

***Single Pract, Multiple Pragmemes:  
Representation of Individual-Social  
Context in a Sample Request-Response  
Adjacency***

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**Abstract**

This paper appraises a sample request-response adjacency in a conversation between two friends with particular focus on how the response pract represents the individual-social context of the interlocutors. It argues that unlike what has been indicated in literature regarding pragmemes as a general situational prototype; a sociocultural concept that usually has several realizations as practs and allopracts, a single pract can also call to mind multiple possible pragmemes in the situated context in which it could be appropriately uttered. Using Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts theory (PAT) and his theory of the pragmeme as action-theoretic pragmatics, this paper elucidates how a single response utterance can represent multiple situational prototypes and hence, construe diverse interpretations that are contextually relevant to the individual speakers' interactional goals and the "scenes" the interactants identify with as well as the affordances and limitations of the context that are cognitively plausible and cooperative for the interactants. The paper also argues that the interface between meaning construction and comprehension is not only based on the general social context but also on the dialectical interaction of the individual speaker and hearer's private contexts as well as features that are salient to their conversational goals which determine how they design their utterances for their interlocutors. The paper concludes that pragmemes of refusal, rejection, invitation, promise, warning among others have been instantiated in a single response pract and these findings seem to go beyond Searle's conceptualization of indirect speech acts as well as Mey's perspective on the theory of the pragmeme.

**Keywords:** pragmeme, pragmatic acts theory, social context, private context, request-response, adjacency pair, practs, allopracts

## 1. Introduction

Language as a representation of human experience and enactment of interpersonal relationships in achieving communication goals involves, to a large extent, interaction of rational participants in the act of ostension (speaker-oriented: communicating something that is meaningful to the recipient) and inference (hearer-oriented: interpreting the communicated intention). To achieve communication success, interactants use various member resources – what Mey (2001, p.222) calls “shared situational knowledge (SSK)” in the prior and present context of the interlocutors. The above claim may summarize the goal of pragmatics which studies “intended speaker meanings” (Yule, 2010).

The interface between recipient design and intention-recognition is indispensable for all conversational success and much scholarly works in pragmatics have been devoted to how speakers and hearers negotiate meaning and achieve their communication goals. For instance, the Gricean theory of implicature (1975) recognizes how speakers and hearers cooperate as rational beings in the communication of their intentions through observance/non-observance of the conversational maxims, the neo-Gricean reductionist (component) approach in reaction to the deficiencies and overlap of the maxims (Horn, 1984; Levinson, 2000), the non-maxim based relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1995), and the Austinian (1962) and Searlean (1969) speech acts theory all of which also belong to the component approach (Nodoushan, 2017), are all geared towards the same purpose; how do speakers and hearers achieve communication and conversational success? It has been argued that pragmatics entails taking not just the cognitive-philosophical view of the Gricean, neo-Gricean and post-Gricean era, nor that of the speech acts theory (SAT) but also incorporating the social and cultural aspects of any linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage and forms of behaviour (Kecskes 2010, p.2889). It is in recognition of the shortfalls of above theories, particularly SAT, that Mey (2001) propounded the theory of the pragmeme or pragmatic acts theory (henceforth PAT) which is the theoretical framework of this paper. By “pragmeme” Mey means “a generalized pragmatic act – a general situational prototype, capable of being executed in a situation” (Mey, 2001, p.221). Mey (2001) flawed Austin’s and Searle’s SAT on the grounds that it lacks the theory of action. According to him, SAT sees utterances as performing actions, such actions are not “situated action” in given social contexts, rather an individual-centred actions (2001, p.214). To Mey, human activity is not the privilege of the individual per se, but that of the individual situated in a social context, which means that the individual is empowered as well as limited by the conditions and forces of their social life (Kecskes, 2010, p.2889). Mey’s (2001) action-theoretic pragmatics or PAT holds that “the explanatory movement in pragmatic theories should go from the outside in” (that is, from actual situational contexts into prior contexts encoded in the utterances used) (Kecskes, 2010, p.2894, citing Mey, 2010, p. 221). Kecskes (2010) has, however, argued that owing to the

