Exploring Speech Acts in the 2024 Malaysian Federal Budget: A Pragmatic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Speech act theory studies have primarily focused on speeches outside the economic domain, with limited attention given to supply bills. This research examines the application of speech act theory in analyzing the translated 2024 federal budget speech delivered by Malaysian political leader Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim. The primary objective is to categorise the speech acts within the selected text and explain the usage and functions of illocutionary acts. A qualitative research approach is adopted, employing an in-depth manual analysis through close reading and anchoring an established framework for identifying and classifying speech acts. While budget speeches have been analysed in certain studies, a focused application of speech act theory in this context remains notably underexplored. Addressing this gap, the study aims to enhance understanding of the speech acts embedded in budget speeches. Findings indicate that speech acts play a pivotal role in articulating and conveying public economic initiatives, each marked by distinct illocutionary forces. These findings provide valuable insights for political representatives, speechwriters, researchers, and public audiences interested in the interplay between language and political discourse. By uncovering the nuances of speech acts in budget speeches, this study contributes to the broader comprehension of language's role in shaping public economic narratives. This study supports Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions by fostering transparency and accountable institutions through a linguistic analysis of how government economic policies are communicated.

Keywords— Language and Communication, Speech Act Theory, Illocutionary Acts, Budget Speeches, Malaysian Federal Budget, Accountable Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Political speeches in general are known for their discursive foreground of political ambitions, emphasizing how they can be maintained and how the public should perceive the political actors. Due to this, those speeches are crafted with great care for their meanings and underlying messages to bring about the aimed connotative baggage as a whole. Apart from campaign speeches and inaugural addresses, budget speeches are also an example of oratory from a political leader to the masses. Albeit being a scripted type of speeches, they are produced by experts who have mastered the art of persuasive language. Ferry et al. (2014) explains that budget speeches, with the power of language, are an articulation mechanism for a pool of subjects such as political interests, social well-being and economic strategies.

The tabling of the budget speech in Malaysia before the next year commences is a regular political event widely awaited by the general public, encompassing the entire nation with announcements of initiatives and forecasts of expenditures that might shape the country's progression for years (Rajandran, 2019). In Ferry et al.'s (2014) view, budget speech appears as one of the government's most powerful and high-profile annual events, with governmental officials, the private sector, and the general public all paying close attention, demonstrating that the yearly budget speech serves as the starting point for citizens to understand the government's aims.

In addition, under the umbrella of linguistics, pragmatics is a subfield that delves into the usage of human language and meanings derived from social contexts, and a part of the study under pragmatics is speech acts. In a broad sense, speech acts are means in the form of utterances for speakers to do things in the real world. Marking the establishment of the speech act theory in his book How to Do Things with Words, Austin (1962) proposed the concept of speech acts. With further research and development, Searle (1969) introduced a clearer classification: assertive, directives, commissive, expressive, and declaratives (Zou & Wu, 2023). Searle (1962) also renewed the three layers of performatives to his own which consist of utterance act, propositional act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act (Mabaquiao, 2018).

Problem Statement

Budget speeches are among the most anticipated events in political discourse, drawing attention from all strata of society. These speeches serve as a platform for government officials to announce their strategies for economic revival in the upcoming fiscal year, outlining policy proposals, initiatives, efforts, and critical financial decisions. Zerban (2015) mentioned that through these budget speeches, they allow the government to manage and influence the activities and the behavioural aspects of the people while assigning responsibilities. However, budget speeches in reality also serve as a platform to subtly sell political literature, being a financial statement as well as a political document carrying a solid political goal rather than an economic one. These speeches build a favorable image of the politicians of their financial capability (Ahmed et al. 2014; Ahmad et al. 2023; Ferry et al. 2014; Rajandran 2019, Rajandran, 2023). The language aspects of political speeches can be analysed using theories such as the theory of speech acts.

While prior studies have investigated speech acts in diverse communicative settings, the adaptation of the contemporary theory to the intricate economic and political discourse embedded within budget speeches remains notably underexplored, thus leaving a noteworthy gap. As such, this study aims to fill the gap that was acknowledged by previous researchers (Rajandran, 2019, 2023). Moreover, this research endeavors to elucidate the communicative intents and potential implications of speech acts within budget speeches, thereby advancing comprehension in the realm of national budgetary and financial management.

