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Speech Acts and Political Commitment: An Analysis of APC Presidential Nomination Acceptance speech of Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu

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Abstract

An acceptance speech is one of the political speeches being delivered by political aspirants across the world. This paper investigates and identifies the speech act features of the nomination acceptance speech of a notable Nigeria politician, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The theoretical framework of Speech Act Theory of Austin and modified by Searle was adopted for its analysis. The analysis specifically focuses on the illocutionary acts that were used in the speech. These illocutionary acts are: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. The findings reveal that Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu uses illocutionary acts: expressives (33.3%), assertives (13.3%), commissives (36.7%), directives (16.7%) and declaratives (0%). He uses the nomination acceptance speech to inform, thank, promise, request, state, assure, persuade and reflect on the present political challenges ahead his party, the All Progressive Congress in the 2023 Presidential election. It was further revealed from the illocutionary acts in the speech that Senator Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu's commitment to the development of the nation cannot be overemphasised. Those identified speech acts further foster his political interest and commitment to the affairs and welfares of Nigerians. The work adds to the knowledge of speech act analysis and provides insights into the relevance of political commitment by politicians in Nigeria.

Key words: Speech Act, Illocutions, Political Speech, Commitment, Challenges.

1. Introduction

On 8th June 2022, major political events took place in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. The ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) had its presidential primary election to elect the standard flag bearer of the party who will contest against the candidate of the main opposition party; Peoples Democratic Party, in the forthcoming 2023 presidential election to be conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission. The race began with 23 aspirants, but eventually, 14 aspirants eventually contested the APC presidential primary election. They are Mr Chukwu-emeka Nwajuba, Pastor Tunde Bakare, Chief Ikeobasi Mokelu, Mr Tein- Jack-Rich, Prof. Ben Ayade, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Gov. David Umuahi, Senator Ahmed Yerima, Dr Ahmed Lawal,

Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, Mr Rotimi Amaechi, Rochas Okorocha, Ogbonnaya Onu and Gov. Yahaya Bello.

The aspirants and their scores are recorded as follows; Ahmed Lawal 152, Rotimi Amaechi 316, Yahaya Bello 47, Yemi Osinbajo 235, David Umahi 38, Tunde Bakare 0,Tein-Jack Rich 0, Chukwu-emeka Nwajuba1, Ahmed Yerima 4, Rochas Okorocha 0, Ogbonnaya Onu 1, Ben Ayadi 37, Ikeobasi Mokelu 0, Bola Tinubu1271.

Senator Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the National Leader of the Party defeated 13 other aspirants to emerge as the candidate at the end of the special National Convention of the party. Immediately the winner was declared and it was officially announced that Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, would be flagging the party's ticket in the 2023 presidential election, he delivered his nomination acceptance speech.

A number of academic exercises have been carried out on speeches of political officeholders across the world. It has become a norm for politicians to interact with their supporters and the general public; hence, speech-making is inevitable among politicians. Aremu (2017) opines that a speech is a type of political discourse in which a newly elected political leader explains his plan on how he intends to rule a nation and ultimately improve the living standard of the electorate. According to Koutchade (2017:227), a political speech is an aspect of political discourse which main aim is to deal with political matters. Akinwotu (2013:43) examines the speech acts performed in the acceptance of nomination speeches of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief M.K.O. Abiola. He posits that those two speeches are characterised by a preponderance of assertive, expressive, and commissive acts.

As a normal practice all over the world, democracy entitles free will to choose between alternatives at the polls. This involves a number of electioneering processes. Thus, nomination for political election by a registered political party is a sine qua non and one of the mandatory requirements by law. It is expedient to state again that nomination acceptance speeches by politicians signal not only an acceptance of political responsibilities but also kick-start the beginning of rigorous campaign activities towards the general election.

Language and Politics

Language is peculiar to humans. Thinking along this thought is Lewis Thomas (1980:89) who opines that the gift of language is the single human trait that marks us all genetically, setting us apart from the rest of other creatures and that language is the universal and biologically specific activity of human beings. Further still, Jackendoff (2002:34) opines that language does not subsist in the minds of individuals alone. It also exists in a social context. Along with the above perception, Language use in a social context, according to Akinwotu (2016:36), encapsulates political activity, as part of social activities during the electioneering process and political contestants compete for available offices as part of the process of engagement. They are required to deliver speeches at different fora before and after the election.

