CHAPTER THREE

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATIVE

COMPETENCE

3.1   INTRODUCTION

As articulated in the objective, this research project is an evaluation of the communicative competence of a group of second language speakers. As also mentioned in Chapter One, for practical considerations, the description and evaluation of communicative competence necessitates dealing with discrete units with some recognisable boundaries between them (Saville-Stoike, 1982:20). The three units suggested: *event* (language and text), *situation* (context), and *act* (function/meaning) inform this investigation and also serve as the analysing units for the sample utterances. However, before the data from the analysis is presented, it was thought prudent to explain these three units to ensure a common understanding between writer and readers. The next sections, therefore, will deliberate on the suggested units for an evaluation of interlocutors' communicative competence.

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3.2   UNITS FOR DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

3.2.1   EVENT: LANGUAGE AND TEXT

> To be human is to be capable of reason, to exercise free will, to have the ability to solve mathematical problems, to possess a visual system that perceives depth, color [*sic*], and movement in particular ways, but above all, to be human is to have language (Falk, 1994).

To attempt to define the word 'language' in an orthodox dictionary format would be of dubious relevance; rather, of more benefit to an analysis of this nature is an examination of the salient properties of language within particular paradigms. Any structural study of language must begin with an overview of semiotics as outlined by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1966) and the American philosopher and mathematician, Charles Peirce (1931). Saussure (1966) is credited with broadening the theoretical base of linguistics as he was dissatisfied with his predecessors' study of language from an exclusive, historical perspective and their failure to account for the nature of language. Linguistics, he wrote

> never attempted to determine the nature of the object it was studying, and without this elementary operation a science cannot develop an appropriate method (Saussure, 1966: 16).

Such an 'elementary operation' Saussure felt is imperative, as human language is an extremely complex and heterogeneous phenomenon. Even a cursory examination of the syntactic, semantic, phonological and pragmatic configurations or perspectives of language testifies to this. A single speech act, according to Culler (1976: 18) 'involves an extraordinary range of factors and could be considered from many different, even conflicting points of view'. One could study the way sounds are produced by the mouth, vocal cords and tongue; one could investigate the sound waves that are emitted and the way they affect the hearing mechanism. One could consider the signifying intention of speakers, the aspect of the world to which their utterances refer, the immediate circumstances of the communicative context which might have led them to produce a particular series of noise. One might try to analyse the conventions that enable speakers and listeners to understand one another, working out the grammatical and semantic rules which they must have assimilated if they are communicating in this way. Or again, one could trace the history of the language which makes available these particular forms.

An appreciation of these perspectives is only possible if the phenomenon to be described, language, is intimately understood. Saussure (Course, 16: Cours, 33, 1966) attempts to do this by describing language as a system of signs organised conventionally to communicate ideas:

> Language is a system of signs that expresses ideas and is thus comparable to the system of writing, to the alphabet of deaf-mutes, to symbolic rituals, to forms of etiquette,

to military signals, etc. It is but the most important of these systems. We can therefore imagine a science which would study the life of signs within society….We call it semiology, from the Greek semeion ("sign"). It would teach us what signs consist of, what laws govern them. Since it does not yet exist we cannot say what it will be; but it has a right to existence; its place is assured in advance. Linguistics is only part of this general science; and the laws which semiology discovers will be applicable to linguistics, which will thus find itself attached to a well-defined domain of human phenomena.

Subsequent studies have proved how prophetic Saussure's words are. Kaja Silverman in his book, *A Theory of Semiotics* (1983: 5) points out that the semiotic field has now widened to include fields like

zoology, olfactory signs, tactile communication, communication, paralinguistics, medicine, kinesics, proxemics, musical codes, formalised language, natural languages, visual communication, system of objects, text theory….

Despite this multi-application of the semiotic idea, it is the assertion of semioticians that language constitutes the signifying system 'par excellence', *'le patron general'*, and that it is only by means of the linguistic sign that other signs become meaningful:

…that is why language, the most complex and universal of all systems of expression is also the most characteristic; for in this sense linguistics can become the master-pattern for all branches of semiology, although language is only one particular semiological system (Saussure, 1966: 68).

The science of signs, semiology (if one prefers the European terminology of Saussure), or semiotics (if one wants to be deferential to the American, Peirce), is a very complex, complicated, and a tentative science (Roland Barthes, 1968). Semiotics as an autonomous theory is usually traced to the writings of Charles Peirce and Saussure (1966), while further refinements are attributed to writers such as Claude Levi-Strauss (1967), Roland Barthes (1968), Emile Benveniste (1971), Umberto Eco (1976) and Jacques Derrida (1978). Semiotics involves the study of signification, or the way that codes or signs can signify within very conventionalised systems.

Language involves signs, that is, entities which represent or stand for other entities the way a red cross on public announcements means a prohibition, or raising your thumb in answer to any query is a response that everything is under control. Peirce (1931) explains that a sign is something by knowing which we know something more; while Morris (1938: 20) suggests 'something is a sign only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by an interpreter'. Eco (1984:15) in a similar vein writes, '… the sign was a part, an aspect, a peripheral manifestation of something which does not appear in its entirety'.

Jonathan Culler (1976: 19) explains the Saussurean sign as

> …the union of a form which signifies, which Saussure calls the signifiant or signifier, and an idea signified, the signifie or signified. Though we may speak of a "signifier" and a "signified" as if they were separate entities, they exist only as components of the sign.

The sign is the central fact of language, and therefore in trying to separate what is essential from what is secondary or incidental we must start from the nature of the sign itself.

Although writers like Culler (1976) and Eco (1984) discuss the components of the sign as if it were possible to view the sign in such a manner, it is necessary to bear in mind that such divisions or components are purely for a structural analysis, as this study is.

Peirce (1931: 135) also describes the components of the sign as follows:

A sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates, I call the "interpretant" of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its "object". It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the "ground".

Schiffrin (1994: 191) summarises Morris (1938: 82) as also saying that the sign has four parts:

A sign vehicle is that which acts as a sign; a designatum is that to which the sign refers; an interpretant is the effect in virtue of which the sign vehicle is a sign; an interpreter is the organism upon which the sign has an effect. Put another way, something is a sign of a designatum for an interpreter to the degree that the interpreter takes account of the designatum in virtue of the presence of the sign.

While the nature of the signified has given rise to discussions centring on its degree of reality, theorists tend to agree that the signified is not a 'thing' but a mental representation of the 'thing'. Saussure (1966) himself stressed its mental characteristics by calling the signified a 'concept'. The signs are not physical objects or physical movements, rather they are sequences, of either sounds or the more visual medium, writing. A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name but a link between a concept and a word or sound. The sign is involved in a two-way relationship with the signifier and the signified, to bring about linguistic signification. The theoretical development of the notion of 'signification' revolves around the relationship between abstract linguistic signifying system to concrete utterances or between signifiers and signified. Peirce (1931) describes the signifying process as follows:

> The sign or signifier represents in some capacity or other the object or referent, which is itself available only as an interpretant or signified, and in so doing elicits within the mind of the individual another interpretant or signified.

In discussing the notion of signification, semioticians, for instance, Morris (1938) or Silverman (1983), usually start with labelling types of linguistic signs which have some affinities and dissimilarities. These are the icon, the index and the sign proper (sometimes also called a 'symbol'), the signal and the allegory. Unfortunately, there is no consistency in the way that authors have defined these terms. There does, however, appear to be some agreement that these kinds of

signs consist of some kind of signifying mechanism and an object or proposition to be signified or a form and an associated meaning or a relation between two 'relata' as Barthes (1968: 35) points out. Culler (1976: 96) notes that the nature of the relationship between these relata are their distinguishing marks:

> An icon involves actual resemblance between the signifier and the signified: a portrait signifies the person of whom it is a portrait less by an arbitrary convention than by resemblance. In an index the relationship between signifier and signified is causal: smoke means fire because fire is generally the cause of smoke; clouds mean rain if they are the clouds which produce rain; tracks are the sign of the type of animal likely to have produced them. In the sign proper, however, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and conventional: shaking hands conventionally signifies greetings.

Silverman (1983: 14-25) describes the Peircian signs as also consisting of icon, indices and symbols:

> The iconic sign resembles its conceptual object in certain ways. It may share certain of the properties which the object possesses, or it may duplicate the principles according to which that object is organised….The only way of directly communicating an idea is by means of an icon; and every indirect method of communicating an idea must depend for its establishment upon the use of an icon. Hence every assertion must contain an icon or set of icons, or else must contain signs whose meaning is only explicable by icons….The indexical sign is a real thing or fact which is a sign of its object by virtue of being connected with it as a matter of fact and by also forcibly intruding upon the mind quite regardless of its being interpreted as a sign….A symbol is a sign which refers to the

object that it denotes by virtue of law, usually an association of general idea which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object….Not only is it general itself but the object to which it refers is of a general nature. Now that which is general has as its being in the instances which it will determine.

The stressed features of the sign vary among theorists. In Barthes (1968: 35-38), there is a very informative comparison of how some of these theorists are using these terms in their work. Peirce (1940: 104) treats symbols as a subclass of signs defining them in the conventional nature of the relation which holds between the sign and what it stands for. So does Miller (1951: 5). Morris (1946: 23-27), who follows Peirce quite closely in certain aspects, says that 'a symbol is a sign – which acts as substitute for some other sign with which it is synonymous'. Natural languages and coding systems are prominently symbolic for Peirce (1931). For Saussure (1966), however, such systems are arbitrary and unmotivated in relation to their conceptual objects. Of importance is the fact that Peirce (1931) and Saussure (1966) use the term 'symbol' in diametrically opposed ways. Whereas Peirce (1931) means by it a relationship between two dissimilar elements, Saussure employs the term to designate the union of elements which have some features in common. Peirce's divisions of signs show not only greater flexibility than Saussure's (1966), but a keener sense of the overlapping functions served by a single signifying entity. Barthes's (1968) scheme is mostly in accord with Peirce (1940) and Saussure (1966), except that he also accommodates the notion of connotation as well as the more denotational interpretation offered by the other theorists.

While an understanding of the semiotic sign is sometimes clouded by the philosophical preference of a writer, no such problem is usually encountered with the sign in the linguistic arena. Applied to linguistics, the notion of the sign does not give rise to competition from neighbouring terms, for in linguistics the plane of the signifier constitutes the 'expression' while the signified constitutes the 'content'.

Signs can become part of any general meaning-creating system, like language, only under certain conditions. Any type of natural verbal output can only be elevated to the status of language when communication can occur in that medium. To differentiate this type of language from its natural counterpart, communicative language must be part of a system of convention, part of a regulated system of signs and codes. Searle (1969: 16) proclaims, 'speaking a language is engaging in a highly complex rule-governed behaviour'.

Speech communities share a history which enables them to reach consensus about the meaning of these codes and the conventions in their usage. As Roman Jakobson (1960) notes, private property in the sphere of language does not exist. Hence all communities of competent speakers of English would recognise the following combinations of morphemes and words as English and therefore understand sentences 10-12 in the same way, be they Tshivendas or Chinese:

10. Lufuno ate the porridge quickly.

11. Soft snow was falling the whole night on the mountains.

12. The hut had a painted straw roof.

That is to say, signs can only become part of a language, or for that matter, any proposition-relaying system, if they adhere to pre-agreed upon regulations. When signs behave in this manner they serve to express or communicate ideas, otherwise they remain as indecipherable noises, arm movements or markings on a page. Verbal and physical signs need to be organised systematically or conventionally by the users of these signs as there is no opacity between them and their meaning or significance:

> Such systems are usually made explicit as systems of conventional RULES determining language behaviour as it manifests itself in the use of verbal utterances in communicative situations. The rules are CONVENTIONAL in the sense of being shared by most members of a linguistic community: they KNOW these implicitly and are able to use them such that verbal utterances may count as being determined by the particular language system of the community as it is cognitively acquired by the individual language user (van Dijk, 1977: 1).

