

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS IN 2023 NIGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN SPEECHES OF TINUBU AND OBI

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Abstract

This study investigated the speech acts in the 2023 Nigerian presidential campaign speeches of two frontline presidential aspirants: Bola Ahmed Tinubu of All Progressive Congress (APC) and Peter Obi of Labour Party (LP) and how they have used language as a tool in their bid to canvass for support. This study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to analyse both underlying themes and narratives constructed in the speech acts as well as determine the frequency of the various speech acts deployed in the campaign speeches. The data for this study were sourced from the recorded videos and documented campaign speeches by TVC, Channels Television and AIT on YouTube. The study adopted the random sampling technique to select four (4) campaign speeches, two by each candidate. The theoretical frameworks adopted for this study are the Speech Acts Theory particularly J. L. Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech acts taxonomies. Based on the findings of the study, the dominant speech acts deployed in the campaign speeches of Tinubu and Obi are the Commissives with (30.7%) consisting promising, pledging, committing, guaranteeing and assuring. The second dominant acts are the representatives, covering (30%) of the total speech acts, mostly asserting, reporting, informing, revealing, stating, claiming, accusing, blaming, criticising. The rest of the distribution include Expressive (20.7%), including thanking, condoling, blessing, well-wishing and apologising; and Directives (16%) Speech Acts, comprising, directing, pleading, requesting, advising, questioning. The result indicated that the least employed speech acts are the declaratives, consisting of only (2.5%) of the entire speech acts. The study concludes that political campaign speeches are rich in speech acts, serving as strategic tools for candidates to garner public support, and politicians prioritise two key objectives - communicating their vision and building trust and hope.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Politics, Campaign and Campaign Speeches*

Introduction

Leadership at all levels in human society is achieved through the instrumentality of language. In a democratic setting where power is attained through elections, human employ the use of language as a tool to solicit for votes by convincing the voters that they have their interest at heart. Through a strategic selection of linguistic items and utterances, political elites control the actions of others, and whoever controls peoples' actions also controls their minds. To support this,

Wardhaugh (1987, p. 285) asserts that "Utterances have some functional value," that our utterances are actions, they do certain things". This buttresses the fact that language is not used only to pass information, but to perform some action and this function of language permeate the political space.

Language is a veritable instrument of thought and an indispensable channel of communication, especially in the field of politics, and a resource in the hands of politicians. This is because all political and politicians' activities,

ranging from campaign, manifestoes, rally, election, inauguration to governance are all carried out through the avenue created by language. As electioneering circles unfold, politicians take to various platforms to communicate with the electorates through political campaign speeches. Speech making is a vital part of the politicians' role in announcing policies and persuading people to agree with such policies. In a more elaborate sense, Ardita and Elbasan (2017) assert that political speech can be seen as a means of establishing and maintaining social relationships, expressing feelings, and selling ideas, policies, and political projects in any society. The language of politicians is characterised by their ability to manipulate linguistic resources in order to sell their political ideologies and manifestoes to the electorates.

Election is periodic process where leaders are elected to hold public offices through a free, fair, and credible voting process which allows people vote to choose their leaders, and this is a major feature of a democracy. Language is a crucial tool in politics, as it allows politicians to announce policies and persuade people to agree with them. Language has become a tool for politicians seeking power as they manipulate it in ways that appeal to the public to identify with them. Certainly, politicians use words and sentences in an emotive manner; it is part of their aim to create a feeling of solidarity, to arouse emotions such as fear, hate or joy (Wilson, 1990). Therefore, politicians do not use language in vain, their use of language is action and goal-oriented. Politicians use language to manipulate linguistic resources to sell their ideologies and manifestoes, achieving success through elegant and persuasive rhetoric. Political discourse is evolving and constituting a significant area of linguistic study that has captured the interest of researchers. In the 2023 General Elections, Nigeria faced challenges due to the influence of religion and ethnic identity. Politicians use emotive language to create solidarity and arouse emotions like fear, hate, or joy. This study investigates the speeches of three leading political presidential aspirants, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP), to uncover the pragmatic contents in their speeches.

This pragmatic analysis aims to understand how politicians use language to sway public support in their favor and increase the selling power of their candidacy.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of those context-dependent aspects of meaning which are systematically abstracted away from in the construction of content or logical form (Horn & Ward, 2006). Many practitioners of Pragmatics view it differently (Allot, 2010). This is to say that pragmatics as a distinct field of linguistic enquiry is approached and defined from diverse perspectives. Leech (1980) defines pragmatics as the study of how utterances have meaning in situation. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics as the study of the relations between language and context, which to him, are basic to an account of language understanding. In the words of Levinson, pragmatics provides spaces to account for hints, implicit purposes, assumptions, social attitudes and so on which are effectively communicated by the use of language. Explaining further, Levinson says that understanding an utterance has to do with connecting what is said to what is mutually assumed or what has been said before. Yule (1983) posits that pragmatics is a field of study that focuses on four areas: meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener; contextual meaning, where meaning is influenced by context; how more is communicated than said; expression of relative distance, where the choice between said and unsaid is determined by distance; and the relationship between linguistic forms and users. This this light, pragmatics is concerned with understanding how people make sense of each other linguistically, as well as the meaning people assign to their utterances. It also explores how context influences what is said, as well as how speakers organise their words in relation to who they are talking to, where, when, and under what circumstances. In expounding the pursuit of pragmatics, Adegbija (1999), cited in Adeyanju, (2009), submits that for a pragmatic analysis to be considered satisfactory, the study of the language must incorporate the context, message, interlocutors, presuppositions and implicature. These and many other constitute the domains of pragmatic enquiry. Buttressing the

indispensability of these components, Bossan (2017), succinctly affirms that in any pragmatic study, the focal point of the definitions is context, but also the message being communicated, the participants involved, their intentions and knowledge of the world are taken into consideration. From the foregoing submissions by different scholars about the field of pragmatic study, it can be said in summary that pragmatics is the study of language and meaning in connection to its users within certain contexts.

