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How Illocutionary Acts Reflect the Cultural Practices of the Participant at The County Assembly of Bomet

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the debates at the County Assembly of Bomet in order to establish the ways in which the performance of illocutionary acts help in revealing the cultural practices of the Kipsigis community. The use of speech acts varies across different contexts and this variability has been noted to cause communication breakdown in some speech situations. Effective communication is possible when interlocutors share the same cultural background which enables them to interpret speech utterances appropriately. The objective of the study was to examine the ways in which the use of speech acts by the debaters reflected the cultural practices of the Kipsigis community where the debaters were socialized. The study used Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory and the Five Categories of Speech Acts identified by Searle (2005), which include directives, expressives, commissives, declaratives, and assertives. The study also incorporated insights in the study of speech acts from Sotillo (2017). The study purposefully sampled three motions from the Hansards recorded between the year 2013 and 2017. The data was downloaded from Bomet County Assembly's website. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that every utterance produced by the debaters in the County Assembly could be categorized under one of the major categories of speech acts proposed by Searle (1969). The results further showed that the Kipsigis cultural practices are brought to the fore by the arguers as they try to justify their claims.

Keywords: Speech acts, cultural practices, debates, argumentative discourse, Hansards

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4. INTRODUCTION

Speech act theory has been largely criticized for excluding cultural context in its analysis of communication. Levinson (1983) as cited in Chakrani (2007) notes that speech act theory has failed in its consideration of cultural context as a determining factor in assuring successful communication vis a vis performance and reception. Using the debates at the County Assembly of Bomet, the study attempted to show the importance of cultural context in the determination of the illocutionary force of utterances of the participants engaged in the decision-making processes. The study argues that the ability of an arguer to perform an act and determine its illocutionary reading is achieved not solely by meeting and fulfilling the felicity conditions, but is, in fact, also attained by creatively invoking and mobilizing aspects of the Kipsigis cultural context. The study therefore, investigated how the Members of County Assembly manipulated salient and shared cultural concepts in an attempt to persuade their opponents into supporting their claims. The participants in a debate use all manner of persuasive strategies while being aware that they are expected to reach a consensus however heated the debating exchange is.

According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), arguers can explicitly invoke an audience's known values in support of a claim for action; and ground their arguments in these known commitments, as part of a rhetorically effective strategy. Following this assertion by the two scholars, the study focused on examining some of the motions at the County Assembly of Bomet to establish the ways in which the participants used some common human values which also

apply to the Kipsigis community as a persuasive strategy to justify their arguments. Some of the Kipsigis known values which may act as motivators for action include; leadership and responsibility, the sense of communalism, hospitality, justice and fairness, and values associated with the rites of passage such as birth and death among others.

1.1 Objectives of The Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- I. To examine the types of illocutionary acts that are used during debates at the County Assembly of Bomet.
- II. To determine the ways in which the illocutionary acts reflect the cultural practices of the Kipsigis community.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Kipsigis' View of language

The Kipsigis recognize that language has a unique power that goes beyond the individual using it. According to Komma (1992), the Kipsigis believe that words spoken will faithfully realize the content of the speech regardless of the true intention of the speaker or the recipient of the speech. The community, therefore ensures that words are given great care and used in the most appropriate manner with due formalities. To ensure that people used language appropriately, the Kipsigis introduced unwritten rules to guide speakers on what not to say at particular situations. This is because of the belief that language has power to change the state of affairs, and in

most cases could lead to unpleasant consequences. This view is akin to what Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) called declarative speech acts; where a speaker changed situations or conditions of things in the process of uttering some sentences. The only difference here is the time taken for the action to be effected. While the action happens simultaneously as the speech in Austin and Searle's case, the Kipsigis case was not always immediate; the act or acts that followed pronouncements did not have a time frame but it was believed to ultimately take place.

The above observations by Komma (1992) are relevant to the present study because of the view that language is used to perform certain actions. That utterances realize the intentions of the speaker is not only applicable to the western context but the Kipsigis context as well. But this study argues that although the use of speech acts is universal, understanding the use and functions of certain speech acts requires that we include the cultural context if we have to do a proper interpretation of them. Soi (2014) notes that the Kipsigis people are generally known to be secretive and of few words. With the few words that are spoken, the Kipsigis believe that language has the power which realizes, if the speaker follows a certain form, the wishes a speaker holds deep in his/her psychology (Komma, 1992).

