

PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S 2025 INAUGURAL SPEECH

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Abstract

The study examines a genre of political speech that has gained popularity across the world. The study examines how language is used as a tool of persuasion, power and dominance as well as a meaning making tool in political communication. The research applies John Searle's speech act model to identify and analyse Donald Trump's 2025 Inaugural speech. Employing the qualitative descriptive method, the study establishes that Trump employs language with the aim of influencing his audience. The various acts identified in the speech shows a preference for the commissive and the assertive acts reflecting promises and specific declarations. His choice of speech acts shows authority, desire for change and stirs audience emotion. The study concludes that pragmatic analysis of inaugural speeches provide deep insights into how politicians employ language to achieve political goals and influence public perception.

Keywords: Language: Context: Political discourse: Speech acts: Pragmatics

Introduction

Language is a powerful tool in communication which allows people to share ideas, express opinions and emotions, and influence the decision of others. Language is an indispensable political tool due to its crucial role in fashioning public opinion and advancing political views. A major way of achieving this is through speeches. Political speeches, as argued by Jalaludeen (2020) are designed to inform, convince, and inspire people. As a genre of political speech, the inaugural speeches are especially important. Fafiyebi (2025) opines that politicians employ them to set the tone for a new government and articulate their vision for the country (Charteris-Black, 2014). President

Trump's speeches have been widely studied for their unique style and persuasive techniques. His choice of simple words, repetition, contextual and emotional appeals hugely contribute to create a speech that connects with his audience, both among the grass-root and the elite (Pennycook, 2012). Even after losing his re-election bid earlier in 2020, Trump delivered a speech which endeared him to most native Americans. After winning the 2024 Presidential election, Trump continued in this trajectory by infusing communicative strategies that are relevant to the current social and political and social environment. It is on this strength that the study focuses on a pragmatic analysis of the 2025 inaugural speech of President Donald J. Trump with the aim of showing the communicative strategies deployed in the speech and how they combine to achieve the communicative goal of the analyzing it from a pragmatic perspective.

Pragmatics is a branch of sociolinguistics that is concerned with how context influences meaning in communication. It examines how language users interpret messages based on factors such as time, place, audience, and speaker intention which is broadly referred to as context of situation (Yule, 2010). While other forms of linguistic analysis focuses on the syntax and pattern of language, pragmatics concerns itself with the interpretation of language based on how it is used in real situations, taking note of certain extra-linguistic factors like speaker, hearer, event and context. Adeyanju (2011, p275) argues that in politically motivated interaction, pragmatic analysis helps to reveal the deeper meanings behind words, the speaker's strategies, and the effects of the speech on listeners. This approach therefore becomes important in understanding how political leaders use language to achieve their goals (Kwasau and Abdulrasheed, 2025).

This research examines Trump's 2025 inaugural speech to identify the pragmatic elements deployed in his inaugural speech which explicit interest on key aspects such as speech acts, implicature, politeness strategies, and persuasive techniques. (Chilton, 2009).

Different scholars have commented on the effect of language choices on the meaning of politically motivated speeches. For example,

van Dijk, (2011) explains that political leaders often use personalized speaker pronoun as a pragmatic strategy designed to create communicative impact. This is seen in the use of pronouns like “we” to build unity or “they” to create contrast between groups. Charteris-Black, (2014) also opines that politicians also employ metaphors, slogans, and repetition to make their messages memorable. Trump is known for his direct speech style, frequent use of hyperbole, and appeal to emotions (Pennycook, 2012).

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to a holistic understanding of the interface between pragmatics, politics and language. Political speeches help to articulate national and international policies, shape social ideologies and most importantly, provides the platform for the people to critically examine the leadership motives of elected and appointed political leaders. Previous studies have examined the pragmatics of Trump’s past speeches, but there is limited research on his recent discourse as a re-elected president. This study provides insights into his evolving communication style and how it aligns with or differs from his previous speeches.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the speech act theory, introduced by J.L. Austin (1962) and later expanded by his student, John Searle (1969). The theory is built on how words are not just used to convey information but also to perform actions. This framework is particularly relevant for analysing political speeches because it sheds more light on how politicians use language to perform actions and influence the decisions of their followers. This is because political activities revolve around persuasion, hence, political leaders often use speech to persuade, assert authority, and communicate their policies effectively.