Words are purely abstract or arbitrary pieces of codes that can be recorded, either in sound or writing. In his *Course in General Linguistics* (1966), Saussure stresses the 'arbitrary' nature of the language sign. The relationship between the signifier and the signified being arbitrary or unmotivated is, in the Saussurean ideology, one of the central premises of semiology (1966: 67- 68):

> The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by the sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: the linguistic sign is arbitrary….The idea of "sister" is not linked by any inner relationship to the succession of sounds "s-o-r" which serves as a signifier in French; that it could be represented equally by just any other sequence is proved by the difference among languages and the very existence of different languages: the signified "ox" has as the signifier "b-o-f" on one side of the border and "o-k-s" on the other.

In other words, since the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, there is no reason for one concept rather than another to be attached to a given signifier. There is, therefore, no defining property which a concept must retain in order to count as the signified of that signifier. A language does not simply assign arbitrary names to a set of independently existing concepts. It sets up an arbitrary relation between signifiers of its own choosing on one hand, and signifieds of its own choosing on the other. Not only does each language produce a different set of signifiers, articulating and dividing the continuum of sounds in a distinctive way, but each language also produces a different set of signifieds; it has a distinct and thus 'arbitrary' way of organising the world into categories. Hence, what the English call 'water', the Fantes in Ghana call 'nsu', and the Tshivendas call 'madi' do not conjure up ideationally the phenomenon being discussed. In other words, each combination of phonemes does not conjure up, to the other group, the picture of a 'liquid substance'.

Of course, there are some limited occasions when linguistic signs can become motivated, more apparent, less arbitrary but rather iconic and indexical. These are the cases of onomatopoeia where the sound of the signifier seems in some way mimetic or imitative as in the Tshivenda words 'kuumvu' (word for heavy object dropping into water), 'phaamu' (word for violently opening a door), 'thuuu' (word for rifle sound), moo (cow). But if these words were truly iconic and hence motivated, they would be the same in all languages, hence a degree of arbitrariness still exists even in these words.

In the absence of a causal link between the signifier and the signified which would enable one to treat each sign individually, one must construct a semiological system of conventions, from which these signs can be explained. That is to say, because these signs are unmotivated, society must devise a system which can explain and make them usable.

> Semiology is thus based on the assumption that insofar as human actions or production convey meaning, insofar as they function as signs, there must be an underlying system of conventions and distinctions which make this meaning possible. Where there are signs there is a system. That is what various signifying activities have in common and if one is to determine their essential nature one must treat them not in isolation but as examples of semiological systems (Culler, 1976: 91).

In general terms, a system is a 'whole' made up of smaller units which stand in particular relationship to each other and perform particular functions with the

assistance of organising principles or rules. Human beings make noises, use gestures, employ a combination of objects or actions and in order for these signs to convey meaning, there must be a discipline which can analyse these kinds of activities and make explicit the conventional systems on which they function. In linguistics, a language is described as being 'rule-governed' (Searle, 1969: 16), hence in English there are organising rules specifying, for example, that 'I saw him' is the normal order in an active declarative sentence; that sex is distinguished in third person pronouns and that the notion of case is illustrated in the object pronoun. The rules also stipulate that sounds unite to form words or parts of words, and these units, in turn, combine to form longer sequences, like complex words, phrases or sentences. In these larger groups, each of the smaller units still maintain some of their original functions as well as enter into a particular relation with the adjacent constituents.

For Saussure, as noted in Chapter One of this thesis, the relationship between linguistic signs can be described on two planes or axes – syntagmatic and paradigmatic (Saussure's own term was 'associative') – each of which generates its own values. The value of a linguistic code depends in part on those features which distinguish it from the other signs within its system, particularly those it most resembles, and in part on those features that distinguish it from the other signs adjacent to it in the utterance. The syntagmatic plane is linear and indicates the relations which a unit contracts by virtue of its combination with other units of the same level. For instance, the lexical item 'some' is syntagmatically related to

the adjective 'small' and the noun 'children' in the expression 'some small children'; also the letters 's,m,a,l,l' are all involved in a syntagmatic relation in the word 'small'. Such combinations are possible and recognised by users of the language because they have been sanctioned by the underlying system. Hence one of the acceptable nominal phrase structures in English is 'article + adjective + noun' giving us a phrase like 'some interesting stories', while a pronounceable lexeme is 'voiceless alveolar fricative + voiced bilabial nasal + a mid back vowel + a double voiced alveolar liquid' giving us a word like 'small'.

A paradigmatic relationship is realised by units which can substitute meaningfully for each other in an utterance. For example, in the phrase 'the small child', 'the' is in a paradigmatic relation with other determiners like 'a, that, this', while 'small' can enter into arrangement with words like, 'big, huge, pretty, tiny', while a similar paradigmatic substitution with words like, 'boy, girl, son, daughter, infant' is permitted for 'child'.

These choices, among the other Saussurean dichotomies: langue and parole, substance and form, synchronic and diachronic, demonstrate the meaning-generating capacity of language. Choice is one of the criteria for meaning creation. If users of a language cannot choose between alternative linguistic items then no information is communicated in selecting a particular language item.

The fact that linguistic signs must be part of a conventionalised system with definite regulations in their arrangement before qualifying as a proposition-signalling apparatus, is just one of the features of language. Some of the formal (structural) as well as the functional characteristics of language, based on Lyons (1977) follow.

3.2.1.1   PROPERTIES OF LANGUAGE

3.2.1.1.1   Duality

 What Hockett (in Lyons, 1977: 74) calls 'duality' (or more fully 'duality of patterning') or double articulation is recognised as one of the universal features of language. To say that a language has the property of duality is to say that it has two levels of structural patterning – phonological and grammatical. And these two levels are related hierarchically, with the higher levels comprising forms which are made of the lower segments. In terms of speech production, we have the physical level at which we can produce individual sounds like [u], [t] and [b]. When we produce these sounds in particular combinations as in [tub] or [but], we have another level of meaning. So at one level we have distinct sounds and at another we have distinct grammatical meaning. This duality of levels is one of the economical features that human language possesses. For with a limited number of sounds and grammatical units, users have the opportunity for various phonological and grammatical combinations.

3.2.1.1.2 Productivity

This is the property of a language system which enables native speakers to construct and understand an infinite number of utterances, including those they have never before encountered in their linguistic experience. New situations arise and new objects have to be constantly described. It is this creativity or open-endedness of language which ensures that users of it manipulate their available linguistic resources to cope with the plurality of situations. The fact that children, at a very early age, can make and understand utterances that they have never heard before is sufficient proof that the language does not have a limited number of utterances which must be memorised or imitated in the process of acquiring proficiency. Non-human signalling, on the other hand, has been proven, experimentally, to have little flexibility in the production of new signals.

3.2.1.1.3 Discreteness

Although a language is composed of a multitude of signs, these must have a signification common and discrete to a group of users or interpreters. The term 'discreteness' applies to the signals or elements of a semiotic system if the signals used in a language are meaningfully distinct so that differences between them are absolute and do not admit gradation in terms of more or less. Such a system is not 'continuous' but discrete. This can be illustrated by the sounds [p]

and [b]. Acoustically there is not a lot of difference between the two; however, they are used in such a way that the occurrence of one rather than the other is meaningful. The fact that the pronunciation of the forms [pat] and [bat] leads to a distinction in meaning can only be due to the exclusiveness or discreteness of the two sounds, [p] and [b]. A sign which has the potential for divergent signification in similar situations poses a problem for its qualification as a member of a discrete system.

3.2.1.1.4 Semanticity

A semiotic system, like language, has meaning or information imputed to the individual signs. Semanticity is defined in terms of the associative ties or significations that hold between signals and their culturally-agreed upon features. Signals or codes may have some extra connotational significance to individual users, but such extraneous information will not be within the conventional system of the language and confirms the interpersonality of language codes.

3.2.1.1.5 Displacement

This feature of language makes it possible to refer to and discuss issues and objects that are remote in time and place from the utterance itself. Lyons (1977:80) points out that the idea of displacement can be traced back to the behaviourist conception of language and meaning. According to this theory, the

primary function of words and utterances is to refer to features of the immediate environment, with which they are associated as stimuli to responses, and the correlation of linguistic expressions with objects and events outside the situation-of-utterance is a matter of secondary development:

> A message is displaced to the extent that the key features in its antecedents and consequences are removed from the time and place of transmission (Lyons, 1977: 80-81).

Lyons adds that whether the ability of displacement can be used to describe non-human signalling systems or indeed any human non-verbal system will depend on our definition of spatio-temporal remoteness and reference.

3.2.1.1.6   Interchangeability

Lyons (1977: 81) states that

> Any organism equipped for the transmission of messages in the system is also equipped to receive messages in the same system.

Reference here is to the ability of interlocutors in a verbal transaction to be both speakers and hearers of a message using essentially the same system. This may seem a trivial characteristic but in many animal signalling systems, for example, it is not uncommon for members of one sex to produce mating calls

which only members of the other sex can respond to. Closely dependent on the notion of interchangeability is the fact that speakers hear and are able to monitor their own performance. This does not refer to the physical process of monitoring an utterance's audibility but describes the ability of interlocutors to check for comprehensibility and correctness of language formation and make adjustments when called for.

3.2.1.1.7 Specialisation

This is a feature stressed in the behaviourist school of thought in language acquisition in connection with the idea of triggering, which refers to the indirect influence that one organism exerts upon the behaviour of another. A signal is considered very objective and specialised if there is no relation between the direct physical consequences of the signal and its effect upon the behaviour of the receiving organism.

3.2.1.1.8 Cultural Transmission

This quality is contrasted with genetic transmission and means that the acquisition of a particular language is context dependent; it necessitates teaching and learning, rather than being instinctive. In other words, acquisition is achieved in a culture with other speakers rather than from parental genes. Hence Tshivenda children (that is, both parents are from Venda), if taken to China at an

early age and not exposed to the Tshivenda linguistic culture, would grow up inheriting the physical features of their parents but would inevitably speak Chinese. This is exactly what Chomsky (1983) means by his theory of the innatenes of language ability. Chomsky (1983) writing on language growth describes the inevitability of any language development in a person, with the development only prejudiced by the absence of a linguistic context. In other words, despite humans having an inborn disposition towards language acquisition, there must be a conducive linguistic environment before language development will take place. Language development is, therefore, context and culture dependent, an aspect which is central to this thesis, as already argued. The much told story of Genie (Curtiss, 1977), a girl who, because of no exposure to any meaningful linguistic input, was unable to communicate, emphasises this point.

3.2.1.1.9   Learnability

A language has to have this property to enable users to internalise it as their own. Users, of whatever background, have the propensity to acquire it as their first language or learn it as a subsequent language, barring any physiological or psychological handicaps. Learnability also refers to the innate qualities of the language itself. In other words, it refers to a certain type of language which is orderly, systematic and predictable enough for users to make some correct assumptions rather than each instance of its use being unique.

The discussion now examines 'text', a subdivision of the notion of 'language'. This study reserves the terms, 'text' and 'utterances' to actual instances of language use. This is in line with established practice (Hjelmslev, 1943, Mey, 1993 and Schiffrin, 1994).

3.2.1.2 TEXT

Linguists like Mey (1993) and Coulthard (1994) agree that single sentences and utterances are not sufficient, as a framework, for a discussion of a person's communicative status, but that a more comprehensive picture should be obtained from a bigger stretch of output or what is loosely known as 'text':

> Discourse analysis has an obvious candidate for the larger unit: *discourse* or *text* for the written language approach (Anne Reboul and Jacques Moeschler, 1997: 283).

