



## The Indicative Mood in Ikwere: A Pragmatic Approach

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### ABSTRACT

This focused on the pragmatic approach to the study of the indicative mood in Ikwere. The specific objectives were to determine how the indicative mood is expressed in the Ikwere language and to identify the Speech Acts performed by the indicative mood in the language. In order to actualise the objectives of the study, the authors adopted the descriptive research design. A self-designed sentence list of 50 sentence items was used to collect data from three competent native speakers of the Ikwere language. For data analysis, the study utilised the descriptive method of data analysis. The findings of the study reveal that the indicative mood can be used to express actions or events that will take place, taking place or took place. The indicative mood is realised in various forms in the Ikwere language. Findings also reveal that the indicative mood in Ikwere performs three main speech acts, which are: the assertive, commissive and expressive Speech Acts in the Ikwere language. Following the findings of this study, it was therefore recommended that further studies on the pragmatics of other moods present in Ikwere language be carried out.

### INTRODUCTION

Mood is a cross-language category, and it is regarded as such due to the fact that many disciplines have contributed to its study; disciplines such as philosophy, discourse analysis, and linguistics (Portner, 2018). For the purpose of the present study however, mood is discussed from a linguistic perspective. The linguistic study of mood can be located in a variety of linguistic subdisciplines namely: Morphology, Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics. What morphology does is to describe the lexical forms wherein mood is expressed in varying languages; syntax on the other hand aims to describe the complex syntactic make up in which mood may be expressed; and the role of semantics is to identify its meaning and explores the different ways this meaning may be manifested morphologically, phonologically even pragmatically. This study thus explores the expression of mood in the language. The linguistic study of mood is embedded in a variety of sub discipline within the arm of linguistics. The present study focuses on indicative mood. Burton (1990) describes the indicative mood as the mood of “unqualified assertion of simple statement of fact”. It is a feature that every natural language has. All natural languages around the world have a clear way of showing that the speaker is making a statement which in his or her belief is true. Such statements according to Nikolaeva (2016) are usually “expressed by the declarative grammatical structure and the responsive mood is called declarative or indicative...”. She links the indicative mood to the illocutionary force of an assertion, according to her “the declarative mood is often taken to represent a grammaticalized expression of the assertive speech act”. This is especially true since it expresses “most of the speech acts distinguished in Searle’s (1969) typology such as commissives (I will never again forget your birthday),

directives (you know what you have to do) expressive (I am sorry) and declaration (you are guilty)”. It should be noted that although the indicative mood is related to the illocutionary force of an assertion, however, they are not identical. “a declarative main clause does not necessarily result in assertive force” Nikolaeva (2016) and they can perform a range of non- assertive functions.

### Statement of the Problem

Mood has attracted a number of studies in English language. Many scholars have carried out studies on mood in the language. Among those scholars are Halliday, Palmer, Portner and so on. In the language, not sure if any work has been done on mood as it relates to its pragmatic implications. This is the gap that the present study attempts to fill. Therefore, the problem the present study seeks to investigate is the pragmatic function(s) of mood in Ikwere language.

### Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study therefore is to describe the pragmatic implications of the indicative mood in the Ikwere language. The specific objectives shall be to:

1. find out how the indicative mood is expressed in the Ikwere language;
2. determine the Speech Acts performed by the indicative mood in the language.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Pragmatics: A Brief Overview

The history of the term pragmatics in modern usage is attributed to Charles Morris (1938), who initially focused on signs within the context of semiotics (Abdulghani & Abdullahi, 2021). When Morris (1938) first used the term pragmatics he saw it as “the study of signs to interpreters”.

