To read the paper online, please scan this QR code

Section: *Applied Linguistics*

A linguistic analysis of verbal bullying expressions in selected schools in Machakos town sub-county

Dorothy Katunge Mutunga
Department of Linguistics and Languages,
Machakos University, Kenya
Correspondence: dmutunga1975@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9346-4781

Abstract
This paper aims at showing how speech act theory is used to account for expressions used to instigate verbal bullying among students in secondary schools. It is hewn from a main study that examined various linguistic expressions of verbal bullying and its harm on students in selected public schools in Machakos town sub-county, Kenya. The study sought to find out evidence of linguistic expressions used in verbal bullying, the forms they took and evaluation of the utterances using speech act theory; how the utterances affected the targeted students and especially if they violated the students' rights on dignity and equal opportunity to quality education despite the child's background. The study used a mixed methods design, where quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze data. Out of an approximate sample of forty-six public schools, purposive sampling was used to select schools based on their previous history in unrest. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the schools, the schools were stratified and categorized in two groups, that is mixed and pure girls' and boys' schools. Further stratification was done based on the type of school whether it was a sub county, county, extra county or national school. Students were selected randomly from each class of school to form the population of the respondents. The students were interviewed to collect data. After analysis, the previous study found out that verbal l bullying expressions such as insults, use of offensive language, threats, issuing commands among others were used by the perpetrators against the victims. Again, the study established that verbal bullying expressions had great effects on the targeted. Some reported to have felt isolated from the affiliated groups, others said they felt dejected, devalued among others.

Keywords: bullying, language use, learning environment, school setting, verbal expressions

Public Interest Statement

Verbal bullying of students in schools is a concern worldwide. Although research has been done on bullying in general little is in records when it comes to specific utterances individual students use to intimidate and harm each other. Using speech act theory, this paper investigates the meanings of verbal utterances, which when used in a school setup, and their effects such hurting other students' self- image and dignity and hence going against the rights of those students who become victims of such hateful utterances.

Introduction

This paper tries to link speech act theory and the linguistic expressions used in verbal bullying in schools. It tries to show how speech act theory is of importance in trying to unearth and account for verbal bullying expressions in schools. As we all know, the main purpose of Kenyan education system is to offer quality education to all Kenyans by the year 2030. In order to achieve this goal, it should promote an environment in schools that promotes tolerance and understanding of the other. It should also discourage alienation among students and help them accommodate each other despite their differences. Hugh (2005p.6) explains this by saying that democracy is about living together and that Education plays a major role in teaching people about learning how to live together. Similarly, Amy Gutmann (1987 p. 289) adds that, for a society to function well in a democratic manner, education forms the main foundation for moral teaching that helps its members to co-exist. Therefore, institutions such as schools, the teachers and the curricula form the needed connection between education and citizenship. Schools provide a fertile ground for grooming democratic citizens (Niemi and Junn 1998, pp.2-3). Thus, a good education system should foster important values such as democracy, tolerance, inclusiveness, and respect for others and discourage vices among citizens such as conflicts due to perceived differences, need to harm others, intolerance and so forth.

The Kenyan Ministry of Education and other stakeholders have been on the forefront to ensure that Kenyan schools are safe for our children. They have come up with policy documents against indiscipline in schools (Republic of Kenya, 2001). This is because schools are considered to be important in our children's lives as they act as socialization grounds where young people learn virtues such as tolerance, respect and how to co-exist with each other. In addition, schools mold children to think as one nation despite their ethnic differences, their religious affiliations, or any other perceived personal differences as Olubayi, (2011 p. 131) puts it to promote national peace and stability, schools will have to become the main location for teaching people to think of themselves as Kenyans and to acquire an expanded sense of empathy that includes all Kenyans regardless of ethnic or racial backgrounds. (Olubayi, 2011 p. 131)

Waldron, (2012 p. 292) in his book, *Harm in Hate Speech*, urges people to live and work together despite their diversity in their ethnicity, race, appearance and religions. For a healthy society, co-existence and living in harmony is paramount. There is therefore need for schools to teach and help learners embrace those virtues that foster tolerance, inclusivism and respect for others. This will enable the students learn to live together harmoniously because they are part of the larger society.

However, in the real sense, this is not what is seen in the current society and especially in schools where our children spend most of their time in their formative years. For instance, using the study on Linguistic Expressions of Verbal Bullying in Selected Secondary Schools in Machakos Sub County, where this article is hewn,many learners experienced verbal bullying such as abuses, threats, and commands, among others in their school environs.

