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### **Abstract**

Present article attempts to analyze the role of the pragmatic markers or illocutionary force indicating devices in the speech acts of prediction. The headlines play a significant role in making a news story readable and approaching large number of audience. The headlines used in the present article were taken from CNN website. These headlines cover a variety of stories related with Pakistan. As the headlines communicate more than what is said they have been treated as speech acts. Searle (1969) defines speech act as a minimum unit of communication which is illocutionary in nature and creates an impact on the mind of the reader. Keeping, this definition in view, the headlines are speech acts that affect the readers. Current study is limited to the headlines that are related to prediction or forecasting the future state of affairs. The detailed analysis of the speech acts finds that the interpretation of the headlines depends on the language devices which help in shaping the illocutionary functions of the speech acts in collaboration with the context. It has also been found that the headlines use negative words more often than the positive ones in an attempt to take the readers to the detailed stories.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic markers, Speech acts, CNN, Pakistan

## Introduction

Headlines are the significant elements of the news stories and grab the attention of the readers instantly. Kuiken et al. (2017, p.1311) claims that headlines available on the internet not only aim to grab the attention of the reader but also induce the curiosity in the reader to an extent that the reader should read the whole article for which the headline has been written. This phenomenon is called clickbait that uses words in a specific manner where use of questions, numbers, forward referencing, spectacularization and negativity is quite common. These words may carry implicit meanings or double meanings which need to be decoded in order to understand the hidden messages in the headlines.

As the headlines use specific language devices to create an impression on the audience, the major objective of this study is to analyze the language devices in order to understand the speech act functions of the headlines that act as predictions. The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Which language devices have been used in the headlines acting as predictions?
2. How these language devices mark the illocutionary force of prediction?
3. What messages are being conveyed in the form of speech acts?

## Literature review

Prediction is usually an estimate of what is likely to happen in future. Keeping in view speech act theory, Vanderveken (1990, p. 173) defined “to predict” as an assertive or representative speech act. Its propositional content represents a state of affairs in future. Its preparatory condition is that the speaker is expected to have good reasons for believing what is predicted. Here, the listener does not need to look for any interpretation.

As the headlines have been treated as speech acts in this article, it is necessary to understand the the proposition, the speech act, the conditions under which a speech act works, the illocutionary force and the illocutionary force indicating devices. It is also important to know how the context contributes to the interpretation of a speech act.

According to Corcoran (2009, p.72) a proposition is something which has an intension and it can be called the meaning of a sentence which carries concepts that may become complex when so many simple senses are included in it. Corcoran (2009, p.73) Claims that people use sentences in order to express the propositions. These propositions are either expressed directly or indirectly.

Knachel (2017, p.02) connects proposition to reasoning and claims that reasoning involves making the statements supported by reasons and drawing the consequences based on reasons. According to him the proposition is a claim or a statement which can be true or false. He differentiates sentences from the propositions by logical content as even two different sentences can have the same proposition.

According to Searle (1969, p.173) a speech act is a function of the meaning of the sentence. Keeping in view this definition a speech act is the basic unit of the linguistic communication as claimed by Searle. In order to understand the functions of the speech act, it is necessary to understand the taxonomy of the speech acts, the identification devices as well as the context in which it is uttered or written. Searle (1969, pp. 16-19) classified the speech acts into illocutionary acts or the acts having a communicative outcome after being read or listened to by the audience:

- i. Representative acts:** These acts commit the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition. The direction of fit of representatives is words to the world and the expressed psychological state is a belief. For example, complain, conclude and deduce.
- ii. Directive acts:** These acts are the efforts by the speaker or the writer to make reader take an action as expressed in an utterance. The direction of fit is world

to the words and the sincerity condition is want or desire. For example, ask, order, command, request and plead.

**iii. Commissive acts:** These acts express commitment to future action that would be taken later. Direction of fit is world to the words and the sincerity condition is intention. For example, commitment and promise.

**iv. Expressive acts:** These acts simply indicate the psychological or emotional state while expressing something. Direction of fit is not required. For example, apologize, condole, deplore and welcome.

**v. Declarative acts:** These acts bring a change in the already existing state of affairs. Successful performance guarantees that the propositional content corresponds to the world. For example, declare, appoint and fire.

Searle (1969, pp.65-68) gave a framework that has further been used in this article for the analysis of the headlines. It include propositional content, preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions.

**i. Propositional Content Conditions:** This condition is concerned with the proposition of the sentence in question that concerns present, past or future state of affairs.

**ii. Preparatory Conditions:** These conditions depend not only on the intention but also the knowledge on the part of speaker as well as hearer.

