Original Research Article

The Study of Speech Acts on Joe Biden's Victory Speech in the US Presidential Election 2020

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Abstract

This study focuses on the phenomenon of speech acts in Joe Biden's victory speech in the US presidential election 2020. There are 30 selected utterances taken from Joe Biden's victory speech. This study applies a qualitative method. Moreover, the data in this study are in the form of utterances which contain speech acts. The analysis begins by classifying the types of speech acts used by Joe Biden in his victory speech using Searle's theory of speech acts (1976), and the theory of context by Brown and Yule (1983). In total there are 30 utterances; 11 utterances are representative, 7 utterances are directive, 6 utterances are commissive, 5 utterances are expressive, and 1 utterance is declarative. The second research question is to reveal the implied meanings of the speech acts used by Joe Biden in his victory speech. The results of this study show that the implied meanings from Joe Biden's utterances in his victory speech are about the commitments he will carry out in the future and to convince the audience of his sincerity in running for president of the United States of America by presenting the great programs he will run when in office and stresses the importance of unity in building and moving the nation forward.

Keywords: context, implied meanings, speech acts, victory speech.

INTRODUCTION

Language undeniably has a crucial role in human life since it is used as the main communication tool. In our daily life, we not only perform physical acts like running, eating, and walking; we also complete the actions through language, like in telephone calls, face-to-face conversations, electronic conversations, or public speaking. Carroll (1980:53) claims that language is an arbitrary system of speech sounds or sequences of speech sounds that is used or can be used in interpersonal communication by an aggregation of human beings, and which rather exhaustively catalogs things, processes, and events in the human environment. Through language, people can easily share and express their feelings, ideas, and desires. When people use language in their daily life, they produce utterances in a particular context and perform actions at the same time. It can be in the form of requesting, informing, promising, etc. It occurs only if there are a speaker and a hearer. However, it is occurring in a conversation involving more than two people in which the audience should understand the utterances. In short, language has features as a bridge to communicate one another and establish a social relationship in society, such as speech.

Through speech, a speaker can convince the audience to do something and the audience must understand what the speaker says. Besides, language is also vital to politicians considering most of their activities are carried out by language. Political campaigns, speeches, written texts and broadcasts are intended to inform and instruct voters about issues that are considered to be of outstanding importance (Beard, 2000). Moreover, Joseph (2006) states that language reflects the speaker's intelligence, industry, and social worthiness level of exposure or education. Politics also has a connection to strength and power. In politics, influence may be established, and speakers frequently show their influence through the words they choose to use.

Speech acts is a subfield of pragmatics that deals with how words can be used to give information and carry out actions. As cited (in Levinson, 1983:236), Austin emphasizes three different acts in uttering a sentence; locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. First, a locutionary act is an act of producing utterances that only convey the literal meaning of utterances. Second, the illocutionary act is an act that in saying something which assigns a function

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in utterances to show the intended meanings. Third, the perlocutionary act is a particular effect of utterances on the hearer or simply the effect of an illocutionary act.

Moreover, Searle (1976) classifies speech acts into representatives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declaratives. Speech acts can be defined as what people do by saying something. The utterance "Could you lend me a pen, please?" (Yule, 1996:54) is an example of the act of requesting. An utterance not only gives the audience the information but also gets someone else to do something.

However, Yule (1996:33) asserts that something must be more than just what the words themselves mean to explain how the hearer understands what is intended. A context is a further meaning that is communicated. In other words, context reveals more information about the meaning of a statement. Compared to what is spoken, it communicates more. As a result, context presents in everyday speech. Brown and Yule (1983:35-45) clarify that the term "context" is defined as the physical environment of a text that can determine an utterance's intent. Therefore, context is important to be able to know the implied meaning in an utterance.

Related to Austin's speech act theory above, this research investigates the speech acts which Joe Biden uses in his victory speech that was delivered on Saturday, 7th November 2020 in Wilmington, Delaware. A victory speech is considered a persuasive speech, defined as a speech that is given to convince the audience to believe or do something. In this case, an elected president uses the speech to persuade and convince his audience of certain views with a specific intention as well. Besides, the victory speech is a special occasion for a new president where he could not only express his gratitude for winning the election but also build positive interactions and influence the society.

