

SPEECH ACT AS BASIS FOR DIALOGUE COHERENCE: A CASE OF ENGLISH –YORUBA TRANSLATION

Bello Yekeen, Tunde-Awe B. M. & Adeniyi-Egbeola Folakemi Oyeniya

ABSTRACT

This study analysed speech act as a basis for dialogue coherence in English language and its relative translation unit in Yoruba language. The study viewed speech act theory as it dealt with functions and uses of language since it is said that speech acts are all the acts we perform through speaking. The study dealt with how speech act theories apply to English language dialogue and its translating equivalence in Yoruba language. The study modified and reframed Searle's felicity conditions according to the categories of speech act to suit this study. The study hypothesised that speech acts in English language can be relatively translated into Yoruba language despite their cultural and systematic divergences between the two languages. The finding showed that both languages used a variety of patterns of speech acts among others in their dialogues which eventually revealed that speech act is a basis for dialogue coherence.

Keywords: Speech Acts, Dialogue coherence, Pragmatics, Assertive, Directives, Commissives, Expressives, Declaratives and Felicity

INTRODUCTION

The Concept of Speech Act

A seeming problematic issue of speech utterance, it would seem, is meaning. For instance, we know that table means a thing with three or four legs on which we can write or eat off; also book is a collection of words between covers. But of course, the situation is more complicated than this. Both words "table and books" have many different meanings, quite apart from those already mentioned. We can eat off a table, or we can table a motion at a conference, we can as well summarise information in a table, too. Again, when we have read a book, we can ring up a restaurant and book a table. Similarly, if we are reckless in driving, we might be booked for over speeding (Harmer, 2007). The point here is that a particular word or utterance is capable of being used in different ways to give different meaning, thus showing how to do things with words born out from language. Language is human vocal noise (speech or utterance) or its graphic representation (written).

Philosophers, semanticists and pragmatists, according to Green (2017) and Lycan (2018) posit that speech act theory plays importance role in the philology of language which has created interest among scholars. Based on this, a great amount of literature on speech act theory has been written, published and read. Austin (1962) originally used the term "speech act" to refer to an utterance thus showing how utterances are used. Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Stuchlik (2013),

and Lockhart and Lockhart (2017) contend that speech act deals with communication such as issuing, requesting, or advising, etc. In a similar vein, Bauer (2015) argues that Austin's primary contention about speech act lies in how we view language-use as an ethical matter. The theory of 'How to do things with words' is a means for us to grasp something philosophically deep about how to use words, not a philosophical end-in-itself. Similarly, Gustafsson (2012) and Ford (2014) also affirm that recognition of the significance of speech acts as the ability to use language to do things than describe reality. This implies that if the theory turns out to be wrong-headed in its particulars, it might still do something important philosophically.

Statement of the Problem

One of the attributes of man is his ability to use language to effectively express or communicate with the world around him. This is the basic function of speech act theory which has received a great deal of attention from philosophers and linguists. While discussing the interlocutors both speakers(s) and listener(s) must be able to comprehend the subject matter following the string of coherence. However, as far as this researcher is concerned, no study concerning speech act as a basis for dialogue coherence with reference to English–Yoruba translation, this gap in research is what this study intends to fill.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to discuss speech act as a basis for dialogue coherence with particular reference to English-Yoruba translation. The objectives are to:

- i. set felicity conditions for specifying speech act in dialogues.
- ii. render speech acts from English into Yoruba since there are cultural and structural divergences between the two languages
- iii. find out whether speech act theory can be applied to dialogue in English as well as translating those English dialogues and their realization in Yoruba language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Searle (1979) classifies speech acts into five broad categories, and they are:

- i. assertives
- ii. directives
- iii. commissives
- iv. expressives and
- v. declaratives or representatives

Each of these is discussed as follows:

Assertive Speech Acts

According to Searle (1979) and Sbisa (2013), these are representation of speech acts because they reflect the speaker's utterances the speaker's narratives. Searle argues further that the purpose of assertive class is to make the speaker near the truth of the expressed proposition. This

means that the speaker wants the listeners believe the truth of what he or she says. Assertive speech acts are statements of fact, getting the viewer to form or accept a belief, such that the speaker's words reveal his beliefs that he is uttering about the external world. The English verbs that function as explicit assertives include report, criticise, state, make, predict, among others. Assertive speech acts have word-to-word direction of fit, this implies that individual assertive speech acts achieve success of fit only if their content is true, meaning that they correspond to reality. For sentence in the sentence, "Bayo is reading" achieves success of fit if actually "Bayo is doing just that", this is why Green (2017) says both assertion and conjecture have word-to-word direction of fit.

