

## ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS IN SLANG EXPRESSIONS USED BY UNDERGRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

By

OMOTOSHO MOSES MELEFA\* & CHIAMAKA BEATRICE ILO♣

### Abstract

*Slang expression is one of the linguistic elements that have attracted the attention of language scholars in recent time. Slang is the language (words, phrases, and usages) of an informal register that members of particular in-group favour (over a standard language) in order to establish group identity, exclude outsiders, or both. There are contextual characteristics that define the deployment of slang expressions by students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). Explication of these features has not been the subject of any linguistic investigation. This study, therefore, discusses the illocutionary acts in slang expressions used by undergraduates of UNN. Data for the study were tap-recorded naturally occurring conversations done by the students in their halls of residence which contained the slang expressions. This aided the analysis of the slang expressions within their contexts of use in interactions. The data were classified and analysed using John Searle's classifications of illocutionary acts. The data gathered revealed that illocutionary acts such as assertives and directives often characterise the students' use of slang expressions in their daily conversations. The students rarely deploy slang expressions as commissives and expressives. Slang expressions were not deployed as declaratives by them. Thus, the students use slang expressions as assertives preponderantly in their conversations.*

**Keywords:** slang, conversation, pragmatics, speech acts, and illocutionary acts

### 1. Introduction

Slang expression is one of the linguistic elements that have attracted the attention of language scholars in recent time. Though considered an

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\* Dr Melefa teaches in the Department of English & Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. moses.melefa@unn.edu.ng

♣ Ilo is of Department of English & Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria

informal language form, its vibrancy and potency for social interaction and the expression of social identity has drawn the attention of linguists. It has generated large volumes of linguistic research. The dimensions of its deployment as a linguistic tool in terms of structure and function in different societies of the world have been subjected to investigation by scholars. This study seeks to analyse slang expressions used by undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This has the potential of helping us to understand the illocutions that are performed by the students when they use slang expressions in the conversations.

It is difficult to point out the etymological origin of the word 'slang'. However, in its earliest attested use in 1756, the word slang referred to the vocabulary of 'low' or 'disreputable' people. By the early nineteenth century, it was no longer exclusively associated with disreputable people, but continued to be applied to usages below the level of standard educated speech. According to Eble (1989), 'slang is an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large. The existence of vocabulary of this sort within a language is possibly as old as language itself. 'Slang seems to be part of any language used in ordinary interaction by a community large enough and diverse enough to have identifiable subgroups' (Eble, 1989, p. 11). For Leech and Svartvik, (1981), 'Slang is language which is very familiar in style, and is usually restricted to the members of a particular social group, for example 'teenage slang', 'army slang', 'theatre slang'. They claim that slang is not usually fully understood by people outside a particular social group, and so has a value of showing the intimacy and solidarity of its members' (p. 26).

In this research work, slang is conceptualised as linguistic forms (words, phrases, and usages) of an informal register that members of particular in-groups favour (over a standard language) in order to establish group identity, exclude outsiders, or both. While many forms of language may be considered 'sub-standard', slang remains distinct from 'colloquial' and 'jargon' terms because of its specific social contexts. While considered inappropriate in formal writing, colloquial terms are typically considered acceptable in speech across a wide range of contexts, while slang tends to be considered unacceptable in many contexts.

Since a pragmatic apparatus is deployed in this study, it is important to say a few things on this secondary level of linguistic analysis. Bublitz and Norrick (p. 4) point out that pragmatics is 'the scientific study of all aspects

of linguistic behaviour', and an area of research that is 'fundamentally concerned with communicative action in any kind of context'. Pragmatics basically deals with meaning, but meaning within this discipline is of a much broader scope than in traditional, truth-conditional Semantics. A crucial distinction is here made between the basic meaning of an expression resulting from its syntactic structure (i.e. semantic meaning), and what someone means by using such an expression in a given context (i.e. pragmatic meaning). Thus, pragmatic research, like discourse analytical work, is inevitably linked to a functional perspective on language, but at the same time it usually takes into account many formal aspects that contribute to the determination of the meaning of any utterance.

