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## EXPLORING SPEECH ACT PATTERNS IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PRAGMATICS

The purpose of this paper is to look into discourse patterns of President Joe Biden from an anthropological pragmatics perspective, and the theory of speech acts, in particular. I will argue that speech acts are double-edged tools in human communication that have the power to create objective facts accepted and maintained by human agreement on the one hand but are also determined by fluctuating socio-cultural context. In exploring the topic of the American presidency from an anthropological pragmatics perspective, this article addresses theoretical and methodological issues which further our understanding of linguistic structure of social reality determined by socially constrained functions that underlie culture. Thus, this paper argues for a broadened research path to advance the theory of speech acts in political discourse. An analysis of President Joe Biden's language practices uncovers the rhetorical concept of *ethos* and its criterion of credibility that is indicative of his presidential status.

Keywords: American presidency; President Joe Biden; Anthropological pragmatics; Linguistic pragmatics; Speech acts theory; Rhetoric

### 1. Introduction

The first hundred days of Joe Biden's presidency were transformative for the American nation not only due to the pivotal presidential transition from Biden to Trump but also because a deeply divided nation still needs reshaping and rethinking presidential power which was classified as “[o]ne of the most (if not the most) rhetorically unconventional, controversial, and divisive candidates in US presidential history” (Sclafani 2018: 1). Therefore, the tumultuous transition happening in the specific social-cultural milieu is an absolutely central point of reference in our discussion of anthropolinguistic study of Joe

Biden's speech acts (e.g. Austin [1962] 1975; Drew 2018; Duranti 2015; Fetzer 2018; Levinson 2017; Sbisà and Turner 2013; Searle 1969) as activities of the relevantly contextualised moments (e.g. Fetzer 2017: 259; O'Brien 2018: 191). This seems to be an important focus in an attempt to pursue the basic parameters of context typical of Biden's first couple of months in the office which were disturbed by the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine war. This article specifically elaborates on the linguistic characterisations of Joe Biden's statements which refer to Putin's war.

Taking the **anthropological pragmatics** stance (Chruszczewski 2011; Huang 2017; Karimzad and Catedral 2022; Norrick and Ilie 2018; Senft 2018; Völkel and Nassenstein 2022), I present the study of Biden's speech acts performance as a mode of practical action by drawing special attention to the construction of presidential power and the "message" behind it. It is crucial at this point to highlight that the message does not mean "getting information across" but rather highlights the strategic value attributed to the president's speaking habits. Therefore, the ambiguity of the term explains how and what the president communicates about his identity, explains the system of values, beliefs, and persuasive power through taking up certain issues and avoiding others (Lempert and Silverstein 2012: 2). Being able to analyse presidential discourse in its highly dynamic context of war accompanied by emotions of uncertainty, disagreement and fear requires a synthetic, structural, and organised approach that could systematically demonstrate how the Message is scripted, performed, and finally accepted by a society. That said, focusing on the tools of anthropological pragmatics seems to serve as one of the most workable methods for understanding and analysing the persuasive function of political texts.

While pointing to the connections, or issues in this respect that are central to every linguistic act, this study has its lens on the rules governing the linguistic elements which draw on sentence meaning, speakers' intentions, and audience reception. They are primarily revealed by the pragmatic locutionary act, the illocutionary force and a perlocutionary effect of speaking practices (Austin [1962] 1975; Sbisà 2013; Searle 1975; Senft 2014). To perform this task, this analysis requires applying the most tangible criteria of who, says what, to whom, how, in what circumstances, and with what effect leads us to account for a communicative framework which works across a wider cultural format. This fusion of concepts in linguistic analysis has successfully been applied in the anthropolinguistic approach to studying human communication that argues for a maximal potential of what is said and offers a more comprehensive scope than purely signposting the reference and predication (Searle 1975: 24) of specific speech acts. With this in mind, the postulate about the complementarity of anthropolinguistic approach comes from Geertzian observation that human behaviour is a symbolic action, and its meaning is socially established (Geertz

1973: 12). Alessandro Duranti goes as far as to say that “[s]peech act theory context does not go beyond speaker and a hearer” (Duranti [1992] 1997: 26), therefore he stirs a question of a methodological sufficiency in applying speech act theory in explaining language phenomena. Thus, anthropological pragmatics enters the scene by taking into consideration a global dimension of events including ritualised and institutional aspects of speech events. This creates prospects for developing cross-contextual implications of practices which become regularities but most importantly exhibit functional types of speech behaviour that are continuously negotiated and restructured according to the dynamically fluctuating context. To put it succinctly, I adopt Piotr Chruszczewski’s view that “[a]nthropological pragmatics is understood to be the study of the essence of language and the essence of culture in the form of their combined and simultaneous regularities in a specific and contextualized functional environment” (Chruszczewski 2011: 48). Therefore, I shall give attention to meaningful units of communication in the form of speech acts that underlie changing contextual embeddings and allow for the development of frame of analysis. In exploring the area of speech acts, being the rationale for this study, it is observed that on the one hand they reflect the type of status, authority and power which transpire through Biden’s linguistic acts and on the other hand they map out upcoming course of action based on evidence communicated through pragmatic force, thus they serve as a legitimisation tool for Biden’s credibility as a political leader. Following up on the anthropological pragmatics view of this analysis, I shall look into Joe Biden’s presidential statements about the Russia–Ukraine war with a view to recognising and establishing functions, mechanisms and effects of speech acts which ultimately create cultural acts typical of his administration.