In its more primitive version, a 'text' was considered as no more than a grammar of anything that extends beyond the sentence:

> For some text grammarians the text is indeed nothing but an extended sentence bound together by certain special, somewhat strange "punctuation marks", called "sentence connectives" (Mey, 1993: 183).

Indeed in an early article, Katz and Fodor (1963: 181) write that

> …discourse [i.e. text] can be treated as a single sentence in isolation by regarding sentence boundaries as sentential connectives.

Text defined in this way serves to make observations about the structural organisation of sentences (syntax) as well as the distributional and meaning possibilities of lexical items within a grammatically defined context (semantics). The vast majority of languages, perhaps all, is formally divided into some kind of hierarchical and lineal structure, sections of which are distinct from each other. For instance, a morpheme has distinct qualities from a word, phrase, clause and so on. It is equally feasible to engage in a lineal description; for example, one can say, this text comprises a certain number of connectives, pronominal references and adverbial and adjectival descriptive items. Analysts in specialised related sciences may undertake to describe texts for various purposes, like establishing the occurrence of certain combination and sequence of sentence constituents, or the frequency of transformed sentences in a text or the pattern of argument development in a text. Efforts can even be made to characterise the statistical regularities in discourse. This type of work can provide details on features like the mean sentence length, a writer's preference in length of lexical items against functional items through to frequency counts of words taken from particular registers or vocabulary fields, to studies of characteristic ways of distributing background information in a text.

Texts analysed in a pragmatic domain, and in this study, are regarded as a socio-linguistic entity or event in which the identity, location and the relative

social statuses of the participants in the communication, together with a description of the social or institutional occasion within which such an utterance is possible, are identified. This study focuses on one type of pragmatic analysis, the Gricean, where the text is not viewed as a collection of sentences but as a communication event or a meaning-creating tool. Gricean pragmatics, therefore, focuses on meaning in context by examining the co-relation between the 'sign' (forms of language) and the 'use' (function and meaning). Discussions along these lines usually involve examining two central concepts of Gricean pragmatics, speaker and hearer meaning, and the co-operative principles in conversation. These discussions form part of Chapter Three, an account of the socio-linguistic concept of texts, and language in general.

A pragmatic analysis of text includes a classification of the text's composite sentence types and their role in speaker intention and hearer interpretation. This study will undertake such a classification along the principles identified in Speech Act Theory. Most languages use such classification to distinguish, at least, between declaratives ordinarily used, among other functions, to report facts, interrogatives used at least to form yes/no questions and imperatives used to make marked requests. Some languages may have other sentence forms, a special type used for expressing wishes, one for making promises and so on. Speech Act Theory, used in conjunction with Gricean pragmatics, describes text in such a manner that the interplay between the speaker, the form, the hearer,

the context and the function, in the realisation of meaning, is demonstrated. This account also forms part of Chapter Three.

In his early writings, Van Dijk (1977: 3) uses the term 'text' to denote the abstract theoretical construct which underlines the physical structure of organised bigger units of utterances. Hence, he talks of individual sentences or macro-speech acts in the formation of text. He (*ibid.*) also introduces another dimension into the structure of text, correctness, by declaring:

> Those utterances which can be assigned textual structure are thus acceptable discourses of the language, i.e. are well-formed and interpretable.

Thinking of text in this fashion, that is, as a compilation of acceptable individual sentences and not as an organ of human behaviour, places restrictions on its flexibility and ultimately its usefulness as a communication tool: a trademark of text. Mey (1993; 184), suggests that

> What we need to do is transcend the limited approach that sees text as a collection of language production and ascribes these productions to single individual uttering sentences, or even to pairs of individuals exchanging standardized text units such as questions and answers, orders and acknowledgement, promises and acceptance and other simple conversation repartees.

Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler in their book, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (1996: 33) also express their dissatisfaction with the earlier definitions by noting that:

> … a text cannot be explained as a configuration of morphemes or sentences: we would rather say that morphemes and sentences function as operational units and patterns for signalling meanings and purposes during communication.

Having said that, they go on to define what a text is by listing the qualities that it should have. For them, a 'text' is a 'communication occurrence' which must meet, what they call, 'seven standards of textuality' (1996: 3). A review of these standards outlines quite comprehensively the features that distinguish a text from a non-text. As this study examines and evaluates texts or utterances of speakers, features considered pertinent to a text are important to this examination.

The first standard is the notion of cohesion and coherence which refers to the way the components of the surface text, that is, words and sounds, are actually connected within an ordained sequence. The joining of components, both in the linguistic and non-linguistic worlds, is governed by conventions which are understood by users of that commodity. For language, the conventions are the grammatical rules. As linguists have pointed out, the surface structure of texts cannot be indiscriminately rearranged without posing semantic and pragmatic problems for its users. Language combinations are regulated both at the vertical and horizontal axes. The horizontal (cohesion) ensures grammatical

acceptability, while the vertical (coherence) is achieved by structural devices like causality, reason, time, locality, inference, through grammatical strategies like recurrence, parallelism, tense, intonation, ellipses and so on. Such attention to detail can be accommodated in a pragmatic analysis as the structural codes are just as important in an examination of the use of language, hence, of significance to this study.

In an echo of van Dijk (1977), Beaugrande and Dressler (1996) identify acceptability as another requirement, though they do not differentiate too rigidly between acceptability and intentionality as they deem these two features as being closely related:

> A language configuration must be intended to be a text and accepted as such in order for it to be utilized in a communicative interaction. This attitude involves some tolerance towards disturbances of cohesion and coherence, as long as the purposeful nature of the communication is upheld.

The emphasis here is on both the creators and receivers of a text: that they must make some effort to negotiate meaning from utterances, as actual linguistic interactions sometimes portray lapses in cohesion, during which intentionality and acceptability of utterances may be compromised. These may occur in collections of unrelated sentences, but their effect is somewhat lessened in textual outputs. Nevertheless, although hearers and readers are very accommodating, extreme idiosyncratic texts, with no apparent justification for the

exploitation of such a style, places marked strain on communication (Gumperz, 1964: 153).

It is not usual to have interlocutors engage in idle non-informative interactions or text creation. We speak because we have something informative to communicate, however banal, inaccurate, irrelevant, uninspiring or otherwise the surface structure may be judged. For example, the utterance, 'It is cold in here' uttered by a newcomer, on a cold morning, to a room full of coat-wearing people is not as banal a statement as it may initially seem. If it is a statement to be taken at its face value, then it could be either a form of a phatic communication with minimal significance, or an observation, or a command or a request for some solution to some perceived problem. Should it be a sarcastic remark, accompanied by appropriate non-verbal gestures and tone, then it could indicate that the speaker is not impressed with either the room, the coats or the wearers of the coats and so on. Hence, an obvious, predictable, un-stimulating text, in certain linguistic environments, is as informative as the next text. A totally un-informative utterance, to both producer and receiver, which is not attributable to blemished surface configurations, cannot, justifiably, be classified as a text.

The term 'situationality' is a designation for the multiplicity of environments which render a text relevant to a current or recoverable situation of occurrence. This is in line with the role pragmatics accords the context of an utterance. Beaugrand and Dressler (1996) conclude their list of features with a discussion of

'intertextuality', the 'oneness' of the ways in which the production and reception of texts is dependent upon the participants' texts or the relatedness between texts or what is technically known as 'macro-pragmatics' which van Dijk (1977: 217) explains as

> …[a] global speech act performed by the utterance of a whole discourse, and executed by a sequence of possibly different speech acts.

This account of text features may seem on the surface to be more suited to large pieces of text, longer than in an average verbal exchange, the type that this study is examining. However, the pragmatic analysis of discourse which comments on the structure or form of utterances exploits, extensively, guidelines laid down by such features as those discussed by Beaugrand and Dressler (1996). Macro-pragmatics extends Speech Act Theory so that the focus is on composite utterances or a sequence of utterances that can be classified as a 'text'. In this way, a macro-speech act results from a linguistic act that is spread over several utterances.

 These features demonstrate the vibrancy of texts and the complexity of meaning creation. Texts are dynamic constructions with no restrictions on the number or types of units and features that go into their creation. Texts are produced all the time. They literally never stop being produced, as long as there are text producers and occasions.

Halliday and Hasan (1989: 8) observe that a text

> is language that is functional. By functional we simply mean language that is doing some job in some context as opposed to isolated words or sentences … so (is) any instance of living language that is playing some part in a context of situation. It may be either spoken or written, or indeed in any other medium of expression.

They continue the discussion by noting that, although when we construct a text we do so using words, sentences and sounds, basically a text is a semantic unit. It is not an extended sentence. Its semantic nature means that a text has to be considered from two perspectives at once

> both as a *product* and as a *process*. We need to see the text as product and the text as process and to keep both these aspects in focus. The text is a product in the sense that it is an output, something that can be recorded and studied, having a certain construction that can be represented in systematic terms. It is a process in the sense of a continuous process of semantic choice, a movement through the network of meaning potential, with each set constituting the environment for a further set (1989: 8)

A consideration of text as 'a process' captures its dynamic meaning-creating nature in such a way that it is conceivable that people use it to survive in their everyday language transactions since it is a living, context-specific, cultural artifact. Embedded in this approach is an acknowledgement of the role the environment or the context plays in text creation. However, an over-indulgence in the notion of the text as a process usually leads to the de-emphasising of the

linguistic (grammar) system that lies behind the creation of meaning within a text. Reducing the role of structural norms, of course, would not give a comprehensive picture of a text. It is, therefore, necessary to describe the text as also 'a product' of structural conventions. The tension here is to combine the two concepts of text, namely, product and process, so as to capture and balance its functional-structural features. The need to combine these two aspects of language gave rise to different approaches to discourse analysis such as the systemic. linguistics of theorists like Berry (1975 and 1977) and functional grammar by Halliday (1973, 1976 and 1985). The next section examines the notion of functional grammar as outlined by Halliday *(ibid.)*, as this has some relevance to this study.

The notion of functional grammar by Halliday *(ibid.)* is an acknowledgement that any grammar should be functional or should have meaning-creating potential. This idea challenges any notion that neglects to characterise function as the fundamental principle of language and language codes as having precedence over speech acts. The impression created is that development of rules of use are not incidental but that competence for use is part of the same developmental matrix as development for grammar. Halliday's framework emphasises the social functions of speech and writing. It is functional grammar as the conceptual framework on which it is based is a functional one instead of a formal one. Such a grammar is designed to account for how the language is used. Language has evolved to satisfy human needs; and the way it is organized is essentially

'natural' in the sense that everything in the language can be explained ultimately by reference to how language is used. This is because the fundamental components of meaning in language are functional components. In other words the units within a language – its clauses, its phrases, its words and so on – are all organic configurations of the functions. The relevant question at this stage is what is the role of codes in a functional grammar? The answer Halliday (1994: xxx) gives is that 'stated in other terms a grammar is an attempt to crack the code' in such a way that the functional nature of the grammar is maintained. One can only do that by the way one approaches the utterances within the speech event or the text that is being created in the interaction.

As Halliday and Hassan (1989: 8-9) rightly note, the tension is marginally resolved if one sees the text as created through an interaction between two types of information. The first type is semantic: a stable core of propositional meaning conveyed through the linguistic or grammatically recognisable units, such as clauses, and through the relations that are established among these units; the second type is contextual information. In its most basic form, contextual information includes all that surrounds a text so that a better understanding and classification of it is obtained. Mey (1993:184) stresses that he is not, here, referring to the narrow 'co-text', but rather an extension which would capture the whole of the linguistic scene to embrace the entirety of circumstances that surround the production of language.

