The Study of Speech Acts in Pakistani Universities’ Vice Chancellors’ Messages: A Pragmatic Lens

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Abstract  
This research aims to explore the manners Pakistani educational leaders/Vice Chancellors perform actions through language in their messages in the educational context. Furthermore, VCs of universities promote education and motivate students to get education reflecting their aims and strategies to infuse positivity and love for knowledge along with responsibility for the country’s progress in their blood. Moreover, this is significant for decoding their messages in an educational context because this inspires the learners. This is a mixed-method inquiry, primary data in the form of VC messages is selected from the official websites of Pakistani universities and analyzed under The Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969). The findings reveal three types of speech acts in their messages. The percentages of these speech acts are representative (40%), commissive (36%) and Expressive (24%). These speech acts interact with the context and give the intended meaning. Thus, Pakistani Universities’ vice-chancellors in their messages perform representative commissive and expressive speech acts to promote education and to motivate students for the future another function
is the role of these speech acts in the promotion of universities to increase the admission ratio.

Keywords: Vice-Chancellors Messages, Speech Acts Theory, Locutionary, Illocutionary, Educational Leaders Roles.

1. Introduction

Language is a tool of communication in daily aspects of life in the world. Language reflects our ideas, our thoughts, our intentions or what we want to communicate in different circles of society. “Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires using voluntarily produced symbols” (Hartman & Stork, 1973 cited in Kaswanand Suprijadi, 2011). Speech theory has played an important role in the conduction of result in different areas of life such as political speeches, social media, multimedia and education for investigating how language perform different acts through channel of communication in different contexts of these areas. People use language in different situations in different forms according to the requirements of the situation and their culture to interact with each other. According to Finocchiaro “Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols which permits all people in a given culture, to communicate or to interact.” There are different modes of language which are used in verbal and non-verbal communication according to the nature of the context in which language is being used such as messages, speeches, sign language etc. use messages in our daily communication as a form of language in educational, social, economic and political contexts according to the intentions of hearers and speakers to achieve communitive goals. Language has the power to change the world. Our educational leaders are also using language as a tool to promote education, reform the education system and motivate students in their messages (Ganda, 2011).

Message is an idea, information or intention of a speaker conveyed in the form of speech and writing or the form of signs or symbols in any context. The speaker conveys the message in the verbal and non-verbal form and the receiver comprehends the message by the knowledge of the context in which conversation occurs. Messages are used both in formal and informal settings as a source of
communication. In formal settings, messages are given in the form of speech, posts, sermons, letters, applications, stories, reviews, news, feature items, films, videos etc. According to context, a message may be a simple idea such as in the form of a greeting or a complex idea which reflects the sender’s intentions, life experiences etc. For a complete understanding of any type of message, understanding its context is necessary. For understanding context knowledge of pragmatics is necessary. For example, to understand of messages of educational leaders should have an understanding of the context

Educational leaders such as Vice-Chancellors of universities use language to lead our generations towards the way of education, to promote a successful education environment and to motivate students to become hard workers and decision-makers. “As we look into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others” (Bill Gates). Educational leaders have clear educational vision and mission and their language reflects it. For a complete understanding of their vision, one should comprehend the language they use in different contexts to shape their ideas and experiences in the form of messages which is only possible by complete command of pragmatics.

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics which deals with the study of language in use and the context of language. Pragmatics is seen as the study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations of necessity, this would take cognizance of the message being communicated or the speech act being performed; the participants involved; their intention, knowledge of the world and the impact of these on their interactions; what they have taken for granted as part of the context; the deductions they make based on the context; what is implied by what is said or left unsaid; etc. (Leech, 1983, p. 20; Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 146; Thomas, 1995, p. 7). Pragmatics tells us how language interacts with its context to shape its meaning. Context includes. Context is the environment in which language is produced, used and comprehended according to different situations and conditions so context consists of the speaker’s intentions, the sentence which is uttered, the action which is performed by uttering the sentence and the listener’s inference.
There are two types of context linguistic context and Physical context. In this way, pragmatics tells us in our daily lives, to perform different actions via speech in different situations according to speaker-hearer relationships and social settings. Pragmatics tells us how Vice chancellors perform different speech acts to promote their institutions and to encourage their students to become scholars in the field of education.