Political Discourse and Language, Campaign Speeches

In common parlance, politics refers to what politicians do, particularly when it comes to state affairs. The word “politics” comes from the Greek word polis, which means city or state (Joseph, 2006, p. 2). According to Chilton (2004, p. 1), politics is “a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who resist it”. The global competition for leadership positions, including in Nigeria, often involves negotiation and persuasion through political campaigns and speeches, making communication central to politics. The term political discourse can refer in a number of ways to a range of different types of talk or text (Wilson, 2015). In the views of Van Dijk (1997) and Fairclough (2012), any kind of discourse that is a political production, be it a speech, debate, political interview, policy document etc. is regarded as political discourse. It also seen as any talk whose subject matter is politics and or which is politically motivated. Political discourse hence may take the form of speeches, debates, interviews, campaign advertisements, etc. Van Dijk (1997) highlights that context significantly influences political discourse, encompassing political actors, institutions, events, and gatherings, including political campaigns, parliamentary sittings, press conferences, and interviews. Language is a potent manipulative instrument in the hands of political leaders. Because politics is essentially about striving to control power, language is used to achieve that control, making language a powerful political weapon. Its purpose is to inform, educate, motivate, convince, entertain, and influence citizens. Language is also used to prepare,

accompany, govern, guide, explain, justify, evaluate, critique, and influence politics (Osisanwo, 2009, 2010).

Political campaigns are organised efforts by a political party or candidate to attract voters’ support in elections (Ginger, 2009), influence decision-making processes within specific groups (Ezegwu et al., 2017), and coordinate activities over time to achieve a specific objective (Chile 2011). This objective is perhaps well captured in the definition of political campaign by Aduradola and Ojukwu (2013, p.106) cited in Etika, et al. (2018, p. 8-9) thus:

the mobilization of forces either by an organization or individual to influence others in order to effect an identified and desired political change. It shows people and particularly, political candidates’ ability to sensitize the political community in relation to making the community see them as potentials and better representatives of the people.

Political campaigns aim to enhance decision-making within a group by presenting candidates’ messages to electorates. They also serve as marketing actions during elections, influencing public opinion through speeches. These speeches showcase candidates’ accomplishments, ideas, and personal appeal, persuading listeners to vote.

Empirical Studies

Various studies have been undertaken in some interrelated fields of linguistics including pragmatics which is the anchor field of this study as well as stylistics and discourse analysis. Also, the speeches reviewed comprise both those of Nigerian politicians and those of their foreign counterparts. Such studies include Ibrahim and Olorin (2020) who studied language as a propaganda tool in Nigerian electioneering. They found that language, both spoken and written, has different effects on listeners. Political campaign speeches in Nigeria often contain rhetoric, exaggeration, rhetorical questions, and abusive utterances.

A study by Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere (2012) analysed President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua’s victory and inaugural speeches, focusing on speech acts and pragmatic functions. The study analyzed 20 sentences and 40 speech

acts, using Austin and Searle's Speech Act theory. The results showed assertive, directive, expressive, verdictive, commissive, and declarative speech acts, aiding in understanding and interpreting the speeches.

Rakaj's (2022) study focuses on Barack Obama's speeches during the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. Data was collected from campaign speeches and quantitatively analysed using Searle's taxonomy. The study found that Obama's most common speech goals were to reassure, confirm, and reaffirm. The performative verb "promise" was used in seven examples, and the construction "be going to + infinitive" and the modal word "will" were used instead. The study differs from previous research, shifting to Nigeria and focusing on the 2023 presidential campaign.

Ige (2023) studied Bola Tinubu's political speech, "Emi lokan, Yoruba lokan," from Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, borrowing insight from van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive model. Analysing, the ideologies expressed in his speech, it revealed that his speech contained elements of supremacist, collectivist, welfarist, and ethnocentric ideologies, influenced by discursive moves.

Azubuikwe and Ngwuoke (2024) examined the pragmatic acts of locution, illocution and perlocution in Mr. Peter Obi's speech at Chatham house United Kingdom during the build up to February 25, 2023 general election in Nigeria. The speech act theories of J.L. Austin (1962) and Searly (1969) were adopted to show the deployment of illocutionary acts. The findings of the study revealed that Mr. Peter Obi used more of assertive illocutionary speech act in his speech covering a frequency of 20 and (42%) to affirm, report, and announce the parlous state of affairs in Nigeria. This is closely followed by commissive and expressive illocutionary speech acts which recorded the frequency of 9 (32%) each.

