



An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Benjamin Netanyahu Speech

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Abstract. This study investigated the types and functions of illocution in some of Benjamin Netanyahu's speeches, focusing on how language was used strategically to influence public opinion and national morality during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By using a qualitative approach and classification of John Searle's illocutional acts, namely representative, commissive, directive, expressive and declarative. This study analyzed transcripts of Benjamin Netanyahu's speeches delivered in 2023, 2024, and 2025. The analysis revealed that there were four types of illocution actions found: representative, commissive, expressive and directive. Representative actions are most often used, especially in situations that are intended to be convincing. This act of speech affirms political positions, strengthens national unity, and influences public perceptions around the world. The study shows how Netanyahu uses language strategically to encourage patriotism, political action, and public behavior. This study expands the field of pragmatism and political discourse analysis, emphasizes the importance of speech in narrative shaping during conflicts, and encourages a more critical understanding of political communication.

Keywords: Benjamin Netanyahu; Illocutionary Acts; Israel-Palestine Conflict; Political Speech; Speech Act Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Quoted from Likud Webside, Benjamin Netanyahu, known as Bibi Netanyahu, was born on October 21, 1949, in Tel Aviv, Israel. Aunt Netanyahu is an Israeli politician and diplomat who served as Israel's Prime Minister for three terms (1996-1999, 2009-2021, and 2022-present). After the foundation of the State of Israel, Netanyahu is the only Israeli-born Prime Minister with the longest term in Israeli history, with a total term of more than 15 years. He joined the Israel Defense Forces in 1967 as a commander in the elite command unit Sayeret Matkal. He was involved in many missions, one of which was rescuing hostages from the hijacked Sabena Flight 571 in 1972, led by Ehud Barak (Yilmaz, 2022).

It is interesting to see the implications of the illocutionary act in Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to find out what Aunt Netanyahu is implicit; whether he wishes to state one thing, describe an event, said his emotions, rule, or perform an action in the future. Therefore, the researchers identified this case. An additional factor is that researchers want to study and examine that the way a politician, in this case Benjamin Netanyahu, gets his point across in a speech. He considers this speech important because it is used to threaten the enemy and inform the public about the continuation of the Israel-Palestinian war, making the people more enthusiastic against the enemy so that they can achieve the common goal of gaining victory and prospering their country again.

Much research has been done on the act of illocution in political speech, with an emphasis on various political figures and contexts. Searle's speech theory was used for most of

this study (Searle, 1969). This theory divides illocutionary into five categories: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Previous research titled "A Pragmatic Analysis of Dominant Illocutionary Speech Acts in Imran Khan's Minar-e-Pakistan Jalsa Speech" examined Imran Khan's speech at Minar-e-Pakistan and found that pragmatically it was heavily dominated by assertive actions, which were used to build confidence and influence the audience (Almas Rehman, 2023). "An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts Used in Joe Biden's Speech Before The 77th UN General Assembly" this study analyzes the illocutionary acts in Joe Biden's speech at the 77th UN General Assembly, the results show that representative illocutionary acts dominate, followed by directives and commissions (Dyah Ayu Caesar Qusty, 2024). "Illocutionary Acts In Barack Obama's Speech In Illinois University As the Foermer President: Critical Discourse Analysis" this study analyzes the act of illocutionary in Barack Obama's speech at the University of Illinois is summed up by the act of assertive illocution, reflecting a rhetorical strategy that emphasizes the delivery of beliefs and facts to build credibility (syafaat., 2021). "An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Taylor Swift's Speech at NYU's 2022 Commencemen" this study analyzed illocutionary acts in Taylor Swift's speech at NYU 2022, the results showed that Taylor Swift used a balanced communication style between sharing personal experiences, giving optimistic advice, and showing empathy and moral commitment (Sanerita T. Olii, 2023). This approach is effective in forming emotional bonds and conveying motivation to graduates. "Illocutionary Acts in Angelina Jolie's Selected Speeches about Humanity" in this study shows that Angelina Jolie's speech is dominated by expressive illocution, which reflects her highly personal and emotional nature, especially when it comes to sensitive topics such as loss and sacrifice (Zubaidah, 2024). "Illocutionary Speech Acts used by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. during the 2022 and 2023 State of the Nation Address" The research found that asserting or making assertive speeches was the main goal of Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. in his State of the Nation Addresses in 2022 and 2023 (Mick Danielle T. Agagon, 2024).