2.2 Language as Action Among the Kipsigis

It has long been established that speaking and doing things with words happen simultaneously. Many scholars (Austin, 1962; Leech, 1996; Searle, 1969) agree that speech and action are inseparable. They explain that when people speak, they perform actions at the same time such as advising, requesting, complaining, acknowledging, protesting, naming, threatening, and warning among others. The notion of the performative aspect of language applies to all languages of the world, the Kipsigis one included.

To further explain how the power of the spoken word affects the state of affairs, Komma (1992) uses the ritual surrounding naming ceremonies in the traditional Kipsigis community. The scholar states that the Kipsigis believes that when a person dies, his or her soul (*atondoyet*) leaves the body, enters the world of ancestral spirits and become an ancestral spirit (*oindet*). The ancestral spirit eventually enters, with the first inspiration, the newborn's body, an agnatic descendant of the same sex as the spirit's, thus becoming the infant's soul (Komma, 1983). Komma explains that for this ritual to happen, an old woman of the infant's clan (who married into the clan) recite the names of its agnatic ancestors of the same sex as the infant's one by one immediately after birth. When the infant sneezes, it is believed that the ancestral spirit has entered its body. The child will then henceforth acquire the name of the ancestral spirit (*kainetap kurennet* or *kainetap oiik*) which may be used alongside other names that the infant will be given. The naming ceremony among the Kipsigis has a close resemblance to the notion of performative aspect of language as expounded by Austin (1962). Austin notes that there are utterances in which the saying and the doing are one

and the same thing. In realizing performatives, as you speak, you are not simply saying, you are actually doing something, and naming is one of them. The performative utterances according to Austin (1962), are not verified by truth conditions but by felicity conditions. The felicity conditions are stated in terms of ritualistic constraints and conventional procedures. For example, for the utterance to be perceived as performing the act, it must be uttered by the right person at the right place and at the right time.

The importance of speech to perform actions seems to permeate all aspects of life among the Kipsigis including leadership. The Kipsigis selected their warrior leaders based on their individual abilities and achievements; the family background was never a factor (Komma, 1992). The primary attributes sought were bravery and eloquence although eloquence was given more weight. The idea of giving more prominence to the skillful manipulation of language and persuasion than to bravery is the Kipsigis's view that language (*ngálek*) is an autonomous power transcending its user. Komma (1992) adds that language can be invoked for malicious as well as beneficial purposes. The effect of speech can change according to the modes of expression, including praying, blessing, cursing, oath taking, and bewitching among other. He further says that language has an ultra-human power that may sometimes severely affect people regardless of the utterer's initial intention. Thus the Kipsigis believe, it is always desirable for an ordinary person not to talk too much lest he/she should cause unintended mishaps to himself/herself and/or someone unknown (Komma, 1992).

While appreciating the above enrichment from Komma (1992) which gave a general view of language according to the Kipsigis, this study nevertheless, focused on a specific context. It investigated the debating process at the County Assembly of Bomet in the light of the theory of speech act initiated by Austin (1962).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study used purposive sampling to select three motions for analysis. The selected motions were obtained from the County Assembly's Hansards recorded between 2013 and 2017. Motion 1 was held on 27th, February 2014 in the afternoon, Motion 2 was done on 15th, July 2015 in the afternoon and the third motion was held on 28th, March 2017 during the morning session. The researcher downloaded the data from the e-version of Hansards available at Bomet County Assembly's website. After downloading the Hansards, the researcher read through the selected motions in order to identify aspects of culture contained therein and the types of illocutionary acts that accompany them. The interpretation of data was done using words or sentences.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some of the Kipsigis cultural practices that came up during the debate included the following;