dialectical nature of communication, which Mey also recognises, the exploratory movement should not just be from the outside in, but also from the inside out (that is, from both directions). To Kecskes, Mey seems to over-emphasize the role of actual social contexts and situations and overlooked, firstly, the role of the lexical items which encode the history of their use in the actual utterances, and secondly, that prior and private contexts of the interlocutors play important roles in invoking the present actual situational context. Kecskes schematic representation of what happens in communication is thus: *from the outside in (actual situational context ↔ prior context encoded in the utterance used) and from the inside out (prior context encoded in the utterance used ↔ actual situational context)*. By integrating Mey's and Kecskes ideas, this paper seems to align with both arguments since for the former, situations imbue utterances with certain affordances and limitations and for the latter, communication is a dialectical activity. More focus was, however, be on Mey's PAT since Kecskes arguments, in some way, still upheld the former's views.

To Mey, an alternative to speech acts is needed which he calls pragmatic acts – situated acts that limit as well as empower the individual in his/her social interaction, enabling them to perform not according to the individual whims and caprices, but in line with the limitations and affordances of that situated social context. Mey (2001) also opposed the existence of speech act verbs and other illocutionary force indicating devices as well as the illocutionary-perlocutionary dichotomy on the grounds that some utterances do not carry such, yet, they encode pragmatic acts which derive their force not from the words or denotative meanings of which they are comprised, but rather from the situation in which they are appropriately uttered. According to Mey (2001, p.218) “our acting is determined by what the scene can afford and by what we can afford on the scene”. Continuing, Mey (2001, p.219) posits that “the scene not only determines our acting but also our actions determine and reaffirm the existing scene”. Kecskes (2010, p.2891) affirms Mey's views in his analysis of “situation-bound utterances” (SBUs) but argues that it is however the wording of prior experience and expression of the speaker's intention that provides the prelude to the construction of meaning which is supplemented by situational context and extralinguistic factors.

## **2. Situating the Research Problem**

Several studies and interventions to Mey's PAT are replete in literature. Tseng (2010) studies the pragmeme of “fishing for personal details” in email scams. The study claims that this pragmeme is contextually, conventionally and culturally attached to the situational context of emails and rarely in any other situation. Similarly, Kecskes (2010) investigates some situation-bound utterances (SBUs) like *how are you?*, *nice to have you with us*, *so long* and argues that their situational meanings differ from their

compositional structure by encoding the pragmemes of “greeting”, “welcoming a new employee” and “taking leave of someone” respectively. Vasilescu (2018) examines the pragmeme of “refusal” and how the practs-allopracts (including her coined term, “interpract”) may differ cross-culturally and may engender inter- and cross-cultural misunderstandings. Vasilescu distinguished between refusal and rejection – whereas one refuses a proposal, a request, an invitation, rejection may be more appropriate in ideas, opinions, initiatives, plans, advice and so on. Also, Becker (1999) analyses the pragmeme of refusal in the American culture which he captioned: “how to say ‘no’ without saying ‘no’”.

Other pragmemes that have been studied include: “greetings” (Constantinescu, 2018), “insults” in cross-cultural and intercultural misunderstandings (Allan, 2016), “alms begging” (Okpeadua, 2012), social practice of indirect reports (Capone, 2010), “referring as a pragmeme” (Mey, 2010). One interesting distinction between these works and the current study lies in the fact that while these studies go from the pragmeme as situational prototype to the possible practs that may be instantiated in different situations/contexts given cultural changes or situational variations, this study looks at a pract that carries with it the potential of encoding multiple pragmemes.

### 2.1 The Textual Data and Research Questions

The phone conversation which is the motivation for the present research is presented below. However, for ethical reasons, the names of people and places are contrived.

1. Ada: Hello, NG, how are you? Are you in Rumuni (pseudonym for the town)
2. Ngozi: Hi ADA, I’m okay. Yes, I’m in Rumuni today, but I’ll travel tomorrow morning.
3. Ada: Could you please book a one-night reservation in a good and affordable hotel in town. I need to come into town tomorrow evening to beat the Monday sit-at-home. My flight is at 1-00pm on Monday and I would like to be close to the airport so as not to miss it.
4. Ngozi: Uhhmm..., well, you see, I know many hotels close by, but I cannot guarantee their safety arrangements.
5. Ada: Just for one night. We might just find one that will suit us fine and also close to the airport.
6. Ngozi: Ummm. But, I live in Rumuni, my dear
7. Ada: Oh, my dear. Wow! What can I say? Many thanks. God bless you.

