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ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS IN DONALD TRUMP'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Abstract

The analysis discusses the illocutionary acts and forces in Donald Trump's 4th of February, 2024 State of the Union address. Based on the analysis that has been conducted, it aimed to interpret and describe the illocutionary acts and forces in Donald Trump's State of the Union address. A qualitative method was used to analyze this research. The research also applied Searle and Bach and Harnish's theory. Searle's theory is used to interpret the illocutionary acts, whereas Bach and Harnish's theory was used as an indicator of the illocutionary forces. The results of the analysis found all five of the classifications of illocutionary act, which consisted of a total of twenty-two samples, namely, assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. In the analysis results, assertives were predominantly found in Donald Trump's State of the Union address with the total of 266 data, which dominantly described how important the act of assertive is in political discourse as it is used as a way to persuade the hearer. The remaining acts that were found are directives with the total of twenty-eight data, commissives with the total of fourteen data, expressives with the total of twenty-two data, and declarations with the total of two data. The statements of Donald Trump that were analyzed did not include all of the classifications of illocutionary forces by Bach and Harnish, with assert as the dominant force in assertive act, requesting in the directive act, promising in commissive act, and thanking in expressive act. The act of declaration does not have illocutionary force.

Keywords: Illocutionary Act, Illocutionary Force, State Of The Union Address, Donald Trump

Abstrak

Analisis ini membahas tindak tutur ilokusi dan kekuatan ilokusi dalam pidato State of the Union Donald Trump pada 4 Februari 2024. Berdasarkan analisis yang telah dilakukan, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginterpretasikan dan mendeskripsikan tindak tutur ilokusi dan kekuatan ilokusi dalam pidato State of the Union Donald Trump. Metode kualitatif digunakan untuk menganalisis penelitian ini. Penelitian ini juga menerapkan teori Searle serta teori Bach dan Harnish. Teori Searle digunakan untuk menginterpretasikan tindak tutur ilokusi, sedangkan teori Bach dan Harnish digunakan sebagai indikator kekuatan ilokusi. Hasil analisis menemukan kelima klasifikasi tindak tutur ilokusi, yang terdiri dari total dua puluh dua sampel, yaitu asertif, direktif, komisif, ekspresif, dan deklaratif. Dalam hasil analisis, asertif ditemukan secara dominan dalam pidato State of the Union Donald Trump dengan total 266 data, yang menggambarkan secara dominan betapa pentingnya tindak asertif dalam wacana politik karena digunakan sebagai cara untuk meyakinkan pendengar. Tindak tutur lainnya yang ditemukan adalah direktif dengan total dua puluh delapan data, komisif dengan total empat belas data, ekspresif dengan total dua puluh dua data, dan deklaratif dengan total dua data. Pernyataan Donald Trump yang dianalisis tidak mencakup semua klasifikasi kekuatan ilokusi oleh Bach dan Harnish, dengan asertif sebagai kekuatan dominan dalam tindak asertif, meminta dalam tindak direktif, berjanji dalam tindak komisif, dan berterima kasih dalam tindak ekspresif. Tindak deklaratif tidak memiliki kekuatan ilokusi.

Kata kunci: Tindak Tutur Ilokusi, Kekuatan Ilokusi, Pidato State Of The Union, Donald Trump.

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PENDAHULUAN

Language, both spoken and written, plays an important role in communication, especially in the political discourse. According to Yang and Wang (2020), written language serves as a representation of a writing system, whereas spoken language is often associated with how it is shaped by context. Both types of communications can be influential to convey message toward the targeted audience. In political communication, whether spoken or written, speakers or writers often contain intended meaning behind the literal words they use. Moreover, simply understanding the literal meaning of a political speech is insufficient. Therefore, the field of pragmatics plays an important role in understanding context in utterance (Leech, 1989). This is because an utterance is not merely produced for the sake of speaking, but with specific function and intended meaning (Khodijah, 2020).