My believe and fear is that many students silently suffer as a result of being stereotyped, abused, discriminated, and threatened by perpetrators in schools. Probably, Majority of these incidents go unreported to the concerned administrators or maybe they are as normalized as harmless or worse even, they go unnoticed by teachers and parents. In addition, there may be no action taken against the

perpetrators. Biggest fear is that, many school administrators and stakeholders of education may not be aware of the language of bullying students use against each other in school environs. This is why speech act theory comes in, so that it can expose the language of verbal bullying.

Generally, bullying can be direct or indirect as pointed out by Olweus and Solberg, (1998, p. 7). Direct bullying involves use of actions such as hitting and kicking and by using comments which are insulting, offensive, Sneering and threatening. In indirect bullying, the victim is socially isolated and excluded from a group (Olweus and Solberg, 1998, p. 7). In both cases the victim suffers psychological effect as stated by (Ridby, 2005, p. 26). In summary, bullying can take three forms: physical form which involves hitting, kicking, pushing and so forth, verbal form, which is characterized by issuing of insults, using offensive language and sneering comments or threats and relational form which involves perpetrators isolating and excluding the victim from group membership (Olweus & Solberg 1998, p.7).

The main study investigated verbal bullying in selected sub-county schools in Machakos. Verbal bullying is defined by Paulyn et al. (2013, p. 9) as "where words are used to intimidate and harm their victims by calling names, spreading rumors, threatening somebody and making fun of others." According to this study, such incidents where words are used to threaten, harass, discriminate, prejudice etc. and as a result inflict pain, isolate, humiliate and infringe on the individual's right to dignity among other rights, are type of bullying called verbal bullying (CIPESA, 2014).

Speech act theory and verbal bullying

Speech act theory is "a way in which a person uses an utterance to perform an act such as stating a fact, stating an opinion, confirming or denying something, making a prediction or a request, asking a question, issuing an order, giving a permission, giving a piece of advice, making an offer, making a promise, thanking somebody or condoling somebody" (Osisanwo, 2003, p. 60). This theory can be used to expound on the phenomenon of verbal bullying in schools. According to the theory, speakers are said to use utterances to perform specific acts. In other words, in uttering a sentence a speaker is doing something. To identify the kind of speech, act a speaker performs in their utterances, we are going to use Austin's three tenets of speech act theory (Austin, 1962 p. 94). He says that one can perform an act in saying something. The first one is locutionary act which is simply the act of saying something. The second one is the perlocutionary act, which is the effect or the consequence the utterance has on the hearer such as convincing the hearer about something, persuading the hearer, arousing anger, distress, annoyance, threatening, etc. Austin continues to argue that such effects are determined by illocutionary force of the utterance as well as the particular circumstances in which the utterance is produced. Austin called this act perlocution.

To further explain the notion of a perlocutionary act, Searle (1969, p. 25) says that "by arguing I may persuade or convince someone, by warning, I may scare or alarm him/her, by making a request I may get her to do something, by informing her, I may convince her….". Lastly, the illocutionary act, which presumes that an utterance made carries with it a certain force or intention such as informing the hearer on something, giving an order, giving a warning, giving a threat, this is the Illocutionary act.

The illocutionary force of an utterance conveys what the speaker intents to do with the particular utterance. Hence, the force determines what type of illocutionary act the utterance is meant to perform. According to the theory, it presupposes that the illocutionary force is an aspect of meaning that cannot be captured in truth –conditioned semantic theory, Osisanwo (2003 p.60). In other words, Searle seems to say that meaning of a statement or an utterance is beyond the semantic level. One has to consider other factors contributing to the meaning like social factors and the intentions of the speaker. Likewise, Verbal Bullying uses utterances that can be informed using the Speech Act Theory. The hateful speeches (the wrongs perpetuated to the hearers) can be looked at as performing the three levels of speech acts that an utterance performs. For instance, by threatening someone with an intention of instilling fear on the hearer, the speaker performs the Illocutionary act (threatening) and Perlocutionary act (the fear that

grips the hearer as a result of the act of being threatened) and of course, the act of uttering the threat is the Locutionary act. The intention of such utterances (Pragmatics) can be inferred using the Speech Act Theory.

Verbal Bullying uses verbal expressions which are uttered with an intention of causing harm or hurting the targeted. Some of these hateful words have the power to damage somebody's reputation, hurting, isolating, dehumanizing, degrading intimidating, harassing etc. as pointed out in Austin's (1962,1975) book, "How to Do Things with Words". So verbal bullying and its harm on the victim can be examined linguistically.