Deborah Schiffrin (1994: 362) contributes to the discussion by making a distinction between text, 'what is said', and the environment in which 'what is said', occurs:

> If we say the text provides the "what is said" part of utterances, then it is context that combines with "what is said" to create an utterance. Context is thus a world filled with people producing utterances: people who have social, cultural, and personal identities, knowledge, beliefs, goals and wants, who interact with one another in various socially and culturally defined situations.

The point being made here is that an utterance is a language output to which socio-contextual factors have been added, or as Mey (1993: 185) puts it, an utterance does not become a living discourse out of context. A socio-linguistic approach to text, and language in general, the stance in this study, is a multi-faceted approach to communicative competence. Competence is viewed not as control over a particular text variable but a more global phenomenon, covering areas like the speaker, the form, the contextual factors, the hearer, and the function. The next section examines the second variable in text creation, the 'situation' (context).

3.2.2   SITUATION: CONTEXT OF TEXTS

The introduction of context into the creation of the meaning of an utterance goes back as far as 1935 when Firth called for linguists to study conversation, for there

a better understanding of language and how it works can be found. Firth's words may have mimicked the ideas of Malinowsky (1923) who found that he had to include a detailed commentary, before he could present, intelligently, a description of verbal interactions of the Kiriwinian language of the Trobriand Islands. Feeling that in such an extended context information cannot have the same status as the more restricted context, he classified this as 'context of situation'. Malinowsky's (*ibid.*) context of situation, therefore, elaborated on the narrower verbal context to include the total living environment, verbal environment included, in which an utterance occurred. Once he had embarked on the articulation of the context of the situation, Malinowsky decided that familiarity even with the cultural background was necessary for full comprehension of an utterance.

Context operates at two levels: external and internal settings for interaction. Internal is the more visible and commonly accepted notion of context, which includes the relationship between the constituents of the sentence codes as well as other content particulars. External context here is detailed as the pragmatic presuppositions or inferences about the beliefs, knowledge and experiences of the participants required to understand an utterance. A slightly different categorisation is offered by Fillmore (1981: 143-167):

> I will refer to the analytical process of determining the character of such "world sets" as CONTEXTUALIZATION. In EXTERNAL CONTEXTUALIZATION our concern is with the worlds in which the text can appropriately be used; with INTERNAL

> CONTEXTUALIZATION our concern is with the worlds in the imagination of the creator and interpreters of the text.

Both approaches to context are based on the notion that a structural-linguistic context provides an insufficient account of the factors involved in meaning creation, thereby justifying a consideration of extra-linguistic considerations. Grice (1957) similarly, talks of the assumptions which ensure co-operation between conversation partners. Grice's theory of conversation implicatures arises out of his identified maxims of conversation or the context specifications underlying the efficient use of language.

This brief discussion of context can be summarised as the presuppositions or variables that are linguistically relevant in the creation of discourse. The hypothesis is that most utterances can be understood in diverse ways based on the configuration of the context; and people's interpretation of an exchange is directly related to the prominence of one or more of these variables: lexical, syntactic, environmental and stylistic decisions. Context then is a frame or schema through which utterances are examined and interpreted. Schemata are considered to be conventional knowledge: those structures which exist in our memory and are activated under certain conditions in the interpretation of what we experience. At the very obvious level we have schemata for the usual verbal activities in our lives, for instance, food schemata, family schemata, office schemata and so on.

Levinson (1983) talks of meaning being assessed as 'an activity'. He uses the term to emphasise the point that, although we are dealing with a structured ordering of message elements, yet this is not a static process, but rather an active process, which develops and changes as the participants interact. For instance, the utterance: 'These are lovely cakes' has possible meanings depending on variables like the location, the role players, its phonological characteristics, the time of day, as well as the accompanying linguistic and non-linguistic marks.   These conditions or variables can be referred to as an 'organising principle' in meaning interpretation, as they determine and channel inferences which either foreground or underplay aspects of the background and hence, the meaning of an utterance.

Contextual information is always information that is identified in relation to something else, the primary focus of the concerned parties' attention: in this instance, interlocutors using language. That is to say, context is a by-product of language: of users engaged in the main activity of meaning negotiation.

> This means that it is impossible to talk about context in a vacuum: context cannot exist unless we are thinking of "something else" (e.g. an image, a smell, a sound, a word, an utterance, a sequence of utterances) that is located relative to it. The identity of that "something else" influences our decisions about what counts as context and about what "parts" of context we find important. Thus although it seems possible to find a single source of text (i.e. in the linguistic system) the source of contextual information is necessarily more varied: context has multiple sources that can be quite different from one another and can shift depending on our focus of attention (Schriffin, 1994: 362).

Saville-Troike (1982: 22) makes a similar point:

> Interpreting the meaning of linguistic behaviour requires knowing the meaning in which it is embedded. Ultimately all aspects of culture are relevant to communication, but those that have the most direct relevance on the communication forms and processes are the social structure, the values and attitudes held about language and ways of speaking, the network of conceptual categories which result from shared experiences….Shared cultural knowledge is essential to explain the shared presuppositions and judgement of truth values which are the essential undergirdings of language structures as well as of contextually appropriate usage and interpretation.

This notion of context, a pragmatic or socio-linguistic one, is also the approach central to this study, as already discussed. Context viewed in this way extends the strictly linguistic environment of utterances so as to acknowledge that language users operate in other kinds of contexts. Linguistic or stable conventional contexts exist, for texts, based on the technical rules of grammar and usually there is very little negotiation in that instance. A tension is created when one operates within a pragmatic context which sees meaning as a dynamic setting, effecting constant change on the meaning. This thesis examines the tension and interplay of the conventional context and the pragmatic context in the interpretation of speaker meaning.

While referential meaning may be ascribed to elements in the linguistic code in a static manner, situated or pragmatic meaning must be accounted for as an

emergent and dynamic process, brought about by the interaction between the static codes and the volatile context. A context, therefore, is not restricted to just one possible world-state but includes a sequence of world-states which undergo very rapid adjustments (Saville-Troike, 1982). Van Dijk (1977: 192) talks of an infinite number of contexts with only one being appropriate or the actual context in a given linguistic situation:

> The actual context is defined by the period of time, and the place where the common activities of speaker and hearer are realized, and which satisfy the properties of "here" and "now" logically, physically, and cognitively.

In his earlier writings, van Dijk (1976) describes the context as an abstract notion which must have properties adequate and sufficient for the formulation of rules and conditions necessary for the realisation of utterances. He uses the Searlean terms of 'happy' and 'appropriate' (1969) to describe the contexts in their relationship to the interpretation of an utterance. Mey (1993: 8-10), in a similar vein, states that

> …a context is dynamic, that is to say, it is an environment that is in steady development, prompted by the continuous interaction of the people engaged in language use, the users of the language. Context is the quintessential pragmatic concept; it is by definition proactive, just as people are.

Mey (1993: 182-186) further indicates that the differences between a 'grammatical' and a 'user-oriented' point of view in relation to language or

utterances are in the context. On the former view, we consider linguistic elements in isolation, as syntactic structures or parts of the grammatical paradigm, such as, case, tense and so on, whereas, on the latter, we pose ourselves the question: How are these linguistic elements used in a concrete setting, that is, in a context? A similar notion is articulated by Recanti (1994), in Reoboul and Moeschler (1997) who makes a distinction between 'a formal and natural' language where the former is language which has a fixed interpretation and is independent of context, while the latter, the contextualist stance, presupposes the opposite:

> Taking a contextualist stance does not imply denying that the linguistic data (lexicon, syntax, etc.) have a role in utterance interpretation. It merely means saying that these data are not sufficient and that they must be complemented by non-linguistic interpretation processes, which can be called *contextual* (Reboul and Moeschler, 1997: 289).

Schiffrin (1994) does not account for context in such a global manner, choosing instead to describe context in relation to the different approaches to text analysis that she examines, as these approaches make different assumptions about what aspects of context are relevant to the production and interpretation of utterances or text. Some of these approaches view context in a very narrow way, limiting it to the immediate surrounding verbal structures, for example, variationist (Schiffrin, 1994). Other approaches, such as interpersonal (Gumperz, 1985) or ethnographic (Saville-Troike, 1982), include the societal context of the texts. The

latter approach presupposes the existence of a particular society, with its implicit and explicit values, norms, rules and laws, and with all its particular conditions of life: economic, social, political and cultural. Context factors also include the beliefs, knowledge and experiences of the interlocutors. All these aspects of context information serve as the pragmatic presuppositions that interlocutors use to create the context for a text.

The next section is devoted to the third unit in communicative competence, act (function). Since the emphasis of this thesis is on the functional approach to language this last component of communicative competence is deliberated upon at some length.

3.2.3 ACT: (FUNCTION)

A discussion of communicative competence is inadequate without an explanation of the functions of language. The description and explanation of the various functions that utterances can perform is possible with various classification systems. Speech Act Theory (SAT), the approach that this thesis will be outlining, was developed in the 1960s by a group of language philosophers, of whom the most important is J.L. Austin (1962). In his seminal work on functions of language, Austin asserts that what he has to say about language is 'neither difficult nor contentious. The phenomenon to be discussed is very widespread and obvious' (1962: 1). Therefore his claim to 'fame' is that he has articulated a

notion to which specific attention had not previously been paid. Austin's fundamental insight is that an utterance can constitute an act. That is, in making an utterance one can 'do' things, as well as 'say' things. An act performed through speech is a 'speech act'.

> In the approach to the analysis of speech events termed speech act theory, the message sent, the content of the communication, is a form of human action. This action is not the act of speaking, but an act we perform by speaking – a speech act (*ibid.*).

Although the focus of SAT has been on utterances, especially those made in conversation, the phrase 'speech act' is taken as a generic term for any sort of language use, oral or otherwise. Speech acts, whatever the medium of their articulation, fall under the broad category of intentional acts, and hence are part of the theory of action. That is because one of the theory's pertinent features is that when one acts intentionally, generally one has a fixed intention in one's mind, similar to reasons for making an utterance. As noted earlier, an 'act' can be physically, mentally or linguistically performed. Let us consider the sentences,

10. This is a book.

11. Those are the apples I was given.

12. I am holding the marked assignments.

13. We had a salary raise.

An intentional act is performed physically when we hold the book, the apples, the marked assignments and the money, mentally when we imagine these items and linguistically when we utter the words of sentences 10–13. The acts, in sentences 10–13, of giving information, performed through speech or words are termed a 'speech acts' or 'speech events'. For the purpose of this thesis, the more familiar term 'speech acts' is used to refer to this act of speaking or sending spoken or written intentions to other members of our speech community. It must be stressed here that the 'act' is not the physical action of moving one's vocal cords or hands in making an utterance or writing sentences, but the 'act' one achieves by uttering or writing this particular string of words. The following examples may explain the point better. If I were to say:

14. Goodness, the windows are open!

15. Am I feeling sick today?

16. Close the windows!

The speech act is not one of either uttering a statement (as in 14), an interrogative (as in 15) or an imperative (as in 16), but one of making a request for a hearer to decrease the chill factor or increase the heat in a room. Austin (1962) realises that viewing sentences as an act, is a novel way, as sentences have always been seen as describing world facts. More clarity, therefore, was needed in what ways a sentence or discourse might be said to be performing actions. Austin isolates three basic senses in which saying something equals

doing something. These amount to three kinds of acts that are simultaneously performed:

(i) **Locutionary act**: a complex act comprising several types of actions: phonological, syntactic and semantic, hence it is the uttering of a sentence with determinate sense and reference (the actual words uttered).

(ii) **Illocutionary act**: what is usually meant when we make an utterance is that we accomplish some specific social act, for example, the making of a statement, an offer, or a promise, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it.

(iii) **Perlocutionary act**: the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effect being special to the circumstance of utterance (the effect of the illocution on the hearer).

