

Deconstructing Elon Musk's Rhetorical Prowess: A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts in His TED Talk

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Elon Musk, speech acts, TED Talk, illocutionary, locutionary, perlocutionary DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v9i1.1473 How to cite: Bahrani, S., Irawati, D., Hadijah, S., & Erangga, S. (2024). Deconstructing Elon Musk's Rhetorical Prowess: A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts in His TED Talk. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 9(1), 219-238	<i>This research comprehensively analyzes Elon Musk's speech acts during his TED Talk Show episode "Tesla, Twitter and How His Brain Works", employing an integrated speech act theory approach. The identified locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts reveal Musk's strategic tactics for maintaining engagement, shaping perceptions, and influencing decision-making. A qualitative approach with a pragmatics perspective analyzed Musk's speech acts in the Talk Show, using a transcription from YouTube as data source for his utterances. The findings showed Musk's locutionary acts aligned with facework and politeness theories, fostering self-presentation. His illocutionary acts like assertions, accusations, questioning, promises, and commands resonated with persuasive discourse applications of speech act theory. Perlocutionary effects causing concern, amusement, persuasion, inspiration, and curiosity generation reflected perlocutionary act concepts influencing audience perceptions. Integrating these frameworks offers insights into Musk's multifaceted strategies, highlighting speech act components' interplay in achieving outcomes. The findings contribute understandings of effective leadership communication and persuasion. While acknowledging limitations, the research holds pedagogical implications for enhancing English learners' public speaking, persuasive discourse, and cross-cultural communication skills by integrating theory and applications.</i>

1. Introduction

The study of speech acts, as pioneered by philosophers J.L. Austin and John Searle, has become a vital area of inquiry within linguistic pragmatics. Speech act theory provides a framework for analyzing the diverse functions that utterances can serve beyond

their literal semantic meanings. Formerly, Searle (1969) posited more recently that a theory of language is part of a theory of action, because speaking is rule-governed intentional behavior. Speech acts can take various forms such as representatives (statements), directives (commands), commissive (promises), expressive (expressions of attitude), and declarations (changing circumstance). The updated theory from Searle (1999) highlights his view that language and speech acts are forms of intentional rule-governed behavior, tying into pragmatics and speech act theory's focus on intended meaning and purposes behind utterances.

A rich body of research has examined the speech acts employed across different contexts and by particular groups of speakers. For instance, studies have investigated the persuasive strategies and speech act usage of political leaders (Carciu, 2009; Vaughn & Ardetey-Vinet, 2019), as well as pragmatic differences across cultures (Grainger, 2011), and gender dynamics in speech acts (Holmes, 1995). Within organizational communication and leadership studies, the speech act patterns and rhetorical approaches of business leaders, entrepreneurs, and technical visionaries have also garnered attention (Schnurr, 2009; Tourish, 2013).

Moreover, the importance of exploring about speech act in communication is proved by the existence research in the latest ten years. The exploration towards the use of speech act was quite varied including the analysis of the use of speech act of characters in certain movie (Annida et al., 2023; Faizah et al., 2022; Gusthini & Tama, 2019; Khalish & Fitrawati, 2024; Marbun & Handayani, 2020; Putri et al., 2019; Rahmawati, 2021; Tutuarima et al., 2018). Other than that, the investigation of the use of speech act in other platforms was also existed such as in novels (Dewi, 2022; Setyawati et al., 2018), short stories (Serenio & Velasquez, 2019), speech (Rahmayani & Dwiyluliana, 2018), advertisement (Dewi, 2021), social media (Fitria, 2021), textbook (Refualu et al., 2021), and in teaching and learning context in classroom (Dwiana & Syahri, 2024; Nugroho & Rekha, 2020; Saputra, 2020; Şenel, 2021).

The importance of exploring speech acts in communication has been demonstrated by research conducted in the past ten years. This research has been conducted in various contexts, including the analysis of speech acts in movies, novels, short stories, speeches, advertisements, social media, textbooks, and classroom settings. Some examples of these studies include the analysis of speech acts in movie characters, the use of speech acts in novels and short stories, the examination of speech acts in speeches and advertisements, the exploration of speech acts on social media platforms, the analysis of speech acts in textbooks, and the investigation of speech acts in teaching and learning contexts in the classroom.

These previous studies have contributed to our understanding of speech acts in different contexts. However, there is a research gap in exploring the use of speech acts in specific talk show episodes. The current research aims to fill this gap by examining the use of speech acts in a talk show episode titled "Tesla, Twitter and How His Brain Works" featuring Chris Anderson, the head of TED (Technology Entertainment and Design). By focusing on this specific context, the research provides insights into the use of speech acts in a talk show setting, which adds to our understanding of communication dynamics in different contexts. Overall, the existing research on speech acts has explored various contexts, but there is a need for further investigation in specific contexts such as talk show episodes. The current research aims to address this gap and contribute to our understanding of speech acts in different communication settings.

While the study of speech acts has been extensively explored across various contexts, such as political discourse, organizational communication, and cross-cultural interactions, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the analysis of speech acts in specific talk show episodes. Despite the rich body of research examining speech act patterns and rhetorical strategies employed by leaders, entrepreneurs, and public figures, limited attention has been given to the nuanced use of speech acts within the context of talk show interviews.