Based on the previous explanation, this study focuses on the types of speech acts and its implied meanings. This study will use the classification of speech acts by Searle (1976) and the theory of context by Brown and Yule (1983).

Based on the problem that has been presented above, there are two research questions that are formulated; what types of speech acts are used by Joe Biden in his victory speech, and what are the implied meanings of his speech. Hence, this research concerns on those problems by applying the speech act's theory by Searle and the context by Brown and Yule.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is considered qualitative. Denscombe (2007:248) argued that qualitative data are data that are presented in the form of words. This study uses qualitative since the data are in the form of written text taken from Joe Biden's victory speech transcript.

The data in this research were collected by using the documentary techniques. Bailey (1994) and Ahmed (2010:2), argued that the "documentary research method referred to the analysis of documents that contained information about the phenomenon we wished to study". There are 30 selected utterances containing speech acts, which has the implied meanings. The source of data in this research is speech transcript by Joe Biden, which is downloaded from *The Washington Post* website.

Purposive sampling was applied to get the data. Purposive sampling is used to describe the situation in which the researcher actively chooses a particular person or events because they are considered to be examples that are likely to generate the most valuable data (Denscombe, 2007:17). There are 147 data in the speech delivered by Joe Biden, but the researcher only takes 30 utterances which contain speech act and its implied meanings.

In processing the data, the first thing to do is reading and understanding the speech. After that, selecting 30 out of 147 utterances. Then, classifying those utterances into types of speech acts based on Searle's classification (1976). The utterances are then coded by using the abbreviations, such as "rep" for representative, "com" for commissive, "dir" for directive, "dec" for declarative, and "exp" for expressive". The data are then put in the table for classifying the types of speech acts used by Joe Biden. Last, the implied meanings are analyzed by using the theory of context of situation by Brown and Yule (1983).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The Findings

This study analyzed the types of speech acts used by Joe Biden in his victory speech by applying Searle (1976), and the implied meaning by using the theory of context by Brown and Yule (1983). Searle (1976) classifies illocutionary acts into five types, namely representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Representative is the type of speech act which represents the world as the speaker believes it. A directive is a speech act that intends to influence the hearer to act. Moreover, expressive is a speech act that expresses feelings or psychological state while commissive is a speech act that commits the speaker to some future actions. Last, declarative is a speech act that can change the world only by simply uttering certain words.

There are 30 utterances that are analyzed in this study. These utterances consist of five types of speech acts, they are; representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Hence, the

findings of illocutionary acts in Joe Biden's victory speech are presented in table 1.

Table 1: The Illocutionary Acts Employed by Joe Biden in Joe Biden's Victory Speech in The US Presidential Election

No.	Illocutionary Acts	Illocutionary Force		Frequencies	Number of Data
1.	Representative	a.	Stating	6	
		b.	Asserting	1	
		c.	Convincing	1	11
		d.	Telling	3	
2.	Directive	a.	Inviting	3	
		b.	Requesting	1	
		c.	Ordering	1	7
		d.	Questioning	1	
		e.	Warning	1	
3.	Commissive	a.	Promising	4	6
		b.	Willing	2	
4.	Expressive	a.	Greeting	1	
		b.	Thanking	1	
		c.	Expressing Gratitude	1	5
		d.	Expressing Pride	1	
		e.	Expressing Empathy	1	
5.	Declarative	a.	Declaring Victory	1	1
TOTAL DATA 30					**30**

Table 1 shows that there are five types of illocutionary acts found in the victory speech delivered by Joe Biden in the US presidential election 2020. Based on the table, those types are representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative illocutionary acts which show different frequencies. Illocutionary act that has the highest frequency of occurrence is 11 utterances. It is followed by a directive with 7 data. Then, commissive with 6 data. Expressive contained 5 data, while declarative is only one. Moreover, the type of representative includes stating, asserting, convincing, and telling. In directive, there are inviting, requesting, ordering, questioning, and warning. Furthermore, in commissive, there were promising and willing. In addition, expressive is including greeting, thanking, expressing gratitude, expressing pride, and expressing empathy. Last, in declarative, there was only found an act of declaring victory.