**iii. Sincerity Conditions:** They tell about the belief, intention or desire of a speaker in performing a speech act.

**iv. Essential Conditions:** These conditions help to determine the type of illocutionary act on the basis of what is intended by the speaker.

Searle (1969, p. 30) used the term 'Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)' for the realization and identification of Illocutionary forces associated with the illocutionary acts. He elaborated that IFIDs can be realized in multiple ways. The intonation contour, punctuation, word order, stress, mood of the verb and performative verbs function as illocutionary force indicating devices that aim to identify illocutions. He also added that by using an illocutionary force indicating device a speaker can express different illocutions with the same proposition.

Allwood (1977, pp. 56-58) expressed a different point of view regarding the identification of illocutionary forces. He highlighted following important points:

- i. Illocutionary force is not always derived from performatives rather it can be derived in two ways. First, the lexical conventions operating on locutionary level connect lexical items to certain contexts. Second, the modal conventions are also associated with communicative actions such as indicative mood is associated with statements, interrogative with questions while imperative with requests or orders. It does not always happen that lexical or modal conventions are directly associated with the constitution of an illocutionary force, instead they may operate together.
- ii. There may not exist any explicit indicator of an illocutionary force rather there can be a natural connection between conventional content of an utterance and specific type of communicative action such as a warning.

According to Searle (1979) as mentioned by Leech (1983), differences in illocutionary verbs are a good guide but differences in illocutionary acts cannot be surely determined on the basis of the differences between the verbs. According to Leech (1983) illocutions are more like puddles and ponds than like monkeys and giraffes. it means that illocutions are distinguished by indistinct rather than discrete characteristics. Language is regarded as an indirect means of accomplishing an extra linguistic goal that is illocutionary goal.

Commenting on the felicity conditions Levinson (1983, pp. 245-246) explained that the felicity conditions help to specify how to give an order to a particular utterance according to the context. He also added that an illocutionary force is closely related to the meaning of an utterance and cannot be easily discussed according to the truth conditional semantics. In this situation, felicity conditions provide the best way for the description of an utterance.

Van Dijk & Kintch (1983, p. 84) emphasized the importance of context in the constitution of the speech acts and termed them social actions. They emphasized that certain acts such as promises, threats and congratulations are social actions of the communicators. The speech act can only be successful if contextual conditions such as wants, beliefs, desires and intentions are satisfied. The social relationships between speakers and hearers such as status and familiarity also matter in the successful performance of a speech act.

According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985, pp. 7-8) every sentence even a one word sentence has an indicator of illocutionary force. Without the presence of illocutionary components the theories of meaning cannot be considered complete. In order to assign illocutionary acts to the sentences it is quite important to analyze illocutionary verbs and other IFIDs.

According to the hypothesis of constructability presented by Searle and Vanderveken (1985, pp. 49-50) new illocutionary forces can be formed out of the old ones by adding propositional content, preparatory or sincerity conditions. If this kind of situation occurs where the propositional content, preparatory and sincerity conditions of an illocutionary force those are not common to all illocutionary forces having the same illocutionary point are called special conditions of that force. On the contrary if the conditions of an illocutionary force that are common to all other illocutionary forces with the same point are called general conditions of that force.

Verschueren (1997, p. 30) tried to elaborate the concept of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices other than the illocutionary verbs. These devices included the following:

- i. Sentence type: Sentences can be used as IFIDS. For example declarative sentences have assertive force; interrogatives have the force of question and imperatives have directive forces associated with them.
- ii. Aspects of word order, stress and intonation.
- iii. Adverbs can serve as the indicators of meta pragmatic awareness such as frankly, seriously, briefly, confidentially. He gave following examples for the adverbs:
  - i. Admittedly, John's a lousy driver.
  - ii. Certainly/ undoubtedly, humans are a danger to themselves.

The adverb in the first sentence serves as an attitudinal marker while in the second it shows epistemic properties.

Waelte (2003) conducted a research on speech act analysis of headlines in which he analyzed the speech acts as well as the linguistic features of the language of the advertising headlines. According to this analysis, representative, directive, commissive and verdictive acts are used in advertising headlines. In order to catch attention effective words such as relish and affordable are used. Apart from these strategies, alliteration, repetition, figurative language and structural ambiguity are also used. Words and phrases having multiple meanings are used in headlines.

