

**SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECHES OF ABUBAKAR SHEKAU,
AL BAGDADI AND OSAMA BIN LADIN**

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Abstract

The fact that terrorism is a ravenous wolf in Nigeria and the entire world is a known fact. No doubt, in any human activity including terrorism, the role of language is incontestable. Language is an important/vital tool used in communicating ideas. Language not only determines how we see the world, but also what kinds of actions are possible. Therefore, knowledge of language is knowledge of how to use language to do things in the right circumstance. This paper looks at how terrorist leaders use language to intimidate, invite people for Jihad against their perceived enemies with the expectation to achieve their far-reaching political goals of over powering the state and instituting sharia. This is done through the window of Speech Act Theory by Searle. The speech act of terrorists were cross examined and scrutinized. This will help in discovering other better and more superior linguistic techniques of countering the terrorists' narratives in addition to military action.

Keywords: speech, speech act, language, terrorism

Introduction

Terrorism is now a global phenomenon. Its mass destructive and catastrophic tendencies have become a strategic threat to the peace, security and economic well-being of the entire international community. Its threat intrudes into the lives and thinking of people throughout the world. Its story is a human story, deeply personal and often tragic, that provokes great fear and intense outrage. It is high drama, the subject of widespread commentary (Kegley, 7).

The leaders of different terrorist organizations use language to control their target vulnerable audience, manipulate their minds, radicalize them into wicked ideology and finally recruit them into various terrorist organizations. In view of the above, the subsequent discussion centred on the speeches and posts of leaders of some known terrorist organizations like Abubakar Shekau of Boko Haram, Al Baghdadi of ISIS and Osama Bin Ladin of Alqaeda. Incidentally, all these leaders are late. The discussion also looks at the linguistic strategies in those speeches and how they have been used to invite and recruit many vulnerable youths into the terrorist organizations and to instill fear on the generality of the public.

Organization of Data

Each terrorist's speeches are grouped together. Specific code is assigned to each speech for easy reference. For example, Abubakar Shekau's speeches appear as (AS) 1,2. Al-Baghdadi's speeches appeared as (AB)=1,2. Osama Bin Laden's as (OB) 1,2. In analyzing the data, the variables appeared as texts. The data marked as texts, are brought out from the speeches and analysed All the data brought out from the speeches are arranged according to the questions they answer using the analytical methods of SAT.

Method of Data Analysis

The methodical approach employed to examine 'The acts by Terrorists' is known broadly as Speech Act Theory (SAT). SAT analyses the role of utterances in relation to the behavior of speakers and hearers in interpersonal communication. It is the Austins' three level analysis known as the locutionary Act, the illocutionary force and the perlocutionary effect. We examined critically the six speeches of

Abubakar Shekau, Abubakar Al-Baghdadi and Osama Bin Laden. We elicited from the speeches the data that answer the questions raised in the study. We then analysed them using SAT.

Conceptual Framework

Terrorism

Studies have shown that there are at least two hundred definitions of terrorism. In fact, Simon reported, that there are at least two hundred and twelve (212) definitions of terrorism across the world, ninety (90) of them are recurrently used by governments and other institutions (6). The term is so loaded with conceptual problems that a totally accepted definition of it still does not exist. The irony is that the recurrent theme of terrorism has become the daily part of the political drama of modern times. One just needs to turn on the TV to hear about it constantly. Nevertheless, the following definitions will help to understand the concept of terrorism. According to Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman:

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby in contrast to assassination, the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators.

David Rapoport: Terrorism is “the use of violence to provoke consciousness, to evoke certain feelings of sympathy and revulsion”. This definition avoids limiting perpetrator or purpose. It allows for a range of possible actors (states or their surrogates, international groups, or a single individual) and all putative goals (political, religious, or economic). (qtd. in Hoffman 40). Terrorism according to Walter Laqueur:

is the use of threat or the use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to achieve certain targets. It aims to induce a state of fear in the victim, that is ruthless, and does not conform with humanitarian rules. Publicity is an essential factor in the terrorist strategy.

