Original Research Article

Conceptualizing Speech Acts in African Literature: A Linguistic Study of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

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Abstract

This paper conceptualizes speech acts in African literature via a linguistic study of Ayi Kwei Armah's [1] *The beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Within the context of the paper, "conceptualization of speech acts" is essentially the functions of speech acts in extended body of discourse such as literary texts. The paper mainly hinges on Bach and Harnish's [2] speech acts theory, although insights from different pragmatic theories give it direction. African literature deploys fascinating dimensions of speech acts in the communication of writers' thematic concerns, as evident in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The paper concludes that a speech act approach to the study of African literature reveals the total meaning produced when speech acts are intentionally selected and deployed by the intra-text participants of discourse in varied situational contexts.

Keywords: African literature, speech act, Bach and Harnish, pragmatics, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

INTRODUCTION

Early scholars of speech act theories observe that the minimal unit of human communication is not a sentence or other expressions, but rather the performance of certain acts: making statements, asking questions, giving orders, describing, explaining, apologizing, thanking, congratulating, etc. Speech act is the core of pragmatic theories. Austin [3] is a pioneering speech act theory. A major feat of Austin's theory is that it generated widespread interest in "doing things with words". In African literary works across genres, sentences are utterances used by fictional characters to convey illocutionary goals. This study investigates the use of such utterances which are essentially speech acts.

Literature Review

This section of the paper comments briefly on: the novel as a literary genre; *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*; and speech acts.

The Novel

Literature is a cover-term for literary works and the novel (prose) is one of the basic genres of literature. The "Africanness" of African literature is conveyed through settings, themes, language and characterization. The *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is an example of a novel. A literary work is known as novel when it deploys prose form and beauty in the presentation of human (societal) phenomena. The term "novel" evolved from the Italian *novella*. Realism (imitation of life) is the core of the novel. There are different types of novels:

a) **Detective Novel**: This type of novel dominantly presents crime as a theme. This culminates in murder.
b) **Picaresque Novel**: Common themes in this type of novel are: the actions of a rogue, scandalous love and morality.
c) **Propaganda Novel**: This type of novel does not only address economic, socio-political and moral issues in society, but also presents panacea to such issues.
d) **Psychological Novel**: It concentrates on how the inner feelings of fictional characters determine their reactions as the plot unfolds.
e) **Novel of Manners**: It is about the modes of social behaviour of a particular class of people at a particular period of time. Other types of novels are: sociological novel, sentimental novel and historical novel.

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born

The physical setting of The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born is Ghana. The novel's time-frame is pre-independence and post-independence Ghana. The hero of the novel is "The Man" (also known as "The Watcher"). The novel lampoons the absence of morality in the society.

Speech Acts

Speech acts make it possible for language users to do things with words. Often, the actions performed with words are the illocutionary goals or communicative intentions of speakers. Such actions include: making statements, asking questions, giving orders, etc.

Austin [3] categorizes speech acts thus:

Lectionary act: The utterance of a sentence with determinate sense and reference;

Illocutionary act: The making of a statement, offer, promise, etc. in uttering a sentence by virtue of the conventional "force" associated with it (or with its explicit per formative paraphrase);

Elocutionary act: The bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effects, being special to the circumstances of utterance.

David A. Brenders [4] notes that "speech act theory, as a part of the philosophy of language, has been concerned with analyzing the performance of linguistic acts (asserting, promising, questioning) as a rule-governed form of behaviour." To understand the meaning of speech acts, it is necessary to locate their situational and individualistic articulation in communicative events. Speech acts are crucial to human communication which is essentially socialization. Labove [5] rightly notes that "no use of language can be divorced from its social context since special meaning is parasitic upon language." Without speech act theory, it is difficult to explain the principles that underpin the encoding and decoding of utterances in spoken and written discourses (such as literary texts). The normative rules of language cannot account for the intentions, attitudes, and various dynamics used by human beings to transmit messages. Terrence Hawkes [6] opines that "every speech act includes the transmission of message through the language of gesture, posture, clothing, hairstyle, perfume, accent, social context, etc. over and above, under and beneath, even at cross purposes with what words actually say." Although underlying conventional rules operate in the performance of speech acts, such conventions are sometimes violated by language users for pragmatic reasons[1].