The introduction highlights the importance of exploring speech acts in communication, as evidenced by the numerous studies conducted over the past decade. These studies have covered diverse contexts, including movies, novels, short stories, speeches, advertisements, social media, textbooks, and classroom settings. However, the specific context of talk show episodes, where influential figures engage in candid conversations and share their perspectives, remains relatively unexplored in the realm of speech act analysis.

Talk shows provide a unique platform for individuals to communicate their ideas, visions, and opinions to a broad audience. The dynamic nature of these conversations, coupled with the potential for spontaneity and varying communicative goals, presents an opportunity to examine how speech acts are strategically employed to convey intended meanings, persuade audiences, and shape perceptions. By analyzing the speech acts utilized in a specific talk show episode, researchers can gain valuable insights into the communicative strategies employed by influential speakers in this particular context.

Consequently, there is a research gap in exploring the use of speech acts in talk show episodes, particularly those featuring influential figures who possess the ability to influence public opinion and shape narratives. By addressing this gap, the current research aims to contribute to our understanding of speech act usage in this specific context, potentially revealing unique patterns, strategies, and pragmatic considerations that may differ from other contexts previously studied.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speech Acts and Pragmatics

Austin began his book "How to Do Things with Words" by challenging a long-held philosophical assumption - that the sole purpose of a sentence is to describe facts or situations truthfully or falsely (Austin, 1995). He contended that language has numerous other uses beyond straightforward statements of fact, despite appearing that way on the surface. While Wittgenstein took an extreme anti-theoretical stance on this issue, Austin developed a systematic theory to categorize and taxonomize the different uses of language. Central to his approach was distinguishing between semantics (the meanings of words and sentences themselves) and pragmatics (how that language is used in practice by speakers). Essentially, he separated the abstract meanings of sentences from the real-world act speakers perform when uttering those sentences.

Paul Grice built upon Austin's work by proposing a nuanced view of meaning that was grounded in language usage, while still maintaining a divide between the inherent meanings of linguistic constructions and the intentions speakers convey by using them (Grice, 1989). This allowed Grice to connect meaning to pragmatic context, without completely conflating sentence meaning and speaker meaning. By clearly delineating semantics and pragmatics, Austin and Grice provided a framework for analyzing both the literal meanings of utterances

as well as the implied meanings derived from their contextual usage. Their work laid important groundwork for the field of pragmatics within linguistics and philosophy of language.

Pragmatics pertains to the examination of meaning as it pertains to the situational context in which an individual is communicating, whether through spoken or written language. Grice (1989) pointed out that pragmatics is related to the aforementioned encompasses the societal, ecological, and linguistic milieu. The aforementioned phenomenon also encompasses the integration of pre-existing knowledge and contextual information, including individuals' familiarity with one another and their surrounding environment. The field of pragmatics operates under the assumption that during interpersonal communication, individuals generally abide by the cooperative principle. This principle refers to a shared understanding of how to effectively collaborate in speech. The relationship between language and utterance context is irrelevant in the study of grammar, but it is unquestionably relevant in the research of pragmatics. If the language is used in a manner that is appropriate for the context, its meaning and intent can be understood (Levinson, 1983).

In this case, the speech act theory is a subfield within the academic field of pragmatics. This concept examines the potential of language to serve as a means of communication, as well as a tool for executing specific tasks or motivating individuals to take action. Additionally, the theory is a credible pragmatic idea that has been infused with study ever since it was introduced in 1962 and continues to this day. The German philosopher Wittgenstein is credited with developing this theory in the beginning, although Austin and Searle gave it some linguistic flavor. Austin posits the existence of two distinct types of utterances: "constatives," which he designates as statements, and a separate category of utterances that he labels "performatives" (Austin, 1995).

A speech act, as Valeika & Verikaitė (2010) supplements, is an utterance characterized by the intention of the speaker and the impact it has on the listener. For understanding language and the reactions that follow, speech acts could be deemed a pivotal feature. Therefore, unless the speaker employs language as a linguistic exercise, what they utter in every conversation within an English textbook might be categorized as a speech act. Following the end of the constative-performative difference, Austin arrived at the determination that all utterances, regardless of their constative or performative nature, possess both a performative and constative aspect simultaneously. The meaning of these utterances is wholly dependent upon the context in which they are articulated. Consequently, a novel architecture of performative utterances was devised by Austin, comprising of three distinct components: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The present discourse attempts to elucidate Austin's explanation regarding the aforementioned subject matter, which can be succinctly encapsulated as Locutionary act, Illocutionary act and Perlocutionary act.

2.2 Types of Speech Acts

Speech is the ability to express thoughts and emotions through vocal and gesture with speech it means of expressing one's opinion or presenting an idea of significance to a wider audience (Searle, 1999). In the context of speech, it is pertinent to note that the act of communication is not limited to the mere transmission of information. Rather, it is a multifaceted process that can also serve as a means of enacting change or exerting influence. The concept of

speech act refers to the inherent nature of an action and its ability to reveal something. According to Austin as stated in Bach (2008), recognized that when someone acts intentionally, they typically have a nested set of intentions. For example, when making an utterance, the speaker may have the intent to make a statement (locutionary act), while also intending that statement to serve a particular function like a request or promise (illocutionary act), which may in turn be intended to produce a specific effect like getting someone to do something (perlocutionary act).