In view of the above definitions, we can define terrorism as any act or threat of violence at the innocent citizens or iconic buildings that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda or extremist ideology majorly fueled by inflammatory, provocative, inciting and hate-filled outburst or speeches of the extremists. These speeches orchestrated by Islamist extremists contain carefully crafted exaggerated stories of the injustices faced by a group of individuals (Moslem community in this study) and anti-western messages. These extremists’ narratives intentionally harp on fictitious stories using all available means of persuasion, social media outlets, and deadly propaganda to set the stage for violence and ferocious attacks from their recruits. Nevertheless, the type of terrorism that is currently a global concern is that perpetrated by Islamist extremists and that is religious/political terrorism.

Theoretical Framework

Speech Act Theory

Searle took a philosophy of language approach to speech acts in an attempt "to give philosophically illumination description of general features of language" He aimed to answer various question in his approach; What is the difference between saying something and meaning it? How does the hearer understand what is meant? (Searle,1969).

The term "speech acts" is used to define "an utterance that has performative function in language and communication" (Searle 1969) and was originally used by his mentor J.L. Austin in his theory of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Drawing on these linguistic practices of Austin, Searle used his framework to base his own thesis that "talking is performing acts according to rules". When it comes to explaining speech acts, Searle suggests three different concepts; rules, prepositions and meaning. He was particularly interested in the illocutionary act of promising performatives and so set out to describe these concepts based on the conditions of this performance of promising. As part of his theory of a rule-governed language, Searle made a distinction between regulative and constitutive rules. In his book "An essay of philosophy of language" he states that "regulative rules regulate independently

existing forms of behaviour but constitutive rules do not merely regulate, they create or define new form of behaviour" (Searle, 1969). For example, take the rules of American football; the touchdown rule is constitutive versus the no taunting rule which is regulative. A second concept, prepositions, provides the content of the illocutionary act which can be used in different types of acts. For example, "Lucy will you sit down" "Lucy, sit" "would you sit down Lucy?" all provide the same prepositional content even though they are different forms of illocutionary acts. In terms of meaning, Searle revised the ideas of Grice and proposed modification in insisting that not only is meaning rooted in the speaker's intentions but also by a matter of convention (Searle, 1969). Based on his ideas one can say that the speaker initially intends for the hearer to recognize his/her intention to produce that lectionary affect and secondly, he/she intends that this is indicated by the hearers understanding of the meaning words used in the context. All these intentions can only act jointly with conventions of words for affective communication (Elswyk, 2014).

The notion of promising is an action referred to as a performative. Searle's theory of performatives is that "some illocutionary acts can be performed by uttering a sentence containing an expression that names the type of speech act" these are called performative utterances. He insisted on the importance of distinguishing between different kinds of performatives; utterances, verbs and sentences. For Searle, performatives can be used in different ways, one can use it to assert or make a declaration. For a speech act to achieve its purpose the correct conditions must be in place, these conditions are called felicity conditions. Thus, a sentence must be grammatical and felicitous to be performed correctly. Originally a concept by Austin, there are 3 types of felicity conditions; preparatory conditions, a sincerity condition and a fulfilment condition. Searle later refined this changing the fulfilment condition to essential condition and introduced a fourth condition called the propositional content condition. Consider this example: A I jokingly say to friends "I know pronounce you man and wife" I have not actually married them because I do not have the authority to these words to have the correct illocutionary force thus the speech act fails. The felicity conditions of marrying couples rely on the legal position of the speaker (qtd. in).

