PRAGMATIC ACTS ANALYSIS OF DR. TEDROS GHEBREYESUS' 2021 ADDRESSES ON COVID-19 AND HIV/AIDS

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ABSTRACT

This study, analyzed Ghebreyesus 2021 addresses on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS. The study aimed to identify the broad categorizations of the pragmatic acts performed vis-à-vis the practs, together with their contextual tools, deployed by the speaker to address the world on the state of covid-19 pandemic and HIV/AIDS epidemic. The textual analytic research design was adopted for the study. It was anchored on Mey's theory of Pragmatic Acts (2001). The population of the study comprised of two Ghebreyesus' speeches on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS from which his 2021 speeches on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS were selected as sample using the purposive sampling technique. These sets of data were downloaded directly from the website of the World Health Organization, and subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analysis, using the basic principles of the adopted theoretical framework. The results of the study revealed that speech acts were the most dominant type of pragmatic act used. Results also indicated the use of indirect speech acts and psychological acts in Dr. Ghebreyesus' addresses. Based on these findings, the study recommended that: Public health officials should use a range of pragmatic acts to convey their messages and use psychological acts to create an emotional connection with the audience and encourage change of behavior; the curriculum of instruction in public health colleges and universities should be rejigged to incorporate the use of pragmatic acts and psychological acts in messages; and Government should provide public health officials with in-service training and capacity building on the effective use of pragmatic acts in public health communication to improve their messaging skills.

Keywords: Keywords: Pragmatic Acts, Covid-19, HIV/AIDS

INTRODUCTION

Information is power, and because it is the premise of progress in every family and every society, it is said to be liberating. Health information includes information that creates awareness about diseases or epidemics in the country, nutrition or diet, mental health, physical health. The scope of health communication is to improve the disease prevention, health promotion, health care policy, and the business of healthcare as well as enhancement of the quality of life and health of individuals within the community (Annan, 2018). Every society needs health information on a daily basis. This is because access to the right information on health saves man from avoidable activities that constitute threats to life.

According to Chambers 21st Century Dictionary, a pandemic is an epidemic or an infectious disease that has spread across a large region, affecting a substantial number of individuals in a country or continent.` A pandemic is characterized as an epidemic that has spread over multiple countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people. Pandemics, often times, occur abruptly leaving the world in chaos. Ghebreyesus (2021), in his address to the world in respect to containing pandemics, avers that the world is intermittently plagued by diseases, which like wars, often take people by surprise. Ghebreyesus further recounted some outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics that have been recorded in history from the Plague of Athens in 430 BCE, to the Black Death, the 1918 influenza pandemic, HIV/AIDS and now, coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Ghebreyesus further asserts that man cannot be helpless or incapable of mitigating the impact of such health hazards. Information becomes a tool for control. Health information presupposes the existence of health or life-threatening challenges and as a matter of urgency, the populace needs to be enlightened on the possible ways to avoid or contain the challenges.

It is important to note that all health information relies heavily on language use. Language serves as a channel through which communication is possible. Language is very crucial for human survival and existence. Man's reliance on language, especially speech has been symbiotic. Human language is unique among the known systems of animal communication in that it is not dependent on a single mode of transmission (sight or sound), is highly variable between cultures and across time, and affords a much wider range of expression than other systems. As a system of communication, it does not exist in a vacuum, but operates in a context. One of the theories that can be used to study language in communication is pragmatic theory. Pragmatics as a discipline is context-dependent (Birchenall, 2016). Contexts determines the variations in language that is called register.

Pragmatics as a theory has some models which include speech acts, conversational implicature maxims, politeness, impoliteness, speech acts, and so on. Austin's speech acts laid the foundation for the study of pragmatic theories. According to Speech Acts theory by Austin, every utterance by a speaker performs an action (Hidayat, 2016). Fadhi (2018) maintains that to perform an action via speech, there must be certain conditions available, and these conditions are called 'felicity conditions'. The conditions are the preparatory, sincerity, executive and fulfilment conditions. Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, the Director General, World Health Organization (WHO), performs a pragmatic act when he delivered an address in 2021 as regards the state of affairs in respect to Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS.