Austin [3] makes a distinction between performatives and constatives. Constatives are statements which have been traditionally treated as having the property of truth or falsity. But performatives may not meet this criterion. They index the fact that an utterance uttered, is the performance of an action; they transcend, mere stating. Rather than being true or false, performatives are either "felicitous" or "infelicitous". In Austin's view, performatives and constatives differ in the areas of "doing" and "saying". The felicity condition for performatives is that certain conventional procedures should be fulfilled; that is, certain words have to be uttered in certain circumstances, all participants of the discourse must execute such procedures correctly and completely, the particular persons and circumstances in a given situation must be appropriate for the particular procedure, and their thoughts and feelings should also be germane to the situation. The violation of these procedures makes performatives infelicitous.

In the literature of pragmatics, the classification of speech act is intractable but crucial. Campbel [7] posits that "having a workable taxonomy of illocutionary forces is a prerequisite for the investigation of illocutionary acts." However, it has been difficult to resolve the intractable nature of speech act categorizatlion. Austin [3] proposes five classes: Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabitives and Expositives. He submits that "Verdictives are typified by the giving of a verdict by a jury, arbitrator, or umpire. They may be an estimate, reckoning, or appraisal". Examples are: acquit, convict, reckon, diagnose and analyze.

Exercitives involve "the exercising of powers, rights, or influence". Examples are: appointing, advising, warning, ordering, etc.

Commissives are characterized by promising or undertaking. The whole point of Commissives is "to commit the speaker to a certain course of action". Examples include: promise, undertake, contract, covenant, etc.

Behabitives "concern attitudes and social behaviors. They include the notion of reaction to other people's behaviors and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct" – cf. Austin [3]. Verbs in this category include: apologize, thank, condole, sympathize, etc.

Austin [3] submits that Expositives are speech acts that "make plain how our utterances fit into the course of an argument or conversation, how we are using words." Examples of verbs in this category are: reply, argue, concede, illustrate, etc. For more classical notions of speech acts, see Searle [8].

The classification of speech acts shows that illocutionary act is crucial in speech act theory. According to Savas L.T. [9] "the study of illocutionary act should be acknowledged as an indispensable component of the study of meaning." If the

illocutionary act performed in an utterance is known, the speaker's communicative intention will be understood. However, speaker-meaning and sentence-meaning (normative meaning) may be different. The literature is replete with contentious positions on the nature of speech acts partly because of the complexity of illocutionary acts. Scholars agree that illocutionary acts have roles to play in the understanding of standard speaker-meanings and occasional speaker-meanings. The intentional nature of illocutionary acts is captured by David Harrah, cited in Savas L.T. [9] who notes that "most speech acts seem to be focused and directed. They are intended as coming from the agent and going to the receivers or audience. They are intended to have a certain point, and they are intended to be construed as having a certain point." This view corroborates Faigenbaum [10] posits that "the meaning of the sentence is its use in the speech act … speaker meaning is a matter of the intentional content." This being the case, the mastery of speech acts in terms of typology (linguistic competence) is instrumental in pragmatic use of illocutionary acts (communicative competence) in spoken and written discourses.

Theoretical Underpinning

This paper explores Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish's [2] speech act theory which is based on intention and inference. They contend that for speakers to perform illocutionary acts, it is intended that listeners have the understanding of the acts (mutual contextual beliefs). It is their claim that the act of conversation or interactional talk involves an inferential process. Their terminology, "Speech Act Schemata (SAS)" refers to an inevitable part of the inferential process in a communicative event. They contend that speaker-hearer mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs) facilitate the inferential process. To infer what a speaker (s) is saying, the hearer (h) depends also on the Presumption of Literalness (PL). The hearer should know when the linguistic communication of the speaker is within or out of the bounds of literalness, and if the speaker is speaking in a non-literal language, the hearer should not only acknowledge it, but should also be able to understand what such speech by the speaker means; that is, the hearer should have a mastery of the speech acts in the speaker's non-literal language. The non-literal language involves the use of indirect speech acts. Apart from MCBs, Bach and Harnish recognize other types of beliefs shared by an entire linguistic community – which the hearer relies on for inference-making:

I.   Linguistic Presumption (LP); and
II. Communicative Presumption (CP).

Linguistic Presumption refers to the moral beliefs that members of a Linguistic Community (LC) share on the particular language (L) in question. Therefore, any expression (e) uttered by a member to any member of the community, is taken by the speaker for granted. The speaker presupposes that the hearer understands what is uttered. An act of communication is successful if the hearer recognizes the speaker's illocutionary intention.