The Analysis of Joe Biden's Utterances
Representative
a) Stating
(1) *I sought this office to restore the soul of America, to rebuild the backbone of this nation: the middle class.* **(lines 20-21)**

The datum refers to the utterance about Biden's goals in restoring America. The clause "I sought…" can be implied as a representative act of stating. Biden states that he can rebuild America and give it once more value in the eyes of the world and to bring people from various places together in their nation, especially the middle class, where he would make changes to make their lives prosperous.

b) Asserting
(7) *Once again, America's bent the arc of the moral universe more toward justice.* **(lines 41-42)**

The datum above is considered a representative illocutionary act of asserting. The clause "Once again" can be implied as an assertion. In this context, Biden talks about justice where one example is derived from the case of Kamala Harris as his running mate. In his previous statement, Biden talked about Kamala Harris' background as vice president-elect, which refers to the issue of racism, which is still one of the issues of justice in America. Therefore, he wants to assert to his audience that over time, America has led to justice and this is the main focus they will face together.

c) Convincing
(8) *You've always had my back, and I'll have yours.* **(line 57)**

The utterance above is indicated as the representative illocutionary act of convincing. The sentence "You've always had my back" is indicating the representative act which aims to assert the speaker's believe. "You've always had my back" is an idiom which means 'to be ready to protect or defend someone'. Here, Biden tries to convince the American people that they can always have his back and rely on him. Likewise, the sentence "…I'll have yours" means Biden will always defend and protect his people under any circumstances.

d) Telling
(11) *It's always been a bad bet to bet against America.* **(line 135)**

The utterance above is a clearly representative illocutionary act of telling. Biden tells the audience that

it has been a bad bet to bet against America since the country and its people always win, and whoever plays against them will lose. In the process, America has overcome countless financial and nonfinancial national and global catastrophes, such as two world wars, civil wars, numerous market collapses, and numerous other difficulties. Despite all that, America has continued to hold the top position in the military, political, and economic sectors. Thus, in the future, the United States will continue to develop and preserve its dignity and greatness.

Directive
a) Inviting
(12) *Let this grim era of demonization in America begin to end here and now.* (lines 95-96)

It can be seen in the sentence "Let this grim era of demonization…". The utterance above is the directive illocutionary act of inviting. The term *demonization* means '*to portray (someone or something) as evil or worthy of contempt or blame'. In this context, without directing his speech to his Republican rival Donald Trump,* Biden is urging cooperation between Republicans and Democrats in Congress. He invites the audience to come together to end the era of demonization, which has to do with the form of disillusionment expressed by President Trump's supporters whereas the challenging year ends.

Trump and Biden have long-standing conflicts. And since racial fairness is a major concern, it is good that Biden received more support from African American voters than any other Democrat during the primaries. Yet, it may be argued that Biden's strengths are matched by his relative resistance to the demonization campaign that is a key component of Trump's reelection strategy. Unquestionably, Biden's identity protects him from typical right-wing demonization, and it is clear that the strategy Team Trump has tried to attack him has failed. Hence, Biden has called for America to look at history and gave an optimistic perspective for the future by ending the era of demonization from now on.

b) Requesting
(15) *It's time to put away the harsh rhetoric, lower the temperature, see each other again.* (lines 64-65)

The utterance above is categorized as a representative illocutionary act of requesting. The sentence "It's time to put away the harsh rhetoric…" is a request from Biden to Americans to stop seeing opponents (referred to as people who did not vote for him) as enemies by tempering emotions and getting along well with one another.

c) Ordering
(16) *And to make progress, we have to stop treating our opponents as our enemies.* (lines 65-66)