Searle offered characterizations of linguistic elements in attempt to give a clear depiction of the difference between one illocutionary force and another. There had been previous attempts by Austin to distinguish between such elements in which he established five basic acts; *Vindictive, executives, commissives, expositive, behavitives*. Searle ultimately believed "that the taxonomy needs to be seriously revised because it contains several weaknesses". One major weakness being that Austin did not determine a clear principle or set of principles on which the taxonomy was based upon and thus there was overlap between categories (Searle, 1976). Therefore, a new list of new categories he regarded as the basics of illocutionary acts were formed. Firstly; (1) *declarations* which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs, "I swear"; (2) *expressives* which express a psychological state and how the speaker feels, e.g. congratulating; (3) *commissives* which is an act of getting the speaker to do something you require, e.g. threatening or promising; (4) *directives* which are attempt to get the addressee to do something, e.g. demanding. Finally; (5) *assertives* which represent the state of the situation, e.g. describing (Searle, 1972).

To summarize, Searle's philosophic approach to speech acts proposes that speaking a language is a behaviour determined by constitutive rules. He further implies that one performs an illocutionary act by promising, directing and questioning and perlocutionary acts are affective if it has the correct effect on the hearer. These acts are governed by linguistic concepts and rules and successful communication can only occur if these are in place. Searle develops Austin's ideas in a way that provides a clearer and in depth understanding of different kinds of speech acts and the role they play in speaking.

Speeches to be Analyzed

- Speech1=1(AS): On Chibok Girls. (May5).
Speech2=2 (AS): Message of Abubakar Shekau to Goodluck Jonathan, the President of Nigeria (Jan.11, 2012)
Speech 1=1 (OB): Martyrs Retaliate on Behalf of the Poor (Oct.7, 2001)

Speech 2=2(OB): Bush's Hands are Covered with Blood (Oct.30, 2004)
Speech 1=1(AB): So Wait, Indeed We, Along with You are Waiting. (Oct.8, 2001)
Speech 2=2(AB) March Forth, Whether Light or Heavy (Oct.8,2001)

AS stands for Abubakar Shekau, AB stands for Abubakar Al-Baghdadi, OB stands for Ossama Bin Laden

Acts Terrorists Perform with language

Locutionary Acts

Here we present a sample of the speeches of Shekau, Baghdadi and Osama as representing the locutionary Acts (acts of uttering them).

2(AS)

You Jonathan cannot stop us like you boasted, instead we will devour you in three months like you are boasting. If death is your worldly gain, for us, it is eternal victory to die working for Allah.if Allah asks me to kill someone, I will kill him and I will enjoy killing him like. I am killing a chicken....bastards all of you that practice democracy are fools ...Idiot....barracks of pigs...dogs...rats.

1(AS)

More attacks are on the way, and by the will.....

1 (OB)

I say to you that security is an indispensable pillar of human life and that free men do not forfeit their security, contrary to Bush's claim that we hate freedom. No we fight because we are free men who don't sleep under oppression. We want to restore freedom to our nation, just as you lay waste to our nation. So shall we lay waste to yours (USA)... This in addition to heavy experience in using guerilla warfare and the war of attrition to fight tyrannical superpowers, as we, alongside the mujahideens, bled Russia for ten years, until it went bankrupt and was forced to withdraw in defeat... So we are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy. As to America, I say to it and its people a few words: **I swear to God** that America will not live in peace. Before peace reigns in Palestine, and before all the army of infidels depart the land of Mohammed, (peace be upon him).

Analysis of the illocutionary acts of Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Qaeda (performatives)

This analysis is done using Searle's typology of speech acts in general and this typology is applied on the following marked speech acts taken from the speeches. According to Searle's theory, which we adopt for this analysis, utterances are assigned to one of five possible speech acts or illocution: assertive, commissive, directive, declarative and expressive. In the framework of these Speech Acts, the series of actions which Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Qaeda groups perform through the instrumentality of those locutionary acts are analysed. Expressed in another way, the selected utterances in the speeches of Shekau, Baghdadi and Osama are worth analyzing. We also group the acts they perform with Language which are also the intentions of the speakers under the following sub-headings.