Bach and Harnish [2] recognize several types of strategies in the inferential process:

a)   Locutionary Strategy: The hearer's inference from the locutionary act or the utterance *per se* and what the utterance means in L. This is based on the hearer's knowledge of the language, the LP, the CP and MCBs.
b)   Direct Literal Strategy: The hearer infers from the PL whether or not the speaker really means what is said. This helps the hearer to identify the act.
c)   Literally-Based Indirect Strategy: The hearer depends on the MCBs, CP, and the utterance to determine whether, under the circumstance there are some actions connected with the literal utterance.
d)   Direct Non-literal Strategy: By relying on MCBs, CP, the utterance and the hearer's knowledge of the literal meaning of the utterance, the hearer infers that the speaker's utterance must be non-literal and indirect since another act is connected with the overt one which the hearer recognizes.
e)   Non-literally Based Indirect Strategy: The CP, the utterance, and MCBS enable the hearer to infer that the speaker's utterance must be non-literal and indirect since another illocutionary act is connected with it.

Bach and Harnish recognize two broad categories of illocutionary acts: communicative and non-communicative illocutionary acts. While the former requires the recognition of S's R-intention, the latter does not. In their theory, there are four main categories of communicative illocutionary acts: Constatives, Directives, Commissives and Acknowledgements. These four main categories correspond rougly to Austin's Expositives, Exercitives, Commissives, and Behabitives respectively and closely to Searle's Representatives (Assertives), Directives, Commissives and Expressives, differing mainly in their characterizations. There are two classes of non-communicative illocutionary acts: Effectives and Verdictives, corresponding roughly to Searle's Declarations. A detailed account of the speech act categories established by Bach and Harnish [2] are speech acts which express the speaker's belief and intention, or, at least the implication or desire, that the hearer form (or continue to hold) a like belief. Fifteen subcategories of this group are recognized as follows: Assertives, Informatives, Confirmatives, Concessives, Retractives, Assentives, Dissentives, Disputatives, Responsives, Suggestives and Suppositives – cf. Bach and Harnish [2].

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

Informatives are speech acts in which the speaker expresses "the belief that P" and "the intention that the hearer forms the belief that P." Examples are: advise, announce, appraise, disclose, inform, insist, notify, point out, report, reveal, tell, and testify.

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

Directives express the speaker's attitude towards a future action by the hearer and the speaker's intention or desire that the hearer considers his utterance as reason to act. Six subcategories of illocutionary acts are listed under this category: Requestives, Questions, Requirements, Prohibitives, Permissives and Advisories. See Bach and Harnish [2] for more insights on speech act taxonomy.

Methodology

In this study, four corpora are selected for analysis using logical parameters: clarity of message, quality of pragmatic features and thematic coverage. Scholars believe that via a few selected structures from a literary text, a linguistic analysis can discover crucial features of the entire text (the Projection Principle). The speech acts performed in each corpus are identified before an integrative analysis is done, showing the conceptual underpinnings of speech acts in extended body of discourse such as the samples extracted from the novel.

Presentation and Analysis of Selected Corpora (henceforth CPS)
CPS 1

Then checking the coins against the tickets, he began to count the morning's take. It was mostly what he expected at this time of the month: small coins, a lot of pesewas … Collecting was easy around Passion Week. Not many passengers needed change; it was enough of a struggle looking round corners and the bottoms of boxes to find small coins somehow overlooked. So mostly people held out the exact fare and tried not to look into the receiver's face with its knowledge of their impotence. Collecting was certainly easier, but at the same time not as satisfactory as in the swollen days after pay day.

