

Analysis of the President's Contexts in Speaking Tough Language

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the speeches of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, the 16th President of the Republic of the Philippines who was labeled as a singular man with a singular voice. This paper used pragmatic analysis. This research capitalized on the contexts of using the expression “Putang Ina” (son of a whore) in the speeches working within the Taxonomy of Illocutionary Forces by John Searle. Moreover, it also utilized Habitus and Field Theory by Pierre Bourdieu. The result showed that the president made use of physical, linguistic, social, and epistemic contexts in his speeches. Duterte’s utterances exhibited his ability to assert power and authority. Moreover, tough language was used to attack the interlocutors and despite that, the president was still an effective speaker. The use of tough expressions in his speeches has become his habit and was already part of his system to convey abhorrence.

Keywords: Pragmatics; Illocutionary Force, Speech Acts Theory, Tough Language

Introduction

In each given community, language is an indispensable tool for communication. It can be understood from different contexts depending on who uttered it and how the language was spoken. Words can be used as agents of intimidation and power or as symbols of arrogance and disrespect. During the communication process, the speaker is believed to be the most active participant in an attempt to transfer the message to the audience. The audience in turn decodes and translates the message at a given occasion and point in time. It is the continuous agreement of meaning between the listener and the speaker.

It is inevitable to think that utterances made within a context foster meaning. The way the speaker utters the lines conveys meaning and creates an unknown effect on the audience. Speakers usually utter expressions that make them different from other speakers and it creates an identity for themselves. Communicators do not only transfer words and ideas to listeners, but are rather involved in a complex situation of attempting to convey the message among varied members of the audience. It posed a challenge for the speakers to be mindful of language use and become accountable consumers of dialectal choice. Context, per se, is a significant component of the communication process. Hence, this paper aimed to find out the underlying reasons for a speaker’s repetitive choice of language and how this choice shaped the kind of persona the speaker was.

The foundation of this paper was the theory of Herbert Paul Grice (1913–1988), who highlighted the differences in word meanings. Prominent pragmatics scholar Grice begins his theory with a clear contrast between what the speaker says and what they mean when they utter a sentence. His theory further clarifies the difference between what is blatantly expressed in an utterance and what is hinted at or obscured by an utterance. Another theory where this study was anchored is Pierre Bourdieu’s Habitus and Field Theory which emphasizes symbolic power and violence. Habitus formation is a societal process as opposed to an individual one, producing patterns that are durable and transferable across contexts, but that also change over time and in response to particular contexts. According to Navarro (2006), habitus “is not fixed or permanent, and can change under unexpected situations or over a long

historical period.” Field is a concept that refers to numerous social and political arenas where people convey and replicate their chosen dispositions. Moreover, it can be defined as a combination of different networks such as intellectual, religious, educational, cultural structures, or collection of relationships (Navarro 2006:18).

In addition, this paper utilized John Searle’s Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts. His theory includes the following categories: representative or assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. In the representative or assertive category, the speaker becomes committed to the truth of the propositional content which includes asserting, claiming, describing, making a hypothesis, concluding, reporting suggestions, predicting, and making statements of facts. In directive, the speaker attempts to persuade the listener to act in a way that fulfills the meaning conveyed by the proposition’s substance. It includes questioning, commanding, requesting, pleading, and inviting. In commissive, the speaker resolves to behave in the manner that the propositional content represents and includes promising, threatening, offering, guaranteeing, vowing, warning, betting, and challenging. In expressive, the speaker conveys the illocutionary act’s authenticity and situation; such as expressing regrets, congratulating, conveying gratitude, appreciating, complaining, condoling, greeting, and reprimanding. In declarative, the speaker performs an action just portraying oneself as performing that action like baptizing and arresting.

Statement of the Problem

This research aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What are the president’s contexts in speaking tough language?
2. What are the illocutionary acts used in the speeches?
3. How do these contexts and illocutionary acts shape the kind of speaker the president was?