4.1 Leadership and Responsibility as values that drive action

The leaders know that the welfare of their people is their priority. The Members of County Assembly come together to deliberate on matters affecting their electorate. When they sense that things are not done in the right manner, they look for ways to rectify the situation. These activities are done through linguistic means in the form of debates at the County Assembly. For instance, in Motion 1, the Mover (Hon. Julius Korir) felt that there was total disregard for the rule of law when the County Executive awarded the contract for the supply of ambulance services to the Kenya Red Cross. He gives his reasons using a number of illocutionary acts to show why the contract should be revoked. For example, he begins by *informing* the hearers that the contract was entered without following the provisions of the Constitution. He *warns* the audience that the County will lose a lot of money if the contract is not revoked. That if the situation is not salvaged then as a County, they are *doomed*. *That Bomet residents will not blame the Executive but them*. He reiterates that as a representative of the people, if he cannot account for the ways that money is spent at the County, he is *doomed*. He then makes some *promises* saying;

Excerpt 1

Mr. Speaker, I will challenge the contract, I will also challenge the County Assembly of Bomet, and I will also challenge the County Executive Committee.

He finally *urges* his fellow colleagues at the County Assembly to agree with him by revoking the contract and awarding it afresh by following the rule of law. The verbs, informing, warning, reiterating, promising, and urging are all illocutionary acts performed by the motion Mover to show that there is a problem with the way the contract was awarded. He knows that as a leader, his main duty is fidelity to the rule of law and he reminds his colleagues thus;

Excerpt 2

We were sworn in to do oversight. I base my argument on the Constitution, we were sworn in to protect the Constitution and to represent the electorate

Therefore, as a responsible leader, the motion Mover acted when he saw that there was blatant abuse of the law in Bomet County. He knows that as leaders, they are expected to follow the law and the Executive is no exception.

The perlocutionary effect of Hon. Julius Korir's utterances is to make the hearer understand that the law was broken when the contract was awarded to The Kenya Red Cross Society. The utterances are meant to persuade the hearers to support the motion so that the contract is revoked. Implicitly, the audience are made aware that the Executive should not be trusted because they do things without regard for the rule of

law. The motion Mover's image is also supposed to improve as a law-abiding citizen.

Other participants however, used the debate to show how their electorates have benefited from the ambulances. These participants show that they are concerned about the welfare of their electorates. They value the lives of their people so that they try to help them whenever they are sick. For example, Hon. David Rotich gave two incidences when the ambulances have come to the rescue of the people in his ward. In one of the incidences, he *reports* a case of an old man from his ward who was sick and had been referred to Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital. His family was not able to meet the cost of transport and medication but when the ambulance arrived, they thought it was a hospital and said there was no need to go to Eldoret. Furthermore, they thought they would be charged for the ambulance and when they learnt that it was free, they were very happy.

In Motion 2, the Mover sees it as his duty to ensure that there is fairness in the recruitment of personnel at the County. He raises a red flag when he thinks that there were irregularities in the way the process of recruitment was being done. He *complains* that there were persons in the County Government who had not been directly hired by the Public Service Board and were drawing salaries. He therefore *urges* the County Assembly to halt payments to such persons until their employment has been regularized.

The motion Movers of Motion 1 and 2 sprang to action when they saw that things were not being done in the right manner at the County of Bomet. They showed leadership and commitment in trying to right the wrongs being perpetrated on the common citizens by those in power, that is, the executive arm of the County Government. They do this by *reporting* the wrongs, *complaining* about the problems and *urging* or *directing* the honourable members to do something so that such problems are minimized or eradicated completely. In all these activities, we see language performing actions although the debaters do this unconsciously. The debaters' belief in the power of their spoken word to achieve their desires is also revealed in these motions and this is in line with how Komma (1992) describes the Kipsigis as people who believe in the power of language to realize actions desired by any user of language.

4.2 The sense of Communal life as Reflected in the Realization of Illocutionary Acts

The Kipsigis cherish communal life where most activities are done together. This communal life, according to Rop (2015) guarantees togetherness and solidarity. In this kind of life what affects one affects all. The Kipsigis sums this with a proverb that goes, *kipangenke ko kimnon* (community is strength). This sense of communal life is especially seen during ceremonies such as circumcision, marriage or work related activities such as tilling land, weeding and harvesting or when there are misfortunes such as sicknesses and death.