By employing established theories of speech acts, as proposed by Searle (1969), this study aims to unravel the nuances of speech acts and contribute a novel layer of understanding to political communication strategies. It permits the researcher to break new ground with the materialization of Malaysia's 2024 federal budget speech and instrumentation of content and discourse analysis. Furthermore, the findings of this research may aid speechwriters in refining transparent communication and empower the populace to make proper interpretations of economic agendas in reality. This study supports Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions by fostering transparency and accountability through a linguistic analysis of how government economic policies are communicated.

Research Objectives & Research Questions

This research aims to analyse the five types of speech acts in the latest Malaysian budget speech and determine their illocutionary forces based on the particular budget context. Therefore, in light of the aforementioned aim, this research has two research questions:

1.   What are the types of speech acts in the 2024 Budget Speech?

2.   How are the speech acts used throughout the 2024 Budget Speech?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech Act Taxonomies

The theoretical framework in pragmatics used for this research is Searle's (1969) on speech acts, which was first introduced by Austin (1962). Austin's theory of Speech Acts highlights the performative nature of language and emphasizes the different dimensions of meaning and action in communication, whilst Searle built upon Austin's work by refining and expanding the focus on illocutionary acts, therefore classifying them into five (5) categories.

Austin's Speech Acts Taxonomy

Austin termed utterances that are communicated to perform actions rather than to state facts as performatives. As pioneered by Austin (1962, as cited in Mabaquiao, 2018), the threefold dimensions involved in uttering a performative are locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. The first component, which is the locutionary act, is the mere uttering of the performatives. Secondly, the illocutionary act is the action taken when pronouncing a performative. Lastly, perlocutionary act refers to the speaker's act of evoking a specific response from or having an effect on the hearer.

Searle's Speech Acts Taxonomy

Searle (1969) codified Austin's theory with a focus on the illocutionary acts until the contribution birthed the influential theory of speech acts. As explained by Mabaquiao (2018), Searle who often uses the term "speech acts" to refer to illocutionary acts or Austin's "performatives", replaced Austin's locutionary act with utterance act to mean the act of uttering words and distinguished it with an additional act named the propositional act which attributes to the subject and the predicate of a sentence used to perform an illocutionary act. Austin has five classes of speech acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives.

According to Nordquist (2020), the five classes can be defined in simple terms as follows:

1. Assertives (or Representatives): Speakers represent how things are in the world

2. Directives: Speakers attempt to get hearers to do something

3. Commissives: Speakers commit themselves to doing something

4. Expressives: Speakers express their attitudes about objects and facts of the world

5. Declaratives: Speakers do things in the world at the moment of the utterance solely under saying that they do

Searle's roots of contribution to speech acts categorization began in his paper "Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language", where he presents his introductory classification of illocutionary acts into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. In his later work titled "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts" published in 1976, he refined the early formulation with further elaborations.

Additional Pragmatic Perspectives

In addition to the Speech Act Theory framework, other pragmatic models such as Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory and Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory can provide supplemental apprehension into the speaker's intent and goal in political discourse. While budget speeches may be formal and policy-oriented, they also convey interpersonal dimensions. Politeness strategies are frequently embedded to alleviate face-threatening acts, particularly in delivering sensitive economic policies or criticisms. Moreover, Relevance Theory can facilitate understanding of the way political speakers tailor and prioritise information to maintain the audience's cognitive engagement, especially in tackling complex economic issues.

Past Studies of Speech Acts in Political and Budget Speeches

Using Searle's Speech Act taxonomy, studies have been conducted on political and budget speeches. There are several studies focusing on the speech act in political speeches made by political figures around the world, and these speeches share certain similarities in the speech act types and purposes with one another. Assertives were used to state, mention and announce by asserting the speakers' and organization's higher position and power. This is made apparent by speeches related to the Yazidi massacre delivered by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Masrour Barzani and Ricardo Rodriguez, Head of UNAMI Regional Office Erbil, in comparative research of speech acts by Khalid and Amin (2019).

The speech act types identified in other studies suggest that political figures commonly employ more than one speech act to convey their point. Devanadera and Alieto (2019) examined the speech acts in five commemorative speeches by Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte to uncover the underlying messages conveyed to the public. Their analysis revealed that the president's speeches predominantly featured Assertive acts, which involved reporting, announcing, and narrating information. This was followed by Expressive acts, reflecting the president's unique style of expressing praise, gratitude, as well as displeasure and dissatisfaction toward individuals or institutions in the country. In similar fashion, Anyanwu (2023) analysed the linguistic and rhetorical features present in the inaugural address by President of Nigeria, Ahmed Tinubu used three key speeches namely, Assertives, Declaratives and Directives in his speech for variety of purposes including establishing trust, outlining policy priorities, inspiring hope, promoting national unity and to further define his vision as President of Nigeria.

