

AN ANALYSIS OF UTTERANCES USED BY YAKA PEOPLE DURING THE MARRIAGE RITUALS DISCOURSE

By

Jackson LUALA MAKOY

PhD candidate University of Kinshasa and Senior lecturer at ISC-Kinshasa
(Business Technical College)
Democratic Republic of Congo

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to analyse 10 Yaka utterances collected in marriage rituals discourse and interpret them linguistically by following two steps: Semantic meaning and finally pragmatic interpretation. This research will demonstrate the value embodied in Yaka marriage rituals discourse.

Keywords: *Speech act, Semantics, Yaka language*

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif principal de cet article est d'analyser 10 énoncés Yaka recueillis dans le discours rituel du mariage et les interpréter linguistiquement en suivant deux étapes : analyse sémantique et interprétation pragmatique. Cela étant, cette recherche va aussi démontrer la valeur incarnée dans le discours rituel du mariage chez les Yaka.

Mots-clés : *Acte de parole, sémantique, langue yaka*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is difficult or less easy to find a specific literature on Yaka rituals discourse. This study attempts to analyse and interpret some utterances used during the marriage rituals discourse in Yaka society from the linguistics point view and we hope that this paper will fill the gap to this linguistic and cultural concern of the Yaka marriage rituals discourse.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Pragmatics

The word pragmatic is derived from the Greek *pragma*, meaning 'deed'; in everyday usage pragmatic means something like '*practical*' or '*realistic*'. The technical usage examined in paper is not unrelated. Cameron D. (2001) defines pragmatics as the "field of enquiry that deals with how language can be used to do things and mean things in real-world situations."

The most helpful definition of pragmatics is offered by Jenny Thomas (1995) quoted by Cameron (2001) who defines it as the study of "meaning in interaction". Thomas notes that pragmatics has typically been characterized as the study of either 'speaker meaning' (what speakers intend by an utterance) or 'utterance interpretation' (what hearers make of an utterance).

Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choice they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in the act of communication. Crystal (2003).

Meaning is not something which is inherent in the word alone, nor is it produced by the speaker alone, nor by the hearer alone. Making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance. (Thomas 1995:2)

2.2 Speech acts

The basic idea behind the notion of a 'speech act' is that when we say something we are always also doing something.

The philosopher J.L. Austin (1962) identified a class of utterances which he called "performatives" because they perform a particular action in and of themselves.

Austin began by distinguishing utterances which are performatives' from other (proposition-making) utterances, which he labelled "constative".

2.2.1. Speech act classification

Austin's Classification

Austin (1962) comes up with five general classes of speech acts:

1. Verdictives: They "consist in the delivering of a finding official or unofficial, upon evidence or reasons as to value or fact, so far as these are distinguishable." (p:153) This class includes the verbs *estimate, assesses, diagnose, rank, appreciate, grade, define, analyse, etc.* as shown in the following example:

Example: (1.4)

I appreciate your work.

2. Exercitives: "The giving of decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it. It is a decision that something is to be so, as distinct from a judgment that it is so." (p:154). It's an exercise of powers, rights or influence. Exercitives comprise the verbs *appoint, pardon, name, bequeath, nominate, order, dare, beg, request.*

For example a judge may utter the following sentence:

Example: (2.5)

I sentence you to five years.

3. Commissives: They "commit the speaker to a certain course of action." (p: 157) The verbs *promise, contract, bet, etc.* are used with this type of speech act which could be shown in the following example:

Example: (1.6)

I plan to leave by airplane.

4. Behabitives: They include "the notion of reaction to other people's behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct." (p:158). This class involves *blame, congratulate, apologize, thank*, as in *Example: (1.7)*

I apologize.

5. Expositives: "they are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments, and the clarifying of usages and of references." (p: 161) Exposition is achieved by *affirm, report, remark, agree, etc.* shown in the following example:

Example: (1.8)

I assume that you will come tomorrow

2.3 Semantics

According to Kroeger (2018), The term *Semantics* is often defined as the study of meaning. It might be more accurate to define it as the study of the relationship between linguistic form and meaning.

For Kreidler (2002), *Semantics* is the study of how languages organize and express meanings.

Also J. Saeed (2003) argues in the same way by saying that Semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language.

* Two "levels" of meaning

In this paper we will be interested in the meanings of two different types of linguistic units:

1. **Denotation approach/ Literal meaning/ sentence meaning**
2. **Connotation approach** /utterance meaning (also referred to as "speaker meaning")

The first unit is hopefully already familiar to the reader. When people talk about what a word or phrase “mean”, they may have in mind either its dictionary definition or its referent in a particular context. Kroeger (2018).