One of the central concerns of Pragmatics is to understand the mechanisms that allow speakers to work out the hidden, indirect or implied meanings of utterances or whole texts. Pragmatics, then, has a lot to say about the indeterminacy of language, and it looks into the nature and inherent characteristics of the many and various mechanisms (such as reference, deixis, conventional and conversational implicatures, or presuppositions) that human beings set into motion in order to encode and decode underdetermined utterances.

Unlike semantics, which examines meaning that is conventional or 'coded' in a given language, pragmatics studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on structural and linguistic knowledge (e.g., grammar, lexicon, etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, any pre-existing knowledge about those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and other factors. In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time, etc. of an utterance.

Scholars have indicated an unusual interest in the use of language by undergraduates. Slang is a variety of language commonly used by the undergraduates of universities across the world. Several studies have been carried out on slang especially among the students (who are mostly youths). For instance, Eble (1989 and 1996), (1994), Alimi and Arua (2006) and Ugwu (2013) have all carried out studies on the use of slang among university students. In fact, the female students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka is the object of Ugwu's study. However, like a living organism, language continuously evolves and continues to grow; hence, the need for more studies to discuss its dynamic status. Specifically, the previous studies have not discussed how the slang expressions used by UNN students in their

conversations embody certain illocutionary acts. There is no doubt that when used in conversational contexts, slang expressions perform certain illocutionary acts. The nature of these illocutions are not yet known. There is, therefore, the need to classify the illocutionary acts performed by UNN students when they use slang expressions in conversational contexts. The present study aims to identify and discuss the various illocutionary acts performed by UNN students through their deployment of slang expressions in their conversations. Thus, the uniqueness of the study lies in its attempt at addressing the opaque situation and divergent meaning slang usage creates among students in the University.

## **2. Previous Studies**

A lot of research works have been carried out by scholars on slang usage in various language contexts. For example, Pradianti (2013) carried out a study on slang expressions used by ninth grade students in Bandung, Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study discussed the morphological processes involved in the creation of slang expressions. The study revealed that the derivation of slang expressions among the students followed morphological processes like coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, back formations, reduplication. Coinage being the most frequently used in slang words among the students that served as a case study implies that the students are creative and innovative in playing and making the new words that older people cannot understand about them. It is supported by the appearance of slang words categorized as coinage, which are rich of new words and not listed in formal language dictionary.

Another scholar who carried out a study on slang is Wang (2016). The study discusses campus slang from a semiotic perspective. The study summarized the characteristics of campus slang to include the following: innovation, economy, vividness and humor. He argued that with developments in ICT, sources of slang expressions are now more diverse. This study is different from the current study in that it focuses on undergraduates of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which belongs to a different sociocultural context.

Eble's (1989) and (1996) works on slang expressions explored the University of North Carolina slang repertoire. The importance of these treatments of slang is that it highlights the fact that slang is intricately woven into college students' academic and social life. It shows that slang can be studied in multi-dimensional ways by focusing on the formal and

functional characteristics of slang expressions. The study explored the relationship between grammar, morphology, lexicology, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and other important fields of linguistics.

There have been few slang studies in ESL environments in Africa. These, however, follow a trend similar to their British and American counterparts: they are all studies of slang in university environments. Ugwu (2013) investigated slang expressions among female students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The study focused on female hostels of UNN and only slang expressions used by female students of the university were studied. With data gathered using a tape recorder, the study found that the words/expressions that constitute the students' slang expressions cut across all languages, although those from English form the bulk. She submitted that slang expressions that depict sexuality/promiscuity rank the highest among their slang repertoire. She claimed that these were followed by those on gossip, those that portray studying, exam malpractice, campus life, theft, fraud, etc. Though the present study is similar to this in that both investigate the use of slang expressions by students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; however, Ugwu's study approached slang using M. A.K. Halliday's theory of register while the present study adopts Seale's model of illocutionary act.

