CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Running through the previous chapters is a view which represents language as a social semiotic which enables users to function verbally in their daily situations. Inherent in this view is the conviction that language is a tool to be 'used' to serve specific purposes; it is not an abstract competence. This statement has notable implications for users of a second language, such as those who participated in the present study. Part of the argument so far is that language codes can have 'negotiated' meaning or purpose at various levels: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. As noted earlier, 'private property in the sphere of language does not exist; any process presupposes a system' (Roman Jakobson, 1960: 377). Such a 'system' should be able to withstand the rigors and scrutiny of utterance analysis.

This chapter elaborates on the method of investigation used in this study and presents the results of the analysis carried out. This empirical study mainly utilises Speech Act Theory (as discussed in the previous chapters), an approach within cross-cultural discourse analysis which is in turn one of the methods within the qualitative research paradigm. Some statistical information is also included to

provide pictorial details of the results as this graphical representation is appropriate to this type of study. Although the statistical information means that this report also exhibits some characteristics of a quantitative research approach, this report cannot be fully classified as quantitative as very basic statistical information is provided, mainly, in the form of graphs and percentages, justifying the retention and location of this research in the qualitative tradition. A description of qualitative research in general, and cross-cultural discourse analysis in particular, as well as the rationale for such an approach are also provided in this chapter. The study's population and sampling techniques are also discussed, followed by the methods for data collection and analysis and the reasons for adopting such methods.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The qualitative research paradigm has roots in cultural anthropology as it is a research tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own environment, and for the purpose of this study, in their linguistic environment. The focus here is on the participants' perceptions and experiences and the way they make sense of their lives. Qualitative research is broadly defined as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical or other means of quantification (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). According to Bulmer (1993) and Denzin and Lincoln (1998), a qualitative research can be multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to the subject matter. This means that qualitative methods study

phenomena in their natural (rather than experimental) settings where the participants are behaving in their normal manner.

Qualitative research starts by acknowledging that there is a range of ways of creating meaning from, or interpreting the different phenomena of the world. The qualitative paradigm focuses on discovering the different types of meaning, for example, linguistic meaning, as created by those who are being researched. The researcher enters the participants' world and attempts to follow their thought processes so that the data that finally emerges is described primarily in the participants' language and from their viewpoint.

This is the stance of this research as it is an attempt to investigate how Tshivenda speakers of English communicate some of their everyday functions in the English language through analysing selected Tshivenda speakers' utterances. As noted above, this category of utterance analysis in language studies, or to give it the more technical term, discourse analysis, falls under qualitative research, as such analysis investigates these speakers' expressions in their natural contexts. The next section reviews discourse analysis as a research tool in cross-cultural language studies.

4.2.1 CROSS-CULTURAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

An area concerned with the linguistic manifestation of social differences is the study of interethnic communication. Work done by researchers such as Gumprez

(1982), Verschueren (1985) and Tannen (1989) has shown that the most subtle linguistic cues, ranging from the selection of lexical items, construction of utterances, placement of tonal stress to the arrangement of an argument can systematically differ among the speakers of the same language depending on the degree of exposure. Such idiosyncratic utterances, according to Brown and Levinson (1978: 33), may unintentionally signal emotions such as exasperation, incompetence, aggression, poor social skills or an array of other negative sentiments on the part of the speaker. Studies in cross-cultural politeness strategies demonstrate that the most subtle differences in the prosodic or pragmatic features of an utterance are enough to isolate a native speaker from a non-native speaker and to cause a breakdown in communication.

4.3 METHODOLOGY

As constantly detailed in this report, Speech Act Theory (SAT) has been used as an analytical tool to evaluate the communicative competence, by analysisng English utterances of selected Tshivenda speakers. Although SAT began in philosophy and was not initially proposed by Austin (1962) as a framework in which to analyse discourse, the issues with which SAT is concerned (language context and functions) can lead to such an analysis. This is because SAT defines underlying conditions that must hold for an utterance to be used to realise a particular function or speech act. These conditions often require considerations of what is said, its form, its meaning and its presentation, and the context in which it is said. SAT as an analysing tool entails establishing whether speaker

intention or meaning or use has been interpreted correctly by the hearer. This is what this study has aimed to do. The point of diversion for this study is that the utterances to be analysed have been provided by English second-language speakers (Tshivenda) and hence contain idiosyncratic expressions. The challenge here is to establish whether such marked features in the expressions have any effect on the function or the hearers' interpretation process.

As has already been noted, communicative competence can be analysed in accordance with various discourse analysis paradigms. The evaluation tool for this study is SAT. Of course this choice is open to questions. Some may feel that functional grammar as articulated by Halliday (1994) may be a better tool because of the theory's claim to foreground all analysis of language in a functional-meaning paradigm (See section 3.2.1.2). Alternatively, evaluation is also possible along the components of communicative competence as advocated by Hymes (1967) (section 2.3.1). Others may also recommend a more ethnographic method for such an analysis. Such analysing tools are all most commendable, as they all articulate functional/ social/ meaning orientation to language, however, this investigation is in line with Speech Act Theory because it best suited the stated objectives of this research project.

One justification for the choice is that this project is interested in the role that structural codes perform in the creation of meaning, within certain contexts. The aim was to see how speakers articulate their intentions and how hearers arrive at

the meaning they assign to utterances. The approach does not negate the role of cultural norms in establishing functions of language but SAT starts from the premise that interlocutors must create meaning during a linguistic interaction and when this does not occur, then reasons must be found for this. If anything, it is this insistence on language being a functional tool, or a tool for social use, that reasons are sought when an utterance does not do this.

Minimum interaction with the theory of semiotics stresses the fact that a language is comprised of signs which may be arbitrarily assigned values, but once these values have been assigned by the custodians of the language, for the continual functioning of these codes/signs as medium of interaction, the values should be maintained. That justifies why SAT begins by grounding its units of analysis in speaker intention and action and in our knowledge of constitutive rules but its application to discourse leads to a structural approach in which units are arranged along functional lines. These functional lines are also communicative actions which have identifiable boundaries and it is these boundaries which objectively allow evaluation of communicative competence.

An utterance cannot have a single meaning unless a comprehensive context is established. For SAT and the other mentioned discourse analyzing tools, the cultural norms and considerations are the context for texts or utterances. Much has been written about the pivotal role of social norms and cultural considerations in establishing meaning, indeed a whole school of thought and

linguistic movement is centred on this view; the view that consideration of cultural norms in English has given rise to New Englishes. It is hard to perceive that the authors within this movement would disagree that language is a structured tool designed to function within certain specified parameters. This is the same central premise of SAT.

4.3.1 SAMPLE COLLECTION

A corpus of representatives and directives (Searle, 1969) was collected. Representatives and directives were chosen for investigation as these particular speech functions are among the earliest to be acquired by second language speakers (Clark & Clark, 1977). For this analysis, eighteen spoken utterances were compiled from the corpus collected from first year University of Venda students, who were enrolled in the English Language Practicals Course (ELP). ELP is a compulsory bridging course for all students enrolled at the University. These were utterances heard from one class of 200 students and they were selected by purposive sampling. The main criteria were that first, the utterances were marked in some aspect, phonologically, semantically or pragmatically; secondly, utterances were from Tshivenda speakers of English; and thirdly, these were students in their first year of study in the University of Venda. The intentions of these utterances were established by the speakers themselves.

4.3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The samples were collected from the first year students in 1997. The second group of participants, the hearers or respondents, was drawn from first year English major students in Univen in 2002. The rationale for using this type of respondent was first, that there is a marked difference in the levels of proficiency between students enrolled in the ELP course and those who go on to major in English and secondly, the demographics of the students have changed in the last five years with a high percentage of first years who have had more exposure to English coming in.

4.3.3 QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire was compiled from eighteen samples collected from students' utterances. The procedure followed was that once an utterance was heard it was recorded; the student was then invited to a brief discussion during which the speaker's intention as well as any context details given by the speaker were recorded. These utterances were then used to design the questionnaire. The questionnaire items comprise either single utterances or short dialogues. In the column before each utterance, brief context details are provided. Respondents were then asked to indicate the speech act/s of the utterance. Respondents had a range of choices: **statements, suggestions, complaints**, **commands, invitations, requests** and a last column which is labelled, **'not sure'**. These particular speech acts were selected after a series of pilot studies established them as the common interpretation of the samples selected for the research.

The final pilot study conducted saw the number of items reduced from 25 to 18, more contextual details added and the inclusion of the column 'not sure' on the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendix.

4.3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis is an attempt to establish the connection between language functions as outlined by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), and the structure of the utterance in an attempt to obtain a picture of the interlocutors' communicative competence. As stated in Chapters One, Two and Three, evaluation of communicative competence using SAT must involve an examination of the language, context and function of utterances. This was done with the samples analysed.

One interesting aspect of the utterances selected for the analysis is the fact that they are not the usual expressions and the challenge is to determine whether these non-ordinary features would influence their functions, and hence hearers' interpretation of them. That is to say, the aim of the analysis is to determine the role that the physical configurations of constituents of an utterance played in the establishing the function of the utterances and the creation of linguistic meaning. This was done by trying to establish a match between speaker intention and hearer interpretation. Communication is said to have taken place when there is a match between speaker intention and hearer interpretation notwithstanding any grammatical blemishes and/or any deviations from standard South African

English(es). Thus the focus in all instances is on mutual understanding within the specific ESL context.

4.3.4.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA

As noted in the literature review on the topic of semiotics, section 3.2.), a language is a system of regulated signs which would have minimum use if certain agreed upon rules are not adhered to. As Searle (1969: 16) puts it, 'speaking a language is engaging in a highly rule-governed behaviour'. Similarly Jakobson (1960) notes that private property in the sphere of language does not exist. Language, as discussed earlier, is only one type of semiological system (Saussure 1966: 68) but before it can become part of any meaning-creating system it must adhere to pre-agreed upon regulations. When signs/ language behave in this manner they communicate propositions and are usable, otherwise they remain as mere noises, markings on a page or body movements. Culler (1976: 91) asserts that 'where there are signs there is a system', and where there is a system, there are observable, objective, describable features or regulations that allow this system to have existence.

Speech communities, and in this case the competent speakers of a language, linguistically and pragmatically, share a history and have reached a consensus about the system and the conventions for the usage of the parts or codes that make up the whole. It is necessary at this point to stress the fact that 'competent speakers' are not specific to any geographical location, rather this term refers to

any speaker of English be it first or second language speakers, along the lines outlined by Hymes (1967). Even advocates of New Englishes (Kachru, 1982) have not negated the fact that one cannot label a string of words as ‘language’ if there are no rules or system guiding users to the value of these codes. It is these conventions, linguistic and pragmatic, which enable linguistics, researchers, evaluators and others to label one string of words as ‘meaningful’ and the other ‘meaningless’.

Of course, one of the assertions of this investigation has always been that communicative competence should not be considered a single attribute but should be judged globally on a variety of norms. Competence, using the communicative or pragmatic context, is mastery of all the communication components namely, grammatical, discourse, socio-linguistic, strategic as well as psycholinguistic components like knowledge and skills (see section 2.3.1). In other words competence is interlocutors control or mastery of the mentalist structural constituents of the language as well as ability to create meaning within the appropriate social-cultural context. These, therefore were the criteria used in evaluating these utterances.