1. CPS 1 consists of the following speech acts:
2. Then, checking the coins against the tickets, he began to count the morning's take. (Descriptive/Ascriptive)
3. It was mostly what he expected at this time the month: small coins. (Suppositive)
4. Collecting was always easier around Passion Week. (Informative)
5. Not many passengers needed change. (Informative)
6. It was enough of a struggle looking round corners and the bottoms of boxes to find small coins somehow overlooked. (Assertive)
7. So mostly people held out the exact fare and tried not to look into the receiver's face with its knowledge of their impotence. (Informative)
8. Collecting was certainly easier, but at the same time not as satisfactory as in the swollen days after pay day. (Informative)

The speaker's use of the words: "coins," "tickets", "collecting", "passengers," "change", "Fare" and "morning's take", is of relevance as it portrays the linguistic context. These words suggest the participants, their purpose of their interaction and the setting. Communication is an activity because the users of language (interlocutors) form utterances by exploring participant-factor, the physical and psychological setting and the purpose of the interaction. William P. Alston, cited in Savas L. T. [9] rightly notes that "though an individual cannot determine which illocutionary rules are attached to a sentence, S, in the language, she can determine whether a particular utterance of S is within the range of activity in which a certain illocutionary rule applies, for it depends on U's intentions whether she is practicing pronunciation, testing a microphone or talking straightforward literal use of S. This makes it clear how it can be understood." The participants are passengers, a commercial driver and a conductor with whom these passengers engage in a routine. This is a common scene in the human society where every morning, people "push" to catch a bus to different places. The use of speech acts in African literature is context-driven; speech acts are constitutive of the communicative events they convey. According to Levinson cited in Jacob Mey [11], "the language we use, and in particular, the speech acts we utter, are entirely dependent on the context of the situation in which such acts are produced. All speech is situated speech; a speech act is never just an 'act of speech', but should be considered in the total situation of activity of which it is a part."

CPS 1 reveals that skillful use of speech acts creates textual coherence. The use of "coins", "tickets", "passengers", "change" and "fare" captures a situation of "give and take", "get the service and pay for it." This concretizes the kind of transaction going on in the corpus. Adegbija [12] submits that a speaker's choice of words is a vindication of the speaker's communicative competence. The capitalization of "P" and "W" in "Passion Week" presupposes that the people in that linguistic community are familiar with the meaning of the expression and the scheme of things it incorporates. In African

literature, language use deploys discrete speech acts (asserting, questioning, ordering, etc.). For the purpose of achieving textual coherence, African literary writers ensure that their use of speech acts is both rule-governed and principle-based. While rules concern linguistic conventions, principles have to do with pragmatics. This view aligns with Pratt [13] who posits that "speech act theory provides a way of talking about utterances not only in terms of their surface grammatical properties but also in terms of the context in which they are made, the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between participants … rules and conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received." In literary texts, characters deploy literal and non-literal language (direct and indirect speech acts respectively) in conversational exchanges because speaker-hearer shared knowledge abounds for the processing of speech acts for meaning. Bosco et al. [14] opine that a conversation is "a two-fold activity in which the participants form utterances that are products of shared meaning, and such utterances produce felicitous results to the communicative event." Commenting on the significance of coherence in human communication, Brenders [4] notes that "coherent conversation involves both the coordinated production of illocutionary acts and the management of the potential elooutionary effects of utterances."

CPS 2

So the conductor had not lowered his eyes. Instead he had kept them fastened to the hungry eyes of the giver of the cedi, and fed them with admiration. He had softened his own gaze the better to receive the masculine sharpness of the giver's stare. He had opened his mouth slightly so that the smile that had a gape in it would say to the boastful giver, 'Yes man. You are a big man.' And he had fingered the coins in his bag, and in the end placed in the giver's hand a confusing assortment of coins whose value was far short of what he should have given. The happy man has just dropped the coins into his shirt pocket. He had not even looked at them.

