

# An Illocutionary Acts Analysis on Barack Obama's Speech

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## Abstract:

This research is entitled Illocutionary Acts Analysis of Barack Obama's Speeches. This research is conducted in order to analyze the utterances of Barack Obama's Speeches. Speeches became an important media for a president like Barack Obama to deliver message, persuade people, influence audience. The speech making process involved a long discussion between Obama and a particular team since they should consider some language aspects such as lexical choices and sentence structure in order to achieve certain goals. Austin (1975:3) stated that there are three types of speech acts, namely locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. But in this paper, the researchers focus to illocutionary acts. Illocutionary act has five types, they are representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarative (Searle in Leech, 1983:205). So the writer uses the types of illocutionary acts to analyze the utterances of Barack Obama's Speeches. Problem discussed in this research is what types of illocutionary acts are found on Barack Obama's speech. This research utilized Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) in analyzing the data. The researched data consisted of two selected speeches delivered by Barack Obama after Osama bin Laden's death: May 1, 2011 and at 2012 Democratic National Convention September 6 2012. And in this research, types of illocutionary acts in Barack Obama's Speeches are found dominantly is representatives.

## Keywords:

Illocutionary Act, Representatives, Directives, Commissives, Expressive, Declaratives

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## 1. Introduction

According to Cruse as cited in Pardede, Herman and Pratiwi, language is use to communicate about things, happenings, and states of affairs in the world. People make conversation to get some information or gain knowledge about what happens in the environment [6]. In linguistics, a speech act is an utterance defined in terms of a speaker's intention and the effect it has on a listener. Essentially, it is the action that the speaker hopes to provoke in his or her audience. Speech acts might be requests,

warnings, promises, apologies, greetings, or any number of declarations. As you might imagine, speech acts are an important part of communication.

Talking about speech act, it means we are talking about how speaker's intention should be understood by the listener. To convey the intention, there are three ways to do it, namely locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts [1]. But in this paper, the researchers focus to illocutionary acts. Illocutionary act has five types, they are representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarative [4].

Then, in this paper the researchers want to analyze about one of speech act levels: Illocutionary Acts in Barack Obama's Speeches because Speech became an important media for a president like Barack Obama to deliver message, persuade people, influence audience. The speech making process involved a long discussion between Obama and a particular team since they should consider some language aspects such as lexical choices and sentence structure in order to achieve certain goals. Based on the reason above, the researchers are interested to conduct research that untitled "Illocutionary Acts Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech".

## **2. Theoretical Review**

### ***2.1. An Overview of Pragmatics***

Pragmatics is often described as the study of language use [8]. It means that speaker and listener have to be able to use the language properly. Hence, Levinson as cited in Pardede, Herman and Pratiwi states that pragmatics is the study of ability of language users to pair sentences in the context which they would be appropriate [6]. Within this threefold branch, only Pragmatics can be investigated. It is due to the fact that only Pragmatics may discover people's intended meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the sorts of actions when they are performing when they speak [9].

Pragmatics plays an important role in studying language as a tool of human interaction, i.e. the interaction between the speaker and the hearer . To understand human interaction, we have to understand 'interactional' meanings expressed in speech and we must have appropriate analytical devices to clarify such meanings [10].

Pragmatics as a field of linguistic inquiry was initiated in the 1930s by the philosopher Charles Morris, Carnap, and Pierce. They cited that syntax addressed the formal relations of signs to one of another, semantics the relation of signs to what they denote, and pragmatics the relation of signs to their users and interpreters.

### ***2.2. Speech Act***

Hutajulu and Herman stated that speech acts is an utterance to explain how speaker use language to accomplish intended actions and how the hearers infer intended meaning from what is said [3]. Interaction and communication are two things that cannot be separated in human daily life. Both of them are very crucial in human activities. In order to perform interaction and communication, speaking a language is needed. When people speak a language, they will perform an action. Actions which are performed via utterances are generally called speech acts [9].

Austin stated that speech act is a technical term in linguistics and the philosophy of language [1]. Speech acts can be analyzed on three levels: illocutionary act, the performance of an utterance: the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning,

comprising phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts corresponding to the verbal, syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance; an illocutionary act: the semantic 'illocutionary force' of the utterance, thus its real, intended meaning; and in certain cases a further perlocutionary act: its actual effect, such as persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring, or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not.

