

PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF SPEECH ACTS IN SELECTED OFFICIAL SPEECHES OF DONALD TRUMP AND BARACK OBAMA

Chika Kate

Abstract

This paper examines the pragmatic functions of speech acts in the inaugural addresses of Donald Trump (2017) and Barack Obama (2009) through the lens of J.L. Austin's (1962) Speech Acts Speech Act Theory, with special reference to Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative descriptive analysis and quantitative measurement, the research analyses twenty-four carefully selected excerpts by identifying, categorising, and comparing the distribution and functions of assertives, commissives, directives, and expressives in both speeches. Results reveal that while assertives dominated both addresses equally (41.6%), significant differences emerged in the use of other speech acts: Obama employed more commissives (33.3% vs. Trump's 16.6%) and expressives (16.6% vs. Trump's 8.3%), while Trump used substantially more directives (33.3% vs. Obama's 8.3%). Furthermore, each president deployed these speech acts with markedly different rhetorical purposes—Trump's language constructed a narrative of national crisis requiring authoritative intervention, while Obama's established one of national continuity requiring collective effort. These findings demonstrate how the strategic deployment of speech acts reflects and reinforces each president's political ideology, leadership style, and approach to governance. The study contributes to political discourse analysis by illustrating how inaugural addresses function as sophisticated linguistic performances through which presidents establish authority, define national identity, and set expectations for their leadership.

Key words: Assertives, Commissives, Directives, Expressives,
Barack Obama's speech and Donald Trump's speech

1.0 Introduction

Language is essential to politicians. This is because most of their activities are carried out through a medium provided by the language, which is speech. This, in turn, has made speech an essential element of language that we use daily. A speech is an official address presented to a specific audience with the aim of inspiring, persuading, convincing, or informing that audience. These political speeches could include campaign speeches, manifestos, rallies, elections, inaugurations, and governance speeches. Through these speeches, a politician conveys his thoughts to the people.

Political language is the language and words that are utilised by politicians in the political field. Opeibi (2009) accepts that,

scholars have long been interested in discussions on the relationship between politics and rhetoric or, more recently, political discourse. Early attempts in this study can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, when the study of language used in persuasion was popularised by Aristotle and Cicero. Language and politics are two dynamic social phenomena that are inseparable (p. 96) cited in Ogbonna (2009, p.2).

Language has a significant impact on the way a nation advances, as it is utilised in elections and other political activities. The way to influence electorates is correspondence and speechwriting. In a popularity-based express, the framework permits individuals to get tied up with what the politicians are saying in their campaign discourses and are used verifiably or unequivocally to convey a point of view.

This study examines the addresses of the two past presidents of the United States, Donald Trump and Barack Obama, utilising Speech Acts theory as a theoretical framework. The previous leader of America, Barack Hussein Obama, is an attorney and a member of the Democratic Party. He has been in the country's politics before he was chosen the 44th leader of the US of America from 2009 to 2017. Donald John Trump is a white American businessman and a member of the Republican Party. Before entering politics, he was a businessman and a

TV personality. He accepted office on the twentieth of January 2017 and became the 45th President of the US of America. America is one of the most developed nations on the planet, and has become a focal point of fascination, particularly with regard to the country's political issues. In view of their exceptional foundations and convictions, the researcher has chosen to do a pragmatic function of speech acts of their chosen addresses. Speech acts theory is one of the theories that overlap with pragmatics.

Pragmatics is viewed as the study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations of necessity, it would take knowledge of the message being communicated or the speech act being performed; the participants involved; their intention, knowledge of the world and the impact of these on their interactions; what they have taken for granted as part of the context; the deductions they make based on the context; what is implied by what is said or left unsaid; etc. (Leech, 1983, p. 20; Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 146; Thomas, 1995, p. 7) cited in Dylgjeri (2017, 19-20). Yule (1996, p.47) views that “in attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, but they also perform actions via those utterances”. Actions performed via utterances are generally called Speech Acts. This study examines the comparative analysis of selected official speeches by Donald Trump and Barack Obama, utilising Austin's (1962) Speech Acts Theory with special reference to Searle's (1969) classifications of illocutionary acts. These illocutionary speech act types include assertive acts, declarative acts, commissive acts, directive acts and expressive acts. This study sets out to identify, analyse and find out the similarities and differences present in the speech act types in the two speeches.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to do a pragmatic function of speech acts analysis of selected official speeches of Donald Trump and Barack Obama. Categorically, the objectives of this study are:

- i. to identify and categorise the speech acts in the selected official speeches of Donald Trump and Barack Obama using J. L Austin's 1962 Speech Act Theory (with Searl's taxonomy of illocutionary Acts).
- ii. To analyse the pragmatic functions of speech acts in the selected official speeches.
- iii. To determines the dominant speech acts used in the speeches of Donald Trump and Barack Obama.