### **1.1. The framework of anthropological pragmatics**

Since every linguist’s aim is to provide a satisfactory account of the ways speakers organise their knowledge and how they interact with it, it is crucial to highlight that anthropological pragmatics invites a well-established set of ethnographic tools which present explanatory function of texts (Searle 1995: 40), relevant to determining their linguistic meaning in the specific and contextualised environment. From a methodological point of view, anthropological pragmatics as a sub-discipline deriving from both anthropology and linguistics (Chruszczewski 2011: 48) most importantly demonstrates the importance of studying language behaviour as an amalgam of language and culture. Another, but still convergent account of anthropological pragmatics, also known as cultural or ethnographic pragmatics, refers to “[t]he systematic study of language use and its place in the functioning of human communities and institutions from a cultural or

anthropological view, especially but not exclusively focusing on non–Western cultures” (Huang 2017: 8). As such anthropological pragmatics principally draws from **anthropological linguistics** (Ahearn 2017; Danesi 2004; Fedorak 2007; Foley 1997; Perrino and Pritzker 2022; Senft 2018; Silverstein 1975) in that both disciplines recognise the importance of a situated focus for studying language but the former provides ethnographic research tools for studying language while the latter supplements or frames language practices as a “[s]et of symbolic resources that enter the constitution of social fabric and the individual representation of actual or possible worlds” (Duranti [1997] 1999: 3). Of particular relevance to this scope is the word *interpretation* (the domain of pragmatics) and ‘social fabric’ as “[s]ocial events demarcated as formal events” (Irvine 1979; Atkinson 1982) [whose, M.S.] “[a]spects of formality have universal linguistic realisations” (Levinson 1983: 46). Therefore, it is possible to recognise some culture–specific social activities which construct social reality governed by the use of language, constrained by linguistic communicational patterns called *the communicational grammar* (Chruszczewski 2007). This system of patterned rules endorses an important feature of speech acts; that they are conditions of utterance and also specifications with regard to what the utterance counts as (Searle 1969: 48). The patterns in question assign certain functions to utterances embedded in the social situation of human communication (Levinson 1983: 279). Consequently, the study of speech acts is organisational and cooperative, since any verbal exchange understood as an act of doing things (i.e. declaring, promising, threatening, asserting, *etc.*) is a performative act of acceptance or acknowledgment that always carries the illocutionary force of the act (its meaning potential) which is also a cultural act (Silverstein 1975; Foley 1997) and an institutional form of human culture (Searle 1995: 40). That said, anthropological pragmatics provides with linguistic investigative methods which bring huge benefits to understanding how language gets involved in the process of meaning–making through ways of life of individuals and communities. From the anthropological pragmatics perspective, Joe Biden’s language in general and his texts (statements) in particular are quintessentially oriented towards the patterning type of presidential behaviour which can be systematically explained in terms of intentions, needs and purposes that are a cultural enterprise embedded within the American discourse structures.

## 1.2. In the pursuit of persuasion exponents

It is natural at this point to highlight that at the core of anthropological research is the significance of describing and analysing presidential cultural practices as forms of power and status demonstration (Duranti [1997] 1999: 4). These social variables are defined in terms of prerequisites of presidential

persuasive power. As Richard Neustadt (1960) observes, “[s]tatus adds something to persuasiveness; authority adds still more” [and– M.S.] “[a] President’s authority and status give him great advantage in dealing with the men he would persuade” (Neustadt 1960: 35). In other words, the contextually driven view of analysing political discourse seems to be highly correlated with the notion of power and status in a sense of the effect that is achieved in the process of persuading the audience. However, Searle (1975) has given even more prominence to the significance of status which bears on the illocutionary force of the utterance to which a certain type of function is assigned. He believes that in the process of assigning a function to certain objects we perform it by virtue of the fact that there exists a collective assignment to the person or an object as having a certain status. Consequently, the manifestation of the status–function interface is pervasive and creates a system of **institutional facts** as determinants of power (Searle 1979: 51) which are typical of only human institutions (*ibid.*). Such a link establishes relations of positive and negative power (Searle 1995: 100) that underlie all of the institutional facts. For example, the fact that someone is a professor at the university carries at least two implications in terms of the status–function. On the one hand, he is entitled to have certain ‘positive power’ representations, e.g. prestige or the right to decide. On the other hand, such a hierarchical position requires meeting other expectations and having obligations or duties which serve as ‘negative power’. These outlines are power potentials, also called by Searle the **deontic powers**. What is important, functional deployment of power types takes place by means of language and through it due to the fact that language gives people reasons for certain types of action. That said, for example, if a president makes a promise he creates a reason for a certain type of action, specifically he commits to some future course of action. Therefore, presidency as a source of power (deontic powers) stems from its status functions (the agentive functions attributed to presidency) and as a result they are the conditions and the reasons for the performance of presidential power.