4.4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS: PART ONE

The first part of the results is presented in the form of tables while the second part discusses the results in a narration format. Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the utterances and their intentions as stated by the speakers.

TABLE 4.1: CONTEXT, UTTERANCE AND SPEAKER INTENTION

CONTEXT	UTTERANCE	SPEAKER INTENTION
1. A student who needed a pen to fill in a form said this to his lecturer:	1. I am asking for a pen to fill out this form.	1. Request
2. A student whose path was blocked by another student said:	2. Sorry, I can pass **(with a rising intonation on the word 'pass').**	2. Request
3. A student absent from class when an assignment was given said:	3. She gave what.	3. Request
4. Marked assignments were given back in class. One student followed the lecturer and said:	4. My marks are somehow.	4. Complaint
5. A student who failed to hand in an assignment on the due date said:	5. I am asking to be apologised due to my failure to submit my assignment.	5. Request
6. A lecturer not sure whether a student had attended her lecture asked:	6. Lecturer: Were you in class today? Student: Of course. **(Please describe the second utterance).**	6. Complaint
7. Student A had just had an accident. This was the dialogue between her and a friend:	7. A: I had an accident last week. B: Sorry. Are you all right? A: I am fine but it is so boring. **(Please describe the third utterance**).	7. Complaint
8. A student accused of being late by the lecturer reported this to her friend by saying:	8. Student: The lecturer said I was late but I denied.	8. Complaint
9. Handouts were given in class. A student who did not receive one said:	9. I am in need of a pamphlet.	9. Request
10. Speaker A wanted to know speaker B's reactions to a film.	10. A: Did you enjoy the film? B: Too much! (Please describe the second utterance)	10. Statement
11. A student when asked whether there were other students in the class	11. I was left lonely in the class.	11. Statement

with him said		
12. A student in the Department of Agriculture describing a plough he was using said:	12. The broken plough, it is fixed.	12. Statement
13. A student describing the size of her discussion group said:	13. The students in our discussion group are many.	13. Statement
14. A lecturer concerned about a student, Kate, said:	14. Lecturer: I would like to speak to Kate. Student: No, she is not around. **(Please describe the first utterance.)**	14. Statement
15. A student whose friend had missed some lectures, when asked to explain the previous lecture to the non-attending friend said:	15. He is a popular somebody.	15. Statement
16. A student asked (in October) whether she would be going home for the weekend said:	16. I won't go there no more.	16. Statement
17. Student A's bag strap came undone and student B said:	17. Leave me do it for you.	17. Statement
18. A student anxiously waiting for her supplementary results said:	18. I feel hopeless for this week.	18. Statement

Table 4.1 indicates that the utterances have various what could structurally be perceived as 'blemishes'. Whether these utterances failed to articulate the speakers' intentions is the main concern of this study. What these utterances demonstrate is that though there are structural idiosyncrasies within a functional-meaning perceptive, they cannot be faulted. For example, in sample 1^5 the speaker has ignored the stative/dynamic distinction in verbs resulting in the use of the stative verb 'to ask' being used in the progressive aspect. Phonological

under-differentiation of the interrogative and the declarative forms of sentences may have accounted for the respondents' inability to interpret sample 2[6]. Pragmatic shortcomings may be blamed for the inappropriate response in sample 6[7] while idiosyncratic semantic broadening may have resulted in utterances 4 and 15[8]. Having said that one realises that in samples, 1, 4, 5, (60%), communication did take place, despite their identified structural shortcomings. This is a clear indication of the tension between a structural and a pragmatic evaluation of utterances or the differences in the concepts of Hymes and Chomsky. Further discussions are included in the second part of the interpretation.

TABLE 4.2: RESPONDENTS' INTERPRETATION

UTTERANCE		statement	suggestion	Complaint	command	invitation	request	not sure
1		7	2	1	1	-	**83**	6
2		13	15	11	**41**	-	8	10
3		17	2	18	5	-	8	**50**
4		6	5	**74**	3	1	-	11
5		8	14	-	2	3	**61**	7
6		37	8	2	4	5	3	**42**
7		**38**	2	33	1	3	-	21
8		**50**	5	23	8	-	2	13
9		17	5	6	**45**	2	12	7
10		**44**	8	1	7	11	3	23
11		**42**	2	**42**	1	-	2	13
12		**65**	13	2	4	3	1	13

[5] Sample 1: I am asking for a pen to fill out this form.
[6] Sample 2: Sorry, I can pass. (With a rising intonation on the word 'pass').
[7] Sample 6: Lecturer: Were you in class today? Student: Of course. (Please describe the second utterance)
[8] Sample 4: My marks are somehow.
Sample 15: He is a popular somebody.

13		**35**	9	**35**	7	-	3	9
14		**34**	18	1	12	2	12	23
15		**42**	14	5	4	7	5	30
16		**25**	12	22	16	6	2	18
17		5	29	3	**33**	6	9	14
18		**31**	9	30	2	4	-	25

NOTE: Numbers in bold and underlined represent the highest response rate, therefore, the recorded interpretation of the utterance.

These percentages are indicative of the difficulty in assigning functions to speech acts, with or without the context being specified. Assigning functions is quite central to the type of analysis undertaken in this study, because of the structural evaluation of utterances implicit in SAT. A similar approach may not be so necessary in a functional or socio-cultural evaluation. This fact reiterates my earlier points that socio-cultural factors exert different considerations on the encoding and decoding of utterances.

Although the discussions have not examined interpretations which represent less than 10% of the respondents, there is still a variety of interpretations for each utterance. For each utterance, there is a possibility of six interpretations, as shown in the tables; and eight utterances (44%) have all six speech acts as possible interpretations while the rest, 56%, have five speech acts as possible interpretations. Only four utterances, (22%), have an interpretation of 50% of the respondents and above. In five utterances – 7, 11, 13, 16 and 18 – the difference between the highest response and the next is less than six respondents. This shows that in 28% of the utterances the respondents experienced difficulties in

choosing between two speech functions. For all the utterances, some respondents, in some cases as many as 50% (utterance 3), were not sure which speech act the utterance was. This is an indication of the difficulty in assigning a function to a written utterance.

TABLE 4.3: A COMPARISON OF SPEAKER INTENTION AND HEARER /RESPONDENT INTERPRETATION

UTTERANCE	SPEAKER INTENTION	HEARER INTERPRETATION	% OF CORRECT INTERPRETATION
1	Request	Request	83
2	Request	Command	41
3	Request	Not Sure	50
4	Complaint	Complaint	74
5	Request	Request	61
6	Complaint	Not Sure	42
7	Complaint	Statement	38
8	Complaint	Statement	50
9	Request	Command	45
10	Statement	Statement	44
11	Statement	Complaint and Statement	42
12	Statement	Statement	65
13	Statement	Statement and Complaint	35
14	Statement	Statement	34
15	Statement	Statement	42
16	Statement	Statement	25
17	Statement	Statement	33
18	Statement	Statement	31

As mentioned earlier, communication is said to have been achieved if there is a match between speaker intention and hearer interpretation, therefore in ten

utterances (56%) communication was achieved. There were two utterances, 11 and 13,[9] where two interpretations were given. Although one of each interpretation matches the speaker's intention, there is still room for misunderstanding. It cannot, therefore, be said that communication has taken place in these two utterances. This means that, in total, eight utterances were misunderstood by the respondents in terms of not being able to determine the function of them. These results also show that statements are more readily understood than other forms of speaker intention. Speakers uttered nine statements and hearers correctly interpreted six of them; in other words 67% of the statements were understood as such by the respondents. There were four complaints and only one, 25%, was correctly interpreted. Speakers made five requests and two, 40%, were identified as such. This shows that the speech act of complaining is either not convincingly articulated by speakers, or hearers are not familiar with the conditions governing this particular speech act.

4.4.1 COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF RESPONDENTS

As indicated earlier, in 56% of the utterances communication was achieved despite the various linguistic and pragmatic flaws identified. This is a clear indication of the multiple competences inherent in communicative competence. The analysis shows that although 14 utterances (78%) had some grammatical variances only 5 (28%) were misunderstood by the hearers. These figures demonstrate the distinction that can be made between linguistic and pragmatic

[9] Sample 11: I was left lonely in the class.

competence (see section 2.2.1.3) and sentence meaning and utterance meaning (see section 3.3.1). Such results are also an indication that a communication event relies quite heavily on pragmatic considerations, perhaps more so in an interaction among second language users in an informal context. Of course, one can also argue that since most of these utterances were made in informal situations it may explain speakers' deliberate choice of these grammatical constructions and is not a true reflection of their competence. This fact, true as it may be, does not invalidate the point being made, namely that such idiosyncratic or context-specific utterances are capable of being understood in certain contexts because of the multiple competence needed in utterance interpretation and in the evaluation of interlocutors' communicative competence.

The recognition of these multiple competences is in line with the distinction between pragmatic, socio-cultural meaning and the meaning conveyed by structural codes of a language. As already discussed, the two approaches see competence and the creation of meaning quite differently. While the latter identifies competence very closely with mastery of the mentalist properties of language, the former sees competence more in terms of usage of the language. Socio-cultural mastery of a language ensures that interlocutors communicate meaningfully in given contexts with the use of structural codes which are appropriate to the occasion.

Sample 13: The students in our discussion group are many.

This is the central point of Hymes' (1967) notion of communicative competence, one of the central points of this investigation.

Therefore, communicatively these respondents can be evaluated as being pragmatically competent as they seem to have drawn upon competences such as discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence to construct and interpret these utterances.

4.5 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS: PART TWO

The presentation of results in part two examines the response rate and the design of the utterances in more detail. This enables comments to be made on the utterances' structural configuration (syntactic, semantic and phonological), the context and the function, in relation to the stated intention of the speaker (pragmatic).

In the presentation, the utterances have been grouped into sections, according to the intention/function of the speaker. In other words, all utterances classified as either suggestions or requests or statements, by the speaker, are discussed together, irrespective of the sample's sequential numbering on the actual questionnaire. This non-sequential presentation style was adopted to reduce the repetition of introductory information which would need to be provided for each utterance if the same numbering, as on the questionnaire, was observed. This presentation style means that, for example, all samples identified as

'suggestions' are discussed together, once the introductory information on 'suggestions' has been given, as against some introductory information being provided every time a sample identified as 'a suggestion', on the questionnaire, is examined. This arrangement also allows for more comprehensive and focused discussions on the possible structural configurations possibilities in the realisation of a particular speech acts.

The composition of the various sections is:

Section A: Requests: utterances 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9

Section B: Complaints: utterances 4, 6, 7 and 8

Section C: Statements: utterances 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

Before the discussions in each section the details of that particular function, according to SAT principles are given to provide an immediate context for the samples. These details are in addition to explanations already given in Chapter Three. The type of details given here, therefore, only serves to focus the reader's attention on the ensuing analysis and discussion.

