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Commissive Speech Act in Joe Biden's Selected Speech

A B S T R A C T

This study deals with analyzing the presidential victory speech selected on November 8, 2020, since it has the purpose of being a piece of discourse with specific goals from a pragmatic perspective. It tackles the use of the main types presented by Searle (1979), who classified commissive speech acts into six types: promise, vowe, refusal, pledge, commit, and offer. Results show that there are three types of illocutionary acts: promise, vowe, and offer. The study tries to answer the following question: (1) What are the main functions of commissive in Joe Biden's selected victory speech on November 8, 2020? (2) How is commissive conveyed in Biden's victory speech?

The study aims at classifying the functions of commissive in Biden's victory speech. Analyzing how the commissive speech acts conveyed in Joe Biden's victory speech The researcher chooses eight Extracts were selected from Biden's victory speech. The findings show that the overall relative frequency for selected types of promises commissive speeches is (4), offer (2), and vowe (2). The results show that Biden relied more on utterance (promise) than other commissive speech acts since he committed to some future actions.

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فعل الكلام المكلف في خطاب جو بايدن المختاره

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الخلاصة:

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليل خطاب النصر الرئاسي المختار بتاريخ ٨ نوفمبر ٢٠٢٠، حيث يهدف إلى أن يكون قطعة خطاب ذات أهداف محددة من منظور عملي. ويتناول استخدام الأنواع الرئيسية التي قدمها

سيرل (١٩٧٩) الذي صنف أفعال الكلام الإلزامية إلى ستة أنواع: الوعد، والنذر، والرفض، والتعهد، والالتزام، والعرض. أظهرت النتائج أن هناك ثلاثة أنواع من الأفعال الإنشائية: الوعد، والعرض، والتعهد. تحاول الدراسة الإجابة على السؤال التالي: (١) ما هي المهام الرئيسية للإلزام في خطاب الفوز الذي اختاره جو بايدين في ٨ نوفمبر ٢٠٢٠؟ (٢) كيف يتم نقل الإلزام في خطاب فوز بايدين؟ تهدف الدراسة إلى تصنيف وظائف الإلزام في خطاب فوز بايدين. تحليل كيفية نقل أفعال الخطاب التوسلية في خطاب فوز جو بايدين يختار الباحث ثمانية مقتطفات تم اختيارها من خطاب فوز بايدين. أظهرت النتائج أن التكرار النسبي الإجمالي لأنواع مختارة من خطابات الوعد والتفويض هو (٤)، والعرض (٢)، والتعهد (٢). أظهرت النتائج أن بايدين اعتمد على التزام (الوعد) أكثر من غيره من أفعال الكلام التكليفية، حيث أنه التزم ببعض التصرفات المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أفعال الكلام، الالتزامات، البراكمتية، الأفعال الالقائية، بايدين، التعبير

1. Introduction

One of the main branches of linguistics is pragmatics. It is simply concerned with the study of the intended meaning (Cook, 2003:53). Speakers not only convey words but also actions in their speech in order to achieve communication goals. Speaking is an action that is carried out through utterances. People can act in this situation by speaking. The activity does not need to be physically performed by the speakers. The words spoken would be adequate to carry out a task. When people apologize, greet, ask, criticize, invite, congratulate, or refuse, they are engaging in speech act. This study specifically focused on commissive speech acts (Yule, 1996: 47).

One type of speech act that commonly happens in a conversation between one person and another is commissive. Commitment is one type of speech act in which the speaker commits to future action, and it is exploited in many interactions. In this research, commissive speech acts as a term to describe the taking of a swear or promise phrase that will be done in the future. In commas, speakers commit themselves to a future act that makes the words fit their words. They express what the speaker intends (Yule, 1996: 54). The forms of commissive speech might include threat, promise, refusal, and warning. Those forms build speech by giving promises by the speaker to the hearer.

The researcher chose *Joe Biden's* speech as an object because his speech contained a commissive act. In this case, the writer will explain that this study focuses on analyzing the form of commissive: the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts in every utterance used by Joe Biden.