Within Malaysian context, the speech texts by Tun Mahathir during the second annual general assembly of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) and from his interview with New Straits Time (NST) reveal that the former Prime Minister of Malaysia included Assertive (or Representative) and Directives acts where Representatives are dominant when he states, describes, explains, claims, and asserts his point on the Malay community and their progress, while Directives can be seen when persuading and counsels the Malay on enhancing their economic and financial standing (Velu et al., 2022). Both speech acts were also used in Syed Saddiq's 'A Lost Generation: Youth in Politics' speech as the illocutionary acts on the speech were investigated by Hisham and Hashim (2022). Representative acts are used to share personal experiences, information, and propositions that the politician believes are true to the audience, whereas Directive acts are used to lead the audience to think about issues and their solutions through rhetorical questions.

In addition, Directives and Expressives speech acts were also favoured by some politicians in order to get the community to adhere and take action on something. An analysis of speech acts conducted by Ahmad Kamil and Shamshul Bahrn (2020) on one of the earliest speeches delivered by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Malaysian former Prime Minister, in the first few days of the implementation of the Movement Control Order highlighted that both types of speech acts were used the most. In order to find correlation, Krishnan et al. (2021) did a comparative study of speech acts by the former Prime Ministers of Malaysia and Singapore in their first Movement Control Order (MCO) announcements due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that Directives are the most dominant type of speech act used by both prime ministers as they try to persuade the nation to comply with the set restrictions.

The use of speech act taxonomy is not limited to physical speeches but also political posts on social media, as Ramanathan et al. (2020) examined the election tweets of the sixth prime minister of Malaysia, Najib Tun Razak and India's fourteenth prime minister, Narendra Modi, in attempting to gain public support and victory. It is reported that Commissives and Directives are the major speech acts utilised. Najib used the 12 speech acts to show his commitment to future actions while Modi used them to express his vision of nation-building.

Narrowing to speech act analysis on budget speech, Akinkurolere (2020) in a study analysed the speech act features in two performative-political speeches by Nigerian President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in the chosen period of 2008 to 2009. The first text, Text A, is the Swearing-in of New Ministers in 2008, while the second text, Text B, is the Budget Speech in 2009. The analysis discovered that although the contexts are different, the speeches have similar patterns of speech acts in facilitating Yar'Adua's thoughts' portrayal. Based on the findings, Assertives is the predominant type of speech act in both texts, which is calculated at 87.5% equaling

14 sentences out of 16 in each of the two speeches the data was drawn from. The author suggests that the comparable assertive nature exhibited by the speeches is impacted by the occasion of the democratic government profile, where he is to exert his authority and responsibility.

It is worth noting that Assertive is dominating most of these speeches, followed by Directive and Expressive speech acts, depending on the aims of the speeches. Conversely, it is critical to point out that the number of studies on speech acts on budget speeches is limited, especially on the federal budget speeches of Malaysia, making the research gap more evident. This study aims to bridge this gap by applying speech act theory to examine budget speech, particularly in Malaysia. Although some existing works have employed local budget speeches as primary material (Rajandran 2019, 2023), their focus on speech act theory within this context remains absent.

Past Studies of Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis of Budget Speeches

Several studies have conducted content analysis and discourse analysis of budget speeches. These studies have been analysed in terms of their content and implications for government policy. For instance, Ferry et al. (2014) examined Malaysian budget speeches from 2007 to 2011, revealing that the government gradually shifted from economic growth to social harmony as their main objective to reflect the global financial crisis and the 2008 general elections. These speeches not only reflect government priorities but also serve as intervention tools to shape public emotions, beliefs, and actions.

Moreover, Ahmed et al. (2014) made comparisons in budget speeches from India and Pakistan from 2009 to 2012 in terms of their frequency and functions of parts of speech. Through the use of discourse analysis, they highlighted that speeches from India were more direct and specific, whereas speeches from Pakistan were more vague and ambiguous. Ahmed et al. (2014) also argue that budget speeches are considered non-neutral documents as they often contain underlying messages that hint at the government's objectives and strategies. This study has also been supported by Ahmad et al. (2023), who focused on lexical choices and categories in Pakistani and Indian budget speeches. They argue that the lexical choices unveiled convey implicit meanings and serve distinct functions, for example, informing, persuading, manipulating, authorising and legitimising.