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Twenty-three pages later he generalized his definition saying that pragmatics is the study of “the relations of signs to their users”. But the choice of the word ‘sign’ didn’t sit well with many. As Emezue (2011) observed, the choice of the word ‘sign’ “is amorphous as it fails to make clear the fact that it is not just any sign that interests us but linguistic signs, this way we may safely include morphemes, content words and functional words”. In addition, Morris (1938) definition of Pragmatics is somewhat similar to Semiotics which is the study of signs and symbols and how they are used. We will thus sample other definitions on Pragmatics. Carnap (1939) saw pragmatics as “the field of all those investigations which takes into considerations ... the action, state and environment of a man who speaks or hears [a linguistic sign]”.

Ayuwo (2018) asserted that “pragmatics is frequently conceptualized as the science of language use, the study of context-dependent meaning and the study of speaker-intended meaning, presupposing the existence of language, language user and context on the one hand, and context-independent meaning on the other”. The understanding of Leech and Short (1983) on the theory of Pragmatics is that it is “...the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered”. In other words, meaning or the interpretation of meaning is based on the connection between what is said and the circumstances (people, objects, events, etc.) that led to it being said. Leech (1983) toing the line of Leech and Short (1983) defined pragmatics as “the study of how utterances have meanings in situation”. Some other scholars said pragmatics is the study of social use of language. It is also defined as ‘the study of how to do things with words’ [the name of a well-known book by the philosopher (J. L. Austin) or the meaning of language in context (Ayuwo & Mandah, 2025)].

### **Mood: A Brief Overview**

Just as Kittredge and Farley (1915) put it, “mood is that property of verbs which shows the manner in which the action or state is expressed”. Similarly, Opdyke (1941) states that mood which he also referred to as mode, means ‘manner’, adding that when “applied to the verb, it means the manner in which an action or state is expressed or is to be regarded”. Roberts (1954) brought in an interesting dimension; he defines mood in terms of two dissimilar viewpoints: the notional as well as the formal. In his exact words, “notionally, mood has to do with the attitude speakers have toward the content of their sentence (whereas) formally, mood refers to the set of linguistic forms used to express these attitudes”. Put differently, mood is the expression of an attitude, using sets of linguistic forms.

Lyons (1977) described mood as a category of grammar that deals with the differences in the morphology of

the verb. Bybee and Fleischman (1995) in turn referred to mood as a “formally grammaticalised category of the verb which has a modal function”, which is “expressed inflectionally, generally in distinct sets of verbal paradigms, e.g. indicative, subjunctive, optative, imperative, conditional, etc” and again which differs from one language to another and is expressed based on the verbal and semantic features they mark.

Portner (2018) in his words saw the grammatical category mood as “a fundamental and traditional concept used in the description of human language and in theoretical inquiries into the nature of language”. He noted that mood, which is usually associated with “two different grammatical phenomena: verbal mood, the category which includes indicatives and subjunctives and sentence mood, the category which includes declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives” is used to convey modality. He thus defines mood as “an aspect of linguistic form which indicates how a proposition is used in the expression of modal meaning”. The use of Propositions here according to him “can be defined in terms of POSSIBLE WORLDS. Emenajo (2015), in consideration of the grammatical notion mood, stated that mood “expresses fact or actuality, he further added that it “establishes the addressee’s psychological state of or frame of mind, about an event or state”. Based on what has been reviewed in the current study, it suffices to say that mood deals with sentence types – whether a sentence is indicative, imperative, conditional or subjunctive.

### **Indicative Mood**

Burton (1900) described the indicative mood as the mood of “unqualified assertion of simple statement of fact”. Such statements according to Nikolaeva (2016) are usually “expressed by the declarative grammatical structure and the responsive mood is called declarative or indicative...”. She linked the indicative mood to the illocutionary force of an assertion; according to her “the declarative mood is often taken to represent a grammaticalised expression of the assertive speech act”. This is especially true since it expresses “most of the speech acts distinguished in Searle’s (1969) typology such as commissives (I will never again forget your birthday), directives (you know what you have to do) expressive (I am sorry) and declaration (you are guilty)”. It should be noted that although the indicative mood is related to the illocutionary force of an assertion, however, they are not identical “a declarative main clause does not necessarily result in assertive force” Nikolaeva (2016) and they can perform a range of non-assertive functions.