In order to understand the second level, “utterance meaning”, we need to distinguish between sentences vs. utterances. A sentence is a linguistic expression, a well-formed string of words, while an utterance is a speech event (proverbs) by a particular speaker in a specific context.

When a speaker uses a sentence in a specific context, he produces an utterance (Proverb). As hinted in the preceding section, the term sentence meaning refers to the semantic content of the sentence: the meaning which derives from the words themselves, regardless of context.

The term utterance meaning refers to the semantic content plus any pragmatic meaning created by the specific way in which the sentence gets used.

Cruse (2000:27) defines utterance meaning as “the totality of what the speaker intends to convey by making an utterance.”

As for Chandler (2002) the term connotation is used to refer to socio cultural and personal associations (ideological, emotional).

3. METHODS

3.1. Research Design

This section deals with the methodology and procedure employed in this paper.

This paper adopts descriptive qualitative approach since the main concern of this research is to understand the meaning that individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This is in accordance with Dornejei (2007) *who states that qualitative method involves data collection procedures using conversational methods, i.e., phenomena helps the researcher understand what participants think and why they think in a particular way.*

R. Ahuja (2001) makes a significant difference between “scientific methodology” and “scientific method” itself, by stating that methodology means “description, explanation and justification of methods and not the methods themselves.

The “**method**” in reverse, is a ‘procedure for obtaining knowledge based on empirical observations and logical reasoning’.

According to Dawson C. (2009), Methods are the tools you use to gather data.

3.2. Research Techniques

In this paper, there were two techniques that were used by the researcher: observation and *interview*. The researcher observed and recorded notes without being involved in the activities of the participants, acts as a spectator of the scene under study, and maintain a certain distance from it and never intervening.

3.3 The procedure of analysis

The procedure of the analysis will be made according to the following steps:

Providing a selection of utterances in marriage rituals discourse from Yaka Traditions:

1. Revealing the surface meaning (denotation) as well as the deep meaning (the connotation) of the selected data.
2. Analyzing the speech acts found in the selection made.
3. Classifying the speech acts under analysis.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 NANI KOTELE MU NZO IMONO?

Nani kotele mu nzo imono = who's there?/ who are you please?

The speech act of this utterance is a directive, i.e. *requesting*

The father is asking politely or officially to know the identity of his visitors.

The semantic analysis

- *The denotational meaning*

The father is asking politely or officially to know the identity of his visitors.

- *The connotational meaning*

In Yaka tradition/culture if the visitors come to your place in the context of marriage etc. the family is obliged to ask question to detect the importance of the visit. The father is asking politely or officially to know the purpose of his visitors.

The pragmatic analysis

The speech act of this utterance is a constative, i.e. *identifying*

The expansion of this utterance is I hereby want to identify the person who is there?

4.2 MALAFU MA NTETI YE NSUKA MANDUINI [this is the only drinks I accept from you].

* *The denotational meaning*

This is a warning. The bride's father is insisting by telling his daughter to avoid disorder. Marriage is honorable in all.

• *The connotational meaning*

Here the father is advising her daughter to avoid others men since she is introducing her future husband. Yaka people are very strict they don't accept fornication. When a man brings with him a drink, it means that he is responsible and they have to receive him like a prince.

Pragmatic analysis

The speech act of this utterance is warning.

4.3. KALA NKOKO = *Let you have children as a hen that gets more chicks*

Semantic analysis

• *The Denotational Meaning*

Here the father is blessing his daughter.

• *The Connotational Meaning*

The deep meaning can be detected from its sociological context which says: Yaka people usually bless their daughters during the marriage ceremony. All the family wishes good success to the new bride and bless her so that she can get more children for the continuity of the family. Indeed in Yaka society we say "Luzingu luetu bana" / *nos enfants, c'est notre éternité* / *Children, our eternity!* Or lubutuku, kuyedisa kwa kanda / When there is a new born in the family, all the members are happy.

• *The pragmatic analysis*

The speech act of this utterance is blessing

I hereby bless you to have children as a hen that gets more chicks.

4.4. LAFU DI MOSI, MWANA NKETO MOSI [we drink once for a lady]

Semantic analysis

• *The denotational meaning*

Here the father speaks on behalf of the family and gives command to the members of the family especially to the daughter asking not to be separated from her husband because the yaka culture does not accept divorce. You have to avoid divorce, otherwise the entire family will be covered with shame.

- *The connotational meaning*

This utterance concentrates on important family and social ethics, that is the family integrity. Yaka tradition emphasizes the family union since it is the core of the society. So it is not acceptable that after the wedding ceremony, the wife should change or destroy the relation. In that case other members of the family will not accept easily if their daughter brings them another man as her future husband. If a wife leaves her husband for certain reasons let her reconcile with her husband or she should not get married again. In Yaka they say: " we can conclude the end of the marriage by the fact that a woman leaves her house and comes back to her family". Before they conclude that the marriage is ended, there must be an official person(member) from the family to pronounce it officially.