It must be emphasised here that speech-making and political campaigns cannot be separated as we have seen it being demonstrated by the winner of the APC Presidential primary election. Politics is basically all about struggling to gain and control power. It must be noted at this juncture that language and politics are inseparable because they are interwoven. It is observed that politicians perform a number of activities such as campaigns, manifestos, rallies, election inaugurations and governance through the use of language.

Abuya (2012:14) rightly opines that "the essence of power in the governance and affairs of the people can never be subject of attraction and they are as important as well as the language used by them. According to Beard (2005:57), "political campaigns, speeches, written texts, broadcast are meant to inform and instruct voters about issues that are considered to be of great importance. In his rather insightful opinion, Aliu Al'Amin Mazrui (1975:48) stated that language is the most important point of entry into the habits of thought of a people. It embodies within itself a cumulative association derived from the total experience of its people.

Still on language and politics, the former is the engine for the latter. Without a language, political officeholders may find it difficult to sell or market their programme to the electorates. Beard (2000:2) says that "the language of politics helps us to understand how language is used by those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power". Politics and language are intertwined and may be impossible to separate as different concepts. Politicians have set goals and to achieve these goals language becomes inevitable. Thorne (1997:369) believes that language influences thought: therefore if language is manipulated so as the processes of thought. Thus, politicians influence the way we think about the events around us, and the words they choose are social parts of that process.

From the foregoing discussion, it is obviously clear that politicians use language to inform, persuade, assuage, campaign, convince and market their set goals to the electorate. It is a known fact that politicians make speeches at various fora as one of the electioneering processes through the use of language.

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2. Literature Review

Some scholarly articles have been written on speech analysis of political office holders across the globe using various linguistic apparatus. Ademilokun (2015:6) works on President Muhammadu Buhari's speech. The work establishes that language can be used in speeches to express emotive content given the various challenges confronting the nation. This paper uses the same speech acts but x-rays the nomination acceptance speech of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Also, Osisanwo (2015:22) focuses on the inaugural speech of President Muhammad Buhari. He posits that the May 29 Inaugural Speech signifies the inception of a newly elected administration to commence the restoration of democracy in Nigeria. The work reveals the use of different pragmatic acts to achieve different political goals. It further reveals that some pragmatic acts such as promising, assuring, promising, thanking, identifying, and extending aid the use of language by Mr President. Our work studies the speech of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, but both works use speech acts as the linguistic framework.

Both Ayeomoni and Akinkurolere (2012:463) use Speech Act Theory to examine the Pragmatic analysis of the victory and inaugural speeches of President Musa Yar'Adua. They focus on the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in the speeches. But our work focuses on the nomination acceptance speech of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Also, Taiwo (2008:79) examines former President Olusegun Obasanjo's speeches to a member of his party like Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu's speech to members of his party. He shows

through the analysis, the linguistic elements in the speech and relates the same to the effect that politicians try to achieve their goals. He says further that former President Obasanjo's choice of words portrays him as a political leader who defends his actions, his party's choice and his resolve to hand over to another elected President.

Yet, Adetunji (2009:280) studies the speech act and rhetoric of the second inaugural speeches of former President Obasanjo of Nigeria and former President George Bush Walker of the United States of America. He submits that the two speeches may not have similar illocutionary forces though they belong to the same linguistic genre.

Still, on political speech, Safwat (2015:706) works on selected political speeches of John Kerry and George Bush using the Speech Act Theory. She posits that language is a powerful weapon in exposing the political thoughts and ideologies of politicians. She submits that in the process or act of saying something, other speech acts are performed and the speech act in a work portrays the personality of the speaker. While Akinkurolere (2020) analyses the inaugural speech of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, through a lexico-pragmatic approach and she concludes that lexical analysis is significant for pragmatic functions.

The data for this research paper were drawn from the speech delivered by the winner of the APC presidential primary election, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The speech was prepared for oral presentation. It signifies the official acceptance of nomination as the standard flag bearer of the All Progressives Congress in the forthcoming 2023 general election.

3. Theoretical framework

It has been observed that political speech expresses political ideas by political actors in any political gathering which entails an interface between a politician and the electorate. In the course of delivering the speech, some acts were performed, this is called "speech act". Thus, a linguistic framework of Speech Act Theory (SAT) is adopted for interpreting the meanings and functions of words in the political speech situation.

