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About this journal

The *International Journal of African Reflections (IJAR)*, which is housed at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, publishes multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary peer-reviewed articles that encourage and support researchers in all fields and disciplines, especially female, black and young researchers, by providing a platform to publish their work with the aim of eventually obtaining an NRF rating. The journal also intends to act as a facilitator in building a cohort of scholars from among the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral graduate students through the articles that are published in the journal. It is hoped that new epistemological ideas will emerge, and that this will contribute to improving the quality of teaching, research and learning.

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Preface

It is my privilege to present Volume 3 (2026) of the *International Journal of African Reflections* (*IJAR*), a scholarly platform that embodies iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu's commitment to disseminating knowledge that is intellectually rigorous, socially responsive and firmly rooted in African realities. This issue brings together researchers from the humanities, social sciences, law, health sciences and economics to examine some of the defining questions of our time: gender justice, historical memory, land governance, Indigenous knowledge, technological change, institutional accountability, public health and sustainable development. Its interdisciplinary reach reflects a fundamental truth: the challenges confronting Africa do not respect disciplinary boundaries and our responses cannot remain confined within them.

At iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu we understand that a university is not simply a place where existing knowledge is transmitted but a public institution with a duty to imagine, test and build better futures. Our Vision 2040+ is anchored in the aspiration to become a technology-infused African university that is locally responsive, continentally consequential and globally engaged. This vision calls upon us to draw intellectual strength from our location while refusing intellectual isolation; to use technology without surrendering human judgement, and to pursue academic excellence in ways that improve the lives of the communities we serve. The *IJAR* contributes directly to this purpose by creating a credible space in which African experiences generate concepts, evidence and solutions of wider significance.

Vision 2040+ is given practical direction through the university's three signature themes: Food Futures; One Health, and Leadership, Justice and Governance. These themes are not separate institutional compartments: together, they recognise that human flourishing depends on the relationship between sustainable livelihoods, healthy communities, ecological resilience, ethical institutions and responsible leadership. The contributions to this volume illuminate these relationships precisely. Research on external debt and agricultural development reveals the fiscal conditions that can advance or impede food security and rural transformation. Scientific enquiry into the bioactivity of medicinal plants brings indigenous and community-based knowledge into productive conversation with experimental research while opening up opportunities for health innovation. Studies of land boards, apartheid regulation, gendered violence and institutional power demonstrate that development cannot be separated from justice, legitimacy and accountable governance.

The volume also engages directly with the technological future of higher education. Artificial intelligence is already altering the way universities teach, learn, conduct research and administer their responsibilities. Yet technology is never transformative merely because it is new: its value depends on whether it advances equitable access, strengthens human capability and serves clearly defined educational purposes. The analysis of AI adoption in South African higher education, together with the dialogue on literary criticism, pedagogy and the digital humanities, underscores the importance of infrastructure, digital literacy, ethical governance and critical judgement. This is central to our Vision 2040+ ambition. A technology-infused African university must be technologically capable, but it must also remain intellectually independent, ethically grounded and attentive to any inequalities that may be reproduced through innovation.

Equally important is the volume's insistence that language and interpretation are forms of social action. The analysis of feminist speech acts in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele …* shows how language can challenge inherited assumptions and direct new practices. Historical research into the criminalisation of interracial relationships under apartheid reveals the opposite possibility: law and official language can classify, stigmatise and control human beings. These contributions remind us that knowledge is never detached from power. The terms through which society describes gender, race, authority, land, health and development influence what institutions permit, prohibit or neglect. Universities therefore carry a special responsibility to cultivate critical literacy: the capacity to identify the assumptions embedded in dominant categories and to formulate more just ways of understanding the world.

This responsibility is particularly urgent for an institution bearing the name of Walter Max Ulyate Sisulu. His legacy represents principled leadership, disciplined service, social justice and an enduring belief in people's capacity to transform their circumstances through collective action. To honour that name, the university must ensure that its scholarship is measured not only by quantity or visibility, but also by its integrity, relevance and impact. Research must confront the lived realities of rural and historically marginalised communities; strengthen democratic institutions; protect human dignity, and contribute to a more equitable distribution of knowledge and opportunity. *IJAR* serves this mandate by enabling scholars to respond to Africa's problems without reducing the continent to a catalogue of deficiencies. It foregrounds African agency, intellectual creativity and the capacity to produce solutions.

The geographical position of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu gives this mission particular force. Our campuses are located within communities

that experience the opportunities and contradictions of contemporary development up close. Questions of rural livelihoods, public health, land, educational access, language, technology and governance are not distant research themes; they shape the everyday lives of our students, staff and surrounding communities. Vision 2040+ requires us to transform this proximity into a scholarly advantage. Community engagement must inform research questions; research must strengthen teaching; teaching must prepare graduates to act with competence and social responsibility, and innovation must yield benefits beyond the boundaries of the university.

The *IJAR* is therefore more than a publication outlet. It is part of the knowledge infrastructure through which our university advances research excellence, supports emerging and established scholars, strengthens interdisciplinary exchange and extends African scholarship into international conversations. A strong university journal safeguards rigorous peer review, promotes intellectual independence and preserves a public record of enquiry. It also enlarges the range of voices and contexts represented in global knowledge. For African universities, this work is essential to epistemic justice: not the rejection of global scholarship, but fuller and more equitable participation in its production, evaluation and circulation.

I commend the authors in this issue for having researched and placed on record difficult questions with methodological seriousness and a commitment to evidence-based knowledge dissemination. I thank the reviewers for the careful and often unseen intellectual labour through which the quality of scholarly publication is secured. I also acknowledge the Managing Editor, the Editorial Board, and the production team for sustaining *IJAR* and bringing this volume to completion. Their collective work demonstrates the institutional commitment required to convert research into an enduring scholarly resource.

As readers engage with this third volume of *IJAR*, I invite them to consider not only the individual findings in its articles but also the shared challenge they present. What kinds of universities, technologies, laws, economies and knowledge systems are needed for Africa's people to flourish? Vision 2040+ calls on iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu to help answer that question through courageous scholarship and purposeful action. The future we seek will not be produced by aspiration alone; it will be built on evidence, ethical leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration and sustained accountability to society.

This volume is a meaningful contribution to that undertaking. It affirms our confidence that African universities can generate the highest-quality knowledge while remaining responsive to place, community and history. It also renews our conviction that scholarly

reflection must lead to transformation. May the ideas gathered here stimulate further research, deepen institutional debate and inspire partnerships that advance healthy communities, sustainable livelihoods, justice and human dignity across the Eastern Cape, South Africa, the African continent, and beyond.