2.0 Studies on Speech Acts

Language shapes political communication via crafted speeches influencing opinion and policy. Obama and Trump show distinct rhetoric in speeches, but studies overlook Speech Act Theory comparisons of their addresses. Prior work ignores systematic speech act analysis for authority and persuasion. This section reviews existing studies that are relevant to this study. The works are examined in contributions to scholarship in speech acts.

Xinyu and Ge (2025), investigates, "Analysis of the Application of Speech Act Theory in English Advertising". The application of Speech Act Theory to English commercials is the primary focus of this study. First, it provides an in-depth examination of the basic concepts of Speech Act Theory, including locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. After that, it thoroughly examines the various ways in which this idea is applied in English commercials. Direct speech actions, for instance, are used to directly communicate product information and appeals, whereas indirect speech acts are used to elicit emotional resonance subtly and thought from consumers, thereby affecting their propensity to buy. In advertisements, a variety of speech acts are used to accomplish goals, including persuasion, informational, and emotional appeals. It illustrates, through a case study, how English ads effectively utilise the Speech Act Theory to enhance marketing outcomes and communication effects. The study demonstrates that the Speech Act Theory is crucial to English ads, offering producers of

advertisements practical tactics and concepts. Additionally, it has applications. It has a positive and significant importance and reference value for both theoretical studies and practical applications in the field of English advertisements, and it aids consumers in better understanding the aims of ads.

Hebel, Abdel and Farah (2024) analyses King Abdullah II's address to the Nation on the 25th Accession to the Throne Day using speech act theory and pragmatics. This research, titled "Pragmatic analysis of King Abdullah's speech: exploring speech acts and societal context" looks at the delivery methods and rhetorical devices King Abdullah used in his address to effectively convey his points, highlighting Jordan's shared values, historical accomplishments, and future goals. The information was taken from King Abdullah II of Jordan's official website. The outcomes show how the speech accomplishes its communication goals and could influence public opinion. The pragmatic elements used in the speech included indirection, politeness techniques, contextualization, metaphor, deixis, and presupposition. The chosen rhetorical model of analysis shows how speeches tell tales that captivate listeners, strengthen feelings of patriotism, and foster unity. Throughout the examination, it becomes clear how language shapes national sentiment and cohesiveness in political debate.

The study titled "Speech Acts Analysis of Peter Gregory Obi's Post-Presidential Election Speech" was conducted by Ugwu and Nnamani (2024) highlights the Speech Acts utilised by Mr Gregory Peter Obi in his post-presidential election speech. The announcement of Senator Tinubu Ahmed as the victor of the inconclusive 2023 presidential election was questioned in this political address. The Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) and its modified principles by J.R. Searle (1969) were used in the investigation. The purpose of this article was to identify the speech acts that Mr Obi used and to determine how his choice of speech acts related to his personality and political beliefs. According to the study's findings, Mr Obi primarily employed assertive speech acts (38.6%), commissive speech acts (15%), expressive speech

acts (9%) and directive speech acts (3%). Instead of responding with hate speech in an election widely suspected of being rigged, Peter Obi employed Speech Acts, primarily consisting of petitions and expressions of appreciation, to handle any potential confrontation in the face of the 2023 election, which seemed to have been flawed. Mr Obi exhibited self-control by requesting composure. He did not use derogatory language to voice his opinions when he disagreed with his opponent. According to the paper's conclusion, the speech is a masterpiece in peace studies because it soothed the tense Nigerians and prevented bloody protests, proving Chiluba's (2021) that "there is a strong connection between what is said or written and how conflict may develop and escalate."

This study, titled "The Study of Speech Acts on Joe Biden's Victory Speech in the US Presidential Election 2020", by Wisamongko, Zahrotu, and Hadi (2023), focuses on the phenomenon of speech acts in Joe Biden's victory speech in the US presidential election 2020. Thirty quotes from Joe Biden's victory address have been chosen. A qualitative approach is used in this investigation. Furthermore, utterances containing speech acts serve as the primary data source for this study. The analysis starts by utilising Brown and Yule's (1983) theory of context and Searle's (1976) theory of speech acts to categorise the speech act kinds that Joe Biden utilised in his victory speech. There are thirty utterances in all, of which eleven are representational, seven are directive, six are commissive, five are expressive, and one is declarative. Finding out the hidden meanings of the speech actions Joe Biden utilised in his victory speech is the second study question. According to the study's findings, Joe Biden's implied meanings in his victory speech centre on his future commitments, his efforts to persuade the audience that he is sincere in his bid for president of the United States of America, his impressive list of programs he will implement once in office, and the significance of unity in advancing the country.