Speech acts in CPS 2 are as follows:

1. So the conductor had not lowered his eyes. (Assertive, Informative)
2. Instead he had kept them fastened to the hungry eyes of the giver of the cedi; and fed them with admiration. (Descriptive/Ascriptive)
3. He had softened his own gaze the better to receive the masculine sharpness of the giver's Stare. (Descriptive/Ascriptive)
4. He had opened his mouth slightly so that the smile that had a gape in it would say to the boastful giver, 'Yes, man. You are a big man. (Praise)
5. And he had fingered the coins in his bag. (Descriptive/Ascriptive)
6. And in the end placed in the giver's hand a confusing assortment of coins whose value was far short of what he should have given. (Offer)
7. The happy man has just dropped the coins into his shirt pocket. (Accept)
8. He had not even looked at them. (Informative)

The setting of CPS 2 is a road (commercial bus). The participants are appropriate for the setting: driver, conductor and passengers. The conductor is someone who believes that not all passengers have keen desire for change, and when a passenger's change is not much, it is better for such a passenger to forfeit it. With keen, steady gaze, the conductor believes he can accomplish his aim, which is to make the giver of the cedi forgo the change.

The writer of the novel believes that materialistic tendency and too much desire for money are partly responsible for the corruption and moral decadence ravishing the Ghanaian society (and Africa by extention); the corrupt actions of the conductor ("… he had kept them fastened … and fed them with admiration") conveys the writer's mindset. African literary writers rely on appropriate contextual structures (physical settings) for skillful deployment of speech acts to convey illocutionary goals. Certain speech acts are expected in certain contextual structures. For example, Offers, Accept and Descriptives characterize a public transport setting whereas Informatives, Directives and Descriptives characterize a classroom setting. There is usually a link between the micro context and the macro context when speech acts are deployed by African literary writers to communicate themes. To explain the difference between the macro context and micro context in discourse, Acheoah [15] evolves two terms respectively: Shared Macro Knowkedge (SMK) and Shared Contextual Knowledge (SCK). At the level of the macro context, there is worrisome corruption and moral decadence in the leadership, politics and governance in Ghana. To convey this ugly trend as a thematic concern, the writer explores different micro contexts (places of actual language use) that are germane to depicting acts of corruption and moral decadence in Ghana. For example: the conductor does not offer the correct cedi as change and he tries to lure the passenger to forgo it. This is how the conductor perpetrates his own version of corruption from his "small corner" and it is his routine practice for earning a living. Indeed, the writer's message via aesthetic matrix is clear: no society is clean until everybody therein is relatively clean.

Desriptives in the text ("sharp gaze", "hungry eyes", "fingered the coins") are incredibly communicative. They show that in African literature, theme-driven messages are transmitted via extra-linguistic acts (gestures). Searle [8], cited in

Jozsef Andor [16] submits that "illocutionary acts are always, in my sense, speech acts, even if they are not performed in language but are performed by raising your arm or by winking, or by making some other gesture ..." Indeed, CPS 2 presents a society ravished by moral decadence. The conductor and the giver of the cedi are familiar with this decadence (shared knowledge). The conductor therefore expects the giver of the cedi to know what the "fastening of eyes" communicates. Barthes [17] states that almost anything in the society can be a significant sign, meaningful to the speech community. By softening his gaze the better, the conductor employs a non-verbal means of requesting favour from the passenger. A further exra-linguistic communication in the text is the way the conductor opened his mouth (slightly) and smiled (with gape). The conductor is a crook; he placed a confusing assortment of coins in the passenger's hand, because this is the only way the money will not be easy to count, and this is a way of making the passenger give up the idea of counting the change to ascertain its completness. The giver of the cedi did not even look at the change, not because he knew it was correct, but because the conductor's communicative mechanisms have yielded the expected perlocutionary effect – acceptance. Bach and Harnish [2] posit that "an act is communicatively successful as soon as the speaker's illocutionary intention is recognized by the hearer.

CPS 3

'Lucky you,' the man said. 'How much?'
The messenger hesitated before replying. 'One hundred cedi,' 'that's not very much,' the man laughed. 'I know,' said the messenger. 'But so many people would jump on me to help me eat it … The messenger frowned. 'I am happy, but I'm afraid,' he said. 'Juju?' the man smiled.'No, not that,' said the messenger. 'But you know our Ghana.'