Alimi and Arua (2006) identify and discuss the labels with which students describe their academic life at the University of Botswana. The claim that the labels reveal students' primary academic preoccupations: excellent and poor performance, good and poor teaching, difficult and easy courses, truancy, illegitimate relationships, cheating and passing and failing. Their findings show that in terms of endearing slang terms, female students and lecturers are discriminated against while both genders are treated alike in terms of disparaging slang expressions.

Yusuf (1994), in 'From 'Motherless Babies' to 'Babiless Mothers': a Sexist Metaphorical Transition of Female Undergraduates, analysed two related slang expressions– 'motherless babies' and 'babiless mothers' amongst Nigerian University students. The structures of the two terms reveal the productive use of the **-less** suffix to denote two types of deprivation: 'maternal care' in the first and 'maternal joy' in the second. This work reveals a sexual consideration of slang expressions.

Goke-Pariola (1989) also examined a collection of slang terms used by students of Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. His findings reveal the following predominant themes in students' deployment of slang

expressions: personal disposition, level of social sophistication, student or non-student status, course of study, reading habits, and level of industry.

There are studies also which utilised speech acts as the tool for the analysis of linguistic data other than slang expressions. These studies (e.g. Ayeomni and Akinkuolere, 2012; Hashim, 2015; Altikriti, 2016; Danang, 2012; Gusthini, Sobarna & Amalia, 2018, etc.) have deployed speech acts theory to analyse data ranging from debates, presidential address, presidential speeches to campaign speeches. The same way speech acts theory was used to discuss these dimensions of linguistic data, its applicability to other kinds of linguistic data such as slang expressions is what this study tries to demonstrate. The current study attempts to discuss illocutionary acts that are performed by students of UNN when they use slang expressions in their conversations.

### **3. Methodology**

The data for the study were gathered from four hostels of UNN. Of the four hostels selected for the study, two were male hostels and two female hostels. These four hostels where conversations were sampled include Alvan Ikoku and Eni Njoku hostels for the male students and Balewa and Nkurumah hostels for the female students. The study adopted qualitative approach to data analysis. Naturally occurring conversations among male and female students who reside in these selected halls of residence were purposively tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Searle's model of speech acts theory was applied to qualitatively analyse the illocutionary acts in the slang expressions collected. Particular attention was paid to the deployment of these slang expressions within their context of use in conversations. Secondly, it was observed that there were conventional and contextual backgrounds that were exclusive to UNN undergraduates. To understand the slang expressions, one needed to understand both the historical and social contexts of their use. The analysis paid particular attention to the contexts of the use of these slang expressions.

### **4. Theoretical Framework**

The study is hinged on the theoretical orientation of Searle's model of speech acts, specifically illocutionary act. According to Searle (1969), in his seminal book titled *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, even when there are underlying universals of usage, there is a considerable

room for context-driven use of communication elements. Searle distinguishes 'illocutionary acts' which he regards as the 'complete' speech acts, from 'perlocutionary acts' which concern the consequences or effects of illocutionary acts on hearers. He further distinguishes 'utterance acts' (the act of uttering words) from 'propositional acts', which are used to refer and predicate.

Searle's speech act taxonomy is based on 'illocutionary point', 'direction-of-fit' and 'sincerity conditions' (as well as other features including the role of authority, discourse relations, etc.). By 'illocutionary point', Searle means the 'purpose' of the speech act in question. The second criterion (direction-of-fit) concerns the match between words and the world. While some speech acts try to get the words (or, more specifically, their propositional content) to match the world, others try to get the world to match the words. Assertions for example, try to get our words to match the world, while promises and requests try to get the world to match our words. Searle represents the word-to-world direction-of-fit with a downward arrow and the world-to-word direction-of-fit with an upward arrow. He notes that direction-of-fit is always a consequence of illocutionary point.

Searle comes up with five categories of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. According to him, 'the point or purpose of the members of the assertive class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something, to the truth of the expressed proposition. The simplest test for an assertive is that it can literally be characterized as true or false. In Searle's second category (directives), the illocutionary point consists in the fact that 'they are attempts ... to get the hearer to do something.' Searle retains Austin's definition for his third category of speech acts, commissives. Verbs denoting expressives include condole, deplore, welcome, congratulate. Declarations, according to Searle, are acts in which 'the successful performance of one of its members brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality. The following are crucial postulations in Searle's speech act theory:

Speaking a language is performing acts intentionally according to conventional rules;

Speech act is the core of communication;

Whatever can be meant can be said (the principle of expressibility);

There are series of analytical connections between the notion of speech acts, what the speaker means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are.