These existing studies were confined to presidential campaign rallies and speeches with temporal settings prior to 2023 general election. This work focused on pragmatic analysis of the 2023 Nigeria's presidential campaign speeches especially from the standpoint of Speech Act Theory.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks adopted for this study are the Speech Acts Theory particularly J. L. Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech acts taxonomies. The theories considered here were developed primarily in relation to spoken interactions, and since interlocutors, specifically politicians do things with their words, hence the suitability of the theories in analysing campaign speeches.

Austin's Model of Analysis

Speech Act is one of the domains of pragmatic enquiry. According to Yule (1996), speech acts are those action performed via utterances, and, in English, are commonly given more specific labels such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, and request. This is to say that utterances contain both information and action and anytime an utterance does something, it is referred as speech acts. Griffiths (2006, p.148) states that: "speech act is the basic unit of linguistic interaction" In the same vein, Osisanwo (2003, p.55) opines that "an utterance is a speech act", which implies that in any utterance a person makes, an act is performed. This supports the view of Cutting (2002, p.13) which maintains that speech acts are the action performed in saying something and these acts performed includes stating a fact, an opinion, confirming or denying something, issuing an order, apologising, etc. Erlinda (2019), adds that speech act is the usage of language to accomplish something. Griffiths, Osisanwo, and Cutting all emphasise that every utterance, every piece of spoken language, constitutes a speech act. This highlights the inherent performative nature of language – it is not just about conveying information but also about *doing* something. By implication, utterances have performative power as every utterance, whether spoken or written, has the potential to produce effects in the world. In this case, political speech is not a speech alone but a series of speech acts, and by implication, Tinubu and Obi, two political aspirants in the 2023 presidential race, are actors in words. As the foremost proponent of speech act theory, Austin (1962) postulates that engaging in speech act means performing the complementary acts of locution, illocution, and perlocution.

Locutionary Speech Act

A locutionary act is an expression used with a determinate sense or reference. In other words, a locutionary act refers to the actual words uttered or the basic act of speaking, which itself consist of three related sub-acts - a phonic act a phatic act a rhetoric act.

Illocutionary Speech Acts

An illocutionary act is an act performed through an expression. It can also be said to be the intention of the speaker. Illocutionary acts include commanding, informing, warning, threatening, deterring, promising, directing, appreciating, congratulating etc. Austin postulates five categories of illocutionary acts which are:

- i. Exercitives: These are acts that connote order, request, or advice with the use of verbs like command, order, plead, beg etc.
- ii. Verdictives: These are acts of making judgement or decisions with the use of verbs such as quit, hold, calculate, analyse etc.
- iii. Commisives: These are used to make promises, pledge, contract etc.
- iv. Expositives: These are acts that expand views, make illustrations and give responses with verbs such as affirm, deny, illustrate, answer, describe etc.
- v. Behavitives: These are acts that express the mental state of speaker with verbs such as apologise, thanks, commiserate, congratulate etc.

Perlocutionary Speech Acts

The perlocutionary act is the act of bringing about certain effects by means of the utterance. This means that when an utterance is uttered, it has certain effects on the hearer, it makes the hearer to behave in a certain way. For example, an utterance may make the hearer laugh, cry, leave a place, become dejected, become hopeful stand or sit.

Searle's Model of Speech Act

Searle's (1969) model of speech acts, a modified version of Austin's, is one of the several different taxonomies of speech acts. Searle gave some principles as informing the foundations for a better classification of speech act. He proposes that speech acts fall into five types which include commissive acts, declarative acts, directive acts, expressive acts and representative acts

- Representatives include assertions and statements and involve an attempt to describe the world. The speaker is committed to the truth of proposition e.g. affirm, believe, deny, conclude, report.
- Directives are orders, requests and the likes. The speakers try to get the hearer to do something, e.g. ask, challenge, command, insist, request.
- Commisives are acts which commit the speaker to some future course of action. The speaker is committed to varying degrees, to a certain course of action, e.g. guarantee, pledge, promise, swear, vow.
- Expressive speech acts are those that express emotion and reveal the speaker's attitude about a state of affairs such as congratulating, condoling, thanking, welcoming, praising, blaming, apologising, or expressing pleasure. They have a strongly interpersonal function.
- Declarations correspond closely to most of Austin's original examples of performatives utterances that change the world rather than describing it Declarations include sacking a worker, performing a marriage, and sentencing a criminal. The speaker alerts the external status or condition of an object or situation solely by making the utterance e.g. I resign, I baptised, you're fired, war is hereby declared.

Methodology

This study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approaches focus on the underlying themes and narratives constructed in the speech acts in the campaign speeches. The qualitative approach helps to measure and determine the frequency of the various speech acts deployed in the campaign speeches. The data for this study were sourced from the recorded videos and documented campaign speeches by TVC News, Channel Television and AIT on YouTube. Since the 2023 presidential bid had three frontrunners from three frontline political parties including Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party

(LP). The study employed the random sampling technique to select three (3) campaign speeches, one from each candidate, to specifically examine the speech acts contained in the speakers' utterances as they canvass for political power. Each campaign speech was taken at least from a different geographical zone.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The researcher, having transcribed the speeches, grouped the data based on the Speech Acts category of locutions, subcategory of illocutions and perlocutions. The result was presented graphically using pie chart, showing the frequency of the illocutions.