In the Malaysian context, Rajandran (2019) examined the narrative of economic competence in Malaysian budget speeches from 1999 to 2018. Three characteristics of economic competence have been identified: financial solvency, interventionist growth and, ethnic and regional prioritisation. Rajandran (2019) concludes that these characteristics were also tied to the ideology of the current elected government at the time, Barisan Nasional. Later, Rajandran (2023) also analysed intertextuality in the Malaysian budget speeches from 2010 to 2018 to identify and evaluate the usage of different voices from various sources or references to justify their economic policies and performance. It was found that the government combines four choices of voices, which are economic, political, religious, and popular, depending on the needs of the context and audience-appropriateness.

This literature review reveals a limited number of available and easily accessible research papers regarding speech acts in budget speeches. The aforementioned studies touched on indicate that a good level of political oration always hinges on pragmatics. With the support of language, policymakers exercise whatever measure of power they have in a socio-political context in which what is said intentionally has underlying tones.

Conceptual Framework

The use of speech acts has a profound effect on how political speeches, such as the federal budget speeches, are interpreted and understood. This conceptual framework (Figure 1) examines the illocutionary acts used in the 2024 Malaysian Federal Budget through the utterances or illocutionary forces made by the speaker. It consists of the five different categories of illocutionary acts: Assertives or Representatives, Commissives, Declaratives, Directives and Expressives. Utterances and a variety of illocutionary forces are identified, such as whether the speaker is appealing to a specific cause or urging action on an issue highlighted, and are then categorised into the five illocutionary acts. This conceptual framework is based on Searle's Speech Act Taxonomies (1969) and recontextualised into the setting of budget speeches.
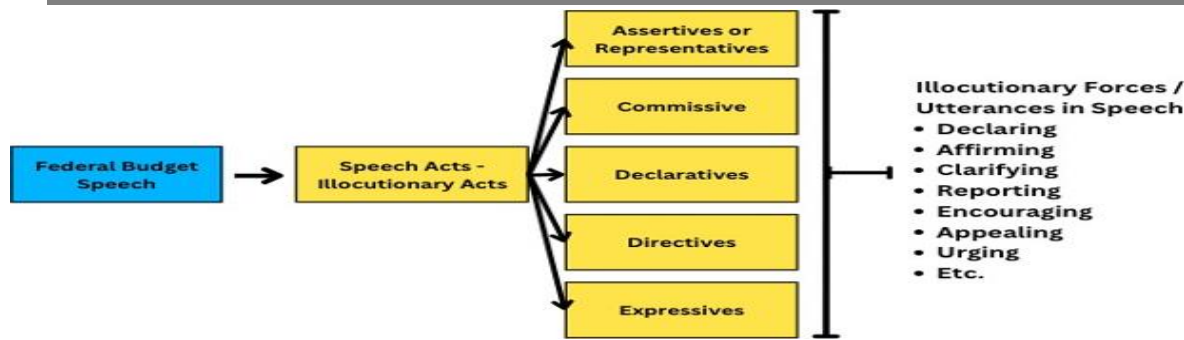
Fig. 1 Proposed Conceptual Framework of the Present Study

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research adopted a textual analysis approach to examine speech acts within the 2024 annual budget speeches delivered by the Minister of Finance, who is also the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Cresswell (2014) highlights that the use of the qualitative approach provides the opportunity to focus on meaning and interpretation in different texts. One can explore how language, tone and structure can provide deeper insights and also reflect the intentions of the speaker. Using the qualitative approach aligns with the study's objectives to illuminate nuanced linguistic strategies, particularly speech acts employed in economic policy communication. The analysed utterances were selected based on their relevance to speech act types within the context at hand. This research only used one budget speech for analysis, the Belanjawan 2024 Speech, which allowed for purposive sampling due to the size of the sample. According to Patton (2014), purposive sampling can be used to identify specific information-rich units in relation to the objectives of the research. In this case, specific utterances in the budget speech were selected based on their relevance to speech act types within the context at hand.