A study titled "An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Taylor Speech at NYU's 2022 Commencement" by Sanerita, Devita, and

Ignatius (2023). The illocutionary acts in Taylor Swift's 2022 commencement speech at New York University (NYU) are thoroughly examined in this paper. The speaker's intentional communication roles, such as asserting, commanding, inquiring, or expressing emotions, are encompassed in illocutionary actions, which are a crucial component of speech act theory. To identify the underlying goals and rhetorical devices employed in the speech, Taylor Swift's speech is analysed in light of illocutionary acts. Speech acts intended to accomplish communication purposes or objectives are referred to as illocutionary acts. Understanding how speakers use language to achieve their communication goals and how listeners interpret these utterances within the context of the discussion is facilitated by the study of pragmatics. It entails considering how speakers structure their goals in relation to the audience, the setting, the time, and the situation. This study examines Taylor Swift's illocutionary behaviours from her New York University (NYU) commencement speech. Using qualitative methodologies, this study attempts to discover and characterise the meaning of Swift's verbal utterances. According to the findings, Swift used 94 illocutionary act utterances in her discourse, comprising 33 representative utterances, 32 expressive utterances, 13 declarative utterances, directive utterances, and 7 commissive utterances. Our comprehension of the speaker's intentions and communication objectives improved because of our analysis of speech acts. Without this knowledge, misconceptions and misinterpretations may impede communication.

The study by Ojukwu C.K. and Osuchukwu N. (2019), titled "A pragmatic analysis of selected political speeches of Nelson Mandela," employs Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts and Grice's cooperative principles—which include the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner—within the framework of Austin's Speech Act Theory. The research aims to explain the significance of Mandela's political speeches, examine their adherence to Grice's cooperative principles, and evaluate whether his speeches meet Austin's felicity conditions. Using a qualitative analytical approach and purposive sampling, the

study analyses selected speeches. The findings reveal that Mandela's speeches are felicitous and meet Austin's felicity conditions. Mandela fulfilled every promise he made, satisfying the sincerity condition. The preparatory condition is met as Mandela, a leader, appropriately addresses his people. The executive condition is fulfilled due to Mandela's effective delivery as a skilled communicator. Furthermore, Mandela's speeches align with Grice's cooperative principles, as expected in any communicative context. The study concludes that Mandela's effective use of language was a crucial factor in South Africa's liberation from apartheid.

Studies above have explored its relevance in advertising, political discourse, and public speeches, demonstrating how speech acts shape meaning, influence audiences, and serve different communicative functions. Xinyu and Ge (2025) utilise Speech Act Theory in English advertisements, employing direct acts for product information and indirect acts for emotional persuasion. Hebel et al. (2024) analyse metaphors, deixis, and politeness in King Abdullah II's address aimed at promoting unity. Ugwu and Nnamani (2024) emphasise assertiveness and commissiveness in Peter Obi's discourse on conflict resolution. Wisasongko et al. (2023) elucidate the amalgamation of commands, commissives, and expressives in Biden's 2020 victory speech aimed at fostering unification. Sanerita et al. (2023) analyse Taylor Swift's address at NYU for emotional and assertive illocutionary behaviours. Ojukwu and Osuchukwu (2019) examine Nelson Mandela's speeches through the lens of Searle's illocutionary acts, Grice's maxims, and Austin's Speech Act Theory. The findings affirm that Mandela satisfied the felicity conditions—demonstrating sincerity through fulfilled commitments, exhibiting preparedness as an appropriate leader, and executing with proficiency—while upholding cooperative values. Their impactful rhetoric facilitated South Africa's anti-apartheid freedom. These studies illustrate the function of speech actions in persuasion within advertisements, politics, and public debate. Their research highlights how speakers strategically use speech acts to engage their audience and effectively

deliver their intended message. From advertising and political speeches to public addresses, the application of Speech Act Theory provides valuable insights into how language functions in persuasion, unity-building, and practical discourse. These studies collectively emphasise the power of speech acts in influencing public perception, fostering understanding, and enhancing communication strategies.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

A helpful framework for investigating the performative elements of language, especially how utterances create meaning in social circumstances, is provided by John Searle's Speech Act Theory. Through the application of this theory to the selected official speeches of Donald Trump and Barack Obama, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these statements function as a discourse form, carrying out various speech acts, including asserting, demanding, expressing feelings, and promising.

According to J.L. Austin's Speech Acts theory, language can be used not only to convey information but also to perform actions. Austin's 1962 book "How to Do Things with Words" challenges the widely held belief that communication merely serves to represent the outside world. His taxonomy categorises speech acts into three categories: perlocutionary (the effect on the listener), illocutionary (the speaker's intended aim), and locutionary (the fundamental meaning). Additionally, he distinguishes between constative utterances, which describe facts, and performative utterances, which implement change in response to advantageous circumstances, such as context and authority. Austin's idea has broad implications for politics, law, and everyday communication since speech actively shapes reality.