Austin's view on the act of speaking, as cited in Eutsuko (2006), involves more than just uttering words and conveying their literal meanings when someone speaks a sentence, they are simultaneously performing three distinct speech acts. First is the locutionary act, which is simply the utterance of the words themselves and the basic meaning they express. However, speech also crucially involves an illocutionary act, the intentional force or purpose behind the utterance, such as making an assertion, asking a question, issuing a command, etc., which goes beyond just the literal sense of the words. Finally, there is the perlocutionary act, referring to the actual effects and consequences produced by the utterance on the listener, whether that's persuading them, annoying them, inspiring emotion, and so forth. Crucially, Austin draws a line between the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act - the former is considered complete and valid in itself, irrespective of what impact or response it triggers, as it has a defined pragmatic force of its own. Thus, in Austin's framework, speech is not just about semantic meaning, but about the performative forces and intended effects woven into the very act of uttering sentences, highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of linguistic communication.

Locutionary act refers to the fundamental act of communicating through speech or utterances. It involves the actual vocalization or articulation of words and phrases with specific meanings and references within a particular context (Tutuarima et al., 2018). The study of locutionary acts falls under fields such as phonetics, phonology, and linguistic semantics, which examine the production of speech sounds, the patterns and structures of these sounds within a language, and the meanings conveyed by linguistic expressions, respectively. Essentially, a locutionary act is the foundational act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression, serving as the basis for communication through spoken language.

The initial component discussed is the locutionary act, which simply refers to the act of uttering certain words or phrases. However, this locutionary act is further divided into three distinct sub-acts (Mabaquiao, 2018). Firstly, there is the phatic act, which involves merely producing sounds or noises without any inherent meaning. Secondly, the phonetic act refers to the production of sounds that can be recognized as actual words belonging to a particular vocabulary and following the rules of a specific grammatical system. Finally, the rhetic act entails using those words in a way that conveys meaning, leveraging their defined senses and references within the given context. Therefore, the locutionary act encompasses not just the physical articulation of sounds, but also the formation of those sounds into linguistically coherent words and the purposeful use of those words to express intended meanings.

Moreover, Austin as cited in Eutsuko (2006) the idea of illocutionary acts, carefully distinguishing them from locutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts involve the basic utterance of sounds (phonetic acts), words and sentences following linguistic rules (phatic acts), and meaningful statements with intended references (rhetic acts). Austin

labeled certain types of speech acts where the act is performed by uttering the performative formula as "illocutionary." However, the illocutionary act represents just one level of the overall speech act performed when uttering a sentence. Perlocutionary acts, on the other hand, relate to the consequential effects produced by an utterance.

Austin taxonomized illocutionary acts into five broad categories: verdictives (delivering a verdict or judgement), exertive (exercising authority or influence), commissive (committing the speaker to a future course of action), behabitive (expressing attitudes, feelings or a psychological state), and expositive (clarifying reasons, arguments or conversational intent). Specifically, Bach and Harnish (1979) listed the classification of illocutionary into the following: (1) constatives: This class includes speech acts that make assertions or declarations about states of affairs. Examples are affirming, alleging, announcing, answering, attributing, claiming, classifying, concurring, confirming, conjecturing, denying, disagreeing, disclosing, disputing, identifying, informing, insisting, predicting, ranking, reporting, stating, stipulating, (2) directives: These are speech acts that attempt to get the listener to perform some action or bring about a certain state of affairs. They include advising, admonishing, asking, begging, dismissing, excusing, forbidding, instructing, ordering, permitting, requesting, requiring, suggesting, urging, warning, (3) commissive: this category covers speech acts that commit the speaker to carrying out a certain action or course of conduct in the future. Examples are agreeing, betting, guaranteeing, inviting, offering, promising, swearing, volunteering, and (4) acknowledgments: these speech acts express attitudes or feelings regarding a state of affairs, such as apologizing, condoling, congratulating, greeting, thanking, or accepting an acknowledgment from someone else.

In essence, constatives represent descriptive assertions, directives aim to influence behavior, commissive commit the speaker to future actions, and acknowledgments convey attitudes and social propriety. While Austin's classification has been criticized as incomplete and the categories not entirely mutually exclusive, it represents an attempt to map out the different kinds of pragmatic functions speakers can perform through their utterances. The extensive lists of illocutionary verbs exemplify the nuanced variety of speech acts possible within a language like English. Though not without limitations, Austin's framework highlighted how statements go beyond just describing reality - they enable speakers to make judgments, commit to future acts, convey attitudes and accomplish various communicative goals beyond simply conveying propositional content.

On the last type of speech act, a perlocutionary act refers to the consequential effects or changes brought about by uttering something within a specific context. These acts represent the outcomes or by-products that arise from acts of communication, such as evoking anger, providing consolation, or influencing someone's emotional state through the spoken words. Tutuarima et al. (2018) explained that perlocutionary acts encompass the unintended functions or impacts that an utterance may have, beyond the speaker's original intentions. They occur when the act of saying something inadvertently leads to a particular response or reaction in the listener or the surrounding circumstances. In essence, a perlocutionary act involves creating an utterance that unintentionally serves a function or produces an effect, despite the speaker's lack of explicit aim to achieve that specific outcome through their spoken words.