The Members of County Assembly invoked this value of communal life as a strategy to justify their standpoints during debates. They do this to appeal to their hearers that they are concerned about their electorates and what they are going through or what might happen to them if certain actions are not taken. The value attached to communal life are elaborated in the following examples.

In Motion 1, Hon. T. Rotich reminds the honourable members to put aside thinking about the cost of ambulances and think about saving lives. He says;

Excerpt 3

I think let us put aside just thinking of the cost. How much do we contribute during the time for funerals? How much do we contribute even to have a mother who is stuck in hospital out after delivery? But this particular time, I think all of us are getting relieved we are not contributing to even get a vehicle to rush this mother to bring home another citizen to this nation.

In his utterance, Hon. T. Rotich describes the usual activities that are done by the community to those in need. It reveals what might be taken for granted as normal but which nevertheless paints a picture of community's sense of togetherness and solidarity in the face of adversity. Rop (2015) observes that the Kipsigis community mobilized their resources when their members had problems that required financial solutions. For example, he says that many destitute but intelligent pupils have been sponsored in their studies through such communal solidarity. In excerpt 3 above, the speaker, through a number of rhetorical questions, *complains* (expressive act) about what he perceives as members' preoccupation with less important issues (financial impact) at the expense of serious issues; that of saving lives.

The honourable member asks his listeners the amount of money they contribute during funerals. This implicitly shows that funerals are more expensive than the hiring of ambulances which would help to reduce the number of deaths. Funerals in Kipsigis land just like in any other community in Kenya are a communal affair. Ordinary citizens as well as politicians attend burials as a sign of respect to the dead and also as a show of solidarity to the bereaved. Consequently, work had to be stopped temporarily especially in the neighbourhood of the deceased until he/she was buried. During such times, people come together to help the bereaved family offset hospital and funeral expenses while at the same time to console the affected family. Although funerals are supposed to be used to show the last respect to the deceased and console the bereaved family, politicians usually hijack the ceremony and used it as a platform to advance their political agenda. Hon. J. Kirui says;

Excerpt 4

Mr. Speaker: I believe that there are some members in this House who enjoy seeing citizens suffer, and if possible

wishing them to die so that they go and do politics in their funerals. (Motion 1)

While the above utterance would pass for any assertive act with the illocutionary force of *claiming*, it carries with it very serious allegations for the mover of the motion and any other supporter of the motion. That the politicians supporting the motion are in fact not sincere because they want to advance their agenda by attending as many funerals as possible; they want more people to die so that they can drive their agenda. The speaker is aware of the seriousness of such accusations and therefore would not expect any member to continue supporting the revocation of the contract to the Kenya Red Cross. The speaker knows the hearers are able to perform the action of rejecting the motion and so the felicity conditions are fulfilled. But he also knows that mentioning that someone could be celebrating because of the misfortune of others is callous to say the least. He effectively exploits this assertion to his advantage because he is aware of the cultural position on this; that the community members share in the sorrow of the bereaved. The speaker in the above utterance further misinterprets the saying to suit his position and cleverly adds that such people who are happy when others are sad are those opposing the services of the ambulance. The concept of death among the Kipsigis has therefore given the participants an avenue to manipulate the minds of the hearers in order to advance their interactional goals.

There were also a considerable number of speech utterances connected to death in the data which require an understanding of the cultural context for their proper interpretation. For instance, when Hon.D. Rotich (Motion 1) says the following;

Excerpt 5

Hon. D Rotich: Mr. Speaker, allow me to give a parable in a local language.

Hon. Speaker: So long as you speak in English

(The House breaks into laughter)

Hon. D. Rotich: I think the issue is that it has been put in a parable that, usually, when there is something bad, people do like laughing. That is why you find people opposing the ambulance.