John Searle's Speech Act Theory, which builds on the seminal work of J.L. Austin, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex role of language—not just as a tool for performing actions, but also as a means of conveying information. According to Searle, language serves as a tool for human communication, and utterances carry out specific tasks in social

contexts, in addition to expressing ideas. At the heart of Searle's theory is the exploration of how speakers utilise language to perform actions, which he categorises into three distinct levels:

Locutionary Acts: The physical act of producing speech sounds or utterances, including the articulation of words and sentences, is known as locutionary acts. It is the foundational act of speaking, consisting of the phonetic act of pronouncing sounds, the syntactic act of arranging sounds into a sentence structure, and the semantic act of giving meaning to the words.

Illocutionary Acts: The primary focus of Searle's theory indicates the purpose or intent of an utterance—what the speaker hopes to achieve by saying something. This includes the "action" that the speaker performs when producing a sentence, such as asserting, questioning, requesting, commanding, or promising.

Perlocutionary Acts: Every speech act has an illocutionary force, which is the intended effect the speaker wants his words to have. Perlocutionary acts are those that involve the effect of another person's speech on the listener; they deal with the change in belief, behaviour, or emotion that the utterance of the speech act brings about.

According to Searle's theory, people talk not only to describe the world or state facts, but also to interact with it actively. Every speaking act has an illocutionary force, or the desired outcome the speaker hopes to achieve with their words. Speech is an action in and of itself that has the power to change perceptions and influence social behaviours, as this idea of language being alive and active suggests. According to this idea, context is crucial for comprehending the purposes of speech acts. The linguistic context—the words and sentences that precede or follow the statement, and the situational context—the social or physical setting in which the utterance is delivered – make up what is known as the context. Without the context, the meaning of a sentence will not be entirely apparent.

Allowing the speaker to communicate their desires, emotions, opinions, etc., to the listener is one of the most significant purposes of these illocutionary acts. However, depending on the context, the same

line may have a distinct illocutionary force. Searle presents five primary intended functions for language users in his forms of illocutionary activities. Speech can be used to accomplish various goals the speaker has in mind.

Assertives: Information is conveyed by the speaker and the words or terms that are utilised, which represent the world. The speaker is committing the proposition's veracity. The speaker in this instance asserts a reality about the world.

Commissives: The speaker pledges to follow a specific future path in the commissive circumstance. These relate to the speaker's desire and motivation to act. Promises, offers, vows, and refusals are a few examples.

Expressives: The speaker uses expressive speaking acts to communicate his feelings, emotions, or circumstances to the audience. It is intended to convey one's thoughts on a specific issue. Examples include apologies, congratulations, condolences, and emotions of happiness or sadness.

Directives: Giving someone instructions is the act of providing them with information that compels them to act. The speaker wants to influence the listener's actions. These consist of directives, advice, recommendations, and requests. The directive illocutionary force aims to persuade the listener to take a specific action.

Declaratives: When the world outside of the issuing statement changes, an utterance in the form of a declaration occurs. The speaker's proclamation of action brings about that shift. Although the speaker's intentions are the focus of the illocutionary function of speech acts, Searle also highlights the listener's role in identifying illocutionary acts.

To determine the illocutionary force behind a statement, listeners must rely on their everyday habits, background information, and contextual cues. The result of the listener's emotional, cognitive, or behavioural reaction to the speaker's intentions is known as the perlocutionary effect of the act.

According to Searle's argument, perlocutionary activities are primarily social in nature. Only when both the speaker and the listener

are familiar with their language and the sociolinguistic norms that govern communication can main speech acts be effective. Speech acts would not be able to perform as planned in the absence of standards to direct communication. The way a statement is interpreted and used in a particular setting depends on the context. When examining how words might function as meaning provocateurs in the linguistic domain by generating utterances, the model offered by John Searle's theory of speech acts is beneficial. This theory plays a key role in helping us understand the phenomenon of communication through speech acts, which can include actions such as giving orders, making claims, posing queries, or making promises, etc.

3.2 Research Methodology

The subsection of this study provides the methods and techniques through which this research is conducted. Selected official speeches of Donald Trump (2017) and Barack Obama (2009) have been chosen as the primary sources for the analysis of these speeches. The speeches of Donald Trump and Barack Obama were downloaded from the internet, from *whitehouse.gov*. A total of 24 excerpts have been taken from their speeches and are analysed, employing techniques such as illocutionary acts analysis, to derive meaning. This study adopts the purposive sampling technique. From each of the speeches, twelve (12) excerpts were extracted, summing to a total number of twenty-four (24) excerpts.

This research adopts both the qualitative descriptive method and quantitative method of data analysis. It aims to describe the linguistic properties of the data, which are utterances that are categorised into Assertives, Commissives, Expressives, and Directives for analysis. The quantitative analysis uses simple percentages to calculate the dominant speech acts in the selected official speeches of Donald Trump (2017) and Barack Obama (2009). The formula for a simple percentage used is Total number of a kind of speech act x 100.

Total number of all speech acts

1

Therefore, data for this study is obtained from official speeches. This data is analysed thereafter using J. L Austin's Speech Acts Theory with special reference to John Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary Acts to expose the pragmatic functions in the excerpts. This helps to answer the research questions and achieve the study's aim.