Let us analyse sentence 17 below to see how Austin applies the terms:

17. What time is it?

Locutionary act: an interrogative statement in the simple present tense.

Illocutionary act: In appropriate circumstances:

Complaint because the hearer is late for an appointment.

Request to hearer to tell the time.

Suggestion for hearer to go home; etc

Perlocutionary act: Some kind of contrite behaviour from the hearer.

Hearer looking at her watch and telling the time.

Hearer (hopefully) leaving speaker's presence etc.

These explanations show that the locutionary act is the actual uttering of words or sounds to make either a statement or issue a command or ask a question. The explanation of the other two is offered by Levinson (1983: 237) when he sums up the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts as follows:

> … the illocutionary act is directly achieved by the conventional force associated with the issuance of a certain kind of utterance in accord with a conventional procedure, and is consequently determinate (in principle at least). In contrast, a perlocutionary act is specific to the circumstance of the issuance, and is therefore not conventionally achieved just by uttering that particular utterance, and includes all those effects, intended or unintended, often indeterminate, that some particular utterance in a particular situation may cause.

The theory of Speech Act is partly taxonomic and partly explanatory as it is not only an attempt to break down scientifically and philosophically the procedures involved in making an utterance, but also an attempt to classify systematically the reasons for the linguistic acts we make. Both Austin and Searle base their theories on the hypothesis that 'speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour' (Searle 1969: 11), which results in the accomplishment of some specific social act, function or intention. These linguistic

115

events or speech acts are classifiable, for example, as a promise, a request or giving advice.

3.2.3.1 CLASSIFICATION OF SPEECH ACTS

Speech Act Theory, stripped of all its trimmings, operates on the basic belief that language is primarily for communication and for this to happen certain rituals have to be observed. The theory then goes on to claim that the functions of, the reasons for, or the intentions behind communication can be classified. Each type of function, reason or intention is then known as a 'speech act'.

Just as linguists have tried to understand how speakers are able to produce an infinite number of sentences given a finite set of rules for sentences, language practitioners have tried to understand how an infinite number of sentences might reflect a very finite set of functions. These theorists argue that since the number of things one does with words are limited, one ought to be able to assign functions to all forms of utterances. A number of theorists, including Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), have attempted to categorise speech functions. For example, Malinowski (1923) classified the functions into two broad areas - pragmatic and magical. As an anthropologist, he was interested in practical or pragmatic use of language on the one hand and, on the other, in ritual and magical uses of language that were associated with ceremonial or religious activities in the language of a culture. A quite different classification was

proposed by the Austrian psychologist Karl Buhler (1934) who categorised the functions of utterances into: expressive function (being language that is oriented towards the self, the speaker); conative function (being language that is orientated towards the hearer); and representational function (being language that is oriented towards anything other than speaker and hearer). Buhler was applying a conceptual framework inherited from Plato: the distinction of first, second and third persons. This framework was developed further by John Britton (1970) who proposed a framework of transactional, expressive and poetic language functions.

Allan (1994bc) offers four classes of language use with a hearer's evaluation as criteria: statements, invitationals, authoritatives and expressives. Vendler (1972), Bach and Harnish (1979), Edmondson (1981), Levinson (1983), and Wierzbicka (1987a) have all attempted to capture what it is that we do with language. Table 3.1 gives a summary of some of these authors' concepts of speech acts.

Table 3.1 is a comparison of five classifications of illocutionary types

Austin (1962)	Searle (1969)	Vendler (1972)	Bach and Harnish (1979)	Allan (1986)
Expositives	Assertives	Expositives	Assertives	Statements
Commissives	Commissives	Commissives	Commissives	
Behabitives	Expressives	Behabitives	Acknowledgement	Expressives
Exercitives	Directives	Interrogatives	Directives	Invitationals
		Exercitives		Authoritatives
Verdictives	Declaratives	Verdictives	Verdictives	

		Operatives	Effectives	

Although there are subtle differences in perception in the various categories, what all the outlines have attempted to do was to come up with ways of describing uses of language or constructing some kind of conceptual framework to interpret the various ways that language functions in people's lives. This was the same task that Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) engaged in when Austin wrote his book *How to Do Things with Words,* mentioned earlier*,* which Searle (1969) expanded in his book, *Speech Acts.* Because this present research examines the contributions of Austin and Searle to SAT, their classifications, particularly those of Searle, are examined in some detail below.

3.2.3.1.1   Classification of speech acts: Austin

Austin (1962:151-164) distinguishes five general functions of language:

Verdictives are typified by the giving of verdicts, as the name implies, by a jury, arbitrator or umpire. But they do not have to be final as they may be an estimate, reckoning, or appraisal.

Exercitives are the exercising of powers, rights or influences. Examples are appointing, voting, ordering, advising and so on.

Commissives are typified by promising or giving an undertaking; they commit one to doing a certain action, but also include declarations, intention and so on.

Behabitives are a miscellaneous group that have to do with attitudes and social behaviours. Examples are apologising, congratulating, commending, cursing and so on.

> **Expositives** make clear how one's utterances fit into a general argument or discussion. They include phrases like, 'I reply', 'I assume' and 'I postulate'.

Austin (1962:152) was very quick to point out that he was not very definite in these classifications:

> We should be very clear from the start that there are still wide possibilities of marginal or awkward cases or overlaps. The last two classes are those which are most troublesome and it could well be they are not clear or are cross-classified, or even that some fresh classification altogether is needed. I am not putting any of this forward as in the very least definitive. Behabitives are troublesome because they seem too miscellaneous altogether: expositives because they are enormously numerous and important and seem both to be included in the other classes and at the same time to be unique in a way that I have not succeeded in making clear even to myself. It could well be said that all aspects are present in all my classes.

3.2.3.1.2 Performatives

While in the process of classification, Austin (1962) had noted that some utterances that seem like statements lack what is thought to be a necessary property of statements: truth condition/value (See Chapter Two). He called these utterances 'explicit performatives'. Not only do these statements not 'describe' or 'report' anything at all, they also cannot be said to be 'true' or 'false' in the sense assumed by logical positivists. Rather, the uttering of such a statement is, or is a part of, the doing of an action. Austin (1962: 5-6) begins his thesis on performatives in this way:

(E. a) "I do"- as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony

(E. b) "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth."

(E. c) "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" – as occurring in a will.

(E. d) "I bet you sixpence it will rain."

In these examples it seems clear that to utter these sentences (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing (anything)…. None of the utterances cited is either true or false: I assert this as obvious and do not argue it…. What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type? I propose to call it a performative sentence or a performative utterance, or, for short, "a performative"…. The name is derived, of course, from "perform", the usual verb with the noun "action": it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action - it is not normally thought of as just saying something.

The peculiar fact about utterances E.a - E.d, according to Austin, is that they are not used just to say things, that is, to describe states of affairs, but rather to 'do' things. Furthermore, you cannot assess such utterances as true or false. Austin classifies them as 'performatives' and distinguishes them from 'constatives' (declarative statements whose truth and falsity can be established). An examination of sentences 18-23 below should be useful.

18. I propose Takalani as president of the SRC.

19. I promise I will be there at 9:00.

20. I apologise for not attending the workshop over the weekend.

21. The avocados pears on the tree are ripe.

22. Lectures will commence on 14 January.

23. There are the same number of male and female students in my class.

According to Austin's classification, only examples 21-23 are constatives: These are constatives because one can actually verify the 'truthfulness' of these statements and they are in the tradition of logical positivism as noted earlier. Sentences 18-20 are different and share several qualities. The central idea here is that once you have proposed Takalani as SRC president; kept your promise and made your appointment for 9:00 and felt sorry for your non-attendance at the workshop 'the world has changed in substantial ways' (Levinson, 1983: 228). Austin explains that this is so because these sentences feature a 'particular' type of verb: a performative verb, one that realises a particular action when uttered in a specific context. Such a context can include setting, physical objects, institutional identities; it may also require a particular response (a bet requires what Austin calls an 'uptake'). Performatives therefore require not only appropriate circumstances, but the appropriate language. The performative verbs in sentences 18-20 are in the present simple tense; each has a first person subject and the adverb 'hereby' may modify any of the verbs.

Austin then goes on to say that although performatives, unlike constatives, cannot be true or false yet they can go 'wrong'. He then sets himself the arduous task of cataloguing all the requirements for their successful execution, as well as the ways in which they can go wrong, or be 'unhappy' or 'infelicitous', as he puts

it. By Austin's contention (1962: 15), utterances will act as performatives only under well defined circumstances:

(A. 1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances.

(A. 2) The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B. 1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B. 2) completely.

(C. 1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts and feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves and further,

(D. 2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

Austin notes that violations of these conditions are not all of equal stature. Violations of A and B conditions give rise to 'misfires' as he puts it: the intended action simply fails to come off. Violations of C conditions, on the other hand, are 'abuses', not so easily detected at the time of uttering the statement, although ultimately the insincerity will surface.

As evidence of the existence of such conditions, consider what happens when some of them are not fulfilled. For example, consider sample sentences 24-26.

24. I sentence you to ten years' hard labour.

25. I bequeath you my shebeen.

26. I congratulate you on winning the prize.

A speaker may be said to have performed an unsuccessful speech act in sentence 24, if the context is infelicitous, that is, if the speaker does not have the authority to make such an utterance, if the physical location is inappropriate, or the hearer is a minor. Sentence 25 may also be infelicitous if I have no shebeen to bequeath, if I am not of sound mind, or if I am pointing to a car while making this statement. Likewise sentence 26 will be infelicitous if the receiver of the message has not won any prize; if I am strangling the person, with a snarl on my face, as I am uttering those words; or if I genuinely believe that I am a better candidate for the prize.

However, as the argument progresses in his book, Austin (1962) systematically dismantles his earlier assertions as indicated by his acknowledgement of the complexities of classification (as quoted earlier). The distinction between constatives and performatives is one of the distinctions that he starts questioning. First, he shifts his view that performatives are a special class of utterances with peculiar syntactic and pragmatic properties, to the view that there is a general class of performative utterances that include both 'explicit performatives' (the old familiar one) and 'implicit performatives', the latter including several other classes of utterances. Secondly, there is an abandonment of the performative/constative

dichotomy for a general theory of illocutionary acts of which the performatives and constatives are just members. At the end of his book Austin (1962: 133-147) writes:

> Were these distinctions really sound? Our subsequent discussion of doing and saying certainly seems to point to the conclusion that whenever I "say" anything (except perhaps a mere exclamation like "damn" or "ouch") I shall be performing both locutionary and illocutionary acts, and these two kinds of acts seem to be the very things which we tried to use, under the names of "doing" and "saying", as a means of differentiating performatives from constatives. If we are in general always doing both things, how can our distinction survive?

That last question echoes the doubt that was creeping into Austin's total commitment to the performative/constative theory and so can be seen as rhetorical. On closer interrogation, one realises that there is clearly no real incompatibility between utterances being truth bearers, and simultaneously performing an action. Consider 27 and 28 below:

27. I suggest we end the meeting at 5:00.

28. I warn you, the car will run out of petrol before the next garage.

Both these sentences are performatives as well as being assessible as true or false, an indication that performatives are also governable by truth conditions. Also questionable is the assertion that it is only with performatives that certain felicitous conditions are necessary. Austin (1962) later admits that uttering an

untrue statement can be equivalent to someone bequeathing a shebeen she does not own, or promising, congratulating or forgiving someone without the appropriate intention and feelings, as discussed in sentences 24-26.[4] That is to say, if one offers advice, or delivers a warning, one is obligated to have good grounds for the advice or warning, in just the same way as one should be able to back up an assertion or constative. Constatives can therefore be subjected to similar infelicities of the kind that can result in abuse of performatives.