Emenajo (2015) saw his description of the indicative mood as the mood “used to express or describe an event or state which, in the mental world of the speaker is considered a fact, a reality, an assertion or a declaration”. He further added that the indicative mood is usually used by “the speaker to seek information on the assertion, from an addressee, in terms of declaration, interrogation, and negation”. The indicative or declarative mood

“expresses a state of certainty, factuality and actuality”. He also noted that “sentence in the indicative is a full and independent clause”.

Below are examples of sentences in the Indicative mood.

- (a) The sky is clear tonight (A simple statement of fact)
- (b) It will rain soon (The speaker expresses certainty)
- (c) She stopped during the third round (A statement of fact)
- (d) This book is three hundred pages long (Statement of fact)

Empirical studies on mood show that the Ikwere language just as various other natural languages has the indicative mood. According to Oji (1974), the indicative mood “indicates that one executes a given action, either immediately or in the past or future”. He further added that the indicative mood in Ikwere is “expounded by the structure SP(C)A in which S stands for subject, P for predicate, C for complement and A for adjunct”. Let us consider some of his examples:

- (a) O ga abja ‘he will come’ (SP)
- (b) O b̄jara ebe a ‘He came here’ (SPA)

In subordinate or linked clauses, the indicative usually has the structure (A)(S)(P)(C) as exemplified by the sentences that follow:

- (c) O ga eje ma o rūs̄iaoru  
‘She will go when he completes his work’ (SPA)
- (d) O b̄ja m ga agwaya  
‘If she comes, I will tell him’ (ASPC)
- e) O jere ̄lo ogwu, wee jeeafia  
‘She went to the hospital then to the market’ (SPAPC)

### Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this study is the Speech Act theory. This theory will be useful specifically in determine the Speech Act performed by the indicative mood in Ikwere language. This theory operates on the subdiscipline of pragmatics which deals with the ways words can be used not only to give information but also to execute actions which usually hinge on the speaker. It is a theory in the philosophy of language that attempts to explain rigorously and systematically the workings of language Quimbo *et al.* (2024). Among the early proponents, the two main pioneers of the Speech Act theory are J. L. Austin (An Oxford philosopher) and John Searle (An American philosopher)

Austin’s Rhetic Act as previously noted refers to the act of using words to convey meaning using Sense and Reference. Searle however, modified his to accommodate context, which is ideal because for words to have sense and reference the context of the proposition must also come into play.

Another modification to Austin’s Speech Act is seen in Searle’s classification of the Speech Act/Illocutionary Act. As will be seen, he did not follow Austin’s classification he only retained Austin’s Commissives. Searle came up with:

- a) Assertives
- b) Directives

- c) Commissives
- d) Expressives
- e) Declaratives

The following were Searle reasons according to Mabaguiao (2018) for his new classification.

### Dimensions of Searle in the Classification of Illocutionary Act

According to Mabaguiao (2018), Searle identifies “the following dimensions of Speech Acts that consistently account for their differences: (1) Illocutionary Point (2) Direction of Fit (3) Sincerity Condition (4) Force or Strength of the point (5) Status or position of the hearer or speaker (6) Way the Utterance relates to the interests of the hearer or speaker (7) Relationship to the rest of the Discourse (8) Propositional Content (9) Requirement that some acts must be speech acts while others need not be (10) Lack of or need for extra- linguistic institutions (11) Lack of or need for Illocutionary verbs and (12) Style of Performance”.

### Among these twelve dimensions, Searle considered the first three as primary. They are

- 1) Illocutionary point which refers to “the basic point or purpose of the speaker in performing an illocutionary act of a certain kind”
- 2) Direction of fit refers to the “direction of the match between the word (speech act) and the world (state of affairs) in determining the success of Illocutionary Acts).