Datum 1: Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Campaign Speech at APC Presidential Rally in Cross River State held in Katsina on Jan 31, 2023. (Source: YouTube covered by TVC News)

Speech acts Analysis

Illocutionary Acts:

Behavitives/Expressives:

- "Let me first of all thank you immensely". (thanking)
- "God bless" (wishing, blessing)
- "Thank you. Since morning, you have been waiting to see and to hear what we have to say today." (thanking)
- I pray that God will give you showers of blessing, bless your family, protect you, give you prosperity, give you joy, keep you in good health, defeat your enemy. You will defeat your enemy (praying, blessing)
- God Almighty Allah will give you happiness and peace, your children will grow better, they will be greater than all of us (praying, wishing)
- "You are great, great in our hearts..." (admiring, praising)
- "Safe journey back home." (well-wishing)

Expositives/Representatives

- "we are promise keepers" (asserting)
- "Lagos is changed beautifully" (claiming, stating)
- "lies of their sixteen years" (exposing, criticising)
- "They cannot even provide electricity" (exposing, criticising, dissuading)
- "They cannot even provide electricity to roast corn..." (asserting, criticising)
- "They never understood what money laundry is all about..." (exposing, condemning,)
- "They are familiar, they've understood what inflation is all about..." (claiming, blaming)
- "They said privatisation, privatisation for Atiku pocket" (stating, accusing, condemning)

Commissives:

- "I'm going to cure your headache" (promising, guaranteeing)
- "you will get job" (promising, assuring)
- "Money will come in, you will enjoy it. You will be happy." (promising, assuring)
- "We will create jobs here" (promising, pledging)
- "Here comes prosperity, here comes job, you will get job..." (promising, proclaiming)
- "Each state will become a wonder of tourism..." (promising, guaranteeing)

Exercitives/Directives

- "Don't let them lie to you..." (instructing, urging, warning)
- "I say follow me..." (commanding, directing) "Don't mind them, the lies of their sixteen years..." (attacking, instructing, warning, advising)
- "Are you going to vote for me?" (questioning, indirectly requesting)

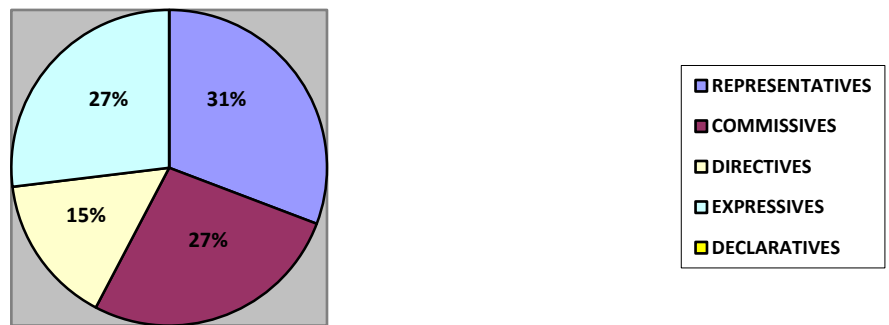


Fig. 1: Speech Acts in Tinubu Campaign Speech in Cross River

Datum 1 above indicates that Tinubu campaign speech in Cross River was heavily laden with several illocutionary acts. Fig. 1 reveals that the most prevalent illocutionary acts in the given speeches are representatives, accounting for approximately 8(31%) of the total. This suggests that the speaker was primarily focused on conveying information, making statements, and expressing beliefs. The categories of **expressives** and **commissives** follow closely behind, each occurred about 7 times representing 27% of the utterances. These categories reflect the speaker's emotional expressions, commitments, and promises. Finally, **directives** constitute the smallest percentage (15%), indicating a lesser emphasis on commands, requests, or suggestions. In Tinubu's campaign speech, he employs various representative acts including informing, asserting, and criticism in order to highlight his past achievements as the former governor of Lagos State, while also accusing and criticising the opposition for corruption, incompetence, and broken promises. He used illocutions to expose the failings of the past PDP administration, aiming to dissuade the audience from supporting their candidate. Commissives acts of promising, assuring, guaranteeing, pledging, and committing to economic prosperity and development, personal assurances of support and care, and thus guaranteeing and assuring a better future. These acts were used to promise economic prosperity, job creation, and overall well-being, constructing

an image of a competent leader committed to the welfare of the people. He also used directive speech acts, such as instructing listeners not to let the opposition deceive them and urging them to vote for the APC candidate, to encourage audience compliance and mobilise support for the candidate. Tinubu used expressive illocutions like praising, wishing, blessing, thanking, well-wishing, and expressing pleasure to connect with his audience. He used acts of thanking, well-wishing, blessing, and praising to create an atmosphere of benevolence and care. These strategies are often used by politicians to stay in favour with their audience.

Implied Perlocutionary Effects

Tinubu employed speech acts as strategies in order to persuade and galvanise support. For instance, the speaker utilised appeals to emotion (pathos) and promises of prosperity with the aim of evoking hope and optimism among the listeners. The frequent use of inclusive language and self-deprecating humour were meant to establish the credibility as well as bond between the speaker and the electorates. The explicit declaration of candidacy and call to vote aim at securing political support. Ultimately, the speech creates a sense of unity, purpose, and enthusiasm among the electorates, inspiring them to believe in the speaker's vision for Nigeria and to work towards its realisation. The apologies and expressions of gratitude engender forgiveness and goodwill respectively.

Datum 2: A Campaign Speech by Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu at APC Presidential Rally in Katsina State held in Katsina on Feb 6, 2023

(Source: TVC News).