The annual budget speech was tabled in Malay, the national language, and the English transcripts were later published. The transcription captured verbal material but not non-linguistic elements such as body language and voice tone. Despite the indisputable differences due to the physical separation of speaker and reader, the core principles of the theory remain pertinent, with skilled writers able to establish context, purpose and relationship within their texts (Drid, 2018). Rajandran (2019, 2023) opined that although budget speeches are prepared by a speechwriter, the content still reflects the government's viewpoint. Thus, the exact author is arguably trivial because the speeches are seen as legitimate and authoritative depictions of the economy. The speech chosen was from 2023, which marked the second year of the unity government. During the tenure of the unity government, both federal budget speeches were read by Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

To describe the linguistic phenomena found in the speech, a customized coding scheme was made, adapted from previous studies, as the primary instrument for analyzing speech acts within the budget speech. The coding scheme categorized the selected excerpts into five main categories of illocutionary acts, following Searle's alternative taxonomy, capturing distinct communicative functions of speech acts in this particular domain. The coding scheme for the speech act class is shown in tabulated form below:

TABLE I CODING SCHEME FOR SPEECH ACT TYPE

No.	Speech Act Type (Illocutionary Act)	Code	Definition
1	Assertives or Representatives	A	Utterances that affirm the truth of the speaker's statements
2	Commissives	C	Utterances that commit speakers to carry out some future action

3	Declaratives	DEC	Utterances that affect the state of some entity
4	Directives	DIR	Utterances that encourage addressees to carry out an action
5	Expressives	E	Utterances that express the speaker's feelings and thoughts

This study attempts to identify the use of illocutionary acts in the speaker's utterances taken from the budget speech he delivered. Following the primary five functions of speech acts as proposed by Searle (1969), the coding scheme was developed based on the speech act theory used in this analysis. Thus, each of the codes corresponded to a specific speech act type accompanied by an illocutionary force as identified in the utterances for systematic coding. As a simple instance, 'A + 1' could signify an utterance sorted into 'Assertive' Speech Act + 'Claiming' illocutionary force and the list goes on. After the coding process, noticeable patterns emerged across the utterances, and with that, themes were identified as related speech act types and illocutionary forces were grouped. Refinement of the themes was done by reviewing the relationship between the codes to create coherent categories.

The data for the present study was taken from the Budget Official Website created by the Malaysian government. Specific parts of the speech were selected to identify the types of speech acts that exist. In the process of selecting speech excerpts for analysis, a manual approach was adopted to identify pivotal sections within the 2024 Federal Budget Speech. This involved a close reading of the official speech text to specifically identify and isolate parts that prominently showcased speech acts and varied illocutionary forces. This ensured a focused exploration of varied speech acts embedded within the written text. These selectively picked out paragraphs were chosen to facilitate a well-done analysis of the speech act features present in the text.

Methodologically, this research used content and discourse analysis as a broad approach to inculcating the types and functions of speech acts. To further analyse the communicative intentions through the channel of language, a thematic analysis was applied to uncover the role of speech acts embedded within each selected speech excerpt. Through close reading techniques, the analysis aims to highlight speech acts, distinguish illocutionary forces, and discern the speech act functions conveyed within the written text. This involved a detailed examination of word choices, sentence structures, and contextual cues related to speech acts employed in the speech.

The rationale behind the content and discourse analysis approach for this research was essentially tailored to the research questions and research objectives. As this study aims to identify the types of speech acts and classify them accordingly, it justifies the content analysis method because it is often employed to determine the concepts within texts (Hasa, 2016). It could be applied for categorizing the content based on predefined criteria, which in the context of this research means categorizing the speech acts recognised into their respective types. On the other hand, discourse analysis looks into the context. Drid (2018) determined that this approach considers utterances to not only be simply sentences but also specific forms of social action. This denotes that sentences used in certain contexts should take on additional meaning based on the speaker's objectives, beliefs, evaluations, and relationships with the listener. This approach is suitable for the current setting, seeing as the budget speeches are characterized as a political event. Moreover, Drid (2018) identifies two characteristics of speech act theory that are relevant to discourse studies: an utterance's ability to do many speech acts at once and the relationship between context and illocutionary force.

Furthermore, manual coding and categorization, grounded in established speech act theories such as Searle's framework, facilitated the precise classification of various speech acts and illocutionary forces within the chosen excerpts. Each identified speech act underwent manual annotation and categorization to provide a comprehensive breakdown of the communicative intentions evident in the written speech. A two-way analysis of speech act types and illocutionary forces, coupled with contextual references, contributed to a detailed

interpretation of the identified speech acts.