Invitation

(i) The invitation to join the jihad, to enlist as a mujahideen and to run to the caliphate is a recurring act of terrorists. For example, in 2(AS), Shekau invites the people to join in jihad. This call is expressed in these directives.

“O Moslems in relation to the command of your lord...to fast in one verse and **commanded you with jihad and fighting in dozens of verse.**

(ii) The invitation to perform hejira as in 1(AB)ion

And we call upon **every Moslem** every place **to perform hejira to the Islamic state (caliphate)** or fight in his land wherever that may be.

(iii) Invitation to enlist as a “**mujahideen**” (**soldier of Allah**) “for the cause of Allah”

It is worthy to note here that these terrorists' intentions are declaration of fight. If one cannot join in the fight by coming to the caliphate due to one reason or the other, the directive here is to “fight in his land wherever that may be”

All these invitations to jihad, hejira, caliphate etc expressed in the speeches are examples of **directive speech act**. A directive speech act occurs when the speaker expects the listener to do something as a response. For example, the speaker may ask a question, make a request, or issue an invitation. Many directive sentences are posed as questions so they are easy to identify by the presence of a question mark. However, the language here is informal and often ungrammatical; so many directives are posed as a question mark. Furthermore, many directive speech acts are not stated as a question but as a request for assistance. Finally, some sentences that end in question marks are rhetorical in nature and do not represent a directive speech act. This class includes commands, suggestions and orders (Yarahmadil and Olfatiz 16).

Al-Baghdadi and Shekau in their 'declaration and directives' persuade the Moslems to enlist as jihadists who will fight the enemies of Allah in this temporary life as Mohammed did. The reference to Prophet Mohammed is to give credence and authenticity to this invitation. The deployment of "valiant men", "heroes" "limbs" to describe the mujahideen is to encourage them to push on because they have already gained victory over the "crusaders"

Intimidation

'Launching attacks ...', more attacks are on the way, "launch endless and violent attacks ...", "devour you" as seen in 2(AS) are all declaratives expressing threats issued by shekau to intimidate Nigerian Citizens and its government.

In 1 (AB) the expression in '... They sleep with rage filling....'

In (OB), "...bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy" "Nobody in the United States will feel safe" and in 1(AB), "for every drop of blood shed of Iraqis, America will shed a river of blood" are declarative speech acts. These declaratives full of threats and literary devices are just to instill fear in the audiences and to intimidate them.

Searle defines declarative speech acts as statements that bring about a change in status or condition to an object by virtue of the statement itself. For example, a statement declaring war or a statement that someone is fired. As soon as addresser utters the words, the very utterance brings about a change in the hearer's world. The perlocutionary effect is immediately felt on the hearer. The class includes betting, declaring, resigning, passing a sentence, answering, appointing, nominating, applying, etc. These speech acts are uncommon. Therefore, the frequency of the use of these speech acts is very less.

Inspiration

Terrorists' language performs the act of inspiring their audience to go into violence fearlessly because of eternal reward. This view is captured in the expressive in 2(AS): "For us, it (death) is eternal victory to die working for Allah". Baghdadi tells the audiences to "come to the land of honour and search for shahada (matyrdom). "Land of honour" refers to the caliphate (directives). Notice also directive speech acts in form of advice and encouragement to the mujahdeens by Baghdadi:

If you feel terrified, close your eyes and imagine yourself inside paradise. Think of your hoor (virgins) that are awaiting you as well as meeting the prophet.

Indoctrination

The assertive speech acts are used for indoctrination. Examples are in the following words of Shekau in 1(AS) where he wants to persuade his audiences to hate democracy thus:

Everyone knows democracy is unbelief. Constitution is unbelief....Allah has forbidden it in the Koran and in countless hadiths of the prophet (all) that are going on in Western schools .

