

Speech Acts in Selected Political Speeches

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Abstract

The study investigates the role of language in the communication and interpretation of intentions by examining selected political speeches of John Kerry in Presidential Campaign in 2004 and George Bush- Inaugural address in 2001 since they have the same purposes as pieces of discourse with specific goals. Hence, the study focused on the pragmatic functions of locution, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts of the speeches.

Twenty sentences were selected from the two speeches. The findings show that the overall relative frequency percentages for the selected speeches are: commissive 40%, assertive 35%, directive 20%, and expressive 5%. The results show that Kerry relied more on sentences that performed commissive acts than other speech acts since he committed to some future actions, and he promised to make the world fit the words. Bush used sentences with assertive acts more than other speech acts since the assertive has a truth value which can only enhance the effect of the asserted proposition. Hence, the data are characterized by a preponderance of commissive, assertive and directive acts that are mostly used as mobilization strategies, especially in political campaigns, where it is essential for candidates to persuade their listeners to win elections.

Politicians communicate directly with the general public in order to convince them of their programs or ideas. Usually, the speakers would promote about their self and talk about their potency to be a good leader with all their goals to convince the hearer. In this area, the speech act analysis of the political speeches provides the understanding that political leaders perform various acts through their speeches.

Keywords: Speech Acts Theory, Political Discourse, Political Speeches.