



A Pragmatic Analysis of Dominant Illocutionary Speech Acts in Imran Khan's Minar-e-Pakistan Jalsa Speech

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Article Info

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Keywords:

Assertive act,

Imran Khan,

Language,

Political Discourse,

Speech Act Theory

Abstract

The primary goal of the current study was to identify the dominating illocutionary speech act and its functions. This paper employed the speech act theory proposed by Searle in 1969 to analyze the subtypes of illocutionary acts in Mr. Imran Khan's speech. The selected speech was analyzed by using a descriptive qualitative approach. The analysis identified the five subtypes of illocutionary speech acts: assertive (55.75%), commissive (11.51%), directive (12.12%), expressive (16.96%), and declarative (3.63%). Assertive acts were dominant, constituting 55.75% of the speech, reflecting Khan's strategy to present judgments, facts, and assertions to engage and persuade his audience. The findings highlighted using assertive acts to discuss historical figures, political events, and proposed policies, emphasizing their role in political rhetoric for building confidence and public support. Future studies can investigate other types of speech acts and a comprehensive comparative analysis of political discourse can also be conducted. The recent study offers insights into Mr. Imran Khan's pragmatic communication style, which can be applied to media analysis, political speechwriting, and communication training programs to enhance audience involvement and influence political discourse.

Introduction

Language is the most important instrument in the lives of individuals. Humans distinguish themselves from animals by using language to communicate. Individuals communicate by creating utterances to convey their ideas and intents. These utterances are more than just a collection of words; they conduct specific speech acts. Speech actions provide a variety of communication purposes, ranging from asserting and inquiring to demanding and proposing (Yule, 1996). Understanding communication entails seeing beyond the literal meanings of sentences and phrases. Leech (1983: 9) defines pragmatics as a study of speakers and listeners, context, goal, speech behaviors, and linguistic acts. This enables speakers to use and understand language according to its context.

According to Griffiths (2006), pragmatics is a discipline of linguistics focused on using patterns in meaningful interaction. Speech act theory examines how language is utilized in context, with the influence of the communicator's attitude, and perceived by the audience. Comprehending the full meaning of utterances can only be achieved through the understanding of all of these factors. In Rukmanasari, 2012, Jacob Louis Mey adds his input, pragmatics emphasizes that individuals have the freedom to employ language in a variety of non-traditional ways, provided that they are aware of how to best achieve their goals. On the other hand, pragmatics might be defined as a

study of meaning derived from spoken language. People's words have meanings of their own that must be understood to extract the information they contain.

Speech acts are activities that are carried out through utterances, as stated by Yule (1996: 47). J.L. Austin and John Searle established the concept of speech actions, which has since become an essential component of linguistics and pragmatics (Austin and Searle, 1962). Austin's book "How to Do Things with Words" classified speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, or perlocutionary. Austin's theory focuses on the illocutionary act, which consists of specific acts done by speaking specific words or phrases with communicative goals that go beyond literal meaning and are impacted by context, tone, and speaker-audience interaction.

Political language focuses on the organization of people's thoughts and opinions via the use of power. It serves as a tool for controlling society in particular. Many individuals hear the same speech, and each person's perception varies, which may have an impact on the candidates' chances of winning. In any culture, political discourse serves as a vehicle for promoting ideas, policies, and programs as well as for forming and preserving social bonds and expressing emotions (Hashim, 2015, p. 699). For politicians, language is essential. Most of the tasks that politicians do is done with words. This includes declarations, campaigns, marches, elections, victories/inaugurations, policy development and implementation, and so on. Political speech is gaining popularity, notably in the field of linguistic research. Speech is the vocal representation of language via the use of words, sounds, and communication strategies, allowing people to share their ideas, opinions, and emotions with others (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

According to Chilton and Schaffner (2002), politicians and other leaders use language strategically to persuade, control, and influence people in general in political situations, rather than just as a means of communication. Politicians give insights and perspectives on political and cultural issues, which either match with or challenge people's convictions, influencing their political views and preferences. They also act as information providers on complicated topics (Zaller, 1992).

