Speech Acts in Diplomatic Speeches: An Analysis of International Speeches

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1. Introduction

Speeches delivered by world leaders during international bilateral visits, conferences, and summits are usually prepared in advance by competent members of the government and thus should have specific objectives. Speech acts in diplomatic speeches usually serve a similar purpose, such as bolstering relationships, advancing foreign policy objectives, and nation branding.

2. Objectives of the study

This research aims to identify illocutionary speech acts used in international speeches and determine the expected perlocutionary effect.

3. Method

This research used qualitative and quantitative research design using Searle's (1976) classification of speech acts. Ten international diplomatic speeches were chosen for the study.

4. Structure of diplomatic speeches

The discourse made by heads of states/nations is usually inclusive and has four structured sections, namely, 1) the opening salutation and greetings; (2) an expression of appreciation or admiration for the host nation or organization; (3) discussion of the issues of concern (summoning for cooperation); and (4) closing remarks, Burahanudeen (2006: 39).

5. Speech Act Theory

British philosopher John L. Austin first developed the concept of speech acts in 1962 in *How to Do Things with Words*, and John Searle later elaborated the idea in *Speech Acts* (1969). Austin divided Speech Acts into three types, namely, locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Searle (1976: 10-14) significantly revised Austin's illocutionary speech acts into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

6. Previous studies on political speeches

Previous studies analyzing speech acts in discourse have mostly focused on political speeches. Mohammed Hasim (2015) examined political speeches by John Kerry and George W. Bush and found that Kerry's speech contained 50% commissive and Bush's contained 40% assertive. Dede Purwadi and Lince Shombing (2012) studied Australian politician Julia Gillard's speech and found that she used representative speech acts more frequently. Mufiah and Rahman (2019) studied the speech acts Donald Trump used in his victory speech and found that 46% were representative speech acts. These studies demonstrate that the speaker's personality, audience, and context play an important role in the selection of speech acts.

7. Results and discussion

Table 1: Overall frequency of illocutionary speech acts in all ten speeches

Illocutionary Speech Act	Frequency (f)	Percent
Representatives	215	40
Directives	75	14
Commissive	110	20.5
Expressive	78	14.5
Declarations	59	11
Total	537	100

- Overall, representatives are the most used speech acts in international addresses.

- Commissive was found to be the second most used speech act.

- Declarative was the least used speech act type in diplomatic discourse.

Table 2: Frequency and percent of illocutionary speech acts in ten international speeches

speech act	Birendra		Bin Khalifa		Khamenei		Trump		Putin		Temer		Abe		Merkel		Xi		Hasina	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Representatives	9	45	4	25	17	60.5	11	15	2	9	18	43	11	25.5	121	60	14	20	8	33.25
Directives	1	5	2	12.5	1	4	3	4	0	0	4	10	5	11.5	32	16	25	37	2	8.25
Commissive	3	15	2	12.5	2	7	29	40	11	50	9	21	4	9.5	23	11	21	31	6	25
Expressive	7	35	7	43.75	3	10.5	14	19	8	36	5	12	12	28	13	6.5	4	6	5	21
Declarations	0	0	1	16.25	5	18	16	22	1	5	6	14	11	25.5	12	6.5	4	6	3	12.5
Total	20	100	16	100	28	100	73	100	22	100	42	100	43	100	201	100	68	100	24	100

- Khamenei and Merkel used over 60 % of representative speech acts.

- Most of the leaders used the representative speech act to outline the difficulties faced by the world, region, organization, or their countries.

- Half of all [types of illocutionary] speech acts used by President Putin were commissive. In Putin's speech, commissive speech acts were used in the quest for cooperation for the economic revival of his country and all BRICS countries.

- President Xi employed 31% of the commissive speech act.

- Expressive speech acts took third place among the speeches surveyed, accounting for 14.5 % on average.

- In diplomatic speeches, this type of speech act is usually deployed at the beginning of the speeches to express gratitude to the host country, people, and organizations.

- Declaratives came third on average, accounting for 12.5 %.

- Abe used most declarative speech acts, accounting for 25.5 %, followed by Trump at 22 %. This indicates that Abe and Trump, leaders from developed countries, had something to offer, either economic or military assistance.

- The least uttered illocutionary speech acts in ten international speeches are directive.

- President Xi used an exceptionally high percentage of directive speech acts, accounting for 37 % for him, he was using these speech acts in terms of economic modernization and revitalization of China and the world.

Table 3: Locution, identified illocutionary act, and expected perlocutionary effect in the speeches

Speaker	Illocutionary Act	Locution (Quote)	Expected Perlocutionary Effect
King Birendra (1989)	Representative (Statement of Fact)	"*Of the 102 members represented in our movement, I am told, as many as 37 fall into the category of the Least Developed Countries as classified by the United Nations.*"	Encouragement
Emir Bin Khalifa (2005)	Representative (Statement of fact)	"*While we welcome the improvement in the cash flow into the developing countries in recent years, yet many of them have not benefited much from it, since such flow is still at its lowest levels.*"	Remorse
Supreme Leader Khamenei (2012)	Declarative (Announcement)	"*We proposed the idea of 'Middle East free of nuclear weapons' and we are committed to it.*"	Hopefulness
President Donald Trump (2017)	Commissive (Pledge)	"*I ask you to join me, to join together, to work together, and to fight together because united, we will not fail.*"	Encouragement
President Vladimir Putin (2018)	Expressive (Liking)	"*We welcome the new initiatives proposed by the BRICS Business Council, particularly those in electronic commerce.*"	Encouragement
President Michael Temer (2017)	Representative (Statement of Fact)	"*It is precisely in this spirit that we are improving the regulatory dimension of Mercosur.*"	Hopefulness
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2014)	Declarative (Announcement)	"*Yesterday I held a summit meeting with H.E. Prime Minister Hailemariam, where we decided to connect Addis Ababa and Tokyo through direct flights.*"	Positiveness
Chancellor Angela Merkel (2019)	Directive (Suggestion)	"*I don't know why the situation today should be so much worse that we can't say that Russia remains a partner.*"	Lack of confidence
President Xi Jinping (2017	Commissive (Promise)	"*In pursuing the strategy of innovation-driven development, we will bolster the strategic emerging industries, apply new technologies and foster new business models to upgrade traditional industries.*"	Hopefulness and Encouragement
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (2017)	Representative (Statement of fact)	"*I along with my family was internally displaced in Dhaka in 1971 during our liberation war.*"	Sadness

The table above shows that most leaders expressed hopefulness and positivity in their speeches.

8. Conclusion

Diplomatic speeches are found to be relatively consistent and can be characterized by the use of representative speech acts.

Results also indicate that diplomatic speeches differ in terms of content compared to political speeches. Although speakers were from different cultural, economic, political, and religious backgrounds, all expressed hopefulness and encouragement through their speeches. Direct suggestions and declarations are usually not made on the international stage because all countries are sovereign, whether powerful or not. Thus, leaders use declarative, and directive speech acts rather scarcely. This research also reinforces the notion that a diplomatic language is a special form of communication, a separate genre compared to political speeches.

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