As noted earlier, Austin also grounded his analysis of performatives in certain textual features: performative verbs, subject in first person singular and structure allowing the insertion of the adverb, 'hereby'. However, in introducing similarities between implicit (primary) and explicit performatives and in noting the possibility of performatives that can be realised without specific textual clues (the fact that the simple present tense need not always convey an action concurrent with the time of speaking) Austin (1962) demonstrates that the gap between the two types of speech act is further narrowed. Schriffin (1994: 53) takes up the issue, concluding that

> We have seen thus far that the constative-performative distinction cannot be maintained because both constatives and performatives involve truth and falsity; both are felicitous or infelicitous in relation to the conditions in which they occur; both are realized in a variety of forms that can be rewritten in terms of performative formula. To put this more

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[4] 24. I sentence you to ten years hard labour.
 25. I bequeath you my shebeen.
 26. I congratulate you on winning the prize.

generally, we cannot find either contextual   or textual conditions that support the constative-performative distinction.

Mey (1993: 167), in agreement, declares that

> The reason for this attack is that even the simplest, most neutral statement still has some effect on the world in which it is enunciated…. The difference between such acts and the original, "performative" ones would then be either in the change they operate on the world, or in their respective forces… or both - but not in the performative quality of one of the members of the distinction.

Harnish (1997: 161) also comments that

> The basic problem with performatives is to explain their "performative force", the (often non-constative) force marked by the performative element of the sentence, within the framework of a compositional semantics. An account of performatives would be easy, were we to give up one or the other. If performative utterances were always just constative in their force, then the grammatical form of performative sentences could be straightforwardly declarative (or truth-valuable). On the other hand if we ignore compositionality, then their performative force could be given by special conventions of force that attach to the performative element in (just) the performative sentence.

Of the large number of philosophical works that SAT has given rise to, two developments in particular have had a profound influence on language studies. One is the attempt to link SAT with Grice's theory of meaning and conversation principles (1957) and the other is the very influential, more rigid systemisation of

Austin's work by Searle (1969) through whose writings SAT has, perhaps, had most of its impact on language studies.

Searle, Austin's student, was unimpressed with the proposed classification on a number of points, among which were criticism of Austin for operating with overlapping criteria (for example, the speech act of 'describing' belongs at the same time to the category of 'verdictives' and in that of 'expositives') and for having incompatible elements within the categories. Searle (1969) objects to the inclusion of elements in Austin's categories that do not satisfy the definitions of the category. In addition, Searle (1975: 28) also had misgivings about Austin's practice of making speech acts dependent on verbs claiming that 'differences in illocutionary verbs are a good guide, but by no means a sure guide to differences in illocutionary acts'.

Similarly, Leech (1983) criticises Austin for committing an 'error' in supposing that 'verbs in the English language correspond one-to-one with categories of speech act'. He continues, 'Austin's classification into Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabitives and Expositives is a prime example of what I have called the Illocutionary-Verb Fallacy' (1983: 176).

In his chapter on 'Semantic Analysis of English Performative Verbs', Vanderveken (1990: 167) also attacks the notion of performatives being based on verbs, giving the following reasons:

1. Many performative verbs do not name an illocutionary force but rather a kind of illocutionary force.…

2. Some performative verbs like "state" and "assert" which name the same illocutionary force are not synonymous. Their difference of meaning derives from conversation features which are independent from logical forms….

3. Some speech act verbs which name illocutionary forces do not have a performative use….

4. Some performative verbs can have non-illocutionary meanings….

These perceived shortcomings culminate in Searle's (1979a: 27) article, 'A classification of illocutionary acts,' in which he comes up with his own classification, the primary objective of which was to develop 'a reasoned classification of illocutionary acts into certain basic categories or types'.

Searle's 'reasoned classification' is based on twelve 'dimensions' (Mey, 1993: 154-162) along which speech acts can be different: illocutionary point, direction of fit, expressed psychological state, force, social status, interest, discourse-related functions, content, societal institutions, speech acts, performatives and style. However, in his final taxonomy, Searle only applies four dimensions when drawing up his list of speech functions: illocutionary acts, direction of fit, psychological state and content.

3.2.3.1.3   Classification: Searle

Searle's speech act categories are:

Representatives: These are assertions which represent the state of affairs, or as Mey (1993) claims, they represent reality. Speakers' purpose in performing representatives is to commit themselves to the belief that the propositional content of the utterance is true. In an attempt to describe the world the speaker says how something is, or tries to make 'the words match the world' to use Searle's expression (1969: 3). They are seen, for example, in assertions, statements, claims and suggestions. They can be either true or false. For example:

29. The simple present tense is used more often than the present perfect tense.
30. I live in Sibasa in the Northern Province.
31. Potatoes are very nutritional.
32. There are dark clouds in the sky; it may rain tomorrow.

These sentences are assertions of facts, claims or hypotheses to be proved true or false.

Commissives: These acts commit the speaker, at varying degrees, to some particular future course of action. Very similar to Austin's class of the same name, these acts place obligations on the speaker. They may be in the form of promises, offers, threats and vows. Their use may be seen in statements like:

33. Touch the dial one more time and you will regret it.

34. If it is a fine day tomorrow we will go to the beach.

35. Would you like to come to the film with me?

36. I will pass that examination, if it is the last thing I do.

Directives: These speech acts are intended to get the listener to carry out an action. These include commands, requests, invitations, dares, challenges and so on, as in

37. Please join us for dinner on Friday.

38. Do not barge into my room.

39. May I borrow your trailer to transport the tiles I bought from CTM?

40. I dare you to go into the field where the bull is.

Expressives: These are speech acts which indicate the speaker's psychological state of mind or attitude to some prior action or state of affairs. They are seen in greetings, apologies, congratulations, condolences and expressions of giving thanks. The following sentences are some examples -

41. Wow! That was a brilliant speech.

42. Oh dear, I am so sorry about the incident.

43. I am so glad to meet you. John has talked a lot about you.

44. I really appreciate the offer you made, thanks.

Declaratives or Performatives: These utterances are those which bring about the state of affairs that they name. They take the form of blessings, christenings, weddings, firing and so on. Declaratives are typically broadcast within a social group and rely for their success on a speaker being sanctioned by the community, institution, committee or even a single person in the group to perform such acts under stipulated specialised conditions. Provided the stipulated conditions are met the act is deemed to have been successful.

45. You are hired!

46. I pronounce this amusement park opened.

47. I declare this committee adjourned.

48. May the Lord richly bless you and your family.

On the point of performatives or declaratives, Searle (1977: 37) also notes that they 'bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the referred object or objects solely by virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed'.

Searle continues his theory by articulating felicitous conditions under which various illocutionary acts can be performed. He chooses to be guided by Rawls (1955) who had made a distinction between 'regulative rules' and 'constitutive rules' in the use of language. The first are the kind that control antecedently

existing activities, for example, traffic regulations (which road users must know before venturing onto a public road) while the second are the kind that create or constitute the activity itself, for example, the rules of a game. This prompts Searle to suggest that felicitous conditions are not merely dimensions on which utterances can go wrong but are actually jointly constitutive of the various illocutionary acts. Searle (1969: 54-71) then quite elaborately outlines the felicitous conditions for some illocutionary acts.

Searle's manner of articulating these conditions assists in drawing up a kind of grid on which to compare different speech acts. He refines his conditions even farther by classifying them in terms of their importance in distinguishing speech acts, identifying four conditions governing such acts**: propositional content, preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions.**

Table 3.2 is an example of a comparison that Searle makes between requests and warnings to illustrate his use of the terminology.

Table 3.2: A comparison of felicity conditions on requests and warnings (Levinson, 1983: 240)

CONDITIONS	REQUESTS	WARNINGS
Propositional Content	Future act of H	Future event
Preparatory	1. S believes H can do A. 2. It is not obvious that H	1. S thinks E will occur and is not in H's interest.

	would do A without being asked.	2. S thinks it is not obvious to H that E will occur at the time asked.
Sincerity	S wants H to do A.	S believes E is not in H's best interest.
Essential	Counts as an attempt to get H to do A.	Counts as an understanding that E is not in H's best interest.

Key: A=act; H=hearer; S=speaker; E=event.

Levinson (1983: 240) claims that although Searle's list of speech acts is relatively more rigorously argued than Austin's, it is still considered disappointing in that it lacks a principled basis. Leech too believes that, contrary to Searle's claims, the list is neither compiled in any systematic way nor on 'felicity conditions', hence there is no reason to think that the classification is definitive or exhaustive. P.F. Strawson (1971) has a more fundamental objection to the classification. He believes that both Austin and Searle, in making the performative / constative distinction the main frame for their classifications, were overly impressed by the special utterances that affect institutional states of affairs and should not have taken them as a model of illocutionary acts in general. For Strawson, the fundamental part of human communication is not carried out in such conventional and cultural-specific occasions, such as baptising a child, or joining couples in wedlock. Rather, a fair amount of meaning is created in more indirect ways and

along the lines outlined by Grice (1957) in his theory of meaning and conversation principles.

Kent Bach and Robert Harnish (1992: 98), also unhappy with the proposed dichotomy between the two main types of speech functions, came up with the notion that performative utterances are, in fact, just indirect illocutionary acts and not a distinct class of speech functions. They declare:

> In our view, the performative formula is but one of a wide variety of forms of words which have become standardized for specific indirect uses, forms which serve to streamline or compress the audience's inference process. Familiar examples include "Can you…?", "I'd like you to …" and "It would be nice if you would…" not to mention a hedged performative like "I must ask you…", each standardly used to make a request indirectly.

This quotation introduces the related concept of indirect speech acts, the focus of the discussion below.

3.3   INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

The notion that speech functions are, sometimes, not directly communicated, is a natural progression from the above discussion and is particularly pertinent in view of the hypothesis of this study. This thesis, as noted in the earlier chapters, is an investigation into the linguistic behaviour of a group of second language speakers; it is an attempt to analyse their particular way of articulating the every-

day functions that any communicative tool has to perform. Therefore an assumption can be made at this juncture that such speakers' utterances may demonstrate, on a continuum, various levels of directness and indirectness.

At the end of the article on classification, Searle (1969: 23) points out that there are a limited number of things that we can do with language although these frequently operate concurrently:

> We tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we commit ourselves to doing things, we express our feelings and attitudes and we bring changes through our utterances… often we do more than one of these in the same utterance.

This comment by Searle (1969) in conjunction with the remarks of Bach and Harnish above (1992: 98) introduces one of the sub-themes inherent in Speech Act Theory, viz. the multiple functions of an utterance, an important issue in indirect speech acts. Searle's view of indirectness (like his taxonomy of speech acts) draws upon his analysis of the conditions necessary for a speech act. An indirect speech act is defined as an utterance in which one illocutionary act (a 'primary act') is performed by way of the performance of another act (a 'literal act'). That is, situations where speech act verbs are not literally employed or are employed for a variety of dissimilar acts pave the way for the indirect creation of linguistic meaning or indirect speech acts. This notion naturally challenges one of Austin's textual conditions for a performative: that explicit performatives have the literal force named by the performative verb in the matrix clause. For instance,

sentences 49-51 would be examples of explicit performatives or those conforming to Austin's classifications:

49. I suggest you take extra care with that door.

50. I bet you R100 that Univen Soccer Stars will win the match.

51. I vote for Mr Mudau.

Sentence 49 is a suggestion, 50 a bet and 51 a vote for Mr Mudau as the matrix clauses contain the verbs 'to suggest', 'to bet' and 'to vote' respectively. Austin's emphasis on the conventional nature of illocutionary acts and their literal textual clues indicate an acceptance of this correlation.