The focus of this study was on Imran Khan, a prominent politician in Pakistan, to examine the intricate field of political talk. The primary goal of this research was to determine the subtypes of illocutionary speech actions that underlie Imran Khan's verbal utterances and to highlight the functions of the dominant act employed by him. To achieve the objective of this study Imran Khan's speech was selected titled as *Minar-e-Pakistan Jalsa Speech, 2018*. Linguists and scholars can examine speech actions in politicians' speeches to better understand their persuasive strategies. They can recognize promises and statements to foster hope and trust and present information as factual. This knowledge is useful for political strategists, policymakers, and media analysts, who can use it to create attractive speeches, interpret political intentions, and evaluate speeches for hidden messages, resulting in more informed public discourse and a clear political environment.

Simon and Cartis in 2014 conducted a quantitative analysis of eighty-four documented commercials from magazines and daily newspapers, finding and categorizing both macro and micro speech acts employed by marketers to fulfill their objectives. In a case study, Searle's classification system was used to analyze speech acts in an English instructor's EFL class, revealing a 70% directive, 21% representative, 6% expressive, and 3% commissives distribution (Basra et al., 2017). Hashim (2015) finds Kerry's speeches focus on commitments, while Bush's emphasize assertions. These speeches are frequently used as mobilization tools, stressing leadership characteristics and policy goals. In Papillon's study, guarantees were the most frequent commissive acts, followed by threats, offers, refusals, promises, and volunteers (Van et al., 2021).

Hosni Mubarak's speeches were analyzed by Asadu (2013) to determine Egypt's socio-economic condition. The researcher determined former president Hosni Mubarak's speech acts using Austin's felicity requirements. The study found that the former president's speech actions (SAs) were infelicitous. Pu (2007) examined the use of rhetoric and linguistic strategies in President George W. Bush's speech at Tsinghua University of China. This research most likely looked into how Bush used rhetorical and linguistic strategies to express his point during this specific speech.

Baby et al. (2020) examined Joe Biden's 2020 victory speech, demonstrating his frequent use of commissive and assertive actions that highlighted authority and goals. Six categories of expressive illocutionary acts were identified by Supri and Rahmatiany's 2021 study after analyzing George Tillman's film *The Longest Ride*: 40% of

expressions of thankfulness, 3% of congratulations, 10% of pardoning, 3% of blaming, 34% of praise, and 10% of condoling. Both direct and indirect speech acts were also found.

Altikriti employed speech act theories to examine three stories written in 2011: "Post Haste," "Acme," and "The Happy Prince." The study discovered that the frequency of illocutionary forces fluctuates and that short stories, like novels and dramas, are appropriate for pragmatic analysis. Hussain and his colleagues (2021) employed Searle's categorization of illocutionary actions to examine offensive speech in the discourse of Sindh provincial assembly members. The authors suggested that public officials should use acceptable language and be courteous. They discovered that offensive language was often employed by politicians. Abba and Musa's (2015) research on Boko Haram atrocities in *The Daily Trust* and *The Nation* revealed that assertive speech acts dominate headlines, suggesting they are not intended to appear ominous or instructive.

The literature mentioned above demonstrates that scholars have analyzed advertisements, movies, short stories, as well as political discourses using the speech acts theory. However, no analysis of Imran Khan's *Minar-e-Pakistan Jalsa Speech* has been conducted to identify the dominant illocutionary act employed by him along with its functions. The current study argues that political speeches have pragmatically encoded meanings.

The following were the research questions of the present study:

1. What are the subtypes of illocutionary speech acts found in the selected speech?
2. Which illocutionary speech act is the dominant one?
3. What are the functions of the dominant act performed in the selected speech?

Methodology

Researchers utilize research techniques to find, gather, process, and evaluate available information about a subject. Discussing how well a certain work is completed is also part of the approach. According to Johansson (2007), this assists researchers in determining the appropriate research instruments for their study design and data requirements. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed in this study to analyze the speech. According to Sholawat (2017), this approach is used to define, examine, and assess the phenomena that happen within the data.

The data was analyzed with the help of pragmatics. Searle's speech act theory (1969) served as the theoretical framework of this study to explore the subtypes of illocutionary acts employed by the speaker and to explain the functions of the most dominant act found. The classification of illocutionary speech acts outlined by Searle is given below (Searle, 1969).