4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the existing data of selected excerpts in the inaugural speeches of Donald Trump (2017) and Barack Obama (2009). Therefore, a qualitative descriptive data analysis and to examine excerpts within the speeches carefully a quantitative method are applied by the researcher to carefully examine excerpts within the speeches and determine the dominant speech acts used in the excerpts. This methodology was adopted to effectively address the research objectives and questions.

The examination of excerpts in the speeches is based on Searle's (1969) theory of speech acts. The excerpts are used in interactions between the speaker and the listener. Consequently, this study focuses on identifying excerpts, categorizing them under the relevant speech acts, analysing their functions. For analysis, the researcher intentionally selected twelve (12) excerpts from each of the speeches, making it a total of twenty-four (24) excerpts.

4.1 Speech Acts Analysis of selected Excerpts in Donald Trump's (2017) Inaugural Speech.

This section examines excerpts in Donald Trump's speech using Searle's theory of speech acts: Assertives, Comissives, Expressives, and Directives.

4.1.1 Analysis of Assertives in Donald Trump's Speech

In Speech Act Theory, assertives or representatives are claims made by the speaker that reflect their belief regarding the truth of a proposition. They provide information and depict the world from the speaker's point of view. The speaker asserts the reality of the statement,

but the listener is not necessarily obligated to respond. They present facts, depict scenarios, or convey information; they bind the speaker to the stated proposition, and they can be either true or false based on reality.

Excerpt 1: “For many decades, we’ve enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry.”

Excerpt 2: “Subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military.”

Excerpt 3: “It is time to remember that old wisdom will never forget: that whether we are black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots, we all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same great American flag.”

Excerpt 4: “What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people.”

Excerpt 5: “Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger.”

In **Excerpt 1** “For many decades, we’ve enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry”, the statement claims, referring to a historical economic imbalance in which American industry has suffered while foreign industries have prospered. The wording implies a proactive participation in bringing about this change, possibly through globalization, outsourcing, or trade agreements. It portrays the issue as a zero-sum game, suggesting that domestic business is directly harmed by foreign growth. The statement, which supports protectionist measures or economic reform, gains urgency and credibility by placing the allegation within a long-term historical framework. Appealing to worries about job losses, deindustrialization, and the waning of American economic dominance, it has a compelling effect. Ultimately, it works as a call to action, encouraging a rethink of economic policies and industrial plans. In **excerpt 2**, by presenting a factual assertion regarding government policies that provide funding to foreign

military while ignoring home defence, the passage serves as a forceful speech act. It binds the speaker to the conviction that other countries have benefited from military alliances and financial assistance at the expense of national security. While “very sad depletion” supports the idea that domestic military power has suffered as a result, the phrase “subsidized the armies of other countries” portrays this allocation as an intentional and irresponsible move. The statement calls for a re-evaluation of military funding by characterizing the situation as a misalignment of priorities. In addition to disseminating facts, this assertive speech act aims to sway public opinion and impact national defence policy debates.

In **excerpt 3**, the excerpt makes a uniting assertion regarding national identity and shared ideals, which serves as a forceful speech act. It presents this idea as an indisputable fact by claiming that racial distinctions do not separate citizens in their liberties, patriotism, or loyalty to the country. By referencing “old wisdom” and stressing “we all”, the phrase reinforces a collective national identity while bolstering its authority and inclusion. It evokes feelings of solidarity and patriotism using metaphors and patriotic imagery. As an assertive speech act, it aims to influence public opinion in addition to describing reality, strengthening national unity, and restating the values that unite all citizens.

In **excerpt 4**, the statement claims a government's legitimacy stems from its accountability to the people rather than from party dominance. It argues that public influence, rather than political leadership, defines authentic democracy and prioritizes popular sovereignty over partisan politics. The statement urges attention in upholding democratic governance by drawing a comparison between party dominance and public control. It encourages civic involvement to guarantee that power stays with the people and functions as both a descriptive assertion about the ideal form of government and a prescriptive call to action.

In **excerpt 5**, “Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger” is an assertive speech act that promotes aspiration and forward-

thinking ideas. It positions expanded thinking as crucial to success by communicating a sense of necessity and urgency. The phrase “finally” gives the assertion more weight, while the words “we must” emphasizes the need to have a fearless attitude. Limitless potential is noted by the difference between “think big” and “dream even bigger”. The phrase functions as a more general call to action in leadership and growth in addition to providing personal inspiration. As an assertive speaking act, it aims to change attitudes and motivate action toward advancement and success, while also expressing a belief.

4.1.2 Analysis of Directives in Donald Trump’s Speech

Directives are speech acts used to influence a listener's actions. In speech act theory, they are meant to elicit a response. Examples include commands, requests, advice, warnings, and suggestions. Their effectiveness depends on context and tone—polite requests often work better than harsh commands. Understanding directives enhances effective communication and cooperation.