Biden's utterance above is considered a directive illocutionary act of inviting. The clause "We

have to…" is indicated as a form of order. On this occasion, Biden orders his audience to unite to make progress by not treating opponents as enemies where it makes progress for them. This is a form of process in making progress for a nation.

d) Questioning
(17) *What is the will of people? What is our mandate? I believe it's this: America has called upon us to marshal the forces of decency, the forces of fairness. To marshal the forces of science and the forces of hope in the great battles of our time.* (lines 71-74)

The datum above is a directive illocutionary act of questioning. It can be seen Biden questioning the American people about what the will of the people is and what their mandate is. This is the central promise of Joe Biden's campaign, to restore the moral authority of the Presidency, which had declined under President Donald Trump, rather than any particular ideology or set of policies. The term *moral authority* means 'trustworthiness to make decision that are right and good'. Hence, Biden brings his campaign promise back in his victory speech in hopes of restoring declining public trust under President Trump's administration.

e) Warning
(18) *Don't tell me it's not possible in the United States.* (lines 38-39)

The utterance of president-elect Joe Biden above is a directive illocutionary act of warning. Biden said "Don't tell me…" which is a warning act. Biden says that nothing is impossible in the United States. Earlier, he said he was happy to have the honor of serving the people with Kamala Harris as his running mate. He mentions Kamala Harris' background as a black person who was able to occupy the vice-presidential seat, which Biden considered a very possible thing and has finally been realized in the United States. It refers to fairness and equality for people of color and immigrants.

Commissive
a) Promising
(19) *I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify, who doesn't see red states and blue states, only sees the United States.* (lines 14-16)

Biden promises the American people by starting the clause "I pledge…". The utterance above can be indicated as a commissive illocutionary act of promising. Biden pledges to bring unity to the country, not the President of red states (republican) nor blue states (democrat), but all of America.

b) Willing
(24) *I'll work as hard for those who didn't vote for me as those who did.* (lines 94-95)

The clause "I'll work…" in Biden's utterance is indicated as a commissive illocutionary act of

willing. Here Biden tells the audience that he would keep hard for those who did not vote for him.

Expressive

a) **Greeting**

(25) *My fellow Americans, and the people who brought me to the dance: Delawareans.* **(lines 1-2)**

    The utterance above is categorized as an expressive illocutionary act of greeting. It shows that Biden greets his fellow American and those who help him win the election and take the presidency. The word *dance* is a kind of American's culture, in which, for many, dancing is the ideal way to release the emotions and joy that have built up over a divisive presidential campaign and administration as well as the pandemic that has killed many Americans. For the elected American president, *dance* is a tradition, where he will dance with the first lady, that is, his wife.

    On November 3, 2020, the democratic candidate elected to the current president, namely Joe Biden won the presidency in Delaware. President Donald Trump (Republic) received 232 electoral voters, while Vice President Joe Biden (Democrat) received 306 electoral votes. Hence, in addition to referring to his hometown, *Delawareans* also refers to the place where he gets the most votes in the region, and there, he will do his dance with his lady as a form of celebration of his election as president.

b) **Thanking**

(26) *And to my campaign team and all the volunteers and all who gave so much of themselves to make this moment possible. I owe you. I owe. I owe you everything.* **(lines 48-49)**

    From the utterance, it is clear that Biden's illocutionary act is an expression of thank. Biden says that he owes everything to the American people who picked him and his team which can be seen from his sentence "I owe you". He repeats his sentence up to three times which means he owes them for all they gave up making Biden's presidency successful.

c) **Expressing Gratitude**

(27) *And I'm humbled by the trust and confidence you placed in me.* **(line 14)**

    The utterance above is categorized as an illocutionary act of expressive, expressing gratitude. Biden says, "I'm humbled…" to the audience since he

wants to convey his feelings to them. The American people have selected Biden to be the next president of their nation. He is moved and grateful for the confidence the American people have placed in him, where American people also give him the support to lead their nation.

d) **Expressing Pride**

(28) *I'm proud of the coalition we put together, the broadest and most diverse coalition in history. Democrats, Republicans, independents, progressives, moderates, conservatives, young, old, urban, suburban, rural, gay, straight, transgender, white, Latino, Asian, Native American.* **(lines 50- 54)**