- **Assertive:** The speaker's primary goal while using this act is to express ideas, make statements, or provide specific descriptions. This category includes actions that assist the spread of knowledge or ideas, such as presenting facts, stating conclusions, and narrating events.
- **Expressive:** The primary focus of the expressive act is the speaker's expression of sentiments, emotions, or attitudes. This includes behaviors that allow the speaker to express their feelings, such as apologizing for anything, congratulating someone on a job done well, or thanking individuals for their kindness.
- **Directive:** The speaker's goal in these situations is to influence the listener's attitudes or behaviors. This might include delivering directions, asking for items, or offering advice to persuade other people to do something or make a specific conclusion.
- **Commissive:** In commissives, the speaker communicates a desire to accept certain responsibilities or commits to a plan of action. This includes behaviors that suggest a willingness to follow out stated intentions, such as making a commitment, promising, or assisting.
- **Declarative:** In certain situations, the speaker has the potential to affect actual world events just by words. Declaring a couple married, leaving a job, launching a ship, and other actions that result in tangible changes are all instances of declarations that demonstrate the speaker's ability to completely establish a new reality.

The application of speech act theory is an important framework for the examination of speeches because it not only allows for the analysis of the linguistic components of a speech but also facilitates understanding of the intended meaning of the speaker and the communication intent underlying the utterance. Firstly, qualitative analysis of the speech text was done to identify the subtypes of illocutionary acts and to identify the hidden intentions behind

using such acts. The researcher employed a simple percentage strategy to portray numeral data. The obtained data has been presented using tables and charts. The final question of the study was answered by describing the functions of the highly used act. The researcher thoroughly transcribed a selected speech acquired from a trustworthy news source, taking into account the ethics of data authenticity and correctness. The study's sample for data analysis was chosen using the purposive sampling approach and the whole speech served as the sample of the current study because purposive sampling is a qualitative research approach that involves selecting a specified set of units or individuals for study. Participants are picked "on purpose," not at random. Purposive sampling occurs when a researcher selects a sample with a certain aim or target in mind. As a result, the sample is chosen to reflect the features or qualities that the researcher wishes to investigate (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023).

Results and Discussion

The researcher examined the selected data and described all of the study questions. The data analysis is divided into the following sections.

Section A

In this section, the selected data was analyzed at the utterance level to search out the subtypes of illocutionary speech acts to answer the first question. There were a total of 165 utterances in the selected speech. The results of utterance-wise analysis are given in the table below and there were five types of illocutionary acts found.

Table 1
Results of utterance-wise analysis of the selected speech

S. No.	Subtypes of the Illocutionary Speech Act found	Serial number of utterances where each act found
1	Assertive	2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 54, 55, 60, 62, 64, 66, 67, 69, 70, 73, 77, 81, 82, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 109, 112, 113, 114, 115, 121, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 132, 135, 139, 140, 142, 143, 144, 148, 149, 154, 155, 156, 159, 162
2	Expressive	1, 4, 8, 9, 15, 31, 42, 51, 53, 56, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 68, 71, 72, 74, 78, 79, 80, 83, 84, 85, 88, 106, 124, 141
3	Directive	6, 20, 33, 37, 40, 48, 58, 75, 76, 116, 120, 157, 158, 160, 161, 163, 165
4	Commissive	12, 17, 117, 118, 119, 122, 130, 131, 133, 134, 136, 138, 145, 146, 147, 150, 151, 152, 153
5	Declarative	41, 99, 100, 108, 110, 111

Section B

The qualitative data found was analyzed quantitatively to find out the frequencies and percentages of illocutionary speech acts found to answer the next question. The percentages were found by using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = (\text{total no. of a specific type illocutionary act} / (\text{total no. of utterances in a speech})) * 100$$

Table 2
Frequencies and percentages of illocutionary speech acts found

S. No.	Illocutionary Acts	Frequency	Percentages
1	Assertive	92	55.75%
2	Expressive	28	16.96%
3	Directive	20	12.12%

4	Commissive	19	11.51%
5	Declarative	6	3.63%
6	Total	165	100%

Table 2 showed that there were a total of 165 illocutionary acts found in the selected speech. Assertive acts were more prevalent in the selected speech, accounting for 55.75% of the total as shown in Table 1. Other acts were identified as expressive (16.96%), directive (12.12%), commissive (11.51%), and declarative (3.63%). The percentage chart of these illocutionary speech acts is given below in Figure 1.