The uniqueness that distinguishes this research from the previous studies above is that no one has examined or analyzed the illocutionary acts in Benjamin Netanyahu's speeches related to the war between Palestine and Israel, focusing on the speeches of Israeli political leaders, the context of international politics and conflicts, in-depth analysis of the categories of illocutionary acts, contextual pragmatics approach, and also provides a new understanding of political communication.

The purpose of this study is to identify different types of illocutionary acts and analyze the communicative role and purpose of each type used in Benjamin Netanyahu's speech. The

benefits of this research are to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies, especially in the study of speech actions in political discourse, helping students, lecturers and researchers understand how political speech is strategically designed using illocution. Additionally, this issue is a global issue that attract so many attentions from the world. This study is expected to contribute beneficial insight to create peace and harmony communication in the worlds.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Searle's Classification of Speech Acts

John Searle states that when speaking, a person performs three different actions. One of the three actions is speech, propositional, and illocution. Proportional and illocutional actions consist of the pronunciation of words in sentences in specific contexts, conditions, and purposes. The act of speech consists of the pronunciation of a series of words. Searle also stated that the three actions correlate with each other rather than stand alone (Searle J. R., 1969). A person usually performs proportional and speech when performing illocution. Searle classifies the act of illocution as follows based on various criteria:

Declarations

Declaration (or declarative) is a type of speech that has an impact on a direct change in a current situation. Because their tendency to succeed depends on complex extralinguistic institutions, they can be referred to as institutionalized performatives. In this kind of speech, the speaker makes statements about the changing world, or the correspondence between proportional matter and the world. The power of illocution includes: declare, resign, postpone, vote, approve, and strengthen, disassure, ratifying, rejecting, denying, rejecting, rejecting, baptizing, condemning, excommunication, sanctification, sanctification, purification, abbreviation, naming, calling.

Representatives (Assertive)

The type of speech called representative carries truth value and binds the speaker to the truth of the proposition expressed. This act of speech shows the confidence of the speaker. In this act of speech, the speaker shows their world, making the words fit their world. Affirming, predicting, asserting, retelling, give information, make inferences, stating, believing, explaining, are all examples of illocutionary power.

Expressives

Speech acts that show the speaker's attitude or psychological state, such as joy, sadness, or like or dislike, are called expressive. This type of speech doesn't make sense.

Congratulations, praise, thanks, disappointment, welcome, greeting, respect, are some examples of illocution speech acts.

Directives

The type of speech that tries to get the interlocutor to do something is called a directive. This act of speech shows the speaker's hope that the speaking partner will act. By using directives, the speaker intends to ask the recipient to do things in the future, so that the world corresponds to the words through the receiver. Invite, order, order, ask, and suggest are examples of illocution power.

Commissives

Asking someone else to do something in the future is known as a commission. This kind of speech act shows that the speaker wants to do something. Commissive speakers change the world with words. Wishing, refusing, promising, and offering are all examples of illocutionary force.

Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)

IFID, or the Illocutionary Force Indicating Device, is a tool that can visualize utterances in sentences that contain illocutionary acts. According to Yule, IFID is described as a phrase with slots for verbs that explicitly mention the illocutionary act. That is, the illocution makes it easily understood by the listener (Yule, 1996).

In a study on the illocutionary force indicator, Searle identified several elements responsible for identifying the illocutionary force. These components include word order, stress, intonation, contour, punctuation, verb mood, and performative verbs (J.R., 1987). It is defined as follows:

Word Order

Searle states that “word order” occurs when several words are combined into a smaller structure or series.

Stress

Searle defines stress as the degree of emphasis given to a particular syllable or word in speech. Its purpose is to distinguish different levels of contrast or emphasis within a sentence or line of sentences.

Intonation Contour

Intonation contours, according to Searle, are a set of musical pitch level features used to differentiate questions, statements, and other forms of language conversation.

Punctuation

Searle says that punctuation marks are used in sentences to provide a mark. Periods, commas, commas, apostrophes, dashes, parentheses, conjunctions, and exclamation marks are some types of punctuation.

The Mood of the Verb

Searle explains that the mood of a verb is a category that indicates the speaker's attitude. In verbs, there are three types of mood: imperative (used in requests and commands), subjunctive, and indicative.