### It has three varieties

- i. Word to world direction of fit where a Speech Act is being matched with a state of affairs. E.g. Statements- if a statement is false it is because the propositional content of such statement does not match with the state of affairs.
- ii. World to word (where a state of affairs is being matched with a speech act. E.g. Commands- if a command is not successful, it is not the fault of the command but of the state of affairs
- iii. Null direction fit (where there is no match intended between speech act and state of affairs”.

The conditions of satisfaction correlate to the Direction of fit and these generally refer to “the conditions of success of the speech acts that have a direction of fit ... a speech that has a direction of fit can be said to be either satisfied or not, successful or not; and the conditions that make this possible are generally referred to by Searle as condition of satisfaction”. That is to say a promise is either kept or broken, an order carried out or ignored, a statement either true or false.

Sincerity conditions refer “to the appropriate mental state that goes with the performance of an illocutionary act”. For instance, the statement ‘Aba is the dirtiest state in Nigeria’. I should believe in the truth of what the statement asserts if not I am not making a statement, perhaps I am telling a lie and thus performing the Act of deceiving others. (Mabaguiao, 2018).

Based on the foregoing, the present study will adopt

Searle's five classification of Speech Act, which are: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives to ascertain which acts are performed using the indicative mood in the language.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted descriptive approach. The descriptive research design adopted for this study was the qualitative research design. This design was chosen because it enabled the authors to provide sufficient details on the manifestation of the subject matter in the language. The data were collected from Ibaa dialect of Ikwere; a dialect spoken by over 30,000 native speakers. The reason for using the above-mentioned dialect was so that the authors could use their intuition. Both primary and secondary sources of data were useful. For the primary data, the authors used a sentence list containing English constructions, interviewed three competent native speakers of Ibaa-Ikwere who served as language consultants. The secondary data on the other hand were collected from existing literature on mood, as well as pragmatics. The major instrument used for this study was a self-designed sentence list of 50 sentence items comprising sentences of the indicative type. Also, the authors used unstructured interview in the case of further clarification as the data were being elicited. For analysis, the authors employed the descriptive method of data analysis well guided by Searle's dimension of Speech Act theory. This was done with a careful examination of the speaker's utterances.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### The Indicative Mood in Ikwere

The indicative mood based on what has been reviewed earlier in the current study, indicates that one carries out a given action, be it presently, in the past or in the future. Moving on, the present study establishes that indicatives are basically used to make declarative statements. See examples below.

(1) M mà ègwènahie n'ì òkwùkwò.í nù àbàll'èsà bìagwù àbà. Fut. 'I will return the textbook to you in one week.'

(2) N'í nù ònwèrè kà hnùgwù úgwùrègwù n'anya. N'í kwùshí tennis ònwèrè gbàshí nnyinyà. Hab. 'This couple is loves sports; he plays tennis and she rides on horseback.'

(3) Nyíshíòchíjà sèrùrì ógólógó má màkò m̄mā. Òrúlé ògnù áwhà láà nù n̄r̄n̄í; ó nwèr̄nú màkò ishíew̄ò nù ányá kólómá. Perf. 'The general overseer was tall and handsome. He would have been fifty years of age; he had grey hair and big grey eyes.'

(4) N'ù k'pò s'p'òs'ò n'èwhégàgà, ògnù Biafra ké vééré kèjè bídnó hna nù Nigeria.

'According to unconfirmed rumors, a new civil war has broken out in Nigeria.'

From a typological opinion, it is not unusual to marry the indicative mood with declarative sentences along with interrogative sentences; these constitute a threefold categorisation features not just in Ikwere.