The assertives in 2(OB) are expressed in:

"Americans are conspiring against us until even the countries that belong to Islam join their side....**I swear by God, by Allah....that America will know no peace....**for permitting the Israelis to wreck havoc and sin in Palestine." Shekau on his part pours curses and abuses on his addressees former President Jonathan and all those "practitioners of democracy" in these assertives: "**dogs**," "**fools**," "**pigs**," "**fools**"

A curse is an appeal or prayer for evil or misfortune to befall someone or something. Cursing is such a speech act, which is full of emotions and accompanies an imaginary world or power. This is the act, which always functions negatively when directed towards the addressee. Most of the time the person who gets angry with someone, uses his word as a sharp weapon.(ibid).In the last lines there is a state of praising. The expressions “raise your heads high” and “lions oif the desert” in reference to the Moslems and the mujahideens depict a state of praise used by Baghdadi and Osama. They express deep emotional feelings towards the praised.

The illocutionary purpose of praise seems to consist in expressing one’s positive judgment. The speaker may or may not wish to please the addressee and may or may not wish to let other people know what his judgment is. But the only invariant purpose seems to consist simply in saying what one thinks (ibid). According to Searle, the purpose of Assertive class is to commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. That is to say the speaer wants to make the listener believe the truth of what he or she said.It is the Assertive speech act that most closely resembles Austin’s constative utterance . The speaker asserts a proposition that represent a condition or a state of affairs that in principle could be true or false (Yarahmadi and Olfatiz 17)

Assertive speech acts are statements of fact, getting the viewer to form or attend a belief. Here, the speaker’s words reveal his beliefs and he/she is uttering about external world. English verbs that function as explicit assertive include: various verbs differ from one another by force or strength of the assertion (Yarymadi and Olfatiz www.textroad.com Aug. 20,2018). The commissive speech acts in 2(AB) are used to indoctrinate the Moslem youths by demonizing the enemies of the terrorists.The expressions below are typical examples of using commissive speech acts to achieve one’s purposes.

“So take up arms, take up arms,.and fight, fight.

The illocutionary point of commissive speech act is to commit speaker to perform some future action.This kind of speech act is also called intended act. In conversation, common commissive speech acts are promise and threats. In message boards, these types of commissives are relatively rare; however, we found many statements where the purpose was to confirm the readers that the writer would perform some actions in the future. The class involves promising, vowing, refusing, threatening, pledging, guaranteeing etc.

Extremist groups have preyed on the youths at colleges, Universities and even European prisons with their radical doctrines expressed in the performatives. “The radical doctrines can profoundly affect how people interpret their situation, and how they respond to efforts to mobilize them. Through these radical doctrines containing the ideological messages of the terrorists, recruitment is on the increase. Moreover, young people who do not share the sufferings of Moslems join terrorism. These rebels, without a cause, are consequently instrumentalized by radical organization (Al-qaeda, Boko Haram and ISIS) that have a strategic agenda. (The observer, 7 December, 2003).

The foregoing represents a sample of terrorists’ illocutionary acts, which are intended as actualization of the locutionary acts. For these illocutionary acts to generate requisite illocutionary force, they are expected to obey the appropriacy condition.

Moreover, declarative speech acts deployed in the speeches have linguistic elements that “appeal to audience psychology” They are those elements of the speech that motivate listeners by stimulating their emotions, needs, and values. Appeals to emotion include speech material that stir “positive” feelings such as joy, happiness, or elation and “negative” feelings such as fear, anger or pity. Appeals to needs include those identified by psychologist A. H. Maslow, namely, our physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization needs. Appeals to values include those identified by psychologist Milton Rokeach, namely, “instrumental values” (specific behaviours that we prefer) such as honesty, reliability, ambition, and courage and “terminal values” (ultimate goals of existence) such as world peace, family security, personal freedom, equality and wisdom. For some of the listeners, it is only through Jihad that these needs can be met.