Furthermore, Austin defined that the utterances of the speaker can be divided into three meanings, they are Locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act [1].

### **2.2.1. Locutionary Act**

Peccei stated that locutionary is the actual form of words used by speaker and their semantic meaning [5]. This act means uttering something, syllable, word, group (phrase), or sentence in the form of language. There are two types of locutionary act, they are utterance acts and propositional acts. Utterance acts is about where something is said (a sound is made) and may not have any meaning, meanwhile propositional acts is where a particular reference is made. For example, the word "Oh" is included into utterance because it happens because of a surprise. For propositional, the word "the white cat" has no communication intended but something is referenced.

### **2.2.2. Illocutionary Act**

Pasaribu, Herman and Silalahi stated that illocutionary acts is an utterance with some kind of function in mind [7]. Hence, Peccei says that it is with speaker is doing by utterance those words, commanding, offering, promising, threatening, thanking, warning, etc [5]. For example, the sentence "jie, nihao?" (translated into "how are you sister?"). That utterance performs illocutionary act of asking information.

### **2.2.3. Perlocutionary Act**

Herman stated that the perlocutionary act is unlike the other act whether locutionary or perlocutionary because perlocutionary act is an external performance of something [2]. If speaker A utters something, speaker B will response. For example, if speaker A says "there is a worm on your right foot", speaker B may be become panic or scream or may be jump. This emotion or action is called as perlocutionary act. Some other examples of perlocutionary acts are deceiving, persuading, inspiring, deterring, etc. There are some characteristics of perlocutionary act: 1. Perlocutionary acts are not performed merely by uttering explicit performative sentence.

## **2.3. Types of Illocutionary Acts**

According to Searle in Leech, there are five types of illocutionary acts such as representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarative [4].

### **A. Representatives**

Representatives commit a speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition.

Paradigm cases: asserting, stating, concluding, boasting, describing, suggesting.

I am a great singer.

Bill was an accountant.

### **B. Commissives**

Commissives commit a speaker to some future action.

Paradigm cases: promising, pledging, threatening, vowing, offering.

I am going to leave you.

I'll call you tonight.

### ***C. Directives***

Directives are used by a speaker who attempts to get the addressee to carry out an action.

Paradigm cases: requesting, advising, commanding, challenging, inviting, daring, entreating.

You'd better tidy up that mess.

Sit down.

### ***D. Declarations***

Declaratives affect an immediate change of affairs.

Paradigm cases: declaring, baptizing, resigning, firing from employment, hiring, arresting.

We find the defendant guilty.

I resign.

### ***E. Expressives***

Expressives express some sort of psychological state.

Paradigm cases: greeting, thanking, apologizing, complaining, congratulating.

This beer is disgusting.

I'm sorry to hear that.

## **3. Research Methodology**

The design of research is descriptive qualitative. As the descriptive qualitative it aims to observe Illocutionary Acts of Barack Obama's Speeches. The subject in this research is Barack Obama (44th President of the United States from 2009- 2017). The object of research is two selected speeches delivered by Barack Obama after Osama bin Laden's death: May 1, 2011 and at 2012 Democratic National Convention Sept 6 2012. In this case, the researchers browsed Barack Obama's Speeches from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Then copy the speeches and save the link. The first speech after Osama bin Laden's death: May 1, 2011 and the second at 2012 Democratic National Convention Sept 6 2012. After collecting the data, the researchers followed some procedures in order to analyze the data, they were:

- a. Reading carefully and repeatedly the speeches of Barack Obama
- b. Analyzing the data by using theory of Searle about the five types of illocutionary acts.
- c. Classifying the finding based on the types of illocutionary acts
- d. Interpreting the meaning of utterance of Barack Obama's Speeches

e. Calculating the types of illocutionary acts of Barack Obama's Speeches

#### 4. Research Findings

As mentioned in the previous chapter, types of illocutionary acts can be divided into five categories, they are: representative, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative (Searle in Leech, 1983:104). Below are the analyses of illocutionary acts based on the data of Barack Obama's Speeches

##### Data 1:

Obama's speech after Osama bin Laden's death: May 1, 2011

<https://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-top-10-speeches-of-barack-obama/20121107.htm#3>

Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of al Qaeda, and a terrorist who's responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent men, women, and children.