However, a cursory examination of usual linguistic interactions will demonstrate that most speech acts are of the indirect type. For example, the imperative is very rarely used to issue requests in English; instead we tend to employ sentence codes that only indirectly perform the speech act of requesting. For example, one can construct an indefinite list of ways of indirectly ordering a hearer to lower the volume on a piece of musical equipment:

52. I can't hear myself think in here.

53. The baby is sleeping.

54. My papers start tomorrow.

55. I do not like Back Street Boys.

56. What will our neighbours think?

57. Are you hard of hearing?

58. I really hate having to leave my room.

59. What is going on?

60. Are we having a party tonight?

61. Wow, you really like your music loud!

Given that none of the above statements (52-61) would literally be classified as a request, (they are assertions and questions) they present a challenge to Austin's (1962) 'form and function' theory of speech acts. On the face of it, what people do with their utterances seems quite unrestricted by the literal surface form (sentence type). That is to say, speaker meaning may be underdetermined by the physical structure of the utterance; words and expressions have non-natural or non-literal meaning and a fair amount of speaker intention is implied, rather than being categorically stated.

The concept of indirect speech is premised by the notion of 'literal force', that is, illocutionary acts are built into sentence forms and performative verbs. Austin asserts that the three major sentence types in English, namely the imperative, the interrogative and the declarative, have the forces or functions associated with them, that is, ordering, requesting and stating respectively; and, secondly that there are specialised categories of speech act verbs to go with these functions. There is, however, some asymmetry in the relationship between speech act verbs and speech acts. This is so because, first, not all speech acts are

represented by specific speech act verbs, but may be represented by several with the exception of the strictly institutionalised speech acts. Thus a speech act, like ordering, may be expressed in various ways: by a direct 'ordering' verb (sentence 62), by an ordinary verb in the imperative (63) or even by circumlocution or implication (64):

62. I order you to turn the TV off!

63. Turn the TV off!

64. I have just put the baby to sleep.

Let us continue the discussion of indirectness in speech acts by analysing the exchange in 65, below.

65. Speaker A: My answer to question C looks odd.

Speaker B: This is an examination room!

In this exchange, Speaker B has correctly interpreted A's utterance as a request for academic assistance indirectly stated as an assertion and has responded in a similar vein by expressing a negative intention using a positive utterance. This example suggests that performing a speech act is a matter of having a certain communicative intention in uttering certain words. Such an act succeeds, that is, the intention with which it is performed is fulfilled, if the hearer recognises that intention. The immediate question is how did Speaker B deduce the speech act

behind Speaker A's statement? Or how do we know that the second utterance is in fact a rejection of the request while seeming to be completely unrelated to it and not containing any overt or hidden expression of negation, or even a mention of the appeal? Or, as Searle (1979b: 82) puts it:

> The problem seems to me somewhat like those problems in the epistemological analysis of perception in which one seeks to explain how a perceiver recognizes an object on the basis of imperfect sensory input.

Mey (1993: 143-145) recaps Searle's two ways of solving the problem. The first is the philosophical-semantic one based on strict reasoning and certain basic principles and the second on pragmatic sense. Using philosophical-semantic reasoning, Searle views indirect speech acts as a combination of two acts, a primary illocutionary act (in example 65, one of rejecting an appeal) and a secondary one (in this case making a statement). Searle explains the process by building a ten-step pyramid of reasoning; and through a process of elimination he demonstrates how an appropriate interpretation is arrived at. Similarly Keith Allen (1998) has drawn up schema which outline the steps in inferring the illocutionary point or speech functions of utterances.

The second solution, or the approach drawing on pragmatic sense, which is in line with the stance of this study, is based on the notions that sentence meaning and speaker / utterance meaning may differ and that speech acts can be performed literally or non-literally. When an illocutionary act is performed

indirectly, it is performed by way of performing some other one directly. In the case of non-literal utterances the illocutionary act performed is not the one dictated by the words. For example, a mother comes home to see, yet again, the neighbour's son sitting in her lounge and she says to the boy:

66. It's a real pleasure to see so much of you.

The content of the utterance has not determined the intention of the mother. This type of language usage prompted Searle (1979b: 77) to distinguish speaker meaning from sentence meaning:

> Strictly speaking whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression, or sentence, we are talking about what a speaker might utter it to mean, in a way that departs from what the word, expressions or sentence actually means….To have a brief way of distinguishing what a speaker means by uttering words, sentences and expressions, on the one hand, and what the words, sentences, and expressions mean, on the other hand, I shall call the former *speaker's utterance meaning* and the latter, *word, or sentence meaning*.

The position Searle takes here is that utterance codes may have meanings which differ from that of the speaker's meaning in indirect speech acts. If a speaker utters an indirect speech act, then it may have the ironic, sarcastic or metaphoric usage which the speaker intends it to have. Therefore sentences are said to have both a semantic representation (literal sentence meaning) and communicative function (utterance meaning).

3.3.1   SENTENCE MEANING AND UTTERANCE MEANING

Grice (1971: 54) makes a similar point by also identifying meaning within semantic and pragmatic domains. He refers to semantic meaning (sentence meaning) as 'basic' and 'conventional' while pragmatic meaning (utterance meaning) is 'non-conventional' and 'implied' or in his terminology, 'meaning nn'.

In a series of influential and controversial papers Grice (1957, 1968 and 1969) has argued that the meaning of a word is twofold: token and non-natural (meaning-nn). The former refers to what speakers mean by that word in individual instances of uttering it (it is also the 'universal type' meaning for such a word) while the non-natural meaning opposes the formalist orthodoxy in semantic theory, according to which the universal conventional meaning of a word predetermines what a word would mean in any instance of its use. The conventional theory discourages inquiry into what a particular speaker might mean by a word in a particular utterance; to understand the utterance one needs to know what the word 'means'. But Grice (1957: 381) holds that what a word 'means' is derived from what speakers mean by uttering it and further adds that 'what a particular speaker or writer means by a sign on a particular occasion… may well diverge from the standard meaning of the sign'.

> The critical insight of Grice's meaning-nn …is that what the speaker intends to communicate need not be related to conventional meaning at all…speaker meaning need

not be code-related, i.e. it may be inferred through processes quite different from the encoding and decoding processes assumed by the code model of communication.

In other words, an utterance need not encode one's intentions, as understanding an utterance is not merely a matter of decoding it. This has led to acceptance that 'sentence meaning' may differ from 'speaker meaning'. That is, a contrast may exist between the strict semantic content of some utterances and what is communicated beyond that. This notion is also referred to as the differences between the 'sense' and the 'force' where the former is seen as the sentence meaning and the latter the utterance or speaker meaning.

Ruth Kempson (1975), for example, sees this distinction as the relationship between properties of grammar (sentence meaning) and principles of conversation (speaker meaning), where the latter implies a more social, contextual view and the former has a more abstract cognitive slant. This distinction is part of the rationale for this thesis, since the assumption supporting this analysis is that an utterance can be analysed on its grammatical status but more importantly on the utterance's value as a communication tool. One of the premises in this research is that a language is primary for the exchange of ideas and that any evaluation of it should stress its ability to perform that role. Naturally the study does not downplay the more abstract cognitive aspect of language, hence the analysis pays attention also to the codes used to exchange the ideas. I tend therefore not to fully agree with Sperber (1995) when he suggests that:

142

Only linguists are interested in sentence meaning for its own sake. For the rest of us sentence meaning is something we are generally unaware of. It is something we use unconsciously, as a means towards our true end, which is to understand people, and to make ourselves understood. Speaker's meaning - the stuff we care about - always goes beyond sentence meaning: it is less ambiguous (although it may have ambiguities of its own); it is more precise in some ways, and often less precise in other ways; it has rich implicit content. Sentence meaning is but a sketch. We arrive at speaker's meaning by filling in this sketch (<http://www.dan.sperber.com/communi.html>, 7 March, 2002.)

There is, however, some credibility in the above quotation - that, in itself, a decontextualised sentence has no meaning. Someone has to give it a meaning, because meaning is entirely subject dependent. Sounds and marks are not intelligent beings that have some meanings of their own apart from that which is projected onto them by someone. Therefore, meaning is not a quality which inheres in a sentence in the same way that actual properties inhere in real things. Meaning or intention is a quality of speech acts or of the receptive acts. Every time a person speaks or hears an utterance, he or she gives the utterance meaning within certain fixed parameters.

I believe a word of caution is called for here. Although it is possible for the meaning assigned to words and sentences to be different from each other, it is reasonable to expect that the meaning of sentences should be related to the meanings of the words constituting the sentence. It is implausible for there to be a language where the relation between the meaning of the sentence and its component units is entirely random. While sentences do contain idiomatic

phrases and sentences where lexical items and sentence meaning are not transparently related (for example, 'to put the cart before the horse' meaning 'to pre-empt an issue') this is not the general rule.

However, in articulating the dichotomy that may exist between sentence and utterance meaning, Grice's framework does allow speaker meaning to be relatively free of conventional meaning; in fact the critical insight of Grice's 'meaning nn' (see earlier quotation in section 3.3.1) is that speaker intention or the illocutionary point of an utterance need not be related to conventional meaning at all. Speaker meaning need not be code-related but may be inferred through processes quite different from the encoding and decoding process. Grice claims that these processes rely, among others, on factors like the interlocutors' a) inferential ability; b) their ability to interpret indirect acts from their knowledge of speech acts; c) their familiarity with general principles of conversation and d) their mutually shared factual information ('encyclopedic knowledge').

Competent sophisticated speakers of a language are aware of these factors and interact with hearers accordingly, knowing that hearers - like other competent social beings and language users - will deduce utterance meaning by recognising the implications of what is said or not said. Each of these factors forms the core of a pragmatic examination and analysis of discourse and the communicative competence of language users, hence the justification for examining these factors in this study. In addition, the analysis of the samples of the Univen

students collected for this study demonstrates that the explanation of some of their utterances depends on a single one or a combination of the above factors. The last two sections of this chapter, therefore, will examine the two remaining factors in meaning creation namely, interlocutors' capacity to make implications and inferences and finally, interlocutors' ability to adhere to established conversation procedures.

3.3.2 INFERENCE AND IMPLICATURE

As noted above, what we mean is hardly exhausted by what we explicitly say. Normally we do not have much difficulty in grasping what a speaker is trying to communicate implicitly. What prevents confusion and miscommunication? How do interlocutors go beyond what is explicitly said to what a speaker implies or intends in an utterance? Vanderverken (1990: 72) asks similar questions:

1) How does the speaker succeed in getting the hearer to understand that what he means is not identical with what the sentence he uses means in the context of the utterance?

2) Once the speaker has understood that how does he succeed in identifying the primary non-literal speech act and the conversational implicatures of the utterance?

The notion that there is divergence between sentence and speaker meanings or that there is under-determination in our linguistic behaviour serves as the impetus for Grice to come up with the notions of entailment, presuppositions,

implicature and inference. His argument is, if speakers use words in non-literal or indirect ways, or if they do not structure their utterances to reflect the full propositions or intentions, how then is consensus reached between speaker and hearer? How would a hearer understand that the sentence:

67. Thanks a lot, you are a fine friend!

said to a hearer who has just made an indiscrete comment about the speaker is not meant as a compliment? Grice (1975) believes that a speaker who performs an indirect speech act, such as the one above, gets the hearer to understand by relying among other factors on the hearer's capacity to make inferences and implications.