Prof Thandi Mgwebi
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu

Africa in transformation

Knowledge, power and institutional responsibility

Editorial for Volume 3 (2026)

This third volume of the *International Journal of African Reflections* (*IJAR*) brings together nine contributions that examine the ways in which knowledge, power and institutional responsibility shape African lives. Moving between history, gender studies, biomedical research, higher education, economics, land law, literary pragmatics, palliative care and the humanities, the volume asks what makes scholarship answerable to the societies it studies. Its coherence emerges from a shared concern with the conditions under which people acquire recognition, exercise agency, secure livelihoods and receive care. The contributions approach these concerns through different methods and at different scales, demonstrating why African scholarship needs both disciplinary precision and sustained conversation across fields.

The volume affirms Africa as a site of knowledge production, theoretical reflection and methodological enquiry. Its studies engage inherited inequalities together with contemporary pressures, attending to the institutions through which both are reproduced or challenged. Read in their published sequence, they move from the coercive regulation of intimate life and the vulnerabilities of university students to questions of scientific investigation, technological change, economic development and land governance. Feminist language, culturally responsive care and the renewal of literary criticism extend this enquiry into the meanings and practices through which social transformation becomes possible. Together, these contributions give substance to *IJAR*'s commitment to multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary scholarship grounded in African realities.

The opening article, AA Marwarwa and M Petse's '"The forbidden fruit": The consequences of interracial sexual relationships in apartheid South Africa', examines the 1952 case of Olaf Abraham Voster and Nomathemba Emily Nomatiti in Umtata. Through this case, the authors trace the operation of the Immorality Act 5 of 1927 and the consequences of racial regulation for those brought within its reach. Their historical analysis shows how racial domination entered intimate life through policing, prosecution and punishment. The case also directs attention to the unequal vulnerabilities of the people involved: racialised law operated within existing differences of status and power. By connecting a particular legal proceeding to a wider system of exclusion, the article demonstrates the value of archival

research to recovering the human consequences of institutionalised discrimination.

Questions of power and vulnerability continue in Keneilwe Wanthitha Mashishi, Mahlodi Monica Rebecca Makupula, Jabulani Gilford Kheswa and Mvuyisi Notole's study of sexual harassment and the mental well-being of female students at a South African tertiary institution. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten participants and guided by Power and Control Theory, the authors examine student experiences shaped by poverty, patriarchal norms, alcohol abuse and unequal relations of authority. The accounts reveal the consequences for psychological well-being and academic participation that institutional policy alone cannot adequately describe. The study recommends ongoing counselling, empowerment programmes and education on sexual harassment policies. Its place after the historical article establishes a consequential connection: the protection of dignity requires attention to be given the way power is exercised in everyday relationships, and also to the formal rules intended to govern them. For universities, student safety must surely be integral to the conditions that make learning possible.

The third contribution turns to the investigation of medicinal plants. Azola Zukisani Ntshobane, Elona Ngqayimbane, Suparna Chakraborty, Saif Khan and Talkmore Ngarivhume screen extracts of *Drimia altissima* and *Crinum macrophyllum* bulbs for anticancer, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity. Their laboratory findings identify promising responses in selected extracts, including activity against cervical cancer cell lines and strong inhibition in an anti-inflammatory assay. These are results obtained from laboratory screenings; they establish grounds for further investigation rather than clinical effectiveness. The authors accordingly call for the isolation and characterisation of active compounds. Their article contributes to this volume by showing how medicinal plant use can inform research questions that are then examined through controlled experimentation. Its significance rests in the disciplined movement from biological resources and medicinal knowledge towards evidence that can support further scientific enquiry.

ST Pika's exploration of the adoption of artificial intelligence in South African higher education shifts our attention to the infra-structures through which knowledge is taught, assessed and administered. Using Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the article considers relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability in interpreting the emerging trends and barriers. Personalised learning, student engagement and administrative efficiency feature among the potential benefits of adopting artificial intelligence, while infrastructure constraints,

digital literacy gaps, inequality and ethical concerns complicate its adoption. The analysis places institutional readiness central to the discussion: technologies acquire educational value through the conditions of their use. Investment, staff development and appropriate policies therefore belong in the same conversation as innovation. Following the biomedical study, Pika's contribution extends the volume's attention to responsible investigation and adoption, asking how promising developments can serve public purposes in unequal institutional settings.

Nnane Eric Sumelong's study of external debt sustainability and agricultural development in Cameroon broadens this institutional enquiry to national economic policy. Using data for the period 1996–2023, an Engle–Granger co-integration framework and an error-correction model, the article examines the relationships between external debt and agricultural value added. It reports a negative long-run association between long-term external debt and agricultural value added, together with a strong positive association with gross fixed capital formation. The analysis interprets debt pressures in relation to constrained fiscal space and the resources available for agricultural development. Its recommendations emphasise transparent debt governance, the protection of agricultural investment and the productive use of borrowing. By bringing rural livelihoods and agricultural capacity into the debates on debt, the article asks readers to assess macroeconomic choices balanced against their developmental consequences. The practical question is what public finance enables communities to produce, sustain and improve.

The next article, by Akame Winslow Melle and Akwe Ngole Ray Junior, examines four land management boards in Cameroon through the lens of legal pluralism. The Land Consultative Board, Site Board Commission, Inter-Village Boundary Settlement Commission and Farmer–Grazer Commission operate where statutory rules, customary authority and administrative practice intersect. Drawing on legal materials, interviews and comparative African experiences, the authors identify procedural ambiguity, bureaucratic delay and institutional constraints that limit dispute resolution. They argue for reforms that combine customary legitimacy with clearer safeguards, digitisation, gender inclusion and more effective administration. Its position after the agricultural development study renders the relationship between productive investment and land governance particularly visible. Land sustains livelihoods, but it also carries histories of belonging, authority and communal obligation; the institutions responsible for land management must respond appropriately to these overlapping claims if their decisions are to command confidence.

Gabriel Ndamzi Amadi's 'Doing feminism with words: a Searlean speech act analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele …*' then turns to the capacity of language to challenge inherited authority. Analysing 239 coded units from Adichie's manifesto, Amadi shows how assertives contest naturalised gender assumptions and directives translate feminist argument into practices of parenting and socialisation. Commissives and expressives establish ethical and affective positioning, while quasi-declaratives attempt to rename or reclassify familiar gendered categories. The recognition of hybrid forms also allows the article to test the usefulness and limits of its theoretical framework. This contribution returns the volume to gendered power at the level of ordinary speech and conduct. It demonstrates how feminist writing can intervene in the vocabularies through which inequality becomes familiar and in the practices through which it is passed from one generation to another.