    The utterance above is expressive illocutionary acts of praising which can be seen in the clause "I'm proud…". Biden expresses his feeling that he is proud of the coalition they put together by mentioning everyone who supported him, regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

e) **Expressing Empathy**

(29) *For all those of you who voted for President Trump, I understand the disappointment tonight.* **(lines 61-62)**

    The utterance above is an expressive illocutionary act of expressing empathy. The sentence "I understand the disappointment tonight" is considered an empathy. Biden also reaches out to Trump voters, saying he also feels the disappointment that President Trump's supporters feel.
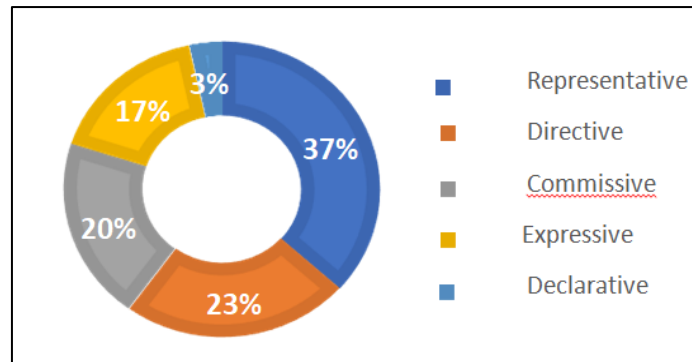
Declarative

a) **Declaring Victory**

(30) *They've delivered us a clear victory, a convincing victory, a victory for we, the people.* **(lines 7-8)**

    In the datum above, the clause "They've delivered us a clear victory..." is declarative as declaring victory. It shows that Biden makes a declaration about the victory he had won. He tells the audience that he won because the American people voted for him to be the US president.

The Percentages of the Illocutionary Acts Found in Joe Biden's Victory Speech

    The chart below will help the readers in identifying speech acts that are frequently and rarely used in speech. the following chart shows the total percentage of the currently used speech act.

In the chart above, the percentage of illocutionary acts found in Joe Biden's victory speech shows that the dominant speech act used by Biden is the representative illocutionary act. The representative shows the highest frequency which takes 37%. A directive is used for around 23%, while commissive is used for 20%. Then, an expressive which only takes 17%. Last, the declarative has the smallest percentage with a percentage of 3% of the total data. It can be concluded that expressive is the most rarely used by Biden in his speech.

DISCUSSION

In the data shown above, representative is the most common illocutionary speech act found in Joe Biden's speech in his victory in the 2020 American presidential election. Searle (1976) argued that representatives is the type of speech act which represent the world as the speaker believes it. The types of representative act used by Joe Biden are stating, asserting, convincing, and telling.

Stating act is most frequently used by Biden in his speech. Biden wants to convey to the audience that with his election as president, he would restore the soul of America and rebuild this country, especially the middle class where he would make a more prosperous livelihood. Given that racism is a widespread problem in the United States, having Kamala Harris as his running mate is a fantastic starting point, who in fact was a black woman, an Asian descendant and the child of an immigrant who became the first history for the United States. This shows that with the rise of racial justice issues there, anyone deserves the position regardless of their background.

In addition, Biden also stresses the importance of unity in his speech, He makes it clear to his audience that we do not need to treat people who do not vote for him as enemies, they are still Americans, regardless of whether they support him or not. Biden believes that America is a country that will always be a role model to the universe. He also says he would make his promise real to everyone regardless of their background, breaking the stigma about justice in the United States and assures them that they could always have his back and rely on him. Furthermore, Biden says that betting against America is a bad bet, both its people and its country. As we know that America is a country capable of overcoming countless national and global nonfinancial and financial crises, such as World War 2, civil war, some market collapses, and some other difficulties. It is also supported by American rankings in several sectors, such as in the military, political, and economic.