Several studies have looked at the harm words have on the targeted people. For instance, according to a review article on Jeremy Waldon's, (2012, p. 11) book 'The Harm in Hate Speech' by Brian Leiter, University of Chicago, Waldron is particular on the harm to dignity by hate speech and defines dignity as "the social standing, the fundamentals of basic reputation that entitle (persons)to be treated as equals in the ordinary operations of society" (Waldron, 2012, p.5).and adds that, "dignity is a matter of status, that is, one's status as a member of society in good standing and it generates demands for recognition and for treatment in accord with that status (Waldron 2012 p.60);it involves "intrinsically, the assurance that one will be dealt with on this basis (as an equal in rights and entitlements)" (Waldron 2012, p.85). However, the harm caused by spoken words goes against this fundamental right. Hateful words result in damaging the dignity of people based on the defamation related to certain characteristics they share with the group, and this can affect the group's dignity and disruption of social order in the society.

Recently, an American newspaper, Unicon Today, (2017) reported that verbal bullying and hate speech can have very detrimental effects to the targeted, especially if such speech is from a public figure in authority targeting a minority group in the community. "Reports from famous people like president Trump on deportation of illegal immigrants especially the Muslims have affected the learners negatively. Students say that they arrive at school anxious, upset, scared, and stressed or angry. Some show signs of withdrawal, anxiety, depression or other mental health concerns. They also bring hurtful speech and actions into school, or be on the receiving end of hurtful conduct or be bystanders witnessing such disrespectful behavior" (US Unicon Today, 2017).

Having looked at the harm verbal bullying has on the targeted person(s) from the above information, it is evident that use of negative words against others can be harmful and can cause serious harm to those targeted by such speech. This harm can be physical like direct threat of violence or psychological ones like long term feelings of fear, insecurity and violence as supported by Mari Matsuda (1989) who argues that, "many forms of such speech tacitly draw on a history of violence against certain groups" (Matsuda, 1989 pp. 2329-2334). In addition to causing violence, verbal bullying can also cause feelings of isolation, loss of self-esteem, among others (Delgado R., 1982 pp.137, 146). However, there is limited data based on research on the issue of verbal bullying and the effects on the targeted carried out in a linguistic perspective and in a school set up. Therefore, speech act theory proved to bridge this gap where there was thus, a need to investigate on the harm verbal bullying expressions have on the victims and the proprietors using a linguistic approach.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory was used to account for utterances that were used to express verbal bullying in this study. The theory attempts to explain how speakers (and writers) "do things with words". In other words they posit that language is a tool for performing actions and the meaning of the expression is not only derived from the words in the utterance, but also from the speaker's intention. Speaking of the same, Sperber and Wilson (1986 p.23) adds that "communication is successful when the hearers infer the speaker's 'meaning' from it." Communication takes place when the speaker and hearer understand one another and they will not rely on the surface meaning of the

expression as brought out by the linguistic form. The hearer will need to go beyond the literal meaning of the utterance to get the implied meaning. This will only be possible if both share a common background of information. For example, they could both share a certain situation when uttering the words so the interpretation of the meaning by both depends on that situation. Lawal (1997, p. 132) makes it clearer by saying that:

> Speech act theory and indeed the whole of pragmatics theory is essentially concerned with how interlocutors (speakers and listeners) understand one another in spite of their possibility of indirectness and implicitness of meaning which recommended pragmatics as a useful analytical tool in literary criticism.

This usefulness of pragmatics could also be extended to any other human communications where meaning and language use needs to be analyzed. Hence it will be of help in demystifying the meaning of the verbal bullying expressions extracted in the study.

Speech act theory, a sub-branch of pragmatics is "a way in which a person uses an utterance to perform an act. The act can perform the certain factions such as stating a fact, stating an opinion, confirming or denying something, making a prediction or a request, asking a question, issuing an order, giving a permission, giving a piece of advice, making an offer, making a promise, thanking somebody or condoling somebody" (Osisanwo, 2003, p. 60). This theory can be used to ascertain the acts performed by expressions of verbal bullying among students in schools.