The eighth contribution, K Zweni, A Mavembela and G Mkukuli's 'Decolonising South African palliative care psychosocial services for mental health benefit: eclectic context', brings the relationship between recognition and institutional responsibility into end-of-life care. Guided by an ecological perspective and an eclectic narrative review, the authors examine the ways patients' social, cultural and spiritual environments shape their experiences of care. They argue that the exclusion of African beliefs and knowledge systems can undermine culturally responsive psychosocial support, and they advocate their inclusion alongside allopathic approaches in healthcare training, policy and practice. The article offers a framework for reform rather than a clinical evaluation of a new intervention. Read alongside the earlier biomedical contribution, it widens the volume's understanding of health: research into biological activity and attention to the meanings through which patients experience suffering respond to different complementary dimensions of care. Respect for patient preferences and cultural diversity is central to that relationship.

The volume concludes with 'Beyond the Ibadan School', Mark Ighile's dialogue with Emeritus Professor Dan Izevbaye on literary criticism, pedagogy and digital humanities. Reflecting on six decades of scholarship, the conversation revisits the relationships between text, context, authorship, audience and interpretation. Its discussion of a declining tutorial culture and campus collegiality underscores the social conditions through which critical judgement develops. Its treatment of canon formation asks how intellectual inheritance can remain responsive to changing publics and media. Returning to the questions raised by Pika, the dialogue considers digital tools and artificial intelligence as supports for enquiry whose usefulness depends

on humanistic judgement and ethical interpretation. This is a fitting conclusion to the sequence: an issue concerned with institutional transformation ends by examining the ways in which scholars learn to interpret, evaluate and transmit knowledge responsibly.

Through these contributions, institutional legitimacy emerges as a demanding practical achievement. Courts, universities, land boards, healthcare services and fiscal systems exercise authority in ways that affect people's opportunities and vulnerabilities. Their legitimacy depends on how that authority is justified, scrutinised and experienced. The articles illuminate this problem through distinct forms of evidence, from a historical prosecution and students' accounts to legal analysis and economic modelling. Together, they encourage a conception of reform that is attentive to everyday consequences: access to education, security of livelihood, recognition of claims and dignity in care.

The volume also clarifies why the recognition of African knowledge must be accompanied by methodological care. Archival interpretation, laboratory screening, qualitative interviews, narrative synthesis, speech-act analysis and econometrics support different kinds of claim. Bringing them into conversation requires respect being shown for those differences. Medicinal knowledge can generate research questions; cultural understanding can inform care; literary criticism can examine the terms through which values are communicated. None of these contributions needs to assume the methods of another to acquire intellectual worth. Their collective strength lies in making evidence, interpretation and the limits of inference visible while responding to problems that exceed any single discipline.

We thank the authors for their contributions, the reviewers for their critical engagement, and the editorial and production teams for the sustained work that makes scholarly publication possible. Their efforts support a journal that is committed to widening participation in research while maintaining the rigour on which scholarly trust depends. For emerging and established researchers alike, that commitment entails the opportunity to contribute and the responsibility to formulate arguments that others can examine, question and develop.

Volume Three of *IJAR* invites readers to consider African scholarship through the quality of the understanding it produces and the opportunities it opens up. Its contributions recover histories of exclusion, scrutinise present institutions and propose directions for change without resolving their differences into a single account of Africa. Their shared achievement is to render the relationship between knowledge and responsibility concrete. *IJAR* advances that relationship

by providing a space in which African experiences inform enquiry, African intellectual resources shape interpretation and scholarship remains answerable to the people whose lives give its questions urgency.

Prof Enongene Mirabeau Sone
and
Dr Thoahlane Thoahlane
Editors, *International Journal of African Reflections*

Doing feminism with words: a Searlean speech act analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele …*

Gabriel Ndamzi Amadi*

Abstract

This study investigates how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie 'does feminism with words' in *Dear Ijeawele, or A feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions* through the lens of Searle's speech act taxonomy. The corpus consists of the full text of the manifesto and the analysis focuses on 239 sentence-level units, including clause-level sub-units where a single sentence realises more than one illocutionary force, selected systematically from the Introduction, the framing letter and all 15 Suggestions in order to focus on segments in which illocutionary force is most explicit. Each unit is coded for its primary illocutionary force as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive or declarative, with Searle's illocutionary point, direction of fit and sincerity condition used as the decision criteria rather than grammatical mood alone, and a secondary code is assigned where a hybrid or indirect act is present. The overall distribution shows that assertives and directives account for almost nine-tenths of all coded units, whereas commissives, expressives and declaration-like acts are relatively rare and unevenly distributed. Assertives occur most densely where Adichie challenges existing beliefs about gender, marriage, biology and language, and they function as corrective claims that prepare the ground for subsequent directives. Directives are concentrated in Suggestions that deal with repeatable parenting practices such as shared childcare, reading, language choices, appearance and difference. Commissives are largely confined to the framing material, where Adichie presents herself as someone who is trying and sharing rather than simply instructing; and expressives mark the intimate, affective tone of the opening letter. A small but significant set of utterances behave as quasi-declaratives in which Adichie attempts to rename or reclassify gendered categories such as 'help' and 'likeability', often in hybrid combinations with assertive or directive force. The findings suggest that Searle's taxonomy remains a useful tool for analysing contemporary African feminist discourse, provided that hybrid

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and quasi-declarative acts are recognised explicitly and they show that *Dear Ijeawele …* enacts its feminist project not only through its themes but through a patterned use of speech acts that shifts the text from a private letter to a public guide on raising a feminist child.

Keywords: speech act, taxonomy, Adichie, Dear Ijeawele, pragmatics, Searle, feminism

1. Introduction

Language does more than describe the world; it also performs actions within it. When a speaker promises, warns, advises or evaluates, the utterance itself carries out a social act, not merely a report of one. This basic insight, developed by Austin (1962) in his account of 'how to do things with words' and extended systematically by Searle (1969; 1976), remains one of the most productive ideas in pragmatics. Searle's classification of speech acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressivesand declarations continues to guide research on how utterances function in real communicative settings, from casual conversation to courtroom exchanges and political speeches.