'Ah yes.' 'And everybody says the Ghana lottery is more Ghanaian than Ghana.' 'You're afraid you won't get your money?' 'I know people who won more than five hundred cedis last year. They still haven't got their money.' 'Have they been to the police?' 'To help them get their money?' 'You're joking,' said the messenger with some bitterness. 'It costs you more money if you go to the police, that's all.' 'What will you do? the man asked. 'I hope some official at the lottery place will take some of my hundred cedis as bribe and allow me to have the rest.' The messenger's smile was dead. 'You will be corrupting a public officer.' The man smiled. This is Ghana,' the messenger said …

Speech act categories in CPS 3 are as follows:
1. 'Lucky you,' the man said. (Assertive)
2. 'How much? (Question)
3. The messenger hesitated before replying. One hundred cedis'. (Responsive)
4. 'That's not very much,' the man laughed. (Assertive)
5. 'I know,' said the messenger. (Accept)
6. 'But so many people would jump on me to help me eat it.' (Predictive)
7. The messenger frowned. (Informative)
8. 'I am happy but I'm afraid'. (Informative)
9. 'Juju?' the man smiled. (Question)
10. 'No, no that,' said the messenger. (Reject)
11. 'But you know our Ghana. (Informative)
12. 'Ah, yes'. (Accept)
13. 'And everybody says the Ghana lottery is more Ghanaian than Ghana. (Informative)
14. 'You're afraid you won't get your money?' (Question)
15. 'I know people who won more than five hundred cedis last year'. (Informative)
16. 'They still haven't got their money'. (Informative)
17. 'Have they been to the police?' (Question)
18. 'For what?' (Question)
19. 'To help them get their money'. (Suggestive/Advisory)
20. 'You're joking', said the messenger with some bitterness. (Dissentive)
21. 'It costs you more money if you go to the police that are all'. (Informative)
22. 'What will you do? The man asked?' (Question)
23. 'I hope some official at the lottery place will take some of my hundred cedis as a bribe and allow me to have the rest. (Assertive)
24. The messenger's smile was dead. (Descriptive/Ascriptive)
25. 'You will be corrupting a public officer'. (Dissentive)
26. 'The man smiled'. (Assertive)
27. 'This is Ghana,' the messenger said. (Informative)

The conversation is transactive because the participants have embraced the social realism (status-quo) that underpins the discourse – corruption in the police force within the immediate geographical context (Ghana). The context of an utterance is often very crucial in making the appropriate inference. Inferences are made on the basis of the background context, our experience of life or world knowledge, and the mutually shared beliefs. The messenger's interlocutor uses

indirect illocutionary strategy, although his language is literal. He asks the messenger series of questions even though he knows the answers and the propositions he intends to convey. This strategy enables him lampoon the messenger for being part of the corrupt status-quo. Sentential propositions are conveyed via speech acts because speech acts have special meanings that are immersed in socially realistic phenomena. The messenger's psychological state of worry affects his language and thought. Thus, he uses versatile speech acts; for example, he uses Informative to condemn (Dissentive) the corrupt practices in the police force. In using speech acts to perform discrete intentional acts, speakers explore their knowledge of the conventions of the language in terms of its syntax (structuring language units) and semantics (meanings of particularly chosen expressions). The encoder of "It costs you more money if you go to the police, that's all" is aware of the moral decadence (bribery and corruption) in the police force, and explores world knowledge to invoke and condemn the greedy and parasitic attitudes of friends and relatives. His interlocutor is also aware of the status-quo (shared knowledge) as evident in the Responsive speech act ("Ah yes").

CPS 4

So the sea salt and the sweat, together and the fan above made this stewy atmosphere in which the suffering sleepers came and worked and went dumbly back afterward to homes they had earlier fled. There was really no doubt that it was like that in all their homes, everywhere save for those who had in themselves the hardness for the upward climb.

Speech act categories in CPS 4 are as follows:
1. So the sea salt and the sweet together and the fan above made this stewy atmosphere in which the suffering sleepers came and worked and went dumbly back afterward to homes they had earlier fled. (Informative)
2. There was really no doubt that it was like that in all their homes, everywhere save for those who had found in themselves the hardness for the upward climb. (Informative, Descriptive/Ascriptive)

The physical setting of the text is an office; the expressions "the fan above" and "came and worked" are setting-revealing. The office is near the sea, thus making the atmosphere "stewy" (the writer's word). CPS 4 depicts the miserable condition of the poor, as typical of African society. Speech acts are deployed in African literature to convey ideology. For example, CPS 4 conveys the ideology known as "social stratification" which views human society as a place for people at different rungs of a status-ladder: the upper, middle and lower class people of society.