The presentation starts with the statistics of the responses given. Responses which represent less than 10% of the research population (hearers) are not reflected in the explanations but the information does appear in Table 4.2 The examination of each utterance includes stating the speaker's intention (**SI**) and

the hearer's interpretation (**HI**) (from the questionnaire data); identifying the locutionary act (**LA**); describing the utterance's status (**US**) in terms of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic norms; identifying the perlocutionary act (**PA**); determining whether communication (**C**) did take place; and finally discussing the status of the utterance in accordance with communication principles. One can see that these headings reflect a configuration of the evaluation units of communicative competence (language, context and function) as well as the components of a speech act.

In Speech Act Theory, a speech act is pronounced 'unachieved' if there is a discrepancy between the speaker's intention and the hearer's interpretation, or whether an 'uptake'[10] was needed for the interpretation of the utterance. All the responses to the eighteen samples are discussed whether communication was 'achieved' or 'unachieved' according to SAT. This is because these utterances are 'unique' as their structures demonstrate some interesting discussion points, not only pragmatically but syntactically and semantically.

4.5.1 SECTION A: REQUESTS

Requests form part of the group of directives which embody an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. Requests are pre-events: they

[10] 'Uptake' further information supplied for clarification so that interlocutors can continue with a

express the speaker's expectation of the hearer with regard to a prospective event, verbal or non-verbal. Requests are face-threatening by definition according to Brown and Levinson (1978). Hearers can interpret requests as intrusive and speakers may hesitate to make the request for fear of losing face.

The abundance of linguistic options available for 'requests' testifies to the social intricacies involved in this speech function. As also noted in Chapter Three, the notion of indirect speech acts illustrates the wide range of possible structures that speakers can implore for this type of directive. For instance, a request can be realised by structures like:

72. I think you better go now. (**request** by a statement)
73. I have finished cooking. (**request** to come and eat by statement)
74. Could you please shut the door? (**request** by embedded question / imperative)
75. May I borrow your pen? (**request** by a modal question)

These examples demonstrate the flexibility that exists in the selection of language codes for articulating a language function. They also indicate that in the final analysis the determining factor is the context or the conditions under which the utterance is uttered. Some researchers like Brown and Levinson (1978), Mey (1993) and Thomas (1995) believe that the greater the risk of a refusal of a request, the more indirect the sentence form will be.

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communication event.

Some of the felicitous conditions for a request are: it is in the speaker's interest for this future action of the hearer to take place; it is not obvious to either interlocutors that the hearer will perform the action in the normal course of events without some kind of prompting; and the hearer is potentially able to comply with the request. Therefore, it is infelicitous, for example, for a speaker to request that the door be shut when it is already shut; or if the hearer does not care one way or another if the door remains open or if the hearer is physically incapable of shutting doors.

Directives differ in force so they may range from 'pious wish to peremptory harsh orders' (Mey, 1993: 164). Although 'orders' and 'commands' are also directives, they have the additional condition that the speaker must be in a position of authority over the hearer and the action the hearer is commanded to perform is obvious. The fact that the proposed action is obvious although the hearer is still not performing it is the justification for a speaker bringing her/his authority to bear on the situation, by issuing an order or a command.

4.5.1.1 Utterance 1: A student needed a pen to fill in a form and said this to the lecturer: "I am asking for a pen to fill out this form."

a) SI: request HI: request: 83%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic blemish from the misuse of the stative verb, 'to ask'

d) PA: lecturer lends the student the pen

e) C: achieved

Although a clear majority of the respondents correctly interpreted the utterance as a 'request', the next response of any note identified the utterance as 'a statement'. That the respondents thought the utterance could also be a statement is in line with the notion of literal force, that is the view that illocutionary force is built into sentence-forms. Hence the three sentence types, the imperative, the interrogative and the declarative, have the forces traditionally associated with them, namely ordering, questioning and stating respectively.

In this sample, however, the speaker was employing an indirect speech act, in this case a statement being used as a request. This is not an unusual communication strategy for it is not out of the ordinary for a speaker to say, 'Those cakes smell divine' which could double as a statement (compliment) or an oblique request for some of the cakes. The non-use of the interrogative form to make requests is also a politeness strategy as the interrogative, according to Brown and Levinson (1978: 129), may sound abrupt. In addition the verb 'to ask', even if used ungrammatically, as in this utterance, has the fundamental function of 'a request' except when used in very marked utterance,[11] as in a mother sarcastically saying to her son who has taken her car out for the whole night without permission, 'May I ask for my car keys back?'

Another point of interest is the performative nature of the utterance. A performative, as may be recalled, is a speech act where 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action' (Austin, 1962: 6). Hence, in this utterance, the speaker saying these words, s/he is simultaneously performing the act of 'asking'. However, if one were to follow this line of argument further one must acknowledge that the other conditions for a performative have not been fulfilled in this utterance. These unfulfilled conditions include the fact that the speaker has used a non-performative verb (the verb 'to ask' is not a traditional performative verb); the verb is not in the simple present tense and no conventional language form is employed here. This utterance lends credence to some of the objections raised by writers like Schriffin (1994) and Harnish (1997) who maintain that there are neither 'contextual or textual conditions that support the constative-performative distinction' (Schriffin, 1994: 54).

4.5.1.2 Utterance 2: A student whose path was blocked by another student said, "Sorry, I can pass." (With a rising intonation on the word 'pass').

a) SI: request HI: command: 41%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic blemish; misuse of the word 'sorry'; use of a statement to request for a favour; not using the usual standard request form appropriate for the occasion, for example, 'Excuse me, may I pass?'

d) PA: hearer makes way for the speaker

e) C: achieved

[11] 'marked utterance' would be any utterance/structure not used with its normal meaning.

The interpretation of this utterance is not conclusive as 15% of respondents identified the utterance as a suggestion, 13% as a statement, 11% as a complaint and 10% were 'not sure'. This inconclusive interpretation may be attributed to the respondents' confusion with the term 'sorry' and maybe, also, their lack of awareness of the significance of the rising intonation on the word 'pass'. In Standard English, 'sorry' and 'excuse me' are usually not interchangeable and therefore context-specific. 'Sorry', a common preface to an expressive, presupposes that an infringement of some sort had occurred and the speaker's intention is to offer an apology, while an 'excuse me' announces a speaker's intention of seeking a favour which may or may not be very convenient for the hearer. If the speaker's intention is the former, communication would be achieved once the hearer accepts the apology after the hearer has assessed the infringement and has decided it was not deliberate and not too out of the accepted norms of social behaviour. Otherwise the perlocutionary act of the latter intention will include the hearer moving from that position.

In the South African linguistic context, as indeed in some other African societies such as the Ghanaian community of West Africa, such confusion, as evidenced by the data, should have been reduced, as 'sorry' and 'excuse me' in these countries carry the same meaning. However hearers, without the benefit of this shared linguistic culture, may need a further explanation, otherwise an alternative interpretation would arise if the hearer, anticipating such a request, had with

some inconvenience attempted to create an opening for the speaker. Had the speaker omitted the 'sorry' and just uttered the declarative statement, 'I can pass' in a rising tone the question would be: would that have helped with the interpretation? This is a point worth investigating. In addition, the usual phrase in such a situation would be 'Excuse me, may I pass?' The problems with this sample therefore include the use of the wrong modal auxiliary and the selection of an inappropriate request realisation.

This utterance also demonstrates the blurring of the distinction between the modals 'can' and 'may'. Traditional grammarians insist that the modal 'can' refers to ability, possibility and permission while the modal 'may' also means possibility and permission (Sinclair, 1992: 399). As an auxiliary used to express permission, 'may' is more formal and less common than 'can' which (except in fixed conventional idiomatic expressions) can be substituted for 'can'. However, 'may' is particularly associated with permission given by the speaker. That is, it is believed there is a difference between 'You may leave the room' (I permit you to leave the room) and 'You can leave the room' (where the permission is more general and impersonal). And that there is also a difference in meaning between, 'May I borrow your pen?' and 'Can I borrow your pen?' where the former is considered the 'true' request for permission, while the latter questions the speaker's ability to borrow the pen and is not a request for permission. Not all English first-language speakers acknowledge this distinction; however, the

prescriptive bias in favour of 'may' as the 'true' permission-seeking form for utterances sees 'may' being used in very formal and legal documents.

The interpretation may have been problematic also, because of the respondents' failure to realise the implication of the rising intonation on the last word. Raising one's tone on the last word to change a declarative statement into an interrogative, and in this case into a request, is one of the accepted formats for question formation, for example, 'The book is blue' ceases to be a statement if uttered with a rising intonation. With this background, there is little justification for only 8% of the respondents interpreting utterance 2 first as a question then logically inferring its use as a request.

One final explanation may arise from the fact that the contextual conditions for 'a command' and 'a request' are almost identical except that the status of the speaker and hearer may differ in the two speech acts. In 'a command' the speaker has some authority over the hearer so the acceptance of the speaker's right to issue that type of speech act. Since this exchange is between two students it is very unlikely that the speaker would command the hearer in such a situation. These two factors, equal status of the interlocutors, plus the raised intonation, should have alerted the respondents that this utterance cannot be 'a command' as some of them, (41%), indicated.

4.5.1.3 UTTERANCE 3: A student absent from class when an assignment was given said, “She gave what.”

a) SI: request HI: ‘not sure’: 50%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic blemish; unusual utterance construction

d) PA: hearer replied that an assignment was given but did not give, initially, all the details but did so when speaker asked more specific questions

e) C: not achieved

The speaker indicated that it was not just a request as to whether an assignment had been given or not but rather a request for a clarification on the nature of the assignment as well. Hearer interpretation was quite varied; 18% identified them as ‘a complaint’, 13% identified them as ‘a statement’. Students would usually complain about being given an assignment or they would request the details of it, if they had not been in class when the assignment was given. It is therefore surprising that these two speech functions, request and complaint, do not have higher response rates. This raises questions as to how much reliance was placed by the respondents on the context clues, and the differences in the interpretative processes involved in written and spoken utterances.

If the speaker’s intention was to request not only confirmation that an assignment had been given, but its details as well, then the most common forms for the utterance would be either a direct speech act as in, ‘What kind of an assignment

did she give?' (request by question); or as an indirect speech act as in, 'I was not in class this morning' (request by statement). One can only make a guess that the presence of the 'wh' word 'what' indicates that the speaker intended to use a 'wh' question. If the speaker intended to use this type of question formation then a syntactic error has occurred as these types of questions must begin with the 'wh' element.

However there are occasional declarative 'wh' questions where the 'wh' element remains in the position normal in declaratives for that item. Such constructions are very marked and associated with highly conventionalised occasions, such as interviews and formal interrogation sessions, as in the sentences:

76. So you locked the door, how?
77. And you went into the lounge, when?

A similar construction is also possible with 'echo' utterances. These are utterances which repeat as a whole or in part what has been said by another speaker. They may take any sentence form but they function as either questions or exclamations. Echo questions are either recapitulatory or explicatory, as in the examples:

78. A: The lecturer gave us a test. B: She gave what?
79. A: I saw Mandela yesterday. B: You saw whom?

80. A: I will pay for the lunch. B: You will do what?

81. A: I will see you at midnight. B: You will see me when?

Although recapitulatory echo questions are ostensibly requests for the repetition of information, they frequently have other functions, such as, to express irony, incredulity or irritation, or as a rhetorical utterance merely to fill in a conversation. Although they are informal, such questions may be considered impolite in an inappropriate situation, unless accompanied by some apology such as:

82. Sorry, you said the lecturer gave us what?

83. I beg your pardon, you saw who?

Therefore this request structure, in which the 'wh' question word is placed at the end of the structure instead of at the beginning, is not uncommon. However, if this utterance was used as an ordinary request for information, then the grammatical rule for the formation of the interrogative is being violated as well as some politeness norms. That explains why the hearer needed an uptake to interpret the intention and why communication was not achieved.