Directive Speech Acts

This happens when the speaker expects the listener to do something as a response to an instruction. For instance, the speaker may ask a question, make a request, issue an order, make an invitation, give command or make suggestions. Directive speech acts have word-to-word direction of fit. Success of fit is achieved if only the addressee sees to it that reality corresponds to the content. Green (2020) contends that directive speech acts can achieve success of fit based on if there is correlation between addressee utterance and the content. For instance the imperative words "go out" achieve success of fit just in case the person ordered "goes out" as commanded.

Commissive Speech Acts

This is also referred to as intended act which implies a type of utterance where the speaker makes a commitment to a future course of action. Commissive as a class of speech acts are performed through a relatively small class of verbs such as offer, swear, promise, converse, among others. In other words, in conversation, common commissive speech acts are promise and threats. Crystal (1985) and Green (2019) affirm that others include, vowing, refusing, asserting, etc. Similarly, commissive speech acts have word-to-word direction of fit. Commissive speech acts achieve success of fit only if the addresser sees to it that reality is changed to correspond to the content. For example "I shall come to see you" achieve success of fit just in case "I actually come to see you".

Expressive Speech Acts

These occur in conversation when a speaker expresses his or her psychological state to the listener. Examples are when the speaker thanks, promises, apologises or welcomes the listener. On occasions like this, it is believed that whenever there is a psychological state specialised in the sincerity condition the performer of the act counts as an expression of that psychological state. This law holds whether the act is sincere or insincere, that is whether the speaker actually has the specified psychological state or not. To thank, welcome or congratulate counts as an expression of gratitude, pleasure (at H's arrival) or pleasure (at H's good fortune)".

This assertion is true for every class of illocutionary act is not only for expressive. The sincerity condition of expressives is that speaker has the psychological state that he/she expresses

when he or she performs an expressive act. Searle further opines that this is the case whether or not the speech act is sincere, so that even if one does not believe what one asserts, that ascertain is still an expression of belief. Expressive verbs non-propositionally convey attitudes and as such, Dore (1979), Searle (1979) and Bauer (2015) divide attitude into three types namely:

- i. exclamation which expresses delight, surprise or other attitudes;
- ii. repetitions which repeat previous or prior utterances; and
- iii. accompaniments that maintain contact by supplying information redundant with respect to some contextual features such as “here they come”.

It is therefore pertinent to surmise that expressive speech acts have null empty direction of fit, for an individual expressive speech acts serves to express attitudes of the speakers.

Declarative Speech Acts

Statements that bring about a change in status or condition to an object by virtue of the statement itself are regarded as declarative speech acts. According to Searle (1979) and Sbisu (2013), in a normal conversation, the speaker needs to create a forum so that his audience will be able to comprehend whatever he says and react to it accordingly, for instance as soon as a statement of riot act or declaration of war is uttered, that utterance brings about a change in the hearer's motif. This implies that perlocutionary effect is immediately felt on the hearers of the utterance. This class, according to Searle (1979) and Bauer (2015), includes passing a sentence, issuing a warning, declaring, and the like. Declarative speech acts have bi-directional (double) direction of fit, this means that individual speech acts change reality in conformity with their content by presenting reality as thus changed. For example the statement “we appoint you the class representative” achieve success of fit when eventually the appointed person becomes the class representative by virtue of declaration.

Dialogue Coherence

Dialogue is conversation in a book, play, or film/movie. It is also seen as a discussion between interlocutors, while coherence refers to the way in which things flow, function together, how they are connected and found consistent. In discussion or conversation, coherence means the way the participants or interlocutors cooperate to maintain a reasonably focused thread of the discussion. Dialogue coherence therefore has been identified that in literature, there are many views of coherence in language and of dialogue in particulars. It is a kind of discussion or conversation between interlocutors which is bi-directionally and mutually understood.