It is stated that “In attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and Actions performed words, but they also perform actions via those utterances. Actions performed via utterances are called speech Acts”. Speech means utterance and act means to do something. It means when human beings utter something in our daily conversation human beings are performing or doing some action. In this way speech and actions are interconnected and the link between speech and action is described in speech act theory. Speech Act Theory is a subfield of linguistics. Speech Act theory tells us about the intended functions of language. Speech Act theory was introduced by J.L Austin and developed by Searle, Bach and Harnish. According to speech Act theory function of language is not only to describe something or to convey information but to do something or to perform some type of action for example apologizing, promising, planning, threatening, ordering, requesting, etc. Speech Act theory plays an important role in the understanding of goals, thoughts, planning, visions, and ideas of leaders including our educational leaders because they perform different speech acts in their messages which are mirrors of their visions (Yule, 1996).

This research is based on a speech act analysis of Pakistani Universities’ Vice Chancellors’ messages published on the official websites of universities. They are educational leaders. In this research, the researcher has tried to find out the structure and meaning of messages delivered by educational leaders by considering the context of messages.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Many researchers have conducted research by applying speech act theory in different areas such as speeches, advertisements, text
messages, short stories, novels, dramas, movies etc. Speech act analysis of political speeches of different political leaders, and business tycoons has been done in previous research. But no one has researched the messages conveyed by our educational leaders who are our real heroes and are preparing the young generation for the progress of our nation and country. VCs of universities promote education and motivate students through their messages which reflect their aims and strategies to infuse positivity and love for knowledge along with responsibility for the country’s progress in their blood. That is why understanding their messages in an educational context is necessary and this research will explore their messages by using speech act theory under a pragmatic framework.

1.3. Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore the types of speech acts used by Vice Chancellors of Pakistani Universities in their messages. And to find out the pragmatic meaning of their messages by understanding speech acts performed via uttering these messages.

1.4. Significance of the Research

This research would be fruitful for all the members of the educational discourse. It would be equally beneficial for students and teachers. The findings of this research will help teachers shape their thoughts and intentions in the form of language to promote education by motivating students. This research will also develop an understanding in the students of how their educational leaders convey their intentions to them by playing with words. Another important practical significance of this research is its findings can play an important role in the promotion of universities to increase the annual admission ratio.

2. Literature Review

Tanveer Hussain, Deeba Shahwar and Abdul Basit have conducted a Speech Act Analysis on the first speech of Imran Khan in 2020. The purpose of the research was to explore the types of speech acts which were used to shape such political discourse. The methods used in the conduction of research were both qualitative research
methods and Quantitative research method. It means the mixed method was used. Political Speech was translated by the researcher. The speech act analysis was done on 15 utterances under the framework of Speech act theory proposed and developed by Austen and Searle. Findings show that Imran Khan’s first speech consisted of a mixture of speech acts such as commissives, representatives, directives and expressive. These speech acts reflect Imran Khan’s vision, strategies and planning to serve people in future. At the end of the paper researcher has also given some recommendations to analyze undiscovered areas of this speech.

Nura Siti Mufiah and Muhammad Yazid Nur Rahman have done speech act analysis in 2019 on the inaugural speech of Donald Trump. The purpose of the study was to search speech acts which were repeatedly used in Trump’s speech. A descriptive qualitative method with content analysis was used for the conduction of the research. The research was conducted under the framework of speech act theory by Yule. Secondary data has been collected for this research. Findings have shown that representatives mostly used his victory speech which represents that he wanted to inspire his audience.

Suhair Safwat Muhammad Hashim conducted speech act analysis on political speeches in 2015. For this analysis, he has taken speeches of John Kerry in the Presidential Campaign in 2004 and George Bush's Inaugural address in 2001. The purpose of the research was to find how political speeches are shaped to gain power goals. For this purpose speech act analysis was done under the linguistic framework of Speech act theory proposed by John. L Austen in 1962 and developed by S.R Searle in 1969. He used a qualitative research method for this analysis. The findings of the analysis show that both leaders have used commissive acts in their speeches to show their loyalty towards their nation.

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Sana Ilyas and Dr. Qamr Khushi conducted a speech act analysis on Facebook status updates in 2012. They wanted to find out the communicative functions of those updates. The quantitative research method was used for this purpose. The sampling technique was used as a data collection tool. The research was conducted under the framework of speech act theory by Searle. The findings reflect that in status updates different types of speech acts are used to show emotions, life and other elements of the speaker’s personality.