But in other languages of the world, the illocutionary force of the previously-mentioned types of sentence is normally listed in the following manner: the declarative sentences show assertions and interrogative ones show questions. Formally, the above categorisation is devoid of a homogeneous background because declarative and imperative constructions usually express a particular mood, whereas it is not the same with interrogative ones. Consequent upon this, mood such as 'interrogative mood' does not exist as some researchers and scholars have already established, which means that, so long as it has to do with Ikwere, interrogative constructions are part of the indicative mood same as declarative ones. On the other hand, Haverkate (2002) has observed that interrogative constructions are filled with a set of unique features: word order, the presence of interrogative pronouns (in the form of Wh words), intonation contour and adverbials.

#### Speech Acts Performed by the Indicative Mood in Ikwere

There are various speech acts that the three moods – indicative, imperative and subjunctive moods as have been found in Ikwere are said to perform. However, our focus in this study is on the Speech Act performed by the indicative mood. Therefore, the analysis will be guided by Searle's classification of speech act, which includes the assertive, directive, commissive and expressive speech acts.

#### Indicatives (Declaratives) as Performing the Assertive Act

The indicative mood in as observed in the current study performs mainly the assertive act. Indicative constructions are produced to make assertions. Taking the analysis further, the authors in this study may add that in many cases where verbs interact, assertives hold a very important role. This is not surprising; therefore, the assertive category accommodates a large variety of members. Hence, in a study focused on English, more than sixty-three verbs were identified, each of them representing a specific kind of assertive (Haverkate, 2002). In the current study, the authors list a number assertives. Below are 17 assertive words in Ikwere indicative mood. From table 1 above, we find words that can perform two speech acts, assertive and directive. The notable factor that distinguishes assertives is not supposedly the only factor that is responsible for the frequent reoccurrence of declarative constructions.

#### Interrogatives as Performing Assertive Act

Interrogatives, as has been established do not have a separate mood; that is, there is no such mood as interrogative mood. So, both declarative sentences and interrogative sentences are categorised under the indicative mood. A better way to explain the absence of an interrogative type of mood could be that questions are inherent part of a specific order of speech acts; precisely,

**Table 1:** Words that Show Assertion in Ikwere

S/N	Words that show Assertion	Gloss
1	kwèrí	acknowledge
2	yìhnáshí	add
3	kwèhná	affirm
4	Nàkwèrú	accept
5	doó	claim
6	yìshí oṣu	comment
7	kwùbí	conclude
8	kwùfiyá	declare
9	gòdáhíà	deny
10	kwéghè	disagree
11	kànu	inform
12	wùú	mention
13	tùfiyá	point out
14	oṣnuṣnu	report
15	kwèrí	agree
16	koṣá	explain
17	chofiyá	find out

the speaker of an interrogative sentence has the intention to induce the performance of a specific action from the hearer as expressed by way of response, which may include answering a question. It is also important to note that where relevant answer is provided by the hearer to a question, such response is said to bring about an assertive act. This category of speech act has the prototypical effect of a declarative construction.

18. Eṣhna í yu kíńí? ‘What is your name?’ (Question)  
Eṣhna m vu Uche ‘My name is Uche.’ (Answer)

19. Oḥoḥi í nā vu kíńí? ‘What is today’s date?’ (Question)  
Oḥoḥi í nā vu oḡnu ábàlì nu oḡwá eṣo nu áwhà. ‘Today is the 20th day of March.’ (Answer)

20. Í jnègwù ówélé? ‘Where are you going?’ (Question)  
M jnègwù m oṣo. ‘I am going home.’ (Answer)

Examples (18 – 20) show that interrogatives belong to indicative mood. Although they are questions they express or state facts when they are answered correctly. Based on the fact which shows that declarative and interrogative constructions belong to the indicative mood, the authors may sum up that the output of the interrogative construction anticipates the answer it is supposed to induce, hence, making available a singular structural background for the two members of the adjacency pair i.e. question-and-answer. Following what has been revealed so far in this study, interrogatives are found to perform assertive act in Ikwere, in that the response part of every interrogatives sentence gives information or states a fact.