Humans are using language to perform actions. The theory of speech acts can be used to understand these intended actions. Speech act was pioneered by J.L. Austin (1962). Austin identified three key aspects of speech acts, which consist of locutionary act (saying something), illocutionary act (doing something with saying), and perlocutionary act (effect of saying something). The theory was further expanded by John Searle (1979). Searle (1979) introduced his own classification system for illocutionary acts, such as assertive, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. All of the classification of illocutionary act could happen during communication, especially in political discourse. For instance, in the illocutionary act of assertives, a politician might aim to convey a fact or believe toward their audience. In the case of directives, a politician aim to order specific action toward their audience. Commissives can happen when a politician aims to commit to a future action to their audience. Lastly, declarations can happen when politicians who hold an authority aim to change someone's status or situation.

This research is focused on analyzing the illocutionary act on political speech as a purpose to analyze the intended meaning behind utterances of politician toward their audience. Thus, the State of the Union (SOTU) addresses was chosen as the object of research. SOTU address is an important speech held annually that is delivered by the President of the United States. The purpose of SOTU address is to act as platforms for presidents to communicate their legislative agenda and to influence the American society in every aspect (Su, 2021). This research is focused on Donald Trump's State of the Union speech on 4th of February, 2020. In the speech, Trump highlighted many of his administration's achievements during his presidency. This is interesting to be analyzed as the speech was delivered in an election year. Furthermore, analyzing the illocutionary act of Donald Trump's utterances can be beneficial to understand the intended meaning as well as the function.

This research can contribute to understand communication strategy in the context of pragmatics within a political discourse. This research will also analyze all five classifications of illocutionary act suggested by Searle (1979) and will be combined with Bach and Harnish's (1979) theory as to make this research comprehensive. Furthermore, the success of illocutionary acts is highly dependent on the context in which they are performed (Obidovna, 2023). This is imperative because in order to determine whether an utterance contain one of the specific classification of illocutionary acts, then analyzing it with the context can be beneficial instead of solely depending on the performative verb.

One existing research of the same topic is shown in a research by Mulyana and Engliana (2021) who examined how Donald Trump's language in his 2016 victory speech with the theory of speech acts. They analyzed the speech transcript based on Searle's theory of speech acts by identifying different types of illocutionary acts used by Trump. The study found that Trump employed all five categories of illocutionary acts as defined by Searle (1979). Interestingly, the research revealed a strong preference for direct speech acts (72%) compared to indirect ones (3%). This suggests Trump relied heavily on straightforward language to express himself. Although the research identified minimal use (3%), it did not delve deeper into each of the five classifications of illocutionary acts in great detail. The research could use a more comprehensive analysis as to understand the intended meaning in Trump's communication style.

In conclusion, while speech act theory helps us to analyze language as action, research can be conducted by delving deeper into each of the five classifications of illocutionary act as well as its illocutionary force or function. By combining Searle's (1979) and Bach and Harnish's (1979) speech act theory, specifically illocutionary act, this research provides an understanding of how Donald Trump strategically uses language to achieve his communication goals in his State of the Union addresses.

METODE

The research design utilized in this research is qualitative method. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative method is a way to explore social issues by understanding social phenomena. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Within this qualitative framework, this research utilized content analysis and descriptive qualitative to examine the illocutionary acts and forces in political discourse of Donald Trump.

The data for this research were obtained from transcripts of a speech delivered by Donald Trump during his annual State of the Union (SOTU) address. There are three SOTU address of Donald Trump in total during his presidency. The first one was on January of 30th, 2018, the second was on February of 5th, 2019, and the third one was on February of 4th, 2020. Overall, the SOTU speech is an opportunity for the president of the US to address the nation, outline their future legislative plans, and provide an assessment of the country's current status. This research used the third SOTU address of Donald Trump as the object of research. The reason why the following transcript was chosen as the data source for this thesis is because not only it is the most recent SOTU speech of Donald Trump, it fits to be analyzed using illocutionary act. Furthermore, the address was done during an election year. Therefore, there ought to be intended meaning and function behind each utterance of Donald Trump to garner support and win over the election. By analyzing Donald Trump's using the illocutionary act theory, it can be seen how language is used to assert, express opinions, give directives, and make commitments, all of which can influence the hearer's perception.