Crucial components of human communication include: discourse relations, the force or strength with which an illocutionary force is performed, differences in the status of speakers and hearer, differences in the way an utterance relates to the interests of the speaker and hearer, relations with extra-linguistic conventions, illocutionary point, direction of fit and sincerity condition.

Searle's theory captures the dynamics of human communication. Conventions of the language being used in a communicative event are explored by the participants of discourse for meaningful interaction. Without this, the inferential process will be problematic. Acheoah (2015) opines that the term 'Linguistic Implicatures (LIs) are meanings implied through language. Searle appears to have restricted his emphasis on the performance of linguistic acts in his discussion of speakers' intentions. The idea that informs the use of Searle's theory for this study is because of its portrayal of speech acts as acts that are not performed in a vacuum. His theory captures the idea that speech acts often have environmental contexts which determine the process of encoding and decoding them.

## 5. Analysis and Discussion

The tape-recorded data analysed revealed various categories of illocutionary acts that characterise the various slang expressions that were used by the students in their conversations. These illocutions include:

### Assertives

These are statements that describe a state of affairs in the world, which could be true or false. They include stating, claiming, reporting, asserting and announcing. Slang expressions in data below which are assertives are highlighted in bold fonts.

### Excerpt 1

Boy 1: You think say na lie I dey lie? Me be wan comot o, come look for back, close to the wall, naim I see am dey **embezzle** that girl like mad... (*all scream*)

Boy 2: Na lie. Na lie.

Boy 3: But wetin you won yarn sef? No be you? I know say you don **knack** that girl.

Boy 2: The guy don chop im **kpomo** teyey! Forget this church thing wey the guy dey do o!

The context of the conversation is between three roommates at Alvan Ikoku hostel. The participants in the conversations are represented with Boy 1, 2, and 3. This is an informal dialogue with a sarcastic tone. In producing the utterance, "I see am dey **embezzle** that girl", Boy 1 claims that he saw Boy 2 caressing and romancing a girl. Boy 2 tries to deny this claim while Boy 3 states that there's no need denying the fact that Boy 2 has had sex with the girl in question. What makes all these illocutionary speech acts assertive is that they give room to be disputed and this is what Boy 2 does by saying, 'Na lie. Na lie. The conversations are outlined below. The slang expressions used in the conversations above, **embezzle**, **knack**, **kpomo** were deployed as assertives, which made certain claims and counterclaims.

Again, in the conversations below, we found the use of slang expressions as assertives:

#### Excerpt 2

Roommate 1: After I go **T-end** o... I wan come pour **shait** na!

Roommate 2: yes!

Roommate 1: Na so the girl come **corner** me say why I wan pour the **shait** for here. Na im I tell am say ah! Ah! This place na our toilet nah, na room 231 toilet. The girl come dey shout come dey paara... I **change hand** give that girl...ah! I **show her level**...

Roommate 2: (screams in joy) Aaaaaa!

Roommate 1: I tell am say I be '**omoeko**'

Roommate 3: Heeeeeeeeeee! I like that...

Roommate 4: Action baby...

The above is a conversation between roommates at Nkrumah hostel. The participants in the conversation are represented with Roommate 1, 2, 3, and 4. The chat is informal and done with a friendly tone. Roommate 1 tries to report to the other roommates the incident that happened between her and another girl in the same hostel. In producing the utterance, 'After I go T-end o...I wan come pour **shait** na. Roommate 1 performs illocutionary act of informing her roommates that something transpired as she went to the

toilet to pour away faeces. In the third utterance, Roommate 1 also performs an illocutionary speech act of informing her roommates that the said girl ambushed her and challenged her for trying to pour the faeces in the toilet. 'I **change hand** give that girl...ah! I **show her level**' is also an assertive as it performs the act of informing her roommates about her reactions towards the other student – 'change hand' and 'show her level'. 'I tell am say I be Omo-Eko (Lagos girl) also performs illocutionary act of informing them what she actually told her.