Despite the discussions above, the fact that 17% of respondents thought the utterance was a statement and 50% were not sure what the utterance meant is still surprising. After all, the brief context clues, shared knowledge of the academic world plus the presence of the word 'what' should have alerted

respondents to the fact that the utterance was in the question format and that the speaker's intention was to request information. One can find some justification for 18% of the respondents identifying the utterance as a 'complaint' as the giving of assignments is an occasion for complaints.

4.5.1.4 UTTERANCE 5: A student who failed to hand in an assignment on the due date said to the lecturer: "I am asking to be apologised due to my failure to submit my assignment."

a) SI: request HI: request: 61%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic and pragmatic blemishes

d) PA: the lecturer accepted the apology as well as the assignment

e) C: achieved

This utterance, although quite similar in structure to utterance 1, has some differences which merit this utterance's own discussion. Although communication is achieved with this utterance it is still interesting as it highlights a number of issues within SAT. The perlocutionary act which normally follows this utterance is that if the lecturer accepts the apology, then the acceptance of the assignment is also usually assumed. But it is equally possible for a hearer just to accept the apology and to wait expectantly for the speaker to articulate the second speech act, a request for the acceptance of the assignment, with a statement like, 'Would you therefore accept my assignment?' The fact that a speaker does not need to

proceed to a second act is interesting. What this implies, is that in certain contexts, for example, in a learning institution, an apology for non/late submission of an assignment embraces a request for a later submission. Strangely enough the two functions, apology and request, belong to two different speech acts although there are both similarities and differences in the conditions governing their realisation. Apologies indicate a speaker's psychological state of mind or attitude and are expressives, while requests are directives to get the hearer to carry out an action. The similarities between the two are that they both refer to 'face-threatening acts and call for redressive action and they both concern events which are costly to the hearer' as Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper note (1989). This is perhaps why the two speech acts can be paired in one utterance. This is a clear example of an utterance with multiple functions. Another example of multiple functions is seen in utterance 4[12] (discussed below) where there is a complaint and a request in one utterance.

Of interest also in this utterance is the clear demonstration of the notion of implication. Why would a lecturer accept the assignment when the student had made no request to that effect? This is because of implication: the request is implied in the apology; hence a positive response incorporates the overt as well as the implied speech acts.

In similar 'face-threatening' situations, (Blum-Kulka *et al*, 1989) it is not unusual for the speaker to be brief as s/he does not want to prolong the interaction. In

[12] Sample 4: My marks are somehow.

that respect, the length of this utterance is surprising as a shorter version (even if ungrammatical) like *'I am asking to be apologised' would have had the same effect. This lengthy utterance structure which is quite characteristic of Univen students is also a violation of Grice's maxim of quantity (Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.). When this maxim is flouted it usually results in stilted expressions and inappropriate formality, features which this utterance demonstrates.

Another feature of this utterance is the misuse of the verb 'to apologise' which is normally used in a performative manner, in other words, the speaker apologises as s/he is uttering the statement. Performative utterances as noted earlier are characterised by the first person indicative active sentences in the present tense with one of a limited set of performative verbs. The structure of this utterance therefore is almost in accordance with Austin's (1962) criteria except that the performative verb should be the main verb of the predicate and not part of the direct object of the sentence, as illustrated in this utterance. If Austin's rule is adhered to, the speaker expresses the performative that s/he is performing and does not ask permission from the hearer first.

This may also be an example of a 'hedge' or a cultural trait where a direct request to a person of higher status is frowned upon. Hatch (1992) defines a 'hedge' as an attempt by a speaker to soften the illocutionary force of an utterance by the selection of certain lexical items as well as in the construction of

the utterance. Cross-cultural studies have investigated different levels of directness in speech acts in languages quite extensively, for example, Levenston (1968) notes a higher level of directness in Hebrew speakers when compared to speakers of English in realising assents and disagreements. In Tshivenda, as in most languages, a certain level of indirectness is equated with politeness. Interestingly enough, hedged performatives may have some similarity with utterance 5 where speakers directly refer to the functions they intend to perform, as in the examples:

84. I must apologise for the error.

85. I would like to thank you for the effort.

86. I am happy to inform you that you have passed the examination.

The phrase 'due to' (in utterance 5)[13] also merits some mention. If an event is 'due to' something then it happened as a direct result of it. The speaker's failure to submit her assignment must be 'due to' some unforeseen circumstance, not the apology, as is implied in this utterance.

4.5.1.5 UTTERANCE 9: Handouts were given out in class and a student who did not receive one said: "I am in need of a pamphlet."

a) SI: request HI: command: 45%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: pragmatic blemish

d) PA: lecturer gives the student a handout

e) C: achieved

A further 17% and 13% of respondents identified the utterance as a 'statement' and 'a request' respectively. Reasons for these results may be that in this utterance there is a declarative form functioning as a 'request' and the fact that the conditions necessary for 'a request' and 'a command' are similar except that, for 'a command' the speaker must have a higher status than the hearer and some urgency may be involved. The closeness of the conditions and contexts governing these functions explains why one constantly hears the utterance, 'Is that a request or a command?' A point worth noting is that, even commands are often phrased as polite requests, as in the expressions, 'May I request that you leave my office immediately?' or 'Please leave my office now!'

These results are noteworthy from yet another angle, that is, if these results are taken in conjunction with the results of utterance 8,[14] (discussed later) where cultural deference could have explained the speaker's reluctance to use a stronger expression or more direct utterance to complain or disagree with a lecturer. If the respondents know students find it uncomfortable to complain even about a false accusation from a lecturer then students should find it even more difficult to insist that a lecturer give them handouts. This accounts for the

[13] Sample 5: I am asking to be apologised due to my failure to submit my assignment.
[14] Sample 8: The lecturer said I was late but I denied.

anomaly of respondents classifying utterance 9[15] as 'a command'. These are some of the anomalies which make such a pragmatic study of language interesting.

The utterance also needs analysis from a syntactic point of view. In similar situations, the usual utterance could be on the lines, 'I need one of the handouts/pamphlets, can I have one?' or simply 'Can I have one of these pamphlets?' and it can be implied that an articulation of the request presupposes a need for the pamphlet (see earlier discussion of the can/may dichotomy). Hence, it is not usual to use the verb 'need' in such a construction. Normally the word 'need' is used as a noun as in the expression, 'Our needs are being met'; or as a modal verb, 'You needn't stay up all night'; or as an ordinary transitive verb, 'He needs some shoes'. The phrase 'need of a pamphlet' serves as an object complement after the copular verb 'to be'.

The phrase 'I am in need of…' is quite formal, similar to, 'I am in possession of some documents'. Not only is this utterance quite formal but also quite an elaborate way of expressing an ordinary request, in that context. Elaborate sentences, like utterances 5 and 9[16], are examples of what Thomas (1983) calls 'pragmalinguistic failure' and Leech (1983: 67-8) would term violation of the 'principle of economy'. Pragmalinguistic failure is a linguistic problem caused by differences in the linguistic coding of a non-native speaker of a language and the

[15] Sample 9: I am in need of a pamphlet.
[16] Sample 5: I am asking to be apologised due to my failure to submit my assignment.

coding of a native speaker. Violation of the 'principle of economy' would result from 'inappropriate complete sentence responses and inappropriate propositional explicitness'.

Finally, the word 'pamphlet' also deserves some mention. Students in Univen use that word as if it is synonymous with 'handout'. Although the two words share many semantic features, there is a difference in the context of use. 'Handouts' are what are given in lectures to supplement the content given by a lecturer in class while a 'pamphlet' has more general usage explaining why the word does not sound quite appropriate in this utterance.

4.5.2 SECTION B: COMPLAINTS

Complaints are meant to contrast 'what is' with 'what ought to be'. To make a complaint is to assert a proposition while expressing a dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs, so, complaints fall within the speech acts of representatives and expressives. Since, the utterances to be discussed below are all of the latter, the utterances in this section will be classified as 'expressives' and discussed as such. Expressive speech acts, as the title suggests, indicate an inner state of the speaker and is essentially subjective. Austin (1969) terms them 'behabitives' and they focus on a reaction to other people's behaviour, fortunes, attitudes and accordingly are expressions to

Sample 9: I am in need of a pamphlet.

someone's past conduct or imminent conduct. Complaints therefore would be a speaker's unhappy reaction to someone's past conduct or past event. Austin establishes a link among expressives and the two functions of commissives and directives. His reasoning for this linkage is that once speakers react negatively or positively to past events they commit themselves to a line of conduct which may involve the issuing of a directive to a hearer or the source of the complaint.

All languages have utterances that can be classified as having expressive functions. Our statements of joy and disappointment, likes and dislikes are reflected in expressive statements, therefore, compliments and complaints belong to one set. What research has established is that complaints and compliments exhibit a small number of syntactic structures and most are surprisingly formulaic (Wolfson, 1981). Like most of the speech acts, expressives can be arranged along a continuum of strength, and the range is mediated by social distance and other factors. The form and intensity of expressives and the expectations regarding when expressives are appropriate vary across languages. Much of our stereotyping of different cultures is bound up with expressives. We judge the speakers of a particular language to be cold, passive, aggressive, poetic, unable or unwilling to express their feelings by their use of expressives.

As noted above, expressives are closely identifiable with representatives and this fact is demonstrated by the responses to the utterances. There are six utterances

identified as complaints. Of these only one, sample 4[17], was correctly interpreted, by a substantial 74% as 'a complaint'. The rest were all wrongly classified as 'statements', the closest function to 'a complaint'. In fact, in sample 7[18], 38% of the respondents said the utterance was 'a complaint', while 33% said it was 'a statement'. The debatable point here, perhaps, is whether those respondents who identified 'complaints' as 'statements' can be said to be 'wrong' as the theorists have not conclusively argued the differences between these two speech acts.

Another point to be noted is that complaints are not as easily identified in short dialogues as directives or representatives. One reason for this, as given by Brown and Levinson (1978), is that since complaints are categorised as 'face-threatening acts', they have a strong potential for disturbing the state of a personal relationship. In polite societies interlocutors, therefore, hesitate before voicing a complaint. This hesitation usually manifests itself in lengthy preambles, hedges, non-literal utterances and disfluencies all aimed at softening the message of the complaint. What this means is that complaints seldom stand alone as an isolated speech act; rather they are negotiated in a larger speech event. This may explain the low interpretation rate of 25%.

4.5.2.1 UTTERANCE 4: Marked assignments were given back in class. One student followed the lecturer out and said, "My marks are somehow."