The transcript is taken from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) website. The website was accessed on March of 5th 2024 at 8:34 PM Central Indonesia Time. The National Archives is the repository for the U.S. government's important documents. As stated on the website, it is frozen in time, meaning it is no longer updated and is considered as historical material. Therefore, the authenticity and reliability of the transcripts used for this research are guaranteed. Additionally, as publicly available documents, the use of these transcripts complies with copyright regulations, and proper attribution to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is acknowledged.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis Of Illocutionary Acts In Donald Trump's State Of The Union Address

Based on the determined data coverage, the State of the Union address contains thirty-five samples of illocutionary acts which are categorized into assertive, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarations. After discovering the types of illocutionary acts that are used in Donald Trump's 4th of February, 2020 State of the Union address it is shown that Donald Trump use all of the types of illocutionary act during his speech. This section will also discuss about how Donald Trump use illocutionary act to achieve different communicative goals through determining the illocutionary forces of each of the samples.

1. Classification of Illocutionary Acts and their Forces in State of the Union Address

This section explains what are the types of illocutionary acts that are found in Donald Trump's 4th of February, 2020 State of the Union address and how Donald Trump utilize the illocutionary act as a way to reach his communicative goals, in this case by analyzing it through illocutionary force. The following are the analysis of samples that are taken from the transcript.

a. Assertives

Datum 1

Because of our powerful sanctions, the Iranian economy is doing very, very poorly.

This statement has the intention of assertive illocutionary act. The illocutionary point of the statement is that the speaker (Trump) commits to the truth of the proposition that the Iranian economy is in poor condition due to sanctions. The statement does not contain explicit performative verbs. Thus, identifying it through Searle's (1979) IFIDs is necessary. Prior to this statement, Trump recounted the U.S. military's action against Qasem Soleimani. Soleimani is involved in terrorist activities. Therefore, this led the U.S. military to eliminate Soleimani to his death. Following this, Trump also addressed political situation in Iran about how the voices of Iranians began to rise against the rulers. Trump criticized the Iranian regime while also offering aid. Furthermore, Trump indicated that the poor state of the Iranian economy is a result of the sanctions and suggested that the U.S. is willing to help if Iran chooses a different path.

Based on the surrounding context of the statement found from the transcript, it can be determined that the illocutionary force of the statement is to assert the negative impact of U.S sanctions on the Iranian economy. Apart from the context, the statement contains adverbs of 'very' which is shown in "very, very, poorly". The adverb 'very' is used to intensify the assertion. According to Searle (1979), in assertive act, the speaker's belief in the information conveyed can vary. In this case, Trump's belief of the information is strong which can be seen from the adverb of very. This is also evident in Ashfira and Hardjanto (2021) research where they found a case of utterance of asserting that contains the adverb of very which emphasize the utterance further.

b. Directives**Datum 2**

Please take this message back that all Americans are united with the Venezuelan people in their righteous struggle for freedom.

The illocutionary act in this statement is directive. The statement occurred in the context of a speech where the speaker is addressing issues related Cuban's policy and support for freedom in the Western Hemisphere. Trump is requesting Juan Guaidó, the legitimate President of Venezuela to deliver a message to the people of Venezuela. The speaker's illocutionary point in this statement is to get Juan Guaidó to take a message back to Venezuela. This message is intended to communicate to the Venezuelan people that all Americans support them to pursue their freedom. Furthermore, this statement falls under the category of directive act through observing a few aspects using IFIDs by looking through the sentence structure since there are no performative verbs. The statement contains imperative form of "take this message back" this indicates a directive to instruct the hearer (Guaidó) to perform an action directed by the speaker (Trump). Moreover, Trump's utterance indicates a polite request, using the word please, to ask Guaidó to deliver the message. According to Searle (1979), the act of requesting is the force directive illocutionary act. Both of this analysis indicates the illocutionary force of the statement is requesting. The illocutionary force of requesting is also shown in Bach and Harnish's (1979) statement that said requestive express the speaker's desire that the hearer do something. This is shown in the context of the statement that the speaker (Trump) expressed a clear desire for the hearer (Juan Guaidó) to take an action. Bach and Harnish (1979) also explains that in requestive, speaker's intention is for the hearer to take the speaker's desire as reason to act. Thus, the speaker is not only expressing a desire but is also indicating an intention that Juan Guaidó should consider this desire as a reason to act.

c. Commissives**Datum 3**

To those watching at home tonight, I want you to know: We will never let socialism destroy American healthcare.