From the view of anthropological pragmatics, speech act analysis offers some excellent categorisation premises for the development and documentation of the American presidential discourse. First of all, such a study recognises and helps to establish the pragmatic illocutionary force of the President Joe Biden’s statements as well as determine the fundamental role of a perlocutionary effect that becomes unconventionally achieved in the persuasive mode of his utterances. Secondly, the study of speech acts allows to make further explorations in HOW presidential power, which represents high social status, is executed. Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) rightly observe that “[t]o treat persons as representatives of a group rather than as relatively powerless individuals would be to refer to their social standing and the backing that they derive from their group” (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 199). This brings up

the question of impression management<sup>1</sup> (Goffman 1956) and public face<sup>2</sup> of Joe Biden which are believed to be strongly positioned with respect to the Politeness Principle (PP) that accounts for a universally shared system of methods observed in situated linguistics practices (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: xiii). Thirdly, speech act analysis acknowledges that especially illocutions form the basis for exploring how linguistic practice is realised in different contexts with reference to the examination of conflict and confrontation in interaction (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 26). Following this orientation, what lies at the core of any conflict talk have been face threatening acts (FTAs) which are formulated based on the framework of direct or indirect speech acts of, e.g. complaining, threatening, accusing, warning, *etc.*). The criterion of facework in this study could thus uncover anthropolinguistic patterns of communication which requires a re-evaluation at a microlevel of Biden's redressive action aimed at minimising face threat, and also considers at a macrolevel his discursive practice, which manifests itself in the building of patterns of his political identity.

It appears that a thorough study of discursive practice as action can be approached by studying situated sequences of events, e.g. speech acts following each other in time that serve as basic units for descriptive purposes (Saville-Troike [1982] 2003: 23). That said, since “[s]peech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication” (Searle 1969: 16) these elements have the potential to act as indicators of functional and contextual character of discursive practice, i.e. sociocultural ways of speaking. This direction of research has been known as ‘speech act theory’ proposed by the British philosopher John Austin ([1962] 1975) and subsequently developed by an American scholar John Searle (1969). In Searle's typology (Searle 1975: 354-358), the most commonly accepted list of speech acts includes:

REPRESENTATIVES that present a state of affairs as either true or false; the acts that have a word-to-world fit, i.e. they intend to make the words fit the world (e.g. stating, announcing, describing)

DIRECTIVES that attempt to get the hearer do something; the acts that have a world-to-word direction of fit, i.e. they are attempts, wants, wishes, and desires.

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of *impression management* refers to speaker's performance that reminds that of a theatrical performance. It is “[t]he way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may or may not do while sustaining his performance before them” (Goffman 1956: x). A different type of font is used in the footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of *public face* adopted in this part of the study comes from Erving Goffman (1967) which “[t]ies face up with notions of being embarrassed, or humiliated, or losing face. Thus, face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 61).

COMMISSIVES that commit a speaker to some future course of action. The direction is world-to-words in which an intention is expressed, e.g. promises, favours, offers, requests.

EXPRESSIVES that indicate psychological states where there is no direction of fit, e.g. congratulations, apologies, condolences, thanking.

DECLARATIONS that define the successful performance through acts of bringing something about in the world where no affect is expressed, e.g. declaring, resigning, naming, appointing, sentencing, excommunicating, christening.

On a political plane, speech acts are the means of legitimising political power, i.e. the power to persuade in political processes and events deriving from political context (Neustadt, 1960; Fairclough and Fairclough 2012). For this reason, persuasion is this element of rhetorical action that aims at ‘making people do things’ which is highly correlated with the illocutionary force of utterances (e.g. Martin 2014: 1; Ilie 2018: 89). Illocutions are well suited to their consequences or effects (perlocutions) that performance acts have on their speakers’ knowledge, values, and beliefs. As such, studying presidential statements, specifically their illocutionary force, also called a function-indicating device (FID) (Searle 1971: 6) captures the patterned ways as persuasion tools but also detects central mechanisms operating in institutional forms of the American political discourse (Lempert and Silverstein 2012). In view of the above, analysing the functions of presidential statements in the form of the study of their speech acts marks on the one hand the types of persuasive speech habits of the president Joe Biden and, on the other, the expectations and beliefs of the hearers which underlie America’s cultural legacy.

### **1.3. Presidency as an institutional reality**

Given the rudimentary logical and conventional structure of speech acts as the foundation for building institutional facts that constitute institutional reality, the basic structure of presidency has as its point of departure its status-function(s). Having said that, we are working with a logical and structure-based apparatus of the features of a presidential institutional reality and its functions which are believed to be objectively constructed (Searle 1995). To further explore presidential cultural practices as forms of power and status demonstration it is necessary to look for the ways they are articulated in actual language use. I specifically rely on Searle’ logical structure of conventional power (Searle 1975) as a source of knowledge about intentions (Austin [1962] 1975; Searle 1995; Duranti 2006) and collective intentionality (social agreement and acceptance of what things are) that are always a part of culture. It serves as the primitive structure providing social categorisation of institutional objects which presidency most notably belongs to. On this account, virtually all social objects, next to “[g]overnments, money, and universities, are in fact just

placeholders for patterns of activities” (Searle 1995: 57). Importantly, these objects implicitly endorse a significant role in making representations serving specific agentive functions. The explanations of the primacy of acts over objects is due to the fact that people impose certain status–functions on institutional objects according to the following formula (Searle 1985):

**X term counts as Y (S does A) in context C**

where Y is imposed on the X element (the object) through general features of Y status–function which content can be stated as **(S does A)** where “S” stands for an object and “A” refers to an act (Searle 1995: 104). Importantly, the act of performance (Y) is assumed to always presuppose intention as one of the felicity conditions (Austin [1962] 1975; Fetzer 2018), rules of appropriateness (Levinson 1983) or conditions of satisfaction (Searle 1969). For assertives, it would be intending to make true/false statements and for commissives the intention is to keep the word that was given. Consequently, when one has no intention in doing what he promised or intended not to state facts which are based on truth conditions then it is a straightforward violation of communication. The conceptual basis for constructing presidency as an institutional reality can be envisaged according to the agreement or acceptance (through the collective intentionality) that we count the X element as having its status imposed and function specified in the Y term.