To put it correctly the Kipsigis say *Kichomyo meet ak roriot* (death and laughter like one another). This saying means that where there is death, it is also possible to find happiness. For people of other cultures, it would probably not make sense to find happiness where death has occurred but the Kipsigis have their own explanation on why both are found together. According to Rop (2015), death among the Kipsigis was met with sadness and somehow happiness; sadness because of separation with the terrestrial kin and happiness because it was viewed as a gateway for joining ancestors. King (2013) supports this fact when he postulates that death is a natural transition from the visible to the invisible. The literal meaning

of the speech act is an assertive with an illocutionary force of claiming. The non-literal meaning of the utterance is a directive meant to persuade the hearers not to revoke the contract to the Red Cross.

The sense of communal life is also explained in motion 3 by the motion Mover, Hon. Taplelei. While pushing to have the County Assembly adopt a street naming policy, she explains that such a move will aid in rescue missions during disasters like fire. Rop (2015) explains that when someone's house is on fire, it is immediately repaired or rebuilt without any regard to the time of the day. He adds that the joyful part of this type of work is that it is done happily and voluntarily. We can therefore say that occurrences like death, fires and any other misfortunes gave the community a chance to show their togetherness. Other situations like hospitalization or education where those affected required financial assistance also called for communal solidarity. Rop (2015) observes that this kind of communal life echoes Nyerere's philosophy of "Ujamaa" which is a philosophy rooted in 'togetherness' as the base for communal life. Rop notes that according to Nyerere, "African traditions should serve as a basis for all future African development."

It is important to note that when the honourable members use the sense of communal life as a strategy to persuade their opponents, they are appealing to the core element of life among the Kipsigis. In a way the debaters are saying that this kind of life is good and should be encouraged by all. That is why any person who is seen as individualistic is heavily criticized as it happened to the motion Mover of motion 1 in the data. Hon. R. Bett said this about the Mover;

Excerpt 6

If the honourable member is now driving a Rav4, his people are actually moving barefooted. We do not have second class human beings in our Republic and we need to treat each individual with dignity...

Through the act of *informing*, Hon. Bett paints a picture of a motion Mover who is rich but selfish. Such a trait goes against the sense of communal life where people take care of each other so that no one is found suffering in one way or the other. It also indirectly criticizes the leadership style of the motion Mover. Looking at the language of debate and particularly the ways in which the Kipsigis community value communal life could be helpful in understanding why the debaters use such a strategy.

4.3 Speech Acts Showing Importance of Birth and Motherhood Among the Kipsigis

Ensuring safe delivery of infants is a core cultural notion that is utilized effectively by the participants during discussions at the County Assembly. In fact, among the Kipsigis, there were rituals performed to ensure that pregnancy and birth happened smoothly. According to Peristiany (1939 as cited in Rop,

2015), ceremonies were performed during pregnancy and after birth to ensure the safety of the infant and its mother. The Kipsigis viewed life as sacred and everyone was expected to behave in a manner that ensured that there was protection of life and prosperity for all. Among the Kipsigis a child belongs to the whole community. The broader cultural resonance of this notion manifests in the speech utterances of some participants such as Hon.T. Rotich (motion 1) in which he opposes the motion by saying;

Excerpt 7

But I stood more so because the President of this Nation declared that maternity services would be very free for the women in this Country...And I am telling you there has never been any other time that maternity coasting was really free until this time when we got these ambulances. It is not less than 19 women who have delivered in those ambulances, and they have gotten their babies very well. The mothers are safe and the children are safe.

The honorable member in the above utterance persuaded his hearers by cleverly tying his arguments with the vision of the President of Kenya; that of ensuring protection of life. By doing this, he knows that the success of his arguments lies in satisfying the cultural duty of ensuring safe delivery of babies and the safety of the mothers. The literal meaning of this speech act is an assertive, namely a report. The non-literal meaning of the speech act is an appeal to the hearers to look at the benefits of the ambulances and reject any act that is meant to deny the residents of Bomet the much needed services. The mention of the president further helps to show that in fact the County is in the right direction and the president is probably going to be pleased with what is happening in Bomet. The speaker further shows what happens when the ambulance services are not provided;

Excerpt 8

I personally lost my sister in-law because of losing time while just being rushed to the

hospital. But for all those that these ambulances have supported, they have all lived.