The above literature review clearly shows that different researchers researched different areas such as political speeches, social media etc. But no one has chosen the messages of VCs of Pakistani Universities for speech act analysis yet.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Speech Act Theory (J.R. Searl, 1969)

This research is conducted under the framework of Speech Act Theory. This Theory is also known as how to do things with the words. It is a subfield of pragmatics. Speech Act Theory was first introduced by John Langshaw Austin in 1962. Austin introduced the speech act theory in his book “How to do things with words”. Speech act theory was further proposed by J.R Searle in 1969. Searle was an American Philosopher. Speech Act Theory is the foundation of Pragmatics. It represents the relationship between the meanings of the words and their function which is necessary for the complete understanding of language in context. According to Austin and Searle, the purpose of language is not only to tell information or to give a description of things, it is used many times to do things or to perform activities or actions. The actions
performed via utterances are called speech acts. When speaking doing or performing some act that is known as a speech act. Through speech acts physical actions are done by the speaker only by using the words or phrases.

2.1.1. Austin’s Classification of Speech Acts

John Langshaw Austin has classified speech acts into three types: Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act and perlocutionary Act. This classification is based on the structure of speech acts.

**Locutionary Act:** It is the physical form of utterance. It is the primary act of utterance. The production of meaningful linguistic expression by speaking is known as the Locutionary speech act. It can relate to the literal meaning of an utterance.

**Illocutionary Act:** The action produced by the utterance is called an illocutionary act. Utterances are formed by some kind of functions in mind and the communicative force of an utterance is known as illocutionary force. An illocutionary act is the intention of the speaker behind saying something.

**Perlocutionary Act:** Perlocutionary act is the reaction of the listener in response to utterance and this response may be in the form of feelings, attitudes and thoughts of the receiver of language. It is the effect of language of the producer of utterance on the receiver of language.

*Figure No: 1. Speech Acts Kinds by John Langshaw Austin (1962)*

Searle classified Speech Acts into five types in 1969. This classification is based on the function of speech acts.
According to Searle, there are five categories of illocutionary acts.

**Figure No: 2. Illocutionary Speech Acts Kinds by Searl (1969)**

- **Representative**: it represents the speaker's belief about something. It shows the intention of the speaker in asserting the belief of the speaker. It is used for stating, claiming, announcing or reporting something.

- **Directive**: This is a type of speech act which the speaker uses to get someone else to do something. Directive speech acts consist of requesting, ordering, commanding, questioning, suggesting etc.

- **Commissive**: These are speech acts which are used by the speaker for performing some future actions. These speech acts consist of promising, threatening, offering, refusing, and pledges etc.

- **Expressive**: These types of speech acts express the psychological states of speakers. These speech acts are used by the speakers to express their feelings of pleasure or sadness. These speech acts consist of apologizing, thanking, welcoming, and congratulating.

- **Declarative**: These speech acts are used by the speaker to create an immediate change in the institutional state of affairs. These speech acts consist of Pronouncing someone guilty, resigning, dismissing, accepting, declaring a war, etc.

3. Method and Material

The methods used in the conduction of this research are both qualitative research method and quantitative. In this way, a mixed-method approach is used. The sampling technique is used as a data collection tool. Data has been taken from primary sources. In this research, five messages of different Public universities’ vice-chancellors were selected from the main page of the official
websites of universities. The data has been collected from the official website of The Women University Multan, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Quaid e Azam University Islamabad, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi and the Muhammad Nawaz Shareef University of Agriculture Multan. These messages were downloaded by using the internet. These messages were different from each other in length and number of sentences. Therefore, the researcher has taken specific portions from these messages and then a total of 25 sentences are selected from them for speech act analysis. A researcher has selected these utterances because these utterances represent the planning, intentions and strategies of speakers.

The simple percentage method is used by the researcher to present the data quantitively in the form of tables. The data has been presented qualitatively and quantitatively. In this research researcher has used speech act analysis to do a qualitative analysis of a selected portion of data. The framework used in this research is the Speech Act theory. This theory was introduced by John. L Austin in 1962. In 1969, the speech act theory was further developed by J.R Searle.