Specifically, the current research focused on the role of speech acts in effective communication, and identify common strategies used by Elon Musk in LED talk show, i.e., including locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. It is crucial for conveying a message effectively and persuading the audience to take action or adopt a certain attitude in communication.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a pragmatic discourse analysis, to examine the speech acts used by Elon Musk in the TED Talk Show. As Creswell (2014) states, "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem".

3.2 Data and Source of Data

The data for this study is the utterances of Elon Musk during the TED Talk Show entitled "Tesla, Twitter and How His Brain Works." The video recording of the TED Talk Show is available on YouTube, and the data collection process involves transcribing the entire video, focusing specifically on Musk's utterances.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis followed the principles of qualitative research, as outlined by Gibbs (2018), progressing from general to more specific for certain types of data. The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, in the data identification stage, all relevant utterances of Elon Musk were identified and extracted from the transcribed data, and the scope of the study were determined based on the research objectives. Second, in the data classification stage, the identified utterances were classified based on three types of speech acts, i.e., locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts and grouped accordingly. Third, in the data description stage, a detailed description and analysis of the identified speech acts within their respective categories were provided, examining their pragmatic functions and implications in the context of the TED Talk Show.

The study was grounded in the theory of speech acts proposed by Searle (1969), which categorizes utterances based on their communicative functions. Additionally, relevant pragmatic theories and concepts were employed to analyze the contextual factors influencing the use and interpretation of speech acts. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing and review by experienced researchers, and detailed documentation of the data analysis process and decision-making trails were employed (Hales et al., 2010).

4. Findings

Elon Musk's interview at the TED Talk showcased his visionary ideas and ambitious goals for various projects. Throughout the conversation, he employed different types of speech acts to convey his message effectively.

4.1. Locutionary Acts

An analysis of the locutionary acts Musk utilized in this speech provides insights into his communication style and ability to inspire others. The findings showed varied statement of

locutionary acts, i.e., acknowledging limitations, explaining challenges, facts, realizations, agreements, predictions, and clarifications.

Elon Musk appears to be starting some statements, but they are incomplete.

00:02:07 *Yeah, I don't want to blow your.*

00:02:19 *I mean, the thing that really got.*

00:02:21 *Me, and I think it's going to.*

Elon Musk is acknowledging that he is not always correct or right, suggesting a degree of humility. It means that he acknowledges a limitation.

00:02:09 *Mind, but I'm not always right.*

Elon Musk is explaining the challenge faced in the field of self-driving technology, where there have been many "false dawns" or instances of thinking the problem was solved, only to realize there were further obstacles.

00:02:21 *Get a lot of other people, is that there are just so many false dawns with self-driving where you think you got the problem, have a handle on the problem, and then it.*

Musk is confirming a fact that Tesla achieved close to the predicted production number he mentioned earlier.

00:01:51 *Yeah, we did almost exactly half.*

Musk is stating that despite thinking they understood the problem, they realized there was a limit or ceiling to their progress (statement, explaining a realization).

00:02:33 *Nope, it turns out you just hit a ceiling.*

Musk is providing an explanation that road networks are designed to work with human brains and vision.

00:03:08 *They're designed to work with a biological neural net, our brains and with vision, our eyes.*

Musk is agreeing that solving self-driving requires solving real-world AI and sophisticated vision.

00:03:52 *I guess when you put it that way, it's quite obvious that the only way to solve full self-driving is to solve real world AI and sophisticated vision.*

Musk is asking at what point self-driving AI will exceed the capabilities of the average human driver (question, seeking clarification).

00:04:26 *At what point do you exceed that of the average person?*

Musk is stating his prediction that self-driving AI will exceed human capabilities this year.

00:04:29 *I think we will exceed that this year.*

00:04:38 *But I think this is the year.*

Elon Musk engaged in a conversational discussion where he frequently started statements but left them incomplete or trailing off. Throughout the dialogue, he exhibited humility by acknowledging his own limitations and fallibility, stating "Mind, but I'm not always right." Musk explained the challenges faced in the self-driving technology field, describing the "false dawns" where progress seemed promising initially only to hit a ceiling or limit later. He confirmed achieving close to a predicted production number mentioned earlier.

Moreover, Musk provided an explanation that road networks are designed for human brains and vision, stating "They're designed to work with a biological neural net, our brains and with vision, our eyes." He agreed that solving full self-driving requires tackling real-world AI and sophisticated vision problems, saying "I guess when you put it that way, it's quite obvious that the only way to solve full self-driving is to solve real world AI and sophisticated vision." Seeking clarification, Musk asked, "At what point do you exceed that of the average person?" in reference to when self-driving AI will surpass the capabilities of the average human driver. He expressed his prediction that self-driving AI would exceed human capabilities this year, stating "I think we will exceed that this year" and "But I think this is the year." Overall, the excerpts showcased Musk's conversational engagement, acknowledgment of challenges, provision of explanations, seeking of clarification, and expression of predictions related to the progress of self-driving technology and AI capabilities.