According to the theory, speakers are said to use utterances to perform specific acts. In other words, in uttering a sentence, a speaker is doing something. To identify the kind of speech act a speaker performs in their utterances, Austin's three tenets of the speech act theory are used (Austin, 1962, p. 94). They are as follows:

1. Locutionary act

Which is simply the act of saying something. It contains the actual meanings of the utterances (Searle, 1969). In addition, Cutting (2002, p. 16) says that, locutionary acts "show what is said by the speaker, containing the form of the words which are uttered". Searle (1969), in trying to expound on locutions, he says that, locutionary acts describe the literal meaning of something. He further explains that, when a speaker says something, he or she is conveying the meaning literary. For example, "it is getting dark," the sentence means that the speaker thinks of the situation in the room which is getting dark because the day will be over. They mean what they say literally (Searle, 1969). Drawing other examples from a study by Okafor and Alabi (2017, pp. 61-72) on analyzing hate speech using speech act theory we can get the following example:

> You should not be bothered with 'cockroaches of politics.' Cockroaches are only in the toilets even at home. If you see a cockroach in your home crush them (*premium times, november19, 2014)*. The meaning of this utterance should be literary understood as stated by the speaker.

2. Illocutionary act

Which presumes that an utterance made carries with it a certain force or intention such as informing the hearer on something, giving an order, giving a warning, giving a threat, this is the Illocutionary act. The illocutionary force of an utterance conveys what the speaker intents to do with the particular utterance. Hence, the force determines what type of illocutionary act the utterance is meant to perform. According to the theory, it presupposes that the illocutionary force is an aspect of meaning that cannot be captured in truth –conditioned semantic theory, Osisanwo (2003 p.60). In other words, Searle seems to say that

meaning of a statement or an utterance is beyond the semantic level. One has to consider other factors contributing to the meaning like social factors and the intentions of the speaker.

Searle (1969) further classified the illocutionary act into five classes namely:

I. Assertive are speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition such as making statements (the speaker represent how things are in the world) in addition, they are acts which state what the speaker believes (include acts of stating, suggesting, boasting, complaining, etc. (Leech, 1983, p. 105).for example, when a speakers says "I feel grateful" the speaker wants to report to the hearer(s) that he or she is grateful. The utterance is merely reporting (Austin, 1962, p. 79).

II. Directives which are speech acts that are to cause the hearer to take a particular action such as requesting, ordering, warning, threatening, questioning, commanding, advising and so forth (Searle, 1969). In addition Searle gives an example, when a speaker says " please pass the salt", by the request the speaker gives the request to the hearer and makes the hearer pass the salt (Searle, 1969, p. 53)

III. Commissives which are acts that commit the hearer to some future action such as promising, threatening, offering, challenging, offering etc. for example, in the utterance, "I shall do my best". The utterance shows that the speaker performs the act of promising as posited by Austin (1962, p. 77)

IV. Expressives, are speech acts that express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the propositions. In other words they bring out the feelings of the speakers towards their subjects using words. They include acts such as complimenting, apologizing, scolding, greeting, thanking, complaining and congratulating among others, for instance when a speaker says, "I am willing to apologize", and "I am sorry to have said…" the utterance shows the act of apologizing (Austin, 1962, p. 80-81).

V. Declaratives are acts that change the reality in accordance with the proposition of the declaration such as baptizing, pronouncing someone guilt, pronouncing someone husband and wife, or appointing, resigning, ex-communicating, naming etc. (Searle, 1969).

Searle (1969) further asserted that speaker's illocutionary acts can also be said to be direct or indirect. In trying to differentiate the two, Yule (2006), said that direct speech acts are straightforward and often contain performative verbs while indirect speech acts require inferences on the part of the hearer or reader. Searle (ibid.) describes the indirect speech acts as "a situation where the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information both linguistic and non- linguistic together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer," In other words, Searle attempts to show how it is possible that a speaker's utterance can mean more than what it really means. For instance the illocutionary act of the statement below will be as follows:

You should not be bothered with 'cockroaches of politics.' Cockroaches are only in the toilets even at home. If you see a cockroach in your home crush them (*Premium Times, November19, 2014)* The illocutionary acts intended are:

- Direct: assertive (stating)
- Indirect: directive (ordering)

We can see that this statement carries with it illocutionary force of ordering, it is not just a mere statement of stating a fact (direct) but also performs an action of ordering (its indirect function).

