

SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF KAMALA HARRIS'S VICTORY SPEECH AND ITS CONTRIBUTION FOR TEACHING PRAGMATICS

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Abstract

Pragmatics is considered as a relatively new branch in the world of linguistics. It is not until the 1950s that the linguists finally found a way to study meanings in relation to the context, and they name it pragmatics (Trask, 2007: 226). In this study, the writer analyzed the speech act of Kamala Harris's Victory Speech. Kamala Harris, U.S Vice President-elect gave her victory speech in Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday. Harris reflected on the women generations who said have set the path for the present time. The objectives of the study were 1) to identify the kinds of speech acts used in Kamala Harris victory speech. 2) to find out the dominant illocutionary act found in Kamala Harris victory speech. The data is the speech acts found in the video of Kamala Harris' victory speech uploaded by CNN News Official YouTube Channel on 8 November, 2020. To achieve the objectives of the study, relevant theories were discussed. This study employed both speech act theories from Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Then the result showed that the kinds of illocutionary speech acts used in Kamala Harris's victory speech were assertive, commissive, expressive, directive, and declaration. The dominant illocutionary act used was assertive with 52%, the second was expressive with 36%, then commissive with 6%, and last were directive and declaration which each had 3%. the study could be presented in pragmatics classes by students or lecturers as an example of how to analysis speech acts from a real speech and the object of this study can be discussed further in pragmatics classes as an authentic material that its aspects other than speech acts are able to be analyzed. By presenting an example from the speech such as the object of this study which is Kamala Harris's victory speech in 2020 United States presidential election, the students could have a better understanding about the material that the lecturers presented.

Keywords: Speech Act, Illocutionary Act, Kamala Harris, Pragmatics

Introduction

Pragmatics is regarded as a relatively new branch of linguistics. Linguists did not discover a way to study meanings in relation to context until the 1950s, when they coined the term pragmatics (Trask, 2007: 226). However, the history of pragmatics can be traced back

The 2nd Undergraduate Conference on Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, and Literature

Vol. 2(1), August, 2022

Online ISSN: 2807-8926

much further. The modern definition of pragmatics is based on the term pragmatism, which was later shortened to pragmaticism (Hookway, 2012: 182). In the early 1880s, the American philosopher Charles S. Peirce, also known as the father of pragmatism, coined the term. The term itself refers to links between thought and action (Jucker, 2012: 497). It explains how one's behavior is greatly influenced by what they are thinking.

This study attempted to analyze the possible speech acts in Kamala Harris' victory speech. Because the speech is made up of many utterances that combine to form one, it is a potential object for speech act analysis. On Saturday, U.S. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris delivered her victory speech in Wilmington, Delaware. Harris reflected on the generations of women who she said paved the way for the present. Millions of Americans were captivated by her speech at home. Some people took to social media to emphasize the absolute power of their representation and the significance of having a leader who represents their identity.

Speech act is one of the branches of pragmatics that deals with the act inside the language that has a specific intention. According to Dijk (2009: 13), "the study of speech acts focused on the action dimension of utterances." Senft (2014:5) then defined speech acts as manifestations of language. It is an action motivated by the speaker's intentions, with psychological and behavioral consequences in speaker-hearer interactions. We would be able to interpret the true meaning of utterances by analyzing them using speech act theory. According to Verschueren and Ostman (2009: 232-233), there are three levels of speech act analysis: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. A locutionary act is defined as a saying act. It does, however, cover a wide range of topics. The illocutionary act refers to how speakers use their utterance, specifically the act that they perform in saying what they said. What the speakers say has an impact on their feelings, thoughts, and actions. These consequences can be viewed as natural occurrences. As we can see, the speakers engaged in a perlocutionary act when they spoke.

Literature Review

According to Trask (2007: 226), pragmatics is the section of linguistics that studies how words convey meaning in a given situation. As said by Paltridge (2012: 38), pragmatics is the study of meaning in relation to the situation in which a person communicates or writes. Jucker defined pragmatics as "the study of meaning that evolves via the use of language" (2012: 501). "Meaning is the subject of pragmatics that develops through the use of language," said Jucker (2012: 501). As he stated in his book's conclusion, "Pragmatics is about how people apply their language in different scenario and environment." Senft (2014: 3). He went on to say that the acts and intentions of the speaker when they speak are referred to as context.