4.2. Illocutionary Acts

The following research findings shed light on the intricate mechanisms underlying illocutionary force and its pivotal role in shaping effective communication. Particularly, the illocutionary acts used by Elon Musk in TED Talk Show include the act of asserting, accusing, questioning, promising, requesting, and commanding.

a. Asserting

Musk is asserting his view on the importance of free speech on Twitter.

00:12:39 *So, yeah, Twitter has become kind of the de facto town square.*

00:12:47 *So it's just really important that people have both the reality and the perception that they are able to speak freely within the bounds of the law.*

Musk is asserting his view on the importance of free speech and the need for Twitter to align with the laws of the country it operates in.

00:16:27 *So obviously, there are some limitations on free speech in the US.*

00:16:34 *And of course, Twitter would have to abide by those rules.*

Musk is asserting his view on what is required for a sustainable future.

00:00:46 *And his view, the secret to a sustainable future is not just making an electric car, it's making a system that churns out huge numbers of electric cars with a margin so that they can fund further growth.*

Musk is asserting his stance that Twitter should allow speech unless it clearly violates laws.

00:20:04 *Well, I think we would want to err on this. If in doubt, let the speech, let it exist.*

Musk is asserting that he did in fact have funding secured for Tesla previously.

00:28:05 *And I should say, actually, even originally, with Tesla, back in the day, funding was actually secured.*

Musk is asserting that more manual processes would not have prevented Tesla's production issues.

00:35:21 *Of course not. That is definitely not the case.*

b. Accusing

Musk is accusing the banks of forcing him to settle with the SEC.

00:28:19 *At the time, Tesla was in a precarious financial situation, and I was told by the banks that if I did not agree to settle with the SEC, that the banks would cease providing working capital and Tesla would go bankrupt immediately.*

Musk also accuses short-sellers of actively trying to undermine Tesla through relentless attacks. He is accusing short-sellers of vociferously betting against Tesla in an attempt to make the company fail out of their own interests.

00:29:29 - 00:29:51 *Tesla was the most shorted stock in the history of stock markets. This is saying something. So the hard part is not creating a prototype or going into limited production. They wanted Tesla to die so bad, they could taste it.*

Regarding the other co-founders of Tesla, Musk accuses one of them of creating a "false narrative". He is accusing Martin Eberhard of falsely portraying that he created Tesla when Musk claims they actually created it together with JB Straubel:

00:33:18 *But a false narrative has been created by one of the other co-founders, Martin Eberhard. And I don't want to get into the nastiness here, but I didn't invest in an existing company.*

In these cases, Musk is making accusatory statements against a former co-founder for spreading misinformation, and against short-sellers for actively trying to harm Tesla through bear raids on the stock. The illocutionary act is one of accusing certain parties of working against Tesla's interests.

c. Questioning

The interviewer of course asks Musk many questions throughout to prompt his responses. As the interviewee, Musk also asks some rhetorical questions as follows:

Rhetorical, not expecting an actual answer.

00:12:02 *How'd you know?*

Rhetorical lead-in to a joke.

00:12:09 *Have you seen the movie Ted, about the bear?*

Musk uses accusing statements to criticize the SEC, requests and commands to guide the conversation flow, while the interviewer uses questioning acts extensively to prompt Musk's insights and predictions across the various topics covered.

d. Promising

Musk is promising to make changes to Twitter's algorithm and policies to increase transparency.

00:13:01 *So one of the things that I believe Twitter should do is open source the algorithm and make any changes to people's tweets.*

00:13:12 *If they're emphasized or the emphasized, that action should be made apparent.*

Musk is promising transparency by open-sourcing Twitter's code.

00:18:48 *What I mean is, I think the code should be on GitHub so people can look through it and say, I see a problem here. They can highlight issues, suggest changes in the same way that you update Linux or signal or something like that.*

Musk is promising to elaborate on how physics and information theory interest him.

00:48:06 *So just. Yeah, physics and information theory were really interesting to me.*

e. Requesting

Musk is requesting/suggesting that Twitter's algorithm code be open-sourced.

00:02:02 *What I mean is, I think the code should be on GitHub so people can look through it and say, I see a problem here.*

There are some more instances where Musk makes requests, even if indirect:

Requesting the audience's attention for something.

00:00:22 *I want to show you something special.*

Requesting the audience to visualize/imagine the factory.

00:00:29 *I want you to come with me to Tesla's huge gigafactory in Austin, Texas.*

Requesting to change the topic to AI.

00:01:25 *I want us to switch now to...*

f. Commanding

Musk is giving a command about having safety restrictions for advanced AI systems.

00:31:34 *I think it's going to be important to have safety features like that.*

While not directly commanding the audience, there are several cases where Musk frames statements as commands to emphasize their importance:

00:54:14 *We must be optimistic about the future and fight to make that optimistic future happen.*

00:54:12 *We should fight for a good future for humanity.*

Throughout the conversation, Musk frequently asserts his views and stances on various topics. He asserts the importance of free speech on Twitter, the need for Twitter to align with laws, the requirements for a sustainable future, and his stance on allowing speech unless it clearly violates laws. Musk also asserts that he did have funding secured for Tesla previously and that more manual processes would not have prevented Tesla's production issues.