Speech Acts Analysis

Illocutions

Behavitives/Expressives

- “We condole with Mr. President and the people of Katsina.” (commiserating)
- “We share the joy, we participate in the mourning, we share the sorrow, the pain that you do go through...” (empathising)
- “We are saying no, no, no, to PDP...” (condemning & rejecting)
- “God bless you, (blessing)
- “thank you” (thanking)
- “Is a progressive party that the sixteen of those Poverty Development Party” (inquiring, criticising, warning)

Commissives

- “They will pay their price...” (promising, assuring)
- “We will deal with them...” (promising & committing, assuring)
- “We will continue to pursue crime...” (promising, committing, assuring)
- “We will promise the children... will be catered for...” (pledging & guaranteeing)

Expositives/Representatives

- “There is nothing, nothing happens without the wish of Allah...” (asserting & affirming)
- “They have committed heinous crime...” (stating, revealing)
- “We are the people who want peace and progress...” (asserting, informing)
- “This is your government...” (stating, proposing, asserting)
- “We are saying no, no, no, to PDP, no to the evil, to the killers no...” (condemning and disapproving)
- “Only yesterday, governor and all of us, discuss whether we should continue with the rally today or cancel” (reporting, informing)
- “This is a progressive party...” (asserting, revealing)

Verdictives/ Declaratives

- “They will not win...” (judging)
- “The wicked shall perish...” (declaring, judging,)

Exercitives/Directives

- “We should take it as a crime without passion...” (urging, obligating)
- “Ignore the killers.” (urging, instructing)

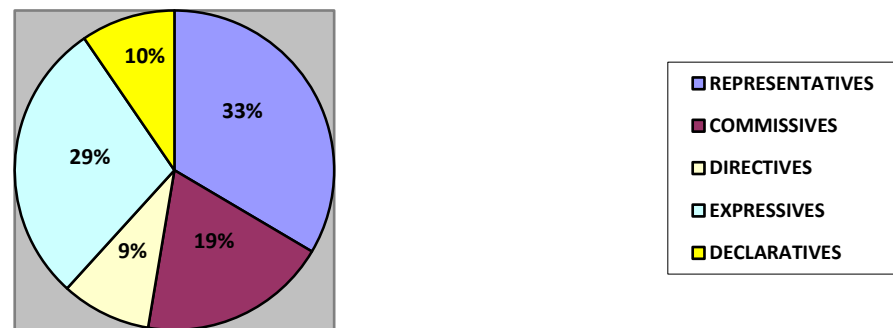


Figure 2: Speech Acts of Tinubu Campaign Speech in Katsina

In datum 2 above, the speaker deployed various speech acts. The Expressive Speech acts set the tone of the speech. Based on the figure 1, the representatives 7(33%), are the most common type of illocution, suggesting a focus on stating facts, asserting, and informing. The expressives 6(29%). and commissives 4(19%), are relatively frequent, indicating a balance between expressing emotions and making commitments while the declaratives 2 (10%) and directives 2(9%) are less prevalent, suggesting a more limited use of judgments and directives. This distribution of illocutions reflect the context and purpose of the discourse. As part of a political speech, the emphasis on informing and asserting is expected, as speakers often aim to convey their stance and persuade their audience. The behavitive/expressive acts cover commiserating and empathising with the people of Katsina over the tragic experience of terrorist attack prior to the rally. Expressives are used to connect with the audience emotionally because they have a strong interpersonal function. Evident in the text are act of thanking and blessing.

The text predominantly employs representative/expositive such as stating, informing, asserting, serving to convey information, express viewpoints and assertions. Tinubu employs assertive statements to convey his party's stance on issues such as crime and governance. Furthermore, Tinubu employs the act stating and evaluating for the purpose of projecting

party as favourably against the opposition. The text also bears commissive speech acts, characterised by pledging, promising, guaranteeing, committing and assuring. Tinubu frequently utilises these speech acts to reassure the audience and convey a sense of determination. The text employs directive speech acts strategically to influence the audience and shape their response to the tragic events, urging them to remain steadfast and resolute. The speaker utilises act of implicit directives in form suggesting, pleading, urging and advising. The speech closes with a blessing, another expressive act, serving to invoke divine favour upon the audience and to reinforce the speaker's faith-based perspective on the tragedy.

Implied Perlocutionary Effects

The illocutionary speech acts in the text was meant to evoke a range of emotional and behavioural responses from the audience. By condemning the perpetrators and promising retribution, the speaker intends to inspire confidence and trust in the government's ability to address the issue. The speaker also aimed consoling, reassuring, and encouraging the audience within the context of responding to a tragic event. The speech is also intended to spur unity and defiance against the perpetrators, and ultimately maintain public morale, deterring future attacks, and reinforcing Tinubu image as a capable and compassionate leader.

Datum 3: A Campaign Speech by Peter Obi, Labour Party Presidential Candidate Labour Party at the Presidential Campaign rally in Lagos Held in Tafawa Balewa Stadium Lagos on February 11, 2022.
Source: YouTube (Aired by Channels Television).