The acts were meant to achieve certain implicit perlocutionary effects on the audience. Comprehension of health messages depends heavily on the context in which the messages are situated. Consequently, World Health Organization relies on different modes and channels to pass health related information to the world. Both the verbal and non-verbal medium of language are employed. An example of the verbal mode is the address by Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus on HIV/AIDS and Covid-19. The non-verbal information includes posters with graphics and symbols on HIV/AIDS and Covid-19.

The posters are often disseminated on media by World Health Organization. Information on the posters are conveyed in various modes such as color, visual images and text. The masses are informed through the use of different semiotic resources in the posters. Hence, it became important to study information on health conveyed through these various modes.

The motivation for this study was to provide insights on how pragmatics principles can be employed in understanding the contextual meaning of health-related information disseminated on media. Pandemics have devastating effects and require an interdisciplinary approach so as to forestall future occurrence. Therefore, this study was geared towards using insights from Pragmatic Acts to examine an instance of health communication by the World Health Director-General, Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, in his addresses to the world on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS in 2021.

There are many studies on pragmatic acts, formal speeches, and other pragmatic analyses of first and second-order texts that are relevant to this

study. For example, Abaya (2015) undertook a pragmatic assessment of Nigerian military coup announcements. The results revealed that speech acts in each coup event depended largely on the context that gave birth to them while the analysis at the social context level revealed that speech relationship between interlocutors was both symmetric and asymmetric depending on the audience. At the linguistic level, it was revealed that diction was used to enforce illocutionary force. Secondly, Oladimeji and Esther (2015) investigated the contextual acts in President Goodluck Jonathan's declaration of presidential candidacy under the political platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) using context and the Speech Act Theory, and the findings showed the frequency scale of illocutionary acts. The verbs employed in the speech expressed actions performed in the form of commissive (50%), and assertive (30%), declarative and expressive acts recorded ten percent (10%) each while the verdictives recorded zero percent (0%). The results of the analysis implied that the President successfully exploited the favorable contexts of his speech to persuade and make promises of good governance.

Furthermore, Etefia (2018) studied pragmemes in outdoor HIV/AIDS campaign messages in Benin metropolis, Nigeria, and the findings revealed that there were 63 utterances and the percentage of utterances were Representative 46%, Expressive 11%, Directive 16%, Commissive 12,7%, and Declarative 14,3%. The result also showed that Donald Trump used more of the representative acts, followed by directive, declarative and commissive speech acts. Lastly, Anjola and Oluwamayowa (2022) pragmatically explored the sermons of Bishop David Oyedepo. The findings reveal that two pragmatic contexts were established, and three practs were classified using pragmatic tools of relevance, inference, reference, shared situational knowledge, voice, and metaphor. It was concluded that Oyedepo's sermons could be theorized using the framework of pragmatic acts. These studies are relevant to the current study, although the current study was conducted using a different text.

The aim of this study was to pragmatically analyze Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus' 2021 address on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS. The specific objectives were to:

1. broadly classify the pragmatic acts performed by Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus in his addresses on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS;
2. classify the individual practs and allopracts used to perform various pragmatic acts by Gheberyesus in his addresses on covid-19 and HIV/AIDS.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the textual analytic research design. This design was used to describe, interpret and understand texts. According to Caulfield (2022), this designed is geared towards connecting text to a broader social, literary, political, cultural, or artistic context. The choice of this design was because it enables a researcher to glean all kinds of information from a text ranging from its literal meaning to the subtext, symbolism, assumptions, and values it reveals.

The population of the study comprised one hundred and twelve (112) speeches on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS delivered by Dr. Ghebreyesus on different occasions in 2021. Using purposive sampling method, two (2) Ghebreyesus' 2021. speeches on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS were selected for analysis. Similarly, extracts or 'textual instances' were purposively selected from the two texts and presented for analysis.

An Android device was used in this study as the main instrument for data collection. The PDF copies of Ghebreheyesus' 2021 speeches on Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS were downloaded from the official website of the World Health Organization (WHO) (https:www.who.int). The speech on Covid-19 was made up of thirty-one thousand and thirty-three (3133) words, while the one on HIV/AIDS was made up of six hundred and seven four (674) words.

For data analysis, the downloaded speeches were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using the basic principles of Mey's theory of pragmatic acts (2001). That is, the speeches were analyzed in line with basic tenets of identification, categorization and discussion of pragmatic acts performed vis-à-vis the individual practs together with their contextual tools as used by speaker. The speeches were coded "Covid-19" and "HIV/AIDS" for easy classification and discussion. Through the use of frequency count method as represented on tables and figures, the same

sets of data were analyzed. In sum, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used simultaneously to analyze the selected texts, putting into consideration the dictates of the theory of pragmatic acts as proposed by Mey.