Excerpt 6: “We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs.”

Excerpt 7: “This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.”

Excerpt 8: “We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity.”

Excerpt 9: “Do not let anyone tell you it cannot be done.”

Excerpt 6 serves as a directive speech act, urging immediate action to protect national economic interests from foreign threats. By using “must”, the statement establishes a substantial obligation, emphasizing border protection as essential rather than optional. The phrase “the ravages of other countries” heightens the urgency by portraying foreign economic influence as destructive. Additionally, the list of economic threats “making our products, stealing our companies,

and destroying our jobs” intensifies the argument, assigning blame and compelling the audience to support protective measures. Overall, the statement reinforces a sense of responsibility and urgency, positioning border security as a crucial response to economic challenges.

In **excerpt 7**, “This American carnage stops right here and stops right now” is a directive speech act that calls for quick action in response to a perceived emergency. By employing absolute language that excludes any possibility of compromise, it communicates command, authority, and urgency. The speaker, Donald Trump, resolves to bring about change, which is emphasised by the repeated “stops”, which strengthen the statement's impact. Furthermore, the use of the phrase “American carnage” dramatises the situation and supports the need for intervention. Ultimately, the message serves as a powerful call to action, demanding a prompt and decisive response to a pressing issue.

In **excerpt 8**, the statement, “We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity”, functions as a directive speech act that calls for open communication, ethical discourse, and unity. The use of “We must” establishes an obligation, reinforcing the necessity of transparency and constructive dialogue. Encouraging honest debate ensures discussions are conducted with integrity, while the phrase “but always pursue solidarity” balances freedom of expression with the need for social cohesion. Ultimately, the statement encourages individuals to engage in responsible discourse that promotes collective unity rather than division.

In **excerpt 9**, the directive speech act, “Do not let anyone tell you it cannot be done”, promotes tenacity and unwavering resolve. To overcome external doubt, it emphasizes personal agency and provides specific instructions to help people resist discouragement. While “anyone tell you” Expands the directive to include all sources of negativity, the term “do not let” strongly forbids embracing doubt. The remark serves as a call to action, bolstering confidence and tenacity in

the face of hardship by stating that one's conviction in achieving one's goals should not be dictated by others.

4.1.3 Analysis of Commissives in Donald Trump's Speech

Speech acts known as Commissives are those in which the speaker commits to a future course of action. They tie the speaker to behave in accordance with their desire, promise, threat, or refusal. These actions are focused on the future and demonstrate the speaker's determination or choice. The speaker's obligation to keep the promise is the main topic of discussion. In social interactions, commissives frequently set duties or expectations. Examples include, "I promise to help," or "We shall take action.", etc.

Excerpt 10: "Together, we will determine the course of America and the world for years to come."

Excerpt 11: "America will start winning again, winning like never before."

Excerpt 10, as a commissive speech act, the phrase "Together, we will determine the Course of America and the world for years to come" conveys a strong commitment to influencing the future. It places a strong emphasis on solidarity, shared accountability, and lasting impact. "Together" emphasizes group effort, whereas "we will determine" expresses a firm commitment to change. The statement reassures the audience of an unwavering commitment to leadership and advancement by extending the pledge beyond national borders and into the future. Ultimately, it serves as a call to action and a pledge, reaffirming accountability and teamwork.

In **excerpt 11**, Donald Trump commits to future action by firmly promising national triumph; the excerpt "America will start winning again, winning like never before" functions as a Commissive speech act. It demonstrates a commitment to rectifying past mistakes and ensuring future success. With the assurance of "will", the statement "America will start winning again" alludes to a return to previous

dominance. While “winning like never before” denotes an unparalleled degree of achievement, the phrase “winning” is repeated, and this heightens the motivational tone. All things considered, the statement serves as a commitment to a national revival, igniting hope and confidence for the future.

4.1.4 Analysis of Expressives in Donald Trump's Speech

Expressives are one type of illocutionary behaviour that conveys the speaker's attitude or emotional state toward a circumstance, event, or state of affairs. Expressives are primarily concerned with expressing the speaker's sentiments, emotions, or reactions. Expressives, therefore, are usually used to convey the speaker's emotional response to something. They enable the speaker to convey their innermost feelings.

Excerpt 12: “We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon.”

In **excerpt12**, by expressing regret and discontent, the excerpt, “We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country have disappeared over the horizon”, functions as an expressive speech act. It contrasts perceived economic benevolence toward other countries with losses at home, reflecting dissatisfaction over the country's decline. By highlighting both tangible and psychic decay, the vision of diminishing wealth, strength, and confidence heightens the statement's emotional impact. Ultimately, this passage laments and calls for the restoration of national prosperity and morale while expressing profound regret over previous choices.

4.2 Speech Acts Analysis of selected Speeches in 2009 Barack Obama's Inaugural Speech

This section examines some selected portions in Barack speech using Searle's category of speech acts: Assertives, Commissives, Expressives, and Directives.