**Indicatives as Performing Commissive and Expressive Speech Acts**

In the context of the current study, the study finds two more categories of speech acts present in indicatives. They are commissives and expressives. Going by Searle’s categorisation, these categories may be defined thus. Whenever a commissive act is performed by a speaker, he/she is said to have committed him/herself to the act; basically for the interest of the hearer, to execute the act presented in the statement. Very good examples which include kwénkwà ‘promise’, kwéshí íknè ‘guarantee’, show that commissive acts have the resemblance of directive acts. In the expression of the erstwhile, the role of the performer of the act is taken up by the speaker; in the expression of the latter, it is expected that the hearer take on the performer role. The modal product of commissive acts is occasioned by using the present or future indicative. Take, for example: m nè-mé ā kíṣnà ‘I do it right now’, m mè ényè í iwáí kèṣn n’ime oḥoḥi láà biágwu àbiá ‘I will give you the money in two days’, m má ákànu á papa ‘(I shall not tell it to daddy)’. Finally, it is also necessary to note that the agent, (the one who performs the commissive act) is known as the holder of the position of the subject.

Expressive acts indicate interactions wherein a psychological state is expressed by the speaker; a state which is occasioned by an event causally having to do with the hearer. Some cases with which this can be illustrated are:

21. Kèlā ‘thank’(appreciation performing expressive act)

22. Vékū ‘congratulate’ (felicitating performing expressive act)

23. Íhíélé ‘welcome’ (greetings performing expressive act)

The indicative happens to be the mood usually used in sentences performing expressive act. So, for example, the following indicative counterparts of the examples above can be found below:

24. M nà navnarnu í (greetings performing expressive act) I welcome you’

25. M nà ákànu í íhíélé (greetings performing expressive act) ‘I bid you welcome’

Other regularly used indicative formulas in the Ikwere language are:

26. M nà èvékwū í èvékwū (performing expressive act of felicitating) ‘I offer my congratulations’

27. M kèlā lé m gē kèkwū (performing expressive act of appreciation) ‘I thank you very much’

28. Kànu. papa ánu. nu. nvékwulé m (performing expressive act of greetings) ‘Tell your father I have greeted’.

29. O. jà-àbjà. (futurity performing assertive act of willingness) fut. ‘He/she will come’.

30. O. jà-àlā oḡo. (futurity performing assertive act of willingness) fut. ‘he/she will go home’

31. O. lázoḣ. (performing assertive act of giving information)

prog. ‘He/she is going home’.

32. o. biázoḣ. (performing assertive act of giving information) prog. ‘He/she is coming’.

33. M`mà égwèhnàhié nu ì oḵwuḵwo ì nu `àbàli `eṣà biàgwu `àbià. (performing commissive act of making promising)

'I will return the textbook to you next week'.

Based on examples (21 – 33) above, it makes sense to state that, contrary to what the term suggests, declarative constructions, more appropriately defined by the presence of the indicative mood, are not only the means of expressing assertives by Ikwere speakers, but also that of commissive in addition to expressive act.

## CONCLUSION

Indicative mood in the Ikwere language can be expressed in different forms. From the study, the indicative mood can be used to express actions or events that will take place, taking place or took place. Indicative mood realises various forms in the Ikwere language. These forms comprise declarative sentences, interrogative sentences. Both sentence types express assertion. Although the interrogative sentences directly convey question and answer adjacency pair, the response it produces is performs assertive act. Pragmatics plays a role in the understanding of mood in Ikwere. The current study therefore concludes that the indicative mood in Ikwere performs three main speech acts using Searle's Speech Act theory. They are: Assertive, Commissive and Expressive Speech Acts however, the declarative and the interrogative sentences perform Assertive Act. The presence of the present or future indicative sentences determines the modal product of commissive acts in Ikwere. Expressive speech acts in Ikwere indicate interactions wherein the speaker expresses a psychological state; a state occasioned by an action causally having to do with the hearer and it manifests in appreciation, felicitation, greeting, etc.

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