SPEECH ACTS ANALYSIS IN JOE BIDEN'S VICTORY SPEECH

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ABSTRACT : *World leaders are required to make speeches all the time to boost the morale and spirit of their people. Joe Biden, in his presidential victory speech, not only thanked the people for voting for him, but he also promised of a better future under his reign and assured the people of America that everything would turn out for the best. Thus, this study will discuss the use of speech acts in Joe Biden's speech. The aim of this study is to investigate the role of language in conveying the message from a political speech as a discourse. The collected data are then analysed using Searle's theory, with the method of research being descriptive qualitative. The result of this study shows that there are five types of speech act found in the speech: 56% assertive acts, 6% commissive acts, 7% declarative acts, 12% directive acts, and 19% expressive acts. The study reveals that assertive act is the most dominantly used speech act in the speech.*

KEYWORDS -*Searle's speech acts, political speech, political discourse*

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

There have been many studies on presidential speeches, and they are examples of political discourse. This is because political discourse has been a topic that attracts the interests of many researchers throughout the years. Political discourse represents the complexity of human activity and the way human manage their society. Politicians and political leaders, such as presidents, communicate with the general public to convince them of their programs or ideas. The speeches would include self-promotion by talking about their potency to be a good leader with all their goals to convince the hearer. In this kind of study, the dominant speech act of the political speech provides the understanding that political leaders perform various acts through their speeches. It reveals the purpose of the political speech which is to influence, persuade, impress, convince, and even to deceive the populace. Some scholars have examined the effectiveness of political speeches in communication as well as in influencing the people.

1.2 Relevant Researches

The first relevant research investigates the role of language in the communication and interpretation of intentions by examining John Kerry's speech during his Presidential Campaign in 2004 and George Bush's inaugural speech in 2001[1]. Both speeches focused on the pragmatic functions of locution, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts of the speeches. There were twenty sentences selected from the two speeches. The findings show the percentages of the frequency for each of the speech are: commissive 40%, assertive 35%, directive 20%, and expressive 5%. These results indicate that Kerry relied on commissive acts during his speech because of his commitments toward the actions he planned to do, and because he promised to make the world fit the words. Meanwhile, Bush used assertive sentences more than other speech acts since the assertive has a truth value that enhances what he proposed in his speech. Hence, the data are characterized by commissive, assertive and directive acts that are mostly used as mobilization strategies, especially in political campaigns, where it is essential for candidates to persuade their listeners to win elections.

The second relevant research deals with the types of illocutionary acts in Donald Trump's Inaugural Speech [2]. It concerns the illocutionary act produced by Donald Trumps as the newly inaugurated President of American. The study aims to analyze the types of illocutionary speech act which was dominantly used in that

speech. It applies descriptive qualitative method and speech act theory by Yule. There were 63 utterances and the percentage of utterances were Representative 46%, Expressive 11%, Directive 16%, Commissive 12,7%, and Declarative 14,3%. The result shows that Donald Trump's speech acts in his speech are mostly intended as statement of fact and assertion.

The last relevant research investigates the value of Speech Act Theory in their study as a framework for analyzing political speeches [3]. The aim for their study is to find out the main political purpose of the speech read in the event of Yazidi massacre in 2004, which may affect the choice for the types of speech acts used. The study analyses the frequency of the use of emotional, informative, persuasive, or motivational speech acts. Based on Searle and Austin's speech acts theories, the study discusses selected political speeches by UNAMI Regional Office Erbil (statement in 15-8-2018) and Prime Minister of Kurdistan Region (3-8-2018) about Yazaidi Massacre during the fourth anniversary of the massive killing and enslavement of thousands of Yezidi in (2014), as a piece of discourse.

1.3 Research Problems

In these trying times, politicians, in particular world leaders, are required to make speeches all the time to boost the morale and spirit of their people. Their speeches regularly contain assurances and promises that things will get better, and that they will do everything in their power to make that happen. Joe Biden, in his Presidential Victory speech that he read on November 7, not only thanked the people for voting for him, but he also promised of a better future under his reign and assured the people of America that everything would turn out for the best. This study will discuss the use of speech acts by Biden in conveying his intentions through his speech. This study will also look into the message that Biden tried to deliver in his speech.