4.2.1 Analysis of Assertives in Barack Obama's Speech

Excerpt 1: "Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less."

Excerpt 2: "It has not been the part for the faint-hearted, for those that prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame."

Excerpt 3: "Our challenges may be new."

Excerpt 4: "The instruments with which we meet them may be new."

Excerpt 5: "Forty-four Americans have now taken the Presidential oath."

In **excerpt 1**, "Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less" serves as a forceful speech act by highlighting tenacity and high standards. It rejects mediocrity and complacency and affirms a shared history of commitment, tenacity, and perseverance. The statement's credibility is increased using unambiguous language, which also supports an identity based on quality and resolve. The statement positions hard labour as a defining characteristic of the collective experience and proclaims a dedication to ongoing effort and success.

In **excerpt 2**, "It has not been the part for the faint-hearted, for those that prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame", serves as an assertive speech act. It asserts that perseverance, not complacency, is the key to success. The idea that only the committed and hardworking can succeed is reinforced by the exclusion of people who value convenience and flimsy rewards. Overall, the statement emphasizes the importance of determination and effort in achieving meaningful accomplishments.

In **excerpt 3**, by recognizing the appearance of novel hurdles and highlighting the ongoing process of conquering them, the phrase “Our challenges may be new” functions as an assertive speech act. By establishing a common experience, the statement suggests that difficulties are a reality that affects everyone. The phrase promotes resilience and reassures the listener by acknowledging change without panic. It fosters a mindset of flexibility and tenacity by framing new difficulties as a part of a continuous process rather than an enormous crisis.

In **excerpt 4**, by recognizing the advancement of tools and approaches to problems, the excerpt, “The instruments with which we meet them may be new,” functions as an assertive speech act. It emphasizes the importance of adapting to changing conditions while remaining committed to finding solutions. The expression conveys a willingness to embrace new ideas while acknowledging the importance of sticking to tried-and-true methods. The statement supports a fair view of change by highlighting flexibility and the continuous search for workable answers.

In **excerpt 5**, the excerpt, “Forty-four Americans have now taken the Presidential oath,” functions as an assertive speech act. It stresses leadership as a national duty and upholds the legitimacy of democratic rule. The intended message, highlighting the continuity and tradition of the oath-taking process, remains obvious despite the irregularity of the grammatical structure. Ultimately, the statement reaffirms the importance of historical precedent in ensuring a peaceful transition of power.

4.2.2 Analysis of Commissives in Barack Obama's Speech

Excerpt 6: “We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together.”

Excerpt 7: “We'll restore science to its rightful place and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost.”

Excerpt 8: “And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age.”

Excerpt 9: “We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan.”

In **excerpt 6**, the statement, “We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together,” functions as a commissive speech act. It promises to bolster national growth and cohesion by focusing on connectivity and advancement to improve both conventional and contemporary systems, guaranteeing social cohesion and economic progress. The declaration emphasizes the importance of infrastructure in **excerpt 7**, by demonstrating a strong commitment to prioritizing scientific research and technical developments in healthcare, the statement, “We'll restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost,” serves as a commissive speech act. It promises to enhance medical services and affordability while highlighting the significance of evidence-based decision-making. The phrase makes it clear that science and technology are dedicated to advancement, creativity, and the greater good.

In **excerpt 8**, the excerpt, “And we will transform our schools, colleges, and universities to meet the demands of a new age,” functions as a commissive speech act. It promises to update educational establishments to address modern issues and maintain their relevance in a rapidly changing world. To equip students with the skills they will need in the future, the statement emphasizes the importance of adapting education to societal and technological changes.

In **excerpt 9**, by declaring a commitment to strategic military withdrawal and conflict settlement, the statement, “We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan,” functions as a commissive speech act. By highlighting sovereignty and self-governance, it demonstrates a responsible approach to withdrawing from Iraq while maintaining stability. It also emphasizes the work necessary to achieve peace in Afghanistan, presenting it as a

methodical and challenging process. To achieve long-term stability, the declaration ultimately expresses a commitment to strike a balance between disengagement and ongoing international responsibilities.

4.2.3 Analysis of Expressives in Barack Obama's Speech

Excerpt 10: “As we consider the role that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who at this very hour patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains.”

Excerpt 11: “We honour them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but they embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.”

In **excerpt 10**, by expressing admiration and respect for military people, the phrase, “As we consider the role that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who at this very hour patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains,” functions as an expressive speech act. It draws attention to the difficult circumstances under which they serve and honours their sacrifices. The statement highlights appreciation for their commitment to security and duty while reaffirming a sense of national honour and responsibility.

In **excerpt 11**, the excerpt, “We honour them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but they embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves,” functions as an expressive speech act. It emphasises their selflessness and dedication to a greater good while acknowledging their crucial role in defending freedom. The passage reaffirms a shared gratitude for their sacrifices and commitment to the country.