However, the adjacency pair that constituted the data for this study is in Utterances 3 and 6. The other turns may be regarded in sequence organization as expansion sequences: pre-expansion (1 & 2), insertion expansion (4 & 5) and post expansion/closing (7). But this is as far as our analysis of this conversation will go in terms of the tenets of conversation analysis. As mentioned earlier, our focus here is how this response in (6) could be interpreted so as to represent the correct intention(s) that NG wanted to communicate to ADA in line 6 for their interaction to achieve the desired communication goals. The response in (6) raises pertinent questions, some of them, which we hope to provide answers to in this paper, include: What possible pragmemes could be deduced from this simple response? What practs and allopracts are instantiated by these pragmemes? What aspects of the pragmeme schema are exploited by the interlocutors (the speaker and the hearer) to design and to infer the intentions of the speaker? How do the findings substantiate or extend knowledge in PAT and also complement the theory of representation of individual-social experience in language?

In the case of the study data, the context of the conversation used in the present paper was the insecurity in the Nigerian political scene, where incessant mindless killings, kidnapping, bandit attacks, terrorism, unknown gunmen and secessionist agitations have become increasingly persistent. In fact, the particular situation that engendered the conversation was the sit-at-home that has characterized every Monday in the Southeast. Initially declared by the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to mark the day their leader was arrested in Kenya and repatriated to Nigeria (he was arrested on Sunday, 27 June, 2021 and repatriated on Monday), some unknown hoodlums have continued to enforce this sit-at-home every Monday by causing mayhem, sometimes killing people who dared come out even after IPOB disclaimed the continued enforcement. This has resulted in people who intend to travel on Monday in the Southeast leaving by Sunday evening to beat that hindrance. If she had to leave her house on Sunday evening, it means that ADA would need a hotel reservation for the night in order to catch her one-o'clock flight on Monday. Before an attempt would be made to analyze this utterance, first Mey's concept of the pragmeme is explored subsequently.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **The Pragmeme**

The theory of the pragmeme was initiated by Jacob Mey (2001) to account for language as situated action in context. Mey (2001, p. 222) described a pragmeme as "a generalized pragmatic act" while Kecskes (2010, p.2893) sees it as "a generalized

pragmatic act that is concretely realized by “practs” in situational use. See Mey (2001, p.222).

The pragmeme chart is structured as a two-part construct:

1. The ACTIVITY part (on the left column of the scheme) which centres on what the interactants are doing in using language; lists the various choices the language user has at his/her disposal in communicating. This part is considered as “a feature matrix” whose cells can be filled or empty as indicated by the “ $\emptyset$  NULL” slot (Mey, 2001, p.222). According to Mey, “the language user may choose one or several of the available options; if all the cells are empty, the matrix goes to zero ( $\emptyset$ ) representing the borderline case of silence (which is not the same as zero communication)”. Our paper identified two features that apply to it from this part: indirect speech acts and conversational acts
2. The TEXTUAL part (on the right column) symbolizes elements that are present in the textual chain, and involves both the co-text and context, represented as “Co(n)text”. Mey (2001, p.222) claims that though the listing is not comprehensive, most of the elements will be found to concurrently exist in any ordinary length of text. They include the following:

$\emptyset$  INF – inference

$\emptyset$  REF – (establishing) reference

$\emptyset$  REL – relevance

$\emptyset$  VCE – Voice

$\emptyset$  SSK – shared situational (or dialogic) knowledge

$\emptyset$  MPH – metaphor

$\emptyset$  ‘M’ – metapragmatic joker (indexicality)

With the exception of “Voice” and “Metaphor”, the analysis in this study revealed that all the other features in the textual chain are applicable to the communication success of the interlocutors in the textual data of this study.