Based on this formula, the analysis providing a representation of presidential power through the institution of presidency in the American government can be interpreted accordingly:

**presidency counts as its status–function (a president performs acts)  
in a specific socio–cultural context**

This account provides a satisfactory explanation to how presidential power is created and represented in the collective mind of a society. Although the formula of identifying representations does not exhaust the methodological scope to researching institutional facts and its reality, it certainly provides with the anthropolinguistic tools to describe ways of speaking in a contextualised functional environment. Finally, drawing on the agentive functions Y imposed on the X term, as the main trigger in creating representations of X (Searle 1995: 70), corroborates the conceptualising potential of speech acts which make up the conceptual system called culture (Silverstein 1975: 157). In the analysis that follows the selection of speech act functions as an intentional behaviour of a president and ways of creating a social reality is a promising path to enforce the representations of the American presidency and its power in the light of the context of a Russia–Ukraine war. It is of significance to recognise the persuasion



tools and mechanisms driven by FIDs to account for a broader view of the ways of legitimising Biden's political power.

#### 1.4. Method

In the study that follows I present the President Joe Biden's 12 written statements in the form of speeches about the Russia–Ukraine war in the year 2022 retrieved from the website of the American Presidency Project (<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>) at the University of California, Santa Barbara which is a database of presidential and non-presidential records. The dataset used for the current study consisted of texts which were found within the timeframe between the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 until the beginning of August 2022 during the times of the Russia–Ukraine war. The primary objective of this study is to demonstrate the key importance of speech acts and account for their workings in the construction of the American presidency as an institution, assuming the presence of speech act functions that are here understood to be conventional classifications of presidential acts of power.

The apparatus for this content analysis was the QDA Miner Lite 5 software which helped to analyse qualitative data. The texts from the website were extracted and organised into a corpus of speech acts. Each utterance was coded as a separate speech act based on its illocutionary force. The sentences were further grouped into clusters of speech acts which belong to various categories of recognising intentions that pertain to specific speech acts. Given that all illocutionary acts are forms of a rule-governed behaviour (Searle 1971: 2; Alston 2000), we need to analyse Joe Biden's statements according to the rules governed by the use of the uttered words. Therefore, this study provides the constitutive rules (Searle 1975) that create the representation of presidency achieved through its status-function. That is, such-and-such rules that apply to the analysed statements "[c]reate and define new forms of behaviour" (Searle 1975: 33) that not only regulate the activities but constitute them or make them possible to happen.

In this research, all the statements were marker-coded and analysed accordingly. The analysis was guided by various recognitions of Biden's intentions in the form of features of propositions. For the sake of this study only three types of speech acts which predominated in the analysis were given a thorough consideration. The methodological assumptions presented above will be shown below with the analysis of the statements according to the following formula and its conditions:

#### **X counts as Y in C where:**

Y triggers the representation of X by means of various recognitions of intentions:

**I<sub>1</sub> (assertives)** – the intention to convince the hearer to the truth of his propositions; assertives are statements of facts. This component also corresponds to *ethos* as a rhetorical mode of persuasion attained by expressing the reliability of a speaker.

**I<sub>2</sub> (commissives)** – the intention to convince the hearer that the speaker is committed to doing something under his obligation.

**I<sub>3</sub> (expressives)** – the intention to express the psychological state (affect) in the form of approval/disapproval.

Since our formula assumes that the function of speech acts assigns a value of presidency and the underlying force is always power, it is necessary to capture (a) the factors which create and establish power relations (P) and establish (b) the ways how one gets the meaning by what Biden says. Trying to answer the latter question, it is of use to adopt Grice's idea of non-natural meaning that "[t]o say that a speaker S meant something by X is to say that S intended the utterance of X to produce some effect in a hearer H by means of the recognition of his intention" (Grice 1957: 385). In other words, what is required in this analysis is to look for a means for making Biden's intentions known to the public and to determine how they are applied for a further purpose. This seems to be an adequate account of the analysis since it makes a connection between intention and meaning.

#### 1.4.1. Analytical framework

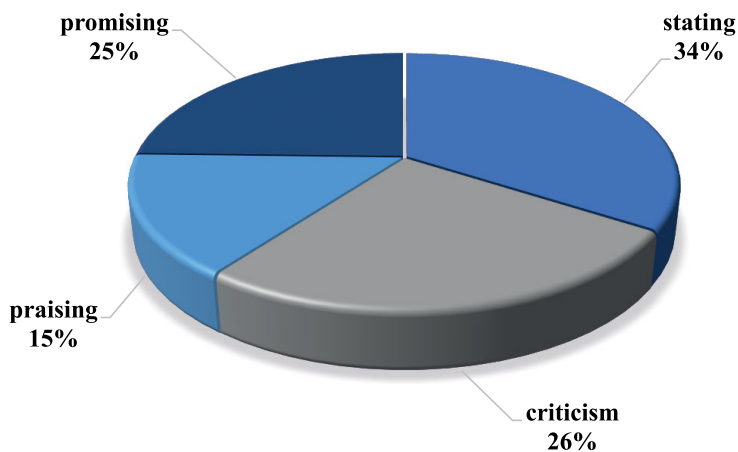


Figure 1. Distribution of speech acts

The data in this study show a relatively even distribution of three predominant speech acts that were recognised in the gathered corpus. The results can be broken down into three main segments: stating (being a part of assertives), promising (commissives), criticism and praising (expressives). Their

frequency showed significance in the analysis of socio-political context of the Russia–Ukraine war. Consequently, the patterns obtained for this analysis give crucial insights on the anthropological pragmatics view of creating Biden's presidency as a social institution. The speech act patterns that were recognised in Biden's texts are indicators of his persuasion style and power differential. Furthermore, they lay the groundwork for conditions, rules and strategies which are the building blocks of his presidency as a social institution. In the following, I will analyse the categories which present the most salient speech act patterns.