Performatives Verb

According to Searle, performative verbs are verbs that mention their own execution. In other words, when someone uses a performative verb, they are "doing" what they are describing just by saying the verb. In addition, we have the ability to determine whether an utterance is performative or not. Insert this word before the verb. Sentences that don't make sense are ineffective.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research approach, which is "related to the development of explanations of social phenomena. In other words, It aims to help us understand our social world and the reasons why things work the way they do". The use of qualitative methods is based on the fact that the study focuses on individuals in the case of Benjamin Netanyahu who think about his words. In qualitative research, reason, opinion, and motivation are explored. In addition, qualitative research is used to explore issues of interest and explore aspects related to those issues. This research is suitable for the type of descriptive writing. This idea is based on the opinion of Nazir, which states that the descriptive approach emphasizes a systematic explanation of things that are happening in society today (Nazir, 1988).

A transcript of Benjamin Netanyahu's speech on Tuesday 7 November 2023, on 17 October 2024, on Wednesday 21 May 2025 is the primary source of this research. Searle's illocution action was used as analysis data in this study. Researchers used YouTube videos as a source to view footage of Netanyahu's initial speech and verify it. However, the researcher found that there were unnecessary words in the video, such as the repetition of the word "thank you" at the beginning and the phrase "something happened" in the middle of the speech, the researcher then chose the YouTube video and the transcript as the source of the research. This is because it is difficult to find sentences from textual sources. To distinguish and divide functions, the sentence here is an important point. Another factor that caused the researcher to

not be able to hear Benjamin's every word clearly is the researcher's limited understanding and the fact that Benjamin sometimes speaks faster, making it difficult to distinguish what he is saying.

The researcher is an essential tool for this study. Bodgan and Biklen (Satori & Komariah), Qualitative research requires researchers to collect and analyze data. The researcher assesses and considers what type of data is required or how the research exploration is limited and covered (Satori, 2009).

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Types of Illocutionary Acts

The discussion in this section analyzes the different types of illocutionary acts found in Benjamin Netanyahu's speeches. The purpose of this section is to answer the first question of this study, which is how the collected data is represented (Searle J. R., A Classification of Illocutionary Acts, 1976).

Representatives

Representative is a type of speech that binds the speaker to the truth of the ideas conveyed. This speech act shows the beliefs that the speaker has. In this type of speech act, the speaker shows their world and makes the words fit into it. In this speech act of representation, Benjamin Netanyahu most often uses convincing as a symbol in representation. Persuasiveness here is very important to make the audience believe in the truth. The following data supports this:

"Israeli citizens, I want to inform you about the continuation of the war. In the south, the war in Eritrea is developing at a pace that Hamas has never experienced before."

First, Benjamin stated that the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine in the southern region is developing very rapidly.

"Gaza city is being destroyed. we are working on it, we are deepening the pressure on Hamas day by day."

Benjamin Netanyahu reassured that Gaza City was being destroyed, and Netanyahu assured that they were deepening the pressure on Hamas by the day.

"So far, we have destroyed thousands of terrorists from above and underground. Among them, we have destroyed many of the assassins who planned and carried out the horrific massacre on Black Sabbath a month ago. Since the beginning of ground reconnaissance, we have destroyed a large number of Hamas command posts, tunnels, bases and facilities."

From the above statements, Benjamin Netanyahu has assured the listener that he has carried out many attacks and assured the Israeli people that their resistance will yield satisfactory results.

"Israeli citizens. A year ago, we celebrated Sukkot"

This data shows that a representative of Benjamin told us that one year ago they celebrated Sukkot. Sukkot or the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Tabernacles is a Jewish holiday which is a celebration of thanksgiving for Israel for the harvest that is celebrated for seven days in the full moon between September and October.

"at the right time, we were making final preparations for the October 7 massacre."

Benjamin Netanyahu told the audience that he and his soldiers were preparing for the massacre on October 7."

" Today I stand before you to inform you that Yahya Sinwar has been murdered."

In this data, Benjamin informed that Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas, had been eliminated by the Israel army

" The man who committed the worst and most horrific massacre in our country's history"

Benjamin went on to say that Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas, was the one who committed the most horrific massacre against his nation.

"the mass murderers who killed thousands of Israelis and kidnapped hundreds of our citizens have been killed today by heroic Hamas soldiers."