Following structural terms of phoneme-phone-allophones, morpheme-morphs-allomorphs, lexeme-lexis-allomorphs (Vasilescu, 2018, p.55), Mey’s pragmeme-pract-allopract meta-terms in PAT seem to be related in a kind of rankscale – a pragmeme is made of a number of practs in the same way as many allopracts may be instantiated from a pract. A pragmeme is thus a generalized pragmatic act labelled by a speech act

(Capone, 2005, 2010; Kurzon, 2016, p.265) which instantiates a pract in force. For instance, a pragmeme of INVITATION would require the speaker to instantiate practs/allopracts that attempt to gain the presence of the hearer at a particular place in accordance with certain social norm. The hearer will thus interpret this pragmeme by tacitly drawing from the implicit schema above in deciding on the action the speaker intends to perform (whether linguistically or extralinguistically) in the activity part; and from the textual part, deciding on the indexical of the situation that license inference, reference, relevance, voice, metaphor and metapragmatic signals that aid the decoding of encoded intentions.

Thus, when one has access to a pragmeme, one is not only exposed to language but also to a bit of culture (Allan, Capone & Kecskes, 2016, p.xvii). As the analysis would attempt to show, the pract in the response is uniquely attached to the context of the interaction where the speaker using indirect speech acts, invokes the situational factors and individual agency in the context of the utterance and coopts her interlocutor to infer her multiple meanings which could be analyzable as pragmemes.

Osunbade (2020) gives insights in an unpublished lecture of how pragmemes may be constructed and realized:

∅ Micro-pragmeme – realized by a pract consisting of a single utterance or minimal form of discourse connective counting as communicative act. Examples: *hei* (calling attention), *how are you* (greeting), *so long* (bidding farewell), and other situation-bound utterances in Kecskes (2010);

∅ Meso-pragmeme: - spans over various micro=pragmemes which count as a sequence. For instance: expansion of argumentative sequence (we are not terrorists; we are freedom fighters), contrasting sequence (strike action is beneficial in some ways but detrimental in others), counter-argumentative sequence (though they claim innocent, we know they may be so but we need evidences to prove their innocence);

∅ Macro-pragmeme – spans over some more or less delimited number of meso pragmemes counting as discourse genre or activity type. For instance, interpretations we get from reading a story, a novel etc. the text will have different pragmemes that convey the message of the author.

Meso-pragmeme construction and Macro-pragmeme above are conspicuously lacking in Austin and Searles's conceptualisations of speech acts. SAT may only have accounted for the first level of pragmeme construction, thus necessitating PAT to fill this obvious lacuna.

Pragmemes have two main functions: firstly, they convey the speakers' intention to have a certain action performed; secondly, they bear the mark of the situation in which they are uttered; they are therefore societal indexicals (Kurzon, 2016). It is in the light of this that Capone (2018, p.91) defines a pragmeme as "a situated speech act in which the rules of language and of society combine in determining meaning" or even more briefly, "speech act in context". With the conceptualization of the pragmeme, Mey (2001, p.223) argues that the illocutionary vs. perlocutionary force vanishes entirely. To him, "(T)here is only one force in any act of uttering, whether illocutionary or perlocutionary, and it is pragmatic: the force of the pragmeme"

### **Practs**

Described as pragmatic access routes to the realization of a pragmeme, practs are individual contextual instantiation of pragmemes. They are the instantiated individual pragmatic acts ("ipras" or "practs") and they refer to a particular pragmeme as its realization. According to Mey (2001), for a pract to be effective, it must have the following variables, namely, "Setting up" which looks up to the "uptake and "coopting". They shall be discussed in turns subsequently.

### **Setting Up**

"Setting up" in pragmatic acting, according to Mey (2001) presupposes that the context of the acting carries more weight than the act itself. Situational setting up is an integrated, constitutive and speaker-directed element of pragmatic act where the speaker creates a conversational context that the hearer can identify with. Consequently, there is heavy reliance on mutually-shared knowledge for the interpretation of the implicitly communicated message. In the data of this paper, NG relies on the mutually shared knowledge of their friendship, the security situation, the nearness of her place of abode to the airport and unguaranteed safety of the hotels in Rumuni to set up the scene of the pragmatic act in her response which ADA recognizes and identifies with, in spite of the fact that the actual words used seem to have scantily addressed NG's actual communicative intentions. Setting up, as indicated by Mey (2001), looks up to an "uptake in order to be "coopted". ADA's uptake in line 7 suggests that NG's setting up has achieved its desired communicative effect, that of convincing ADA to be coopted in her own suggestion of taking up her line of thought. According to Mey (2001), for a sequence to "count as" a pragmatic act, certain conditions have to be in place:

∅ The setting up (circumstance) has to be right.