4. Data Analysis

Data Analysis is divided into two sections. In section A qualitative analysis and in section B quantitative analysis has been completed.

4.1. Section A

In this section, the researcher has analyzed all the selected sentences from messages of Vice Chancellors of Pakistani Universities. The researcher has explained all the selected sentences under the classification of speech acts. explain the research questions which are mentioned in this paper. In this way researcher has tried to explain the research questions mentioned in this paper.
4.1.1. Speech Act Analysis of Women University Multan’s VC’s Message

1. Locutionary Act

Dear Students! You are embarking towards a bright academic and professional journey.

Illocutionary Act: Representative, (Reporting)

Perlocutionary Act: Hopefulness and encouragement

2. Locutionary Act

WUM emphasizes instilling values and facilitating the development of personal attributes.

Illocutionary Act: Representative(stating)

Perlocutionary Act: Inspiring

3. Locutionary Act

The Women University Multan aspires to promote distinctive world-class education and research to cultivate and enhance students’ competence by exploring their hidden potential, skills and creativity to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive (Aiming and wishing)

Perlocutionary Act: Encouragement

4. Locutionary Act: We look forward to facilitating you to contribute in the progress and prosperity of our country

Illocutionary Act: Commissive(promising)

Perlocutionary Act: Inspiring and encouraging
5. **Locutionary Act:** The University is committed to contributing to the advancement of learning and knowledge as it looks towards the future.

**Illocutionary Act:** Commissive (Planning, aiming)

**Perlocutionary Act:** Inspiring

4.1.2. **Speech Act Analysis of Fatima Jinnah Women University’s VC’s Speech**

1. **Locutionary Act:** This is an institute with a vision of promoting and facilitating studies and research in various fields of higher education

**Illocutionary Act:** Representative (stating)

**Perlocutionary Act:** inspiring and confident

2. **Locutionary Act:** Fatima Jinnah Women's University aims to provide quality education to the women of Pakistan.

**Illocutionary Act:** Commissive(promiseing)

**Perlocutionary Act:** Hopefulness and encouragement.

3. **Locutionary Act:** This long-term vision will crystallize your future aspirations and help you to proceed towards an accessible goal in the real-time frame.

**Illocutionary:** Commissive (offering and promising)

**Perlocutionary:** Hopefulness and encouragement.

4. **Locutionary Act:** Yes, we are responsible for you today but our future is in your hands.

**Illocutionary Act:** Directive(claiming)

**Perlocutionary Act:** Encouragement and inspiration

5. **Locutionary Act:** You are the vanguards of the future. I hope it is bright and beautiful because you deserve it.
Illocutionary Act: Commissive (assuming)

Perlocutionary Act: Hopefulness

4.1.3. Speech Act Analysis of Bahauddin Zakariya University’s VC’s Message

1. **Locutionary Act:** Thank you for choosing Bahauddin Zakariya University for your academic pursuits.

Illocutionary Act: Expressive

Perlocutionary Act: Happiness

2. **Locutionary Act:** It is one of the nation’s leading public research universities.

Illocutionary Act:: Representative (stating)
Perlocutionary Act: Persuasion

3. **Locutionary Act:** This is a marvellous facility available to our students and faculty as the digital library contains all the leading international research journals.

Illocutionary Act: Representative (reporting).
Perlocutionary Act: Hopefulness and encouragement.

4. **Locutionary Act:** To provide accommodation to the maximum number of students, the university has planned to build new hostels.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive (Planning)

Perlocutionary Act: Persuasion

5. **Locutionary Act:** I wish you the best of luck with your admission plans.
Illocutionary Act: Expressive

Perlocutionary Act: Encouragement

4.1.4. Speech Act Analysis of Quaid e Azam University’s VC’s Message

1. Locutionary Act: As you join the University, you will find that the entire QAU community will help you to achieve your academic pursuits, personal growth and development goals.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive(Promising)
Perlocutionary Act: Persuasion

2. Locutionary Act: Consistently ranked top academic institution by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan, QAU has also secured a place among the world’s best Universities.

Illocutionary Act: Representative

Perlocutionary Act: Hopefulness and encouragement.

3. Locutionary Act: On behalf of the faculty and staff, I welcome you to Quaid-i-Azam University and wish you all the best in your academic endeavours.