Also, the interactions below among students are replete with slangs expressions that are assertives.

### Excerpt 3

Roommate 3: Heeeeeeeey! Hope say you scatter the place, you **wole** the girl, scatter am, **corner** am...?

Roommate 2: Trust me...I tell am say I dey like **ajebo** for your eye?

Roommate 3: I trust you naaaa! She fine?

Roommate 2: fine keh, One **yeye lengelenge** girl like wey her face be like **Pancake**.

Roommate 4: Are you serious...?

In the first utterance above, Roommate 3 performs the speech act of asserting that she expects Roommate 2 to ambush the said lady. In the second utterance below, Roommate 2 performs illocutionary act of affirming that she is not a pampered lady from a wealthy family who cannot stand for her right and fight her fellow lady on her own. In the fourth utterance, Roommate 2 performs illocutionary act of informing her roommates that the said lady that tried to bully her was quite ugly, slim and skinny. Thus, the illocutionary act performed is an assertive.

The exchange below between two students are also characterised by assertives.

### Excerpt 4

Voice 1: I went to Nkrumah that last two Sunday, guy I could not breathe. Everywhere was just fucking smelling. Like... I don't know...I come dey ask them whether cleaners no dey come clean there...

Voice 2: students are **shaiting** everywhere or what?

Voice 1: Them dey **shaite** na! You you no dey shaite every day?  
 Students are **shaiting** everywhere?  
 Them dey **shaite** na!

The above is an excerpt of conversations between two female students at Balewa Hostel. The two speakers are represented as Voice 1 and Voice 2 respectively. Voice 1 tries to inform Voice 2 of the state of affairs at Nkrumah Hostel. Voice 2 interrogates Voice 1. In affirming the proposal, Voice 1 performs illocutionary act of informing, which is an assertive. The next reaction, 'You know dey shaite every day?' presses Voice two affirm yes/no.

The deployment of slang expressions as assertive also reverberates in Excerpt 5 below.

#### Excerpt 5

Voice 2: They no dey **shait** for inside toilet?  
 Voice 1: **Na P-bucket** them dey use na. You no dey use **P-bucket?** But seriously that hostel is messed up...of all the hostels in the school o...

The interaction above involves two roommates. In responding to the question asked by Voice 2, Voice 1 responds, '**Na P-bucket** them dey use na'. This is assertive which reports that ladies all over the hostels defecate into a bucket before flushing same into a toilet. The slang expression used, therefore, is an assertive which makes a claim that can be challenged or disproved to true or false.

In the excerpt outlined below, in producing the utterance, 'You don jack na!' Voice 2 performs a speech act of informing Voice 1 of her awareness that she had already read for her exams. It is an assertive in that it can be proven to be true or false. Voice 2 also uses 'Smoke dey your own head too' to assert that the evidence of her preparation is obvious; Voice 2 also proved this assertion wrong by returning, 'See smoke for your head too.'

#### Excerpt 6

Voice 2: How about that exam? You don **jack** na!  
 Voice 1: Jack ke! Abeg leave that one jaree. All I know say anyhow they no fit give person '**f**' for this final year, just like that...

Voice 2: **See smoke for your head!** (*laughs mockingly*)

Voice 1: **Smoke** dey your own head too...They cannot give someone '**f**'; don't you know that this time around they want everybody to pass, they want to push us...we are too fucking many in that department...

Voice 2: Serious...?

In Excerpt 7, by uttering 'instead of giving you '**f**' they fit just say '**Let my people go**', Voice 1 performs a speech act of informing Voice 2 the least the department could do in awarding grades to her students. She also asserts that she can't have grade "**E**". Below is the full conversation:

#### Excerpt 7

Voice 1: Better still ...instead of giving you '**f**' they fit just say '**Let my people go**...

Voice 2: That's '**E**'?

