AN ANALYSIS OF ASSERTIVE SPEECH ACT ON SENTENCES USED IN THE SPEECHES OF BARACK OBAMA

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by:

DASTI FITRIANA

A320100215

SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
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DASTI FITRIANA
A320100215

Approved by

Consultant I
Dra. Siti Zuhriah Ak., M. Hum.
NIK. 225

Consultant II
Dra. Malikatul Laila, M. Hum.
NIK. 409
Surat Persetujuan Artikel Publikasi Ilmiah

Yang bertanda tangan ini pembimbing/skripsi/tugas akhir:
Nama : Dra. Siti Zuhriah Ar., M.Hum.
NIP/NIK : 225
Nama : Dra. Malikatul Laila, M. Hum.
NIP/NIK : 409

Telah membaca dan mencermati naskah artikel publikasi ilmiah, yang merupakan ringkasan skripsi/tugas akhir dari mahasiswa:
Nama : Dasti Fitriana
NIM : A320100215
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul Skripsi : “AN ANALYSIS OF ASSERTIVE SPEECH ACT ON SENTENCES USED IN THE SPEECHES OF BARACK OBAMA”

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Surakarta, 27 Juni 2014

Pembimbing I

[Signature]

Dra. Siti Zuhriah Ar., M. Hum.
NIK. 225

Pembimbing II

[Signature]

Dra. Malikatul Laila, M. Hum.
NIK. 409
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ABSTRACT

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Assertive speech act is concerned with facts which the purpose is to inform. There are six focuses of assertive utterances: on information, on truth-value of utterance, on speaker’s commitment or involvement in what is reported, on manner of communicating, on the nature of the message, and focus on aspect. This research aimed at 1) describing the types of assertive speech act which are found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book, 2) describing the illocutionary act of sentences found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book. The data are the speeches of Barack Obama which collected in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book. The techniques of data collection is observation and documentation. The technique for analyzing data is descriptive analysis. The study shows that: 1) the focus of assertive utterances based on illocutionary act used in speeches Barack Obama are 27 (36%) focus on information, 34 (45,33%) focus on truth and value of utterance, 6 (8%) focus on manner of communicating, 1 (1,33%) focus on the nature of the message, and 7 (9,4%) focus on aspect. And the last is the illocutionary act of assertive utterance, the writer finds 3 motivating (4%), 2 predicting (2,67%), 25 persuading (34,66%), 8 requesting (10,67%), 11 threatening (14,67%), 9 warning (12%), 4 worrying (5,33%), 2 convincing (2,67%), 1 inviting (1,33%), 1 swearing (1,33%), 2 hoping (2,67%), 1 promising (1,33%), 2 guaranteeing (2,67%), and 3 influencing (4%).

Keywords : Assertive speech act, illocutionary act, the speeches of Barack Obama

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is human basic need. All people need language to communicate and transfer information to others. Speech is one way to communicate to others. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (1995: 1142), speech is a formal talk given to an audience. There are four basic types of speeches, to inform, to instruct, to entertain, and to persuade. To reach the understanding between the orators or speakers and listeners,
people have to know what the meaning of speeches is. Pragmatics can be use to learn the meaning of the speeches.

Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning. Yule (1996: 3) explains that pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader).

In pragmatics, people are familiar with speech act. The human’s ideas are commonly expressed by using utterances. Appropriate to Yule (1996: 47) speech acts is actions performed via utterances. There are some kinds of utterances, one of them is assertive utterance. According to Kreidler (1998: 183), assertive language is concerned with facts. Assertive utterances are either true or false. The focuses discussed assertive are on information, on truth-value of utterance, on speaker’s commitment or involvement in what is reported, on manner of communicating, on the nature of the message, and focus on aspect.

Barack Obama often delivers the speeches to the public. To know the intention of Barack Obama’s speeches, this research is conducted to examine the assertive utterances which are produced by Barack Obama.

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Based on the research background of the study, the problems in this research are as follows:

1. What are the focuses of assertive speech act which are found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book?

2. What are the illocutionary act of the sentences found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book?

C. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

In conducting the research, every researcher should have a certain objective of the study. In this study, the writer intends:

1. To describe the focuses of assertive speech act which are found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book.
2. To describe the illocutionary act of sentences found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book.

D. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer uses descriptive qualitative research. The data sources are library and literary data. Its purpose is to analyze using assertive utterances approach found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book. The steps to conduct the research are as follows: 1) determining the type of the research, 2) determining the object of the research, 3) determining data and data source, 4) determining technique of data collection and finally 5) determining technique of data analysis. The object of this research is pragmatic analysis of sentence found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book. In this research, the data are sentences contains pragmatic force found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book. The sources of this research is taken from the speeches of Barack Obama in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book. The techniques of data collection are observation and documentation, while the technique for analyze data applied by the writer is descriptive analysis. In this research, the writer’s techniques for analyzing data are analyzed the focuses of assertive speech act which are found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book by referring to theory of Pragmatics by Kreidler (1998), and analyzed the illocutionary act of sentences found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book by referring the theory of speech act by Searle (1978).

E. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1:

What are the focuses of assertive speech act which found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book?

The researcher just finds five focuses of assertive utterances: on information, on truth-value of utterance, on manner of communicating, on the
nature of the message, and focus on aspect. The researcher cannot find the data which has focuses on speaker’s commitment.

1. **Focus on Information**

   From 75 data which has collected, there are 27 data has focus on information. For example:

   These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land – a nagging fear that America’s decline is inevitable, and the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America – they will be met.

   This sentence is produced by Obama at Washington DC, January 20, 2009. The speaker who is hidden mentions the indicators of crisis: subject to data and statistics. This utterance belongs to indirect assertive utterance.

2. **Focuses on Truth – Value of Utterance**

   From 75 data which has collected, there are 34 data has focus on truth – value of utterance. For example:

   These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land – a nagging fear that America’s decline is inevitable, and the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America – they will be met.

   This sentence is produced by Obama at Washington DC, January 20, 2009. The speaker who is hidden claims that the challenges they face are serious and many.

3. **Focuses on Manner of Communicating**

   From 75 data which has collected, there are 6 data has focus on manner of communicating. For example:
This is the moment when we must renew our resolve to rout the terrorists who threaten our security in Afghanistan, and the traffickers who sell drugs on your streets. No one welcomes war. I recognize the enormous difficulties in Afghanistan. But my country and yours have a stake in seeing that NATO’s first mission beyond Europe’s borders is a success. For the people of Afghanistan, and for our shared security, the work must be done. America cannot do this alone. The Afghan people need our troops and your troops; our support and your support to defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda, to develop their economy, and to help them rebuild their nation. We have too much at stake to turn back now.

This sentence is produced by Obama at Berlin, Germany, July 24, 2008. The speaker who is hidden stresses that America cannot achieve the America better alone. This assertive utterance belongs to indirect assertive utterance.

4. Focuses on the Nature of the Message

From 75 data which has collected, there is 1 data has focus on the nature of the message.

This is the moment when every nation in Europe must have the chance to choose its own tomorrow free from the shadows of yesterday. In this century, we need a strong European Union that deepens the security and prosperity of this continent, while extending a hand abroad. In this century - in this city of all cities - we must reject the Cold War mind-set of the past, and resolve to work with Russia when we can, to stand up for our values when we must, and to seek a partnership that extends across this entire continent.

This sentence is produced by Obama at Berlin, Germany, July 24, 2008. The speaker who is hidden dictates that every nation in Europe must have the chance to choose their own tomorrow. This assertive utterance belongs to indirect assertive utterance.

5. Focuses on Aspect

From 75 data which has collected, there are 7 data has focus on manner of communicating. For example:
Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends — honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism — these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.

This sentence is produced by Obama at Washington DC, January 20, 2009. This sentence belongs to assertive sentence which focuses on aspect. The speaker predicts that the challenges which they found may be new. This utterance belongs to indirect assertive utterance.

Research Question 2:

What are the illocutionary act of the sentences found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book?

The researcher finds fourteen kinds of illocutionary act of the sentences found in President Barack Obama in His Own Word e-book. The illocutionary act are 3 motivating (4%), 2 predicting (2.67%), 25 persuading (34.66%), 8 requesting (10.67%), 11 threatening (14.67%), 9 warning (12%), 4 worrying (5.33%), 2 convincing (2.67%), 1 inviting (1.33%), 1 swearing (1.33%), 2 hoping (2.67%), 1 promising (1.33%), 2 guaranteeing (2.67%), and 3 influencing (4%). For examples:

1. Motivating

   From 75 data which has collected, there are 3 data has focus on manner of communicating. For example:

   I would not be running for President if I didn’t believe with all my heart that this is what the vast majority of Americans want for this country. This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the
most hope is the next generation — the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election.