Illocutionary Acts

Representatives/Expositives:

- “We have allowed people to come, tell us one thing and when they go into office they do another thing.” (stating.)
- “We have allowed people to come, tell us one thing and when they go into office they do another thing.” (stating)
- “This Lagos will remain the centre of our finest, centre of our excellence, centre of our achievement and everything.” (stating)
- “Nigeria have all the factor endowment to be a great country.” (informing)
- “The enemies are no more formidable.” (informing)
- “You voted for PDP, the broom, you voted for the PDP, the umbrella I mean, and put into poverty.” (stating, accusing, blaming)
- “Nobody will still our oil again.” (asserting, accusing)

Directives/Exercitives

- “Please listen and tape it” (instructing)
- “Go and vote for... go and vote for...Mama, Papa, Pikin.” (directing)
- “Please go out on the 25th, look for LP, vote there, stay there, until they count the vote.” (directing)
- “We are begging you the youths, support what we are doing”. (pleading)
- “Hold unto the possible, hold unto a possible Nigeria”. (instructing, advising)
- “Hold unto a secured Nigeria” (instructing, advising)
- “Hold unto Nigeria that is productive”, (instructing, advising)

Commissives

- “We will secure and unite Nigeria.” (promising, committing)
- “We will ensure that when we start, after some years, no Nigerian will say I’m from the West, East North but will be proud to say he’s a Nigerian.” (promising, committing)
- “We will work hard to pull people out of poverty.” (promising, committing)
- “We will ensure that our youths are employed.” (promising, committing)
- “We will remove this country from consumption to production.” (promising, committing)
- “We will ensure that there is rule of law and order.” (promising, committing)
- “We will support the youths to start SMSEs, the companies.” (promising, committing)
- “We will apologise to all those who are victims of police brutality.” (promising, committing)
- “We will ensure that we love each other.” (promising, committing)
- “We will reproduce an enabling environment, the favourable environment that will spur investment in our oil and Gas.” (promising, committing)

Expressives/Behavitives

- “Thank you, thank you” (thanking)
- “God bless you.” (invoking blessing)
- “We will apologise to all those who are victims of police brutality”. (apologising)



Figure 3: Speech Acts in Obi's Campaign Speech in Lagos

Datum 3 above contains several illocutionary acts. Based on result in fig. 3, the commissives are the most prevalent illocutionary act in the given utterances, accounting for 44(44%) of the total. This suggests a strong focus on promises, commitments, and pledges. This emphasis on commissives aligns with the political context, where candidates often make promises to gain public support. Representatives and directives each constitute 23(23%) of the utterances. Representatives provide information or assertions, while directives are requests or commands. The relatively equal distribution of these two categories indicates a balanced approach to informing the audience and seeking their participation. Expressives are the least frequent, making up 3(10%) of the utterances. These acts express emotions or perform social acts, such as thanking or apologising. While less prominent, they contribute to the overall tone and interpersonal dynamics of the speech.

Representative speech acts form the core of the text, as the speaker predominantly makes assertions and claims. Obi used representative speech acts to outline the country's challenges, such as insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and economic instability. He also employed these acts extensively to present his party's proposed solutions, including plans for security, economic growth, job creation, and agricultural development. It was based on those representatives, which expose the challenges assailing the nation, that the speaker strung his promises. The text is permeated with commitments to address Nigeria's challenges, and thus, the speaker explicitly promises to secure and unite the nation, pull people out of poverty, create jobs,

revamp the agricultural sector, ensure the operation of rule of law and combat corruption etc. These commissive speech acts woo the heart and loyalty of the audience. The deployment of directive speech acts are evident in the text, as Peter Obi issues commands, requests, and advice to the audience. These directive speech acts mobilise the audience, encouraging them to support the speaker's political agenda. They also induce a sense involvement, motivating the audience to actively participate in the political process. The discourse is initiated with expressions of gratitude, thanking the audience for their presence and attention. The speaker also invoked divine blessing at the conclusion of the speech, expressing hope and reliance on divine powers for success.

Implied Perlocutionary Effects

The implied perlocutionary effects of the speech acts in the text are intended to conjure a range of responses from the audience. The speaker employed rhetorical devices like repetition, slogans (Mama, Papa, Pikin), and promises of a better future to generate excitement and enthusiasm among the audience. Principally, the speaker hoped to stir hope and optimism about Nigeria's future. By vividly portraying the current state of the nation, as faced with series of crises, Obi aimed to evoke a feeling of dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the existing government. The promise of a secure, united, and prosperous Nigeria is meant to elicit feelings of aspiration and excitement among the listeners. Ultimately, the perlocutionary goal was to sway the audience to vote for the speaker's party, believing that it represents the best chance for positive change and a brighter future for Nigeria

Datum 4: Campaign Speech by Peter Obi, Labour Party Presidential Candidate at the Labour Party Presidential Rally in Adamawa State Held in Numan Adamawa State on January 31, 2023. Source: (YouTube Aired by Channels Television)

Speech Acts Analysis

Illocutions:

Commissives

- “I assure you,... my commitment is total, our program is to secure and unite Nigeria.” (promising, assuring, committing)
- “We will ensure that we provide security for this country.” - A promise to provide security. (promising, assuring, committing)
- “We will ensure that we have appropriate number or security personnel, equip them, protect them, no longer are we going to allow our police men and women to die without the country caring about them.” (promising, assuring, committing)
- “We will ensure that whoever we sent to the front will be properly equipped, properly supported, properly insured, and nothing will happen to them but if it happens, their family will know they are not alone.” (promising, assuring, committing)
- “We try and unite the country, we ensure the country is united, we cannot no longer stay the way we are today.” (promising, assuring, committing)
- “We want to build a country where no Nigerian will ever say I am from the East, West, North or South. We are Nigerians.” (promising, assuring, committing)
- “We want to build a country where we will move Nigeria today from consumption to production.” (promising, assuring, committing).
- “We will make sure we unite people, all this fight between the various people, whether it is herders and farmers will cease, our farmers must go back and produce and be the right in their farms.” (promising, assuring, committing).

