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**A PRAGMA-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF SUSAN COLLINS  
SENATE FLOOR SPEECH IN SUPPORT OF BRETT KAVANAUGH**

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**Abstract:**

The research offers an investigation of linguistics acts that are evident in Senate Floor Speech of Susan Collins by using pragma-stylistic approach. Therefore, the study mainly constrain on the types of speech acts such as locution, illocutionary and perlocutionary in the speech. Thus, one of the main objectives of the study is to identify the most prominent speech act by using Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The researcher extracted (15) utterances from the speech script. The results of the study revealed the following data; declarative 40%, assertive – 30%, commissive – 20%, expressive – 6.66% and Verdictive – 3.33%. These outcomes proves that Susan Collins depended more on using sentences with a declarative acts than other speech acts in her Senate Floor Speech.

**1.1. The Study Aims:**

The main aims of the study are as follows

1. Identifying the types of speech acts used by Susan Collins in her Senate Floor speech.
2. Showing the most prominent and used speech act in the speech.

**1.2. Questions of the Study**

The following questions are meant to be answered in the current study :

1. What types of speech acts employed in the selected Susan Collins political speech?
2. Whether or not the explored speech acts are important for meaning in the political speech?

### **1.3. The Research Problem:**

In political terms, most of the politicians' speeches tend to use a certain techniques and styles in speeches to capture their audience attention. Thus, the study tries to find out what types of speech acts are mostly used and most prominent in political speeches.

### **1.4. The Study Limitations:**

The study is limited to analyzing Susan Collins Senate Floor speech using Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969).

### **1.5. The Study Procedures:**

To answer the study questions, the following procedures are followed:

1. Presenting a theoretical background of the speech acts and the adopted model.
2. Selecting the needed data from Susan Collins Senate Floor speech.
3. Identifying the type of speech acts that are used in the selected sentences.
4. Pointing out the most used and most prominent speech act that is used in the speech.

## **2. Theoretical Background:**

### **2.1. Introduction:**

In politics, the language plays a vital role. The two of them are intertwined in way that language has become an essential political tool. According to Agbogun (2011) this can be the reason behind employing language in fields of political terrain, such language now becomes political language. According to Chaffner (2004) adds that language is used in linguistic literature, political language to imply the use of language in political context. That is to say, language is used for specific goals in politics. Language is used to achieve a political motivated function, also it is used to indicate a political vocabulary to produce phrases and words that indicates an extra-linguistic phenomenon in political fields. In the political domains, language is employed for a specific functions and purposes. The roles played by language in the political domain have attracted a lot of scholars' attention. Probably, this the reason behind Beard (2002) claiming that "looking at the language of politics as an occupation is important because it 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". The roots of power in people's relationships and connections cannot be overrated. Therefore, people who are powerful are always the central of attention; consequently, their language is also under the Spotlight. Taiwo (2009) states that "the study of language of politics has been carried out within the framework of political rhetoric, linguistic-stylistic, pragmatics, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis". Thus, these points prove that political language quickly growing field that attracts linguists' attention. Political language gives the politicians the opportunity to use and see the tools provided by language that can be used for words manipulation to achieve their intended

goals. This type of language can also be considered as political discourse. Graber (1981) states that political

discourse crops up “when political actors in and out of government communicate about political matter for political purposes”.

The way politicians use language to benefit from its resources is what determines the political discourse success. Therefore, Opeibi (2009) concentrate on the fact “No matter how good a candidate’s manifesto is; no matter how superior political thoughts and ideologies of a political party may be, these can only be expressed and further translated into social actions for social change and social continuity through the facilities provided by language”.

Consequently, it is not important how big your political achievements are, you still need language to persuade, convince, entertain, enlighten, inform, promise other people. Language works as bridge to the hearts of people in politicking. Relating to this matter, Akinkulore (2011) states that “the support that citizens have for the politicians will be determined by what they say and how they say it for success to be achieved in candidacy, programmes or policies”.

## **2.2. Pragma-Stylistic Approach:**

Pragma–Stylistic approach is “a linguistic approach that bothers on the intended meaning of the speaker, together with distinctive style of the speaker”. People and individuals tend to use different modes and styles of speech which are different from other individuals. Leech (1981) states that pragmatic analysis of language intends to identify the meaning aspects that are understood from the way utterances are used and the way they relate to their context. According to this definition, pragmatics is a theory of appropriateness.

On the other hand, stylistics as defined by Babajide (1990) is ‘the study of style’. Davt and Crystal (1983) define stylistics as “the effectiveness of a mode of expression”. Therefore, it could be deduced that pragmatics represents an appropriateness theory. On the other hand, stylistics represents effectiveness theory. The Pragma –Stylistic approach that is used in the analysis of the Sara

Collins Senate Floor Speech in Support of Brett Kavanaugh is for highlighting its appropriateness and effectiveness by analyzing Speech Acts theory.