Originating from the Latin word 'plicare' (to fold), the word 'implications' mean that which is 'folded in' and has to be 'unfolded' in order for an utterance to be understood. An utterance can imply a proposition that is not part of the utterance and that does not follow as a necessary consequence of the utterance. An implicature is an inference, or additional message that the hearer is able to work out from what is said by appealing to various cognitive structures. Levinson (1983: 115), for example, says that implicatures are like deductive devices. Bach and Harnish (1979: 92) claim that implicatures 'might be called inference to a plausible explanation'. Speakers convey meaning by implicature while hearers 'infer' meaning from the implicature. Simply put, to imply is to hint, suggest or

convey some meaning indirectly by means of language. An implicature is generated intentionally by the speaker and may or may not be understood by the hearer. To infer is to deduce something from evidence (this evidence may be linguistic, paralinguistic, metalinguistic or non-linguistic). An inference is, therefore generated by a hearer. Sperber (1995) notes:

> "Inference" is just the psychologists' term for what we ordinarily call "reasoning". Like reasoning, it consists in starting from some initial assumptions and in arriving through a series of steps at some conclusion (<http://www.dan.sperber.com/communi.html>, 7 March, 2002.)

Implication is therefore the basis for the distinction between implicit and explicit meaning. To imply is the act of communicating more than is said. Very often what we choose not to say, or leave out - especially when that information is expected by our hearer - conveys meaning.

    68. Speaker A: I hear you were at the new Chinese restaurant in the

                    Venda plaza. How was it?

        Speaker B: The Chinese lanterns are extraordinary.

In sentence 68 the real information is what was left out in speaker B's response. The main occupation of any restaurant is in connection with food, hence any enquiry about the status of any restaurant is usually about the food. Thus, choosing to be silent on that aspect of the status of a restaurant speaks volumes.

Grice (1971: 54) distinguishes between two types of implicature: conventional and conversational. They have in common the fact that they both convey an additional level of meaning beyond the semantic value of the utterance. Conventional implications refer to propositions which, taken by themselves, 'implicate' (Grice 1971: 54) certain states of the world that cannot be attributed to our use of language but rather are manifested by such use. Conventional implications are always conveyed regardless of the context. Levinson (1983: 127) states:

> Conventional implicatures are non-truth-conditional inferences that are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like the maxims but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items.

He then goes on to enumerate conventional implicatures' distinguishing features: non-cancellable, non-detachable and non-calculable, using pragmatic principles. For example:

69. Phew, that librarian is a cow!

has a conventional implication that the librarian is a female, on the well-built side, unhelpful, somewhat intimidating and hence it is an uncomplimentary comment. This meaning is quite usual with the younger generation. One can therefore say the word 'cow' has this permanent (conventional?) additional meaning, in certain

contexts. Kempson (1979) and Mey (1993), for example, wonder whether conventional implicatures have anything to do with pragmatics and whether they do not fall under the general semantic expansion of lexical meanings, which is not a radical notion. Part of the reason for the insignificance of conventional implicature in pragmatics is the limited number of items that have been identified as having this feature.

The above explanation contrasts with conversational implicature which rests on the assumption that all participants in a communicative event follow some laid down conversation principles or maxims (see section 3.3.4). To know what people mean you have to interpret what they say. But interpreting is a not a straight forward endeavour, misunderstandings occur frequently. As Leech (1983: 30) remarks, 'Interpreting an utterance is ultimately a matter of guesswork, or (to use a more dignified term) hypothesis formation'. In the case of conversational implicature, what is implied varies according to the context of the utterance. One important feature of a conversational implicature is that the implied information should be recoverable by reasoning process.

> The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument the implicature (if present at all) will not count as a conversational implicature; it will be a conventional implicature (Grice 1981: 187).

Other features include the fact that implicatures are dependent on the recognition of cooperative conditions of conversation; they are not part of the general meaning of the lexical items and the current meaning is not the sole possible interpretation of the implicature. Thus, the meaning of the implicature will depend on assumptions of the world which the hearer and speaker share. The extract below, taken from a linguistics course entitled, 'Conversation Implicature', in the University of Western Australia outlines the logic governing conversational implicature:

> The speaker (S) intends A but says B.
>
> S is aware that B is violating the cooperative principles (CP).
>
> S is aware that hearer (H) is also aware that S has deliberately violated CP in uttering B.
>
> S counts on H recognising that S intends H to recognise that CP has been deliberately violated.
>
> S counts on H being able then, to use shared/general, contextual knowledge to work out A from B.   (<http//ww.arts.uwa.edu.au/linWWW/lin101-102/NOTES-101/implicature.html>, 7 March, 2002).

Grice's (1971a) position is that to determine what is being said one has to be specific to assist interlocutors select one possible meaning based on the consideration of all factors. The question one may ask after this is: how does a hearer move from a literal interpretation into the realm of implication? Or, what is the exact nature of the inference process by which conversational implicatures are worked out? The answer offered by Grice is that interpretation of speaker intent or meaning is created during a communicative event by an assumption that

the participants are, unless alerted to the contrary, observing general rules or principles of conversation behaviour.

3.3.4 CONVERSATION PRINCIPLES

Grice asserts that a speaker and hearer respect certain rules which ensure communication takes place even if the intention of a speaker may not have been captured by the physical codes. Linguistic interaction is a co-operative and social enterprise, hence users of the language observe these rules in the process of socialisation. There are many unstated and complex rules of interaction that citizens of the same speech community share and it is assumed that they bring these postulates to any communication encounter. Within a certain context the following exchange between speakers A and B would serve as a normal comprehensible communication:

70. Speaker A: I really dislike the first day of the term.

Speaker B: Mrs Brink has a baby.

Speaker A: I am going to set my alarm.

The exchange above may leave one totally perplexed unless one operates on Grice's theory that most participants in a conversation 'have a common purpose or at least a mutually accepted direction' (1989: 26). With that at the back of one's mind, an assumption can be made that the parties in the above interaction are obeying certain conversation maxims, unless alerted otherwise. That is the

justification for speaker A correctly interpreting speaker B's utterance as a relevant contribution to the communication. Owing to their shared background, speaker B knows that the presence of Mrs Brink, in the institution, causes some unpleasantness, particularly at the beginnings of terms; and secondly, that speaker A knows that one of the practices in their institution is that when people have babies they absent themselves. Speaker A's second utterance testifies that the correct deductions have been made, as setting an alarm is the usual indication of not wanting to miss or be late for an awaited event, most likely a pleasant one. So a seemingly uncooperative/irrelevant response by speaker B sets into motion a chain of assumptions and inferences which leaves speaker A more informed than when the exchange commenced. These assumptions Grice (*ibid.*) calls 'cooperative principles' which he then sub-divides into four conversational maxims:

Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly.

In formulating the cooperative principles, Grice (1989: 29) believes that conversation is a form of rational purposive behaviour, the goal of which is 'a maximally effective exchange of information', hence these maxims are not

arbitrary but a reasoned or rational way of explaining language users' ability. A theory of this nature can be divided into two parts: a theory of competence and a theory of performance (see Chapter Two). In this view, conversation maxims can be seen as constituents of a person's communicative competence or as an account of human capacity to communicate, an echo of the theme of this study. Steven Burnaby (1997: 128), for example, refers to these maxims as part of our normative competence in linguistic behaviour.

The concretisation of these maxims is based on Grice's view that the conversational principle determines the way all indirect information can be conveyed in utterances. The propositional content of an utterance (what the speaker says) is determined by semantics (truth conditions); and the cooperative principles come into play solely to determine the additional information (implicatures) which a hearer might deduce from an utterance over and above such truth conditional content. The normal sequence therefore is that interlocutors initially attempt to create meaning using the conversation maxims. When this does not create relevance in the exchange, they move on to the next level, the inferred level. In other words, the main rationale for the outlining of these conversation guidelines is to explain the processes that interlocutors undergo to provide information which is beyond the semantic content of an utterance. The idea that there can be under-representation of the semantic value of utterances and hence the necessity for conversation interpretation is, therefore, the bases for implications and the conversation maxims.

It can therefore be said that Grice (1989) conceives the role of the maxims as yardsticks to determine whether a conversational intervention is suitable or unsuitable in an endeavour that has as its goal, the exchange of information. A suitable move is one that furthers the common goal of an exchange while an unsuitable one does not. Grice (*ibid*) argues that the participants in a conversation agree on a purpose or direction. This purpose may change throughout the conversation yet at each moment there is some mutually recognised direction for the conversation. In Grice's (*ibid.*) model each participant cooperates in an attempt to achieve that purpose and both speaker and hearer typically assume that utterances are governed by these four maxims. When these maxims are not observed, participants are forced to find alternative ways of arriving at the meaning of an utterance – the alternate meaning arrived at is known as the implied meaning.

Despite the general plausibility of these maxims, there are numerous occasions when non-observance of them is noticeable in normal exchanges. 'There are many liars and there are many conversation which change their subject abruptly as someone makes a statement quite irrelevant to what was said before' (Kempson 1979: 143). These rules may then be intentionally or unintentionally broken. Grice has identified five main ways that conversation participants may fail to observe these maxims: flouting, violating, infringing, opting out, and suspending. In her book, *Meaning in Interaction: an introduction to pragmatics* (1995), Jenny Thomas has quite comprehensively articulated how non-observance occurs in each of these instances. When this happens, the hearer

154

must assume that the speaker's words imply something other than their literal meaning. For instance, Grice (1989) cites tautologies as an example of a Quantity maxim violation.

71. Boys will be boys.

If based on literal interpretation, a statement like sentence 71 above has not communicated any information, hence competent users of the language will automatically switch their interpretation into implication mode which will then provide users with more information than the codes mean on a literal level.

Although the articulation of the maxims is seen as one of the major break-throughs in explanation of communication, it has also generated a fair amount of debate. One usual question is whether all the maxims are necessary and whether it is not possible to have one superordinate maxim. Green (1989: 89), for example, mentions her doubts about having two parts to the maxim of quality. She believes that the first part ('Do not say what you believe to be false') logically entails the second part ('Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence'). She also feels that the parts of the maxim of quantity ('Make your contribution as informative as is required' and 'Do not make your contribution more informative than is required') could be succinctly captured by the third maxim ('Be relevant'). Stephen Neale (1989) wonders why there are no rankings on the individual maxims to assist in cases where it is impossible to observe all of them (or all of

them to the same degree). Even though Grice (1975: 27) does acknowledge that observing 'some of these maxims is a matter of less urgency than the observance of others', he is unable to provide 'weightings' which could assist participants to determine the status of their interactions. Other questions raised are: What does it mean that a 'contribution should be as informative as is required'? When precisely does a contribution cease to be relevant? What is the status of the maxims? Are they rules, conventions or, as Sperber and Wilson (1986) claim, just 'empirical generalisations' (hence obvious)?

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986) alternatively explain exchange of information or meaning creation by the relevance theory and not a general cooperation principle. Relevance theory is an approach to human communication based on two assumptions, one about cognition and the other about communication. The first assumption is that human cognition is driven by a search for relevance. The second assumption is that human communication crucially involves the expression and recognition of intentions. The theory postulates that utterances raise precise and predictable expectations of relevance which act as a guide towards the speaker's intention. In this approach, hearers are entitled to assume that of all the linguistically possible explanations of an utterance, the one the speaker intended to convey is the one that best satisfies these expectations of relevance. The comprehension process may be seen as involving the mutual adjustment of contextual assumptions and implications in order to acquire equilibrium in communication relevance.

Although these principles may indeed seem obvious and appeal to everybody's common sense, exchange of information is complex and credit should be given to Grice for 'streamlining' what actually occurs in a conversation event.

3.3.5 SUMMARY

Chapter Three, the second part of the literature review, has discussed the three components of communicative competence, namely, event (language and text), situation (context) and act (function). Since the main focus of this research is how interlocutors express language functions, the classification of language functions, according to SAT, has been extensively dealt with. The chapter has explored in depth the functional approach to language by outlining the various functions of language which can be performed either directly or indirectly. Also examined is the process interlocutors undergo to create the various language functions during conversation events. This provides the theoretical background for the analysis carried out in this study and reported upon in the next chapter.