Benjamin Netanyahu emphasized that Yahya Sinwar was a horrible murderer, a murderer who had killed thousands of Israelis and kidnapped hundreds, who was then killed by heroic Hamas soldiers.

"To the people of Gaza, I say Sinwar has destroyed your life. He claimed that he was a lion, but in reality he was actually hiding in a dark lair and he was killed while fleeing in great panic from our soldiers. His death is an important milestone in the decline of Hamas' evil rule. I want to say once again, in the clearest possible way, Hamas will no longer rule Gaza."

In this data, Benjamin affirms that Hamas will no longer rule Gaza, because Sinwar has been killed and in fact he is just a coward hiding behind a dark nest so his death is an important milestone in Hamas' decline.

"We implemented President Trump's plan, it was a good plan and it made a difference and it meant something very simple, that the people of Gaza who wanted to leave could leave so whoever asked us to end the war right before we reached this goal, was actually calling for Hamas to remain in power."

From this data, Benjamin Netanyahu argued that President Trump's plan was a good plan so Benjamin implemented the plan suggested by President Trump.

Expressive

Expressive speech is a type of speech that shows and expresses the speaker's psychological attitudes or statements such as joy, sadness, and likes or dislikes. This type of speech does not have a clear path. Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his condolences to the people of Israel in his speech:

"Israeli citizens, we are all honored for the families of the murder victims, we all share our condolences for the families of the abductees"

Expressing condolences is an act of illocutionary contained in the data above, the words of condolence in Benjamin's speech show sorrow for the victims of murder and kidnapping victims committed by the opposing party.

"I would like to congratulate the IDF and Shin Bet fighters and their commanders for their courage, spirit and determination."

Congratulating and praising the illocutionary actions contained in the data above, Benjamin expressed his congratulations to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Shin Bet fighters (Israeli Intelligence Community) as well as to their commanders for their determination and courage in this war.

"I would like to express my deepest condolences to the families who lost their loved ones."

In the data above, Benjamin expressed his condolences which showed his condolences to the families who lost their loved ones.

Commissive

Commissive is a type of utterance that gives an agreement or stipulation in the future. In this speech act, speakers show their desire to act. In commissive speech acts, the speaker gives an agreement or stipulation in the future. In his speech, Benjamin promised:

"We will continue to defend our borders. We will not accept the fact that Hezbollah, or Hamas-Lebanon, will harm our communities and citizens. We will continue to attack with vigor every attack against us."

Looking at the data above, it shows that in Benjamin's speech there was an act of illusory in the form of a commissive in which Benjamin Netanyahu promised to defend the border and would continue to attack vigorously until the end.

"Since the Holocaust, heroic Hamas soldiers killed thousands of Israelis and kidnapped hundreds of our citizens. And today, as we have promised, we have come to account for his deeds".

This data shows that Benjamin promised to hold its citizens accountable for what Hamas has done, and in this speech Benjamin came to demand accountability for Hamas' actions.

"To all the families of the hostages. I have stated before that this is an important event in the war. We will make every effort to continue the war until all your loved ones who are our loved ones return safely."

Then Benjamin promised all his citizens that the war would continue by exerting all the strength he had so that the return of all the hostages which were all the people they loved and loved.

"I call on all those who are holding our hostages. I call on anyone to lay down their arms and return our hostages. If you guys do, we'll let him out and go."

This data shows that Benjamin Netanyahu offered anyone who held his hostages and wanted to return them to him, then he would let them go and leave.

"And in the same way, I say whoever hurts our hostages, the blood on his head, we will take into account"

This data shows the act of commissive illocution because it contains a promise, Benjamin promises to whoever hurts his citizens who are held hostage, then he will take into account the retribution.

"We have an enormous opportunity to break the cycle of crime and build a new and different future, a peaceful future and a prosperous future across the region. If we work together, we can eliminate hatred and increase peace and benefits."

Benjamin Netanyahu hopes to work with his citizens to create a peaceful and prosperous future throughout the region and to be able to drive away curses and increase blessings.

"King Daud said, I will pursue my enemies and destroy them, and will not return to them."

In this data, Benjamin gives a speech quoting the words of King David: a hope as well as a promise that he will pursue his enemies and destroy them.

"We will fight together, and with God's help, we will win."

Finally, Benjamin hoped that with God's help he would win this war.