While this study primarily adopted a qualitative manual coding technique to identify speech acts, it is beneficial for future research to apply a mixed-methods approach. Integrating quantitative tools, such as frequency counts using content analysis software, could amplify the reliability of findings and qualify for a more comprehensive and broader generalizations from larger datasets. Moreover, it would also allow for the triangulation of qualitative interpretations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study attempts to look into the speech acts used in a budget speech of the 2024 Malaysian Federal Budget and their illocutionary forces. The two broad research questions have been addressed to guide the study are;

RQ1. What are the types of speech acts in the 2024 Budget Speech?

RQ2. How are the speech acts used throughout the 2024 Budget Speech?

For equal distribution and fair coverage, 15 paragraphs were taken from the 2024 Budget Speech, with each speech act type purposely represented by three samples of utterances, totalling the number of analysed utterances to 15. The paragraphs were taken for the analysis as the speech document has been formatted with numbered paragraphs as default. Hence, each paragraph is assumed as one single utterance.

RQ1. The Types of Speech Acts in the 2024 Budget Speech

The research findings of the utterances categorization according to their suitable speech act type, as well as illocutionary intent determination for every speech act performed, are indicated in Table 2 below;

TABLE 2 SPEECH ACT TYPE AND ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE CATEGORISATION

Table 2. Speech Act Type and Illocutionary Force Categorisation			
No	Code	Speech Act Type (Illocutionary Act)	Illocutionary Act
1.	A1	Assertive or Representative	Acknowledging Challenges
2.	A2		Expressing Confidence
3.	A3		Highlighting Responsibility
4.	C1	Commissive	Committing to Policy Implementation
5.	C2		Committing to Economic Support
6.	C3		Committing to New Programmes
7.	DEC1	Declarative	Declaring Measures
8.	DEC 2		Reporting Outcomes
9.	DEC 3		Declaring Efforts
10.	DIR 1	Directive	Encouraging Action
11.	DIR 2		Urging Action
12.	DIR 3		Appealing to Unity
13.	E1	Expressive	Affirming Success
14.	E2		Showing Appreciation
15.	E3		Expressing Stance

Table 2 shows that the illocutionary acts found in the federal budget speech consist of all five types of speech acts outlined by Searle (1969), namely assertive, commissive, declarative, directive and expressive. The illocutionary force or communicative intent for each utterance appears to be distinctive, demonstrating that each act produced by the speaker has a unique function of their own as stated above. The analysis and elaborations regarding the illocutionary forces for each type of speech act are shown in the tables below:

TABLE 3 ASSERTIVES OR REPRESENTATIONS

Table 3. Assertives or Representations		
	Illocutionary Act	Elaboration
A1	Acknowledging Challenges	The speaker acknowledges the challenges faced by low-income households due to rising living costs, emphasizing the government's commitment to providing assistance. The phrase "utmost priority" underscores the importance of addressing these financial difficulties, assuring the public that help will continue to be available.
A2	Expressing Confidence	The speaker expresses confidence in uplifting the local craft community through economic policies, using the phrase "I am confident" to convey certainty. This highlights the government's commitment to creating meaningful income opportunities and demonstrates credibility in supporting local initiatives.
A3	Highlighting Responsibility	The speaker highlights the government's role in enabling Aqil Naufal, a student passionate about sports, to achieve his dream with the support of the Malaysian Amputee Football Association (MAFA). The utterance affirms the government's responsibility in fostering success through assistance and collaboration.

TABLE 4 COMMISSIVES

Table 4. Commissives		
	Illocutionary Act	Elaboration
C1	Committing to Policy	The government commits to attracting foreign film productions by proposing a preferential income tax rate of 0%-10% for production companies, actors, and crews filming in Malaysia. This policy reflects the intention to enhance Malaysia's competitiveness in the global film industry.

C2	Committing to Economic	To support paddy farmers, the government announced an increase in the purchase price floor from RM1,200 to RM1,300 per metric tonne. This decision highlights the government's commitment to improving farmers' economic well-being.
C3	Committing to New Programmes	The government introduced the Program Kampung Angkat MADANI to improve basic facilities, including internet access, in rural areas. Collaboration across ministries, GLCs, GLICs, and private organizations is emphasized to ensure the program's success.