- **Pragmatic analysis**

The speech act of this utterance is *commanding*. The extension of this utterance is: I hereby command you, on behalf of the ancestors, asking the wife not to depart from her husband, if she does, she should necessarily reconcile with her husband.

4.5. KANGA MBUNDU KU NZO LONGO: [You have to be patient and support]

The semantic Analysis

- *The Denotational Meaning*

Marriage is another step of life; the married woman has to be patient because she is discovering a new way of living.

- **The connotational meaning**

The mother is advising her daughter (the bride) on how to live with the new members of the family that she is adopting. i.e. her husband, parents and so on.. Indeed it is well known that getting married is easy but to stay married is more difficult. There are problems so that, parents have to advise their daughter to keep quite, be patient and or to support even if there are disappointing situations.

- **Pragmatic Analysis**

The speech act of this utterance is a directive (*advising*). The extension of this utterance is: I hereby *advise* you, how to keep quite even when things go wrong.

4.6. BUTA BUNA BU BUTA NSUSU: [Let you have children like a hen that gets a lot of chicks]

Semantic analysis

- *The Denotational Meaning*

Here the father is blessing his daughter.

- *The Connotational Meaning*

The deep meaning can be detected from its sociological context which says: Yaka people usually bless their daughters during the marriage ceremony. All the family wishes good success to the new bride and bless her so that she can get more children for the continuity of the family. Indeed in Yaka society we say "Luzingu luetu bana" *Children, our eternity!* Or lubutuku, kuyedisa kwa kanda / When there is a new born in the family, all the members are happy.

- **Pragmatic analysis**

The speech act of this utterance is blessing

I hereby bless you to have children as a hen that gets more chicks.

4.7. LONGO LUKWENDA TATA KO, LUKWENDAPI MAMA KO

Semantic Analysis

- *The denotational meaning*

Here, the father is talking his daughter. He is making her understand the importance of marriage. Problem may happen, but she has to assume her responsibility.

- *The connotational meaning*

The wife should live with her husband according to ancestral laws. All married people should take care to behave themselves so lovingly and peaceably. In Yaka tradition, the choice of a partner is free, but the parents are there only to guide their daughter/ son to make a good choice. They approve the decision made by their daughter and as parents they have to assist the future married people. The purpose behind that is to keep the family and the marriage clean and to maintain the family consolidation.

- **Pragmatic Analysis**

The speech act of this utterance is *warning*. The extension of this utterance is: I hereby warn you that marriage is a personal decision.

4.8. BETU TU DIA MADIAMODIKO

Semantic analysis

- *The denotational meaning*

Here the father speaks on behalf of the family and gives command to the members of the family especially to the daughter asking not to be separated from her husband because the yaka culture does not accept divorce. You have to avoid divorce, otherwise the entire family will be covered with shame.

- *The connotational meaning*

This utterance concentrates on important family and social ethics, that is the family integrity. Yaka tradition emphasizes the family union since it is the core of the society. So it is not acceptable that after the wedding ceremony, the wife should change or destroy the relation. In that case other members of the family will not accept easily if their daughter brings them another man as her future husband. If a wife leaves her husband for certain reasons let her reconcile with her husband or she should not get married again. In Yaka they say: "we can conclude the end of the marriage by the fact that a woman leaves her house and comes back to her family". Before they conclude that the marriage is ended, there must be an official person(member) from the family to pronounce it officially.

- *Pragmatic analysis*

The speech act of this utterance is *commanding*. The extension of this utterance is: I hereby command you, on behalf of the ancestors, asking the wife not to depart from her husband, if she does, she should necessarily reconcile with her husband.

4.9. LONGO IKANGA KWA MBUNDU; [*it is not easy to stay married / you have to patient or keep quite*].

Semantic Analysis

- *The Denotational Meaning*

Marriage is another step in life; the married man has to be patient as he is discovering a new way of living.

- *The connotational meaning*

The father is advising his son (the married person) on how to live with his wife. Indeed it is well known that it is not easy to stay married, there are several problems; so the father needs to advise his son not be agitated even if there are difficult situations in which he can be disappointed. There is a saying that says in Yaka that « Nketu ka yelaku»: *La femme ne voit jamais ce que l'on fait pour elle ; elle ne voit que ce qu'on ne fait pas.*

- **Pragmatic Analysis**

The speech act of this utterance is a directive (*advising*). The extension of this utterance is: I hereby *advise* you, how to support women because sometimes they react like children.

4.10. MATONDO « *thank you for your visit.*

Semantic analysis

- **The denotational meaning**

Here, the father is talking to his son-in-law and the rest of the members of this family.