Speech Act theory (SAT) was propounded from the work of John Austin. It is also described as "How to Do Things with Words". Because it has its root in the post-humour work of Austin (1962) Speech Act according to Austin can be divided into three categories which are the locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. The illocutionary acts are the core of any theory of speech act, the social acts performed by the speaker Austin (1962:8). He classified the illocutionary acts into five: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives (150) in his book, speech Act theory. John Searle (1969) modified Austin's (1962) Speech Act theory by distinguishing (in the perlocutionary act) between two types of speech acts: direct and indirect speech acts. Searle's modification and categorization of illocutionary acts are as follows: Assertive, Directive, Commissives, Declaratives and Expressives. The categorization can be grouped into five divisions which are:

1. ASSERTIVES: These are statements of fact. They describe states of affairs in the world which could be true or false. They commit a speaker to the truth or falseness of the expressed proposition, e.g. suggest, describe, claim, assert, predict.

2. DIRECTIVES: These are statements of the attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.

The hearer acts in such a way as to fulfil what is represented by the content of the proposition. Examples are: commanding, requesting, and pleading.

3. COMMISSIVES: These are statements that commit the speaker to certain future actions. The speaker becomes committed to an act in the way requested by the propositional content. Examples are: vowing, promising, threatening, offering, guaranteeing, and betting.

4. EXPRESSIVES: These are statements that indicate the sincerity of the speech act. It is the expression of some psychological state. Examples are thanking, apologizing, and congratulating. They state what the speaker feels.

5. DECLARATIVES: These are statements that bring out the performance in the correspondence between propositional content and reality. These statements say something and make it so. Examples are; naming a baby, resigning, pronouncing someone guilty, and accepting.

We adopt J.L. Austin's theory as modified by Searle for this paper. The adoption is not only to interpret the unstated illocutionary acts being performed in the course of delivery of the speech but also to enter the minds of the audience because of the expected future actions from them. Akinkurolere (2020) opines that the perlocutionary act is the third sub-section of Speech Acts. It could be inspiring, persuading, consoling and so on. It brings out effects on the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours of the addresses.

It is obvious from the foregoing premises that the linguistic relevance of Speech Act Theory to this paper is appropriate. The analysis will allow the identification of the type of speech acts that predominantly dominate utterances in our data, which reflect the political commitment of Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu.

4. Objectives of the Study

This paper generally aims at analysing the APC presidential nomination acceptance speech of Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu within the ambit of Speech Act Theory. Thus, the objectives are to identify the Speech act features embedded in the speech; analyse the identified features and specifically relate the features to meaning in the social context in which they were performed.

5. Methodology

For this study, the method is based on both quantitative and qualitative enquiry. The reason is that it is interpretative in nature and it demonstrates an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions and what motivated Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu to deliver the speech. The speech was downloaded from the internet. The analysis is carried out on the data through those selected sentences from the speech. Thirty sentences were extracted, the first fifteen and the last fifteen sentences. They are labelled A1-A30 serially for easy reference and to guide the analysis.

Thus, we have A1 –A30. In the quantitative analysis, our observed frequency of occurrence of the identified acts is presented in percentages for empirical statistical analysis. The percentage will be determined by dividing the frequency in the table by the overall frequency in the analysis and it will be multiplied by 100. The acts in each utterance are stated at the level of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

6. Data Analysis

As noted earlier, this paper focuses on the analysis of Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu's nomination acceptance

speech, through the linguistic framework of Speech Act Theory. The Speech was delivered on 8th June 2022 following his victory at the APC Presidential primary election in Abuja. The speech was downloaded and printed from the internet.

Data A1, Utterance 1

Locutionary act: "Thank you"

Illocutionary act

i. Direct: expressive (greeting)

ii. Indirect: expressive (thanking)

Perlocutionary act: Showing appreciation.

Data A2

Locutionary act: "We have been at historical Eagle Square for many hours such that day has turned into night and night back to day"

Illocutionary act

   I.   Direct: assertive (stating)
   II.   Indirect: assertive (stating)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of loyalty to the nation"

Data A3

Locutionary act: "Because of your democratic exertion, this convention shall be recorded as a shining moment in the evolution of our party and the life of our nation"

Illocutionary act

i.   Direct: assertive (stating)
ii.   Indirect: assertive (stating)

Perlocutionary act: Building confidence and appreciation.