J.L. Austin (1962) divided speech acts into three categories: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. A locutionary act refers to the actual act of producing a meaningful sentence. For example, when a speaker says, "We will ensure victory for our national teams," the locutionary act is the verbal expression of this statement.

An illocutionary act is the intended function of the speech, such as making a promise, giving an order, giving assurance or issuing a warning. Using the same example, the illocutionary force of "we will ensure victory for our national teams," might be to reassure the public or make a promise towards achieving a goal.

A perlocutionary act refers to the effect the speech has on the audience, such as persuading, inspiring, convincing or assuring them. If the audience feels assured or convinced to support the leader's policies, then the perlocutionary effect is said to be successful. Austin argued that every speech act consists of these three components, highlighting how language functions as a powerful tool in communication. John Searle (1969) expanded on J.L. Austin's Speech Act Theory mainly by distinguishing between direct and indirect speech acts. He also provided a five-fold classification of speech acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives and clarified their role in communication. He argued that language is not just used to convey information but also to perform various actions. Searle built upon Austin's distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts and introduced a systematic way to categorize speech acts based on their function.

Five Categories of Searle's Speech Acts

Searle classified speech acts into five main categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Each category serves a different communicative purpose and influences how people interact in everyday conversations including political discourse.

1. Assertives – These are speech acts that express a belief or describe a situation. They present information as a fact, regardless of whether it is true or false. Examples include statements, descriptions, claims, reports, and stating.

Example: "The economy is improving." (Stating a belief about the economy)

In political speeches, assertives are used to present arguments, share achievements, or state the speaker's position on issues.

2. Directives – These speech acts are imperative statements used to elicit actions from the addressee or get someone to do something. They include commands, requests, suggestions, advice, and invitations. Directives can be direct (e.g., orders) or indirect (e.g., polite requests).

Example: "Please vote for me in the next election." (A request)

Political leaders often employ directives to influence public action by urging citizens to support policies or participate in national activities.

3. Commissives – These speech acts commit the speaker to a future action. They include self-imposed obligations like promises, vows and threats.

Example of commissive acts include: "I promise to create more jobs." (A commitment) Politicians frequently employ this speech act category to assure and re-assure the public of their intentions.

4. Expressives – These speech acts convey the speaker's emotions, attitudes, or psychological states. They include apologies, regrets, felicitations, condolences, and compliments are examples of expressive speech acts.

Example: "I sincerely apologize for the mistake." (Expressing regret)

Expressives play a crucial role in political speeches, especially in moments of national crisis, celebration, or public relations.

5. Declaratives – These speech acts bring about an immediate change in the world by their very utterance. They include official declarations, verdicts, resignations, baptisms, and pronouncements.

Example: "I hereby declare this conference open." (An official act)

Declaratives are often used in legal, religious, and political settings. In an inaugural speech, a president's statement "I take this oath as the President of the United States" is a declarative act that officially makes them the president.

Political Speeches and Pragmatics

Political speeches are often crafted by language experts who often take the communicative goals of their principals into consideration. They identify the need to use language to forge relationships, forge ideas and formulate policies. Pragmatics, being the study of how language is used, focuses on meaning as communicated in a text (Beard 2007, p.19). Therefore, they pay attention to what is said, how it is said and the speech acts employed in conveying their policies and ideas. Scholars have argued about the relationship between pragmatics and political speeches. Uduk and Omoregbe (2025) opines that political leaders are often conscious of the need to use language to effectively communicate ideas and ideologies. Political speeches play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing national policies. Inaugural speeches, in particular, are significant because they introduce a leader's vision and set the tone for their administration.

Pragmatics is the study of language as used in specific context or situation. As expected pragmatics takes cognizance of what is communicated, the participants, their contextual understanding as well as their ability to explore context in framing their communication. Nwachukwu and Ugwuagbo (2023) are of the opinion that pragmatics affords language users the opportunity to make deductions based on situational context, what is said and what is left unsaid and what is meant by the information provided by the information provided.

Literature Review

Scholars have carried out numerous research on the pragmatic patterns in the addressees of political leaders. For example, Sheveleva (2012) examined the rhetorical strategies in the political speeches of Barack Obama with the aim of identifying and describing his approach

to political communication and how his choice was able to create the kind of strong political followership he enjoyed. The work is premised on the belief that rhetorics is an important communicative strategy employed by political leaders to create a lasting impression on their audience. The study identified the use of positive self-presentation and a strong appeal to America's history as major communicative strategies in Barack Obama's political speeches. This allows him to pay attention to the actions which will lead to a successful future by realizing mistakes made in the past.