Notably, there are some works that have been conducted related to the domain of pragmatics and stylistics. One of these works is done by Ayodabo (2003) who conducted a pragma-stylistic research related to the form and functions of hedges in a presidential media chat program hosted on Nigerian Television Authority.

## **2.3. Speech Act Theory:**

According to Ayeomoni (2005) “The Speech Acts theory and indeed the whole of pragmatic theory is essentially concerned with how interlocutors (speakers and listeners) understand one another in spite of the possibility of their saying what they do not mean, and meaning what they do not say”. It is also known as “How to do Things with Words Theory”. There are three classes in Austin’s (1962) speech act theory: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

The locutionary as defined by Austin (1962) is “the utterance of certain noises, the utterances of certain words and construction, and the utterances are with certain ‘meaning’ in the favorite philosophical sense and a certain ‘reference’ a driver”. To put it in other way, the illocutionary act is created or made utterance. According to Dad (2004) the illocutionary act

represents the central base of the Theory. Speech Acts theory indicates the speaker's social act. The perlocutionary act, on the other hand, refers to the speaker's utterance effect on the hearer, it might be intentional or unintentional. Illocutionary act is classified by Cutting (2002) who proposes Searle's classification of illocutionary act as follows:

**A. Declaratives:** It refers to words and expressions that uttering them could make a change in the whole world such as I bet, I declare, I resign.

**B. Representatives (Assertive):** This type includes words and expressions that hold what the speaker believes to be the case such as 'describing' 'claiming', 'hypothesizing' 'insisting' and 'predicting'.

**C. Commissive:** This includes acts and words that commit the speakers to future action such as 'promising', 'offering' 'threatening', 'refusing', 'vowing' and 'volunteering'.

**D. Directives:** This category covers acts in which the words are aimed at making the hearer do something such as 'commanding' 'requesting', 'inviting', 'forbidding', 'suggesting' and so on.

**. Expressive:** This last group includes acts in which the words state what the speaker feels such as 'apologizing' 'praising', 'congratulating' 'deploring' and 'regretting'.

### 3. Research Methodology:

The researcher downloaded Susan Collins Senate Floor Speech in Support of Brett Kavanaugh and analyzed it adopting Austin (1962) Speech Acts theory along with Searle's (1969) Theory. For the purpose of analysis, the researcher selected nineteen sentences from the speech. The extracted data are the first nineteen sentences and they are listed from 1 to 19. The selected data are analyzed in a careful way. Thus, a table was made to show the frequencies and percentages of the used types of speech acts. The percentage of the speech acts is the basis of discussion, the percentage is counted based on the utterances number:

#### 3.1. Data Analysis:

##### Data 1:

**Locution:** "Mr. President, the five previous times that I have come to the floor to explain my vote on the nomination of a justice to the United States Supreme Court, I have begun my floor remarks explaining my decision with recognition of the solemn nature and the importance of the occasion".

**The direct Illocutionary** speech act of this locution is a declarative speech act (stating). While the indirect speech act type is a commissive type (promising), the perlocutionary expected effect is excitement.

##### Data 2:

**Locution:** "I have always opposed litmus tests for judicial nominees with respect to their personal views or politics, but I fully expect them to be able to put aside any and all personal preferences in deciding the cases that come before them".

The Direct Illocutionary speech act of this locution is declarative speech act (confirming).

While the indirect speech act is of representative type (expecting), the expected perlocutionary effect is approval.

**Data 3:**

Location: "I've never considered the President's identity or party when evaluating Supreme Court nominations".

In this utterance, the direct Illocutionary speech act type is declarative (stating). On the other hand, the indirect speech act is of expressive type (praising). The speaker by this utterance expects a perlocutionary effect which is 'trust'.

**Data 4:**

Location: "I also have met with thousands of my constituents, both advocates and many opponents, regarding Judge Kavanaugh. One concern that I frequently heard was that the judge would be likely to eliminate the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) vital protections for people with preexisting conditions".

The direct Illocutionary speech act here is of declarative types, the speaker tries to confirm the audience. Indirectly, the speaker makes a commissive act to show appreciation. Consequently, he expects the perlocutionary effect to be cheering.

**Data 5:**

**Location:** "I disagree with this contention".

In this utterance, the direct Illocutionary speech act is of commissive type. In that the speaker refuses something. While indirectly, she tries to declare or state something by using declarative speech act. The speaker expects perlocutionary effect from the audience which is applauding.

**Data 6:**

Location: "Others I met with have expressed concerns that Justice Kennedy's retirement threatens the rights".

Susan Collins here directly use assertive Illocutionary speech act by stating a statement. Indirectly, she makes a commissive type of speech act. The speaker expects the perlocutionary effect of the audience to be excitement.

**Data 7:**

Location: "I listened carefully to the testimony at the Committee hearings".