Pragmatics, which deals with how to do things with words is also concerned with meanings of utterances being translated. Pragmatic translation therefore, is a linguistic term used to refer to translation of utterances which pay attention not only to denotative meaning, but also the way utterances are used in connotative situation, and the way we interpret them in context thus reflecting contextual meaning. Austin, (1962), Adegbiya (1987), Baker (1992) and Lawal (1996) are of the view that pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that talks about how to do things with words and the study of meaning not as generated by the linguistics system as conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation. By implication this means that a pragmatic translation will, for example attempt to convey denotative, connotative, inferred

meaning, allusion and interpersonal aspects of communication such as implicature, register, tone, among several others. Since our everyday conversation is not primarily about the sentences we utter to one another, but to the speech acts that these utterances are used to perform such as requesting, warning, inviting, promising, apologising, predicting, Macfarlane (2011) espouses that it is pertinent we attune to the utterances heard. Linguistically, speech act theory has become influential not only within philosophy, but also in psychology, legal theory, artificial intelligence, literary theory, and feminist thought among other scholarly disciplines, just as Lavin (2013) and Lycan (2018) subscribe to the fact that dialogue coherence is a kind of discussion or conversation between interlocutors which is bi-directionally and mutually understood.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are derived for this study:

Ho₁: Speech acts in English dialogue can be translated into Yoruba despite cultural and structural divergences between the two languages.

Ho₂: Both English and Yoruba dialogues use a variety of patterns of speech acts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey type where dialogues in English language between two interlocutors are translated into Yoruba. Felicity conditions will be used as models for specifying different types of speech act.

A. Felicity conditions for specifying assertives have:

- i. The propositional content conditions:
 - a. The speaker expresses the proposition of assertives in his utterance.
 - b. the speaker predicates a future action.
- ii. The preparatory conditions:
 - a. The speaker knows the truth of the proposition
- iii. The sincerity condition:
 - a. The speaker believes in the proposition expressed
- iv. The essential conditions:
 - a. The speaker intends to assume that the action is in the hearer's interest
 - b. The speaker intends to make the hearer believe in the actual state of affairs.

B. Felicity conditions for specifying directives have:

- i. The propositional content conditions:
 - a. The speaker expresses the proposition of directives in his utterance, and
 - b. predicates a future action
- ii. The preparatory conditions:
 - a. The speaker believes that the hearer will be able to do the action.
 - b. The speaker believes that it is obvious to the hearer that action will occur.
- iii. The sincerity conditions:

- a. The speaker wishes the hearer do the action
- iv. The essential conditions:
 - a. The speaker believes that the effect of actions is in the hearer's interest.
 - b. The speaker intends to make the hearer see the speaker's intention as real, and that the action will be advantageous to the hearer.

C. Felicity conditions for specifying commissives have:

- i. The propositional content conditions:
 - a. The speaker expresses proposition of commissives in his utterance, and
 - b. predicates future action
- ii. The preparatory conditions:
 - a. The hearer wants the act to be done, and the speaker realises this
 - b. The act may not be done unless it is intensified by the speaker.
- iii. The sincerity conditions:
 - a. The speaker may be sincere or insincere in doing the act.
- iv. The essential conditions:
 - a. The speaker intends to make the hearers believe that he, the speaker intends to put himself under the obligation to do the act.

D. Felicity conditions for specifying expressives have:

- i. The propositional content conditions:
 - a. The speaker expresses the proposition of expressives in his utterance as a reaction to past actions.
- ii. The preparatory condition:
 - a. The speaker believes that the action is in the hearer's interest
- iii. The sincerity condition:
 - a. The speaker wants the hearer to be happy
- iv. The essential condition:
 - a. The speaker wants to hearer to believe that the action is in the interest of the hearer.

E. Felicity conditions for specifying declaration have:

- i. The propositional content condition (PCC):
 - a. The speaker expresses the proposition of declaration in his utterance which can be executed by a present course of action.
- ii. The preparatory condition:
 - a. The speaker is able to carry out the action in his utterance and the hearer knows that the speaker is capable to carry out his action his action.
- iii. The Sincerity condition:
 - a. The speaker really believes, and desires to carry out the action in question.
- iv. The essential condition:
 - a. The speaker intends to make the hearer believe that he, the speaker intends to put himself under an obligation to do the act for her, the hearer.