Gadiola (2021) examined the speech act types in selected political statements. The study concluded that political leaders skilfully deploy the commissives, assertives, directives and other speech act types to achieve their persuasive goals. This is done through persuasion, promising and calling for action.

Ahmed and Solomon (2025) conducted a comparative pragmatic study of the 2009 and 2013 inaugural speeches of Barrack Obama. Deploying a qualitative-descriptive approach, the study identified a preference for the commissive and assertive speech acts, highlighting his commitment to future actions and his desire to further entrench the ideals of the average American. A comparison of the two addresses indicates a shift in emphasis: the 2009 speech relies more heavily on commissive of reassurance and rebuilding during crisis, whereas the 2013 speech foregrounds assertive and directives that highlight national values and call for shared responsibility. Overall, the study demonstrates how speech act analysis uncovers the ways political leaders use language to persuade, inspire, and establish authority.

Uduk and Omoregie (2025) examined the speech act types deployed in the victory and inaugural speeches of Governor Alex Otti. The study revealed that Governor Alex Otti deployed illocutionary acts like commissives, assertives, directives, expressive and declaratives in various proportion in each of the speeches. In the two speeches, the speaker used expressives mostly to inspire hope, create a sense of unity and connect with his audience emotionally. Assertives and directives were used to reinforce the speaker's commitment to inclusive

governance. Commissives and declaratives were also used to assure the audience of the speaker's intention. The study finally identified two broad patterns in the speech category studied. While the victory speech employs the expressive acts, the inaugural address emphasises the commissive acts. This is because while the victory speech comes immediately after the election results were announced of celebration and jubilation characterized with heightened emotion, the inaugural address was delivered at a period when the speaker needed to make promises and assure the audience. These findings further reinforce the claim that language use is usually sensitive to context and situations surrounding their usage.

Quam and Ryshina-Pankova (2016) also examined the provisions of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to examine how the frontline candidates in the 2016 American Presidential elections aligned themselves with the audience. The study discovers marked patterns of politicians-voters interaction characterized by expansive and contrastive dialogic strategies. The study shows that politicians often identify specific audience and thematises communication to achieve specific goals. A major feature of the works identified here is the acknowledgment of context as condition for the crafting of meaning. The current study seeks to examine the acts performed by Donald Trump in his 2025 inaugural address and how they align to achieve his communicative objectives.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Excerpt 1: The Golden Age of America begins right now.

This utterance is a declarative speech act that seeks to enact a new reality through words. It seeks to create a sense of renewal, prosperity, and historical significance, functioning as an optimism strategy. The intention is to present the speaker as a symbol of a new American era. The combination of strong temporal immediacy ("right now") and symbolic language reinforces the urgency and importance of the proposed transformation, strengthening audience belief.

Excerpt 2: Our sovereignty will be reclaimed. Our safety will be restored.

This utterance functions as a declaration, announcing the recovery of two fundamental aspects of national stability, sovereignty and safety. It creates a sense of something valuable being taken away and now returned. The parallel structure reinforces the theme of restoration and order. It is intended to inspire feelings of security, strength, and pride, making the audience believe the leader has the capacity to defend their rights and wellbeing.

Excerpt 3: Sunlight is pouring over the entire world, and America has the chance to seize this opportunity like never before.

This statement functions as a declaration, combining metaphorical imagery with a motivational call. Implicitly, the “sunlight” represents global opportunity, renewal, and enlightenment, framing the current era as uniquely promising. The phrase “like never before” intensifies the sense of urgency and distinctiveness. This metaphor unites the audience under a shared vision, suggesting that the nation’s success is both possible and time-sensitive.

Excerpt 4: From this moment on, America’s decline is over.

This is a declaration signalling restoration and renewal. The speaker employs a tone of finality to close a chapter of decline and open one of progress. The phrase “from this moment on” marks a clear temporal break, emphasizing immediacy and resolve. The goal is to instill hope and certainty that a negative period has ended.

Excerpt 5: I was saved by God to make America great again.

