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Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Leadership Acts in Bolanle Austen Peters' *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*

Oremire J. Ehibor ^{1*} , Rhoda A. Osiyemi ¹ , Joy Eyisi Jr. ¹ , Olalekan Atoloye ² 

¹ Department of Languages and General Studies, College of Leadership and Development Studies, Covenant University, Ota 112104, Nigeria

² Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan 200001, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study is a pragmatic analysis of the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in the leadership communication of Funmilayo portrayed in the biographical film *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti* by Bolanle Austen Peters. With a qualitative design, the study employed a case study approach to explore language use within the specific context of the film. Data collection involved primary data from the film, transcribing relevant speeches and conversations of the central character, Funmilayo. Secondary data were gathered from literature on pragmatics, speech act theory, and leadership that provided context and supported the findings. Engaging John Searle's (1976) taxonomy of speech acts, utterances from selected scenes in the film were transcribed, systematically categorised, and analysed. The objectives identified the prevalent illocutionary acts employed in the language use of a leader, analysed illocutionary acts performed in the movie while identifying the most recurrent speech acts and the intended meaning and effects, and evaluated the perlocutionary impact on listeners. Findings revealed that directives emerged as the dominant illocutionary act used to coordinate grassroots mobilisation for social change through rhetorical questions and instructions. Funmilayo's utterances achieved their aims of motivating, inspiring, and organising women in the market, as evidenced by their responsive cheers. This research provides new insights into Funmilayo's strategic language as an influential leader in Nigeria's history, underscoring the integral role of pragmatic analysis in understanding leadership communication. There are implications for advancing knowledge on effective oration

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Oremire J. Ehibor, Department of Languages and General Studies, College of Leadership and Development Studies, Covenant University, Ota 112104, Nigeria; Email: oremire.ehibor@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

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within African contexts, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which emphasises peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Keywords: Illocutionary Act; Perlocutionary Act; Pragmatics; Speech Acts; Leadership

1. Introduction

Language is a communication tool used to express feelings, emotions, and desires are expressed. It is made up of sounds or graphic symbols, which users or speakers have accepted to use^[1]. Most importantly, language serves as a medium for building relationships and passing down or exchanging ideas. Language allows humans to connect and convey meanings through symbolic representations to facilitate interaction and the sharing of notions between individuals^[2]. In communication through language, persons often mean more than what they say, as shown in their enquires about something, for example, “Would it be possible to get some more information about that programme?” (the underlying intention goes beyond obtaining the information), complaints about something, for example, “The Wi-Fi has been down all morning, and it is hampering my work.” (this expresses frustration with the internet connection), commands, “Be quiet and pay attention during the lecture.” (this is an order to behave in a certain way) or offers to do something for example, “I would be happy to proofread your paper before you submit it.” (this is a proposition to perform a task); this is known as the field of pragmatics. In the literature, pragmatics examines the significance of things said that can differ from the exact definition of words or phrases depending on the situation. Leech and Short^[3] describe pragmatics as the “investigation into the aspects of meaning which are derived not from the formal properties of words, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered.” In other words, pragmatics, as the study of language use, investigates what speakers aim to convey through their words and utterances, which are considered along with the particular situation or setting. It is essentially the study of language use.

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that studies how language is used in context and how meaning is interpreted beyond the literal aspects of language. Pragmatics is concerned with meaning formation and the influence of context factors, whether it is linguistic, physical/environmental, in-

terpersonal, situational, or psychological^[4]. This study aims to explore the relationship between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts within the context of leadership, specifically examining their use in the movie *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*. It further classifies the illocutionary acts performed by the speaker and evaluates the perlocutionary effects on the listeners to understand if they respond as expected. The prevalent in the language use, such as assertions and directives in the establishment of authority are identified; analyses illocutionary acts performed in Bolanle Austen Peters’ *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*, identifying the most recurrent speech acts and intended effects, evaluates the perlocutionary effects of the speaker’s illocutionary acts on the listeners, thus, investigating whether there is alignment between the intended response and the actual hearers’ reactions. In what follows, some concepts that are relevant to the study are explained.