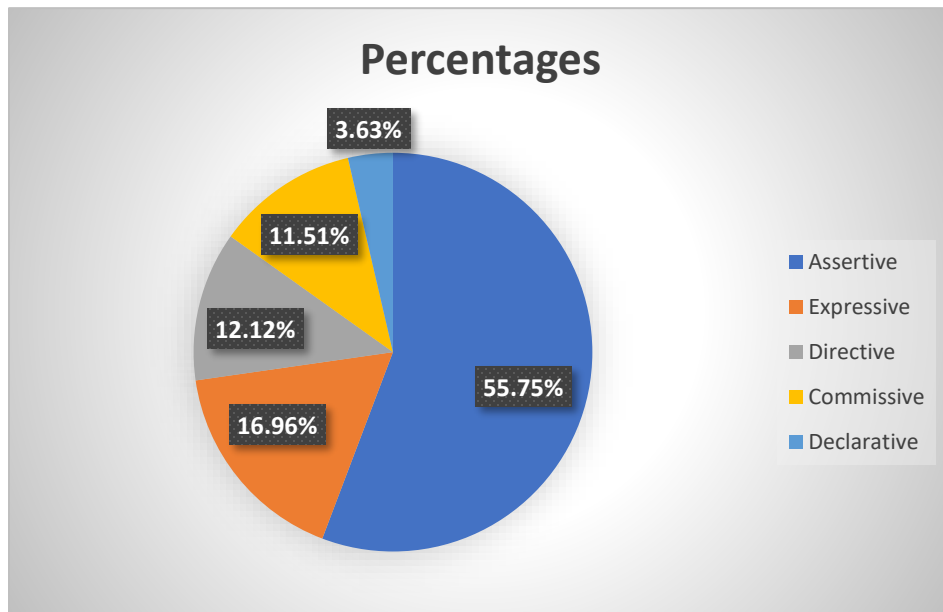


Figure 1. Percentages of illocutionary acts found

Section C

This section highlighted the functions of the most prevalent act used by Mr. Imran Khan to answer the final question of this study. In the current study, the most dominant illocutionary act utilized by the speaker was the assertive act. The speaker makes assertive or representative claims that they believe to be true. Declaring, specifying, complaining, asserting, and making statements are examples of this type of act (Searle, 1969). In this study, the researcher identified 92 utterances and classified them as assertive illocutionary acts. The speaker employed assertive acts to explain facts, declarations of action, predictions, expressing judgment or opinion, observation, emphasis, statements of evaluation, condition of affairs, assertion, etc. The functions performed by assertive illocutionary acts in the selected speech are given in the following tables with appropriate examples.

Table 3

Assertive act of describing/observing

S. No	Utterance	Functions performed
1	Data 7: "I've been seeing since morning last night."	In this line, the speaker utilizes an assertive act to provide information about his continuous observation by saying that he is seeing people gathering from the last night.
2	Data 28: "For 700 years, such Muslims ruled at that time. But Halaku Khan defeated the Muslims when they rejected the justice-based system."	In this line, the speaker employed an assertive act to describe a historical fact or observation that Muslims ruled for 700 years and then they faced a downfall by Halaku Khan.

3	Data 52: "An old guy visited the doctor holding numerous medicines. He claimed to have all of them, but the doctor pointed out that he was missing one. The man then turned around, revealing his face to me."	In this line, the speaker described an incident he faced when he saw an old man with a lot of medicines and he visited the doctor. Here, he used assertive acts to narrate his visual experience.
4	Data 81: "I contested in my first elections and did not win even one seat. We sought for electives even at UC."	In this line, the speaker described a past event to tell about the first election he fought but didn't win. Here the purpose of the speaker is to tell about the outcome of his first election endeavor.