This is a declaration speech act that asserts a divine calling or mission. It presents the speaker’s leadership as divinely ordained, adding a spiritual dimension to their authority. This religious metaphor elevates the leader above mere politics, suggesting a sacred responsibility to restore national greatness. The aim is to appeal to audiences who value faith and moral purpose.

Excerpt 6: Jan. 20th, 2025 is Liberation Day.

This is a declaration which identifies a specific date as being symbolic of freedom and victory for America. The aim is to rally public support and pride by encouraging collective celebration. The audience is influenced to see the date as a turning point, reinforcing unity and optimism.

Excerpt 7: We must be honest about the challenges we face.

This is a directive speech act, urging transparency and collective acknowledgment of difficulties. The speaker creates a contrast between his own openness and the dishonesty of previous administrations. The word “must” shows obligation, which requires credibility and shows the speaker as a moral agent who is ready to confront unpleasant situations.

Excerpt 8: America will soon be greater, stronger, and far more exceptional than ever before.

This is a declarative speech act, declaring the speaker’s positive view of the nation’s future. It conveys the speaker’s confidence that America will get better. The word play “greater, stronger, and exceptional” shows that the anticipated progress is all encompassing and unprecedented. The speaker seeks to re-ignite hope, confidence, and belief in the audience

Commissives

..... described commissive speech acts as utterances in which the speaker commits to a certain course of action or promises to do something in the future. These acts express intentions, plans, or guarantees, aiming to reassure the audience and build trust by showing the speaker’s dedication to fulfilling the promise. Examples include pledges, vows, and promises that bind the speaker to act according to what is stated.

Excerpt 9: From this day forward, our country will flourish and be respected again all over the world.

This statement is a commissive speech act, it indirectly promises a future of national growth and global respect. The speaker acknowledges past failure and juxtaposes it with a promising future. It appeals to collective dignity, boosting morale and aligning public perception with the leader's confident vision.

Excerpt 10: During every single day of the President Trump administration, I will, very simply, put America first.

This is a direct commissive act, pledging and assuring Americans that preferences would be accorded policies that seek to improve their lives the nation's interests. The phrases "America first" and "every single day" creates a sense of patriotism and total commitment and reliability. The act is intended to create a sense of dedication and engender personal and collective national pride and unity.

Excerpt 11: Everyone is unable to do anything about it. That's going to change.

This is an indirect commissive speech act promising change and leadership. Implicitly, it acknowledges a prior state of inaction, then offers hope through a commitment to reversal. The phrase "that's going to change" is a powerful shift from despair to empowerment. The aim is to present the speaker as a proactive problem-solver that is ready to restore the hope and confidence of the Americans.

Excerpt 12: In his honour, we will strive together to make his dream a reality.

This is a commissive speech act promising collective effort to fulfil the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Implicitly, it aligns the speaker's goals with the moral authority and civil rights values represented by the referent's dream. The excerpt draws on shared and communal commitment, designed to appeal to the electorates' sense of justice and equality.

Excerpt 13: Our top priority will be to create a nation that is proud, prosperous and free.

This statement is a commissive speech act promising focused action on national renewal. The speaker employs it to appeal to the audience's sense of patriotism. He assures the citizens of his commitment to actions that foster national pride, prosperity, and institutional freedom. The phrase "top priority" signals urgency and dedication, persuading the audience that the speaker is committed to positive change.

Excerpt 14: All of this will change starting today, and it will change very quickly.

This is a commissive speech act that promises immediate and rapid transformation. Implicitly, it signals a break from past failures, instilling a sense of urgency and action. The repetition of "change" emphasizes determination and creates momentum. The aim is to persuade the audience about the speaker's ability to instill hope deliver tangible results.

Excerpt 15: We will immediately restore the integrity, competency, and loyalty of America's government.

With this act, the speaker expressly commits to restoring key values within government institutions. The speaker indirectly acknowledges past deficiencies and promises comprehensive reform. The commissive act employed here assures the audience of the availability competent individuals who are ready to work with integrity to achieve the objectives of government.

Excerpt 16: We will move with purpose and speed to bring back hope, prosperity, safety, and peace.

The speaker employs the commissive speech act to improve key aspects of national life. The speaker successfully conveys urgency and optimism. The speaker employs the act to assure Americans of hope, prosperity safety and peace builds momentum and offers a

comprehensive vision for progress. Persuasively, it uplifts the audience's spirits and strengthens emotional bonds by appealing to shared desires for well-being and security.