Directive

A directive is a type of speech that shows the speaker's desire to get the other person to do something known as an instruction. This act of speech shows the speaker's expectation that the speech partner will do something. Using instructions, the speaker intends to ask for future actions from the recipient, so that the world fits into words through the recipient. The types of directive in Benjamin Netanyahu speech showing his demand in his following speech:

"I demand that the Red Crescent immediately release our arrest. This is a must in international law. Therefore, I demand that the Meraha Crescent fulfill its duty and immediately release all prisoners to ensure their peace and well-being"

The illusory power that Benjamin Netanyahu uses above is to rule. To rule is the act of telling someone to do something. Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the Red Crescent to immediately release all Israelis detained by the Palestinians to ensure their peace and well-being.

"This is an opportunity for all of you Gazans to finally free yourselves from our weapons. I ask all those who have been holding our hostages to immediately release their weapons and return our hostages."

This data shows that Benjamin Netanyahu ordered and asked whoever held his citizens hostage to immediately lay down their weapons and immediately return his hostage citizens.

"Israeli citizens. We are in a war of resurrection. The big challengers are still ahead of us. We are required for, long patience, unity of ranks, courage, and firm standing."

With this war still ongoing, Benjamin Netanyahu demanded that all Israelis remain patient, continue to maintain unity and unity, to remain courageous in facing this situation and to remain steadfast.

"I am ready to end the war, but on the clear terms that it will be Israel's security, all the hostages go home, Hamas gives up its weapons and leaves its power, their leadership is expelled from Gaza or what is left of them and Gaza is completely free of weapons."

From the above data, it shows that Benjamin Netanyahu is ready to end the war but with conditions in the sense that Benjamin asks Hamas to fulfill his conditions, namely to return all the citizens who are hostage, Hamas surrenders its weapons and leaves its power, then their leadership must be expelled from Gaza.

The Dominant Type of Illocutionary Acts

By collecting the necessary data, the researcher found the number of implied illocutionary acts in Benjamin Netanyahu's speech. The results can be explained as follows: Representative appeared 10 times, Expressive appeared 3 times, commissive appeared 8 times, directive appeared 4 times, and no declarative illocution appeared. Furthermore, the types of representatives include informing, stating, affirming, retelling and convincing. The expressive type consists of condolences (sadness) and consolation (joy). The commissive type is represented by promise and determination. And the type of directive consists of demand and ask.

According to the data above, the most common type of illocution in Benjamin Netanyahu's speech is representative. The second and third types of illocution are directives and commissions. In this conversation, a representative is used to express Benjamin Netanyahu's beliefs. Speakers make speeches that fit into their own world when they perform this type of speech. The illocutionary power in this state of the nation speech, convincingly, is the power that Benjamin Netanyahu uses most often. In this State of the Nation address, Benjamin Netanyahu went to great lengths to convince the Israeli people that they have a strong defense in the war against Palestine so that they are confident of winning.

5. CONCLUSION

After analyzing Illocutionary's speech in Benjamin Netanyahu's speech about the war between Israel and Palestine, there were four illocutionary speeches found, namely representative, commissive, expressive, and directive. Declarative speech was not found in the data of this study because declarative actions require institutional authority to make changes directly through speech.

This research shows that political speech, especially those delivered during conflicts, has significant pragmatic implications. The predominant use of representative illocution, especially convincing ones, shows how political leaders create and project reality to influence morality, international perception, and public opinion. Netanyahu's speech showed that language not only serves as a medium of communication, but is also a powerful tool for persuasion, encouragement, and control of society. These illocutionary acts form a system of collective trust, direct public behavior, and encourage government action. The use of speech such as directive and commissive also shows the performative nature of political rhetoric in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This can increase or decrease tension depending on the intention and manner of talking. Therefore, understanding illocutionary in political discourse is essential for critical discourse analysis, media literacy, peace-making efforts, and international diplomacy.

The moral values contained in Benjamin Netanyahu's speech reflect important lessons about leadership, patriotism, resilience and responsibility during times of national crisis. When facing national challenges, a leader must remain firm, clear and persuasive, as Netanyahu exemplified in his speech. Based on the findings and limitations of this study, further suggestions for further research, researchers are advised to analyze more speeches of Benjamin Netanyahu or other political leaders in different contexts, such as international forums, peace

negotiations, or humanitarian responses to gain a better understanding of how speech is used in various rhetorical contexts.

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