- **The connotational meaning**

Yaka people are very kind, since there are visitors to your place or when the husband's family comes to you, the first thing is to receive them.

The lady's family is radiant with joy, that is why the expression "Matondo". The selection related to marriage is due to many conditions (the way your family behave or the family must have the good name, etc.)

- **Pragmatic analysis**

The speech act of this utterance is *thanking*.

The father expresses his appreciation since the husband' family is there present at the ceremony and the presence of the husband's family expresses their approval to that marriage.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Findings

This section presents the research finding that has been collected from observation in Yaka marriage ritual discourse. The researcher found and selected the types of speech acts performed by Yaka people during the ritual ceremonies.

As stated in the formulation of the problem, this study aims to show the types of the illocutionary act used during the ritual process and show the dominant used types of illocutionary act by the participants during the marriage ritual discourse.

In this paper, the researcher collected utterances in marriage rituals discourse in Yaka society and the analysis showed that two types of illocutionary acts performed by Yaka people are dominant during the marriage rituals discourse according to Searle's theory. They are directive and expressive.

The types of speech act which are used in these ten traditional yaka marriages are listed in the following table:

N	Utterances	Lge function	Verbs meaning	Type of sentence
1	Nani kotele mu nzo imono	Directive	Request	Interrogative
2	Malafu ma nteti ye nsuka manduini	Expressive	Blessing	Declarative
3	Kala nkokó	Directive	Command	Imperative
4	Lafu di mosi, mwana n'keto mosi	Directive	Advise	Declarative
5	Kanga mbundu ku nzo longo	Expressive	Blessing	Declarative
6	Buta buna bu buta nsusu	Directive	Warning	Imperative
7	Longo lukwenda tata ko, lukwendapi mama ko	Directive	Oder/com mand	Imperative
8	Betu tu dia madia modiko	Expressive	Joy	Declarative
9	Longo ikanga kwa mbundu	Directive	Advise	Declarative
10	Matondo	Expressive	Thanking	Declarative

As shown in the chart bellow, the researcher, after the analysis of the Ten (10) Yaka utterances, has found the following speech acts as they occur in each speech act:

The speech act of **directive** with the utterances advise, order, warning and request scored higher frequency, i.e 6 times followed by the speech act of expressive with the utterances thank, bless, joy that appears 4 times.

Or we can summarize this in the following chart:

Table (2) Yaka speech act in order of appearance

Nr	Speech act	Verbs meaning	Frequency	%
1	Directive	Advise	2	20
		Command	2	20
		Warning	1	10
		Request	1	10
2	Expressive	Blessing	2	20
		Thanking	1	10
3		Rejoice	1	10
TOTAL			10	100%

5.2. Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the research findings. As mentioned in the previous lignes, the study aims to know the types of illocutionary acts performed by Yaka people in their marriage rituals discourse.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used Searle's theory. Searle divides the kinds of illocutionary acts into expressive, directive, assertive, declarative,

and commissive (Searle 2005). Firstly, declarative is a variety of speech acts that could change the world by using utterances. Secondly, assertive is a variety of speech act that declares about a speaker's belief by using examples like statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions. Thirdly, expressive is a variety of speech acts that declares about the speakers' feelings. Fourthly, directive is a variety of speech act that is usually used by a speaker to ask someone to do something. Lastly, commissive is a variety of speech act that is usually used by a speaker to present him/her to perform some action in the future.

After the analysis of 10 utterances, the researcher has found that two dominant speech acts among the 5 types of illocutionary acts proposed by J. Searle They were directive, expressive.

The result has proved that directive act was used 6 times (60%) followed by expressive that appears 4 times (40%).

From 10 utterances, the directive is mostly performed by Yaka people during the rituals discourse process. It is because directive can significantly help the groom to live well or keep well their family. Therefore, it is more insightful and meaningful.

The expressive act is used to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content. The relative mostly used to express complimenting and thanking during the rituals discourse process, it is because the relatives always gives appreciation for the women engaged to be married after they have successfully achieved the marriage process. Leech (1983: 56) states that the illocutionary force of these acts can be in the forms of apologizing, complementing, congratulating, thanking and the like.

CONCLUSION

This analysis showed us that utterances are produced and understood within a shared context of situation that includes personal, cultural, historical, and physical setting in which the speech act are spoken or heard. And the meanings of words and sentences are dependent on and a part of the culture of the speech community.

Also, the analysis shows us that the speech act of directive with 6 utterances scored higher than the speech act of expressive that scored 4 times.

We sum up our paper by saying that utterances used in traditional rituals Yaka discourse have meaning in context, to come up, we need a background in pragmatic or similar knowledge.

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