Much of this research, however, has concentrated on two broad areas: everyday spoken interaction and institutional discourse such as legal, medical or classroom talk. Literary and epistolary texts that blend private address with public argument have received comparatively less systematic attention in speech act theory, even though such texts are often dense with illocutionary activity. This gap is especially noticeable in feminist writing, where language is frequently used not just to describe gender relations but to change the way readers think and act towards them. As Mills (1995) argues in her work on feminist stylistics, feminist texts often rely on strong evaluative and directive language to unsettle established norms, making them a natural, though underused, site for speech-act analysis.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele, or A feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions* (2017) offers exactly this kind of site. The text began as a letter Adichie wrote in response to a childhood friend who asked how to raise her newborn daughter as a feminist, and it was first shared as a Facebook post on 12 October 2016 before being expanded into the present volume (Adichie, 2017). This origin matters pragmatically because the text moved from being a private message addressed to one reader to a publicly circulated statement addressed to many, without shedding the intimate second-person voice of the original letter. The published version keeps this dual identity visible in its very architecture. It opens with an authorial Introduction explaining why the letter was written, and it then organises the main letter into 15 numbered 'Suggestions', a listicle-like structure that pre-signals directive intent even before individual sentences are read.

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Within this structure, Adichie advises, instructs, redefines, challenges and encourages, often through strongly marked imperatives and evaluative claims. Some of this work is performed through direct instruction, as when she tells her friend plainly that domestic and care-giving work 'should be gender-neutral' (2017: 8) and rejects the language of a father 'helping' with his own child, because the word 'help' quietly assigns child care to mothers alone (Adichie, 2017). Elsewhere, the force is less direct: a flatly stated fact, such as 'cooking is learned' (2017: 9), does the work of a directive by dismantling the premise behind a demand rather than issuing the demand itself. This mixture of direct and indirect force, together with Adichie's habit of renaming familiar categories (a father is 'as much a verb as a mother' (2017: 8); unpaid domestic support is not 'help' but shared duty), suggests utterances that come close to a declarative function, attempting to change the status of a practice by re-labelling it rather than merely describing or requesting it. Such patterns indicate that the text can be read productively as a network of overlapping speech acts, where simple and hybrid illocutionary forces work together to build both interpersonal closeness and ideological persuasion.

Despite the considerable body of scholarship on Adichie's fiction and non-fiction, most existing work has focused on theme, ideology or narrative style. Few studies have examined how her feminist prose is organised at the level of speech acts, that is, how particular illocutionary choices help the text achieve its persuasive and pedagogical goals. At the same time, Searle's taxonomy, though widely applied to Western conversational and institutional data, has rarely been tested against contemporary African feminist epistolary writing. This leaves an important gap: a text such as *Dear Ijeawele …* has been read closely for what it says about gender, but not closely enough for the way it says it. Closing this gap matters for two reasons: first, theoretically, it shows whether a framework built largely from Western conversational data travels well to a hybrid genre and a different cultural context. Second, practically, it deepens our understanding of how a widely read contemporary feminist writer constructs authority and persuades through language choices rather than through argument alone.

This gap raises two connected questions that the present study addresses. First, what types of speech act are most prominent in *Dear Ijeawele …*, and how are they linguistically realised, whether as simple, single-force utterances or as complex, hybrid ones that combine more than one illocutionary force within a single sentence? Second, how do these patterns of speech act support the text's dual identity as a personal letter and a public feminist manifesto? To answer these questions, the study conducts a Searlean speech-act analysis of the text, combining close, context-sensitive identification of illocutionary force with a quantitative overview of how often each speech-act category occurs

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across the 15 Suggestions. This mixed approach makes it possible to show not only which speech acts dominate the text but also where they cluster and what effect this clustering has on the reader.

The study is motivated by two related concerns. Theoretically, it addresses the limited application of speech act theory to African literary and feminist texts and it tests how well Searle's categories hold up when applied to a genre that mixes epistolary intimacy with manifesto-like assertiveness. In practical terms, it contributes to a fuller understanding of how contemporary feminist writers use language strategically to advise and persuade, which is valuable to discourse analysts, literary critics and readers interested in the rhetoric of feminist advocacy writing. The study extends pragmatic theory into a genre it has not fully reached, while also giving *Dear Ijeawele …* the kind of close linguistic reading that its ideological content has already received in abundance.

2. Speech act theory: from Austin to Searle

Modern speech act theory begins with Austin's (1962) rejection of the assumption that all utterances merely describe states of affairs. Austin distinguished **constatives**, sentences that can be judged true or false, from **performatives**, sentences that act simply by being uttered, such as pronouncing a couple married. Because a performative cannot be true or false in the ordinary sense, Austin argued that its success depends instead on **felicity conditions**: the speaker must have the appropriate authority, the circumstances must be right and the participants must be sincere (Austin, 1962). Where these conditions are not met, the utterance is not false but 'unhappy' or infelicitous.

Austin's own classification of performatives, however, was left admittedly unsystematic and he treated it as a provisional scheme rather than a finished taxonomy. This gap is what Searle (1969; 1976) set out to close. Searle proposed that all illocutionary acts could be organised around three dimensions: illocutionary point, direction of fit and the psychological state expressed by the speaker. On this basis, he arrived at five basic categories: 'representatives (or assertives), directives, commissives, expressives and declarations' (Searle, 1976: 1). Assertives commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition; directives attempt to get the hearer to do something; commissives commit the speaker to a future course of action; expressives convey a psychological state such as gratitude or regret, and declarations bring about a change in reality by the very act of utterance, as in sentencing, naming or firing an employee.

A further refinement matters for the present study. Searle (1975) observed that speakers frequently perform one illocutionary act indirectly by way of another, so that a sentence with the grammatical

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form of an assertive can carry directive force. For instance, a statement as ordinary as 'the door is open' can, in context, function as a request to close it. This idea of the indirect speech act is central to the current analysis, since much of the persuasive material in advice-giving prose is plausibly carried by assertive-looking sentences that are pragmatically doing directive work.

Although Austin and Searle built their theories mainly around spoken exchange, the framework has travelled well beyond the conversational setting for which it was designed. Dylgjeri (2017) applied Searle's categories to a victory speech, arguing from the outset that political discourse itself amounts to 'doing things with words', since a politician's utterances routinely commit, request and declare rather than merely report. In a comparative study of two American political speeches, Hashim (2015) found that assertive and commissive acts dominated over directives and expressives, a distribution that the author linked directly to each speaker's rhetorical goal, whether persuading through promises or through claims presented as fact. This kind of quantitative distributional finding – that the relative weight of illocutionary categories can itself be read as evidence of communicative strategy – is a precedent the present study adopts directly.

Corpus-based work on social media has pushed the framework even further from Austin's original spoken examples. Researchers analysing hate speech on Twitter, or instance, identified assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative patterns in short written posts, noting that hateful utterances tend to cluster around particular combinations of speech acts rather than spreading evenly between categories. Taken together, these applications confirm that Searle's taxonomy is not tied to the spoken register in which it originated; it has already proven adaptable to political oratory, legislative and hate-speech texts and other written genres with a persuasive or ideological purpose, in this way supporting its extension here to epistolary feminist prose.