Muhammed (2005) conducted a pragmalinguistic analysis of the selected political newspaper headlines from distinguished newspapers, such as Los Angeles Times, The New York Times and The Washington Post. Out of a total of 50 illocutionary speech acts she found 02, declaratives, 39 representatives, 04 expressives, 01 directive and 04 commissives. She also found following linguistic features in the headlines:

- i. Deletion:** It is the omission of lexical items such as articles, demonstrative adjectives, possessive adjectives, verb 'be' and titles, such as Mr., Sir, and Dr., to save space in a headline.
- ii. Special Use of Tenses:** Present tense is used in headlines to add freshness, immediacy and also to create interest. Present tense describes something happening in the present or the past. Present progressive tense is used with the omission of the auxiliary to report the events that are developing. The infinitive is used to refer to the future. The past participle is used in passive constructions.
- iii. The Use of Acronyms and Abbreviations:** Abbreviations, and acronyms make headline writing easy, but they also add ambiguity to the headlines.
- iv. Pre and post modification:** They occur in different ways in headlines as adjectives; participles, adverbials, genitive 's' and nouns are used as pre modifiers. Post modifiers are also used where modifier follows the modified expression.
- v. Ambiguity:** There are various reasons why ambiguity is created in the headlines. Context alters word meanings. As editors have to shift the headline materials in order to save space. In this way the particular word important to the context is missing. Sometimes nouns and adjectives are joined in a way that they convey double meanings. Generalization is also a cause of ambiguity. Generalization must only be made when a specific fact cannot be stated within the limits of the headline. Sometimes, it overstates the results. Muhammed (2005) gave following different kinds of ambiguity:

The first one is lexical or referential ambiguity where a single lexical item has more than one meaning the ambiguity is lexical. The second is syntactic ambiguity where an entire sentence has more than one interpretation the ambiguity is syntactic. The third one is textual ambiguity that occurs when incompatibilities exist between different parts of text or specifications exist in multiple directions, across a text.

Hall (2012, p. 04) emphasized that the deliberate use of certain lexical and syntactic arrangements media reports the news as well as invites the desired responses from the audience. He stated that media language is a performative language as it invokes certain attitudes from audience. He explained that the acts of informing, deliberating and witnessing are used by the journalists to give shape to the agendas, opinions, identities and social reality.

### Methodology

This study is part of a comprehensive descriptive qualitative study based on speech act theory where the headlines were randomly selected from CNN website ([www.editioncnn.com](http://www.editioncnn.com)). All these headlines were processed to select the relevant content only and the bylines and the details were deleted. The headlines were treated as propositions functioning as speech acts in the light of Searlean theory of speech acts and were classified under five major categories of illocutionary acts given by Searle. The headlines were further processed to classify the prototypes associated with the major categories of the speech acts. The illocutionary acts of prediction are basically assertive or representative acts. Headlines giving an indication of future happening were treated as illocutionary acts of prediction. All the headlines were numbered from H1 to H11. Further, the same speech acts were analyzed for the occurrence of linguistic devices that play important role in shaping the predictions. In order to make sure whether the headlines have a function of predicting they were analyzed according to the propositional content, preparatory and sincerity conditions given by

vanderveken as mentioned in the literature review. The propositional content conditions helped to analyze different contexts of prediction.

### Data Analysis and discussion

The results of the current analysis are based on the linguistic devices found in the speech acts as well as the analysis of the propositional content conditions. The important language devices playing key role in the headlines acting as predictions have been discussed below.

**Table 01: The results for the language devices in the headlines**

Headlines	Language devices
H1. Collision <b>at intersection of</b> quick fix and long haul in Afghanistan, Pakistan	Noun+preposition
H2. <u>'You're seeing a collapse in Pakistan'</u>	verb
H3. <u>Spring will bring Taliban resurgence, top military official predicts</u>	Verb+verb
H4. <u>Inside Al Qaeda succession: Who is likely to step up</u>	Adverb+infinitive
H5. With Pakistani visit to the U.S., a <b>chance to ease</b> tensions	Noun+infinitive
H6. <u>Pentagon optimistic about Af Pak strategy</u>	adjective
H7. <b>Hope for future floats</b> for Pakistan	Noun+modifier+verb
H8. <u>Pakistan 'ready to explode'</u>	Modifier+infinitive
H9. Pakistanis <b>edge</b> tense World Cup win	verb
H10. <b>Economic outlook dire</b> for Pakistan flood victims	Compound noun+modifier
H11. Pervez Musharraf's <b>comeback chances</b>	Compound noun