Representatives:

- “What you country has done for the past twenty years is to manufacture poverty, manufacture insecurity, they ensured your people are unemployed, to make our youths suffer, least is unemployment.” (questioning, asserting, informing)
- “The enemy is no more formidable, we will deal with it.” (asserting, informing)
- “This year’s election must not be based on tribe or ethnicity.” (asserting, informing, advising)
- “Have you ever seen people buying bread cheaper because they are from the north? Nobody buys food cheaper because of where he comes from.” – (questioning, asserting, informing.)
- “If anybody tells you about their religion, tell him show me any Church where I can buy food cheaper, where I can get employed, since there is none, it is time to tell.. them,”
- “What I’m telling you is all those things have ceased.” (asserting, informing)
- “We want to build a country where we will move Nigeria today from consumption to production.” (informing, promising)
- “We want people who are competent.” (stating, asserting)

Expressives

- “Let me start by thanking people of Adamawa.” (thanking)
- “I thank you for what you’ve been able to do.” (thanking)
- “Thank you for what you’ve able to do, for those warm reception,” (thanking)
- “Thank you for being here,” - (thanking)

Directives

- “Hold us responsible.” (directing, charging)
- “Tell him I’m hungry. Tell him we are poor.” – (directing, advising, inciting)

- “Tell him it is turn of Nigerians to take back their country. Tell him it’s your turn.” (directing, advising, inciting)
- “Is there where a Christian is buying bread cheaper? Is there anywhere a Muslim buys bread cheaper?” (questioning, challenging, persuading)

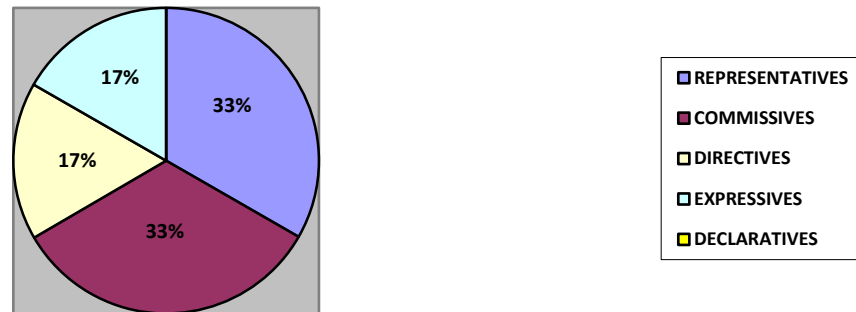


Figure 4: Speech Acts in Obi's Campaign Speech in Adamawa

Datum 4 contains various illocutions including commissives and representatives being the most frequent illocutions in the speech, each accounting for approximately 8(33%) of the total illocutions. This suggests that the speaker is primarily focused on making promises, commitments, and informing the audience about the state of the nation. Expressives and directives are less prevalent, each constituting approximately 4(17%) of the total. This indicates that while the speaker does express gratitude and make requests, these actions are less prominent compared to the emphasis on promises and information. Generally, Obi's discourse is characterised by a strong emphasis on commitment and informative statements. This could suggest a campaign strategy aimed at gaining trust and confidence from the audience through promises and assertions. This indicates a campaign strategy aimed at reassuring the audience and providing a clear vision for the future. The minimal use of expressives and directives suggests a less emotional and less commanding tone, possibly reflecting a desire to connect with the audience on a more level playing field.

In the campaign discourse, Obi used representative speech acts to describe the nation's current state, such as poverty, insecurity, and unemployment. He communicated his party's plans and policies as factual commitments, positioning the speaker and his party as credible.

Obi also used the act of criticising to berate the incumbent government, asserting its failure in security and economy. He questioned the electorate's support for APC ineffective leadership. Communications were woven around the challenges encapsulated in the representatives. Obi committed to promises of securing the nation, uniting diverse groups, and addressing economic challenges. He pledged to improve security, foster national unity, transition the economy from consumption to production, and address the farmer-herder conflict. Directives were also used, instructing and urging the audience to hold politicians accountable. He also employed questioning to redirect the audience's perception and influence decisions against long-held religious or ethnic-based politics. Expressive speech acts, particularly thanking, were used to establish rapport and goodwill with the audience. The speaker's use of these speech acts effectively communicated the nation's challenges and aimed to inspire change.

Implied Perlocutionary Effects

The speech acts in the speech were intended to persuade the audience of the Labour Party's competence, integrity, and commitment to addressing pressing national issues. The employment of commissives, representatives, expressives, and directives was meant to prompt trust, arouse hope, and spur support. The frequent use of promises and assurances was to help stir the

feeling of optimism and reassurance, positioning the candidate as a viable alternative to the incumbent. Obi's use of accusatory statements against the previous government was intended to provoke resentment and discontent, thereby

motivating the audience to embrace change. Ultimately, the speech aims to convince listeners to vote for the Labour Party, believing that it represents the best chance for a secure, united, and prosperous Nigeria.