Assertive speech acts are statements in which the speaker expresses a belief, opinion, or judgment about a particular state of affairs. They aim to convey information, describe reality, or make claims that can be evaluated as true or false. Through assertives, the speaker attempts to influence the audience's understanding or attitude by presenting something as a fact or a strong opinion. Examples include stating, claiming, or reporting.

Excerpt 17: The vicious, violent and unfair weaponization of the Justice Department and our government will end.

This is an assertive speech act, where the speaker presents a strong yet indirect critique of previous abuse of government institutions. The intention is to present the past administration as inept and corrupt. The choice of the adjectives "vicious, violent and unfair" is intended to show the deep seething nature of the corrupt tendencies of his predecessor to galvanise the audience towards a common goal of identifying a common enemy. The promise that "this misuse will end," reassures listeners of imminent change. The audience is influenced to see the speaker as their long-awaited ambassador of fairness who is poised to put an end abuse of office and restore justice for and among Americans.

Excerpt 18: A radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens.

The excerpt here is an assertive statement which casts aspersion on the ruling elite by accusing them of corruption and exploitation. The speaker intends to pitch the electorate against the opposition and foster a sense of solidarity between the speaker and the audience.

Excerpt 19: We now have a government that cannot manage even a simple crisis at home...

It fails to protect our magnificent, law-abiding American citizens but provides sanctuary and protection for dangerous criminals, many from prisons and mental institutions that have illegally entered our country from all over the world.

This utterance is an assertive act which is a strong critique of the many perceived failings of the last administration. With the aim of creating a picture of the good against the bad, the speaker presents the last administration as incapable of performing its basic and fundamental duties. It portrays the current government as incapable of handling basic responsibilities like securing the lives of the average Americans and protecting the country and its borders. The excerpt comes from the context of the American nature of showing interest in foreign development. The speaker employs the assertion as a tool for assuring the people of his abilities as it concerns effective border and immigration control.

Excerpt 20: My recent election has a mandate to completely and totally reverse a horrible betrayal.

This is an assertive speech act employed by the speaker to give legitimacy to his administration and remind the electorate of incidents of the past where he lost in his bid for re-election in the past. The speaker's choice of the phrase "horrible betrayal" seeks to generate strong sympathy from the electorate. The statement also paints his victory as an undeniable sign of acceptability.

Excerpt 21: Our victory showed, the entire nation is rapidly unifying behind our agenda.

This is an assertive speech act also shows general acceptability as a result of the speaker's electoral success. Persuasively, it encourages inclusiveness and shared purpose, appealing to the audience's desire for stability and cooperation.

Excerpt 22: We had a powerful win in all seven swing states, and the popular vote we won by millions.

This utterance is an assertive act that legitimizes leadership through electoral statistics. Implicitly, it uses quantitative evidence to validate political authority and success. The detailed reference to “seven swing states” and “millions” of votes underlines the scale and decisiveness of the victory. The speaker appeals to the audience reasoning ability and provides statistic-based legitimacy. The aim is to reassure them of the acceptability of his candidacy against the backdrop of previous election which he lost.

Excerpt 23: I will declare a national emergency at our southern border. All illegal entry will immediately be halted. And we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came. We will reinstate my “remain in Mexico policy”. I will end the practice of catch and release. And I will send troops to the southern border to repel the disastrous invasion of our country. Under the orders I sign today we will also be designating the cartels as foreign terrorist organizations. The pillars of our society lay broken and seemingly in complete disrepair.

This excerpt is commissive in nature as it indirectly shows the multi-faceted challenges of America which include ineffective border control, influx of unwanted immigrants and threat from terrorists. Persuasively, it calls for attention and action, provoking concern and a desire for reform. The speaker displays his knowledge of the American situational context, leveraging on shared belief with the audience. The direct reference to the “southern border” and “Mexico” shows that the speaker identifies the negative influence of these places on the quality of life of the American people. He intends to create a sense of trust so that the electorate views him in light of a savior who has come to liberate the American economy and its people from external dominance.

Excerpt 24: Our country can no longer deliver basic services in times of emergency.

This assertive speech act criticizes government inefficiency, focusing on failure in essential services. It accuses leadership of neglect and mismanagement, emphasizing vulnerability during crises. The excerpt suggests a positive turnaround from a previous state of neglect and inactivity and presents hope for improved quality of life engendered by leadership trust.