RESULTS

The presentation of results in this study is according to the objectives and the corresponding research questions that guided the study.

The contextual tools and their meaning are as follows:

1. INF-stands for-inference- a process of drawing conclusion base on evidence and reasoning
2. REF.-stands for - reference- the act of using language to identify something in the world.
3. REL - stands for- relevance – refers to how information contributes to effective communication.
4. Voice
5. SSK- shared situational knowledge
6. MPH- metaphor – element that appears in the text and draws out attention outside of it.
7. M- stands for metapragmatics

Table 1: Broad Classifications of Pragmatic Acts Performed Together with Their Contextual Tools in Ghebreyesus' Speech on Covid-19

Activities (Pragmatic Acts)	No. of Acts performed	Contextual Tools						
		INF	REF	REL	VCE	SSK	MPH	M
Speech Acts	23	7	5	11	0	1	5	1
Indirect speech Acts	5	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
Conversational Acts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Psychological Acts	10	2	3	3	0	0	4	1
Prosody	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Physical acts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1 shows the broad classification of the types of pragmatic acts performed by Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, together with their contextual tools. Out of Mey's (2001) classification of pragmatic acts, twenty-three (23) extracts classified as speech acts; five (5) are classified as indirect speech acts; while ten (10) are classified as psychological acts. It is, however pertinent to mention that all excerpts in his speeches naturally fall under speech acts, because they are aspects of the speech, which Ghebreyesus delivered to his audience, but that does not mean that other acts embedded in the speech should be classified as speech acts. This perhaps justifies why indirect speech acts and psychological acts featured to some extent. However, the pragmeme of speech act has the highest number of occurrence because the data was an address by Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus who happens to be the sole participant. Secondly, the psychological acts, occurred in ten (10) utterances because they act has to do with the psychological state of the speaker. In those extracts, the speaker expressed some elements of emotions. Thirdly, the indirect speech acts occurred in five extracts, because the speaker used indirect linguistic features to communicate his intent to the target audience. However, the pragmeme of conversational acts had zero (0) occurrence because it was not used by the speakers, because it was not a dialogic communication. In a similar vein, the pragmemes of prosody and physical acts were not used by the speaker; and that explains why they had zero occurrences. Meanwhile, the speech acts, as contained in the table above, were realized using the following contextual tools: INF (7), REF (5), REL (11), SSK (1), MPH (5), and M (1). The indirect speech acts were realized using the contextual tools of INF (2), REF (3), REL (0), SSK (0), MPH (0), and M (0). Similarly, the psychological acts were realized using INF (2), REF (3), REL (3), SSK (0), MPH (4), and M (1).

Table 2: Broad Classification of Pragmatic Acts Performed Together with Their Contextual Tools in Ghebreyesus' HIV/AIDS

Activities (Pragmatic Acts)	No. of Acts performed	Contextual Tools						
		INF	REF	REL	VCE	SSK	MPH	M
Speech Acts	27	5	5	6	0	1	5	0
Indirect speech Acts	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conversational Acts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Psychological Acts	5	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
Prosody	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Physical acts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The results on table 2 showed that three pragmatic acts were performed. They include speech acts, indirect speech acts, and psychological acts. Like what is obtainable in table 1, Ghebreyesus performed almost all the acts in his speech through the pragmeme of speech acts, because, out of the thirty-three (33) excerpts, twenty-seven (27) of them are speech acts; five (5) are psychological acts, only one (1) is an indirect speech acts. As already explained, all the excerpts, including the ones mapped for psychological and indirect speech acts, fall within the ambits of speech acts, but they are specially used here to create some pragmatic effects. Conversational acts, physical acts, prosodic acts and null acts recorded zero occurrence as can be seen on the above table, not because they were not implicitly used, but because, in the context of this study, they are not explicitly used as pragmatic acts, which are realized using the pragmeme of speech acts. Furthermore, the speaker situated his speech on HIV/AIDS, using five (5) INF, five (5) REF and one (1) SSK. These tools are pivotal in interpreting situation-bound utterances used by the speaker. These are discussed in detail in the subsequent heading.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, which examined the pragmatic acts used by Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus in his 2021 addresses on COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS, reveal that speech acts were the most dominant type of pragmatic act used. This is consistent with the findings of Abaya (2015), who found that speech acts were used extensively in Nigerian military coup announcements. It is also in tandem with Oladimeji and Esther (2015) who found that speech acts were used by President Goodluck Jonathan in his declaration of presidential candidacy to persuade and make promises of good governance.