In addition to assertions, Musk levels accusations against certain parties. He accuses the banks of forcing him to settle with the SEC, accuses short-sellers of actively trying to undermine Tesla, and accuses a former Tesla co-founder of creating a false narrative about the company's origins. While the interviewer asks many questions to prompt Musk's responses, Musk himself asks some rhetorical questions, sometimes as lead-ins to jokes or to emphasize a point.

Musk also makes promises, such as promising to make changes to Twitter's algorithm and policies for increased transparency, promising to open-source Twitter's code, and promising to elaborate on his interest in physics and information theory. In terms of requests, Musk suggests open-sourcing Twitter's algorithm code, requests the audience's attention, and requests to change the topic to AI. Additionally, he frames some statements as commands to emphasize their importance, such as commands related to having safety restrictions for advanced AI systems and fighting for a good future for humanity. Overall, Musk's illocutionary acts in this conversation involve assertions, accusations, rhetorical questioning,

promises, requests, and emphatic commands, covering a range of topics from free speech to Tesla's history and the future of AI.

4.3. Perlocutionary Acts

In this section, various functions of perlocutionary acts were performed by Elon Musk including causing concern and amusement, persuading, reassuring, inspiring, reducing confidence, humbling, and generating curiosity.

a. Causing concern/worry

Musk's statement about not caring about the economics of acquiring Twitter may cause concern or worry among shareholders and investors.

- 00:15:35 *It's just that I think this is, my strong intuitive sense is that having a public platform that is maximally trusted and broadly inclusive is extremely important to the future of civilization.*
- 00:15:57 *But you've described yourself.*
- 00:15:58 *I don't care about the economics at all.*

b. Causing amusement/laughter

There are several instances where Elon Musk's responses seem intended to cause amusement or laughter, such as his joke about making "catgirls" and his quip about not being sure if his child was real or a ventriloquist dummy.

- 00:08:13 *I mean, I did promise the Internet that I'd make catgoals.*
- 00:08:16 *We could make a robot Catgirl.*
- 00:51:57 *How do you know that's real? A ventriloquist dummy there.*

c. Persuading

Through these statements, Musk is trying to persuade the audience that under his ownership, Twitter will allow free speech to the maximum extent permitted by law. He states Twitter will abide by legal limitations, but also suggests erring on the side of allowing speech in gray areas, and posits that having to encounter annoying/disliked speech is a sign of a healthy free speech environment. Thus, he is arguing for an open discourse approach while still respecting legal boundaries.

- 00:16:27 *So obviously, there are some limitations on free speech in the US. And of course, Twitter would have to abide by those rules.*
- 00:20:04 *Well, I think we would want to err on this. If in doubt, let the speech, let it exist.*
- 00:20:13 *You know, if it's a, you know, a gray area, I would say let the tweet exist.*
- 00:21:08 *And if that is the case, then we have free speech. And it's damn annoying when someone you don't like says something you don't like. That is a sign of a healthy, functioning free speech situation.*

d. Reassuring

At certain points, Musk seems to be trying to reassure the audience or interviewer. For example, when discussing the potential negative impacts of advanced AI/robotics, he suggests having safeguards like unchangeable code to make robots stop if told to stop. This could be seen as an attempt to reassure people about risks.

00:07:37 *I think it's going to be important to have safety features like that (referring to unchangeable robot stop codes).*

e. Inspiring

Musk's statements here aim to inspire optimism about the future and motivate efforts towards realizing it.

00:54:14 *I mean, I'm trying my hardest to do so. I, you know, I love humanity, and I think that we should fight for a good future for humanity, and I think we should be optimistic about the future and fight to make that optimistic future happen.*

The massive scale of Musk's vision may inspire awe among the audience.

00:40:45 *Our estimate is that approximately 300 terawatt hours of battery storage is needed to transition transport, electricity and heating and cooling to fully electric situation.*

f. Reducing confidence

There are a few moments where Musk undermines or reduces confidence in certain entities, like when he strongly criticizes the SEC for forcing him to falsely admit to lying. This could reduce the audience's confidence in the SEC's integrity.

00:28:19 *...the SEC knew that funding was secured, but they pursued an active public investigation nonetheless.*

00:28:45 *Those bastards. And now they make it look like I lied when I did not, in fact, lie.*

00:29:45 *Yeah, I mean, it's difficult to put yourself in the position.*

g. Humbling

Musk comes across as quite humble and self-deprecating at times, such as when he jokes about "oversharing" on Twitter (00:26:41) from the toilet. This tongue-in-cheek humbling could make him more relatable.

00:26:41 *I'm, like, literally on the toilet or something. Like, oh, this is funny, and then tweet that out. You know, that's like most of them, you know, oversharing.*

While boastful, this may have a humbling effect on manufacturing experts in the audience.

00:34:46 *"At this point, I think I know more about manufacturing than anyone currently alive on earth.*

h. Generating curiosity

At the beginning, he teases that there are rumors of "a few things to talk about with him" (00:00:14), generating curiosity about what those things might be. Later, when discussing Tesla's Optimus robot, he says "People have no idea this is going to be bigger than the car" (00:06:17), piquing curiosity about just how significant this robot could be.

Additionally, when asked about the economics and pricing of Tesla's Optimus robot, Musk says:

00:09:17 *Well, I think the cost is actually not going to be crazy high, like less than a car.*

This piques curiosity by hinting that the robot could be relatively affordable compared to expectations, without providing an actual projected price point.