2.1 Feminist discourse and pragmatics

Whereas speech act theory provides the analytic categories, feminist stylistics provides the reason such categories matter in a text such as *Dear Ijeawele* …. Mills argues that 'discourse is profoundly gendered' (1995: 123) and that texts should therefore be read for the way linguistic choices distribute value, authority and blame along gender lines rather than be treated as neutral vehicles for conveying content. Her broader claim is that a feminist analysis of a text cannot stop at what is said about women; it must also examine how grammar and lexis themselves participate in either sustaining or unsettling gender ideology.

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This orientation converges naturally with speech act theory once a text is understood as being advice literature. Advice inherently leans on directive force; whether expressed as bare imperatives or disguised inside assertive statements of fact, feminist advice writing in particular tends to pair this directive pressure with expressive language, since the writer is not only telling the reader what to do but also modelling the emotional stance she wants the reader to adopt. Mills' (1995) insistence that gendered discourse operates below the level of theme, in mood, transitivity and point of view, is precisely the level at which a Searlean analysis also operates – which is why the two frameworks are treated here as complementary rather than competing.

2.2 Scholarship on Adichie and the gap in existing work

Dear Ijeawele … has already drawn a reasonable cluster of scholarly attention, though almost none of it descends to the level of illocutionary structure. Akpan and Udoette (2023) examined the text alongside other African feminist manifestos to assess the ways in which such writing shifts women's consciousness, drawing on Judith Butler's account of gender performativity, but their concern stays at the level of ideological effect rather than linguistic mechanism. Reshmi (2022) applied an intersectional lens derived from Kimberlé Crenshaw, concluding that Adichie's manifesto accommodates the reality that not every woman identifies as a feminist, again without examining the linguistic strategies that produce this accommodation. Sebola (2022) read *Dear Ijeawele …* thematically, treating it as a summary statement of ideas that recur across Adichie's fiction.

Two more recent, studies moved closer to language itself. Akeju-Ahmad and Shobowale (2024) conducted a stylistic analysis of the text using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, demonstrating that Adichie's lexical and syntactic choices serve both her communicative intentions and the text's aesthetic texture. Adebayo (2024) went further, applying Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis together with the interpersonal metafunction of Systemic Functional Linguistics to the text's mood and modality patterns. Working through a full clause-level count of the letter's 534 sentences, Adebayo found that declaratives accounted for 68% of clauses, imperatives for 25% and interrogatives for 7%, and that among modal expressions, epistemic modality (61%) outweighed deontic (30%) and dynamic (9%) modality. On this basis, Adebayo (2024) concluded that the predominance of declaratives, combined with a strong deontic undercurrent, renders the manifesto simultaneously 'authoritative and instructive' (2024: 62), a formulation that comes close to a speech act observation without actually naming one.

This body of work establishes that *Dear Ijeawele …* rewards close linguistic analysis and that its clause-level grammar carries real

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ideological weight. What none of these studies does, however, is apply Searle's illocutionary categories directly to the text. Mood and modality, the tools used by Akeju-Ahmad and Shobowale (2024) and by Adebayo (2024), describe grammatical form and the speaker's epistemic or deontic stance; they do not, by themselves, tell us whether a given declarative clause is functioning as a bare assertive, an indirect directive or something closer to Searle's declarations – where Adichie appears to alter the status of a category by renaming it rather than merely describing or requesting a change. A sentence coded as 'declarative' in Systemic Functional terms could, in Searlean terms, be doing directive, assertive or quasi-declarative work, depending on the context; however, the existing scholarship on this text has not yet drawn that distinction.

2.3 Synthesis and statement of the gap

Four strands come together to define the space this study occupies. Speech act theory – from Austin's felicity conditions through Searle's five-way taxonomy and his account of indirect speech acts – offers a precise vocabulary for what an utterance does rather than merely how it is phrased. That vocabulary has already been shown to travel successfully into written, political and even social media discourse, which removes any principled objection to applying it to literary–epistolary prose. Feminist stylistics, particularly Mills' (1995) insistence that discourse is gendered at the level of grammar, not merely of theme, explains why such an analysis matters for a text explicitly written to transform gendered practice. The existing scholarship on *Dear Ijeawele …* confirms that the text is linguistically dense and ideologically purposeful; and the two most linguistically detailed studies to date, those by Akeju-Ahmad and Shobowale (2024) and Adebayo (2024), have already shown that its declarative-heavy, deontically inflected grammar does really persuasive work. Yet neither of these studies, nor the thematic and intersectional readings that precede them, has classified the text's utterances according to Searle's categories of illocutionary force. This is the gap the present study attempts to deal with: a Searlean speech-act analysis of *Dear Ijeawele …* that identifies which categories dominate, how simple and hybrid acts are linguistically realised and how this illocutionary profile supports the text's dual function as an intimate letter and a public feminist manifesto.

3. Methodology

The corpus for this study is the full text of *Dear Ijeawele, or A feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions* (Adichie, 2017), comprising the author's framing Introduction and the 15 numbered Suggestions that make up the main letter. The print edition runs to approximately 62 pages

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and Adebayo (2024), working with the same text, recorded a total of 534 sentences across the 15 Suggestions, a figure this study uses as a cross-check on segmentation during coding. From the 534 sentences identified in the text, 239 sentence-level units (including clause-level sub-units where necessary) were selected and coded, drawn systematically from the Introduction, the framing letter and all 15 Suggestions in order to concentrate on segments where illocutionary force is most explicit.

Because the corpus is defined, the next question is what counts as a single unit for the purposes of coding. The sentence is treated as the base unit of analysis, which is consistent with standard practice in speech act studies of written discourse (Hashim, 2015; Dylgjeri, 2017). Where a sentence contains more than one independent clause carrying a distinct illocutionary force – for example, an assertive clause followed by a directive clause joined by a conjunction, each clause is coded separately as a sub-unit. This allows the analysis to capture hybrid utterances without inflating or collapsing the sentence-level count. Fragmentary or elliptical sentences, such as single-word exclamations or rhetorical one-liners such as 'Allowed.', are retained as separate units, since brevity does not diminish illocutionary force.

With the unit of analysis fixed, each unit was classified qualitatively against Searle's (1976) five-category taxonomy – namely, assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative – using his felicity conditions of illocutionary point, direction of fit and expressed psychological state as the decision criteria rather than surface grammatical form alone. This distinction matters because the corpus is dense with declarative-mood sentences that nonetheless perform directive work consistent with Searle's (1975) account of indirect speech acts. A sentence such as 'cooking is learned' is grammatically an assertive sentence but was coded for its primary directive force, since its function in context is to dismantle a premise the reader is meant to act on. Hybrid utterances were handled through primary and secondary force coding rather than forced single-category assignment, so that each unit received one primary code reflecting its dominant illocutionary force in context and, where applicable, one secondary code reflecting a co-present force. This made it possible for a sentence to be counted as, for instance, primary-assertive with secondary-directive force, preserving the distributional data needed for both the simple- and the hybrid-act findings. Quasi-declarative acts, meaning utterances that attempt to alter the status of a category by re-labelling it – as when Adichie rejects the word 'help' for fathers doing child care – were coded as a marked subtype of directive-declaration overlap and flagged separately for discussion, since Searle's taxonomy does not formally accommodate non-institutional declarations of this kind.