#### 1.4.1.1. The analysis of assertives

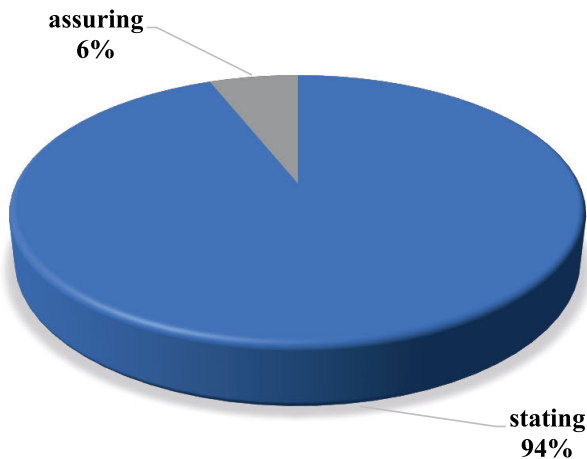


Figure 2. Distribution of assertives

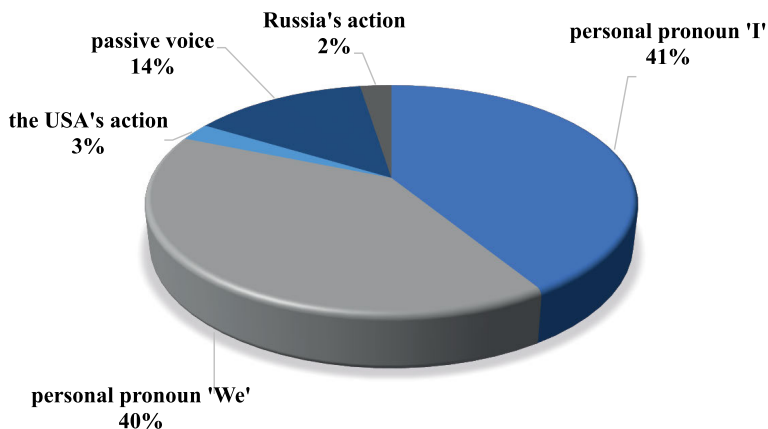


Figure 3. Distribution of personal pronouns

Since in performing assertives the main purpose is to inform and state the truthfulness of the asserted propositions, the primary institutional facts that are intended to be recognised as true also aim to show a representation of an actual state of affairs. The use of assertions reveals a tendency of Joe Biden's rhetoric to heavily rely on the regular and frequent use of first-person singular as well as its pluralisation 'we'/'our' which accounts for a negative politeness strategy that involves orientation towards a negative face<sup>3</sup> (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 70). Adopting the two criteria, they provide significant findings in relation to the construction of presidential personhood (Foley 1997: 261) viewed as a type of inscription whose traces can be found in social relationships (Gergen 1990) and which is evoked through social collaborations. Interestingly enough, the results based on the gathered corpus data show a dichotomous nature of the created ideology of Biden's personhood. On the one hand, we are faced with the egocentric individualist ideology (Foley 1997: 265) evidenced in the strategy of a *personal pronoun I* pattern and a socio-centrally embedded personhood which is fundamentally anchored in a social belongingness to a group (Foley 1997: 266). In the detailed study that follows I start with the latter pattern.

It is observed that a *pluralisation of I* pattern operates at the following thematic levels:

Table 1. A list of thematic levels recognised in *the pluralisation of I* pattern

Thematic levels	Examples
(1) presenting action taken to help Ukraine,	<i>e.g. We are sending the weapons and equipment that Congress has authorised, We have deployed defensive land and air forces in the astern part of the Ukraine, We are now making additional defensive deployments of forces to the eastern part pf the Alliance, Our measures are and remain preventive, proportionate and non-escalatory.</i>
(2) maintaining a collaboration with other countries to provide support for the Ukrainian armed forces,	<i>e.g. We also discussed Secretary Austin's efforts in Brussels today, We were joined today by our closest partners Sweden, Finland and the European Union.</i>
(3) presenting the USA as a game-changer,	<i>e.g. And an overwhelming majority of the world recognizes that if we do not stand up to Putin's Russia, it will only inflict further chaos and aggression on the world.</i>
(4) expressing solidarity with Ukraine,	

<sup>3</sup> According to Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987), the negative face of an addressee refers to a "[w]ant to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded" (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 129).

Table 1. cont.