TABLE 5 DECLARATIVES

Table 5. Declaratives		
	Illocutionary Act	Elaboration
DEC1	Declaring Measures	The government acknowledges the rise in road accidents, with over 6,000 fatalities annually, and declares its commitment to prioritizing road safety, emphasizing ongoing efforts to address the issue.
DEC2	Reporting Outcomes	Through the Second Chance Policy and amendments to the Insolvency Act, nearly 14,000 bankruptcy cases with small debts have been resolved as of July 2023. This reflects the government's focus on reporting positive outcomes and legal reforms.
DEC3	Declaring Efforts	The government has launched a pilot project for accelerated paddy cultivation in select areas, alongside a RM3 billion investment to upgrade irrigation infrastructure in Perlis and Kedah, demonstrating active efforts to boost rice production.

TABLE 6 DIRECTIVES

Table 6. Directives		
	Illocutionary Act	Elaboration
DIR1	Encouraging Action	The speaker encourages state governments to reduce entertainment taxes to support local creative talent and boost tourism, highlighting the importance of such action for economic and cultural development.

| DIR2 | Urging Action | The government urges private sector employers to review and adjust salaries and rewards to address rising living costs, emphasizing the need for equitable employee compensation and announcing plans for further engagement next year. |
| DIR3 | Appealing to Unity | The speaker appeals for national unity, grounded in mutual respect and shared responsibility, to ensure stability and prosperity for all citizens, urging collective action to create a dignified life for everyone in the nation. |

TABLE 5 EXPRESSIVES

Table 7. Expressives		
	Illocutionary Act	Elaboration
E1	Affirming Success	The speaker affirms the government's success in fostering a resilient domestic economy over the past year, expressing gratitude and satisfaction for the progress made under the Unity Government.
E2	Showing Appreciation	The government shows appreciation for the efforts of enforcement agencies like the RMP, MACC, and RMCD in combating revenue leakages and crime, acknowledging their dedication and committing to rewarding excellent performance.
E3	Expressing Stance	The speaker expresses the government's stance on feedback, emphasizing openness to constructive criticism while rejecting slander, highlighting its detrimental impact on national progress amidst global challenges.

The study's findings on speech act types in budget speeches differ from Akinkurolere's (2020) analysis due to variations in research design, though their functions and usage are notably similar. Both studies highlight that Assertives are used to present facts, such as economic challenges and guiding principles, while Commissives express commitments to future actions, often signaled by the word "will." Declaratives are employed for official announcements, like confirming economic growth, and Directives request actions, such as fostering collaboration for national progress. Additionally, Expressives convey psychological states, such as gratitude. Overall, the study suggests that while the exact forms of speech acts in budget speeches may vary, their functions are comparable, emphasizing the role of extralinguistic factors in shaping their usage.

RQ2. The Speech Acts Used Throughout The 2024 Budget Speech

The aforementioned findings are thematically grouped under three major topics related to budget discourse. The emergent themes are tabulated in Table 7 below:

Table 8. Emerging Themes in 2024 Budget Speech

No	Themes	Codes & Illocutionary Forces	Elaboration
1.	Affirming Success	**A2**: Expressing Confidence **C2**: Committing to Economic Support **DEC2**: Reporting Outcomes **DEC3**: Declaring Efforts **E1**: Affirming Success	Encompasses utterances that reflect the government's focus on economic recovery and sustainable growth.
2.	Showing Appreciation	**A1**: Acknowledging Challenges **C1**: Committing to Policy **C3**: Committing to New Programmes **DEC1**: Declaring Measures **E2**: Showing Appreciation	Includes utterances that aim at improving governance and emphasizing the need for policy evolution to better serve the citizens.
3.	Expressing Stance	**A3**: Highlighting Responsibility **DIR1**: Encouraging Action **DIR2**: Urging Action **DIR3**: Appealing to Unity **E3**: Expressing Stance	Captures utterances that display efforts to promote collective responsibility for societal wellbeing.

Table 8 shows that the three key themes identified within the findings of illocutionary forces derived from the performed speech acts in 2024 Budget Speech are economic vigour and advancement, leadership and policy reform and social welfare and cohesion. Five utterances can be classified under each theme. All themes are commonly related to the nature of budget speeches, in consideration of the speaker, hearer and the underlying context of the situation the speech takes place.