Cutting (2008: 5) classified linguistic context into three categories: situational, background, and co-textual context. What individuals can see in their immediate

The 2nd Undergraduate Conference on Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, and Literature

Vol. 2(1), August, 2022

Online ISSN: 2807-8926

surroundings is referred to as the situational context. The background knowledge context is concerned with the knowledge that individuals have of one another and of the outside environment. The co-textual background is crucial to understanding what has been spoken.

Three factors affect how individuals use their context (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010: 42). The relative social relationship between the speaker, writer, and reader is determined by each party's social status (S). Distance (D) measures the degree of social and psychological distance (how far or close speaker, writer, and reader perceive each other), and intensity (I), which is the act's intensity, establishes the speaker, writer, and reader's relative social distance from each other (for instance, the extent of a request or apology).

Speech act is one of pragmatics' several subfields. It deals with linguistic behaviors that have predetermined goals. After Dijk (2009: 13) claimed in his book that "the study of speech acts centered on the action dimension of utterances," Senft (2014: 5) referred to speech acts as manifestations of language. It is an action that is impacted by the speakers' goals and has an effect on interactions between speakers and listeners in terms of the behavioral and psychological results. The speech act is the fundamental idea at the core of pragmatics, asserted Bara (2010: 43). When it comes to the speaker's intentions, speech act theory has been a significant source of inspiration (Sandra and Ostman, 2009: 29). Austin, an Oxford-based "ordinary language philosopher," first presented the speech act theory in 1962. Searle later developed it (1969). We could interpret an utterance's true meaning by examining it using speech act theory. There are three stages of speech act analysis, according to John L. Austin's findings in Verschueren and Ostman (2009: 232–233). They are Locutionary act, Illocutionary act, and Perlocutionary act. An act of saying could be utilized to describe a locutionary act. Then, Illocutionary act refers to the speakers' distinctive use of their utterance and the act they carry out when stating what they said. What is spoken affects the speakers' feelings, thoughts, or actions. These results can be seen as something that has organically happened.

In Levinson (2008: 240), John R. Searle presented his own theory about the types of illocutionary acts in speech, which are as follows: 1. Assertives is the speaker's commitment to express the truth (for example, asserting, implying, concluding, swearing, boasting, and so on); 2. Directives is the speaker's attempt to persuade the addressee to do something (for instance: questioning, requesting, advising, ordering, inviting, begging, etc.), 3. Commissives are the speaker's obligations to carry out a specific action in the future (for instance: threatening, promising, offering, planning, vowing, betting, opposing, etc.) 4. Expressives, which describe a mental state (for instance: apologizing, thanking, welcoming, congratulating, etc.) 5. Declarations, which typically rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions and result in immediate changes to the institutional status of affairs (for instance: declaring war, excommunicating, firing from employment, christening, etc.)

Both Austin (1962) and Searle (1962) speech act theories were used in this study (1969). The data are the speech acts found in the video of Kamala Harris' victory speech, which was

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Vol. 2(1), August, 2022

Online ISSN: 2807-8926

uploaded on November 8, 2020 by CNN News Official YouTube Channel. The author concentrated on identifying the types of speech acts used in Kamala Harris' victory speech and determining the dominant illocutionary act found in Kamala Harris' victory speech.

Method

The writer used a qualitative research design, which means that the research required extensive analysis, and the outcome was independent of the numerical outcome. Creswell (2009:33) defines qualitative research as a method for deciphering meaning from individual or group responses to social or human problems. Furthermore, according to Cohen (2007:168), qualitative research serves a variety of purposes, including description and reporting, the development of key concepts, theory generation, and testing.

Additionally, this study's writer employed a descriptive qualitative method. It meant that the writer described things objectively, free of emotion or opinion. The writer of this study examined the speech fragments from Kamala Harris' victory speech from 2020. He sought to determine the types of speech acts employed in Kamala Harris's victory speech, the dominating illocutionary act present, and the role played by Kamala Harris's winning speech in the pragmatics curriculum.