Table 4
Assertive act of making a factual statement

S. No	Utterance	Functions performed
1	Data 10: "Either for Namal or SKMH, whenever I requested you for money."	In this line, the speaker described a fact by using assertive act by saying that whenever he asked his audience for money they gave him more and more for the construction of his charity hospital.
2	Data 35: "We are all aware of what happened with the current Pakistani prime minister in the US airport. He's being examined."	In this, the speaker described a fact that what happened to the current prime minister of Pakistan at the US airport by using the assertive act of stating a fact.
3	Data 73: "Shahbaz travels abroad, while Nawaz receives treatment in London."	In this utterance, the speaker utilized an assertive act to describe the facts about the political figures' healthcare choices by saying that Nawaz and Shahbaz go to London for their treatments while the poor die here in Pakistan due to lack of treatments.
4	Data 127: "Despite being a tiny country Switzerland generates more revenue than all of Pakistan's exports combined."	In this, the speaker makes a strong statement, conveying a truth about Switzerland, a small country with more money than Pakistan's entire exports. So, in this case, the speaker utilized an assertive act to express a fact, drawing people's attention to the discrepancy.

Table 5
Assertive act of emphasizing

S. No	Utterance	Functions performed
1	Data 38: "We are discussing the head of state of Pakistan."	In this, the speaker is making an assertive statement, emphasizing that the subject under discussion is no one else but the head of state of Pakistan.
2	Data 148: "Educated mothers raise an educated nation."	In this sentence, the speaker makes an authoritative statement, emphasizing the fact that educated ladies (mothers) contribute to raising an educated nation. So, the purpose

here is to underline the importance of maternal education in affecting the education of future generations by an active act of emphasizing.

Table 6
Assertive act of belief/assertion

S. No	Utterance	Functions performed
1	Data 5: "The Pakistan of today is not what Quaid and Allama Iqbal had in mind. Pakistan is now at a crossroads: dignity is on the opposite end and disrespect is on the other."	In this, the speaker asserted by describing the situation of Pakistan which is opposing to Quaid and Iqbal's dream. Mr. Imran Khan's purpose is to inform the audience about the current status of the country.
2	Data 13: "No one can stop me."	Here in this utterance, the speaker is making an assertive statement by asserting his determination and belief that no one can stop him from carrying out his intended actions.
3	Data 103: "We are going to replicate the Health card; we had in KPK throughout Pakistan."	Here the speaker makes use of an assertive act by asserting his belief that they will expand the health care system implemented in KPK throughout the country.

Table 7
Assertive act of informing and expressing

S. No	Utterance	Functions performed
1	Data 49: "I was never even interested in politics; I was a cricket player who played in England in the summer and toured the world with the Pakistani team in the winter."	In this utterance, the speaker informed his audience about his past profession by expressing that he was a cricket player who played summer cricket in England and traveled the world in winter. So here the speaker's purpose was to express his past.
2	Data 94: "Today, eight lakh children learn in English medium. While two million and fifty thousand are in religious institutions, thirty million students attend government schools."	Here the speaker is informing the audience about the number of students enrolled in English medium, religious, and government schools, etc.
3	Data 104: "In KP province, the government would pay for up to Rs. five and a half lac of a family member's medical care."	In this utterance, the speaker employed an assertive act to inform the audience about the benefits of health care KPK people availing of treatments.

Table 8
Assertive act of anticipating and evaluating

S. No	Utterance	Functions performed
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1	Data 22: "In united India, Muslims would have had to live like Narendra Modi treats Muslims there, as Quaid's wisdom and foresight had anticipated."	In this, the speaker used the assertive act of anticipation to express Quaid's purpose of getting a separate homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent to save them from the potential challenges that the Muslims of India are facing nowadays.
2	Data 36: "It is shameful' that this occurred at an American airport or that he uses paper to talk."	In this line, the speaker used an assertive act to express a judgment about the incident that happened to the PM of Pakistan at the US airport by saying that this act is so shameful and also when he talks with a paper before a US official.

Table 9**Assertive act of inquiry (or questioning)**

S. No	Utterance	Functions performed
1	Data 54: "About him, I questioned the doctor. According to the doctor, the man arrived from the village with his brother."	Here the speaker used the assertive act of inquiry to ask about the old man from the concerned doctor whom he visited and the doctor then told him about that man.
2	Data 98: "How many hospitals did Shahbaz Sharif establish in the last ten years where his family could also receive treatment?"	In this, the speaker asked a question from Shahbaz Sharif how many hospitals he made in the past 10 years where their family can be treated. The purpose of the speaker is to question the standard hospitals the PMLN government constructed for world-class treatments.