3. **Perlocutionary act**

is the effect or the consequence the utterance has on the hearer such as convincing the hearer about something, persuading the hearer, arousing anger or anxiety, creating fear, worry, distress, annoyance, threatening, intimidating, embarrassing, amusing etc.(Searle. 1969). For example, the utterance, take a look of yourself. You are the most beautiful woman I have ever met." The function of this utterance is to give effect of amusing to the hearer (Searle, 1969). Austin continues to argue that such effects are determined by illocutionary force of the utterance as well as the particular circumstances in which the utterance is produced (Austin, 19623). By using the previous example:

> Locutionary act: You should not be bothered with 'cockroaches of politics.' Cockroaches are only in the toilets even at home. If you see a cockroach in your home crush them (*Premium Times, November19, 2014*)

The expected Perlocutionary effect is incitement. The utterance *"if you see cockroach in your home crush them"*, is an order where the hearer is supposed to take action against the opponent, hence inciting the hearer against the opponent.

Likewise, Verbal Bullying uses utterances that can be informed using the Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Speech Act Theory has been used as an analytical tool of the identified linguistic expressions of verbal bullying from a study where this article is hewn.from the main study, the selected verbal bullying utterances have been subjected to the Illocutionary act analysis that is direct and indirect illocutionary acts. The Perlocutionary effects of the Locutions on the hearer have been determined from the illocutionary force of each utterance as shown in the following texts from the study data:

Example 1
Locutionary act: He said, 'Hey, you are clicking and you know you get Es (*20 year old form 4 female student, mixed Sub County school)*
Illocutionary act: Direct: assertive (concluding); Indirect: expressives (contempt/ridicule)
The perpetrator uses words to demean the victim in terms of academic performance by telling her that she only gets the lowest grades "E's", "you are clicking and you know you get Es"
Perlocutionary effect the victim reported to have felt humiliated and withdrawal.
More examples are as discussed below:

Example 2
Locutionary act: Where is my fifty shillings, when I come, when we meet again I need my fifty shillings and I won't speak again, (A *19 year old Form 3 Male Student, Public Boy's Boarding County School)*
Illocutionary act: Direct: directive (ordering, questioning); Indirect: commissive (threatening) , "when we meet again I need my fifty shillings and I won't speak again"
Expected Perlocutionary act: fear, anxiety and helplessness

Example 3
Locutionary act: "huyo *msichana ni mkundu sana" (mkundu'*) abusive word mentioning taboo words of the private parts- anus) (*19 year old form 4 female student Girls' extra county boarding school*)
Illocutionary act: Direct: assertive (stating); Indirect: directive (insulting)….. *"mkundu"*
Expected perlocutionary effect: withdrawal, isolation, intimidated.

Example 4

Locutionary act: There is this Kamba word "*kathembo*" so that means in Kiswahili we can say "*fisi*" you see now. They started saying I have many girlfriends yeah. So that *name kathembo* will be my nickname. (*18 year old form 4 Male student, public sub county day school*)

Illocutionary act: Direct: assertive (claiming); Indirect: expressive (accusing/criticizing) ..Kamba word "*kathembo*" means "*fisi*" in Kiswahili.The implied meaning is that the victim is accused of being immoral and insatiable in terms of sex and women.
Expected Perlocutionary effect: embarrsssed,withdrawal, isolation sadness.

Example 5

Locutionary act: *(Sarcastically)*, you are in form four and you don't know form two question? What are you doing in form four? *(A 19 year old form 4 female student, Extra County girls' school)*

Illocutionary act: Direct: assertive (concluding); Indirect: expressives (contempt/ridicule). "You are in form four and you don't know form two question?"we can see this statement is a contempt from the speaker who feels that the victim does not fit to be in the senior class, form four, if she cannot answer a question on the subject of discussion from a lower form ,form two.
Expected Perlocutionary effect: humiliation, emotional disturbance, and withdrawal.

From these illustrations from the study data, all linguistic communications involve acts in which communication is not only about sentences, words or symbols but also production of the sentences and words in the performance of speech acts. (Searle, 1969). In classifying and analyzing verbal bullying expressions, we not only focus on the language use, but also on the acts the expressions perform. Speech act theory has fully succeeded in bringing out the three acts an utterance may perform. The acts can be inform of locutions, such as in the example, the verbal bullying utterance "you are in form four and you don't know form two question?" simply means exactly the literal meaning, or illocutionary acts in which we perform certain acts by simply uttering words and sentences in certain situations and conditions. For instance the above verbal bullying utterance may express contempt by the speaker towards the hearer and consequently affect the self-image of the hearer (the Perlocutionary effect), hence bringing out effects of humiliation and low self-worth.