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A second coder, briefed on Searle's felicity conditions and given the coding manual together with ten sample-coded Suggestions as calibration material, independently coded the entire 239-unit corpus, and disagreements were resolved through discussion, with unresolved cases coded as hybrid rather than forced into a single category. Formal inter-coder reliability statistics (eg, Cohen's kappa) were not computed for this round of coding, as item-level codes from both coders prior to reconciliation were not retained; this is noted as a limitation, and future replications of this coding scheme should preserve pre-reconciliation codes to permit a formal reliability calculation.

Once coding was complete, the coded units were tabulated to produce two levels of quantitative description. The first is an overall frequency and percentage distribution across the five Searlean categories, plus the hybrid and quasi-declarative subtypes, providing a corpus-level profile of the manifesto's illocutionary composition as captured in the coded sample. The second level is a distribution broken down by each of the 15 Suggestions and the Introduction, which is what makes it possible to show where directive density spikes, as expected in the more instructional Suggestions, such as those on shared child care and physical activity, against which assertive or expressive density dominates instead, as expected in the more redefinitional or reflective Suggestions, such as those on language, biology and the treatment of the oppressed. Frequencies are reported as both raw counts and percentages, with the results being presented in table and chart form in the Findings section that follows.

4. Data presentation and analysis

The coding procedure described in the methodology yielded a corpus of 239 analytically coded sentence-level units, drawn systematically from the Introduction, the framing letter and all 15 Suggestions that make up *Dear Ijeawele ….* Each unit was classified against Searle's (1976) five-category taxonomy, using illocutionary point, direction of fit and sincerity condition as the operative criteria rather than surface grammatical mood alone. Each unit was also cross-checked against Mills' (1995) claim that gendered discourse organises itself below the level of theme in the distribution of grammatical choices themselves. The presentation below follows the same sequence in every subsection: the coded data are set out first, in tables or in illustrative extracts drawn directly from the primary text, and the interpretive discussion follows only after the data have been presented in full.

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Table 1: Overall frequency and percentage distribution of Searlean speech act categories across the coded corpus (n = 239)

Illocutionary category	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	114	47.7
Directive	95	39.7
Declaration/quasi-declarative	16	6.7
Expressive	11	4.6
Commissive	3	1.3
Total	**239**	**100**

The distribution in Table 1 shows a text dominated by two categories – assertives and directives – which together account for 87.4% of all the coded units, while commissives are almost absent. This pattern is not accidental; it follows directly from the genre Adichie is working in. Searle (1976: 1) defines the five basic kinds of illocutionary act as 'representatives (or assertives), directives, commissives, expressives and declarations' and specifies that each category is distinguished by a different illocutionary point, direction of fit and expressed psychological state. A letter of advice is structurally suited to assertives, since the writer must first establish what is the point to be made about gender, marriage or language before she can tell her addressee what to do about it; and it is equally suited to directives, since advice is, by definition, an attempt to shape the hearer's future conduct. Commissives, in contrast, commit the speaker rather than the hearer to a future course of action and Adichie has almost nothing to commit herself to in this text beyond the act of writing the letter itself, which explains why only three units in the entire corpus carry commissive force. The presence of a distinct declaration and quasi-declaration category, small in raw number but recurring across nearly every Suggestion, is the first indication that this text is doing something Searle's original taxonomy does not fully anticipate: renaming and reclassifying social categories outside of any formal institution, a pattern examined in detail later in this section.

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Table 2: Distribution of coded speech act units by section, showing the introduction, the framing letter, and the 15 numbered suggestions

Section	Assertives	Directives	Commisives	Expressives	Declarations	Total
Introduction	8	0	2	0	1	11
Framing letter ('Dear Ijeawele …')	21	1	1	6	1	30
1. Be a full person	17	13	0	2	0	32
2. Do it together	18	4	0	0	4	26
3. Gender roles are nonsense	12	8	0	0	1	21
4. Beware feminism lite	10	2	0	3	4	19
5. Teach her to read	4	3	0	0	0	7
6. Question language	5	10	0	0	0	15
7. Marriage is not an achievement	2	3	0	0	1	6
8. Reject likeability	5	11	0	0	1	17
9. Give her a sense of identity	1	8	0	0	0	9
10. Appearance and the body	3	10	0	0	0	13
11. Question biology as a norm	1	2	0	0	0	3
12. Talk to her about sex	3	8	0	0	0	11
13. Romance and money	0	4	0	0	2	6
14. Oppression and dignity	2	1	0	0	1	4
15. Teach her about difference	2	7	0	0	0	9
Total	**114**	**95**	**3**	**11**	**16**	**239**

Table 2 makes visible a pattern that a whole-text percentage cannot show on its own: the 15 Suggestions are not internally uniform and directive density rises and falls in a way that tracks the argumentative work each Suggestion is doing. Directive force is heaviest in Suggestions 8, 9, 10, 6 and 15, all of which instruct the reader on how to raise a child moment by moment, whether through everyday praise, identity work, grooming, language choices or attitudes to difference and in Suggestion 1, which opens the letter's practical guidance with a concentrated run of imperatives on self-care and household division. Assertive density, in contrast, peaks in the framing letter itself and in Suggestions 2 and 3, the two Suggestions most concerned with dismantling a belief, before any instruction is given, on fatherhood as 'help' in Suggestion 2

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and on cooking and gender roles in Suggestion 3. Declarations and quasi-declarative acts cluster most heavily in Suggestions 2, 4 and 13, precisely the passages where Adichie is not simply describing gender inequality but attempting to strip a word of its conventional meaning and assign it a new one, a pattern discussed at length later in this section. Expressive acts are almost entirely confined to the framing letter, where Adichie is addressing her friend directly about the birth of a child, and to Suggestion 4, where her anger about sexism becomes part of the argument itself. This distribution is the clearest quantitative evidence in the study of the claim made in the introduction that the same text is doing two different kinds of work in different places: opening with the expressive register of a private letter, then shifting, suggestion by suggestion, into the assertive-and-directive register of public instruction.