2. Review of Concepts

2.1. Pragmatics

According to Leech^[5], Pragmatics is “the study of meaning in relation to speech situations.” The speech situation enables the speaker to use language to achieve a *particular effect* on the mind of the hearer”. Thus, the speech is goal-oriented (i.e., the meaning which the speaker or writer intends to communicate). By exploring communication dynamics, pragmatics seeks to highlight how meaning is constructed and negotiated in real-world contexts. Pragmatics explains language use in real-life situations, how it serves certain conversational purposes, and how it considers a wide range of factors to understand meaning.

2.1.1. Austin’s (1962) Theory of Pragmatics

Austin^[6] postulated Speech Acts theory and made it prominent through the publication of *How to do Things with Words*. Austin’s contribution through his well-known book was a major progress in the field of pragmatics. He came up with the findings that surpass the conventional view of language as a mere tool for information or for people to assert

or affirm things, but also do things. Austin believes that in every utterance one makes, one performs an action through it. This action is the “Speech Act.”

2.1.2. Searle’s (1969) Theory of Pragmatics

Austin’s thesis is expanded upon in Searle’s notion of speech act. In his ground-breaking work “Speech Act: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language,” he first put forward his thesis. Searle shares Austin’s belief that context is necessary to fully understand the meaning of a speech act. According to Searle^[7], communication is guided by rules. Similar to Austin^[6] makes a distinction between “perlocutionary acts,” which deal with the ramifications or repercussions of illocutionary acts on hearers, and “illocutionary acts,” which he views as the “complete” speech acts.

In an effort to improve on Austin^[6] taxonomy, Searle^[7] developed his own speech act taxonomy, which is based on “illocutionary point,” “direction-of-fit,” and “sincerity conditions” in addition to additional elements like the function of authority and discourse relations. In addition, Searle divides rules into constitutive and regulative categories. Speech acts can be performed within the conditions outlined by Searle^[7]. It is necessary to fulfil the “felicity conditions” before making a promise, for example. The following conditions apply:

- i. The speech refers to the orator’s upcoming action.
- ii. The orator would not typically execute it
- iii. The orator acknowledges that he has assumed a responsibility

The above “conditions” are meant to establish whether or not a speech act is proper to execute.

2.2. Speech Acts Theory

Speech act theory was proposed by Austin^[6] in his book *How to Do Things with Words*, which explains that acts are expressed in sentences, not only to describe or report something. Austin^[6] says speech act means “doing things with words.” In other words, we perform actions such as describing, commanding, declaring, and many more with our words. The theory was further developed by Searle^[7]. Searle defines speech acts as something that are not only words but also involve performance or action.

John Austin and Searle recognised that language is a tool for performing actions. Therefore, speech acts can be defined as actions performed via utterances. Here, language

is regarded as an action in itself, hence, *speech acts*. A speech act references more than just the spoken or written words themselves, but additionally relates to the context surrounding the communication^[8,9]. Speech act is associated with language’s functional role in facilitating exchange beyond semantics and syntax alone^[10]. According to Bayat^[10], being able to use speech acts properly comes from experiencing different cultures, which helps people build good relationships with others in society. Thus, speech act theory does not see language so much as a means of communication as it is an action. It is a statement that has a purpose in communication. Speech acts refer to the actions performed using language, rather than focusing solely on the informative content of utterances. Speech act theory studies how speakers use words to accomplish a range of tasks, including asking for things, delivering commands, promising things, and voicing opinions.