1.4 Purposes of the Research

The purpose of this research is to identify the speech act features of the selected speech, which is Biden's victory speech, to determine how the identified features project the message in the speech.This research also aims to analyze the features in relation to the contexts in which the speech was presented, in order to gain deeper insight on how the speaker's speech act affect how the message they are delivering to the public.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is based on the theories of speech acts. The theory is then used to analyse the speech that Joe Biden delivered when he won the Presidential election. A victory speech is a form of political discourse, and further understanding about political discourse is imperative for this research in order to help the analysis of the speech acts used. The following are further explanations on political discourse and speech acts theory.

1.5.1   *Political Discourse*

Political discourse is identified by its actors or authors, and in this case, they are the politicians. The politicians in this study refer to the people who have been elected or appointed as the central players in the politics. However, various recipients in political communicative events are also included, such as the public, the people, and citizens. They all may take part in the political process and are actively involved in political discourse [4]. Political discourse is about politics and about how to do thing with words that are used to affect the political body. Lexical items are selected because of official criteria of decorum, and also because they effectively emphasize political attitudes and opinions, manipulate public opinion, manufacture political consent, or legitimate political power.

One form of political discourse is a political speech, which carries ideas and ideologies. Political speeches need to be conveyed through language so that they are agreed upon by the receivers. The use or omission of words and expressions may affect the meaning of a speech act in various ways. More often than not, political speeches are composed by a team of professional speech writers who eloquent when it comes to using persuasive language. A political speech is not necessarily a success because of a correctness of truth; rather it may be a matter of presenting

arguments [5]. A political speech serves as a text, an output and a process that may be spoken or written. In studying political speeches, a major theory that always been used to understand the message of a political speech is speech act theory. This theory will be used throughout the research for this paper.

1.5.2 *Speech Act Theory*

Many language experts have been interested in the study of meaning as an enterprise in language study. There are two major fields of language studies regarding the study of meanings that complementary to each other: semantics and pragmatics. Semantics is a branch of linguistics that is defined as "the study of meaning". A semantic analysis focuses on the conventional meaning conveyed by the use of words, phrases and sentences of a language. Meanwhile pragmatics is described as the study of language in use [6]. The two studies differ in semantic analysis, where there is an attempt to focus on what the words conventionally mean, and in pragmatic analysis, which focuses on what a speaker might want the words to mean on a particular occasion [7].

Speech Acts Theory is strongly related to the studies of Pragmatics. It is a tool to interpret the meaning and function of words in different speech situations concerning the symbolism of words. A speech is performed through the use of words, which results in a particular act being performed. This is what is called as a Speech Act. The theory states that Speech Acts have three classes: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts [8]. A locutionary act is an act of saying something, which means it is an act of producing an utterance. Illocutionary acts are the main discussion of any theory regarding speech acts, and they are identified by explicit performatives. Meanwhile, the perlocutionary act refers to how the speech act affect or influence feelings, thoughts or actions of the listener. Perlocutionary acts could be inspiring, persuading, or consoling. It may also affect the beliefs, attitudes or behaviors of the addressee. The three classes are then elaborated into five classes as follow [9]:

- Assertives: speech acts that done by speakers in terms of propositioning such as stating, claiming, reporting, announcing, and so on.
- Directives: attempts done by the speakers to gain some form of effect through the action of hearer such as requesting, ordering, demanding, begging, and so on.
- Expressives: the expression of the speakers through psychological statements such as thanking, apologising, congratulating, and so on.
- Commissives: the speakers make commitments to do an action in the future such as promising, offering, swearing, and so on.
- Declarations: speech acts that bring about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality such as naming a baby/ship, resigning, dismissing, accepting, and so on.

For the purpose of analysis in this paper, the five classifications of Speech Acts will be used. This comes from the fact that politicians articulate their intentions through the various kinds of utterances: they inform, inspire, assure, accuse, promise, direct, suggest, apologize, disagree, criticize, etc. These purposes of political discourse are all relevant to the five classifications of Speech Act Theory.

II.   METHODOLOGY

For this study, a descriptive qualitative approach is used. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to asocial or human problem [10]. A descriptive qualitative approach aims to describe the condition and situation of something specifically [11].   The data will be analysed and then described to explain its functions relating to the Speech Act Theory.

The primary source of data for this research is Joe Biden's victory speech that he read on November 7, 2020 after he was declared as the winner for the 46th Presidential Election in the United States. The speech was downloaded from the internet. The secondary source of data are the books regarding the Speech Act Theory that are used as references to support this study. The type of data taken for the study is soft data, and they are utterances from the Biden's speech that will be analysed using the Speech Act Theory.