∅ There need not be any explicit speech act (requesting, rejection, warning, etc); the conversational context determines the nature of the pragmatic act; in ABC contexts, when XYZ is said, the wording may count as an attempt to perform a pragmatic act (eg. bribing) and it will be understood as such.

∅ Without uptake, there cannot be a pragmatic act; however, the uptake can be cancelled by another subsequent act. For instance, in the data of this study, if after the uptake NG comes up with another pract – *I'll see what I can do* – the initial uptake is cancelled.

### **Coopting**

Coopting serves as a product of setting up in pragmatic acts, a means of “seducing” (Mey, 2001, p. 210) the hearer to identify with the speaker’s views. A speaker performing a pragmatic act in most cases may decide not to make their intentions explicit to their interlocutors. They, thus, resort to implicit meanings which leave a lot unsaid, but then, they try to bring in the hearer to identify with their real intentions by using words that index situations in the context which s/he invites the hearer to infer. By responding with: *But, I live in Rumuni*, the respondent does not use words that express her real intentions, but she expects her hearer, as a rational and intelligent being, to recognize these intentions through the shared presuppositions and situational-shared knowledge of the context in addition to all of its affordances and limitations. She is therefore “setting up” the scene in which the context of the acting carries more weight than the spoken act itself and invites the hearer to make the relevant inferences.

Mey (2001, pp. 214-215) argues that, as action theory, pragmatic acts must be considered from two fundamental angles: from the angle of the individual agent, and from the angle of the act itself. He claims that it is these two that make pragmatic acts effective (p. 213). Two of these variables are considered in turn.

### **Agency**

Any pract must be infused with agency for it to be effective in a particular context, otherwise it fails to be effective (Nodoushan, 2017). The individual agent in pragmatic acts is “not a free agent, with the prerogative to set goals and devise strategies or charting courses of action like a Platonic rider on her or his beast of burden” (Mey, 2001, p.214). S/he is rather empowered, as well as limited by the conditions of his/her life, which for the individual agent may include their class, gender, age, education, previous life history, culture and other such sociolinguistic variables. These variables have been identified by ethnomethodologists as “member resources” (MRs); resources

that people dispose of as members of the community, often also referred to as background knowledge. These resources bring into an interaction certain “constraints and affordances imposed on the individual in the form of necessary limitations on the degrees of freedom that he or she is allowed in the society” (Mey, 2001, p.214). When a pract is infused with agency, the agency makes the pract adaptable to the particular situation as an instance of a particular pragmeme, just as we pointed out earlier in Joshua’s use of the word: “nothing”. In the example, that is, NG’s pract, *But I live in Rumuni* could not have made any sense but for the context of her friendship with her interlocutor and the mutually-shared knowledge of the utterance history and other factors relevant to the private contexts and salience to their conversational goals.

### **The Act**

This refers to the language used in performing the pragmatic act and points to the relationship between linguistic choices, situations of use and contexts of use. The act raises important questions from two perspectives:

∅ From the individual perspective, what language can I use to perform a specific act?

∅ From the context perspective, what language can be used to create the conditions for me to perform a pragmatic act?

Whereas the former perspective focuses on the adaptability of language as individual members rely on language to adapt to the ever-changing conditions surrounding them, and in so doing, generate meaning; the latter looks at traditional speech acts as contextual tools at our disposal to control our environment and adapt to it in various ways. Using our data in 6 as an exemplification, NG has used language and the expression: *But I live in Rumuni, my dear* to influence ADA’s line of thinking and to indirectly perform the act of subtle refusal to book the hotel and for ADA not to consider other hotels in town. Similarly, the context and language use from NG has created a condition for ADA to consider accepting NG’s subtle polite refusal to book a hotel. For according to Verschueren (1983: 276 in Mey, 2001, p.215), speech acts are functions from context to context. However, Mey notes (2001, p.215) that speech acts uttered in context are pragmatic acts. On the other hand, pragmatic acts need not be speech acts, not even indirect speech acts. It is pertinent at this juncture to examine Mey’s arguments on the latter position.

### **3.1 Pragmatic acts and indirect speech acts**

In resolving the dilemma of indirect speech acts and pragmatic acts, Mey affirms that pragmatic acts cannot be equated to indirect speech acts because the focus of attention is not on the words uttered but on the things being done with the words. Mey (2001, p.215) gave an example with the difference in the indirect request:

Can you pass me the salt (compare with the direct request “pass the salt”)?