Literature Review

Pragmatics in a Nutshell

The concept of pragmatics focuses on language use and contextual integration. Pragmatics has been investigated by numerous academics and linguists. Alluding to some insights of what pragmatics means and what it reflects is a landscape to its scope. “Pragmatics has as its aspects the meaning of utterances which cannot be accounted for by straightforward reference to the truth conditions of the sentence uttered,” according to Gadzar (1979, p. 2). The point being stressed here is that it is not in all situations that language users express themselves directly and that utterances and written expression could have hidden the meanings which the listener or reader is expected to decipher. To Crystal (1987, p.120), “pragmatics” studies the factors that govern our choices of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others.” From this vantage point, it is important to remember that pragmatics is not just about what is said, but also the reasons the writer or speaker chose to utilize a particular term or word over another. Lawal (2012) has further claimed that pragmatics shines a light on the style and implications of a writer’s or speaker’s utterance. Pragmatics also specializes in analysis of language from the perspective of its users, with an emphasis on the decisions they make, the problems they experience while utilizing it in social situations, and the effects their language use has on other conversation participants.

Context in pragmatics refers to the factors that are relevant for an account of how people use language. The fact that an analysis of an utterance’s context affects how it is interpreted is central to the concept of context’s function in determining reference, which is essentially language. Physical context encompasses what is physically present around the speaker or hearer at the time of communication. The statement is uttered to give a warning or to make an assertion. It comprises what items are visible from the location of the communication as well as the surrounding activities. Linguistic context refers to what is being said before in the conversation. It may also allude to the past of what has been mentioned thus far. Social context refers to the social relationships between the parties participating in communication and epistemic context is the speaker or hearer’s knowledge and opinions.

Walkthrough on Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis was stimulated by another field called sociolinguistics. It is an approach that analyzes written, oral, or even sign language. There are prominent figures in Discourse Studies like Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, Gail Jefferson, and Anita Pomerantz. Business, medicine, science, computer and information studies, gender studies, race and cross-cultural studies, sociology, linguistics, communication, and semiotics have all been greatly impacted by it. Discourse analysis gained recognition as a rigorous and innovative method for studying language and social interaction after the publication of “A Simplest Systematic for the Organization of Turn-taking in Conversation”, a seminal paper on the topic that was initially published in 1974. Its basic tenet is that conversation is structured in every way, and that the meaning is derived from this intricate order. It is vital to draw attention to issues such as how a speaker can determine whether or not the listener has understood what they have said and how to explain how words’ meanings become clearer in specific contexts. Moreover, it gives interactions an unavoidable moral component.

Speaking in fragments, which would seem to be a language issue, is therefore a very effective way to ensure mutual understanding. It makes sure that each person taking a turn meets the requirements for hearing and listening, and that they either comprehend what has been stated during the conversation. Every conversational preference order directly affects what can be said in the next exchange and how previous utterances can be understood to follow one

another. Preferences for taking turns are sensitive to participants' presentational identities as well as the sequential nature of the conversation. Thus, there are components of preference orders that are "between-turn" and "within-turn" that are not exclusive to a certain discourse. This perspective on the context sensitive nature of specific discussions differs greatly from the more prevalent, however problematic, notion of context as shared cultural values or biographies, which is the perspective that defines conventional, postmodern, and interpretive sociologies. In addition to explaining how words in domains of practical, technical, and instrumental significance are mutually understandable, the discourse analysis approach claims to explain why people from various social "categories," such as those related to race, age, gender, culture, and disability, find it difficult to have conversations.

Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative research design was the main approach employed in this study. The researcher used books, journals, and peer-reviewed articles in pragmatics and discourse analysis as resources for this investigation. The researcher used videos of speeches delivered by Rodrigo Duterte. The investigator selected the videos where Duterte mentioned "Putang Ina," transcribed, extracted statements, and analyzed them based on theoretical positions and perspectives. The two main research techniques that are employed are pragmatics and discourse analysis. The researcher observed and listened to the selected speeches as part of an immersion experience. The selected speeches were then transcribed and encrypted for theological interpretation.