[17] Sample 4: My marks are somehow.
[18] Sample 7: Student A: I had an accident last week. Student B: Sorry. Are you all right? Student A: I am

a) SI: complaint HI: complaint: 74%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic blemishes

d) PA: the lecturer asked what the problem was

e) C: achieved

Although this utterance was correctly interpreted by a large percentage of the respondents, (74%), it is still examined because of semantic and pragmatic issues that are present. Like utterance 5,[19] this sample is a demonstration of multiple functions in a single act – a complaint and a request. Strangely enough, none of the respondents identified it as a request, rather, 11% of respondents said they were 'not sure'.

The next point to be discussed in connection with the utterance is the presence of the word 'somehow'. If the word is used as a qualifier then the usual structure is for the word 'somehow' to be followed by some sort of descriptive element for modification, as in the sentence, 'This situation is somehow embarrassing'. If this is the manner in which the speaker intended to use the word then the sentence is incomplete. The utterance can also be said to be 'incomplete' in another sense, that is, if the student has not finished speaking but has paused long enough for the hearer to believe s/he has come to the end of the utterance. This is a very common communication strategy for second language speakers where lack of an

fine, but it's so boring.

[19] Sample 5: I am asking to be apologized due to my failure to submit my assignment.

appropriate word forces the speaker either to appeal for assistance by pausing or to avoid the word or to abandon the interaction totally.

But then ‘somehow’ may be functioning as an adverb complement after the copular ‘are’, in which case, the word would be an adverb complement of manner referring to a characteristic which is either intangible or nebulous or unspecified or unspecifiable. In this case, such usage is not unprecedented and this is exactly how the speaker intended to construct the utterance. The plausibility of this explanation is, of course, questionable. A student following a lecturer to discuss marks suggests only one reason: the calculations are inaccurate because some points have not been credited or counted. A student coming to discuss a lecturer’s over-generosity in the allocation or calculation of marks must be rare indeed. If that is the situation, then the objective of the communication is clearly defined and there is nothing unspecific about the speaker’s complaint. If this is so, then the inappropriateness of the word ‘somehow’ becomes obvious.

This could also be an example of a ‘hedge’. If that is the situation then this utterance demonstrates a deliberate stylistic choice of the speaker in deference to the lecturer and the whole concept of complaining. In other words, the selection of the word ‘somehow’ may stem from the student’s avoidance of the less positive, confrontational words like, ‘miscalculated’, ‘wrong’ or ‘error’ in the utterance. Brown and Levinson (1978: 225) mention avoidance, euphemisms and hedges as very common politeness strategies of second language speakers.

4.5.2.2 UTTERANCE 6: A lecturer not sure whether a student had attended her lecture asked:

Lecturer: Were you in class today?

Student: Of course. (Please describe the second utterance)

a) SI: complaint HI: 'not sure': 42%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: pragmatic blemish

d) PA: lecturer offended

e) C: not achieved

This interaction recalls the extensive work done in cross-cultural pragmatics by writers, such as Thomas (1986) and Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989), House (1989) where particular attention has been paid to politeness or deference in speech act realisation and politeness phenomena across languages and cultures. Thomas (1986) gives examples of pragmatically inappropriate transfer of structures across cultures. She cites the example of 'konesno' a Russian word meaning 'of course' which is often used instead of 'da' (yes) to convey an enthusiastic affirmative in English like 'yes, indeed' or 'yes, certainly'. Often, however, 'of course' implies that the speaker has asked something which is self-evident so that if the utterance is a 'genuine' question, it can sound, at best, peremptory and at worst, insulting. One may therefore conclude that the response 'of course', in this sample, should be read as 'Yes indeed I was' or 'I certainly was in class' or

words to that effect, and not the usual hearer's interpretation of 'What a stupid question'.

A similar situation occurs with the expressions 'in my opinion' and 'it seems to me'. Normally these expressions are used to deliver considered judgements as in, 'It seems to me you have misunderstood my position on the matter'. Sometimes second language speakers use these expressions for less weighty issues. It is not unusual to hear Univen students say, 'It seems to me to be raining'.

4.5.2.3 UTTERANCE 7: Student A had just had an accident. This was the dialogue between her and her friend: Student A: I had an accident last week Student B: Sorry. Are you all right? Student A: I am fine, but it is so boring. (Please describe the third utterance)

a) SI: complaint HI: statement: 38%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: semantic blemish

d) PA: hearer continues with signs of sympathy

e) C: not achieved

This is one of the interactions which hearers had a problem interpreting, for in addition to the above response detail, 33% of respondents identified the interaction as 'a complaint' while 21% of respondents were 'not sure'. These

results are rather surprising as the word ‘boring’ occurs so frequently in Univen students’ utterances. The word ‘boring’ seems to have undergone a semantic broadening where it is now descriptive of any unpleasant experience or anything disappointing to the speaker. These may include diverse situations, such as, a disagreement with a friend, low marks in an assignment, inability to obtain semester marks from the administrator, unhappiness with the conditions in the hostel, a robbery on campus, being forced to walk in the dark to and from the library and so on. In these examples, other terms could have been used to better capture the emotions of the speaker. Although the expansion of the use of the word ‘boring’ has been explained as ‘semantic broadening’ that may not be strictly accurate. In semantic broadening part of the original meaning of the word is maintained but it is quite difficult to refer to some of the above situations as partially ‘not interesting’. Alternatively, one can say a total ‘semantic shift’ has taken place, but here also there is a problem, as a word which has undergone a semantic shift contains no aspect of the original meaning. Therefore a componential analysis of the word ‘boring’ shows its inappropriateness in the above utterance. The word ‘boring’ is overused on this university campus and this has reduced its semantic value, in much the same way as words and expressions like, ‘very’, ‘at this point in time’, ‘comrade’, ‘at the end of the day’ and so on. In most cases, these words and phrases can be replaced by more meaningful substitutes. In spite of the linguistic laziness that this practice portrays, such usage does seem to have a ‘bonding’ effect on the speakers or confirms their ‘membership’ in a specific linguistic group.

In addition, speaker A seems quite oblivious of the contradiction implied in the second utterance by the juxtaposition of 'I am fine' and 'it's so boring'. Logically, if a hearer asks the question, 'Are you all right?' after a speaker has just mentioned her/his involvement in an accident, the assumption is that the hearer is more concerned about the physical well-being of the speaker and much less about the social well-being of the speaker. This unexpected response from student A is partially due to the semantic emptiness of expressions, such as, 'How are you?' 'Are you all right?' and 'I am fine'. These phrases have now been reduced to routine conversation openings or gambits of little significance.

4.5.2.4 UTTERANCE 8: A student accused by a lecturer of being late, reported this to her friend by saying: Student: The lecturer said I was late but I denied. [Please note that some explanation of utterance 8 has already been given in section 1.2. This section is therefore a continuation of these explanations.]

a) SI: complaint HI: statement: 50%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: semantic blemish

d) PA: Student B: What did she do?

e) C: not achieved

In addition to the above result, 23% of the respondents correctly identified the utterance as ‘a complaint’ and a further 13% selected ‘not sure’. Part of the reason, is probably that the respondents thought it would be inappropriate for a student to complain or directly challenge a lecturer on such a point. This is clearly brought out by Student B’s response, ‘What did she do?’ This is strange and unexpected, as the anticipated response could have been, ‘What did she say?’ as an apology from the lecturer is called for, if in fact the student was in class. Here, societal norms are directly influencing the interpretation of the English utterances.

4.5.3 SECTION C: STATEMENTS

Statements or representatives have truth value, show ‘words to world fit’ and express a speaker’s belief in a certain assertion, according to Searle (1969: 65-6). Conditions for a representative include the fact that the speaker has evidence or reason for the truth of a proposition; it is not obvious to both speaker and hearer that hearer knows or does not need to be reminded of the proposition. Statements are typically realised by declarative clauses. Representatives vary in terms of how hedged or aggravated the assertion might be.

4.5.3.1 UTTERANCE 10: Speaker A wanted to know the hearer’s reaction to a film: Speaker A: Did you enjoy the film? Speaker B: Too much! (Please describe the second utterance).

a) SI: statement HI: statement: 44%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic blemish

d) PA: --

e) C: achieved

In addition to the above result, 23% of the respondents were 'not sure' of the intention of the speaker and 11% thought it was 'an invitation'. This confusion may have arisen because of the syntactic error arising from the expression 'too much'. The expression 'too much' is an intensifier used in front of uncountable nouns, as in the expressions, 'Too much food was cooked for the party' or 'Too much sand was used in the making of these bricks'. In these instances, the term 'too much' is used when there is more of something than is necessary or desirable. In such utterances the speaker's intention is to complain, whereas the intention in this case was the speaker's desire to express the magnitude of the pleasure s/he got from the film – an utterance meant as a compliment.

At face value, the syntactic codes of this utterance express the opposite of what the speaker intends as the utterance as it stands is 'a complaint'. A modification in the structure of the utterance to read, 'Very much' would then better express the speaker's intention. With this explanation it is no wonder that 23% of the respondents were 'not sure' of the meaning of the utterance. 11% of the respondents who understood that the speaker's intention was to make a

recommendation assumed that the utterance was an indirect invitation for them to go and watch the film. Strictly speaking, the utterance could also be an indirect suggestion or even a command (directive) to the hearer to make an effort to see the film. The respondents have also made similar deductions, for 8% and 7% of the respondents had identified the utterance as ‘a suggestion’ and ‘a command’ respectively.

4.5.3.2 UTTERANCE 11: When asked whether there were other students in the classroom, a student replied: “I was left lonely in the class.”

a) SI: statement HI: statement / complaint: 42%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic blemish

d) PA: --

e) C: achieved

The interpretation of this utterance was equally split between ‘a statement’ and ‘a complaint’. Part of the contributing factor to the uncertainty is the semantic and/or syntactic errors in the utterance. The errors arose from the awkwardness of the lexical items ‘left’ and ‘lonely’, although one cannot rule out that part of the confusion also arose from the lack of theoretical distinction between ‘a statement’ and ‘a complaint’.

In utterance 11, a syntactic error inheres in the word ‘lonely’. The words ‘alone’ and ‘lonely’ have some semantic properties in common except that the former has a neutral connotation while the latter has a negative connotation. The word ‘alone’ is both an adjective and an adverb; ‘lonely’ functions as an adjective complement only and has the implication that the person or thing so described is uncomfortable with the situation. ‘Lonely’ therefore extends an otherwise ordinary representative (statement) into a complaint. Although the common linguistic practice is to use adjectives as complements after the copular verbs, there are other instances where either the adjective or the adverb form appears with little or no semantic differences as in the examples, ‘Her visits are frequent’ and ‘She visits frequently’. Some of the confusion surrounding the use of adjectives and adverbs stems from the fact that there is a certain amount of overlap between the adjective and adverb classes as adverbs are regularly, though not invariably, derived from adjectives by suffixation. The speaker may have been aware of this close relationship between adjectives and adverbs and hence the belief that they are interchangeable without any structural amendment to the sentence. Therefore in this utterance the non-adjustment of the constituents of the sentence has resulted in the utterance reading like a complaint.