Austin (in Searle, 1979:14) states that commissives is to committ the speaker to a certain future course of action. Commissives are the kind of speech acts in which the speaker expresses his intention concerning some future actions. Sometimes, someone wants to do something in the future by saying something such as a promise, threat, warning, or refusal. A promise is an utterance used to remind the speaker about something to be done in the future. Threat is an expression of an intention to inflict pain, injury, punishment, or evil. A warning is an utterance that intends others to be careful. It could be an advice, a warning, a suggestion, etc. Refusal is when the speaker says firmly that the hearer will not do, give, or accept something. The research problem is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are the persuasive speech acts used by Joe Biden?
2. What is the most common offensive speech act used by Joe Biden?
3. To what extent does Joe Biden employ the commissive act in his speech?

The interest of this study is to analyze the speech delivered in Joe Biden's speech and to see the types of persuasive speech acts used in his speech. It also tries to describe the functions of these speech acts and how they are employed by Joe Biden. The present study is limited only to providing a pragmatic analysis of the speech act of commissive in Joe Biden's speech.

2. Pragmatics and Speech Act Theory

Pragmatics is a field of linguistics that studies the meaning of words in their context. The main focus of pragmatics is on a person's ability to deduce meanings from specific types of speech in order to understand what a speaker is referring to and the relationship between new information and previous events. It also supports understanding of the speech by drawing on earlier knowledge of the topic and the speaker (Charles, 1998: 18). According to Levinson (1983: 6), "Pragmatics is the study of such ties between language and contexts that are grammaticalized, or

delivered in the structure of a language". He also states that Pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning that is based on the systematic use of language.

Speech act theory is one of the most important aspects of pragmatics. It was founded by the British philosopher John Austin, who said that "in saying anything, we are doing something" (Austin, 1962: 12). He believes that when we try to convey the intended meaning, we not only produce grammatical forms and words, but we also perform actions with these expressions. The verbs that are utilized to express the speech act intended by the speaker are called performative verbs (Crystal, 1985: 285).

According to Tragoutt and Pratt (1980:229), various frameworks for describing language use in context have been presented. The "speech act theory" considers an utterance to be an act performed by a speaker in a context with respect to an addressee.

3. Commisive

Yule (1996: 85) stated that commissive is an illocutionary act, and the point is to compel the speaker to take a specific action in the future. This category was once employed to connect the speaker's words to the actions they inspired. Vanderveken (1985) stated that commissive acts are primarily hearer-directed, implying that a speech act should be directed at a particular hearer and can be addressed to anybody or no one. Hearer-directed acts, on the other hand, in which the hearer is not the same as the speaker, must be conducted as explicit public acts, meaning that their intent is directed at anyone.

Commissives are the types of speech acts used by speakers to commit themselves to a future action. They convey what the speaker intends. They include promises, threats, refusals, and commitments, as in (we'll be back and I'll pay for you. They can be delivered by the speaker alone or by the speaker as part of a group. When utilizing a commissive, the speaker manages to make the world fit the words (through the speaker).

Commissive speech acts are recognized and categorized based on the speech act theory created by Searle (1979) and Yule (2006).According to this theory

commissive speech acts are classified into six types: promise, guarantee, refusal, threat, volunteer, and offer.

1. **Promise**

A promise is a verbal or written commitment to do or refrain from doing something. It is a statement used to remind the speaker of a task that needs to be completed in the future. The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1966:1151) defined a promise as a statement that someone will or will not do something in the future. Searle (1976) maintained that for a valid promise speech act, there must be five prerequisites. The speaker must first aim to do what he promises and then believe that the action is in the best interests of the hearer. The speaker must then assume that he is capable of performing the action. The speaker should predict a future action, and then he must predict his own action.

ii. **Vow**

Vows need not be addressed to the hearer, unlike promises and threats. One commits to doing something when they make a commitment to accomplish it. However, one is not required to do it in favor of or against their listeners.

Vowing of more have an added solemnity that isn't always evident in threats and promises (Searle and Vanderveken, 1985).

iii. **Refusal**

When a speaker explicitly or implicitly declines an invitation or request, this is referred to as a speech act of refusal (Tanck, 2002: 2). As Searle and Vanderveken (1985) claimed, refusal is an illocutionary conflict that occurs when a speaker interprets what he intended to say as acceptance when speaking in that setting. As a result, when given the choice between acceptance and rejection, the illocutionary contradiction of acceptance is refusal, which then has the extra preparatory. Ghazanfari (2012) claimed that refusals are negative reactions to invitations, requests, ideas, and other common forms of communication.

iv. Threat

According to Allan (2014), a promise has two components: a threat and a promise-truth. If the statement involves the goal of creating harm, scandal, or punishment, the issue transforms the promise into a threat. Threat is a non-performative verb, according to Allan's definition of promise and truth.