Thematic levels	Examples
	<i>e.g. We stand in full solidarity with the democratically elected president, President Zelensky reached out to me tonight and we just finished speaking.</i>
(5) following NATO'S founding document	<i>e.g. Our commitment to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is ironclad, Our commitment to article 5 is ironclad, We have activated NATO's defence plans.</i>

Twelve written statements account for clear cases of implicating social motives behind the linguistic construction of Joe Biden's social status and his presidency. As the illocutionary acts of stating are produced, thereby implying that the preparatory conditions of assertives are satisfied (i.e. to imply that they can be backed up by facts), Biden's group membership is manifested. All of this underlines the plural of authority, solidarity, power, and social status (Ilie 2005: 182; Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 199) which is derived from performing a specific role (Brown and Gilman 1960: 253) based on a membership with another group as a sign of social standing derived from this group (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 199, Helmbrecht 2002: 42). As can be noticed, the inclusive function of 'we' is sociocentric with its meaning formulated through the societal potential of collectivity. Therefore, one way of representing the world by means of assertives has been the creation of the representation of presidency as a carrier of a collective identity stemming from its membership in a group.

A radically different view of creating American presidency by means of assertives includes an observable shift into the use of the personal *pronoun 'I'* pattern. By looking at how frequently Biden used this mechanism, it was found that the distribution of occurrence was equally high to that of the pluralisation of *I* pattern. Considering the thematic grounds for these specific communicative occurrences, it was observed that they hinged explicitly on the following areas:

Table 2. A list of thematic levels recognised in the *personal pronoun I* pattern

Thematic levels	Examples
(1) Personal action taken by the President Joe Biden	<i>e.g. I reaffirmed my commitment, I informed President Zelensky, I sent to Congress an urgent proposal, I just spoke with President Zelensky, I met the fellow leaders (...) to discuss, I briefed him on the steps we are taking to rally international condemnation, Tomorrow I will be meeting with the leaders of the G-7, I will be monitoring the situation from the White House this evening and will continue to get regular updates from my national security team, Tomorrow I will meet with my G-7 counterparts</i>

Table 2. cont.

Thematic levels	Examples
(2) Reference to his successful management of available resources	<i>e.g. I have nearly exhausted the resources given to me, I have ordered the deployment of additional forces, I also have conveyed ongoing economic, humanitarian, and security support,</i>
(3) Frequent use of the phrase ‘my administration’	<i>e.g. my administration will continue to expedite the delivery of additional weapons and equipment, my administration has nearly exhausted funding, my administration is authorizing an additional \$800 million in weapons, ammunition, and other security assistance to Ukraine, Since the outset of my administration, I have directed my administration to continue to...,</i>

The exploration of assertives shows a significant distribution of a pattern marking the use of *singular personal pronoun I*, being the primary referent. What seems to be of importance here are the preparatory conditions governing the use of this specific class of speech acts which are concerned mainly with the truthfulness of claims manifested in his statements. It is the context that assigns the value of his propositions as true based on the Searlian formula “S has evidence (reasons *etc.*) for the truth of proposition” (Searle 1969: 66). Therefore, the preparatory conditions which represent the actual state of affairs include contextual grounds of the Russia–Ukraine war and various types of action taken by Biden (listed in [1] and [2] above) that invoke an explicit effect, that of maintaining a successful leadership. It seems that one of the hallmarks of his statements is providing the audience with some credible basis which holds that his acts are sincere. As a consequence, his rhetoric is believed to be motivated by the same core intuition which focuses on building his presidential identity which reflects the attributes of an ethical rhetor. It is an essential finding since it entails crucial implications for understanding his performance as a persuasive mode of action which follows from the specific type of argumentative speech, i.e. appeals to authority and credibility. The empirical findings show significant variability in constructing his presidential identity. They demonstrate that his pragmatic actions of assertives (specifically stating) create a dichotomous module of his ideological presidency which hinges on an individuated and collectivist sets of pragmatic behaviours. This plurality of terms and what they could infer creates the chasm between the role of personal-collective goals that Biden wishes to fulfil. Nevertheless, a major advantage of these seemingly conflictive results is that they explain speech acts as dynamic determinants of emergent strategies, therefore they view them as causal roots of any pragmatic behaviour.

### 1.4.1.2. The analysis of expressives

Turning now to another distribution of predominant speech acts, Figure 6 presents the proportion of statements belonging to the category of expressives. The largest cluster of utterances found in Biden's transcripts belong to criticism<sup>4</sup> and praising which shall be analysed, respectively.

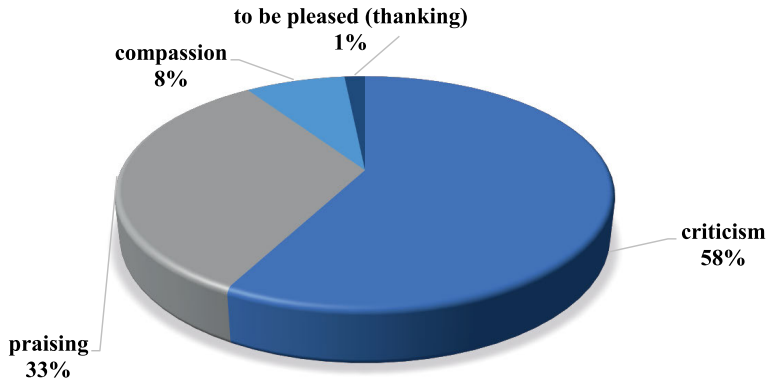


Figure 4. Distribution of expressives

The pattern of criticism consistently produces a strong effect for a negative evaluation of Russia (67,7% of all critical utterances), Putin (22,6% of all critical utterances) and blaming other countries (9,7%). At a functional level, criticism as the “expressive” segment lies at the core of a strategic orientation towards the positive– social face that is threatened. Clearly, such a strategy covers much ground that ranges from presenting a negative evaluation of Russia and Putin's actions to claiming asymmetrical power by the President Joe Biden over his enemies. Structuring criticism through negative politeness and its on record FTAs is clearly observed in the following statements: *Russia's aggression, Russian brutal and ongoing war, the world condemns Putin's war, Russia is responsible for the devastating abuses of human rights, Russia is to blame, Russia bears full responsibility for this conflict, President's Putin's flagrant aggression, Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction.* This observation helps to understand presidential discourse as an arena of a **role allocation** strategically distributed through delegitimisation of Russia and its leader. Against this