In another case, by teasing a "Plan B" for Twitter without revealing details, Musk generates curiosity from the audience about what this backup plan might entail. This intentional curiosity piquing could keep people engaged.

00:31:30 *There is [a plan B]. For another time, I think.*

He also mentions his upcoming "master plan" for Tesla a couple times (00:00:42, 00:42:30) without revealing details, generating curiosity about what will be included in this new strategic roadmap. Thus, by making vague allusions to upcoming reveals, products, and plans without giving away too much information upfront, Musk intentionally generates a sense of curiosity and suspense in the audience about what he has in store. This could compel people to stay tuned for more details.

Based on the findings of perlocutionary acts reflected above, Musk's statements seemingly aim to cause a range of perlocutionary effects. His jokes about making "catgirls" and quips about ventriloquist dummies appear intended to cause amusement and laughter among the audience. Conversely, his nonchalant statement about not caring about the economics of acquiring Twitter could cause concern or worry, particularly among shareholders and investors. Throughout the conversation, Musk makes persuasive arguments advocating for maximizing free speech on Twitter to the fullest extent permitted by law, potentially persuading the audience towards his vision of open discourse on the platform. Simultaneously, his suggestions about implementing safeguards like unchangeable stop codes for advanced AI systems could have a reassuring effect, alleviating concerns about risks.

Musk's optimistic statements about humanity's future and his grand visions, such as transitioning the entire world to sustainable energy through massive battery storage, may inspire awe and motivation among listeners. However, his harsh criticisms of entities like the SEC could reduce confidence in those institutions' integrity. Additionally, Musk exhibits some humbling and self-deprecating moments, such as joking about oversharing on Twitter from the toilet, which could make him more relatable to the audience. Crucially, he frequently generates curiosity by vaguely teasing upcoming reveals, like his "master plan" for Tesla or a "Plan B" for Twitter, without divulging details, potentially compelling people to stay tuned. In summary, Musk's statements appear aimed at eliciting a range of perlocutionary effects, from amusement and persuasion to reassurance and inspiration, while also causing concern, reducing confidence in some entities, humbling himself, and strategically generating curiosity through vague teases about future plans and products.

5. Discussion

Elon Musk's locutionary acts reflect a nuanced communication approach that aligns with contemporary theories on facework and politeness. His use of incomplete statements and acknowledgments of limitations resonates with the concept of "face-saving" strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and further explored by scholars like Ree (2020), who examined how leaders employ such strategies to maintain positive self-presentation. Additionally, Musk's adherence to Grice (1989) Cooperative Principle reflects recent research

by Padilla Cruz (2013) on how speakers strategically navigate the maxims to foster understanding and achieve communicative goals.

The illocutionary acts observed, such as asserting, accusing, questioning, promising, and commanding, align with Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1995; Searle, 1969) and its applications in various contexts. For instance, Musk's assertions and accusations can be seen as "representatives," as defined by Searle (1999) and further explored by Sbisà (2009) in analyzing political discourse. Musk's rhetorical questioning resonates with Ilie's (1994) work on the persuasive power of rhetorical questions, which has been further examined in studies on public speaking and debate (Agha, 2020; Shawar, 2015).

The perlocutionary effects, such as causing concern, amusement, persuasion, and inspiring awe, reflect the perlocutionary act concept (Austin, 1995; Searle, 1969) and its applications in leadership communication. Musk's persuasive and inspiring statements align with the notion of "charismatic leadership" (Conger & Kanungo, 1998), which has been explored in recent studies on transformational leadership (Banks et al., 2016; Dimitrov & Darova, 2021). His humbling and self-deprecating moments may contribute to perceived authenticity, a crucial aspect of effective leadership communication examined by Avolio and Gardner (2005) and further explored by Branson et al. (2014).

Furthermore, Musk's strategic generation of curiosity through vague teases aligns with "information manipulation" theories (Buller & Burgoon, 1996) and their applications in persuasive communication and marketing. Recent studies by Hartmann et al. (2018) have explored how strategic withholding or obscuring of information can influence perceptions and decision-making processes, potentially enhancing engagement and persuasiveness.

By drawing upon these theoretical foundations and recent empirical studies, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of Elon Musk's communication strategies and their potential implications. The interplay between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts reflects a multifaceted approach that leverages facework, politeness, persuasion, inspiration, authenticity, and strategic information management to achieve desired outcomes, such as maintaining audience engagement, shaping perceptions, and influencing decisions. In summary, the analysis of Elon Musk's speech acts during the TED Talk aligns with previous research on the use of speech acts in public speaking and persuasive communication, highlighting the importance of employing a combination of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts to effectively convey information, assert ideas, persuade the audience, and achieve desired perlocutionary effects.

The analysis of Elon Musk's speech acts during his TED Talk presents a novel perspective by integrating multiple theoretical frameworks to understand his multifaceted communication approach. Previous studies have primarily focused on examining speech acts through a single lens, such as politeness theory or speech act theory. However, this research combines insights from various domains, including facework, cooperative principles, speech act theory, charismatic leadership, authenticity, and information manipulation. This integrated approach offers a comprehensive understanding of how Musk strategically employs a range of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts to achieve specific goals, such as maintaining engagement, shaping perceptions, and influencing decision-making. Additionally, the application of these theoretical frameworks to a high-profile figure like Elon

Musk, known for his influential communication style, provides valuable insights into the strategies used by influential leaders to effectively communicate their ideas and visions.