Voice 1: yes, Them don bring '**E**' back

Voice 2: Yeah; that's what I heard o...

Voice 1: Haa! No problem but me I no dey pray for '**E**' shaa. The least I fit get na '**C**':

Also, the conversation represented in Excerpt 8 below is a discussion that took place at Balewa hostel. It is basically gossip among some female students in the hostel. In the first utterance, Girl 1 demands to know what Girl 2 went to do in a guy's house. Girl 2 uses an assertive illocutionary act to answer her. In making the utterance, '**to collect fuck**', Girl 2 performs the illocutionary speech act of informing her roommates that she actually went to the guy's place to have sex. One can actually disprove her by saying, 'it is a lie' or support her by saying, 'it is true'. This is one of the features of assertives. However, Girl 3 performs an expressive act by expressing her state of mind the statement made by Girl 2. The Excerpt is captured below:

#### Excerpt 8

Girl 1: What did you go there to do?

Girl 2: To **collect fuck...fuck**

Girl 3: Fork! Like eating fork?

Girl 2: To collect fuck.../ef/ /ju:/ /si/ / kei/

**Directive**

This an illocutionary act which embodies an effort on the part of the speaker to get the addressee to do something. This act prompts, questions, directs, advice, commands, requests, and suggests. According to Searle (1969), directives as illocutionary acts consist in the fact that they are attempts to get the hearer to do something. There are instances of the use of slang expressions in conversations by the students to get their hearers to do something. Excerpt 9 below is a conversation between two guys in Eni Njoku Hostel. The speakers are represented as Speaker 1 and 2.

**Excerpt 9**

**Speaker 1:** Na that guy ba? I go treat him **mata**, honestly.

**Speaker 2:** Noo! **fashe** am abeg, that guy na my **aloba** o

**Speaker 1:** you say?

**Speaker 2:** The guy no get any problem oo...

Using the slang expression, **fashe**, Speaker 2 directs speaker 1 by suggesting to Speaker 1 not to try anything funny with the said guy because the guy happens to be his friend. Using ...I go treat him **mata**, Speaker 1 commits himself to dealing with the guy and Speaker 2 performs an illocutionary act that directs the speaker not to. As Speaker 1 commits himself, his commitment expresses a commissive act as he promises to deal with the said guy.

There is another conversation among some female students of English Department at a room in Nkrumah Hostel. This is captured in Excerpt 10. Their conversation centred on the frequent assignments they receive from their lecturers. Interlocutors are represented as Speaker 1 and 2.

**Excerpt 10**

**Speaker 1:** Babe, abeg that Ejesu assignment, you go help me **tidy** am, abeg

**Speaker 2:** Tidy wetin? Na my project I face now oo

**Speaker 1:** Abeg help me **tidy** am, I go reason you something later.

Speaker 1 pleads that Speaker 2 helps her in writing an assignment. In doing this, she uses a slang expression, '**tidy**', which directs Speaker 2 to do the assignment given to her. In uttering the, 'babe, you go help me **tidy** that

Ejesu's assignment, abeg,' Girl 1 performs a directive speech act. However, the utterance of Speaker 2 shows that she is not assuring Speaker 1 of her help. It is this speech act that Girl 1 performs as her expression is simply a request to be assisted by Girl 2 in carrying out her assignment.

Another instance is a conversation among some female students at Balewa hostel. In producing the utterance, 'What's your **ringing tone**?' Girl 2 makes a request from Girl 1 to tell her the kind of sound she produces while having sex. Girl 1 also performs a directive speech act by saying, 'Which one be **ringing tone** kwa?' This question is both an explanation and a request; an explanation in the sense that it gives Girl 1 idea that she knows not what she means by 'ringing tone' and request in that she wishes to understand what the slang expression, 'ringing tone' means. The reply of Girl 2 which is outlined below after Girl 2 had asked her question shows that the speech act performed by Girl 1 is actually a directive. Below is the excerpt:

#### Excerpt 11

Girl 2: What's your **ringing tone**

Girl 1: Which one be **ringing tone** kwa?