Data A4

Locutionary act: "I must thank you all for making me the standard bearer of our progressive party"

Illocutionary act

   i.   Direct: expressive (thanking)
   ii.   Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act: Reinforcing trust in government.

Data A5

Locutionary act: "And humbly accept the nomination of this convention to be the presidential candidate of our enlightened, humanitarian and great party, the All Progressive Congress"

Illocutionary act

   i.   Direct: commissive (promising)
   ii.   Indirect: commissive (promising)

Perlocutionary act: Building confidence.

Data A6

Locutionary act: "I also offer my sincere gratitude to President Buhari's for his calm and prudent leadership throughout this process"

Illocutionary act

   i.   Direct: expressive (thanking)
   ii.   Indirect: commissive (promising)

Perlocutionary act: Showing appreciation.

Data A7

Locutionary act: "I thank him, also, for his steadfast determination to ensure a level playing field and fire and fair primary process for every aspirant".

Illocutionary act

   i.   Direct: expressive (thinking)
   ii.   Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act: Cheerfulness and hopefulness

Data A8

Locutionary act: "Without him, I would not be standing here today as the new flag bearer of Nigeria's party"

Illocutionary act

    i.   Direct: expressive (thanking)
    ii.   Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act: Reiteration of commitment and loyalty.

Data A9

Locutionary act: "I thank the governors for their invaluable contribution to internal democracy and unity"

Illocutionary act

    i.   Direct: expressive (thanking)
    ii.   ii. Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act: Showing appreciation to democratic values.

Data A10

Locutionary act: "I commend the party leadership and organizers forthe conduct of a successful convention".

Illocutionary act

i.   Direct: expressive (thanking)
ii.   Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act:

Data11

Locutionary act: "Thank you, the delegates, for the confidence you have shown in me"

Illocutionary act

    i.   Direct: expressive (thanking)
    ii.   Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act: Cajoling the citizens

Data12

Locutionary act: "I will prove that your choice was a wise one"

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising)
       ii. Indirect: commissive (vowing)

Perlocutionary act: Giving hope for the citizens

Data 13

Locutionary act: "You have moved our party and country towards its best future"

Illocutionary act i. Direct: assertive (stating)
ii. Indirect: assertive (asserting)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of better life for Nigerians.

Data 14

Locutionary act: "On your mandate I shall stand"

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising)
       ii. Indirect: commissive (vowing)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of government commitment

Data A15

Locutionary act: "I commend my fellow aspirants".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: expressive (thanking)
       ii. Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act: Showing appreciation

Data16

Locutionary act: "We will create new opportunities in the FINTECH sector,

the creative and entertainment industries, digital skill and other areas".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising)
       ii. Indirect: commissive (promising)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of job creation

Data A17

Locutionary act: "Do we dare feed our nation and provide the farmer a solid income for their toil?"

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising) ii. Indirect: commissive (challenging)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of bumper agricultural harvest

Data A18

Locutionary act: "Yes, we dare".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: directive (pleading) ii. Indirect: directive (commanding)

Perlocutionary act: hope for a great nation

Data A19

Locutionary act: "Do we dare construct a society where the vulnerable, the weak, the disadvantaged and the elderly are attended

to and loved?" Illocutionary act i. Direct: directive (requesting) ii. Indirect: directive (pleading)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of government commitment

Data A20

Locutionary act: "Yes, for we must care for those who cannot care for themselves."

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising) ii. Indirect: commissive (vowing)

Perlocutionary act: Giving hope to the citizens.

Data A21

Locutionary act: "Do we re muster our collective strength to conquer terrorism,kidnapping, and violet evil of any form?".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (vowing) ii. Indirect: commissive (promising)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of security in the nation.

Data A22

Locutionary act: "Yes, we dare"

Illocutionary act i. Direct: directive (pleading) ii. Indirect: directive (requesting)

Perlocutionary act: Reinforcing trust in the government.

Data A23

Locutionary act: "After the PDP convention, I commended Abubakar Atiku"

Illocutionary act i. Direct: assertive (reporting) ii. Indirect: assertive (asserting)

Perlocutionary act: Guaranteeing mutual cooperation.

Data A24

Locutionary act: "The ensuring contest between our party and his will be one of competing vision".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising) ii. Indirect: commissive (vowing)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of victory

Data A25

Locutionary act: "Our vision is of progress and the future that can be".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising) ii. Indirect: commissive (vowing)

Perlocutionary act: Reinforcing trust in the government

Data A26

Locutionary act: "We must defeat the PDP's reactionary ideals"

Illocutionary act i. Direct: directive (pleading)   ii. Indirect: directive (commanding)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of electoral victory.