And the “hints” and “prompts” such as:

I’d like some salt.

Or

Isn’t this soup rather bland?

Mey argues that these indirect requests, hints and prompts may be efforts to have someone pass the salt but they do not count as “requests”, rather as pre-sequences to requests. Yet the desired effect of the salt being passed on is achieved. According to Mey (2001, p.219), the “so-called indirect speech acts derive their force not just from their lexico-semantic build-up, but from the *situation* in which they are appropriately uttered” (emphasis in the original). To Mey, therefore, there is no such thing, strictly speaking as speech acts or indirect speech acts, what is left are instantiated pragmatic acts (“ipras” or “practs”/ “allopracts”) associated with say, the request pragmeme (p.220).

Thus, whereas indirect speech acts, in line with Searle’s conceptualization, is determined by the structure of the language used for an utterance which has no direct relationship with the meaning the speaker intends for it, pragmatic acts are contextually-driven, with “underlying goal orientation among participants in a discourse which manifests itself in their interactional goals” (Mey, 2001, p.216). Mey classified indirect speech acts as allopracts because according to him, they are unpredictable as there is no way of determining *a priori* what an allopract could look like, or *a fortiori*, what it cannot look like, as any utterance can constitute a pract (and an allopracts) of say, incitement pragmeme (citing Kurzon (1998) provided the situation and circumstances are appropriate to allow such an interpretation.

### **Allopracts**

As Mey (2001, p.221) claims, “no two practs will ever be identical (being realized in an actual situation, and every situation being different from every other), every pract is at the time an allopract, that is to say, a concrete and different realization of a particular instantiation of a particular pragmeme.” It may not be easy to differentiate between practs and allopracts based on the above claims. However, Vasilescu (2018, p.65) defines allopracts as “individual contextual choices made from a pre-defined set of options, which underlie practs”. She claims that whereas practs are transpersonal contextual choices, allopracts are personal contextual choices; practs are types,

allopracts are tokens in conjunction with temporary, content-form association as judged appropriate by a specific speaker at a specific time of interaction with a specific interlocutor, in accordance with their conversational history.

From the above discussions, it is possible to make these deductions about the pragmeme-pract-allopract schema.

**Table 1: Illustration of the Pragmeme-Pract-Allopract Schema/Rankscale**

S/N	Pragmatic Acts Schema	Explanation	Examples
1.	Pragmeme	Generalized speech act with situational affordability; a general situational prototype, capable of being executed in a situation	Greeting Insults Refusals Bribing etc
2.	Practs	What can be said in the situation; the instantiated individual pragmatic acts which refer to a particular pragmeme as its realization	For instance, the pragmeme of "Greeting" may be realized as <i>Hello, Hi, how are you? Good morning, hope you're good, how do you do?</i> and others.
3.	Allopracts	What is actually said; actual units of communication, different forms of expressing a pragmeme.	The examples above are allopracts of the pragmeme "greeting" but the choice of which will depend on variations determined by contextual factors: speaker, time and type of interaction.

Allopracts are therefore possible practs that the speaker chooses from regarding the same pragmeme determined by factors of the context. Allopracts variations may be:

- ∅ Speaker-centred: different speakers may voice the same pragmeme in different practs based on two considerations: firstly, individual subjective assessment of the communicative situation; and secondly, personal selection that reflect individual communicative competence.
- ∅ Time-centred: different moments of speech may trigger minor or major context change that influence speaker choices
- ∅ Interaction-centred: every speech event/encounter is unique. For instance, greeting in a lecturer-student encounter, may differ from one in personal encounter, inaugural address, traditional marriage exchanges, etc.

Allopracts are, therefore, reflections of how individual voices are heard on a community of practice at the very moment of speech. They are unique and temporary instantiations of practs.