This utterance is produced by Obama at Pennsylvania, March 18, 2008. Americans had a choice to their country. Their country grown slowly because there are problems. It is called declarative sentence because it ends by period marker. The illocutionary act is to motivate Americans that the next generations are able to be perfect.

2. Persuading

From 75 data which has collected, there are 25 data has focus on manner of communicating. For example:

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land — a nagging fear that America’s decline is inevitable, and the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America — they will be met.

This sentence is produced by Obama at Washington DC, January 20, 2009. Obama is a speaker and Americans are listeners. Obama said that America was in the midst of crisis. It was showed from the data and statistics. He asserted his citizens that they were facing the real challenges which were serious and many. One of serious challenges was crisis.

This assertive utterance is called declarative sentence because it is marked by the use today as adverb of time, I as subject, verb say to as predicate and you as object. Word say is a
performative verb. It has some evidences, the formula is I + Verb + You that X and in simple present form.

The illocutionary act is to persuade the listeners that the challenges Americans face were real. This utterance belongs to direct assertive utterance.

3. Requesting

From 75 data which has collected, there are 8 data has focus on manner of communicating. For example:

At some point, a judgment must be made. Iraq is not going to be a perfect place, and we don’t have unlimited resources to try to make it one. We are not going to kill every al Qaeda sympathizer, eliminate every trace of Iranian influence, or stand up a flawless democracy before we leave. ... In fact, true success in Iraq — victory in Iraq — will not take place in a surrender ceremony where an enemy lays down their arms. True success will take place when we leave Iraq to a government that is taking responsibility for its future — a government that prevents sectarian conflict, and ensures that the al Qaeda threat which has been beaten back by our troops does not reemerge. That is an achievable goal if we pursue a comprehensive plan to press the Iraqis stand up.

This sentence is produced by Obama at Washington, DC, July 15, 2008. The participants of this speech are Obama as speaker and Americans as listeners. America need a judgment to prove the true and false. Judgment here had a meaning that a honest and loyal judgment which always decide depend on the reality. This assertive utterance belongs to declarative sentence because they end by period marker.

The illocutionary act is to request to make a judgment.

4. Inviting

From 75 data which has collected, there are 1 data has focus on manner of communicating. For example:
Now is the **time for a new era of international cooperation**. It’s time for America and Europe to renew our common commitment to face down the threats of the 21st century just as we did the challenges of the 20th. It’s time to strengthen our partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Australia and the world’s largest democracy - India - to create a stable and prosperous Asia. It’s time to engage China on common interests like climate change, even as we continue to encourage their shift to a more open and market-based society. It’s time to strengthen NATO by asking more of our allies, while always approaching them with the respect owed a partner. It’s time to reform the United Nations, so that this imperfect institution can become a more perfect forum to share burdens, strengthen our leverage, and promote our values. It’s time to deepen our engagement to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, so that we help our ally Israel achieve true and lasting security, while helping Palestinians achieve their legitimate aspirations for statehood.

This sentence is produced by Obama at Washington, DC, July 15, 2008. The immediate danger in the world is eclipsed only by the long-term threat from climate change, which will lead to devastating weather patterns, terrible storms, drought, and famine. America is strongest when they act alongside strong partners. This assertive utterance is declarative sentence because it ends by period marker.

The illocutionary act is to invite all nation to do cooperation.

5. **Influencing**

   From 75 data which has collected, there are 3 data has focus on manner of communicating. For example:

   What I am opposed to is a dumb war. A rash war. A war based not on reason but on passion, not on principle but on politics. Now let me be clear - I suffer no illusions about Saddam Husseine. **He is a brutal man.** A ruthless man. A man who butchers his own people to secure his own power. ... **He’s a bad guy.** The world, and the Iraqi people, would be better off without him.
These sentences are produced by Obama at Chicago, Illinois, October 2, 2002. Obama was giving opinion about Saddam Hussein, the Iraqis president. Obama looked that the world and Iraqi people would be better without him. These assertive utterances are called simple declarative sentence. They end by period marker. The illocutionary act is to influence listeners that Saddam Hussein is bad president.

F. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in the speeches of Barack Obama which collected in *President Barack Obama in His Own Word* e-book, the speeches of Barack Obama is dominate by the assertive speech act focus on truth – value of utterance. While, the illocutionary act which mostly appear in this speeches of Barack Obama is persuading. Every sentence which he says is collection of inspirations to motivate listeners to arise. It shows that Barack Obama wants to deliver the high belief to the listeners. Obama is amazed how a person can influence the listeners to do believe what has he spoken.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