<sup>4</sup> Criticism is categorised as one of the elements of expressives because they threaten the positive -face want by showing that S has a negative evaluation of some aspect of the H's face and that the S does not care about the addressee's feelings (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 66). Negative evaluation also relates to or even is equal to a negative attitude (Bromberek 2014: 76). The theoretical notion of expressives linked to emotions is rooted in Searle's theory of speech acts and his conceptualisation of evaluative statements that express the speaker's emotions and to express his attitudes (Searle 1969: 183).

background, the representation of Russia and Putin gains a submissive role characterised by power deprivation through the loss of social face and consequently the creation of a negative–public image. And if we add a layer of ideological and rhetorical implications to this interpretation, we add a new dimension to viewing American presidency as an act of creating ideological reality (Van Dijk [1998] 2000: 4) in the ideational sense of ‘constructing social reality’ (Fairclough [1992 2006: 169) which serves rhetorical ends. By doing so our view is anchored in a negative representation that **rhetorically dehumanises** Russia and Putin who become the subjects to delegitimization (Chilton 2004: 47) due to their barbaric and disruptive role in a society. This outcome reveals the use of a strategy based on a binary distribution of power called ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ relation (Van Dijk 2008; Okulska and Cap 2010: 3; Strukowska 2024: 95; Chovanec 2010: 63). Under this view, the axiological framework of ‘us’ underlies those who need to resist the oppression of ‘them’, i.e. Russia.

The results systematically show that American presidency is assigned power through its status–function of expressive–criticism segment that initiates a process of constructing a social role of a president that is inculcated in the habitus triggered by Biden’s active response and engagement in political matters. By saying so he maintains his status entitlement that is accrued to him due to cultural conventions which are expected to follow for the role of a president. That said, Biden’s rhetoric follows a conduct that is required of him through the obligations and rights imposed on his social role that prescribe a defining code of behaviour. Using the socio-cultural transfer of ideational meaning through habitus, Biden’s presidency and his power differentials is evidenced in speech acts of expressives that legitimate his leadership and deligitimise Putin’s administration.

On a relatively opposite scale of a valuational potential lies another expressive segment in the form of a speech act ‘praise’. This pattern presupposes a significant conceptual relation– a joint effort of two countries; Ukraine and the USA who gather forces to resist Russian aggression. The results obtained for the frequency of statements which indicated praising Ukraine’s actions is 64, 7% while utterances which showed the approval of the USA’s performance amounted to 35,3%. Looking closer at the contextual–sensitive expressions of praising it is possible to carve out some specific features that present a favourable assessment of both nations. These contents are fixed to two predominant frameworks: (a) the Ukraine’s coping skills in handling war and (b) the USA’s help for Ukraine. In light of this distinction, the former aspect illustrates how lexical resources build the momentum of conveying the rhetorical effect of glorification produced by the President Joe Biden towards Ukrainians. As observed in the following lines: *The bravery, resilience, and determination of the Ukrainian people continues to inspire the world, The people of Ukraine continue to inspire the world with their courage and resolve as they fight bravely to defend*



*their country and their democracy, the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their democracy and freedom, courageous Ukrainian forces, the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their country, brave actions of the Ukrainian people, the brave and proud people of Ukraine,* the lexical items are marked with a high intensity of meaning that legitimise Ukrainian operations as if the physical threat is no longer a looming catastrophe but rather present a threat that is well-handled and will soon perish. Quite naturally, therefore, it can be argued that praising statements function as the first attempts to signal some preliminary stages of stabilisation that are aligned with the outpouring of support that comes from the American nation. With regard to direct military backing, Joe Biden highlights that “[w]e have provided a historic amount of security assistance to Ukraine, the United States will be able to keep providing Ukraine with more of the weapons, The resources that I requested will allow us to send even more weapons and ammunition to Ukraine, U.S. support (...) has been critical in helping Ukraine win the battle of Kyiv, the steady supply of weapons the United States (...) have provided to Ukraine, the United States has placed the highest priority on delivering critical military capabilities to Ukraine, In addition to U.S.-produced weapons, we have also worked to facilitate the transfer of capabilities (...). The data demonstrate one thing that is particularly prominent in the distinguished praising pattern. The institution of the American presidency is based on the premise that the President Joe Biden earns credibility through his appeal to *pathos* by sending a message of hope for all the fear-stricken people who struggle to accept war-affected reality.