The sample above falls into the category of commissives illocutionary act. Commissives express the speaker's commitment to a course of action in the future. The commissives act lies in the statement "We will never let socialism destroy American healthcare". In the context of the statement, we refers to the one hundred thirty-two lawmakers who are present in the room

where the SOTU address took place. Such case is shown above. The propositional content of the statement is that the speaker, Trump along with the lawmakers will do a future action to prevent socialism from destroying American healthcare system. Commissives come with classification of illocutionary forces. To determine the illocutionary force, it is necessary to use IFIDs by Searle (1979). The statement itself does not have any performative verbs. From the sentence structure, there is the use of will in the statement of “will never let”. This shows that there is an indication of a future commitment to a future action, which is to prevent socialism from destroying healthcare. Thus, the illocutionary force of the statement is a promise because this fits well with the criteria of promise as outlined by Bach and Harnish (1979).

d. Expressives

Datum 4

Welcome home, Sergeant Williams. Thank you very much.

The statement was uttered when Trump was acknowledging Amy Williams, a wife in a military family whose husband was out for deployment. However, Trump gave her a surprise that her husband was back from deployment. Thus, the above statement was uttered as a way to welcome Amy’s wife, Sergeant Williams. From the context, it can be determined that the statement has an expressive illocutionary act. The propositional content of the statement is the greeting of welcoming Sergeant Williams and expressing gratitude to him. It can be seen on the phrase “Welcome home” that it presupposes that Sergeant Williams has returned home. Moreover, there is also the phrase “Thank you very much” which presupposes that there is something Sergeant Williams has done for which the speaker, Trump is grateful. There are two illocutionary forces on the statement, the first one is to greet and the second one is to thank. The underlying reason behind it is because both phrases match the classification of expressive illocutionary forces suggested by Bach and Harnish (1979).

e. Declarations

Datum 5

And, Rush, in recognition of all that you have done for our nation, the millions of people a day that you speak to and that you inspire, and all of the incredible work that you have done for charity, I am proud to announce tonight that you will be receiving our country’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. (Applause.)

The statement was uttered when Trump was awarding Rush Limbaugh, an American citizen who is diagnosed with Stage 4 advanced cancer, yet he never cease to inspire the others. Thus, Trump gave him an award, which is the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The statement has the illocutionary act of declaration. The underlying reason behind that is because from the context of the statement, it can be seen that Trump has the authority within the U.S government to give an award to Limbaugh. This immediately brings about a change to Limbaugh because before the announcement, Limbaugh was not a recipient of the award. Furthermore, in the statement “...you will be receiving our country’s highest civilian honor,” does not merely describe a state of committing to a future action. Instead, Trump is performing an act simultaneously.

2. The Total of the Classification of Illocutionary Acts in Donald Trump’s State of the Union Address

Based on table 1, the classification of illocutionary acts in Donald Trump’s 4th of February, 2020 State of the Union address were found in all of the five classification of illocutionary acts, which are assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declarations with twenty-two samples and a total of 332 data taken from Donald Trump’s State of the Union address. The following are the frequency of classification of illocutionary acts presented in a table.

Table 1. The Total of Classifications of Illocutionary Acts found in Donald Trump’s State of the Union Address

Classifications of Illocutionary Acts	Total
Assertives	266

Directives	28
Commissives	14
Expressives	22
Declarations	2

The State of the Union address on 4th of February, 2020 of Donald Trump was dominated by the assertive illocutionary acts with the total of statements of 266. According to Searle (1979), assertive is used to assert beliefs and convey information with the purpose that the speaker wants the hearer to belief in his or her proposition. This is in line with how Donald Trump utilized a lot of assertive illocutionary acts to implement his belief toward the hearer or to state a fact on the current situation. The second classification of illocutionary acts that were found is directives. Directives were the second most found illocutionary act with the total of twenty-eight statements. Directives are a type of illocutionary acts where the speaker attempts to exert influence on the addressee’s future behavior. This influence can range from subtle suggestions to forceful commands (Searle, 1979). This is often times utilized as a rhetorical language by politicians as it enhances the persuasiveness of their language (Obeng and Hartford, 2008).