Notably, in this utterance, the Illocutionary direct speech act is declarative. In that Sara Collins tries to confirm something to the audience. In return, she expects the perlocutionary effect to be praising.

**Data 8:**

Locution: "I spoke with people who knew him personally, such as Condoleezza Rice and many other".

The direct Illocutionary speech act used here is declarative. Sara Collins confirms the audience that she spoke with him personally. Indirectly, she uses an assertive speech act which is claiming. She expects the perlocutionary effect of the students to be cheers.

**Data 9:**

Locution: "To members of PDP family and members of other political parties, who have demonstrated faith in our democratic enterprise, I salute you".

The direct Illocutionary speech act here is used of the commissive type. The speaker tries to show his appreciation for the PDP members. Indirectly, she uses declarative speech act by confirming the utterance to the audience. In return, she expects the audience to applaud.

**Data 10:**

Locution: "When I asked him "Would it be sufficient to overturn a long- established precedent if five current justices believed that it was wrongly decided," he emphatically said "no"".

Susan Collins here uses a declarative Illocutionary speech act to conform her utterance to the audience. She also indirectly used an assertive speech act to date this utterance. The expected perlocutionary effect is excitement.

**Data 11:**

Locution: "I asked the judge point blank whether he had made any commitments or pledges to anyone at the White House, to the Federalist Society, to any outside group on how he would decide cases. He unequivocally assured me that he had not".

The direct Illocutionary speech act of this utterance is assertive. The indirect is declarative speech act and the perlocutionary effect that is expected from the audience is applause.

**Data 12:**

**Locution:** "Now, one theory I've heard espoused repeatedly is that our colleague, Senator Feinstein, leaked Professor Ford's letter at the 11th hour to derail this process".

The speaker use direct Illocutionary speech act which is declarative to confirm her utterance. Indirectly, she use assertive speech act to describe her statement. In return, she expects that the perlocutionary effect would be approval.

**Data 13:**

Locution: "I knew that to be the case before she even stated it at the hearing. She is a person of integrity, and I stand by her".

The direct Illocutionary that is used here is of assertive type. Indirectly, the expressive speech act is used for praising and she expects the perlocutionary effect to be cheering.

**Data 14:**

Locution: "I cannot thank them enough".

For stating this utterance, Susan Collins used an assertive Illocutionary speech act. The indirect Illocutionary speech act is commissive, the speaker uses it to show appreciation and expects the perlocutionary effect to be cheering.

**Data 15:**

Location: “I found her testimony to be sincere, painful, and compelling”.

The direct Illocutionary speech act of this utterance is declarative. That is to say, the speaker uses the declarative speech act to confirm the statement. As a reaction to this utterance, the speaker expects applause as a perlocutionary effect.

- i. Direct: declarative (confirming)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (prayerful) Expected  
Perlocutionary Effect: applause

**Table (1) frequency and percentage of speech acts occurrence.**

Types of speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Declaratives</b>	12	40%
<b>Assertive</b>	9	30%
<b>Commissive</b>	6	20%
<b>Expressive</b>	2	6.66%
<b>Verdictive</b>	1	3.33%

**3.2. Results:**

Language can be the most powerful tool a politician use to achieve their goals. The politician achievements mostly depends on the way the use language effectively to serve their goals and intentions. One of language resources that can be used to deliver these goals is the speech acts, they are used to interpret Sara Collins intended meaning. The study adopted Searle (1969) speech acts theory along with vindictive category from Austin (1962). The senator used primarily sentences that were declarative in her speech with percentage of 40%. On the other hand, 30% percentage of the sentences were Representative (assertive) speech acts. The senator used commissive speech acts with total percentage of 20%, expressive speech acts were used with a percentage of 6.66%. The last speech act is vindictive (3.33%) which was the least frequent. Based on the analysis of the utterances, it has been found that the declarative speech act is the most used type of speech acts. Declarative speech act was mainly used by Susan Collins to state facts and events to support her speech as evidence.

### **Conclusion:**

The study primarily focuses on pointing out the speech acts that has been used by senator Susan Collins Senate Floor Speech. The outcomes of the data analysis showed that while on of the speech act is being performed, other types of acts were also employed at the same time. The speech act analysis also showed that there are various communicative functions were performed while making speech, namely, the political speeches. Notably, the speech acts analysis has brought to fore the meaning in Senate Floor Speech of Susan Collins making understanding of the speech clear and simple. Analyzing Susan Collins Senate Floor speech has shown the reason behind governed people prominence in any democratic rule. The highlighted speech acts in the speech portrayed the senator as a democratic leader. The analysis of such political speeches requires a better understanding for the speech act Theory. Thus, this study suggests that for the analysis of political discourses a pragma-stylistics approach recommended, especially, through the linguistic framework of Speech Acts theory.

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