Austin identifies three levels of action in his work, which are the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. He distinguishes between the act of uttering something, what one performs in uttering it, and the action that one does by saying it. The locutionary act refers to actually vocalising or expressing a statement that has meaning according to the linguistic structure and standard definitions of the language being used. Based on Searle^[7], locutionary acts are the execution of a statement with a specific sense and reference, as well as the practice of saying a thing. In other words, the locutionary act involves the production of a meaningful sentence or proposition that has a specific sense (meaning) and reference (relation to the world).

Illocutionary acts refer to the intended communicative force or function of an utterance. They go beyond the literal meaning and focus on the speaker’s intention and the effect they aim to achieve on the hearer. An illocutionary act involves the intended effect or function of the speech beyond just the literal semantic meaning. It pertains to the aim or purpose behind something said, such as to make a promise, give an order, provide criticism, show agreement, make a claim, give greetings, or declare something officially. Illocutionary act does something while making a speech. Illocutionary acts are context-dependent and rely on shared understanding and conventions within a specific speech community. Understanding illocutionary acts helps uncover the speaker’s intentions and the intended effects on the hearer.

The effect the illocutionary act has on the listener is what Austin calls the “perlocutionary act.”

The perlocutionary act is a response to the illocutionary act. It refers to the effects or consequences that an utterance has on the hearer. This act may be verbal and non-verbal. It is the reaction or effect it has on the listener, such as pleasure, enjoyment, fear, or confusion. Simply put, the perlocutionary acts are the effects that the illocutionary acts have on the audience. Considering this: “Do not eat that piece of cookie”. The locutionary act is the act of saying it, the illocutionary act is a warning, while the perlocutionary act is the impact of the warning on the audience. Speakers can wield the power of influence, consciously or unconsciously. It emphasises the impact and response that the speaker aims to elicit from the hearer through their speech. Perlocutionary acts go beyond the speaker’s intention and focus on how the utterance is interpreted, received, and its influence on the hearer’s thoughts, beliefs, emotions, or subsequent behaviour. Understanding perlocutionary acts helps in analysing the persuasive power of language, and the role of context in interpretation^[11]. It acknowledges that the ultimate impact of an utterance goes beyond the orator’s intention and depends on the interpreter’s reception and response.

2.3. Leadership

Leadership refers to the ability to inspire and encourage individuals or groups of people who are being led^[12]. It involves influencing others and motivating team members to work towards common goals. According to Stogdill^[13], leadership can be seen as a process or act of influencing the work and actions of an organised group to establish its objectives and achieve them. Communication is essential for leadership. Among a leader’s primary duties is how they convey information using their words, vocal tone, and body language, which provides a window into a leader’s traits^[14,15]. Their communication further impacts others and organisational outcomes because effective transmission of ideas is paramount for leadership success. Words are a leader’s most powerful tool. Through language, people can communicate their purpose to their listeners. The interplay between leadership and words is a fundamental aspect of effective communication, influence, and inspirational guidance within various contexts. According to Chukwudi et al.^[16], leaders who are attuned to the emotional impact of words can build meaningful connec-

tions with their followers or hearers, through empathetic and supportive language, a culture of trust, openness, and collaboration, and strengthening of relationships can be fostered. There have been successful leaders all around the world, both today and historically. One worthy of consideration is the story of a woman popularly referred to as the ‘Lioness of Lis-abi’ Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, who audaciously led the women of Egbaland to protest against the injustices meted out against women in Abeokuta. Her story is inspiringly told by Bolanle Austen-Peters.

2.4. Empirical Review

This section reviews some previous empirical studies that focus on how speech acts are used in leadership communication^[17] analysed the speech acts used by former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed in his political speeches to provide insights into the mechanisms of persuasive political discourse. Dr. Mahathir explored “Directives and Assertives” speech acts as essential components of his rhetoric to sway his audience, creating trustworthiness and persuasion. Thao et al.^[18] worked on the illocutionary acts in Barack Obama’s speeches. Akinwotu^[19] examined the pragma-rhetorical features of Pentecostal sermons in Nigeria