The literal meaning of the above speech act is an expressive. The speaker *complains* that his sister in-law died because she could not be rushed to the hospital in time. The non-literal meaning of the utterance is an *urge* to his hearers not to revoke the contract offered to The Kenya Red cross because the services offered by the ambulances have saved lives. Culturally, the utterance depicts the Kipsigis community as relational in nature. The extended family is a reality in Kipsigis culture because it is functional and fundamental among the people (Rop, 2015). No member of the family feels isolated and this kind of relation provides security and adequate care for all in the family. Rop continues to assert that in the Kipsigis extended family system, moments of joy, misfortune and sorrow are shared together. The system offers

security in the sense that someone in the family is always there to help. (ibid.).

The fact that the speaker was able to invoke the illocutionary force of an urge (which is a type of directive) to persuade the hearers not to revoke the contract does not solely fulfil the felicity conditions, but it is also because the expression is made salient in the Kipsigis culture.

Thus, with the cultural importance attached to safety of the mothers and their newborns in the Kipsigis culture, the performance of such acts is made socially and interactionally meaningful and this in turn enabled the speaker to strategically use such discursive expressions to win the debate. Moreover, the use of such expressions touching on the culture of a people help to neutralize the gap that exists in an argumentative exchange between the proponents and the opponents. The two opposing sides are brought together by something that is familiar to them as opposed to when they are discussing new information or unfamiliar issues during the debates. Therefore, when participants in the debates selectively use culturally relevant notions that are collectively agreed upon to support their claims, it can help them to persuade their opponents and ultimately succeed in winning the debate to their side.

c) *Speech Acts Depicting Respect for Life and a call for Action*

In the Kipsigis society, life is central and everyone is expected to protect it. According to Rop (2015), life to a Kipsigis was and is still more central and fundamental. He continues to say that life means so much to a Kipsigis that they go to the extent of celebrating it vigorously in music, with bodily movements, with harmonized voices, with rhythmic drumming, with greetings, with drinks and foods, with mode of speaking and with dances of life (ibid.). This cultural notion is given prominence in motion 1 and Motion 3. In motion 1, the motion Mover seeks to persuade the members to revoke the contract awarded to The Kenya Red Cross. Using the illocutionary force of informing, he justifies his claims by providing several reasons, the major one being that the contract signed between the Red Cross and the CGB did not follow the law. The other reason is that the contract is very expensive because the County will pay Ksh. 3.6 million for six vehicles per month which is enough to buy two ambulances per month. The Mover is, however, aware of the Kipsigis culture; that of protecting life and he quickly tries to thwart any attack using the following speech act with the illocutionary force of stating;

Excerpt 9

I want to remove the notion that I intent to derail the Contract...I know members will protest that the ambulances have saved many lives but had the right procedure in law been followed, we could not be wasting our time discussing this.

The Mover further predicts (assertive act) that if the law is not followed, the County is doomed and he therefore directs (directive act) the participants to reject the contract so that due process is followed in redrafting it afresh. He explicitly indicates that they are losing a lot of money as a County. The intention of the Mover is to have the motion supported so that the contract is revoked. According to Searle (1969), understanding the speaker's intention is crucial to interpreting the meaning. Without the speaker's intention, it is not possible to understand the words as speech acts.

The participants listened to the Mover's assertive speech acts but majority of them did not believe him. When the motion opens for debate, they use various types of speech acts to directly and indirectly describe the character of the motion Mover. Hon. R. Bett used an assertive act to directly describe the Mover as a deceptive character who does not value his people because he drives a Rav4 while his people walk barefooted. The Mover also enjoys a huge medical insurance from the County while he wants to deny his people the little support they receive from the County in the form of ambulance services by attempting to revoke the contract. Hon. R. Bett sums his utterances, thus,

Excerpt 10

We should not be gospel preachers while we are taking wine.

Hon.J. Kirui equally makes serious claims on the character of the motion Mover stating;

Excerpt 11

I believe that there are some members in this House who enjoy seeing citizens suffer, and if possible wishing them to die so that they can go and do politics in their funerals.

Though the above assertive utterance attracts laughter in the House, it still portrays the Mover as a selfish person who only cares for himself. This is not how a Kipsigis conducts himself/herself. To be accused to taking advantage of others' misfortunes is therefore a serious allegation.