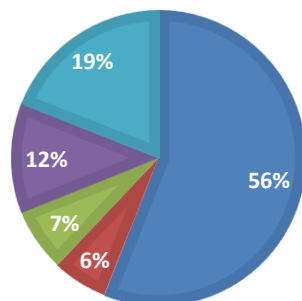## III.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data has revealed that assertive acts accounts for the largest proportion with 56% of the illocutionary acts performed in our data. Next to this are expressive acts with 18%. Then there's directive acts with 11%. After that, there is declarative acts with 7%, and the last one is commissive with 6%. The summary of the speech acts that are represented by Joe Biden's victory speech presented in the table and the chart below.

Tabel 1. Summary of the speech acts in the data

Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	53	56%
Commissive	6	6%
Declarative	7	7%
Directive	11	12%
Expressive	18	19%
Total	95	100%

Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of the Speech Acts

The reason for this result is because the speech used as the source of data is a victory speech, which means that it predominantly uses sentences that state, inform, describe, inform, thank, praise, encourage and urge people. With those intentions conveyed in the speech, it is expected that the listeners of the speech could be directed into celebrating along with the winner as the person who delivered the speech, as a show of support. Thus, the specific speech acts performed in the data refer to assertives, expressives, and directives as the three dominant speech acts. Detailed discussion of the performance of each speech act will be explained in order of which speech act is shown to be more dominant throughout the speech.

Assertive Acts

As stated before in the introduction, assertive act is the most common illocutionary act in the data, representing 56% of the total utterance acts in the data. Included in this act are stating, suggesting, describing, claiming and informing. Some of the data are indicated by the use of assertive verbs, others are inferred through the meanings of the sentences. Here are some discussions on the samples related to this act.

Sample 1

I've long talked about the battle for the soul of America.

Sample 2

We have won with the most votes ever cast for a presidential ticket in the history of this nation – 74 million.

Sample 3

As I said many times before, I'm Jill's husband.

Sample 4

Jill's a mom – a military mom – and an educator.

Sample 5

That in America everyone should be given the opportunity to go as far as their dreams and God-given ability will take them.

In Sample 1, the speech act that is performed is stating. It is shown in this sentence when Biden stated what had always been general knowledge to everyone, which is insinuated by his use of *I've long talked*. Meanwhile in Sample 2, it tells the listeners that there were 74 million that participated in the election, which was more than it had ever been in the history of American election. This is an information that Biden delivered to his listeners, thus it means that the sentence is informing. Sample 3 falls under claiming, because through Biden's words the listeners could tell how Biden claimed his role as the husband of his wife Jill. In Sample 4, the listeners were given the description Jill Biden, which means that this sample is describing. All four forms of speech acts fall under the Assertive Acts classification. Lastly, Sample 5 is suggesting because through that sentence, Biden gives a suggestion on what he feels the ideal life for every American.

Expressive Acts

Expressive acts have the function of revealing the psychological state of the speakers regarding the topic they are discussing. Expressive act is used to to communicate speaker's feeling by thanking, praising, encouraging, inspiring, and assuring. This research, expressive acts are represented by 19% of the data. Here are the elaboration on this speech act, which is based on the samples of the data.

Sample 6

I am humbled by the trust and confidence you have placed in me.

Sample 7

And I will be honoured to be serving with a fantastic vice president – Kamala Harris – who will make history as the first woman, first African American woman, first woman of South Asian descent, and first daughter of immigrants ever elected to national office in this country.

Sample 8

And to those who voted for President Trump, I understand your disappointment tonight.

Sample 9

This is the United States of America, and there has never been anything we haven't been able to do when we've done it together. (inspiring)

Sample 10

You see, I believe in the possibility of this country. (encouraging)

In Sample 6, the sentence expresses Biden's gratitude for winning the American Presidential election. He used the word *humbled* as his way of thanking the American nation who voted for him. Sample 7 uses the word *honoured* to show Biden's appreciation of having Kamala Harris as his very competent running mate. Thus, this sample is a form of praising. Sample 8 is assuring because Biden was telling people who voted his opponent that he got how they were feeling. The word *understand* is used to assure the listeners of this fact. Sample 9 falls under the classification of inspiring because the sentence as a whole inspires Americans to rise up

together to return into the great nation they believe to be. In Sample 10, the sentence Biden used is a form of encouraging by using the word *believe* to get the American people to be better.

Directive Acts

Directive acts are used when speakers are trying to get the listeners to do what they want them to do. It includes acts such as commanding, requesting, condemning, warning, urging and disagreeing. This act is represented by 12% of the data. Examples shown by the samples below will give further explanation about this speech act classification.