General Discussion of Findings

The 2023 Nigeria presidential election campaign speeches are laden with several speech acts. These speech acts serve as campaign strategies deployed by the players in the race for the purpose of winning the support of the masses and electorate during the polls. Politicians do not merely deliver campaign messages but performs certain acts that bear their effects on the audience. The summary of Speech Acts as employed in the selected speeches is presented thus:

Candidates	Representatives	Commissives	Directives	Expressives	Declarative
Tinubu	32%	23%	12%	28%	5%
Obi	28%	38.5%	20%	13.5%	0%
Total	60%	61.5%	32%	41.5%	5%
Average	30%	30.7%	16%	20.7%	2.5 %

Source: Author, 2024.

Based on the findings of the study, as shown in the table above, the dominant speech acts deployed in the campaign speeches of Tinubu and Obi are the Commissive with (30.7%), consisting promising, pledging, committing, guaranteeing and assuring. The second dominant acts are the representatives, covering (30%) of the total speech acts, mostly asserting, reporting, informing, revealing, stating, claiming, accusing, blaming, criticising. The rest of the distribution include Expressive (20.7%), including thanking, condoling, blessing, well-wishing and apologising and Directives (16%) Speech Acts, comprising, directing, pleading, requesting, advising, questioning. The result indicated that the least employed speech acts are the declaratives, consisting of only (2.5%) of the entire speech acts. This shows that electioneering campaign provides the platform for politicians' market themselves in order to win support. To achieve this, they employ representatives which pave way for them to express their core beliefs, values and principles; clearly articulate their political agenda, policies, and their stance of specific issues; reveal and inform audience of their expertise and credibility through their achievements. The commissive acts afford the politicians to pledge and make promises on what they will do if elected, thereby helping to convey a sense of direction as they politicians outline their

goals and vision.

The Tinubu predominantly employed representative/expositive such as stating, informing, asserting, serving to convey information, express viewpoints and assertions. His campaign speeches highlight the importance of political speeches in persuading the audience through factual claims, accusations, and critiques of opponents. The lower frequency of directives suggests a more subtle approach, relying on persuasive arguments and emotional appeals to encourage voting. Tinubu's campaign speeches demonstrate the multifaceted nature of political discourse, employing informative, persuasive, and emotional strategies to achieve their objectives. The distribution of illocutionary acts reveals how speakers strategically use language to achieve their goals, such as persuading voters, building trust, or offering support during crises.

The most frequent illocutionary acts across contained in Obi's speeches were the commissives, accounting for a significant portion. This suggests a strong emphasis on promises, commitments, and pledges. The high frequency of commissive acts (promises, commitments) strongly suggests a campaign strategy heavily reliant on appealing to the audience's hopes and aspirations. This aligns with the expected nature of political discourse, where candidates strive to gain

public support by outlining their plans and promises. Obi aimed to garner support by outlining a vision for the future and pledging to address the nation's challenges. The significant presence of representative acts (assertions, claims) indicates an emphasis on informing the audience about the current state of the nation and presenting his party's proposed solutions. This approach was intended to convince voters of the validity and effectiveness of his policies. The relatively equal distribution of representatives and directives suggests a balanced approach to engaging the audience. While providing information, Obi also sought to actively involve them through requests, commands, and calls to action. The lower frequency of expressive acts (gratitude, apologies) suggests a campaign tone that was less focused on emotional appeals. The findings align with the expected characteristics of political discourse where politicians often rely on promises and commitments to gain support and win elections.

The study reveals various similarities in the way these politicians employ speech acts as campaign strategies. In both Tinubu and Obi's campaign speeches, there are several speech acts that this study identified, including stating, asserting, informing, (assertives), promising, assuring, guaranteeing (commissives), directing, urging, appealing, advising, instructing (directives) and thanking, praising, condoling, apologising (expressives). While some of these acts are explicit, others are implicit. One striking correlation in the political campaign discourses of the two players in the 2023 presidential bid is the use of expositive/representative speech acts for the purpose of discrediting opponents. The findings indicated that structural composition of the commissive acts involves the use of modal word "will", the performative verb "promise" and

"want" as in: we want to ...". There are few instances of the use of be going to + infinitive in both Tinubu and Obi's campaign promises. The two political aspirants employed promises to instill hope in the audience, reassure them of their commitment. Most times, these politicians use the act of promising as bait to lure the masses into believing in the credibility of their candidacy.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that political campaign speeches are a complex tapestry woven with a rich array of speech acts. Across both Tinubu and Obi's speeches, making promises (commissives) and representing their views were the most prominent speech acts. This aligns with the expected nature of campaign speeches, where candidates aim to convince voters through promises and the presentation of their political stances. Both Tinubu and Obi strategically deployed these acts – informing, persuading, promising, and seeking audience engagement – to navigate the competitive landscape of the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. While exhibiting commonalities, their individual styles and priorities were evident in the frequency and specific wording of their speech acts. The findings underscore the importance illocutionary acts in revealing underlying speaker's intentions, audience's expectations, and the dynamic interplay between speakers and their audiences in the political arena. While seemingly aimed at informing and inspiring, campaign speeches often subtly (and not-so-subtly) employ persuasive and manipulative tactics. This research highlights the multifaceted and nuanced nature of political communication, urging a deeper understanding of the strategic use of language in shaping public opinion and influencing electoral outcomes.

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