Data Analysis

The highlighted model of the felicity conditions (FCs) for the speech act categories will be applied to the dialogue conversations of the interlocutors. The analysis covers the translation of English dialogue into Yoruba to see how speech acts are realised in Yoruba language. Below are the conversations:

Dialogue 1: (English version)

Gentleman: Good morning, madam. Can I help you? It is about to rain lady (looking for transport)?

Lady: Good morning, I am going to the market please.

Translation 1: Yoruba version)

Omokunrin: *E ku owuro, Omidan. Se mo le ran yin lowo?*

Omidan: *E ku owuro, mo nlo si oja ni*

FINDINGS

Speech Act and Translation of the Conversation

The first part of the gentleman's (good morning madam) utterance can be identified as speech act of the expressive category since he is attempting to express his psychological state and attitude. The second part of his utterance (can I help you?) can be considered as directive category simply because he is making a request. In other words, the gentleman expresses the proposition of his request in his utterance that he is asking her if she needs any help. By this, the gentleman believes that the lady would answer in affirmative since it is in her interest. The first part of the lady's utterance (good morning) is identified as speech act of the expressive category because it is a type of greeting, and she is expressing her psychological state and attitude. However, the second part of the lady's utterance is both assertive and directive categories since she is stating and indirectly requesting for help, i.e. she wants the gentleman to offer her a lift since it is about to rain. The lady believes that the gentleman would do offer her a lift, and she wants him to do just that.

In the translation 1 (Yoruba version) of the dialogue, the first part of the gentleman's (*Omokunrin*) utterance (*E ku owuro Omidan*) is identified as an expressive category because he is expressing his psychological state and attitude since it is a type of greeting. But the second part of the utterance (*se mo le ran yin lowo?*) is considered as directive because he is requesting (to offer a helping hand), he wants the lady to answer his question regarding if he can help her, and he expects her answer in affirmative (due to the fact that it is about to rain). He believes that answering his question in affirmative would be in her interest.

In another development, the second part of the lady's utterance is identified as expressive category because it is a form of greeting and she is expressing her psychological state and attitude. Still, the second part of the lady's utterance can be regarded as assertive and directive categories because she is stating, and at the sometime requesting, that is she needs a lift and she predicates a future action to be done by the gentleman who is willing to offer her help. She also believes that doing what she wants by the gentleman would be her interest and intends to make the gentleman realise that giving her a lift would be good for her.

In the gentleman’s utterance, politeness is explicit which is expressed by using the modal verb “can”, while in the lady’s utterance, it is expressed by the polite marker “please”. The gentleman’s utterance has no performative verb, as such, it is implicit. However, in the lady’s utterance there is performative verb “going”, so it is explicit. Considering the cordiality between the two of them now, they both have the same social status therefore, the relationship is a sort of solidarity.

Regarding translation 1 (Yoruba version) politeness in the gentleman’s utterance is expressed by using of particle “E” /3:/ (Honourific) which signifies plurality but it is used as a word of respect for that single woman. Similarly, “E” /3:/ (Honourific) is used in the lady’s utterance as a mark of respect too.

Table 1: Translation Analysis of the Utterances

Title			Gentleman’s utterances		Lady’s utterances	
			English version	Yoruba version	English version	Yoruba version
Speech Act Categories	Assertives	+	+			
	Directives	+	+	+	+	
	Commissives					
	Expressives	+	+	+	+	
	Declaratives					
Social Relationship	Power					
	Solidarity	+	+	+	+	
Explicitness	Explicit			+	+	
	Implicit	+	+			
Directness	Direct	+	+	+	+	
	Indirect	+	+			
Voice	Active	+	+	+	+	
	Passive					
Politeness	Polite	+	+	+	+	
	Impolite					
Type of Translation	Pragmatics		+		+	
	Linguistics					

Dialogue 2: (English version)

Gentleman: Are you comfortable (in the car)?

Lady: I am afraid not, I didn’t know I could get help.