Other studies that investigated the use of illocutionary speech acts in several different contexts include a study conducted by Budiasih et al.^[20] on illocutionary acts of foreign students in an Indonesian schooling setting regarding the process of learning. Canceran and Temporal^[21] also studied the speech acts of ESL learners’ in classroom discourse. These research works exposed that in the classroom setting, most illocutionary acts are utilized for interrogations, expressing notions, and confirming information. Illocutionary act analyses carried out on more speeches include that of Kemal, Suryadi, and Rosyidi^[22], on the use of illocutionary speech acts by Jokowi in the first presidential election debate that took place in Indonesia in 2019. An analysis of illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts in defamation texts was conducted by Sholihatin^[23]. It was discovered that the use of illocutionary acts included representatives, directives, and declaratives. The review of these previous studies shows that each genre of text employs diverse purposes for the illocutionary acts. In the literature, a few research studies are associated with the research, such as one carried out by

Putri et al.^[24], that explored the speech act utilized in the film *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* while employing a descriptive qualitative study that utilized the utterances from the *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* film as data. The researchers above revealed that statements in films contain locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary behaviours.

While these studies offer useful insights into the use of illocutionary speech acts in different contexts, they focused more on classroom, historical, textual, political, and religious leadership contexts. Inevitably, these acts frequently emerge in communication processes across diverse contexts because they are concerned with communication, one of the essential parts of human existence. An understanding of these concepts in specific contexts is needed to avoid problems in communication. The present study, therefore, distinguishes itself by examining a female historical leader and contributes a new understanding of illocutionary acts in such narratives. It also considers the perlocutionary dimension, which prior works have not extensively explored.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The theory that guides this study is the extended Speech Acts Theory by Searle^[7]. This extension by Searle to Austin's speech acts categorised the illocutionary act of Austin's three dimensions of Speech acts into five groups.

Searle^[7] classifies illocutionary acts into five parts:

1. **Representatives (or assertives):** This act commits the orator to the truth of the expressed notion. They make a specific claim, describe something, or draw a conclusion about the world. This act describes events, states, and processes; it also makes assertions, claims, reports, and suggestions. They are also called assertives because they make assertions about the state of affairs of the world.
2. **Directives:** This act directs the listener to take action; examples include giving instructions, making requests, advising, pronouncing, sentencing, and baptizing. For example, I christen you Moses.
3. **Commissive:** This act commits the orator to a certain course of action, e.g., vowing, warning, challenging, threatening, and betting. For example, I promise I will help you with your project this weekend.
4. **Expressives:** This act expresses the speaker's feelings

regarding a particular circumstance, such as expressing gratitude, regret, welcome, greeting, reprimanding, condoling, praising, congratulating, or apologizing. For example, I am really sorry for arriving late, I am thrilled to hear the good news!

5. **Declarations:** In Searle's view, declarations are speech acts that, when performed successfully, alter the world in some way. The act of speaking creates a new reality or alters the existing one. In other words, the act of saying something ensures that the propositional content (what is said) corresponds to the reality it aims to describe or change. It includes christening, marrying, firing, pronouncing, and sentencing. For example, You are hereby terminated from your position.

Linguists usually employ different approaches in their analysis of data, but John Searle's extended version of speech acts serves as the linguistic approach for this study. The speech acts in Bolanle Austen Peters' *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti* are analysed based on the modified version of the Speech Acts theory.

3. Methodology

The study employed a qualitative method of data analysis, involving a detailed examination and interpretation of the language employed in the movie *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti* by Bolanle Austen-Peters to gain insight into the movie's meaning and intended message by the producer. This study employs a qualitative research design using a case study approach. The data for the study is Bolanle Austen-Peters' film "Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti", a vivid and engaging representation of one of Nigeria's most influential personalities. Film scenes and utterances were purposefully selected based on relevance to leadership, speech intensity, and diversity of speech. The data collected was subjected to a speech act analysis. Utterances were examined within their contexts to interpret the intended illocutionary points based on representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Recurrent speech acts were identified and exemplified. The perlocutionary effects on the audience were also evaluated based on their observable responses. Through this systematic process, the study classified illocutionary acts, identified prevalent ones, and assessed perlocutionary impact.