Assertive speech acts

Assertive units make up the largest single category in the corpus and they are concentrated in passages where Adichie is establishing a claim about the world before any instruction follows. Representative examples, drawn directly from the text and coded as primary assertives, include these:

Example 1 'The knowledge of cooking does not come pre-installed in a vagina. Cooking is learned.' (Suggestion 3)

Example 2 'Saintliness is not a prerequisite for dignity.' (Suggestion 14)

Example 3 'Social norms are created by human beings, and there is no social norm that cannot be changed.' (Suggestion 11)

Example 4 'Women are as human as men are. Female goodness is as normal as female evil.' (Suggestion 14)

Example 5 'For me, feminism is always contextual.' (Framing letter)

Searle's own definition of the category, quoted in Acheoah's (2017: 2) integrative appraisal of Searle's theory, states that the point of an assertive is 'to commit the speaker ... to the truth of the expressed proposition', with a word-to-world direction of fit and a sincerity condition of belief. Every example above satisfies this condition: each is offered as a claim about how the world actually is, whether about the biological neutrality of cooking skill, the ordinariness of female moral failing or the constructed and therefore revisable nature of social norms. What is analytically significant, however, is not the presence of assertives in an advice text, which is unremarkable, but their function. Following Mills' (1995) argument that discourse is

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'profoundly gendered' (1995: 123) at the level of grammar and not only of theme, these assertives also are rarely neutral reports; they are corrective claims, offered specifically to overturn a previous gendered assumption the reader is assumed to hold. 'Cooking is learned' has rhetorical force only because it responds to an unstated but culturally familiar counterclaim that cooking is an innate feminine competence. Searle (1975: 355) notes that the 'degree of belief and commitment may approach or even reach zero' in an assertive, which is to say that assertive force is not binary but scalar; Adichie's assertives sit at the high-commitment end of that scale, phrased as flat, unhedged fact rather than opinion, which is itself a persuasive strategy, since low-modality assertion reads as more authoritative than a hedged claim. This scalar intensity, combined with the corrective function of nearly every assertive example above, is the first sign that assertive force in this text is doing more than reporting: it is clearing the ground for the directive that follows.

Directive speech acts

Directives form the second-largest category and are the most evenly spread across the 15 Suggestions, appearing in every one of them. Representative examples include:

Example 6 'Teach her that the idea of "gender roles" is absolute nonsense.' (Suggestion 3)

Example 7 'Share child care equally.' (Suggestion 2)

Example 8 'Never tell her that a short skirt is "immoral".' (Suggestion 10)

Example 9 'Give Chizalum a sense of identity.' (Suggestion 9)

Example 10 'Teach her about difference. Make difference ordinary. Make difference normal.' (Suggestion 15)

Searle's account of the directive category, as reported in Acheoah (2017: 2), holds that its illocutionary point consists in the fact that directives 'are attempts … to get the hearer to do something', with a world-to-words direction of fit and a sincerity condition of want or desire that the hearer perform some future action. Nearly every directive example above satisfies this condition transparently: each is a bare imperative, addressed to Ijeawele, instructing her to perform, avoid or sustain a specific parenting behaviour. What the data in Table 2 add to this picture is a distributional finding rather than a definitional one: directive density is not constant across the text but rises sharply in the Suggestions concerned with daily, repeatable practice (identity-work, appearance, language, difference) and falls in the Suggestions concerned with redefining a single contested concept

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(fatherhood, gender roles). This supports a reading in which Adichie deploys directives most heavily where she wants habitual behavioural change and deploys assertives most heavily where she wants conceptual change first. Not every directive in the corpus, however, is a bare imperative. A substantial number are indirect, realised through assertive grammatical forms but performing directive work in context, consistent with Searle's (1975) account of indirect speech acts, in which one illocutionary act is performed by way of another. 'The knowledge of cooking does not come pre-installed in a vagina' is grammatically an assertive, yet its function in the surrounding co-text, which moves immediately into instructions about raising Chizalum without gender-based chores, is to license and reinforce a directive stance towards domestic labour. This indirection is discussed in the subsection on hybrid speech acts below.

Commissive speech acts

Commissives are the rarest category in the corpus, with only three coded instances across the entire text:

Example 11 'In response to my friend's request, I decided to write her a letter, which I hoped would be honest and practical …' (Introduction)

Example 12 'And in rereading these as a mother, I too am determined to try.' (Introduction)

Example 13 'I don't have a set-in-stone rule; the closest I have to a formula are my two 'Feminist Tools' and I want to share them with you as a starting point.' (Framing letter)

A commissive, in Searle's (1976) definition, commits the speaker rather than the hearer to a future course of action, with a world-to-words direction of fit and a sincerity condition of intention. All three instances above occur in the Introduction or the opening lines of the framing letter and none occurs inside any of the 15 Suggestions. This concentration is telling. Adichie commits herself only to the acts of writing, trying and sharing that frame the letter as a whole; she does not, within the body of her advice, promise Ijeawele any future action of her own. The near-total absence of commissive force inside the Suggestions is consistent with the genre: an advice letter is structurally a directive-and-assertive genre because its purpose is to shape the hearer's conduct, not the speaker's. The one theoretically interesting effect of this asymmetry is rhetorical rather than semantic. Because Adichie so rarely commits herself to anything, the few commissives that do appear, positioned at the very beginning of the text, function to establish the personal, non-authoritative footing on which the

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manifesto's later directive weight depends. She presents herself first as someone who is trying and sharing, only then as someone instructing, which softens the manifesto's prescriptive force by rooting it in an admitted, ongoing personal effort rather than settled expertise.

Expressive speech acts

Expressive units are concentrated almost entirely in the framing letter that opens the text and in Suggestion 4:

Example 14 'What joy.' (Framing letter)

Example 15 'Your note made me cry.' (Framing letter)

Example 16 '"Congratulations" feels too slight.' (Framing letter)

Example 17 'Of course I am angry. I am angry about racism. I am angry about sexism.' (Suggestion 4)

Searle (1976) characterises expressives as acts that convey the speaker's psychological state about a presupposed state of affairs and, unlike the other four categories, expressives carry no direction of fit at all, since their truth is assumed rather than asserted. The examples above satisfy this condition cleanly: Adichie is not claiming that the baby's birth is joyful, nor arguing for the fact of her own anger; both are presupposed and the utterance simply registers her attitude towards them. The distributional finding in Table 2 gives this category its interpretive weight. Expressive force appears almost nowhere in the instructional body of the 15 Suggestions, which confirms that the letter's intimate, affectively marked opening is doing specific generic work rather than setting a tone that continues throughout. This is the clearest linguistic evidence of the dual identity argued for in the introduction to this study: the text opens as a private letter, marked by the expressive vocabulary of congratulation and personal emotion that makes sense only between two people who know each other and then largely sets that register aside once the manifesto's instructional content begins. The one exception, the cluster of expressives in Suggestion 4, is not a return to intimacy but a strategic re-use of it: Adichie's declared anger about sexism functions simultaneously as an expressive act and as evidence of the assertive and quasi-declarative claims that surround it in that Suggestion, discussed next.