Translation 2: (Yoruba version)

Omokunrin: *Se ibi ti e wa yen te yin lorun?*

Omidan: *O ya mi lenu, mi o mo wipe mo le ri oluranlowo.*

Speech Act and Translation of the Conversation

A look at the gentleman's utterance can be identified as an illocutionary act of directives since he is attempting to make the lady to give an answer to his question. In other words, he expresses the proposition of his question in his utterance that the lady has boarded his vehicle. The gentleman believes that the lady would answer him. Furthermore, the gentleman believes that answering his question would be good for her, and he intends to make her realise his intention of good will. Regarding the lady's utterance, both the first and second parts of her utterances are identified as assertive speech acts because she is confirming the situation. She expresses the proposition of her confirmation in her utterance, she also intends to make the gentleman realise that her comfort is in her interest.

In the case of the translation 2, the gentleman's utterance is identified as speech act of directive category because he is expecting the lady to give an answer. In other words the gentleman expresses the proposition of his question in his utterance that the lady has boarded his vehicle and comfortable on the seat. The gentleman and the lady's utterances are polite implicit because there is explicit no polite marker. In the gentleman and the lady's utterances, there is no performative verb, as such, the utterances are implicit. Considering the cordiality between the two of them, they both have the same social status therefore, the relationship is a sort of solidarity. In respect of translation 2, it is obvious that the utterances are pragmatically translated since meaning is conveyed. The utterances are illustrated as shown in table 2:

Table 2: Translation Analysis of the Utterances

Title		Gentleman's utterances		Lady's utterances	
		English version	Yoruba version	English version	Yoruba version
Speech Act Categories	Assertive Directives Commissives Expressive Declaratives	+	+	+	+
Social Relationship	Power Solidarity	+	+	+	+
Explicitness	Explicit Implicit	+	+	+	+
Directness	Direct Indirect	+	+	+	+
Voice	Active Passive	+	+	+	+
Politeness	Polite Impolite	+	+	+	+
Type of Translation	Pragmatics Linguistics		+		+

Dialogue 3: (English version) it begins to rain as they move

Gentleman: How long do you want to say in the market?

Lady: At least thirty minutes – possibly a little longer

Translations 3: (Yoruba version)

Omokunrin: *Bawo ni e se ma pe si ninu oja?*

Omidan: *O pe ju ogbon iseju – tabi ju be lo*

The gentleman’s utterance can be identified as speech act of the directive category, since he is attempting to get the lady to give him an answer concerning her shopping process in the market. The gentleman expresses the proposition of his question in his utterance that how long the lady would stay for shopping in the market. He believes that the lady would answer him; he also believes that answering him is in her best interest. The lady’s utterance is identified as illocutionary act of assertive because she asserts the situation. The lady expresses the proposition of her assertion in her utterance that she would spend at least thirty minutes shopping in the market, and she intends to make the gentleman recognise that she would shop at least for thirty minutes.

In the case of the translation 3, the gentleman’s utterance is identified as the speech act of directive category, simply because he is attempting to get the lady to give an answer. The gentleman expresses the proposition of his question in his utterance that how long the lady would spend shopping in the market. He believes that the lady would answer him, so, the gentleman wishes the lady to give him an answer. He also intends to make her recognise his intention that answering him is to her best advantage.

The lady’s utterance can be identified as the assertive category since she is stating how long she would spend shopping in the market. The lady expresses the proposition of her statement in her utterance that she would spend at least thirty minutes shopping in the market. She intends to make the gentleman recognise that she would spend about thirty minutes shopping. The gentleman’s utterance has no polite marker, therefore politeness is explicit. Similarly, the lady’s utterance also does not contain polite marker, and as such, the politeness is explicit. Both utterances have no performative verbs, therefore, they are implicit. Considering the goings, it is discovered that the social relationship between the gentleman and the lady, both have the same social status, and so, it is a kind of solidarity.

Based on all these, it is obvious that the utterances are pragmatically translated since meaning is conveyed. These utterances are illustrated as shown in table 3:

Table 3: Translation Analysis of the Utterances

Title	Gentleman’s utterances		Lady’s utterances	
	English version	Yoruba version	English version	Yoruba version

Speech Act Categories	Assertive Directives Commissives Expressive Declaratives	+	+	+	+
Social Relationship	Power Solidarity	+	+	+	+
Explicitness	Explicit Implicit	+	+	+	+
Directness	Direct Indirect	+	+	+	+
Voice	Active Passive	+	+	+	+
Politeness	Polite Impolite	+	+	+	+
Type of Translation	Pragmatics Linguistics		+		+

Dialogue 4: (English version) after about thirty minutes

Gentleman: You got all you wanted in the market? Welcome madam.