4.2.4 Analysis of Directives in Barack Obama's Speech

Excerpt 12 “To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.”

In excerpt 12, by promoting diplomatic interaction, the excerpt, “To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect,” functions as a directive speech act. It promotes a shift in relationships that is grounded in mutual respect and shared objectives, fostering cooperation and understanding. The declaration positive, constructive communication.

4.3 Frequency Table of Speech Acts in the Speeches of Donald Trump and Barack Obama

To provide a clearer picture of the prevalence of each speech act, the presentation of the frequency and corresponding percentages is in the table below:

Items Studied	Donald Trump's Speech		Barack Obama's Speech	
Speech Acts	Frequencies	Percentages %	Frequencies	Percentages %
Assertives	5	50%	5	50%
Commissives	2	15%	4	25%
Directives	4	25%	1	10%
Expressives	1	10%	2	15%

4.0 Discussion

This study examines the pragmatic functions of speech acts in the inaugural addresses of Donald Trump and Barack Obama, utilising Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory as the analytical framework. Searle categorises speech acts into assertives, commissives, directives, and expressives, each serving a distinct communicative function in conversation. This theoretical framework elucidates how both presidents employ language to exercise authority, negotiate power relations, and construct social narratives. In line with previous studies on political rhetoric (van Dijk, 1997; Fairclough, 2001), assertives constitute the predominant speech act type in both presidents' addresses, accounting for roughly 41.6% of each. These assertive acts serve as truth claims or factual declarations, through which both leaders

strive to, construct a reality that promotes their political goals. Trump's assertions frequently emphasise themes of nationalism, security, and existential peril, often establishing a sense of urgency and crisis by highlighting subjects such as immigration and terrorism.

In contrast, Obama's assertiveness typically presents challenges through the lenses of unity, hope, and progress, utilising logical reasoning to cultivate trust and collective optimism. This discovery aligns with Lakoff's (2004) research on divergent political framing techniques, in which conservative speech frequently evokes dread, whilst progressive discourse seeks to inspire collective growth. The commissive category, which includes promises and commitments, accounts for 16.6% of Trump's speech acts and 33.3% of Obama's, indicating distinct political orientations. Trump's commissives often manifest as guarantees or warnings regarding the restoration of American dominance, particularly in foreign relations, thereby fulfilling Austin's (1962) role of establishing audience trust through future-orientated commitments. Obama's commissive actions, along with his optimistic rhetoric, highlight societal advancement and reform, emphasising the function of commissives in fostering accountability and legitimacy (Blome, 2013). Directive speech acts, such as instructions, requests, and recommendations, constitute a substantial segment of both speeches—33.3% for Trump and 8.3% for Obama—and function as pragmatic instruments to provoke particular responses from their listeners. Trump's commands frequently seek to galvanise support for assertive measures, including military intervention and immigration regulation, in line with rhetorical strategies that emphasise urgency and authority (Charteris-Black, 2005). Conversely, Obama's directions primarily emphasise communal responsibility and inclusive collaboration, as illustrated by his frequent motivational phrase, "Yes, we can," which acts as a unifying call to action. This discovery highlights the importance of instructions in shaping political behaviour and promoting participatory engagement (Simons, 2001). Expressive speech acts, which communicate emotions, constitute 8.3% of Trump's and 16.6% of Obama's speech acts. Trump's vivid rhetoric frequently conveys displeasure or discontent, strategically bolstering his outsider and anti-establishment image (Fairclough, 2003). Obama's expressions are characterised by empathy and optimism, enhancing an emotional connection with the audience amid uncertain times, as outlined in the literature on emotional appeals in political

discourse (Hart, 2010). The comparatively reduced occurrence of expressives in both speeches suggests a deliberate regulation of emotional expression in political circumstances, harmonising affect with rhetorical aims. The distribution and use of speech acts in Trump's and Obama's inaugural addresses exemplify the strategic utilisation of language to exert power, shape public perception, and maintain political legitimacy. The prevalence of forceful language underscores the significance of truth-claiming in political discourse, whereas instructions highlight the importance of audience involvement in political activity. Commissives and expressives enhance these processes by cultivating trust and emotional rapport. This study contributes to the expanding literature illustrating how political leaders construct discursive tactics via speech acts that embody their ideological perspectives and governance approaches (Fairclough, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

5.0 Conclusion

This comparative examination of the speech acts in Donald Trump's 2017 and Barack Obama's 2009 inaugural addresses demonstrate how their linguistic tactics embody divergent political philosophies. Trump prioritised directives (33.3%) and assertiveness (41.6%), portraying the national situation through authoritative demands consistent with his populist and decisive leadership style. Obama emphasised commissive (33.3%) and expressive (16.6%) traits alongside assertive (41.6%), fostering collective continuity and empathy in line with progressive inclusivity. These trends highlight inaugural addresses as instruments for establishing presidential power and national identity through language.

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