The verb ‘left’ and the use of the passive have also increased the belief that the utterance is a complaint. The meaning of the utterance is in no way enhanced by the addition of the word ‘left’ as the same meaning is captured by the expressions, ‘I was alone in the class’ or ‘I was lonely in the class’. One of the

uses of the passive voice is to demote the subject while bringing to prominence the object of the active sentence. A construction of this nature thus implies some 'helplessness' on the speaker's part (the subject) while a central controlling position is awarded to the former object.

But having said that, one can argue that the representatives: 'I am alone in the classroom' or 'There is no one else in the classroom' are equally capable of being misinterpreted as 'complaints'. Then the misinterpretation of utterance 11 does not arise from the student's inappropriate use of the word 'lonely' which has an additional semantic property of '+unwanted' but that the distinction between a 'complaint' and a 'statement' rests on other felicitous conditions which may be paralinguistic.

4.5.3.3 UTTERANCE 12: An agricultural student describing a plough he was using said: 'The broken plough, it is fixed'.

a) SI: statement HI: statement: 65%

b) LA: positive declarative

c) US: syntactic and pragmatic blemishes

d) PA: hearer is now better informed

e) C: achieved

13% of the respondents identified the utterance as a 'suggestion' while a further 13% said they were 'not sure'. Although the majority of respondents, 65%,

correctly interpreted this utterance, it will be discussed because of the construction of the utterance. There seems to be a syntactic blemish from the insertion of a pronoun 'it' immediately after its precedent noun 'broken plough'; in other words, the subject of the sentence has been repeated or referenced (by using a pro-form) without any intervening constituents. This seems to be the case if only the surface structure is examined, but an examination of the deep structure shows a case of ellipsis. The notion of ellipsis is postulated to explain why some obligatory elements of a sentence are lacking. Although sentence reduction may, in general, be regarded in semantic or pragmatic terms, as a means of avoiding redundancy of expression, what constituents may be reduced is a matter of what is permissible semantically, syntactically and pragmatically. Pragmatically, ellipsis can also be justified by Grice's maxim of quality which requires interlocutors to be brief and avoid unnecessary prolixity. Reduction, however, should not be undertaken if, for example, the general meaning is distorted, or if it creates ambiguity or confusion or difficulty for the interpreter. Usual means of ellipsis include, coordination, omitting of descriptive relative phrases, main verbs after auxiliaries in tags and the use of pro-forms. It is a fair assumption that the full version of this utterance could read; 'You remember the broken plough that you asked about, it is fixed', hence in sample 12 the relative phrase has been omitted.

From the response, the ellipsis seems not to have affected the utterance's interpretability, although the resultant construction is both stylistically and

syntactically questionable. Pragmatically, the reduction may have some effect on the illocutionary act. In the first instance, one is forced to read the first part of the utterance as an echo of questions such as, 'Where is the plough?' 'What happened to the plough?' 'What did you do with the plough I saw at the Agriculture Department?' and so on. 'The broken plough' would then function as an echo-question, in a statement form, and be said with a rising intonation, so that the second part, 'it is fixed' is seen as an answer. This scenario seems a plausible explanation because of the shared mutual knowledge that is necessary to make ellipsis comprehensible. There is an inevitable association between the use of ellipsis and the existence of in-group knowledge.

In addition, the construction of this utterance, a nominal group followed immediately by a pronominal reference to the same item, may raise some doubt as to the type and degree of emphasis that is being placed on the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act intended. Is it an ordinary representative (low emphasis) or is the student boasting, or is s/he irritated at an implied doubt of her/his mechanical abilities? Perhaps a more extensive context which would include the utterance immediately before this could have given some clues, for constatives, unlike some performatives, do not have specific linguistic conventions. In other words, there is no conventional way, linguistically, of showing emotions like boasting or showing irritation. In instances where there is a need to show such emotions, the speaker would make use of prosody to show the relevant emotion. Most of the linguistic emotions can be either replaced or

emphasised by prosodic and kinesic features. The raised eyebrow, the widening of the eyes, the frown and the stance are some ways of communicating tentativeness, irritation or emphasis.

4.5.3.4 UTTERANCE 13: Describing the size of her discussion group a student said: "The students in our group are many."

a. SI: statement HI: statement / complaint: 35%

b. LA: positive declarative

c. US: syntactic blemish

d. PA: hearer is now better informed

e. C: achieved?

In utterance 13, the respondents were equally divided as to whether the utterance was a complaint or a statement. Part of the problem is created by the fact that both statements and complaints are representatives. The felicity conditions for the two are therefore similar, as noted earlier. In fact, a statement can be transformed into a complaint merely by a special 'look', tone or posture accompanying an utterance. These non-linguistic context factors can be augmented by other factors in attempts to separate the two acts. For example, Hatch (1992: 141) identifies 'hedges' as one of the main characteristics of complaints. Phrases like 'please don't get me wrong but…', 'I hope you don't mind if I say this…', usually would start a complaint session. Such hedges, Brown and Levinson (1978) believe, are employed if the speaker suspects the

complaint to be 'face-threatening' to the hearer as most complaints are. In this sample, no such situation exists as the context indicates that the speaker is 'describing' the size of her discussion group. The word 'describing' is deliberately enclosed in quotation marks as the point will be developed further. The speaker can give this response to different questions. These questions could be, 'Aren't there too few students in your discussion group if these are the only ideas you have come up with?' or 'These are very well-thought out points, how many students are in your discussion group?' or 'How many students are in group five, the last group?' or 'Are there enough students in your group?' One would recognise that different speech acts are intended by these questions – a criticism, a compliment and two enquiries respectively. Now, if the speaker is responding to what s/he believes is a criticism (question two), then sample 13 is a complaint against what the speaker saw as lack of appreciation of the well-developed points put forward. However, if the speaker is responding to questions three and four (genuine information-seeking utterances), then sample 13 is a statement. Naturally the respondents (not being privy to any extra context) are divided in the interpretation.

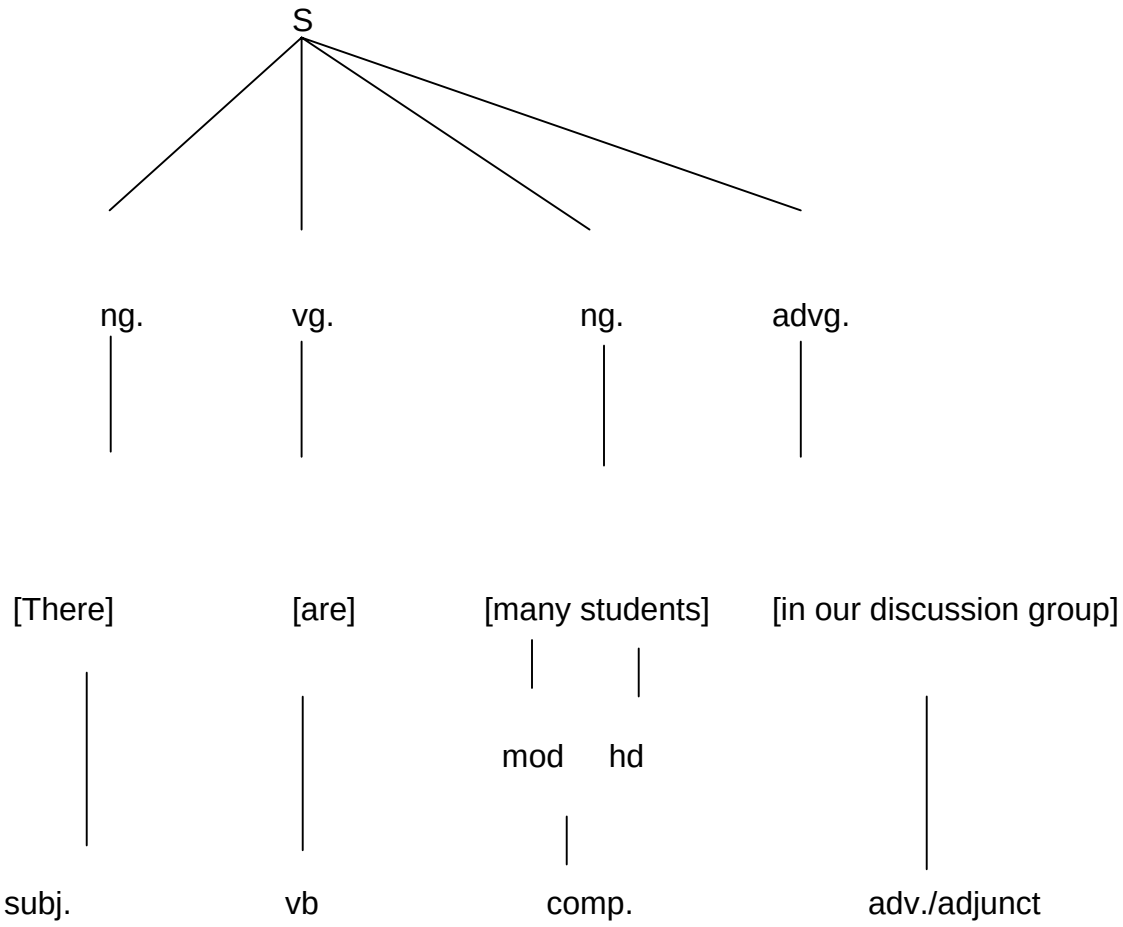
Another issue with the interpretation stems from the physical arrangement of the codes, or the word order. The ordering of the constituents of a sentence depends on the stylistic preference of the speaker in addition to the focus of the message. According to Quirk *et al.* (1985), it is a 'courtesy' to the hearer as well as a convenience to the speaker to provide the point of the message with

minimum fuss by placing the utterance in a normal linguistic framework. The 'normal' linguistic framework is governed by the 'given' and the 'new' information contained in an utterance; the 'theme' - the initial part of any structure when considered from an informational point of view - and the 'focus'. These four factors usually govern the way that we structure the linguistic codes. A sentence which is constructed in such a manner that the 'new' information is not focused by either 'fronting' or 'end-focusing' is then regarded as 'marked'. In utterance 13, the 'new' focal information can be either 'the students' or 'many' depending on the question the speaker is responding to and the style that the speaker prefers. If the utterance is a mere statement, in accordance with the speaker's stated intentions, then the unmarked form (Figure 4.1), 'There are many students in my discussion group' would be the logical form. For respondents then the choice of the marked form (Figure 4.2), which this statement shows, is not an arbitrary exercise, causing respondents to think the utterance is not a 'statement' (information giving) but a 'complaint'.

Another plausible explanation for the confusion is the preference of Univen students for the longer relative clauses, rather than the genitive clause, as descriptive elements. In most cases adjectives can be used either attributively, 'The red books are on the table' or in a longer predicative manner, 'The books which are red are on the table' without any change of meaning. Whether a speaker uses descriptive units attributively or predicatively, usually is a question of the person's linguistic style and/or the semantic demands or justification of the

sentence. However, it is not unusual, in Univen, to hear expressions like, ‘At our place we have poor service of electricity’, ‘The book which is torn is on the floor’ or ‘The violence of the taxi is caused by these different organisations’ (Kaburise and Phalanndwa, 1997: 34) where there is no clear justification for the choice of that style. If utterance 13 is rephrased as, ‘There are many students in our discussion group’ then it is a case of simple pre-modification of the noun ‘students’ and ‘in our discussion group’ then is an adjunct of place (Figure 4.1). This will then be regarded as the ‘unmarked version’ as it is the more usual expression. In the marked version, utterance 13, ‘in our discussion group’ functions as a relative qualifier for the nominal phrase ‘many students’ (Figure 4.2). The analyses following will illustrate the point:

There are many students in our discussion group.