The table indicates that a number of linguistic devices have been used in the headlines that function to predict. In the first headline a preposition can be seen with a noun which means something is likely to happen. Similarly, the verb “seeing” in the second headline means expecting something in future. In the third headline auxiliary verb has been used with the main verb along with the verb “predicts”. “Will” as an auxiliary marks future tense and the verb “predicts” clearly indicates future forecast. In the fourth headline the verb of possibility “likely” has been used with an infinitive which means there is a possibility of something to happen in future. The sixth headline uses the word “hope” which is related with anticipation. The headline also uses the word future where “for future” is a post modifier to “hope”. The verb “float” has also been used which means the situation is unclear and anything can happen. In H8 the word “ready” has been used which means prepared for some activity. This word has been used with an infinitive “to explode” which indicates the possibility to blast. In H9 the word “edge” has been used which also indicates strong possibility of a happening in future. In H10 a compound noun “Economic outlook” has been used where it means economic position in combination with a modifier “dire” which means

dreadful and shows a state of fear in the near future. In H11 the phrase “comeback chances” indicates a possibility again.

Keeping in view the propositional content conditions given by Searle that were further explained by Vanderveken, the headlines were analyzed by applying all the possible conditions. The detailed analysis is given in table 02 where the symbol “—do—” indicates “same as above”. This symbol has been used where the felicity conditions are same as the for the previous headline.

**Table 02: Analysis of headlines according to propositional content conditions**

S. No.	Headlines (Propositions)	Propositional Content Condition	Preparatory Condition	Sincerity Condition	Essential Condition
H1.	Collision at intersection of quick fix and long haul in Afghanistan, Pakistan	Possibility of future event	Writer has enough knowledge to predict what is likely to happen	Writer thinks that giving awareness about the possibility of future happening is in the interest of the reader	Something bad is likely to happen
H2.	<a href="#">'You're seeing a collapse in Pakistan'</a>	--do--	--do--	--do--	--do--
H3.	<a href="#">Spring will bring Taliban resurgence, top military official predicts</a>	--do--	--do--	--do--	--do--
H4.	<a href="#">Inside Al Qaeda succession: Who is likely to step up</a>	Possibility of future event	Writer can speculate about future	--do--	It can be predicted who is the successor
H5.	With Pakistani visit to the U.S., a chance to ease tensions	Possibility of future event	--do--	--do--	Something good is likely to happen
H6.	<a href="#">Pentagon optimistic about Af Pak strategy</a>	Possibility of future event	Writer has got the speculation from a reliable source	The information is beneficial for the reader	--do--
H7.	Hope for future floats for Pakistan	Possibility of future event	Writer has enough knowledge to predict what is likely to happen	The info can help readers to change the course of an action	A bad event is predicted



H8.	<a href="#">Pakistan 'ready to explode'</a>	Possibility of future event	--do--	Reader must be protected from worst event that is likely to happen by giving relevant info	--do--
H9.	Pakistanis edge tense World Cup win	Possibility of future event	--do--	Reader needs to be made aware of the reasons	--do--
H10.	Economic outlook dire for Pakistan flood victims	Possibility of future event	--do--	--do--	--do--
H11.	Pervez Musharraf's comeback chances	Possibility of future event	--do--	--do--	There is a possibility for the comeback

H1 is related with 2010 while the Non government Organization were working for development in Pakistan and Afghanistan where the war against terror was going on. The headline H1 carries illocutionary force of prediction as the felicity conditions show the possibility or likeliness of the future happening. Prepositional phrase "at intersection of" helps to mark the proposition as a prediction. Keeping in view the context, the headline forecasts a neagative state of affairs.

H2 is about 2011 after a bomb blast in Pakistan. In H2 the verb "seeing" that is in the form of present participle marks the illocutionary force of prediction as it has not been used to indicate present situation rather it has been used to mark the possibility of something that is likely to happen. In this headline a state of affairs happened in past has been connected with negative predictions of future.

H3 relates with 2011 about US forces fight against Taliban. There are two indicators of illocutionary force in H3. One is the modal verb "will" that clearly marks future. The second indicator is the verb "predict" which marks the illocutionary force of prediction as a performative. Unlike the previous headlines, this headline uses a performative verb to mark the future state of affairs.

H4 was written after the death of Bin Laden who was famous Al-Qaeda leader. In H4 there is a very clear marker of illocutionary force in the form of an adverb "likely". Here the adverb shows the possibility. The possibility is sually ambiguous as it is not clear what can the result of an ongoing situation in future. The headline simly seems to be an attempt to take the readers to an ambiguous story.

H5 belongs to 2010 when a NATO gunship helicopter killed Pakistani soldiers in border region with Afghanistan and it caused a rift in US Pak relations. H5 is also a prediction as the noun phrase "a chance" and the infinitive " to ease " bothe show the possibility. In this headline, the word "chance" has been used in a positive sense to create an impact that something better may happen in future.