**4. Data Analysis**

The pract, *But I live in Rumuni, my dear*, is not giving the hearer an information as in Austinian constative or locution, neither is it simply an indirect speech act where the structure of the proposition does not align with the content as Searle postulated. The utterance, which we will call a “mega pract”, is rather call to action, a situated pragmatic act that aligns with the affordances and limitations of the particular context of booking a hotel reservation for a friend in order for her to be close to the airport to catch an early morning flight in the context of prevailing insecurity. Unlike what obtains in literature of pragmemes being instantiated by practs, this mega-pract in study data is invariably loaded with multiple pragmemes which can be concretely realized through allopracts that remain unsaid. We present this scenario in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Pragmemes and Practs/Allopracts in the Mega-Pract *But I live in Rumuni***

S/No	Pragmeme Constructed	Instantiated (Implicit/Unsaid) Practs/Allopracts
1.	Refusal	No, I will not book the reservation. I refuse your request

2.	Rejection	Your idea does not sound right given the prevailing situation.
3.	Warning	Hotels in Rumuni are not safe. I cannot guarantee your safety.
4.	Inviting	Come to my house and pass the night. I invite you to my house.
5.	Promising	I will accommodate you for one night. I promise you a room
6.	Informing	I have a house in Rumuni that can accommodate you.
7.	Persuading	Change your mind about booking a reservation.
8.	Solidarity/Camaraderie	We are friends, remember. What are friends for?
9.	Admonition	You don't spend that money when you have me in Rumuni.
10	Coopting	Hope you agree?
11	Directing/declaration	My house is close to the airport. You need not worry.
12	Rebuke	I know Rumuni more than you.

From the above table, the pract *But I live in Rumuni*, which the recipient, ADA, regarded as the concrete realization of the pragmeme of subtle refusal primarily, carries with it other complex and multiple implicit pragmemes. It may be such complexities in the interpretation of a simple response that Mey (2001) claims are not accounted for in speech act theory. They cannot simply be written off as indirect speech acts because, as Searle would have it, the structure of the utterance differs from the functions it performs in context. The hearer, ADA, on hearing the pract, *But I live in Rumuni*, first of all gets the interpretation that NG is practicing "refusal" but in a polite way. NG is

“rejecting” the idea of booking a reservation for her friend because that idea is wrong based on the prevailing insecurity both in Rumuni and in the hotels in the town.

ADA also decodes the pragmeme of warning in that pract; to beware of such an idea, and also a subtle, implicit “invitation” to come to her house to pass the night instead. This invitation is accompanied by pragmemes of “promise” for free accommodation; “informing” ADA that she has a house in Rumuni; “persuading” her to change her mind from booking a reservation to putting up with her; expressing solidarity/camaraderie of their long-time friendship; “admonishing” her for even thinking of spending/wasting that money when she is available to help her; coopting her into her own line of thinking by declaration that her house is close to the airport. This is what Jacob Mey (2001) calls “setting up” strategy in pragmatic acts, a strategy meant to “seduce” and coopt the interactant into identifying with the speaker’s intentions.

In Table 3 below, we show how the hearer was able to decode these various pragmemes from this single response. We use Mey’s (2001, p.222) pragmeme schema to arrive at the above interpretation of the pract *But I live in Rumuni*

**Table 3: Application of the Pragmeme Schema in the Interpretation of the Response, *But I Live in Rumuni***

S/No	Pragmeme Schema	Strategies evident	Application
1.	Activity Part	Indirect speech acts  Conversational acts	<i>But I live in Rumuni</i> structure differs from the communicated intention. Marked use of language which licenses R-/I-/M-implicature (Horn, 1984; Levinson, 2000)  Conversation of seven sequences with basic adjacency pair in Turns 3 and 6

2.	Textual part	Inference	Contains implicit meaning beyond the words and both interactants know this. Both have to activate pragmatic inference to decode the implicature
		Reference	Refers to some features of the situation implicitly
		Relevance	Relevance to the intention of the speaker
		Shared situational knowledge	The speaker and hearer are aware of the constraints of booking a reservation in Town
		Metapragmatic joker (indexicality)	Indexical signals in the situation such as insecurity, closeness to the airport are implicitly conveyed

Since the text from which this response is derived is a telephone conversation, it characterizes the activity as conversational act. The act sequences, seen in the speaker turns in that conversation, involve pre-expansion sequence as seen in Lines 1 and 2, insertion expansion as in lines 4 and 5 and post expansion in Line 7. That leaves Lines 3 and 6 as the two utterances in contiguous relevance to one another which qualifies them as “adjacency pair” – a request-response adjacency. It is also obvious from our knowledge of SAT that the response is an indirect speech act – one of the variables in the activity part of the pragmeme schema, although, as we have seen, indirect speech acts can only be used to refer to the way the utterance manifests, and should not be the end of interpretation of that single pract, *But I live in Rumuni*.