Ethical Consideration

Proper citations and due credit of the studies reviewed were religiously observed. In this study, trustworthiness of data was considered, and the findings were reported clearly, objectively, and honestly. Intentional misinterpretation, misinformation, and misleading claims were also avoided.

Results and Discussion

This section presented the president's contexts in using tough language in his speeches, the illocutionary acts used, and how these contexts and illocutionary acts shape the kind of speaker the president was.

Contexts

The result demonstrated the speaker's use of all settings, including linguistic, social, physical, and epistemic ones. In speech fragment 1, Duterte used the term "Putang Ina" to refer to Senator Antonio F. Trillanes IV and Jose Maria Sison, both of whom he detested. He did this by utilizing social and linguistic circumstances. His belief in the aforementioned individuals, his social relationships with them, the current state of affairs, and the ongoing upheaval in Mindanao all contributed to his emotional state. These two individuals were seen by him as guilty. The president discussed the insurgent issues that began in 1970 and continued to this day in the second passage, which made use of language context.

Due to the speech's epistemic framework, the third passage featured the president's hate speech. The president reiterated his hatred for the Inquirer and ABS-CBN, labeling them "killers," in the third speech snippet, which is related to the epistemic framework. The subject has switched from medicines, where he was talking earlier, to the two companies, which he described as worthless. In this instance, he discussed his knowledge and opinions about the topic he was speaking about. In the fourth speech clip, he denigrated the police officers due to their purported actions, focusing more on social and physical surroundings. The president's speech was overcome with emotion in front of massive police officers. Here, he made a lot of faces and repeatedly said phrases like "putang ina" and "gago." He mentioned the shortcomings of the Philippine National Police and human rights. In one instance, he vented all of his worries and voiced out his displeasure with certain police officers' actions, such as their indulgence in luxury and women. The president continued to criticize the police in the last speech snippet, calling them incompetent and threatening to fire them if they persisted in being uncooperative. The police officers acted as the obvious targets of his scorn and disdain in this scene, which continued to draw on social and physical circumstances.

Illocutionary acts

The illocutionary Act with the highest frequency in his speeches was commissives as the president showed fondness in promising, threatening, guaranteeing, warning, betting, and challenging. The least illocutionary act used in his speeches was expressive. His speech had little elements of apologizing, congratulating, thinking, and appreciating.

The President as a Speaker

The president was an effective speaker and communicator. His use of “Putang Ina” and other tough language had been part of his usual conversation to express abhorrence. Tough language was used in his speeches to attack his interlocutors and to provoke hostile humor. He spoke from the heart and exhibited integrity. In effect, his audience understood him. His words were full of honesty and truthfulness, causing no confusion among the audience. He spoke from experience and reality and the same generated laughter and attention from his audience.

However, the President had to minimize the use of commissives in his speeches because it would make him look arrogant and domineering. He needed to utilize other forms of illocutionary acts to calm down his emotions and feelings.

Conclusion

Speeches are an ideal corpus for pragmatic analysis. They are rich in meanings that are worthy of analysis. Qualitative research findings—like those from language and literary studies—allow for a great deal of flexibility in this process. Contexts in speeches like physical, linguistic, social, and epistemic are almost evident in Duterte’s speeches. His talks followed the format of a typical speech, which began with a greeting and some parts had elements of congratulating and appreciating. Like other presidents, he was also fond of promising.

President Duterte’s speeches had no big difference from the speeches of other speakers except his constant and repetitive use of tough language. He was a president with plans and vision for his country and countrymen. His use of foul language, like that of “son of a whore”, had already seeped into his system. He was easily affected by the people who surround him. The president was a man with firm language and disposition whose power and authority were manifested through his manner of communication. The president has to remain true in his speeches and be truthful and honest in dealing with his audience. Most of the president’s speeches were unscripted and had left a mark in the hearts and minds of the audience.

Contributions of Authors

The study's author did the entire research process, including data gathering, analysis, and work development.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declare that no conflict of interest is associated with this research study.

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