A threat is a declaration of a desire to hurt or punish someone. If the listener refuses to follow the speaker's order, it implies intimidation. It is frequently used to scare a listener because the speaker feels the listener is beneath him or her and is therefore driven by hatred and mistrust (Al-Bantany, 2013: 26). It is a declaration of intent to cause harm, punishment, or evil (Mifflin, 2003). It is a statement in which you threaten to harm or trouble someone if they do not comply with your wishes.

V. Volunteer

Volunteering is defined as making a voluntary offer to perform a task. It is to do a service or offer to do so of one's own free will. It refers to deciding to freely offer or contribute without being asked (Husain, 2018: 43).

vi. offer

Offering stands out from other commissive speech acts and is seen as a conditional illocution of commissive speech acts. An offer is described as a conditional promise made solely upon acceptance by the hearer (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). Consequently, an offer only has legal force when it is accepted, and anyone may accept an offer as long as it has been made and is still in effect.

5. Methodology and Data Analysis

The modal of analysis of the current study is limited to Searle (1969) as a modal of analyzing speech acts of commissives:

Promise, Guarantee, Refusal, Threat , Volunteer, Offer

Extract (1)

"I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify, who doesn't see red states and blue states, only sees the United States."

Biden promises the American people by starting the clause "I pledge...". The utterance above can be indicated as a commissive, illocutionary act of promising. Biden pledges to bring unity to the country, not just the presidents of red states (republicans) and blue states (democrats), but all of America.

Extract (2)

"I'll work as hard for those who didn't vote for me as those who did."

The clause "I'll work..." in Biden's utterance is indicated as a commissive illocutionary act of willing. Here, Biden tells the audience that he will keep fighting for those who did not vote for him.

Extract (3)

"It will be constructed out of compassion, empathy, and concern."

The clause 'It will be...' in Biden's speech is indicated as a Commissive illocutionary act of promising. In which Biden tells the audience about compassion, empathy, and concern.

Extract (4)

"I said at the outset, I want to represent this campaign and look like an American, and we have done that."

In the quote above, there is a commissive speech act of "vowe" that has been used by Biden when he addressed his audience in his election campaign.

Extract (5)

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

In this extract, there is a commissive speech act with the illocutionary force of promise. He promises to put an end to the pandemic soon

Extract (6)

“We must make the promise of the country real for everybody – no matter their race, their ethnicity, their faith, their identity, or their disability.”

The above statement contains illocutionary force, making it a commissive speech act. By direct speech “promise”. This context of speech shows that Joe Biden is committed to continuing to keep the unity of the American people from division and racism, and he tries to unite all these races. From the utterance, it can be concluded that this utterance functions as a commissive illocutionary act as it is classified as a promise, for he commits himself to do some future course of action.

Extract (7)

“And if we can decide not to cooperate, then we can decide to cooperate. And I believe that this is part of the mandate from the American people. They want us to cooperate. That’s the choice I’ll make. And I call on the Congress – Democrats and Republicans alike – to make that choice with me”.

This utterance functions as a commissive illocutionary act as it is classified as an “offer” that is conditional based on the hearer’s acceptance. An offer becomes binding only on acceptance, that is, only if it is accepted by the hearer. In this case, Biden offers the citizens of America cooperation between two parties (the Republican and Democratic parties). Biden also promises the citizens of America cooperation between the two parties.

Extract (8)

“Hopefully, this hymn gives you solace as well.”

Extract (7) is offering because Biden offered a hymn that he hoped would boost the morale of the American nation.

Conclusions

Commissives are concerned with a speaker's commitment to future action. The researcher found at least one utterance of the commissive act that had multiple interpretations.

After analyzing Joe Biden's selection-victory speech, the researcher draws two conclusions: The first answering the first research objective about the types of commissive speech acts used in Joe Biden's victory speech in the 2020 US presidential election. This research analyzes eight utterances produced by Joe Biden in his speech. And the second research object is about 'the functions of these speech acts and how they are employed by Joe Biden'.

All of these types of illocutionary acts found in Joe Biden's victory speech have different purposes; the commissive one suggests four promising, two vowing and two offering.

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