#### 1.4.1.3. The analysis of commissives

The results clearly show that Biden’s rhetoric is heavily based on a pragmalinguistic pattern of commissives, predominantly promising (89,5%). Regarding promises, it is rudimentary to ask “[w]hat conditions are necessary and sufficient for the act of promising to have been successfully and non-defectively performed in the utterance of a given sentence” (Searle 1969: 54). This preliminary stage of identifying the intention to convince the hearer that the speaker is committed to doing something under his obligation can be followed by extraction of rules which are used in this illocutionary act (ibid.). Based on this premise, the following analysis serves a double purpose. Firstly, it aims to set out the conditions under which the President Joe Biden performs successful promises and secondly to specify the formulation of rules governing the necessary and sufficient conditions of context-specific discourse. Therefore, the ‘HOW’ of the President Joe Biden’s promises are organised according to the following conditions for the performance of his illocutionary acts of promising:

1. *Promise (p) predicates a future act (A) of doing something for someone.*

In this category, promises made by Biden are based on propositional content conditions (Searle 1969: 57) that are determined by a specific context and are aimed to work to the advantage of the ‘promisee’. The propositions in question capture the meaning of Biden’s promises based on a reference–and–predication structure which is most often accomplished by the modal auxiliary ‘will’ as in: *the United States will stand by Ukraine/will stand with Ukrainian partners, will be able to keep providing Ukraine with more of the weapons, the American people will continue to stand with the brave Ukrainian people, This new package will arm them with new capabilities and advanced weaponry, We will continue to lead the world in providing historic assistance to support Ukraine’s fight for freedom, will provide additional artillery, radars, and other equipment to Ukraine, etc.* It is only a selected number of promises made by Biden; however, their global meanings involve thematic patterns that deal with emotional support as well as tangible military help in the form of a regular supply of resources.

2. *Speaker is obliged to be sincere and effective in making a promise.*

Importantly, promising is a practice for putting a promiser under the obligation of not only performing but most importantly carrying out the promised act. What is being postulated by Searle is that promising is both a socially recognised fact built on the assumed social role and essentially a subjective judgment inferred from attitudes and practices of individuals. This particular tenet gives a close resemblance to a rhetorical appeal of *ethos* that can be regarded as a rhetorical move of persuading through a certain type of appearance and evaluation. The former aspect is closely related to creating an impression management in the Goffmanian sense of a favourable public self–image while the latter represents the area of socially shared values and beliefs that are central to social interaction and a transfer of social roles.

Finally, what makes a promise is an intention to produce the illocutionary effect of promising that ought to be recognised by the hearer. What this relation implies is the act of placing the promiser under the obligation to fulfil the promise, but not only that, making promises also creates expectations in hearers (Searle 1969: 167). Therefore, this creates a bidirectional relation of making meaning that is built on the truthfulness of a speaker’s intentions and reciprocity of hearers. This distinction agreement is a major source of solidarity, commitment and symmetrical power that is built between both parties. Such a view goes hand in hand with a focus on persuading the audience to believe that a newly elected president Joe Biden is a credible and legitimate leader who declares truth, support, unity, commitment, and solidarity in the times of crisis and war. His presidential manifesto is coded in the commissive pattern of making a significant contribution as a President of the USA through a strategy of building his rhetorical status of an ethical leader who meets the expectations of those to whom he promises help and support.

### 1.5. Conclusion and remarks

The present article has been an attempt to explain how the American presidency becomes a social institution constructed by means of speech acts being intrinsically institutional facts. To meet this principal objective, the methodological premise of speech acts as anthropolinguistic tools describing ways of speaking in a context-constrained environment are given superiority. Therefore, the analysis grounded in a specific formula proposed by Searle (1969) was put forward suggesting that the conceptual basis for constructing presidency lies at the core of a conventional agreement between the social object (X) and its status, the acts of performance (Y) subsuming their status-function and a specific context (C). It has been shown that such a pragmalinguistic account provides a satisfactory explanation to how presidential power is created, maintained, and developed in a society therefore mediating cultural knowledge.

As prominently demonstrated in the empirical part of this paper, the full spectrum of mechanisms and strategies underlying the President Joe Biden's presidency quintessentially infers an anthropological pragmatics framing. This methodological premise suggests two types of outcomes. Firstly, on a theoretical plane, it endorses the view that speech acts are inherently modular since they are coding elements of any linguistic practice that can be accounted for by means of their specific regularities. Essentially, zooming in on the status-functions of assertives, expressives, and commissives produced by Biden, helped to find the regularities in pragmatic behaviour that assign a status of the American presidency and establish its power. Most importantly, the outcome of the study reveals that it is fundamentally built on the foundations of Biden's rhetorical persuasive style that exhibits a strong tendency towards building a character of an *ethical rhetor* as an indicative of his presidential status. The omnipresence of this framework is traced in the **criterion of credibility** that largely depends on (1) the truthfulness of his asserted propositions which are supported by facts, (2) the axiology-based role allocation that is markedly strengthened by Joe Biden's positive social face that serves to illustrate his power differential, (3) the appeal to *pathos* by creating solidarity, emotional support and sending a message of hope.

Secondly, these outcomes also point to the non-modular nature of speech acts that underlie the creation of presidency. This is not to say, however, that the patterns of primary pragmatic processes provide explanatory power of the cultural practices since they do not exhaust their meaning potential. Yet, they are variations in pragmatic actions which pertain to the social role of a president. Suffice to say, they are preliminary exponents of power in a specific functional environment therefore, this study is the right direction in the methodology of anthropological pragmatics approach (language-culture interface). Following on from that, this discipline is a promising field of study that apparently helps to

explain in detail how the gap between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning can be shrunk which is one step closer to achieving the explanatory status of social institutions that are the building blocks of the existing culture.

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