Lady: Hope I did not waste much of your time.

Translation 4: (Yoruba version) *lehin nkan bi ogbon iseju*

Omokunrin: *Se gbogbo ohun ti e fe ni e ri loja? E ku abo.*

Omidan: *Se mi o da yin duro pupo ju bayi?*

In this dialogue the gentleman's utterance is considered as speech act of assertive and directive categories at the same time because he is stating and indirectly asking the lady if she gets all the items she need in the market. In other words, the gentleman expresses the proposition of his assertion and indirectly requesting to know if she is able to get all the items she need. The gentleman believes that the lady would answer his question, as well as having the intention that if the lady answers him, it would be in her interest. The second part of the utterance can be identified as speech act of the expressive category since he is attempting to express his psychological state and attitude. The lady's utterance is identified as speech act of the expressive category because it is a type of greeting (showing appreciation), and she is expressing her psychological state and attitude.

In the translation 4 (Yoruba version) of the dialogue the gentleman (*se gbogbo ohun ti e fe ni e ri loja?*) is considered as speech act of assertive and expressive categories at the same time because he is stating, and indirectly asking *Omidan* if she got all she wanted in the market. In another words, the gentleman expresses the proposition of his assertive and indirectly requesting to know if she is able to get all the items she needs in the market. The gentleman believes that the lady would answer him, as well as having the intention that if the lady answers his questions, it would be an advantage for her (otherwise he would still exercise patience for the

lady to go and get them). The lady’s utterance is identified as speech act of the expressive category because it is a form of greeting (showing appreciation), thus, expressing her psychological state and attitude.

The gentleman and the lady’s utterances are polite implicitly because there is no explicit polite marker. In the gentleman and the lady’s utterances, there is no performative verb, and as such, the utterances are implicit. Considering the mutual cordiality between the gentleman and the lady, they both have the same social status, and as a result, the relationship is a sort of solidarity.

Based on the above, it is obvious that the utterances are pragmatically translated since meaning is conveyed. The utterances are illustrated as shown in table 4 below:

Table 4: Translation Analysis of the Utterances

Title		Gentleman’s utterance		Lady’s utterance	
		English version	Yoruba version	English version	Yoruba version
Speech Act Categories	Assertive	+	+	+	+
	Directives	+	+	+	+
	Commissives	+	+		
	Expressive				
	Declaratives				
Social Relationship	Power				
	Solidarity	+	+	+	+
Explicitness	Explicit				
	Implicit				
Directness	Direct	+	+		
	Indirect			+	+
Voice	Active	+	+	+	+
	Passive				
Politeness	Polite	+	+	+	+
	Impolite				
Type of Translation	Pragmatics		+		+
	Linguistics				

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Most of the utterances of the dialogue contained types of Speech Act categories such as directives and assertives. Most of the utterances of the dialogue consist of directives, assertives and others such as commissive and expressive speech acts. The repetition of these speech act categories means that speech acts can be considered as basis for dialogue coherence. The findings of the analysis indicate that speech acts can be translated from English language to Yoruba language despite the cultural and structural differences between the two languages. It is shown that other speech acts such as implicit without performative verbs were also found, signifying that they are indirect speech acts. The indirectness shows the polite nature of language

by strangers. There was only one type of relationship which was solidarity and is mainly attributed to politeness nature of the language of strangers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers should always use dialogue in their teaching so that learners will have balanced academic activities. Learners should constantly engage in speech act theory to broaden their academic horizon.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

BELLO, YEKEEN

Department of Arts Education
Faculty of Education
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
bello.y@unilorin.edu.ng

TUNDE-AWE, B. M

Department of Arts Education
Faculty of Education
Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria
bolajokotundeawe@gmail.com

ADENIYI-EGBEOLA, FOLAKEMI OYENIYI

Department of Arts Education
Faculty of Education
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
adeniyi.fo@unilorin.edu.ng