CPS 4 presents the level of suffering that is typical of the poor, and most Africans belong to this social class. The use of "fled" pungently depicts the troubles in many African homes. Husbands and wives do not enjoy the expected cordial relationship. Many wives nag. Naturally, husbands avoid nagging wives. Many husbands fail to perform their responsibilities as bread-winners of their families. The home is a contextual structure conveyed in CPS 4. Many homes are bereaved of peace. The writer is aware that in that same society (Ghana), some people reap the "dividends" of their corrupt practices. This is how they survive whereas others do not; the lectionary act "hardness for the upward climb" is a potent Descriptive (speech act) that conveys the societal vices that the writer brings to the fore, ponder on, and lampoon. African writers tie different contextual structures to their thematic concerns. This corpus shows that Ayi Kwei Armah relates the decadence in the society with the decadence in different homes. The writer's message is clear: since the home which is the foundation of societal values is bereaved of morals and hence weakened, then the society becomes characterized by indiscipline, moral decadence and corruption. The African novel is used to communicate a writer's themes (messages) to a wide range of audience[2]. Table 1 reveals the distribution of speech acts across CPS 1-4:

S/NO.	SPEECH ACT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	Descriptive/Ascriptive	6	14.3%
2.	Informative	15	35.8%
3.	Suppositive	1	2.4%
4.	Offer	1	2.4%
5.	Reject	1	2.4%
6.	Advisory/Suggestive	1	2.4%
7.	Dissentive	2	4.8%
8.	Praise	1	2.4%
9.	Assertive	6	14.3%
10.	Predictive	1	2.4%
11.	Responsive	1	2.4%
12.	Question	5	11.9%
13.	Predictive	1	2.4%

Table-1: Distribution of Speech Acts

Findings

The findings of this study are crucial, and concern how speech acts are conceptualized in African literature:

i. In African literature, speech acts are not used arbitrarily, but in accordance with discrete pragmatic variables such as the relationship that holds between participants (fictional characters), the setting and the writer's message – which explains why Informatives is the dominant speech act (35.8%), used to make comments on the status-quo;

ii. The use of speech acts in African literary texts is effective if fictional characters in such texts use literal and non-literal acts intentionally, and such acts are interpreted appropriately by their interlocutors;

iii. In African literature, speech acts are either used conventionally or unconventionally, depending on whether or not pragmatic principles are used to violate conventional procedures;

iv. There is usually a Master Speech Act (message) that anchors all other messages in African literary texts;

v. The use of speech acts in African literature is immersed in writer-reader shared knowledge;

vi. When speech acts are deployed in African literary works, the referents are states-of-affair in the real world (universe of discourse) and are appropriately picked by the decoders;

vii. The illocutionary force of any speech act category used in African literature is its topic relevance, understood by the decoder;

viii. African literary writers communicate difficult themes with relative ease through skillful selection and use of speech acts – and this explains why Assertives (used for the emphasis of writer's message) and Ascriptives (used to describe phenomena) are the next to Informatives in frequency and percentage (6 and 14.3% respectively);

ix. Various contextual variables facilitate the inferential process when speech acts are used in African literature;

x. There are three types of audience in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The first is the make-believe intra-text audience (characters within the text, as partakers in the use of speech acts in social discourses and interpersonal relations. They live within a world of their own as created by the authors, and the meaning one character attributes to a particular speech in the text can be a unique contribution to the total meaning of the entire text. The second is the non-immediate, extra-text audience (the entire African audience with the awareness of the corruption that pervaded their countries after their independence. The third category of audience is the global context extra-text audience, which includes any non-Ghanaian that reads the novel. This category of audience cannot make a total interpretation of speech acts deployed in African literary works because of lack of knowledge in terms of the socio-cultural underpinnings of such works. Unlike the third category of audience, the first two categories of audience have shared knowledge of the socio-cultural and historical background of the text.