The current study employed speech act theory to determine the subtypes of illocutionary acts utilized by Mr. Imran Khan in the selected speech (Searle, 1969). To respond to the first question (**Q1. What are the subtypes of illocutionary speech acts found in the selected speech?**), the researcher analyzed the selected data at the utterance level. There were all five categories of illocutionary speech acts found named as assertive, expressive, directive, commissive, and declarative (Searle 1979). Imran Khan utilized assertive acts to describe facts, judgments, observations, events, and assertions. He used expressives to express feelings of regret, appreciation, joy, and remembering. He used directives to express suggestions, proposals, and invitations and make claims. He used commissives to make promises, pledges, and commitments, and declarations to convey greetings, and intentions, and make claims.

To answer the second question (**Q2. Which illocutionary speech act is the dominant one?**), the researcher quantitatively analyzed the qualitative data to find out the frequencies and percentages of each illocutionary act found to get the dominant act used. The numeral results showed that the assertive act was the dominant one having the percentage 55.75% found in 92 utterances out of 165. The remaining acts were classified as declarative (3.63%), directive (12.12%), expressive (16.96%), and commissive (11.51%). The least used act was declarative. According to Searle (1979), the declarative act is mostly used in formal settings and they are less used in everyday political speeches because they are used to change the state of affairs or to create new realities. On the other hand, assertive acts are more commonly used by politicians in everyday situations to show confidence and authority. Assertive communications allow politicians for more open interaction and audience engagement (Searle, 1979). The previous studies (Hashim, 2015; Baby et al., 2021) cited in the literature review section show that politicians like Bush and Joe Biden mostly

utilized assertive acts in their public addresses while Kerry utilized more commissives. While in the current study, Mr. Imran Khan used more assertive acts to address his audience to achieve his communicative goal. He used less commissive and declarative illocutionary acts.

To answer the third question (**Q3. What are the functions of the dominant act performed in the selected speech?**), of the study after finding out the dominant illocutionary act the purpose of using that act was highlighted. Assertive speech actions are those in which listeners and speakers use language to express what they understand and believe to be true in light of the available facts (Kreidler, 1998, p. 183). Reporting, reminding, asserting, protesting, consenting, declaring, and anticipating are just a few of the things that can be done by using assertive illocutionary acts. In assertive illocutionary acts, the speaker conveys their views on global topics (Yule 2006:92). It is conceivable to argue that the claim made by the assertive speech acts ties the speaker to the truth they have said, or that it is an assertion that the speaker intends to be correct. As discussed earlier politicians utilized assertive acts to gain confidence and public support. In the selected speech they are used to offer information, express opinions, and make assertions about a wide range of topics, such as political leaders, historical events, societal challenges, and suggested remedies. Assertive acts include remarks regarding political events (700 years of Muslim rule), historical characters (Prophet Muhammad), achievements and failures (Pakistan's growth, debt buildup), and projected plans (education reforms, healthcare initiatives).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study discovered that Mr. Imran Khan predominantly utilized assertive illocutionary acts in his chosen speech, making up 55.75% of his utterances. These acts were primarily employed to present facts, express judgments, and engage the audience, thereby enhancing his communicative effectiveness. The study also highlighted that, while all five categories of illocutionary acts were present, assertive acts played a crucial role in transmitting his political messages and achieving his rhetorical aims. Future research can explore other types of speech acts in public addresses and other literary texts, and a thorough comparative analysis of political addresses can be done. Beyond Mr. Imran Khan's communication, the latest findings have significant implications; they provide analytical information on political discourse, public speaking, and persuasive communication. This study gives a better understanding of Mr. Khan's communication style by examining his pragmatic aims and recurring patterns that underlie the use of dominant illocutionary acts. In addition to being academically interesting, these insights have practical applications in political speechwriting, media analysis, and communication training programs. This research may be used to teach students about the pragmatic aspects of language, such as the underlying intents of words. Understanding illocutionary acts can improve audience participation and communication efficacy, ultimately influencing political discourse.

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