These categorization of themes in the budget speech further concludes that speech acts can be considered as a political instrument due to the fact that speech acts had been employed in many types of political speeches across any context or circumstances whether it is to gain support, encourage people to take action, express stance or power, or signify hope and unity. This validates Rajandran (2019) who argued that budget speeches are one of the government-promoting materials, which also include commercials, electoral manifestos, interviews, and news releases. They demonstrated a combination of campaigning and governing (Rajandran, 2019) as the government sought to keep voters' trust. In the same breath, Ahmed (2014) stated that political speeches have similarities and variances that help readers and listeners interpret the underlying meanings. In general, the aims of political speeches are uniform, despite some spiking more attention than the other.

Intentionality is a critical factor in the implementation of speech acts, and since there is an existing differential status between the interlocutor and the addressee where the interlocutor has the upper hand, what is said is mostly pragmatically motivated. This corroborates the findings that politicians modify remarks in political speeches to meet their specific needs and achieve their goals by presenting only one side of their perspective to the audience (Ahmed et al., 2014). This rings true in relation to Malaysia's budget speeches as the discourse focuses on the federal government as a provider of initiatives for the Malaysian economy while the citizens as the target of initiatives (Rajandran, 2019) and that the ideological government-citizen dichotomy may be common in budget speeches (Lukin, 2015; Thompson, 2015, as cited in Rajandran, 2019). This further reinforces the study by Ahmad et al. (2023), which mentioned that the ultimate kind of power in political discourse is psychologically mediated control of the actions of others, especially when the audience is unaware of such control, as in manipulation. It can be conjectured that speech acts work in political discourse to protect

the hierarchy-related authority. It can be observed from how the speech acts facilitate the speaker communicating their higher position and rights to keep social order. This indicates that the budget speech is a tool for the government's approach to handling economic management and moulding the public's Behaviour and perceptions to accomplish their immediate goals, which aligns with Ferry et al. (2014). As Ferry et al. (2014) stated that budget speeches could also integrate discourses like unity and political stability to alleviate against social turmoil because they mainly have the undertones of prioritizing self-government. Ultimately, the linguistic field of pragmatics and all the branches it has, including speech acts, are useful sources to achieve the intended illocutionary force instead of saying the core meaning directly, engulfed in politeness.

It is worth noting that the interpretation of illocutionary acts may vary depending on the audience. For instance, economically literate stakeholders may interpret Commissive acts with greater scrutiny, while the general public may resonate more with Expressives or Directives aimed at unity. Including reception analysis from different audience groups would enrich future research by capturing these interpretive dynamics and validating the perceived functions of each speech act.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Overall, the data from the study provides clear evidence that speech acts are widely used and have an established role in delivering budget speeches. In light of the speech act theories used, it would be unreasonable to deny the psychological impacts the pragmatics field holds as much as it is unreasonable to deny that the cultural aspects influence how the performative strategies are situated. Knowing the interrelationship between speech actions and their embedded behavioural changing feature, it can help readers such as speechwriters, public figures, the masses or any other stakeholders increase their repertoire of pragmatic strategies. Moreover, it can sharpen their interpretation of speech acts as it involves intellectual processes dissecting the possible layers of nuances. This is reasoned based on the notion that a speaker's linguistic choices are to control how people see them. It can also be said that pragmatic intuition or skills are learned and developed rather than being innate; therefore, this research can be considerable material for stakeholders' understanding of meanings and interpretations generated from such speeches.

This study expounds a snapshot of the pragmatic aspects of one specifically chosen budget speech, so it is possible that the research data proportion is small for the findings to be generalized since the data is limited to 15 utterances. Based on the findings, it is plausible to suggest that this paper is a small-scale analysis. This results from the number of speeches, sampling and the elicitation procedure along with the researcher's constraints. Researchers interested in this field can further the same line of research with relevant adjustments. Theoretically, it would have been more insightful to expand the number of speeches or sampling or change the elicitation procedure. It might be logical to design research projects that use software instead of manual analysis whereby bigger research data is required. This potentially reveals how various contextual conditions interact with the speech actions, leading to a deeper level conceptual knowledge of the theory underpinnings pragmatics. As a result, a more substantial contribution to the body of knowledge can be made.

Future research should consider extending the analysis across budget speeches delivered in different years or under varying political administrations. A diachronic or comparative approach could reveal shifts in rhetorical strategies, ideological positioning, and communicative priorities. In addition, integrating audience reception and applying complementary pragmatic theories could further contextualize the performative functions of budgetary discourse. Such extensions would not only address current limitations but also provide more comprehensive insight into political communication strategies.

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