4. Data Presentation, Analysis, and Findings

The study analysed the prevalent illocutionary acts in the language use of a leader such as assertions and directives in the establishment of authority, to analyse the types of illocutionary acts performed by the protagonist herself in Bolanle Austen Peters' *Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti*, identifying the most recurrent speech acts and their intended effects and to evaluate the perlocutionary effects of Funmilayo's illocutionary acts on the hearers, investigating whether the intended responses align with the producer's design. Illocutionary and perlocutionary analysis help in understanding

the intent behind the speaker's statements and the effects these statements have on the listener.

The text employs speech acts to call the listeners to action against an unjust cause. The results reveal a discussion around community frustrations with excessive taxation (**Table 1**). Utterances 1–3 express shared sentiments using expressive acts like “Our mothers!” and “It is enough!”. Utterances 4–5 question authorities through interrogative directives like “Why?”. The final utterance directly calls for action through a commissive like “Let's chase them away!”. The word “parakoyi” used in the text refers to a traditional merchant guild or association of traders among the Yoruba people of Nigeria.

Table 1. Utterances showing the illocutionary act, intended force and the resultant perlocutionary effect.

Utterance	Illocutionary Act	Intended Force	Perlocutionary Effect
1. Our mothers!	Expressive	Expressing a bond and calling for attention	Creates a sense of unity among the audience
2. It is important we join hands to stop these parakoyi!	Directive	Urging collective action	Motivates the audience to collaborate
3. Enough of the exorbitant taxes they've been collecting from us!	Assertive	Stating a fact about unfair taxation	Provokes a feeling of injustice
It is enough! It is enough!	Expressive	Emphasizing frustration and urgency	Heightens the sense of urgency
4. You can see how they have been stressing you and frustrating you anyhow.	Assertive	Stating the adverse effects of the oppressors	Reinforces feelings of shared hardship
5. Why?!	Expressive	Questioning the reason behind the oppression	Encourages the audience to question authority
Let's chase them away!	Directive	Calling for immediate action to remove the oppressors	Incites a direct action against the oppressors

In the utterance, the speaker primarily uses directives to the women to distribute pamphlets and fliers and then proceed to the Alake's palace (**Table 2**). These directives are coupled with a commissive, indicating the speaker's commitment to immediate action to mobilise, coordinate, and inspire the listeners, ensuring they understand and are ready to participate in the planned actions. The illocutionary acts provide specific tasks and reveal the ultimate goal of their movement, indicating a structured plan and purpose. The speaker's clear and direct instructions aim to reduce confusion and increase efficiency by ensuring that everyone understands their roles. The perlocutionary effects of the utterance are intended to motivate and energize the listeners. By specifying the destination as the Alake's palace, the speaker inspires a sense of purpose and urgency. This approach increases the collective effectiveness and resolve of the group, ensuring they are

prepared for the steps involved in their collective action.

“Let us all have it at the back of our minds that we might stay late. I will make sure that what we shall eat is sorted,” involving expressing gratitude, giving instructions, making commitments, and conveying hope (**Table 3**). The perlocutionary effects aim to reassure, prepare, inform, and motivate the women, reinforcing their commitment and morale.

The analysis classified statements in **Table 4** described their illocutionary forces and perlocutionary effects. The discussion utilised a range of speech acts to achieve interpersonal goals. Assertives conveyed information, while directives encouraged specific actions. One commissive indicated commitment. An expressive statement shared a feeling. No declaratives altered the external situation directly. In all, language functioned pragmatically to inform, motivate, reassure, and build empathy between speakers and listeners.