Therefore, speech act theory has been used to account for all linguistic expressions and their functions in this study. The theory has further enabled classification of the verbal bullying expressions using politeness theory into what the politeness theory calls face threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1967) by using the illocutionary acts of the speech act theory. To fully understand the meaning of an utterance, we must understand the context in which it is used. Pragmatics is concerned with how people use language within a context and why they use language in particular ways. (Georgios Tserdanelis Andwai Yi Peggy Wong, 2004).

Many authors of pragmatics commonly argue that pragmatics is a study of 'natural language' thus language as used in actual or real life situations such as Grice 1957, Searle 1969, Petofi 1976, Van Dijk 1976, Levinson 1983, Mey 1993, Martin 1994 and Yule 1996 among others (Kaburise, P.K. 2005). Thus a pragmatic analysis of language will rely on looking at the form and the function of an utterance within a given situation. This means that an utterance in one situation could have different function and meaning in another situation all together. This study can be said to be pragmatic because it analyses the language use and its meaning in relation to a speech context or situation. It further integrated the speech

act theory with politeness theory quite well.

The study looked at the verbal bullying expressions that cause face damage of both the hearer and the speaker in a school set up using students in selected schools in Machakos Sub County. Therefore the study recommends that further research can be done to see how the face of both the hearer and the speaker can be saved (face saving strategies) using the politeness theory by (Brown and levinson1967) in school set up. It can also be carried out on other schools in the county, other counties and other nations as well.

It further recommends that a study to be done on school administrators and the teaching staff on how best language can be used to enhance effective administration and productivity in a school set up and even in other organized institutions using both theories.

This study focused on linguistic expressions used in verbal bullying among high school students, specifically in selected secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Kenya. The objectives of the study examined were, to classify verbal bullying expressions, secondly, to describe their meaning and lastly, to establish how speech act theory accounts for verbal bullying expressions used in bullying.

The study randomly sampled sixteen students across the class forms using variables such as such as gender, religion, socio-economic status among others, from the selected sub-county schools in Machakos Sub County. They were interviewed and also tape recorded because the researcher was interested with the utterances from the individuals that constitute verbal bullying. From the data, the researcher identified and classified verbal bullying expressions using Olweus (1993) model bullying classification and Brown and Levinson's (1978,1987). Politeness theory, described the meanings of the verbal bullying expressions using Austin's speech act theory and established that speech act theory can be used to account for verbal bullying expressions. The findings are as follows: The researcher found out that speech act theory was able to analyze verbal bullying expressions by looking at the language use and also the acts the expressions of verbal bullying perform (their intended function by the perpetrator). The theory succeeded in bringing out the three acts an utterance may perform. The acts were locutions, for example, the verbal bullying utterance "you are in form four and you don't know form two question?" simply means exactly that, or illocutionary acts in which we perform certain acts by simply uttering words and sentences in certain situations and conditions. For instance, the above verbal bullying utterance expressed contempt by the speaker towards the hearer and consequently affected the hearer by making them feel humiliated (the Perlocutionary effect), hence bringing out effects of humiliation and low self-worth. Therefore, speech act theory was used to account for all linguistic expressions and their functions in this study.

The theory further enabled classification of the verbal bullying expressions using politeness theory into what the politeness theory calls face threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1967) by using the illocutionary acts of the speech act theory. The face threatening acts as identified earlier were, acts of ordering, insulting, ridiculing, criticizing, daring, slandering, evaluating interruptions and reminding. The effects of the utterances on the victim came out clearly as identified by the Perlocutionary act. The study found out that the victims experienced feelings of humiliation, embarrassment, withdrawal, low self-worth, devalued, isolated among others.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the findings. Verbal bullying expressions exist in secondary schools in form of face threatening acts as identified and classified by Brown and Levinson using their politeness theory. The study also concludes that speech act theory was used to account for all linguistic expressions and their functions in this study. The theory further enabled classification of the verbal bullying expressions using politeness theory into what the politeness theory calls face threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1967) by using the illocutionary acts of the speech act theory. The face threatening acts as identified earlier were acts of ordering, insulting, ridiculing, criticizing,

daring, slandering, evaluating interruptions and reminding. Furthermore, the study concluded that, by using the perlocutionary act, the effects of the utterances on the victim came out clearly. The study found out that the victims experienced feelings of humiliation, embarrassment, withdrawal, low self-worth, devalued, isolated among others. In conclusion, the issue of bullying is a menace to the student world and the society at large.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declared no conflict of interest.

Disclaimer Statement
This article is part of my on-going M.A studies at the Department of Linguistics and Languages, Machakos University.