We must also reaffirm that the United States is not -- and never will be -- at war with Islam. I've made clear, just as President Bush did shortly after 9/11, that our war is not against Islam. Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer of Muslims. Indeed, al Qaeda has slaughtered scores of Muslims in many countries, including our own. So his demise should be welcomed by all who believe in peace and human dignity.

##### Analysis:

- Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world

(Asserting - Representatives)

- The United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of al Qaeda, and a terrorist who's responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent men, women, and children.

(Describing – Representatives)

-We must also reaffirm that the United States is not -- and never will be -- at war with Islam.

(Stating – Representatives)

-I've made clear, just as President Bush did shortly after 9/11, that our war is not against Islam.

(Asserting – Representatives)

- Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader

(Describing – Representatives)

- he was a mass murderer of Muslims.

(Describing – Representatives)

- Indeed, al Qaeda has slaughtered scores of Muslims in many countries, including our own.

(Describing – Representatives)

- So his demise should be welcomed by all who believe in peace and human dignity.

(Declarations)

**Data 2:**

Now, the first time I addressed this convention in 2004, I was a younger man; a Senate candidate from Illinois who spoke about hope, not blind optimism or wishful thinking, but hope in the face of difficulty; hope in the face of uncertainty; that dogged faith in the future which has pushed this nation forward, even when the odds are great; even when the road is long.

Eight years later, that hope has been tested, by the cost of war; by one of the worst economic crises in history; and by political gridlock that's left us wondering whether it's still even possible to tackle the challenges of our time.

I know campaigns can seem small, and even silly sometimes. Trivial things become big distractions. Serious issues become sound bites.

The truth gets buried under an avalanche of money and advertising. If you're sick of hearing me approve this message, believe me, so am I.

I won't pretend the path I'm offering is quick or easy. I never have. You didn't elect me to tell you what you wanted to hear. You elected me to tell you the truth.

**Analysis:**

- Now, the first time I addressed this convention in 2004

(Asserting – Representatives)

- I was a younger man

(Describing – Representatives)

- a Senate candidate from Illinois who spoke about hope, not blind optimism or wishful thinking, but hope in the face of difficulty; hope in the face of uncertainty; that dogged faith in the future which has pushed this nation forward, even when the odds are great; even when the road is long.

(Retelling – Representatives)

- Eight years later, that hope has been tested, by the cost of war

(Retelling – Representatives)

- by one of the worst economic crises in history; and by political gridlock that's left us wondering whether it's still even possible to tackle the challenges of our time.

(Retelling – Representatives)

- I know campaigns can seem small, and even silly sometimes

(Concluding – Representatives)

- Trivial things become big distractions.

(Stating – Representatives)

- Serious issues become sound bites.

(Stating – Representatives)

- The truth gets buried under an avalanche of money and advertising.

(Stating – Representatives)

- If you're sick of hearing me approve this message, believe me, so am I.

(Threaten- Commissives)

- I won't pretend the path

(Promises – Commissives)

- I'm offering is quick or easy.

(Offering – Representatives)

- I never have.

(Stating – Representatives)

- You didn't elect me to tell you what you wanted to hear.

(Concluding – Representatives)

- You elected me to tell you the truth

(Concluding - Representatives)

After analyzing the data above, the researchers come to the finding. There were 3 types illocutionary acts found in Barack Obama's Selected Speeches i.e Representatives, Commissive, Declarations. Furthermore, the types of representative consist retelling, describing, asserting, stating. Commissive acts consist promising, offering, threatening.

## 5. Conclusions

In the research findings, the conclusion can be drawn as follows. There are 3 types illocutionary acts found in Barack Obama's Selected Speeches, they are Representatives which covers retelling, describing, asserting and stating; Commissive which covers promising, offering, threatening; and the last was Declarations. Yule's theory (1996) stated that a good utterance must consist of five basic kinds of action, they are Declarative, Representative, Expressive, Directive, Commissive. Meanwhile the finding above just only depicted three kinds of illocutionary acts. This means that the speech uttered by Obama was not completely delivered or sent to the listener to depict the intention. The researchers hope that every single communication should cover all of illocutionary in order to get the intention from the speakers.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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