Illocutionary Act: Expressive

Perlocutionary Act: Encouragement

4. Locutionary Act: Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) is the premier seat of learning in Pakistan, known for its research and excellence in teaching.

Illocutionary Act: Representative
Perlocutionary Act: Happiness and Encouragement.

4.1.5. Speech Act Analysis of MNS-Agriculture University’s VC’s Message

1. Locutionary Act: Dear Viewers, I warmly welcome you to MNS University of Agriculture, Multan’s website.

Illocutionary Act: Expressive

Perlocutionary Act: Happiness

2. Locutionary Act: I am proud to proclaim that our experienced and highly qualified faculty, vigilant and profound administration, and well-established ORIC, QEC and Financial Aid offices are always there to facilitate the students.

Illocutionary Act: Expressive

Perlocutionary Act: Happiness and inspiration

3. Locutionary Act: Once again, I thank you for taking the time to explore our university virtually.

Illocutionary Act: Expressive

Perlocutionary Act: Happiness

4. Locutionary Act: At MNSUA, it has an array of academics with significant international experience providing support to our student body and researching issues that offer great prospects for scientific advancement and tackling society’s challenges. It offers our students and researchers a great place to work and the opportunity to help shape
their future as they mature with the ever-growing reputation of the University

**Illocutionary Act:** Representative

**Perlocutionary Act:** Persuasion

4. **Locutionary Act:** It offers our students and researchers a great place to work and the opportunity to help shape their future as they mature with the ever-growing reputation of the University.

**Illocutionary Act:** Commissive

**Perlocutionary Act:** Persuasion or promotion of something

5. **Locutionary Act:** It is committed to providing a learning ecology ensuring experiential learning of the graduates with appropriate skills and internships for future farming, entrepreneurship, and increased employability of the students.

**Illocutionary Act:** Commissive (aiming)

**Perlocutionary Act:** Inspiring and Persuading
Section B

This section represents the quantitative interpretation of data in the form of tables.

**Table No: 1. Speech Acts in The Messages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vice Chancellors' Messages of</th>
<th>Representative</th>
<th>Commissive</th>
<th>Expressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Women University Multan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatima Jinnah Women's University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaid e Azam University</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahauddin Zakreya University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table represents the types of speech acts used by vice-chancellors in their messages individually.
Figure No: 1. Speech Act Frequency

Table 2. Percentage of Speech Acts in the Messages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illocutionary Acts</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table represents the types of speech acts used in all the messages and their percentage.

5. Discussion

Language is a multi-talented actor who performs different acts in different contexts. This research is conducted to know about acts of language which it performs in the messages of our educational leaders (Vice Chancellors of Pakistani Universities). For this purpose analysis is done on their messages by using speech act theory.
The findings have represented that three types of speech acts shape the language of vice-chancellors in their messages in educational contexts or the environment of public universities. These are 40% representative, 36% Commissive and 24% Expressive which reflects the pragmatic meanings of this message. The extensive use of Representatives and commissive represents the messages of vice-chancellors who want to promote education and motivate the younger generation to be admitted to their universities. For this purpose, they first give statements about the achievements and success of the university and then give offers to students to join their universities with the promise of a bright future. Expressive is also used in these messages which play a role in establishing intimacy between students and educational leadership. It can be said that speech acts discover the intended meaning of language spoken or written in the form of a message. This research reveals that there is a direct relation between speech acts and the intended meaning of language in context. This relationship is clearly described in the following diagram.

Figure No: 1. Intended Meaning in Speech

5.1. Conclusion

In a nutshell, In this age, language is not only a way to transfer information or a tool for communication but a multi-tasking technology which is performing actions in different areas of life depending upon different contexts. This research is conducted to find out the speech acts in the messages of educational leaders (VCs of Pakistani
Universities) in an institutional context. Three types of speech have been found in their messages reflect the intentions of the speaker which is the promotion of universities to increase the admissions ratio by perusing the students and motivating them. In this way, education is also promoted. This research shows that speech acts interact with the context to give the intended meanings of messages of VCs. An understanding of the intended meaning is necessary for the proper functioning of language which is the basis of pragmatic analysis. All the discussion can be concluded by stating that pragmatics analysis of Pakistani Universities’ vice chancellors’ messages reveals types of speech acts and their interaction with the context of language to recognize intended meanings which shapes the real functions of language use in speeches or messages etc.
References