The third one is commissives with the total of fourteen statements found in Donald Trump’s State of the Union addres. Commissives are one of the classifications of illocutionary act where the speaker commits to a future action and it has the function to create the speaker’s commitment to perform an action in the future (Searle, 1979). Most of the commissives that were found have the illocutionary force of promise. This is common because promises serve as a rhetorical device and strategy that the President can use to gain support from the citizens (Marklund, 2022). The fourth one is expressives. There are a total of twenty-two expressives that are found in Donald Trump’s State of the Union address. Expressives are a type of illocutionary acts that has the purpose to express the speaker’s psychological state and does not have a direction fit unlike the other classification of illocutionary acts (Searle, 1979). Most utterances have the illocutionary force of thank.

The last illocutionary act with the least amount of statements that were found in Donald Trump’s State of the Union address is declarations. As explained by Searle (1979), declarations are a type of illocutionary act where a speaker has an authoritative status within a specific context, influence the real world by making immediate changes, either toward the hearer or the world. There are a few research that found the illocutionary acts, one of them is a research by Puteri et al (2020) about the analysis of illocutionary acts in Theresa May’s the great meritocracy. The setting of the speech is similar, as both are in the context of political discourse. However, no utterances by Theresa May contain the illocutionary act of declarations. This is because, although Theresa May held a higher authority as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the social context surrounding her intention was primarily to communicate substantive explanations of how Britain should be (Puteri et al, 2020). In contrast, during Donald Trump’s State of the Union address, he made several changes, such as honoring someone for their achievements which ultimately changed their status as the receiver of an honor from the president of the United States. Moreover, the changes were valid because he held the institutional role of the President of the United States at that time.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis that has been conducted, the conclusion can be described as follows:

According to the first research question of the analysis, the types of illocutionary acts found in the selected statements from Donald Trump's speeches predominantly fall into the category of assertives. The illocutionary point of these assertive acts is for the speaker to commit to the truth of the propositions uttered. This aligns with Searle's classification of speech acts. This includes making statements, claims, or assertions about the state of affairs.

In the second research question, the specific illocutionary force of these assertives includes actions such as asserting, affirming, and claiming. The analysis reveals that the dominant force found in Trump's speeches is assertive, particularly when discussing the impact of U.S. policies or actions, such as sanctions on the Iranian economy. This is evidenced by the use of the illocutionary force indicating device and the context support the speaker's belief in the propositions being presented. The second classification of illocutionary acts that were found is directives. Directives were the second most found illocutionary act with the total of twenty-eight statements. The dominant force that were found is requesting as in the speech Trump was politely requesting his hearer to do something instead of strongly commanding them.

The third one is commissives with the total of fourteen statements. Most of the commissives that were found have the illocutionary force of promise. This matches with the surrounding context of the speech because in political speech, politicians tend to make promises to persuade their hearers. The fourth one is expressives. Most utterances have the illocutionary force of thank. The last illocutionary act that was found in Donald Trump's State of the Union address is declarations. During Donald Trump's State of the Union address, he made several changes, such as honoring someone

The result of this analysis suggest that the predominant use of assertive illocutionary acts in political speeches, like those of Donald Trump, serves to show confidence and authority. It allows the speaker to present their policies as factual. Thus, it can be used to persuade the hearer. In conclusion, the analysis of illocutionary acts in Donald Trump's speeches highlights assertives in political discourse. The frequent use of assertive illocutionary forces reflects the speaker's intention to assert truth claims and influence the audience's beliefs about the state of affairs. This understanding of illocutionary acts and their forces is crucial for analyzing and interpreting the effectiveness of political communication.

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