Key:

ng = nominal group

vg = verbal group

advg = adverbial group

subj. = subject

vb = verb

mod. = modifier

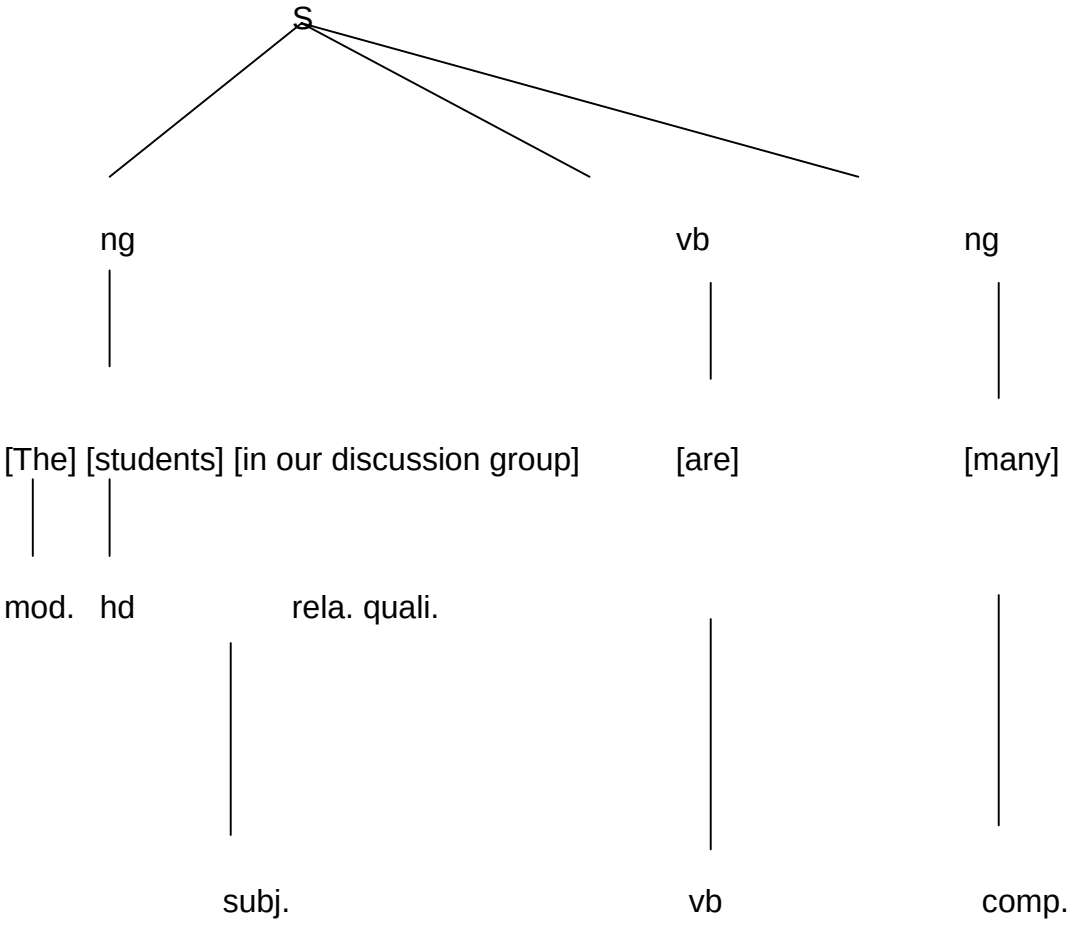
hd = headword

comp. = complement

adv./adjunct = adverb/adjunct

Figure 4.1: Unmarked Version

The students in our discussion group are many.



Key: rela. quali. = relative qualifier

Figure 4.2: Marked Version

The significance of these tree diagrams stems from the fact that English is a SVO/CA (subject, verb, object or complement and adjunct) language and that order is usually not adhered to for a reason. In the marked version (Figure 4.2), the speaker has not adhered to this sequence, therefore the assumption that the

utterance is not a just a statement but maybe, a complaint as well. The difference is the phrase ‘in our discussion group’ which functions in Figure 4.2 as a ‘relative qualifier’ for the nominal phrase, whereas in Figure 4.1 ‘in our discussion group’ is part of the predicate functioning as an adjunct of place.

Although the argument so far is that if the speaker had used ‘many’ attributively, therefore creating an unmarked statement, the utterance is more likely to be interpreted as ‘a representative’ one can also make a case against this assertion. One of the deciding factors in this utterance’s interpretation is the tone in which the statement is uttered, particularly how the word ‘many’ is articulated. A stress on ‘many’ may be the student’s way of drawing attention to the fact that this particular group has many students as its special feature. Or the stress may be in response to what the student sees as an implied doubt (or an articulated question) on whether the group has the required number. In this case, a pre-modifying adjective is open to a similar interpretation as a predicative one.

In summary, one can say that although the similarity in the felicity conditions of a ‘statement’ and a ‘complaint’ has contributed to the confusion, the sentence construction, particularly the predicative use of the adjective or post-determiner ‘many’ has also contributed to the difference in the interpretation. Some respondents tend to believe that the speaker is not merely describing the quantity of students in the group but that further information is being provided.

4.5.3.5 UTTERANCE 14: A lecturer concerned about a student, Kate, said to her roommate: Lecturer: I would like to speak to Kate.

Student: No, she is not around. (Please describe the first utterance).

a. SI: statement HI: statement: 34%
b. LA: positive declarative
c. US: semantic blemish
d. PA: the lecturer became more informed
e. C: not achieved

In addition to the above result, 23% of the respondents said they were 'not sure', 18% thought it was 'a suggestion' while 12% thought it was either 'a command' or 'a request'. These results are not at all surprising as the student's response indicates clearly that she has misunderstood the speech act. In that context, the respondents' subsequent confusion is justified. Non-communication has resulted from this utterance because of the difference between utterance meaning and speaker meaning. As discussed in Chapter Three, one of the reasons pragmatics emerged as a separate branch of language studies was the notion that sentence or linguistic meaning may be different from speaker or utterance meaning. The same argument is used to distinguish semantics from pragmatics where the former is concerned with sentence meaning while the latter is concerned with speaker meaning. As Grice (1971: 54) observes, the content of a locutionary act (what is said) is not always determined by what is meant by the sentence uttered

Ambiguous words or phrases need to be precisely defined; assumptions and the references of indexical and other context-specific expressions need to be explained for what is said to be interpreted fully.

The discussion of SAT has demonstrated the variety of ways that a single speech act can be realised. A speech act can be directly or indirectly performed (using a non-conventional form to perform a speech act); literally or non-literally (depending on how the words are used); explicitly or inexplicitly (depending on whether what is meant is fully spelt out). Therefore in indirectness the usual form and function match is not maintained. With non-literality the illocutionary act being performed is not the one that would be predicted simply from the meanings of the words used. Quite frequently utterances are both non-literal and non-direct. For example, one might say 'I love the sound of your voice' to tell someone non-literally (ironically) that one cannot stand her voice and thereby indirectly to ask her to stop singing.

Non-literality and indirectness are the two main ways in which the semantic content of a sentence can fail to determine the full force and content of the illocutionary act being performed in using an utterance, as is demonstrated by the lecturer's utterance. In this sample, the lecturer was performing all three types of non-conventionality (indirectness, non-literality and inexplicitness) in the utterance.

The utterance 'I would like to speak to Kate' is a positive declarative statement functioning as a command. As a result, there is an indirect speech act, as a direct act would utilise an imperative form. The use of the modal 'would' may have confused the hearer causing the inappropriate response. The modal 'would' has multiple uses, among them, politeness and tentative markers, features not normally associated with a 'command' in the traditional sense. Instead of utterances like 'Tell Kate to come to my office' or 'Kate must see me as soon as possible' the lecturer used an utterance which sounded almost like a tentative request instead, with a modal verb 'would' and a main verb such as 'like', which minimises the illocutionary force of a command.

This sample is also interesting from the point of politeness theories inherent in pragmatics. Van Dijk (1977b: 221) talks about the need to defer to the positions and relations existing between the interlocutors. Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978) also argue that the more power the speaker has over the hearer and the more socially distant the speaker is from the hearer the less tact is required in handling the situation.

All these factors may have led the hearer to believe that the lecturer's utterance was not a command but an indirect question meaning 'Is Kate around? May I speak to her?' The response of the student, 'No she is not around' is reminiscent of the anecdote repeated in Yule (1985: 101):

Visitor: Excuse me, do you know where the Ambassador Hotel is?

Passer-by: Oh sure, I know where it is. (and walks away)

In this scene, the visitor uses a sentence form usually associated with a question and the passer-by answered the question literally. Instead of responding to the request the passer-by replies to the question, treating an indirect question (request) as if it were a direct one. Similarly, the hearer in this sample has treated a command as a question since questions can be realised with a statement form as in the exchange:

87. A: Your walls look very clean.

B: Yes, they have just been painted.

4.5.3.6 UTTERANCE 15: A student whose friend had missed some lectures, when asked to explain the notes to the absent student said: "He is a popular somebody." (As a description of the absent friend)

a. SI: statement HI: statement: 42%

b. LA: positive declarative

c. US: semantic blemish

d. PA: the lecturer became more informed.

e. C: not achieved

In addition to those respondents who interpreted the utterance as a statement, 30% were 'not sure' and 14% thought it was a 'suggestion'. The reasoning

behind respondents interpreting the sample as ‘a suggestion’ is difficult to determine, although perhaps respondents were merely being mischievous. Of more significance is the 30% of the respondents who were not sure of the meaning of the utterance and the reasons for this. The reasons may stem from not only the surface codes of the utterance, but also from the conversation style of the speaker.

The word ‘somebody’ is both an indefinite and a compound pronoun. As such it cannot be pre-modified by an adjective as in the expressions *‘a tall somebody’, *‘a nice somewhere’. Such pronouns can, however, be post-modified as in the expression, ‘somebody tall’ and ‘somewhere nice’ which are more usual. The first problem, therefore, is the positioning of the adjective ‘popular’ before the pronoun.

The word ‘somebody’ usually implies that one is not fully aware of the particulars of that person and would prefer to use the less definite term. With that understanding one would hardly describe one’s ‘friend’ as ‘somebody’. However, a common practice in Univen is to describe an acquaintance as a ‘somebody’. The same, supposedly can be said of the meaning of the word ‘individual’ which is not an antonym for ‘group’ but has now been broadened to substitute for the similarly vague word ‘person’ as in the sentence, ‘She is an outgoing individual’.