Table 2. Utterances showing the illocutionary act, type of speech act used, the intended force, and the resultant perlocutionary effect.

Utterance	Illocutionary Act	Type of Speech Act	Intended Force	Perlocutionary Act
“We’re heading out now”	Commissive	Announcement	To indicate the commencement of an action.	This commits the group to immediate action, instilling a sense of urgency and readiness.
“Market women”	Directive	Addressing the Group	To address the specific audience, ensuring they know the message is directed at them.	This phrase directs the address specifically to the market women
“More pamphlets, more fliers”	Directive	Instruction	Giving instructions on the line of action	Aiming to spread their message more widely and effectively, this directs the market women to increase distribution of pamphlets and fliers.
“Then we head to the Alake’s palace”	Directive	Instruction	Giving instruction	Perlocutionary Act: This provides the next step in their plan, creating a clear sequence of actions. The reference to the Alake’s palace likely aims to focus their efforts on a significant target, increasing the perceived importance and impact of their actions.

Table 3. Utterances showing the illocutionary act, type of speech act used, the intended force, and the resultant perlocutionary effect.

Utterance	Illocutionary Act	Intended Force	Perlocutionary Effect
“Let us all have it at the back of our minds that we might stay late, I will make sure that what we shall eat and drink is sorted.”	Commissive, Directive	Promising provisions, instructing preparedness	Reassurance and mental preparedness
“Our mothers, thank you, I am grateful, I would like you to go home and prepare, our assembly time is 9:00 am tomorrow morning. We will move from here.”	Expressive, Directive, Commissive	Expressing gratitude, giving instructions, making a commitment	Feeling appreciated, understanding instructions, being informed, feeling committed to the plan
“God will help us”	Assertive	Conveying hope and reassurance	Feeling hopeful and reassured

Table 4. Utterances showing the illocutionary act, type of speech act used, the intended force, and the resultant perlocutionary effect.

Utterance	Illocutionary Act	Type of Speech Act	Intended Force	Perlocutionary Effect
As you keep making the requests, I keep adding them	Commissive	Promising	The speaker is assuring the listeners that their requests are being acknowledged and addressed.	The listeners may feel acknowledged and reassured that their requests are being considered.
That’s right	Assertive	Affirming	The speaker is reinforcing agreement or affirmation.	The listeners may feel affirmed and validated.
When you get home, make sure you share them with the market people and your family members	Directive	Instructing	The speaker is giving instructions for future actions.	The listeners may feel compelled to share the information with others, spreading the message further.
Let your family members hear!	Directive	Commanding	The speaker is giving a direct command.	The listeners may feel a sense of urgency to communicate the information to their family members.
Let the people of the market also do what? Let them hear!	Directive	Emphasizing instruction	The speaker is reinforcing the instruction with a rhetorical question and command.	The listeners may feel a reinforced obligation to ensure the market people hear the information.
We’ve been here since morning. My voice is sore	Assertive	Stating	The speaker is providing information and emphasizing the effort made, stating facts about their current condition and effort	The listeners may feel empathy for the speaker’s efforts and dedication.
It’s your cause I’m fighting for	Assertive	Expressing commitment	The speaker is affirming dedication and commitment to the women’s cause	The listeners may feel a strengthened sense of solidarity and support from the speaker.

The speaker here makes use of expressive, assertive, and directive speech acts. The analysis shows how the speaker uses different types of speech acts to express gratitude, affirm correctness, command, state facts, challenge, and declare intentions. Each act is aimed at evoking specific responses and emotions from the listeners, that is, the Abeokuta women who were marching.

“We will not accept this anymore!” and **“The taxes they collect from us women, we will pay them no more!”** are declarations of refusal to accept injustice, empowering and unifying the listeners, the women. **“You will not cry!”**

and **“You will not mourn!”** are commands meant to console and encourage listeners (Table 5).