Excerpt 25: We have a public health system that does not deliver in times of disaster.

This is another assertive speech act showcasing the failure of the previous government to provide quality healthcare. It is aimed at showcasing the gross mismanagement of the last government. The intention is to create disdain towards the government. And to ginger the electorate towards believing in his own abilities to do the right thing as it affects the provision of basic healthcare necessities.

Excerpt 26: We have an education system that teaches our children to be ashamed of themselves.

This assertive speech act offers a harsh and toxic critique of the American education system. By alluding to moral and cultural decay, the speaker directly attacks his opponents for relegating the culture and values of America to the lowest level. The aim is to create a sense of urgency towards the need to restore and reform the lost pride through a renewed commitment to purpose-driven education.

Excerpt 27: The journey to reclaim our republic has not been an easy one.

This assertive act shows the nature of the electioneering process. The speaker uses the excerpt to show his understanding of the activities involved and wants same entrenched in the minds of his followers hence building emotional connection and sympathy with the audience. The perception created is of a leader who is committed, battle-tested,

and willing to face difficulties for the nation's sake, inspiring loyalty and patience among supporters.

Excerpt 28: America will soon be greater, stronger, and far more exceptional than ever before.

This utterance is an expressive speech act, communicating the speaker's optimism in the future of America. It seeks to build hope in the audience by assuring them of a tomorrow like never before. The attributive adjectives "greater," "stronger," "exceptional" serves as intensifiers and paints a picture of unmatched excellence. The intention is to re-ignite the audience's trust in the nation's potential for greatness while visualizing the speaker as the agent to drive that future leap of greatness.

Excerpt 29: An assassin's bullet ripped through my ear.

This expressive speech act communicates personal suffering and vulnerability. It reveals a moment of danger and sacrifice. The vivid imagery humanizes the speaker, moving beyond political rhetoric to show real, personal hardship endured for the cause to liberate America. The aim is to create a feeling of sympathy and empathy towards the speaker and show his vulnerability as well as the failure of the last administration to ensure security of lives.

Excerpt 30: We set records and I will not forget it.

This is an expressive speech act showing gratitude and recognition of achievements. Implicitly, it acknowledges the contributions and loyalty of supporters, especially minority communities. The phrase "I will not forget it" adds a personal promise of remembrance and respect. Persuasively, this fosters a reciprocal bond between the leader and the audience, reinforcing trust and loyalty. The emotional recall of success strengthens community identity and pride. Audience perception is shaped to see the speaker as appreciative and connected to their base, deepening support and commitment to the leader's vision and future efforts.

Discussion of Findings

Speech Act Classification Distribution

Speech Act Classification	Number of Excerpts	Percentage (%)
Assertive	11	36.7%
Commissive	8	26.7%
Declarative	5	16.7%
Expressive	5	16.6%
Directive	1	3.3%
Total	30	100%

A key theme that emerges from the findings is how President Trump’s speech acts serve not only to assert his own authority but also to critically differentiate his administration from past governments. Declarative speech acts frequently appear in the speech to assert change and renewal while indirectly commenting on the failures of previous administrations. These declarations work to inspire hope and national pride while undermining the legitimacy of those who governed before. Commissive speech acts in the speech reinforce this distinction by promising decisive corrective action. Many phrases like “I will very simply put America first” contrast the new administration’s commitment with the inaction or incompetence attributed to his predecessors. By repeatedly making promises and commitments, President Trump seeks to build trust and present himself as a leader capable of delivering on reform where past governments allegedly failed.

Assertive speech acts are particularly significant in criticizing former governments. President Trump’s statements that “A radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens” and “We now have a government that cannot manage even a simple crisis at home” explicitly blame previous leadership for mismanagement and injustice. These assertives are designed to create a clear divide between the “old” and “new” orders, encouraging the audience to view the prior administrations as corrupt and ineffective.

Expressive speech acts add emotional weight to these critiques by humanizing the speaker and evoking sympathy in contrast to the alleged cold and inhuman nature of past leaders. Personalised disclosures, such as “An assassin’s bullet ripped through my ear” shows the speaker as one who makes sacrifices and almost lost his life thereby creating a sharp contrast with former administrations. Expressive acts also appeal to religious and patriotic sentiments, as when the speaker claims divine purpose, further reinforcing the legitimacy of his leadership against past governments.