H6 is related with 2010 in the context of united States war against terror in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Unlike the pervious headlines this headline H6 uses the adjective

“optimistic”. Although it does not indicate the illocutionary force clearly but functions as an indicator of the probability. Just like H5 this headline is also an effort to create a positive impression.

H7 is also about 2010 in the contexts of heavy floods in Pakistan. There are two linguistic devices in H7 that help to decide the illocutionary force. One is the noun phrase “hope” then the noun phrase “future” and at last the verb “float” that does not give lexical meaning rather gives idiomatic meaning and shows that there is no hope. The headline predicts a state of affairs that can take a negative turn in future.

H8 is related with 2010 about a story highlighting the gun market business in Pakistan. Once again the marker of the illocutionary force of prediction in H8 is infinitive “to explode”. Another feature is the presence of adjective “ready” which indicates strong possibility. In the context of gun business, the headline creates a negative impression by forecasting negative results. The headline also uses words indicating strong possibility of negative events that are likely to happen.

H9 was written in the context of 2011 world cup in which Pakistan cricket team had participated. H9 marks the illocutionary force of prediction with the help of verb “edge” that gives idiomatic meaning and means that there is a strong possibility of a future event. Keeping in view the context, the headline indicates a sudden happening in future that may result in failure or defeat. The headline again creates ambiguity.

H10 is about the heavy floods in Pakistan in 2010. The nouns present in the H10 help to mark the illocutionary force of prediction as there are two nouns “outlook” that is related to something in the future whereas the second one the noun “dire” that shows the possibility of some negative happening. As a forecast of future the headline states a negative state of affairs for future by using words that create fearful impression.

H11 was written after an interview given by former president of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf. Just like the previous headlines the noun “chances” indicates that there exists a possibility in H11. The headline uses the word “chance” just like in H5 in order to indicate what may happen in the coming days or months. The headline can be taken as a predictive statement only.

### **Discussion**

Overall analysis of the data indicates that it is not sufficient for the felicity conditions to mark the illocutionary force of prediction rather there is a key role played by the linguistic devices such as nouns, verbs, adverb, infinitives. Adjectives also play a key role in marking the illocutionary force. Moreover, it is not necessary that a performative must always be present. Although the presence of these devices is essential, still the role of extralinguistic factors such as the context of an utterance cannot be ignored. The analysis supports Allwood (1977, pp. 56-58) above mentioned statement that lexical and modal elements play an important role in marking the illocutionary force. In addition to the devices mentioned by the researchers, the nouns and adjectives have also been used in such a way that they mark the predictive illocutionary force such as the words “chances” and “dire”.

The analysis of illocutionary force markers is necessary as even after the analysis of felicity conditions there remains a question in mind that what made us to identify the illocutionary force. Illocutionary force indicating devices are the only factors that need to be analyzed to identify the role of the linguistic factors in pragmatic analysis.

Propositional content of all the headlines or speech acts included here speculate about a future event likely to happen. Comparing with Vanderveken (1990) the propositional content does not clearly indicate whether the proposition is related to present or past. There exists a difference in the preparatory conditions for the headlines as some headlines are based on writer’s knowledge or ability to speculate whereas others are based on the information taken from reliable sources. Similarly a variety exists in the sincerity conditions

where the information is either beneficial or is for the sake of change of a course of action or just for awareness. Context matters but the choice and arrangement of the linguistic devices in marking the predictions is quite significant.

### **Conclusion**

Language devices have played a significant role in the headlines acting as predictions. Most commonly found devices are noun, preposition, verb, adverb, infinitive and adjective or modifier. These devices do not exist independently, rather give their meaning in combination with the other devices. The meaning associated with these linguistic items have changed the meanings associated with the headlines.

The language devices act as illocutionary force indicating devices in the speech acts of prediction. The choice of the words creates a significant impact on the interpretation of the speech acts. A single IFID may change the meaning associated with an illocutionary act. The context of the headlines matters in interpretation but the major role has been played by the choice of particular words.

As the headlines proved to be predictive speech acts, most of the headlines forecast a state of affairs in the associated context. Negative predictions are more frequent than the positive predictions. The headlines create a sense of ambiguity and fear in most of the headlines. There are only three headlines that use ambiguous but positive words while the rest of the headlines communicate negative state of affairs related with future. This article is limited to a few speech acts and language devices. More research is needed to find out the implicit meaning related with the headlines functioning as speech acts.

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