DISCUSSION

By conceptualizing speech acts in African literature, this study subtly attempts a semantic investigation of speech acts therein. More research in semantics can resolve conflicting views on the intractable nature of speech acts[3]. The use of speech acts in African literary works shows that there are dimensions of meaning beyond the linguistic units that convey the utterances of fictional characters. Ayi Kwei Armah, like other African literary writers, convey xperiences or ideas with pragmatic language (skillful speech act selection and sequencing) to arouse readers' emotions and interpretations, as noted by U. Lehtsalu et al. [18] who posit that "besides communicating certain ideas an utterance may also produce a definite effect or arouse an emotion in the listener or reader." The reader of any African literary text establishes the rationale for working out the meanings of speech acts deployed therein. African literary writers use speech acts that readers can process for meaning. Speech acts essentially have what Allan [19] calls "world-spoken-of" which must be recognized by the readers as evidence of the writer's effective use of language to convey themes. Worlds-spoken-of" are the contexts that readers invoke when making inferences on the use of speech acts. Adegbija [12] posits that "inference involves the drawing of a conclusion from known or assumed facts or statements, from available data or a particular premise. It is the deductive process through which the addressee or reader progresses from the literal meaning of an utterance to what the speaker/writer actually intends to express. Knowledge of the literal meaning of an utterance often contributes to appropriate inference that will lead us to the non-literal meaning." Commenting further on inference, Ariel, cited in Rita Bossan [20] notes that "pragmatics is responsible for inferences which are based on the linguistic strings expressed when contextual assumptions are taken into account." Adegbija [12] contends that "many extended bodies of discourse contain one or more Master Speech Acts that can be identified as their *raison d'être*; writers have an overriding goal, a predominant message, or a particular speech act that the sequences of utterances in their entire texts are intended to perform". A speech act appraisal of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* seeks to identify the super-ordinate status of this dominant speech act whose illocutionary force(s) rules over an entire text. Literary appraisal should identify the Master Speech Act in a literary text, its illocutionary force, aspects of the contextual structure of the entire text that forcefully help to convey the Master Speech Act and how the remaining sequences of speech acts in the text are related to the Master Speech Act. A speech act approach to the analysis of African literature shows the theme-driven dominance of the Master Speech Act in relation to other individual acts performed (Requestives, Descriptives, Questions, Assertives, Dissentives, etc.) in a literary text. This view aligns with Fowler [21] who posits that "linguistic structure is not arbitrary but is determined, or motivated by the functions it performs." In a similar vein, Adegbija [12] opines that "language use is not incidental. It is of credit."

A speech act analysis of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* shows the potency of indirect speech acts in African literature. Indirect speech acts refer to utterances in which a textual character says one thing and means another, or says one thing and means what he says and also means a different thing. Indirect speech acts help African literary writers communicate difficult themes with appreciable ease. Being sensitive to the global and historical context of a text, a speech act approach to the analysis of African literature, combines both synchronic and diachronic perspectives to provide richer insights into literary texts. While a synchronic perspective primarily concerns the text *per se*, its present life, context and present meaning, a diachronic perspective introduces dimensions of meaning relating to the historical and global context enclosing a text. Such access to the diachronic context is particularly relevant for a full understanding of indirect speech acts. Diachronic contexts typically form central aspects of the mutually shared beliefs that are important for the understanding of the full illocutionary force of an indirect speech act. Like direct speech acts, indirect speech acts are performed with adherence to "felicity conditions".

In African literature, writers lampoon societal vices through various speech acts (illocutionary forces). The context of a lectionary act determines its illocutionary force and elocutionary sequel. When a make-believe intra-text audience asserts, informs, advises, prohibits, offers, dissents, assents, retracts, greets or praises another intra-text audience, it impinges on the writer's overall message.

CONCLUSION

The speech acts in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* can be fully understood within the felicity conditions involving the corruption and moral decadence that pervade the setting of the novel: Ghana. Literature is essentially language, interacting with people and social institutions. Indeed, African literary writers' use of language accentuates the thematic relevance of their works. A speech act approach to the study of an African literary text such as Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, produces the total meaning of the text.

Notes
1. The fact that speech acts are used according to conventional procedures, accentuates their constitutive nature.
2. The messages are taken from society, and to communicate to the same society, the literary writer is engaged in a process of "constructing meaning".
3. Given that speech acts are basically intentional acts deployed in African literature, additional research in the semantics of speech acts is timely.

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