Findings

From the study, therefore, we found out that these terrorist leaders interpret the Koran in the ways that suit their purposes. They select the portions of the Koran that authenticate their actions in their utterances: public or private. If those speeches were made with a little bit of caution, putting into consideration what unchecked words can cause to the audience/world, Militant activities and insurgencies would have been reduced or not existing at all.

In addition, all the terrorist leaders and their organizations have deep-rooted murderous hatred for the West especially America and also Israel. They are active antagonists against the West. For some of them, the West through their secular governments deliberately introduced programmes like secular education, sports and music as a way to deny Muslims time to read their Koran. Consequently, many Moslems have lost their Islam while others who claim to be Moslems have lost traces of Islam in the name of being educated (<https://www.naij.com/65903.Nov,22,2017>). For others, they feel that the West was intentionally targeting the Moslem population; America is at war with Islam and that Americans forced the formation of the state of Israel on Palestinians, that America's foreign policy encouraged desecration of Moslem land through the presence of American troops in Iraq and sanctions against Iraq (Bin Laden et al, 193-194).

We also found out that Bin Laden, Baghdadi and Shekau tried to use rhetoric that would discredit the intentions of American foreign policy makers, Western World and democratic nations to strengthen their credibility. For example, Osama believed that it was through America's aid that citizens in Moslem communities (Iraq, Palestine) suffered and that America is conspiring against us (Moslem nation) until even the countries that belong to Islam (join) their side (Bin Laden et al, 194).. This is a power play between the "they" (Americans) seen as bad ones, and 'us' (the Moslem nation) portrayed as the innocent, oppressed ones. This is CDA in action.

Furthermore, the terrorists used their speeches not only to inform their audiences, but to motivate them to participate in the fight for Jihad, freedom and injustices against the Moslem nation. Our analysis of their speeches showed that Osama Bin Laden, Al Baghdadi and Abubakar Shekau were committed Moslems and were versed in the Koran. Their Islamic convictions extensively influenced their language. In pursuing and propagating their dreams, they used a lot of Koranic language

Shekau, Baghdadi and Osama skillfully manipulated words not only to suit their themes, but also to amplify their call to their fellow Moslems to rise and shine and seek for a caliphate through hejira and Jihad to the land of freedom. Their skill in the use of language brought about unprecedented paradigm shifts in Moslems' relationship with America, Israel and the West, establishment of caliphates in Iraq's Mosul, Raqqa in Syria and Sambisa forest, in Nigeria, more terrorist attacks, suicide bombings and the trooping of young men especially from Western countries to join in the Jihad. It is important to know at this juncture that all these their caliphates have been overrun by government's coalition army.

Besides, their utterances were a combination of locutionary and illocutionary forces. The implication of this is that their speeches achieved the intention of the speaker which the audience also comprehended. Indeed, throughout their speeches Shekau and others employed the language of politics which is mainly protest and persuasion to communicate their objectives to their respective audience. In the light of the above, it is clear that without the instrumentality of language, terrorism would have been a foregone phenomenon.

Conclusion

Given the aforementioned various acts terrorists used language to commit, it can be said that SAT is relevant in drawing a link between language and terrorism. In recruitment of terrorists, what exists is a manifestation of power play and ideological conditions. Terrorist leaders promote an ideological message and so they use the language of extremism which produces a skewed image. Therefore language is used to manipulate the psychology of these young minds –some of whom are disillusioned, some are from dysfunctional homes etc and so vulnerable to the extremist narratives of terrorists' recruiters.(Okeke et al www.ca-journals.org).

Recommendations

Our younger generation, and in fact anyone that has been endowed with the gift of the gab should eschew themes of violence, hate and revenge in their speeches.

Words in speeches should be coloured positively and constructively so as to achieve positive effect.

Non-violent method of protest should be imbibed and advocated for by all those who seek to bring positive changes in our society and sections of religious books that encourage violence, Jihad or crusade should be dropped.

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