Semantic non-differentiation, under which this utterance would fall, usually also flouts Grice's (1989) conversation principle of manner – avoid obscurity of expression. As noted in Chapter Three, flouting of the maxims is an everyday occurrence and a flouting of the maxim of manner may be a deliberate decision of a speaker with an aim of, maybe, hiding a fact, confusing an issue or indicating an unwilliness to be associated with an issue. None of these aims can really be attributed to the speaker in this situation; the obvious explanation is the speaker's personal preference for such a vague, ambiguous statement. Utterances of this nature can also be classified as an indirect speech act.

Indirectness can be generated intentionally in the case of the speaker deliberately wanting the hearer to infer utterance meaning by using implications, which is then an example of a stylistic choice; or it could be accidental when performance constraints have created some indirectness in the speaker's utterance. In this instance, performance constraints have resulted in the utterance having an implied meaning, that is, 'popular' students do not need missed lectures explained to them, or that the hearer cannot or should not be entrusted with the task of explaining the missed lecture. The two possible meanings would necessitate two different actions from a lecturer, a clear example of the risk involved in using indirect speech acts. In a very illuminating discussion, Dascal (1983: 54) makes the point that indirectness is costly and risky. It is 'costly' in the sense that an indirect utterance takes longer for the speaker to produce and longer for the hearer to process (a fact which has

frequently been confirmed in psycholinguistic experiments). It is risky in the sense that the hearer may not interpret accurately the intention of the speaker, causing a breakdown in communication.

Furthermore, a pragmatic blemish may also have occurred from the student's inability to make a semantic adjustment in the utterance. The use of the colloquial 'somebody' would be appropriate among peers in an informal dialogue but could hardly be appropriate in a lecturer-student interaction over formal issues like assignments and non-attendance at lectures.

4.5.3.7 UTTERANCE 16: A student asked (in October 1999) whether she would be going home for the weekend said: "I won't go there no more."

a) SI: statement HI: statement: 25% statement

b) LA: positive declarative

c. US: syntactic blemish

d. PA: hearer is not better informed

e. C: not achieved

In addition to the above results, 22% of the respondents identified the utterance as 'a complaint'; 18% were 'not sure'; 16% and 12% thought it was 'a command' and 'a suggestion' respectively. This variety of interpretations is difficult to explain

except to hazard a guess that confusion was created from inadequate context clues and the idiosyncratic utterance construction.

Two central tenets of pragmatics, as noted in Chapters Two and Three, are that a comprehensive context is vital for the achievement of communication and that pragmatics is 'language in use'. A comprehensive context includes all the clues (physical, linguistic, paralinguistic); knowledge of general principles of conversation and mutually shared factual information (encyclopedic knowledge) that the interlocutors bring to a conversation situation. With that in mind, some of the information needed for a hearer to correctly interpret this utterance should include the fact that the hearer

a) must be a long-standing acquaintance of the speaker so as to be aware that the speaker does not come from the immediate vicinity;
b) is aware that the speaker does go home on weekends;
c) knows the speaker has not gone home recently;
d) knows that since the speaker is 'a student' she must be in some learning institution either at secondary or tertiary level;
e) knows that the academic calendar runs from January to December in South Africa;
f) knows that some examinations are written in the latter part of the year, around October;

g) knows that most learners who do not reside at home when they do go home for a short break, like for a weekend, find it difficult to study during their stay at home; and

h) knows that the average student would like to pass her/his examinations.

These are just some of the factors that must be shared by the interlocutors for correct inference to take place of this utterance. In addition there are other paralinguistic clues like prosody, body language and the physical location of the interlocutors at the time. Should any of these clues not be available to a hearer, miscommunication can occur. It can be deduced that respondents, having available only the sketchy context given, may have missed the significance of some of the details.

The physical structure of utterance 16 has also contributed to its multiple interpretation. A syntactic blemish has occurred from the use of the two negative particles, 'won't' and 'no more'. Quirk *et al.* (1985: 782) explain that such an utterance has failed to observe the negation proceedings governing assertive and non-assertive pronouns. Assertive pronouns include 'some', 'somebody', 'somewhere' and 'something', while their non-assertive forms are 'any', 'anybody', 'anywhere' and 'anything'. In addition to this classification, there are negative forms for these pronouns, 'no', 'nobody', 'nowhere' and 'nothing' respectively. 'No more' as used in this utterance is therefore the negative form of

the time adverb ‘still’ (assertive) and ‘any more’ (non-assertive). A combination of the negator ‘not’ and a non-assertive form is possible giving an example like, ‘I am not painting anymore’. It is equally possible to negate the sentence by just using the negative form, as in, ‘I am painting no more’. Strictly speaking, the speaker should have used the negator plus the non-assertive form ‘any more’ resulting in ‘I won’t go there any more’. Alternatively, the speaker could have omitted the negator and used only the negative form of the pronoun as in ‘I will no more go there’. So what has happened in this utterance is that the speaker has included the negator ‘not’ with the negative form ‘no more’, a case of a double negative. In most cases the combination of the negator (n’t) and the non-assertive form is more colloquial and idiomatic than the other negative formation.

Double negation is possible in certain contexts as in ‘I can’t not obey her’, ‘You can’t not admire her’, ‘No one has nothing to offer society’, ‘Not many people have nowhere to live.’ These sentences are similar to the double negative of logic where the two negative values cancel each other leaving the sentence positive. Syntactically, these sentences are still negative as for example, they will be followed by positive question tags as in ‘I can’t not obey her, can I?’ or ‘Not many people have nowhere to live, have they?’ However, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 799) argue that the double negative in standard English is very different from double or multiple negation in some varieties of non-standard English. In non-standard English, a negative item can be used wherever in standard English a non-assertive item follows a negative, as in ‘No one ever said anything to anybody’

(standard), 'No one never said nothing to nobody' (non-standard). The additional negatives, in non-standard English, as in this utterance, do not cancel out previous negatives to make the utterance positive but rather emphasises the negativity of the utterance. In addition, the notion that two negative elements in a sentence transform it into a positive one is not strictly adhered to in colloquial situations nowadays, and the Americanism which has crept into linguistic performances of the younger generation means that this utterance remains a negative response to the question asked. It is clear that some emphasis was intended as those familiar with South African universities' calendars would be aware that October is indicative of the examination period. What is also of significance in the assigning of meaning to this utterance is the student's use of the words 'there' and 'no more'. 'No more' has some finality to it, giving the impression that the student has an issue with the home ('there') and not with the time of going.

4.5.3.8 UTTERANCE 17: Student A's bag strap came undone and student B said: "Leave me do it for you."

a. SI: statement HI: command: 33%

b. LA: positive declarative

c. US: syntactic blemish

d. PA: hearer is now better informed.

e. C: achieved

This is another of the utterances the interpretation of which caused some confusion for the respondents. A further 29% of respondents identified the utterance as a 'suggestion' as well as 14% who were 'not sure'. Although SAT posits that an interpretation of an utterance rests with the speaker, this is an occasion to question the speaker's stated intention in relation to the context. The initial reaction is to view the utterance as either a 'suggestion' or an 'offer' or even a 'request'. As a 'suggestion' (because the speaker is proposing a course of action which the hearer may not otherwise pursue; it is in the hearer's interest that such an action take place) the hearer has the option to accept or reject the course of action. These are all conditions which this utterance fulfils. Likewise, the utterance could be an 'offer' since the speaker is making something (her services) available to the hearer and the speaker is not sure the hearer would accept the offer. That the utterance can also be a 'request' is also possible as the speaker could also be 'requesting' that her services to be made available to hearer. With all these possibilities it is rather odd that the speaker has indicated that her intention was merely to inform the hearer, as that is the main function of a statement. This is one of the utterances that highlights the possibility that the speakers and the respondents were not fully conversant with the different speech acts involved in this questionnaire.

A question that arises at this juncture is whether the respondents identified the utterance as a 'command' because of the sentence construction used, that is, the imperative, and the use of the word 'leave' or whether had the speaker replaced

it with 'let' the interpretation would have been the same. The answer to the first part of the question cannot be in the affirmative as the use of the imperative even in orders and requests, in normal conversational interaction, is dispreferred in many languages, English included, despite its status as the genuine expression of these illocutionary acts (Mey, 1993). However, the imperative form, rated by Walters (1979: 295) as the most impolite, accounts for a large number of utterances of spontaneously-occurring requests. The responses to this utterance demonstrate the closeness in linguistic conditions between 'a suggestion', 'a request' and 'a command'.

The other point worth noting is the semantic properties of the word 'leave' and the alternative, 'let', that could have been used. In other words, is there difference in meaning between 'Leave me do it for you' and 'Let me do it for you'? Apart from the syntactic blemish and the implied physical unpleasantness of the first sentence, the meanings are similar, if context clues are taken into account, although the use of 'leave' could also indicate either a lapse of time or the incompetence of receiver of the message rather than simply an offer to help. The confusion surrounding this utterance, therefore, rests more on the inconclusive conditions surrounding the various speech acts rather than on the surface codes.

4.5.3.9 UTTERANCE 18: A student anxiously waiting for her supplementary results said: "I feel hopeless for this week."

a. SI: statement HI: statement: 31%; complaint 30%

b. LA: positive declarative

c. US: syntactic blemish

d. PA: hearer is now informed that the speaker does not have much hope of getting the results this week.

e. C: achieved

In addition to the above results, 25% of the respondents indicated that they were 'not sure' of the meaning of the utterance. This diversity in the interpretation, perhaps, has occurred from the use of the word 'hopeless'. The word 'hopeless' is an adjective meaning either 'without hope' as in 'The rains would not stop; the situation is hopeless'; or 'a feeling of inadequacy or incompetence' as in 'I am hopeless in Mathematics'. However, 'hopeless', when used to modify an object with animate qualities, can only have the latter meaning as in the sentence, 'I am hopeless at Mathematics/chess/public speaking'.

In this utterance 'hopeless' seems to be a subject complement after a verb of perception, 'feel'. One would, therefore, use the first part of this utterance to refer to a situation or an issue over which the speaker would normally have or should have some control but for some reason, this is not the case currently. However, if you believe that it is impossible or unlikely for something to happen, as in the first meaning discussed, you can say that there is 'no hope' of it happening, as in,

'There seems to be no/little hope of my getting my results this week.' In this case, 'no hope' is not synonymous with 'hopeless', as 'no hope' is not an adjectival phrase. It is rather part of the nominal group functioning as the object of the sentence. That is to say, in such a construction, it is not the speaker who is without hope but rather the situation which does not look promising.

The use of either meaning naturally goes with a definite sentence construction. What the student has done is to intend the first meaning but use a sentence construction which is usually reserved for the second meaning. That seems to be part of the reason for the misunderstanding by the respondents.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Demonstrated in this fairly extensive analysis is the variety of interpretations or functions possible in a written utterance if one has recourse only to a written context. Critics of SAT, such as Leech (1983: 176) and Vandereveken (1990: 167), have maintained that in everyday linguistic interaction it is problematic to attempt a match between structural codes and speech functions as the interpretation process relies quite heavily on very comprehensive linguistic and non-linguistic context clues. This has been shown by the analysis in this chapter. Also demonstrated by the variety of possible interpretations of these utterances, is the fact that creation of linguistic meaning is a negotiated process between the speaker and the hearer.