The object of this study was the video of Kamala Harris victory speech 2020. The video was uploaded on the CNN News Official YouTube Channel on 8 November, 2020. Kamala Harris' victory speech reflects the woman generation to have the same opportunities to success. In this study, the writer takes the transcript of Kamala Harris victory speech 2020. The source of the data in this study was from the video of Kamala Harris victory speech, it is then transcribed in the written form. The data is the speech acts found in the video of Kamala Harris' victory speech uploaded by CNN News Official YouTube Channel on 8 November, 2020.

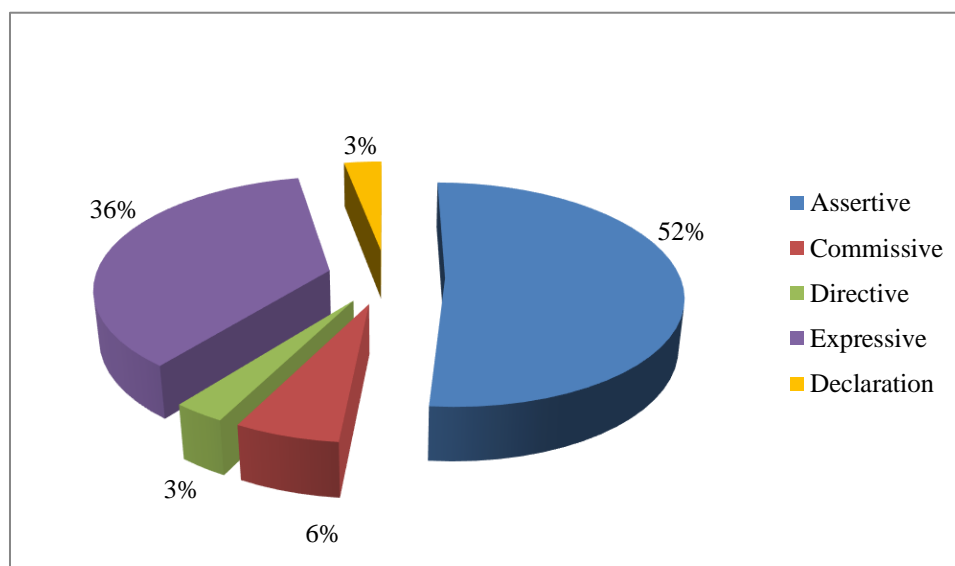
Based on the data source in this study, the writer used one of the non-interactive techniques, documenting, to collect the data because the writer required the transcript and video of Kamala Harris' victory speech, which was uploaded by CNN News Official YouTube Channel on November 8, 2020, to be analyzed. The following steps were taken by the writer in order to collect data:

1. Watching the video and transcribed the speech
2. Reading the transcript carefully and identifying the data
3. Highlighting the possible utterances
4. Numbering the highlighted utterances

Finding and Discussion

From the findings, the writer found the 33 sentences of speech act used by Kamala Harris on her victory speech. The writer classified and analyzed it by using Searle theory. Then the writer calculated the illocutionary acts used by types. From the 33 speech acts, there were 17 assertive, 2 commissive, 1 directive, 12 expressive, and 1 declaration. Assertive has 6 functions, namely asserting, notifying, admitting, guessing, affirming, reminding. Commissive gets 2 functions, namely accepting and committing. Expressive has 4 functions, namely welcoming, thanking, confessing, praising. Directive has one function namely requesting. Declaration has one function namely declaring.

Figure 1: Types of Searle Illocutionary Acts



The chart above showed the percentage the dominant illocutionary act found in Kamala Harris victory speech from the highest number to the lowest one. The most dominant illocutionary act found in the speech is assertive (52%). The second place is expressive (36%). Then, it is followed by commissive (6%). Next, declaration and directive as the fourth and fifth places have the same number (3%). Therefore, the most dominant illocutionary act found in Kamala Harris victory speech is assertive.