Author Bionote
Dorothy Katunge Mutunga holds a Bachelor of Education Arts degree in English and Literature and is currently pursuing Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics at Machakos University, Kenya. Her research interests are in the uses of speech act theory, linguistic analysis and language use in schools.

References

Alannah and Madeline Foundation. (2018). *The Economic Cost of Bullying in Australia.* Australia: PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting

Attorney General Kenya. (2010*). the Constitution of Kenya.* Nairobi: The National Council for law reporting NCLR.

Austin J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words.* New York: Oxford University Press

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. & Tight, M. (2006). *How to Research* (3rd Edition) Milton Keynes. Open University Press.

Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. (1978, 1987) Politeness: some universals in language usage. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP]. (2011). *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance.* United States, *2011. Mmwr.*

Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). (2014) *State of Internet Freedoms in Kenya; an Investigation into the Policies and Practices Defining Internet Freedom in Kenya.* CIPESA.

Creswell J.W. (1998). *Quality Inquiry and Research Design*: *Choosing Among Five Traditions.* London. Sage Matt. Haught.

Cupach, W.R., & Metts, S. (1994). *Facework. Thousand Oaks, C.A: Sage.*

Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse*: *A Resource Book for Students.* London &New York Rout ledge.

Cyrus. O. (2017, September 25).”Embakasi East MP Arrested for Insulting President Uhuru,”*standard nation.* Kenya.

Dan, O. (1993).*Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do.* (Oxford, England): Blackwell Publishing.

Delgado, R. (1982). “*Words That Wound: A Tort Action for Racial Insults, Epithets, And Name-Calling,*” Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties: Law Review 17 Pp. 137,146.

Denis k. (May 23, 2017). Every Time Elections Approach, Politicians Capitalize On Ethnic Affiliations.” Daily Nation. Nairobi.

Domenici, K., & Littltjohn, S.W. (2006). *Facework:* Bridging Theory and Practice. https://doi.org/104135/9781452204222, Pp. 225

Farley, R. (2011). “*Donald trump says people who went to school with Obama never saw him.*”Politifact. *Retrieved July 9, 2018.*

Fekih, L. (2017).*Bullying Among High School Students and Their Relationship with Diligence at School.* International Journal of Education, Culture and Society, 2(4), 114-119. https://doi.org/10.11648/J.Jjecs.20170204.12

Fraser, B., E. Rintell & J. Walters (1980). “*An Approach to Conducting Research on the Acquisition of Pragmatic Competence in a Second Language*” In Larsen- Freeman (Ed.) Pp.75-91.

Fumbuka N. (2019): President Urges Tanzania’s Women to “Set Ovaries Free,” Have More Babies to Boost Economy. *Thomson Reuters.*

Goffman, E. (1967) *Interaction ritual*: Essays in Faces to Face Behaviour. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.

Gonzanga, P., Domingo, Ferreras, A. J., Alcantara N.R. Balagta R. A., Sanchez C. S. (2013).*The Impact of Bullying in Adolescents at School.* A Research Paper. Academia. Edu. “*General Recommendation on Combating Racist Hate Speech*”, CERD/C/GC/35.

Jwan, J. (2010*). Conducting Qualitative Research*: *Current Trends And Developments*: Moi University 5th Campus Wide Research Workshop.

Kaburise, P. K. (2005*). A Speech Act Theory and Communication:* A Univen Study. Pretoria. Kenya Daily Nation (2018, Thursday 25). “*Jamuhuri High closed after Seven Students Admitted*

in Hospital with Serious Injuries following Clash", P. 2.

Kirby, Jen (January 11, 2018). *Trump wants fewer immigrants from "shithole countries and*

Kombo D. K. And Tromp. D. L. A. (2006). *Proposal and Thesis Writing: An Introduction;* Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa.

Kothari, C.R. (2008). *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques*. (2nd Ed.) New Delhi: Pitman Publishers.

Lawal, A. (1997). Pragmatics In Stylistics: Speech Act analysis of Soyinka's "Telephone
Conversation". In Lawal, A. *Stylistic In Theory and Practice (3rd Ed.) Ilorin: Paragon Books 150- 173.*

Leiter, B. (2012, 07, 29). *Harm in Hate Speech* –Reviews.

Lim T., & Bowers, J. (1991). Facework: solidarity, approbation, and tact. *Human Communication Research,* 17(3), 415-450.

Matsuda, M.J. (1989, April).*Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victims Story.* Michigan Law Review, 87, Pp.2320-2381.