Data A27

Locutionary act: "Our better, more progressive vision of Nigeria shall secure a better society for all Nigerians".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising)   ii. Indirect: commissive (vowing)

Perlocutionary act: Giving hope for the citizens.

Data A28

Locutionary act: "May this be our task arising from this convention".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: commissive (promising)   ii. Indirect: commissive (promising)

Perlocutionary act: Assurance of victory

Data A29

Locutionary act: "Let nothing stand in the way of our achieving a more just society and a greater Nigeria."

Illocutionary act i. Direct: directive (requesting)   ii. Indirect: directive (pleading)

Perlocutionary act: Cajoling the citizens

Data A30

Locutionary act: "God bless the APC, God bless Nigeria".

Illocutionary act i. Direct: expressive (thanking)   ii. Indirect: expressive (appreciating)

Perlocutionary act: Calls for celebration and appreciation.

7. Frequency Distribution Table

Illocutionary Speech Acts Direct and Indirect	Frequencies	Percentage
Assertives	04	13.3%
Directives	05	16.7%
Commissives	11	36.7%
Expressives	10	33.3%
Declaratives	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Table 2

Data Interpretation and Discussion of Analysis

It is obvious from the table and analysis above that language use has significant roles to play in political gatherings and some actions are performed in the course of delivering the speech. It is a fact that language is a key factor in getting political parties' manifestoes to the electorates. From the speech analysis above, we were able to identify those speech acts that are embedded in the speech. The analyzed speech of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the presidential aspirant of the All Progressive Party, contains a total of fifty sentences, ranging from simple sentences to compound-complex sentences.

The analysis revealed that assertive acts have a total percentage of 13.3% while directive acts have 16.7%, commissive acts 36.7%, expressive acts 33.3%, and declarative acts 0%. It was observed again that the presidential aspirant used four (04) assertive utterances, to state, report and assert the state of affairs in the political environment in Nigeria. The speech contains five (05) directive utterances, pleading, requesting and commanding the hearers to do something ahead of the forthcoming 2023 presidential election. Again, we observed that the

speech used eleven (11) commissive utterances. This has the highest percentage 36.7% and the highest frequency of occurrences. It was used to express the aspirant's intention to perform some actions.

Those utterances showed the determination of the presidential aspirant to make some political commitments. It should be noted here that the reason why he used more commissive illocutionary acts was to commit him to certain future actions by making promises as expected of a presidential candidate. We should note here that making various promises both realistic and unrealistic is one of the unique ways politicians hold their audience spellbound. Political commitment as demonstrated by the APC presidential aspirant through his deliberate choice of words showed his determination to move the nation forward and salvage the socio-political and security challenges confronting the nation.

Yet, we noted that expressive utterances were ten (10). They were used to thank, congratulate and appreciate his supporters and the general public. The presidential aspirant shows appreciation and gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the convention. Finally, the declarative illocutionary act has no place in the speech. It was discovered from the analysis that the presidential aspirant did not consider it necessary to pronounce anybody guilty or declare any war throughout the presentation of his speech.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Political speech across the world over has been subjected to various linguistics analyses from scholars and researchers. This study has inquired into various acts performed by the presidential aspirant of the All Progressive Congress, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in the course of delivering his speech. We adopted Speech Act Theory (SAT) as the linguistic framework to bring out those different speech acts embedded in the speech. In

other words, the speech act analysis brings to the fore political commitment as demonstrated in the utterances in the speech. He likewise assured Nigerians through his choice of words to make promises and vows on what his government will do if elected because of his political commitment to Nigerians and Nigeria as a country.

Also, the utterances portray the APC presidential aspirant as a committed party man and a loyal, committed politician of note, who is determined to transform and bring to Nigeria the much-desired security across the country. Through the analysis, the audience and extension, Nigerians, are better informed about the intention and political commitment of the presidential aspirant. It is therefore recommended that knowledge and uses of speech act will aid the dissemination of messages from leaders to followers. It is recommended also that political office holders need to establish social relationship with their followers in moving the nation forward. Finally, focusing on the relevance of speech act in analysing speeches, we suggest that other linguistic tools could be applied to further study of speeches of leaders at various levels.

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