Sample 11

To make progress, we must stop treating our opponents as our enemy.

Sample 12

I said from the outset I wanted a campaign that represented America.

Sample 13

It's time to put away the harsh rhetoric, to lower the temperature, to see each other again, to listen to each other again.

Sample 14

We cannot repair the economy, restore our vitality, or relish life's most precious moments – hugging a grandchild, birthdays, weddings, graduations, all the moments that matter most to us – until we get this virus under control.

Sample 11 fall under the category of commanding because the word *must* indicates a command is issued. Sample 12 is requesting because the word *wanted* indicates that a request was made about something, and in this case it is about having a campaign that represented America. In Sample 13, the words used in the sentence give off the sense of how Biden was urging the public to stop being at odds with each other and start making up in order for the American to rise up to a better life. Sample 4 is a combination of two speech acts. The first one is warning, which is shown by how Biden reminded the public they wouldn't be able to show their affections to their loved ones during this time of the pandemic. The second speech is urging, which completes the sentence by pushing them to work together in getting the virus under control.

Declarative Acts

The use of declarative acts indicate that a change is about to be carried out into the world. The acts include endorsing, declaring, appointing, naming, accepting and so on. This type of speech act is represented by 7% of the data. Below are the samples and the discussions regarding them.

Sample 15

My fellow Americans, the people of this nation have spoken.

Sample 16

Now that's what I want the administration to look like.

Sample 17

It is time for our better angels to prevail.

Sample 18

I ran as a proud Democrat.

Sample 19

I will now be an American president.

In Sample 15, Biden declared to the listeners how the American nation had made a collective decision. Thus, this sample falls under the declaring category. In Sample 16, Biden was showing his support on what a

government administration should look like for America. This indicates that the speech act used is endorsing. Sample 17 is appointing because it is referring to the current situation that needs everyone to be a better person. Sample 18 is an example of namin because through the sentence, Biden called himself as a Democrat—and a proud one at that. Lastly, Sample 19 is accepting because Biden was recognising his new role as the American president.

Commissive Acts

Commissive acts provide information on the participant's intention to carry out future actions through promising, pledging, offering, vowing and swearing. This research has 6% of commissive acts presented in the data. Here are the samples taken from the data and the explanation about them.

Sample 20

I will spare no effort – or commitment – to turn this pandemic around.

Sample 21

I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide, but to unify; who doesn't see red and blue states, but a United States; and who will work with all my heart to win the confidence of the whole people.

Sample 22

Hopefully, this hymn gives you solace as well.

In Sample 20, the use of the word *will* here indicates a promise Biden made to do everything he could put a stop to the pandemic. Thus, this sample is an act of promising. In Sample 21, the use of the word *pledge* outright shows this sentence as an example of pledging. Lastly, Sample 22 is offering because Biden offered a hymn that he hoped would boost the morale of the American nation.

IV.   CONCLUSIONS

The results for this study all answer the research questions.. Firstly, this research succeeds in identifying the speech act features of the selected speech, which Joe Biden's victory speech. All of the speech acts classifications are identified to have been present in the speech. This leads to the answer to the second result of the research. By analysing the features in relation to the contexts in which the speech was represented, the research manages to determine the frequency of each of the speech acts in the speech. In this exact order, the most frequent is Assertives with 56%, followed by Expressives with 19%, then there's Directives with 12%, the next one is Declarative with 7%, and lastly is Commissives with 6%.

The last result of this research shows that the speech acts used in the speech did have a part in making sure that the message the speaker, who was Joe Biden, wished to convey were delivered to the public. With the frequent use of Assertives in his speech, Biden was cementing the fact that he's won, and telling the public how legitimate his victory was by giving factual information, and describing how the American would be under his lead through his suggestions of the country should be. However, a victory speech wouldn't be complete without the victor expressive his gratitude, and this is shown by the Expressive Acts being the second most frequently used speech act in the speech.

Directives are the third most frequent because Biden was slowly trying to get the American nation into following and agreeing his programs to create a better American nation. Declarative Acts are next, but it's hardly anymore frequent than Commissives. This is because a victory speech hardly needs the speech acts that are used to make grand promises or declarations of making a change. Therefore, based on the results of this research, it can be conluded that a political speech, particularly a victory speech of a winning presidential candidate, mostly used Assertive Acts in his speech, and the least speech act used is Commissive Acts.

V.   Acknowledgements

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