While this analysis offers a comprehensive examination of Elon Musk's speech acts, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the analysis is based on a specific TED Talk, and Musk's communication strategies may vary across different contexts and audiences. Additionally, the study relies on the provided transcript, which may not capture all the nuances of Musk's nonverbal communication, such as body language, tone, and facial expressions. Furthermore, the analysis is limited to the identified speech acts and their theoretical underpinnings, and there may be additional factors or theories that could further enrich the understanding of Musk's communication approach. Finally, the research focuses on Musk's communication strategies, but it does not delve into the audience's reception and interpretation of his speech acts, which could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of his approach.

The findings of this research on Elon Musk's speech acts during his TED Talk have significant pedagogical implications for the study of English as a foreign language (EFL). By understanding the interplay of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, EFL educators can provide learners with valuable insights and strategies to enhance their English communication skills, particularly in public speaking and persuasive discourse.

One of the key pedagogical implications is the importance of teaching speech act theory and its practical applications in EFL classrooms. By introducing learners to the concepts of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, educators can equip them with the knowledge to analyze and understand the underlying intentions and effects of utterances. This can be achieved through the analysis of authentic speech samples, such as Musk's TED Talk, allowing learners to identify and dissect the various speech acts employed.

Additionally, the research highlights the significance of facework and politeness strategies in effective communication. EFL learners often struggle with navigating cultural nuances and maintaining appropriate levels of politeness in their interactions. By incorporating concepts like "face-saving" strategies and the Cooperative Principle into the curriculum, educators can provide learners with valuable tools to communicate respectfully and build rapport with their interlocutors. Additionally, the research highlights the significance of facework and politeness strategies in effective communication. EFL learners often struggle with navigating cultural nuances and maintaining appropriate levels of politeness in their interactions. By incorporating concepts like "face-saving" strategies and the Cooperative Principle into the curriculum, educators can provide learners with valuable tools to communicate respectfully and build rapport with their interlocutors.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on persuasive techniques and charismatic leadership communication can be leveraged in EFL classrooms to enhance learners' public speaking and presentation skills. By analyzing Musk's use of rhetorical questions, inspiring statements, and strategic information management, learners can develop a repertoire of effective strategies to captivate and persuade their audience.

Moreover, the research highlights the importance of authenticity and relatability in effective communication. EFL learners can benefit from exercises that encourage self-expression and vulnerability, fostering a genuine connection with their audience. Musk's use of self-deprecating humor and acknowledgment of limitations can serve as examples of how to

establish authenticity and cultivate rapport with the audience. Lastly, the analysis of Musk's speech acts can serve as a model for EFL learners to critically examine public discourse and develop their analytical skills. By deconstructing influential speeches and presentations, learners can gain insights into the underlying communicative strategies and their potential effects, enabling them to become more discerning and effective communicators themselves.

In essence, the pedagogical implications of this research on Elon Musk's speech acts during his TED Talk offer valuable opportunities for EFL educators to enhance their learners' communication skills, particularly in public speaking, persuasive discourse, and cross-cultural communication. By integrating theoretical concepts with practical applications, educators can equip EFL learners with the necessary tools to navigate complex communicative situations and effectively convey their ideas and messages.

6. Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of Elon Musk's speech acts during his TED Talk, employing an integrated approach that combines various theoretical frameworks, including facework, cooperative principles, speech act theory, charismatic leadership, authenticity, and information manipulation. The research findings reveal that Musk strategically employs a range of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts to achieve specific communicative goals, such as maintaining audience engagement, shaping perceptions, and influencing decision-making.

The analysis demonstrates that Musk's locutionary acts, including incomplete statements, acknowledgments of limitations, and explanations, align with contemporary theories on facework and politeness, fostering a positive self-presentation. His illocutionary acts, encompassing assertions, accusations, rhetorical questioning, promises, and commands, resonate with speech act theory and its applications in persuasive discourse. Furthermore, the perlocutionary effects observed, such as causing concern, amusement, persuasion, inspiration, and generating curiosity, reflect the concept of perlocutionary acts and their influence on audience perceptions and decision-making processes. By integrating these theoretical foundations and empirical studies, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of Musk's multifaceted communication strategies, highlighting the interplay between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts in achieving desired outcomes. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of effective leadership communication, persuasive techniques, and the strategic management of information to enhance engagement and influence.

While the study provides valuable insights, it acknowledges limitations, such as the analysis being based on a specific TED Talk, the potential for nonverbal cues to be missed, and the lack of exploration into audience reception and interpretation. Nevertheless, the research has significant pedagogical implications for the study of English as a foreign language (EFL), offering opportunities to enhance learners' communication skills, particularly in public speaking, persuasive discourse, and cross-cultural communication, by integrating theoretical concepts with practical applications. Overall, this research contributes to the field of communication studies by providing a novel perspective on the analysis of speech acts through an integrated approach, offering insights into the strategies employed by influential figures like Elon Musk to effectively convey their ideas and visions.

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