor's unconnected and incessant representatives seem to indicate what just popped into his heads intermittently. This has equally violated Gricean maxim of relevance ([Izar et al., 2021](#), [Kanasya & Bram, 2022](#), [Hamidah et al., 2022](#)). This can as well lead to confusion and lack for total understanding by the students.

The use of disjointed and unplanned direct and indirect speech acts leads to confusion as the listeners were unable to relate one utterance to another. These violate Gricean's maxim of relevance ([Syafryadin, et al., 2020](#); [Wilson & Sperber, 2002](#); [Ibrahim et al., 2018](#)). An ambiguous indirect speech act ([Ikeo 2007](#); [Lee & Pinker 2010](#)) is a confused speech act that leaves an individual to doubt the true meaning of any utterance. This is shown in T4 in DP6, an assumptive indirect speech act. This assumptive indirect speech act places the listeners in a disadvantaged position as he or she begins to wonder if it were the teacher herself that was to arrange the things or the students themselves. The instructor's T4, an over-generalized representative; violates the sincerity condition because the speaker (the instructor) is not sure of the capability of the guests to carry out the actions. She has not also tested the guests but talks of their overwhelming abilities to do things. This has equally violated the preparatory condition ([Lambert, et al., 2021](#)) of the instructor to get the guests to actually do what she wants them to do.

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Furthermore, disconnected speech acts make discourse participants alienated from ongoing speeches. This alienation affects the understanding of the listeners, the students, who might have doubted what the instructor actually means. This violates the maxim of relevance (Jorfi & Dowlatabadi, 2015; Labobar, 2018; Radfar et al., 2020) as this has no interrelationship between the neighbouring utterances. T6 seems to pick up from T4 as it still focuses on the theme of serving. Although this is the case, its elliptical nature blurs the full comprehension of the utterance. T7 is an indirect speech act; it acts as a false elicitation as well as a self-pseudo-representative. This necessitates T8, an elliptical directive as well as an unclear representative. The instructor seems encumbered with multiplied events; that is why her utterances seem to be highly disjointed as shown in T9, an incomplete representative. Many of these utterances are awkward near representatives, clumsy and lack coherence and as such blurred the listeners' comprehension. It does not assist them to understand what the instructor teaches. White (2001) frowns at such utterances and concludes that they should be clear.

In addition, the instructor's application of inappropriate speech acts does not allow the students to understand completely what they teach. This disposition rejects Searle (1969)'s principle of expressibility (Hosseinpour, 2021) that states that what can be meant can be said. In this case, what is said cannot be meant because the students were not able to know what the utterance of the instructor actually meant. The instructor's use of indirect and multifunctional speech acts sometimes causes confusion. This is not in conformity with White (2001)'s opinion that maxims are interpreted to meet readers (and by implication listeners) expectations of clarity, brevity and sincerity. Again, the instructor's use of superfluous representatives violates sincerity (Searle, 1969) and relevance maxims (Clementson & Page, 2022).

Mere locutionary acts negate Sbisà's observation that illocutionary acts go beyond mere acts (Sbisà et al., 2001). T5 is a defective representation, supposed to be applied as two statements; possibly, "That is the caramel"; and "The caramel is on top". The instructor mixed ideas in the expressions; and the perlocutionary force of this is blurred and results in confusing interpretations. This may be summarized in Jauboury (2020)'s observation that the least unclear speech act is the perlocutionary act. This might have informed the blurred and confused meanings obtained in T5. Here, the instructor was unable to repair this statement. As a result of the instructor's failure to apply a repair mechanism here, the students were unable to comprehend the ambiguous representative; and this further confuses the entire lesson.

The use of elliptical representatives (Anana et al., 2018) and fragmentations used by the instructor encourages incomprehensiveness on the learners. These disharmonized acts (Hager, 2012) are sure indicators that the instructor's lesson is unplanned. The listener may be left to decide which act the instructor actually applies. It is worth noting that these bits of unconnected speech acts are capable of rending lessons confusing and incomprehensible. The instructors should organize their thoughts so as to enable them to have connected and organized speeches that will help the students to understand what they are taught easily.

## **6. Conclusion**

Speech acts are used in doing classroom businesses which are specifically teaching and learning. Other activities in the classroom, besides teaching and learning, are secondary; therefore, it is necessary to do any research that focuses on classroom discourse. Also, the structure of classroom discourse determines the effectiveness of classroom discourse especially the comprehension of the listeners (i.e. the students). The structure of classroom discourse in technical centres in Lagos State is quite different from that of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975)'s model. Lessons are highly instructor's centred and as such the instructor initiates the discourse, continues to dominate it and sparingly gives the students little or no time to contribute but the instructor just gives few comments instead of full explanations of what he/she actually teaches. Elicitations and false elicitations are used as teaching mechanisms rather than their primary functions of sincerely seeking the understanding of the students. These malfunctioned speech acts are to be maximally used if not eradicated. The instructor, as the chief administrator and director of classroom discourse must apply it appropriately.

For classroom discourse to be effective, the instructors need to do thorough preparations of their lessons, understand their students and their uniqueness, apply the appropriate classroom discourse structure and make their lessons students' centred. The instructor needs to use elicitations appropriately to make sure that students participate fully in the ongoing discourse in the class. It is believed that if these are carried out appropriately, the students will easily understand what is being taught and classroom discourse in technical centres will be effective.

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