Secondly, the findings showed the use of indirect speech acts and psychological acts in Dr. Ghebreyesus' addresses. This resonates with the findings of Etefia (2018), who found that representative, expressive, directive, commissive, and declarative acts were used in outdoor HIV/AIDS campaign messages in Benin metropolis, Nigeria. The fact that Dr. Ghebreyesus used psychological acts in 10 utterances to express emotions and create an emotional tone is also consistent with the findings of Anjola and Oluwamayowa (2022), who found that Bishop David Oyedepo's sermons used pragmatic acts to create a specific emotional tone and engage the audience.

The similarity in the findings of this study with the empirical studies highlights the importance of considering the context and audience in the analysis of pragmatic acts. For example, Abaya (2015) found that the context of the coup announcements influenced the type of speech acts used, while Oladimeji and Esther (2015) found that the social context of the presidential declaration influenced the type of speech acts used. In the same vein, Etefia (2018) found that the context of the HIV/AIDS campaign messages influenced the type of pragmatic acts used. The use of contextual tools such as inference (INF), reference (REF), relevance (REL), shared situational knowledge (SSK), metaphor (M), and voice (MPH) to realize pragmatic acts in Dr. Ghebreyesus' addresses is also consistent with the findings of Anjola and Oluwamayowa (2022), who found that Bishop David Oyedepo's sermons used pragmatic tools such as relevance, inference, reference, shared situational knowledge,

voice, and metaphor to create a specific pragmatic effect.

The findings of this study also highlight the importance of considering the speaker's intentions and the audience's needs and expectations in the analysis of pragmatic acts. For example, Dr. Ghebreyesus' use of speech acts, indirect speech acts, and psychological acts suggests that he was aware of his audience and tailored his message to their needs and expectations. This is consistent with the findings of Oladimeji and Esther (2015), who found that President Goodluck Jonathan's use of speech acts was influenced by his intention to persuade and make promises of good governance.

In a sum, the findings of this study, which examined the pragmatic acts used by Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus in his 2021 addresses on COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS, are consistent with the findings of empirical studies such as Abaya (2015), Oladimeji and Esther (2015), Etefia (2018), and Anjola and Oluwamayowa (2022). The study highlights the importance of considering the context and audience in the analysis of pragmatic acts and demonstrates how speakers can use pragmatic acts to achieve specific goals, such as persuasion, emotional connection, and engagement. The findings of this study have implications for our understanding of how language is used in public addresses and highlight the need for further research on the impact of pragmatic acts on the audience.

CONCLUSION

The pragmatic analysis of Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus' 2021 speeches on covid-19 and HIV/AIDS, as carried out in this study, has proven that language is at the heart of every discipline, without which the discipline in question would have no voice. This study specifically identified the broad categorizations of the pragmatic acts deployed in the speeches. It identified and discussed the practs used in performing various pragmatic acts by the speaker vis-à-vis the contextual tools deployed to situate the discourse. Ghebreyesus is an eloquent speaker who utilizes various practs and allopracts to perform different pragmatic acts in his speeches. He situates these speeches, using contextual elements of INF, REF, REL, MPH, and SSK. The study underscores the importance of pragmatic acting as a means of interpreting meaning in Ghebreyesus's 2021 speeches

on covid-19, HIV/AIDS and indeed any other public health issue. Hence, it is concluded that if public health officials should use a range of pragmatic acts to engage their audience, their message would be conveyed effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Public health officials should use a range of pragmatic acts to convey their messages and use psychological acts to create an emotional connection with the audience and encourage change of behavior.
2. The curriculum of instruction in public health colleges and universities should be rejigged to incorporate the use of pragmatic acts and psychological acts in messages.
3. Government should provide public health officials with in-service training and capacity building on the effective use of pragmatic acts in public health communication to improve their messaging skills.
4. Language experts should develop guidelines for the use of pragmatic acts in public health communication to provide a framework for public health officials to follow.

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