Directive speech acts, though less frequent, are strategically used to call for honesty and collective reflection on the challenges left by previous administrations. For instance, the statement “We must be honest about the challenges we face” implicitly critiques the lack of transparency or denial of problems by past governments. These directives encourage the audience to embrace the new administration’s narrative of truth and reform, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility that distinguishes the current leadership from its predecessors.

Ultimately, the findings reveal that President Trump’s speech acts do more than simply present his agenda; they actively shape public perception by delegitimizing past administrations and positioning his leadership as the necessary corrective force. The mix of declaratives, commissives, assertives, expressives, and directives creates a powerful narrative that blends authority, emotional appeal, and nationalistic pride. This rhetorical strategy persuades the audience to both reject previous governance and embrace the new vision, uniting and energizing supporters under a banner of renewal and reform.

The justification of the percentages in the speech act classification distribution is grounded in the strategic use of language throughout President Trump’s inaugural speech to achieve persuasive, emotional, and authoritative effects. Assertive speech acts, which make up 36.7% of the excerpts, dominate because the speech frequently presents statements of fact, critiques of former administrations, and claims about past failures, as seen in phrases like “A radical and corrupt

establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens.” These assertives serve to delegitimize previous leadership while positioning the speaker as a corrective force.

Commissive speech acts, accounting for 26.7%, emphasize promises and commitments, with statements such as “I will very simply put America first” signaling decisive action and building audience trust in the speaker’s capacity to effect change. Declarative speech acts, comprising 16.7%, announce shifts in governance and symbolize new beginnings, exemplified by utterances like “The Golden Age of America begins right now,” which inspire hope and national pride while implicitly critiquing prior administrations. Expressive speech acts, also at 16.6%, communicate emotions, personal experiences, and moral engagement, as in “An assassin’s bullet ripped through my ear,” humanizing the speaker and appealing to audience empathy.

Finally, directive speech acts are least frequent at 3.3%, strategically employed to prompt reflection and collective action, such as “We must be honest about the challenges we face.” The overall distribution demonstrates a deliberate rhetorical balance: assertives and commissives establish authority and commitment, declaratives and expressives foster emotional connection and inspiration, and directives guide audience engagement, together shaping perception, legitimizing the administration, and contrasting the new leadership with past governance.

Out of thirty selected excerpts, assertive speech acts were the most frequent, accounting for 36.7%. These statements presented facts, critiqued former administrations, and emphasized the speaker’s role as a corrective force, exemplified by statements such as “A radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens.” Commissive speech acts constituted 26.7% of the excerpts, highlighting promises and commitments that signaled decisive action and aimed to build audience trust, such as “I will very simply put America first.” Declarative speech acts, making up 16.7%, were used to announce shifts in governance and symbolize new beginnings, as seen

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also implicitly criticizing past administrations.

Expressive speech acts accounted for 16.6%, conveying personal experiences, emotions, and moral engagement to humanize the speaker and elicit audience empathy, illustrated by "An assassin's bullet ripped through my ear." Finally, directive speech acts were the least frequent at 3.3%, used to prompt reflection and collective responsibility, for instance, "We must be honest about the challenges we face." The overall distribution shows a deliberate rhetorical balance: assertives and commissives establish authority and commitment, declaratives and expressives foster hope and emotional connection, and directives encourage reflection and unity, collectively shaping audience perception, legitimizing the administration, and contrasting the new leadership with past governments.

The analysis of President Trump's speech shows that implicit meanings and persuasive strategies are central to the way he communicated. Declarative speech acts such as "The Golden Age of America begins right now" and "From this moment on, America's decline is over" were not only used to announce change but also to indirectly condemn past administrations as eras of failure and decline. The symbolic term "Liberation Day" implied that previous governments were oppressive, while his leadership was presented as liberating. This implicit framing positioned President Trump as the force of renewal.

Commissive speech acts added weight to these meanings by stressing decisive action. Promises such as "I will very simply put America first" carried the implicit message that previous governments had neglected the interests of citizens. By using hyperbole and historical references like "make his dream a reality," President Trump's speech strategically connected him to shared national ideals, persuading the audience to accept his leadership as both patriotic and morally justified. Assertive speech acts also revealed implicit meanings. Statements like "A radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens" framed former leaders as exploiters of the people,

implicitly portraying President Trump as their defender. Expressive acts such as “An assassin’s bullet ripped through my ear” carried the hidden meaning of personal sacrifice, which contrasted sharply with the alleged indifference of previous administrations. Directive speech acts such as “We must be honest about the challenges we face” implied that earlier leaders had lacked transparency.