The intended perlocutionary effect of the utterances is to make the listeners realize the duplicitous nature of the motion Mover on the floor of the House. The Mover is painted as not caring for the community and this contradicts the Kipsigis ways of life. Ukpong (1984) observes that Africans-Kipsigis-included define themselves not in egoistic terms but rather in terms of their community and thus find their identity there. He continues to say that individuals exist first for the community and then for themselves and that community too exists first for the individual and then for itself.

Many participants opposed the motion because they believed the contract with the Red Cross had assisted the County by saving lives. For example, Hon. W. Mosonik reports that he was glad that a hundred and sixty lives had been saved so far

and used a directive speech act to persuade the members ‘to agree with the community because the County Government is making saving lives cheaper than it was before.’

Hon. Joyce Korir narrates an incident in the quarry where they lost three lives and saved three lives. She laments (expressive act) that if they had the ambulances as is happening now, they would not have lost those lives. These utterances and many others help to explain the importance with which the Kipsigis attach to life. Towett (1979) points out that the Kipsigis valued life and anyone who prevents or blocks or stops others from living fully commit a grave sin or rather breaks the greatest taboo in Kipsigis terms but the one who supports and ensures full living is appreciated and honoured. The Kipsigis understood this as promotion of life. Elders, medicine men, rain makers, medium diviners and pregnant women are highly respected because of their commitment to the promotion and protection of life.

4.4 Utterances on the Notion of Hospitality Among the Kipsigis

In Motion 3, Hon. Taplelei through an assertive act, reports about her experiences when she visited England in 1985. She reported that *she expected to be picked from the airport but she did not find anyone*. What helped her was *the written letter which indicated the house number*. In such an utterance, one cannot fail to see the disappointment experienced by the honourable member. Traditionally, the Kipsigis people, like other Africans, have a good spirit that is welcoming to their visitors (Rop, 2015). A visitor was heartily welcomed and everyone went out of their way to ensure that the visitor was comfortable. Even a stranger who passed by the home had to be given something to eat before they proceeded on their journey. This was because of the belief that the visitor must be tired and hungry. Rutto and Maritim (2016) further stressed that the Kipsigis were so generous with food that a visitor was served food first before the members of the family, even at the risk of the host getting less. It must have been therefore shocking for the honourable member to find herself all alone in a strange country with only a written letter indicating the house number in which she was going to stay.

An analysis of the data revealed some interesting things about the above utterance. Firstly, the first part of the utterance is an assertive; a report about the speaker’s experiences in England and Japan. Secondly, the speaker implicitly talked about her disappointment when no one came to pick her up but instead she was forced to use a letter showing the house number as her destination; this is an expressive act. Thirdly, in supporting the naming of streets, Hon. Taplelei also used expressive acts to explain how she had to send someone to the cattle dip to give direction to her home when her mother fell sick. She further used expressives to thank the members for their support when her mother was sick. While Taplelei’s utterances may appear contradictory to her experiences (showing hospitality to visitors as dictated by the Kipsigis culture) as opposed to having the visitor to use maps, a deeper

analysis portrays otherwise. The non-literal meaning of the speech acts is that naming of streets will make it easy to assist people during times of tragedies like fires or sickness because in the Kipsigis community what affects one affects all (Rop, 2015). The speakers therefore use such expressions touching on the welfare of others to help build meaningful speech utterances that ensure they win the debate to their side. The utterances help to show the culture of hospitality among the Kipsigis.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The interpretation and meaning of speech acts depends on context. The study sought to find out whether the context affected the realization of speech acts and concluded that unpacking the meaning of speech acts did not merely depend on the successful performance of felicity conditions and the illocutionary forces behind the utterances, but partially on the cultural meaning that these utterances have acquired in the Kipsigis culture. The debaters’ success in performing the speech acts used to convince and persuade their hearers was partially based on their knowledge of the Kipsigis culture. That is, culture influences the way one uses language; it guides people on what to talk about and when, how to be polite and when to issue an apology, and so on. All these activities of language are known as speech acts.

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