Girl 2: have you forgotten that poem Mr. Ejesu taught us, he said those girls that does not scream during sex, how do guys enjoy them?

Girl 3: Ejesu na bad guy...

In excerpt 12, there is conversation between two guys in Eni Njoku Hostel. Represented by Boy<sub>1</sub> and 2. In producing the first utterance, Boy 1 tries to question. Boy 2 responds by asking Boy 1 if he wanted to take him to a restaurant. Both utterances are directive in nature; however, Boy 2's utterance is also assertive as it requires a Yes/ no response from Boy 1.

#### Excerpt 12

Voice 1: Kenneth you dey "**H**"?

Voice 2: why? You want make we go **Amara**?

#### Expressives

This is the illocutionary act that expresses the mental state of the speaker about an event presumed to be true. It simply expresses emotions. Slang expressions used as expressives are rare in the students' conversations. Only a single instance of that was found in the data collected, which is Excerpt 13. The extract below is a transcript of conversation between two students when

a lady was given a surprise birthday cake. Speaker 1 is expressing her joy towards her friend who presented her with a birthday cake. She uses an expressive to capture her emotional state of mind.

### Excerpt 13

Speaker 1: Amy **Baaabyyy**...na you nah, happy birthday ooo.  
Congratulations!...You too much. joor!

Speaker 2: thank you ooo...

### Commissives

As mentioned earlier, this is an illocutionary act that commits the speaker to perform future action i.e. the one performing the speech act to do something in the future. The conversation below is between two female students at Balewa Hostel who are represented as Girl 1 and 2 respectively.

In producing the utterance below, Girl 1 makes a commitment on what she is going to do. What this speech act does in the larger conversation is to let Girl 2 realise that Girl 1 already has her money committed somewhere even when the money is yet to be sent to her. Below is a brief extract of the conversation:

### Excerpt 14

Girl 1: I wan buy can and white wey I go use do **four-years-don-waka**

Girl 2: serious... I for buy too, if to say money dey. "Iwan enter **airport**",

Excerpt 14, which contains 'do **four-years-don-waka**', commits the speaker to a future course.

Again, the slang expression, **airport**, functions as a commissive within the context of its use. Excerpt 15 is a transcript of conversation between two roommates in Alvan Hostel. They are represented with speakers 1 and 2. Speaker 1 makes an utterance that he wants to go and defecate in the open bush. The illocutionary speech act performed by Speaker 1 is a commissive as it makes a commitment of going to defecate. Below is the extract:

### Excerpt 15

Girl 1: Guy, I wan enter **airport**, this okpa don dey worry me for belle too much

Girl 2: Na that slim woman naim you go chop imokpa?

Girl 1: I dey tells you guy...

Girl 2: You don fuck up na! That woman okpa no dey dey good at all.

### 6. Conclusion

This study analyses slang expressions used by UNN undergraduates in their conversations. The slang expressions were discussed using Searle's illocutionary speech act classification— assertives, directives, declaratives, commissives and expressives. A total of 15 excerpts was analysed and the result of the findings shows that assertives constitute the bulk of the slang expressions used by UNN undergraduates in their conversations, while directives are next. The reason for the preponderance of assertives can be accounted for in that the speech act form enables the students to assert themselves by informing, stating, announcing and making remarks to reflect the peculiarities of their sociocultural context.

These slang expressions, which were coined or adapted by the students, serves the purpose of helping them to index a youth identity that reflect the peculiarities of their campus life and worldview. Hence, the slang expressions are identity markers that implicate popular youth subculture that indicates an attempt to evolve nuances of their peculiar environment. Peculiar creations that reflect their idiosyncratic lifestyle on campus include '**airport**,' **to go Amara**', '**white house**' "**T-end**", "**shiat**" "**p- bucket**" and so on. Other slang expressions are products of admixtures of imported slang expressions that are internalized and domesticated. For instance, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, has her students drawn from many parts of the country. As each student comes, he/she comes with the slang expressions used in his/her environment and, thus, expanding the lexicon of these peculiar creations. As language is considered dynamic, it evolves and adapts new forms which are reflect the ethnography of usage.

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