Persuasive strategies such as repetition, metaphor, hyperbole, and contrast deepened these meanings. Phrases like “Sunlight pouring over the entire world” presented a new global vision denied under former governments, while repeated slogans like “America first” reinforced loyalty and commitment. Hyperbolic claims that America would become “greater, stronger, and far more exceptional” amplified the promise of change, persuading the audience to believe in the possibility of national transformation.

President Trump’s language choices strongly influenced how the audience viewed both his leadership and previous administrations. The dominance of assertive speech acts (36.7%) framed him as a truth-teller exposing corruption and failures, while delegitimizing past leaders. Commissive (26.7%) built trust by making firm promises, reinforcing the perception that President Trump’s leadership would take decisive corrective action. Declaratives (16.7%) inspired optimism by symbolizing new beginnings, while simultaneously suggesting that former administrations had brought only decline.

Expressives (16.6%) influenced perception by humanizing the speaker. Sharing personal struggles and appealing to patriotism created emotional bonds with the audience, contrasting his empathy and sacrifice with the failures of past leaders. Even though directives (3.3%) were few, they shaped political messaging by urging the audience toward collective honesty and responsibility, reinforcing his reformist stance. Overall, President Trump’s language choices were carefully crafted to reshape political messaging. By blending authority with emotional appeal and nationalistic rhetoric, he presented himself as a corrective force against corrupt establishments. The consistent use of contrast between “old” and “new” leadership persuaded the audience to reject

previous administrations while embracing his vision of renewal. Thus, his speech not only outlined an agenda but also influenced perception by uniting supporters under a shared sense of pride, reform, and transformation.

Conclusion

The analysis of the inaugural speech of Donald Trump through the prism of speech acts has shed more light on the interconnection between language and politics and further shows that political discourse thrives and flourishes on the platform of context. Trump effectively leverages on events surrounding the electoral process to drive home his communicative goals. The study shows that political speeches, as exemplified in the inaugural speech of Donald Trump, is a communicative tool used in expressing feelings, emotions and desires. The study identifies the fact that Donald Trump employs and explores the American context to sell his views and ideas and make projections into the future. In essence, the study establishes that political speeches are not considered effective because of its correctness and closeness to truth but is considered so in the way and manner its argument is presented thereby laying emphasis on the communicative strategies rather than the product.

In the data employed for the study's analysis, the research establishes that the speaker employs the positive-self/negative-others strategy, disapproval strategy, appeal to the past strategy and the strategy of projecting into the future. Donald Trump introduces himself and talks about his ideals, views and opinions both before and during the electioneering period. He projects himself and his party as the ideal while he presents his opponent in negative light. He also disapproves the past by blaming his predecessors by condemning the policies of previous administrations and emphasizing how they had impacted the people negatively and why such policies should never have been allowed in the first place. Finally, Trump employs speech acts in drawing references from the history of the United States of America in the areas

of education and the economy and explains what projections he has in the pipeline for the American people.

In the study, the deployment of the various speech acts shows a communicative strategy that constantly exonerates the speaker against the previous government. Findings indicate that President Trump's 2025 inaugural speech effectively used a variety of speech acts to achieve both rhetorical and persuasive objectives. Assertives and commissives established authority and commitment, declaratives signaled change, expressives fostered emotional connection, and directives guided audience engagement. Together, these strategies influenced political messaging, strengthened national pride, and encouraged the audience to view the new administration as capable of correcting the failures of the past. The speech demonstrates how carefully chosen language can shape perception, inspire confidence, and consolidate political legitimacy. With the declarative speech acts, Trump makes subtle comparison between his government and the previous administration with the aim of presenting his administration as superior in terms of economic ideas. He also employs the commissive act as a way of showing the failings of his predecessor and assure the electorate of a better deal with his own government. The speaker also employs language as an instrument for showing his human nature. This is done by expressing his love for America and Americans.

In summary, the study demonstrates the importance of language as a tool for charting the course of a country. It explains the role of language in political discourse and sheds light on how political leaders employ communicative rhetoric to convey their views to the public.

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