In the textual chain, there is no way one can understand the response without making pragmatic inferences. In Horn’s (1984) and Levinson’s (2000) modified theory of implicature, the R-principle stipulates “say no more than is necessary given the Q-principle” and the I- principle “what is said in an abnormal way isn’t normal” respectively point to the fact that in the response, the speaker in saying *But I live in*



*Rumuni* is leaving a lot unsaid and is inviting the hearer to work out the implicature. By making reference to her house in the town, she invites the hearer to make these deductions, through the invocation of situational-shared knowledge, that the utterance is relevant in conveying her intentions. She also appeals to the metapragmatic signals in the situation such as her place of abode in *Rumuni* to index an invitation to cancel her idea of booking a reservation but instead to stay in her house for the night in the face of prevailing insecurity.

#### **4.1 Discussion**

At least twelve (12) identified pragmemes are evident from the pract *But I live in Rumuni* and the present authors regard these as pragmemes. The allopracts realising these pragmemes are unsaid but can be retrieved from the individual and social contexts of the pract. These allopracts cannot be said to be generally recognizable by anybody who is not part of this conversation but are only recognized by the concerned interlocutors because of the affordances and limitations of their individual private contexts and conversational history. This upholds Kecskes (2010) view that the exploratory movement of analysis of any utterance should be both from the outside in (as argued by Mey, 2001) but also from the inside out; that is to say, from both directions. Attention should be given not just to the actual social context but also to the individual participants' private contexts, their egocentrism and their particular attention and salience in the achievement of conversational goals. This goes to prove that individual as well as social contexts play dialectical roles in meaning construction and in communication success.

From our analysis, the response pract is not a piece of information, or a constative utterance, in Austin's terms. It is a call to action; to compute the meaning based on actual situational context and prior individual contexts of the interlocutors in order to arrive at the multiple pragmemes that the utterance invokes. If NG had said, *come to my house and stay the night*, this pract would have an instance of the situational prototype pragmeme – INVITATION. However, her opting for *But I live in Rumuni* makes it an indirect speech act that falls on the activity part of the pragmeme schema and hence calls up for its appropriate interpretation most of the textual part of the pragmeme schema; inference, reference, shared situational knowledge, relevance, indexicality and marked use of language as metapragmatic jokers.

To interpret this pract, the interactants invoked both activity and the textual parts of the pragmeme schema; indirect speech act and conversational act as well as inference, reference, shared situational knowledge, relevance, metapragmatic indexicals respectively Pragmemes realised by practs and allopracts reflect possible contexts that

uniquely license certain utterances, so utterances are not arbitrary but tied to particular situations. The data seem to disprove the fact that we can only go from pragmeme to practs that realise them; a pract can also call to mind multiple pragmemes. Thus, the utterance *But I live in Rumuni* is not just an indirect speech act but what we would call a mega-pract that requires the hearer to invoke the textual part of the pragmeme schema in order to infer the different situational prototypes – refusal, rejection, invitation and others as shown in our analysis.

In addition, we have argued in this paper that contrary to a pragmeme coming to life through being instantiated as practs and allopracts, a single pract, uttered in a particular pragmeme-inducing situation can index multiple pragmemes and as the study data illustrate, this single response pract has been used to execute at least twelve pragmemes, each of which is relevant to the situation in which that pract is instantiated confirming Mey's view on the force of the pragmeme. (2001,p.223). However, rather than moving from pragmeme being instantiated in several practs and allopracts, our findings show a reversal of this pattern; that of a single pract invoking multiple pragmemes. It is this reversal that makes our argument a unique contribution to the theory of the pragmeme.

## **5. Conclusion**

Paper argued that PAT, as an action-theoretic reconceptualization of SAT, serves as a model of communication that better explains speech acts as situated actions in given contexts. Unlike the views expressed by Austin and Searle in the original conceptualizations of SAT as universal acts not tied to given contexts, PAT situates such acts in given contexts as pragmemes that are possible to be executed in particular social context.

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