Moreover, Biden also uses directive in his speech. Searle (1976) asserted that a directive is a speech act that intends to influence the hearer to act. The types of directives used by Biden are inviting, requesting, permitting, questioning, and warning. The probable reason Biden uses directive in his speech is because he wants to tell the audience that with the victories he has gained, Biden tells his audience to be optimistic about the future by restoring unity. He invites the audience to always unite and build the nation together. Therefore, Biden also invites Americans who do not vote for him to give him a chance to lead America. He also did not forget to remind his audience not to treat opponents as enemies. In his speech, he also asks his people about the mandate he receives, which was the main promise in his former campaign, which was to restore the morale of the presidential authority that had declined under President Donald Trump.

Furthermore, the third illocutionary act used by Biden is commissive which commit the speaker to some future action (Searle, 1976). The commissive acts found in his speech are promising and willing. Biden conveys some of his commitments and his will in his speech. He says that he would be a president who unites not to divide, who sees neither red states (Republican) nor blue states (Democrat), but rather only one which is America. Although he used to be a vice president, as the current president he will work hard and give his best to his people and America. With the people's trust placed in him, Biden also explains his agenda since being elected as president, namely by forming a Biden-Harris Covid plan group for handling Covid-19.

In addition, Biden in his speech did not forget to use expressive act which express feelings or psychological state (Searle, 1976). The commissive acts found are greeting, thanking, expressing gratitude,

expressing pride, and expressing empathy. Biden for the first time greets his fellow Americans on the eve of his victory by thanking his team and supporters. He is grateful for the trust the people had placed in him. He also expresses his pride in the coalition they built together, the widest and most diverse coalition in history. But Biden also did not forget to express his empathy for supporters of President Donald Trump for their disappointment. It can be seen that Biden uses the expressive to show appreciation and respect to the audience. Applying these expressive acts will have a good influence on him, such as a good impression and trust from the public towards him.

Last, the declarative is also found in his speech. A declarative can change the world only by simply uttering certain words (Searle, 1976). In his opening sentence, Biden blatantly declares his victory in front of his audience. He says that the victory he achieves is a clear and convincing victory, a victory for those Americans. With the support and votes that the people give to Biden, it eventually makes him a president of the United States.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing Joe Biden's victory speech, the researcher draws two conclusions. The first is aimed to answer the first research objective about the types of speech acts used in Joe Biden's victory speech in the US presidential election 2020. This research analyzes 30 utterances which is produced by Joe Biden in his speech. It was found that there are five types of illocutionary acts, they are representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

Each type of illocutionary acts found in the Joe Biden's victory speech has different purposes. The first is representative that indicates stating, asserting, convincing, and telling. Second, there is the directive that indicates inviting, requesting, ordering, questioning, and warning. Then, the commissive that suggests promising and willing. Moreover, there is the expressive act that indicates greeting, thanking, expressing gratitude, expressing pride, and expressing empathy. The last is declarative indicating the act of declaring victory.

From the speech, the researcher found that the dominant illocutionary acts used by Joe Biden in his speech is representative with the percentage of 37% or 11 utterances. While directive has 23 % or 7 utterances. Third, the commissive with the percentage of 20 % or 6 utterances. Then, the expressive for around 17% or 5 utterances. Last, a declarative with the smallest percentage which is 3 % or 1 utterance.

Moreover, the second conclusion is aimed to answer the second research objective about the implied meaning of the speech acts used by Joe Biden in his victory speech. On the eve of Joe Biden's victory in Delaware on Saturday 7th September 2020, Joe Biden successfully delivered his victory speech. Based on this research, as the new president of the United States, this implies that Joe Biden conveyed a lot of information through his remarks, particularly in regard to the national agenda that would be carried out during his administration. Joe Biden's speech primarily serve to commit to the future actions and to convince the audience of his sincerity in running for president of the United States of America by presenting the great programs he will run when in office. Looking at the entirety of what he said to the audience, it is clear that he always makes commitments after considering the existing facts. Here, he pays more attention primarily to issues of racial justice. He advises that they are equal and there is no difference in it. Thus, in his speech, Biden stresses the importance of unity in building and moving the nation forward.

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