Merrel K.W, Gueldner B.A, Ross S.W. *How effective are School Bullying Intervention Programs? A meta-analysis of intervention research*. School psychol Q.2008; 23 (1):26-42. *More from places like Norway." Vox. Retrieved February 19, 2018.*

Mugenda, O. M. &Mugenda, (2003). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.* Nairobi. African Center for Technology Studies.

National Crime Research Center, (2017). *Research Issue Brief into Secondary Schools Arson Crisis in Kenya,* Nairobi. Government Printer.

Ndetei D. M, Ongecha F. A, Khasakhala L. , Syanda J., Mutiso V., Otieno C. J., Odhiambo, C. J., & Kokonya D. A. (2007). Bullying In Public Secondary Schools in Nairobi, Kenya. *Journal of child and adolescent mental health, 19*(1), 45-55. South Africa.

Niemi, R. G. & Junn, J. (1998*). Civil Education: What makes Students Learn*? Yale University Press.

Okafor, V.C., & Alabi T. O. (2017). A Speech Act Analysis Of Hate Speeches In The 2015 General Election Compaign In Nigeria. Impact: International Journal Of Research In Humanities, Arts And Literature, 5(6), 61-72.

Olweus D. (1991*). Bully/Victim Problems among School Children: Basic Facts and Effects of a School Based Intervention Program*. In Debra, J. Pepler and Kenneth H. Rubin. (Eds.) *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum.

Olubayi O. (2011). *Education fora Better World*. Amazon. Com.

Olweus D. (1993). *Bullying At School. What We Know And What We Can Do*. Cambridge, Ma: Blackwell.

Olweus D. And Solberg, C. (1998). *Bullying Among Children and Young People.* Information and Guidance of Parents. [Translation to English: Caroline Bond]Oslo: Pedagogic forum.

Osisanwo, W. (2003). *Introduction to Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics*. Lagos: Femolus- Fetop Publishers.

Parault, S.J., Davis H.A, And Pellegrine, A.D., (2007). The Social Context of Bullying and Victimization. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. 27, 145-174. Philosophical Review, 77, 420-21. *Recommendation on Combating Racist Hate Speech"*, CERD/C/GC/35 Report- 280218.

Premium times, November 19, 2014.

Republic of Kenya (2009). *Vision 2030;* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya, (1991). *Report Of the Presidential Committee on the Students Unrest and Indiscipline in Kenyan Secondary Schools* Chaired by Dr. Lawrence G. Sagini. (Sagini Report)July, 1991.

Republic of Kenya, (2001). Ministry Of Education Science and Technology. *Report of the T a s k Force on Students Discipline and Unrest in Secondary Schools. (*Wangai, Report Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation. Retrieved July6th 2018.

Roland, E. and Idsoe, T. (2001). *Aggression and Bullying. Aggressive Behaviour*, 27, 446-462.

Searle J. (1969) *Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts:*

Searle J. (1969) *Speech Acts and Expressions and Meaning.* New York: Cambridge University Press), 31.

Searle, J. and Vanderveken, D. (1985). *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Starky, H. (2005). *Democratic Education and Learning. British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26, 299-308.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1986). Relevance: 14 Theory of Communication. Cambridge: Havard University.

The Millennium Development Goals Report (2009). United Nations. *The Trump Effect: "The Impact of the 2016 Presidential Election on Our Nation's Schools." Southern Poverty Law Center. Retrieved January 22, 2018.*

Tserdanelis, G., & Wong, W.Y.P (2004). *Materials for an introduction to language and linguistics,* ninth edition. Department of linguistics. The Ohio state university, the Ohio state university press Columbus.

U.S. Department of Education (2015*). "New Data Show A Decline In School Based Bullying"*: National Centre For Education.

UNESCO (2010) Education in Kenya. Retrieved from https://Stats.U.S.Unecso.Org./Unesco/Document. Pdf.

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013).

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013) "*General* US Unicon Communications (2017, January 17): "Get Ahead Of Bullying and Hate Speech, Says Education Expert": Uniconn Communications.

Waldron, J. (2012). *The Harm in Hate Speech.* USA: Havard University Press.

Wes Weasley Wiki *(2016 September 1)* "Five Insults Donald Trump Has Fired At Mexicans in the Presidential Race." *Sky. 1, Retrieved January 13, 2018.*

Wittgenstein, L. (1968) *Philosophical Investigations.* Translated By G.E.M. Anscombe. Third Edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.