Assertive stood first by dominating the 52% illocutionary acts that are used in the speech. It consisted of six functions; they were asserting which had ten sentences, notifying which had two sentences, admitting which had two sentences, guessing which had two sentences, affirming which had one sentence and reminding which had four sentences. So, the total assertive illocutionary act was seventeen sentences. The speaker applied more assertive

The 2nd Undergraduate Conference on Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, and Literature

Vol. 2(1), August, 2022

Online ISSN: 2807-8926

illocutionary speech act because she wanted to show to the hearers about her gratitude and her vision. Then the use of many asserting functions could be a way to show not only about her spirits on democracy and her milestone but also to talk about Joe Biden as the great person. So, the hearers would feel more connected to the speaker, then they will follow all the speaker instruction.

In the second place was expressive that having 36% with five functions. It was composed of two welcoming sentences, three thanking sentences, three complementing sentences, one confessing sentence and one praising sentence. So, the total of expressive illocutionary act was twelve sentences. The third place was commissive illocutionary act which had 6% with two functions. They were accepting function with one sentence and committing function also with one sentence. The total of commissive illocutionary act was two sentences. The fourth place was directive illocutionary act which had 3% with one requesting function. The function was from one sentence. And the last place was declaration illocutionary act. It had one function with one sentence.

The speaker applied more assertive illocutionary speech act because she wanted to show to the hearers about her gratitude and her vision. Then the use of many asserting functions could be a way to show not only about her spirits on democracy and her milestone but also to talk about Joe Biden as the great person. So, the hearers would feel more connected to the speaker, then they will follow all the speaker instruction.

Furthermore, as the study was already conducted successfully and shown the result of its findings, the steps to analyze speech act which are mentioned in this study can be followed by readers or students, especially those who learn about pragmatics, for analyzing their own object or subject. Also, the study could be presented in pragmatics classes by students or lecturers as an example of how to analysis speech acts from a real speech and the object of this study can be discussed further in pragmatics classes as an authentic material that its aspects other than speech acts are able to be analyzed. By presenting an example from the speech such as the object of this study which is Kamala Harris's victory speech in 2020 United States presidential election, the students could have a better understanding about the material that the lecturers presented.

The writer found another study that analyzed the illocutionary speech acts used in Kamala Harris victory speech act, but it was only focused in expressive illocutionary speech act. Instead of another study, this study gave more analysis on the functions and expected perlocutionary speech act. Also, this study gave more explanation on the contribution on Pragmatics class. To support this study, the writer found many studies that the topic is speech act analysis, and the writer chose four among them to be put in the previous studies. The object of the first until four previous studies in order were "Analysis of Speech Acts in Political Speeches", "A Speech Act Analysis of Teacher Talk in an EFL Classroom", "Speech Acts Analysis in Desmond's Conversation in Hacksaw Ridge Movie", and "Conversation Analysis of ESL Learners' Speech Acts in Classroom Discourse".

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Vol. 2(1), August, 2022

Online ISSN: 2807-8926

This study's goal was to distinguish how this one differed from the four studies mentioned above. A speech that represents the desire of the female generation to have equal opportunity for achievement is the study's intended outcome. The study then classified the illocutionary actions utilized based on their various roles in addition to analyzing the acts themselves. Identifying the most common illocutionary act from the study's subject is another goal. Finally, this analysis used both the Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) theories of speech acts, as opposed to the second and fourth previous investigations, which just used Searle (1969) theory or Cohen (1996) theory, respectively (1969).

Conclusion

Kinds of illocutionary speech acts used in Kamala Haris's victory speech were assertive, commissive, expressive, directive, and declaration. The writer found six functions of assertive illocutionary speech act namely asserting, notifying, admitting, guessing, affirming, and reminding. The commissive speech act had two functions namely accepting and committing. Then, the expressive illocutionary speech act was found by using five functions namely welcoming, thanking, complementing, confessing, and praising. The directive illocutionary act had one function; requesting function. And the declaration speech act also had function. It was declaring function.

The result found that the dominant illocutionary act used is assertive with 52%, the second is expressive with 36%, after that is commissive with 6%, and last are directive and declaration which each has 3%. Then, the most used function in assertive illocutionary act is asserting. So, the dominant use of assertive can be interpreted that the speaker wanted to show to the hearers about her gratitude and her vision. Then the use of many asserting functions could be a way to show not only about her spirits on democracy and her milestone but also to talk about Joe Biden as the great person. So, the hearers would feel more connected to the speaker, then they will follow all the speaker instruction.

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Online ISSN: 2807-8926

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