Declarations and quasi-declarative acts

The smallest formally distinct category in Searle's taxonomy, declarations, is also the category his framework accommodates least comfortably in this text. The following examples were coded as declarations or quasi-declarations:

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Example 18 'A father is as much a verb as a mother.' (Suggestion 2)

Example 19 'Chudi is not "helping" you by caring for his child.' (Suggestion 2)

Example 20 'Allow is a troubling word.' (Suggestion 4)

Example 21 'A husband is not a headmaster. A wife is not a schoolgirl.' (Suggestion 4)

Example 22 '"Because you are a girl" is never a reason for anything.' (Suggestion 3)

Example 23 'Teach her that it is NOT a man's role to provide.' (Suggestion 13)

Searle's own account of declarations, as reported in Acheoah (2017: 2), holds that a declaration 'brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality' and that its felicitous performance ordinarily depends on an extra-linguistic institution of the kind that allows a judge to pronounce a sentence or an official to pronounce a marriage. None of the examples above meet this institutional condition in the strict Searlean sense: Adichie holds no formal authority to change what 'help' or 'tradition' or 'allow' means in English. What each example does instead is attempt the declarative act without the institutional backing that would guarantee its success, treating the correspondence between word and world as something she can simply assert into being through the force of restatement. This is the pattern this study labels as 'quasi-declarative': an utterance that has the grammatical shape and rhetorical confidence of a declaration, redefining a category outright rather than describing or requesting a change to it, but which lacks the institutional felicity conditions that Searle's framework requires for a true declaration. 'Chudi is not "helping" you' does not describe an existing state of affairs so much as it refuses an existing linguistic convention and installs a replacement in its place; 'a father is as much a verb as a mother' performs the same operation on the category of fatherhood itself.

Thus, against Mills' (1995) claim that feminist analysis must attend to the way grammar itself distributes ideological value, this quasi-declarative pattern is arguably the single most consequential illocutionary strategy in the text, because it is the mechanism by which Adichie tries to change not what the reader does but what the reader's words are permitted to mean. This is also the clearest point at which the data answer the first research question posed by this study: Searle's taxonomy, applied without modification, forces these utterances into an ill-fitting category and the text itself supplies the evidence for treating quasi-declarative renaming as a distinct genre-specific extension of Searle's declaration category rather than a failure of classification.

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Hybrid and complex speech acts

Besides the categories above, a recurring subset of units in the corpus carries two simultaneous illocutionary forces and was coded with both a primary and a secondary category, following the primary- and secondary-force coding procedure set out in the methodology. Table 3 presents a representative sample of these hybrid units.

Table 3: Representative hybrid speech acts coded with primary and secondary illocutionary force

Utterance	Primary force	Secondary force	Basis for hybrid coding
'Cooking is learned.'	Assertive	Directive	Assertive grammar performing indirect directive work against gendered chore expectations.
'And please reject the language of help.'	Directive	Quasi-declaration	Imperative form instructing renunciation of a word, while also reclassifying what 'help' may mean.
'Her job is not to make herself likeable, her job is to be her full self ...'	Quasi-declaration	Directive	Redefines 'job' while implicitly instructing the reader towards a new standard of conduct.
'Teach her that if you criticise X in women but do not criticise X in men, then you do not have a problem with X, you have a problem with women.'	Directive	Assertive	Imperative 'teach her' frames an embedded diagnostic claim about the logic of sexism.
'Of course I am angry. I am angry about racism. I am angry about sexism.'	Expressive	Assertive	Registers emotion while implicitly asserting that emotion's legitimacy as evidence.

The presence of these hybrid units is directly anticipated by Searle's (1975) own account of indirect speech acts, in which a speaker performs one illocutionary act by way of performing another, so that the literal force of an utterance and its contextually operative force can diverge. What the coding in Table 3 shows is that this divergence

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is not incidental in *Dear Ijeawele …* but patterned: the hybrid units cluster specifically around Adichie's redefinitional vocabulary – help, likeability, job, allow, verb – precisely the same lexical items already identified as the site of the text's quasi-declarative activity in the previous subsection. This convergence between two independently coded phenomena, hybrid force and quasi-declaration, strengthens rather than merely repeats the earlier finding: the utterances doing the heaviest ideological work in this text are consistently those in which Searle's five categories overlap rather than those in which a single category applies cleanly. Searle's taxonomy, as Table 1 in an earlier section of this article made clear, was never presented as a set of mutually exclusive bins into which every utterance sorts without remainder; the hybrid pattern documented here is best read as confirmation that a feminist epistolary–manifesto genre exploits this openness in the taxonomy deliberately, using the gap between literal and operative force as a rhetorical resource rather than treating it as an incidental feature of ordinary language.

Together, the data interpreted in this section support a coherent picture: assertive and directive force dominate the corpus and are distributed unevenly across the 15 Suggestions in ways that track each Suggestion's argumentative purpose; commissive force is confined to the framing material that opens the letter; expressive force marks the text's private epistolary register and is largely absent from its public, instructional body; and a small but consequential category of declaration-like and hybrid utterances carries the text's central ideological work of renaming gendered categories outright.

Conclusion

This study has shown that *Dear Ijeawele …* is built, above all, on two kinds of speech act: statements and advice. Working with 239 carefully selected sentencelevel units from the Introduction and the 15 Suggestions, the analysis found that assertives and directives together make up almost all of the coded acts, whereas commissives, expressives and declaration-like utterances appear more sparingly and in specific parts of the text. Assertives are used mainly to challenge takenforgranted ideas about gender, cooking, marriage and language, and to prepare the ground for the directives that follow; directives are most frequent in the Suggestions that talk about everyday parenting practices such as shared childcare, reading, language use, appearance and difference. Commissives occur almost only in the opening, where Adichie presents herself as someone who is trying and sharing rather than laying down rules; and expressives mark the personal, emotional tone of the framing letter. A small but important set of utterances functions as 'quasi-declarations' in which Adichie tries to change the

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way words such as 'help', 'likeable' or 'job' are understood, often in hybrid combinations with assertive or directive force. Using Searle's speech-act categories, together with primary and secondary forces and special attention to quasideclarative moves, this study shows that Adichie's manifesto performs its feminist work not only through what it talks about but also through the kinds of action it performs in language, shifting from a private letter to a public guide on how to raise a feminist child.

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