From the observable responses of the listeners, the illocutionary acts performed by Funmilayo achieved their intended perlocutionary effects. The expressive acts elicited smiles and expressions of gratitude in return. The assertives sparked agreements and engagement with the issues. The directives unified the women in resolve against oppression as they cheered affirmations in response. Overall, Funmilayo’s strategic use of language had a profound impact in motivating and mobilizing the listeners towards action.

Table 5. Utterances showing the illocutionary act, type of speech act used, the intended force, and the resultant perlocutionary effect.

Utterance	Illocutionary Act	Type of Speech Act	Intended Force	Perlocutionary Effect
Thank you! Yes	Expressive	Gratitude	Expressing gratitude	Listeners feel appreciated
Thank you, I am forever grateful!	Expressive	Gratitude	Expressing deep gratitude	Listeners feel deeply appreciated
That’s right	Assertive		Affirms correctness	
You will not cry!	Directive	Command		Listeners feel encouraged
Amen!	Expressive	Agreement	Expressing agreement with a hopeful tone	
You will not mourn!	Directive	Command		Listeners feel encouraged
Amen!	Expressive	Agreement		
Taxes imposed on women alone, and we still get to the market and the parakoyis may beat us, they may take away our property.	Assertive	Stating fact	Stating the injustice and hardship	Listeners feel informed and possibly outraged
We will not do what?	Directive	Rhetorical Question	Challenging the audience to reject injustice	Listeners feel challenged to think critically
We will not accept this anymore!	Directive	Declaration	Declaring refusal to accept injustice	Listeners feel empowered and resolute
The taxes they collect from us women, we will pay them no more!	Directive	Declaration	Declaring refusal to pay unfair taxes	Listeners feel determined and unified

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to identify prevalent illocutionary acts in Funmilayo’s leadership communication and evaluate their perlocutionary impact. Expressives, Assertives, and Directives were identified as the most common speech acts used, revealing insights into Funmilayo’s effective communication as a transformative leader. Expressives—gratitude and agreement, used to foster unity and morale; Assertives informed listeners accurately, and Directives mobilised them to action. These align with works in the literature noting political leaders’ use of representatives and directives^[17,18]. Directives emerged as the most frequent illocutionary act. Funmilayo issued instructions, rhetorical questions, and declarations to

coordinate protests—a finding supported by Akinwotu^[19] in religious contexts. This reflects leaders employing language to influence audiences^[10,25]. In Perlocutionary effects, Funmilayo’s acts achieved their intended impact of motivating, inspiring, and organising listeners into collective resistance as seen in their responsive cheers. This is consistent with theories that speech acts function to accomplish real-world actions Searl^[7]. These findings align with prior works that noted political leaders’ use of representatives and directives to influence audiences^[17,18]. They also support theories on speech acts that accomplish real-world actions^[7].

The study reveals leadership communication and its role in inspiring followership. It has implications for advanc-

ing knowledge on leadership, communication, and language studies within African and global contexts. The study recommends that future studies could examine a larger data corpus encompassing Funmilayo's full speeches to gain deeper knowledge/insight. A comparative analysis of her language with other leaders could provide a perspective on shared and divergent communication strategies. Investigating other factors, such as nonverbal cues, could offer a more holistic view of Funmilayo's leadership effectiveness; similar pragmatic analyses of other influential figures would expand understanding of language use in diverse historical and cultural settings.

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Conceptualization, O.J.E. and R.A.O.; methodology, R.A.O. and J.E.J.; software, J.E.J. and O.A.; validation, O.J.E. and R.A.O.; formal analysis, O.J.E. and R.A.O.; investigation, J.E.J. and O.A.; resources, O.J.E. and J.E.J.; data curation, O.J.E. and R.A.O.; writing—original draft preparation, O.J.E. and R.A.O.; writing—review and editing, J.E.J. and O.A.; visualization, J.E.J. and O.A.; supervision, O.J.E. and R.A.O.; project administration, O.J.E. and O.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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