

## A SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTERS' MAIDEN SPEECHES

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### Abstract

*This study systematically examines transcribed maiden speeches of Pakistani Prime Ministers Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif to identify and quantify the use of speech acts through the framework of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), applied within a political discourse context. People, particularly politicians, (Ashraf et al., 2022) express themselves using utterances composed of words and grammatical structures, which perform specific actions through speech. This study adopts a qualitative approach, supported by quantifying occurrences of speech acts to strengthen the qualitative findings. The findings reveal that both leaders employed commissive speech acts extensively, with Imran Khan making more promises compared to Shahbaz Sharif. Khan's speech featured a higher proportion of representative and directive acts, emphasising policy goals and accountability, while Sharif's speech contained a greater use of expressive acts, showcasing empathy and emotional appeal. The research underscores the pragmatic implications of political speeches, as political leaders strategically use language to shape public opinion and drive social and political change. The findings contribute to existing literature on political discourse analysis by examining the specific context of Pakistani Prime Ministers' maiden speeches and emphasising promises as a rhetorical tool for building trust and maintaining a positive image.*

**Keywords:** Speech Acts, Commissive, Promise, Political Discourse, Maiden Speeches

### Introduction

Politicians have a significant influence over people because they have a more remarkable ability to persuade and affect public opinion, which may bring social and political changes. As Anna & Barrios (2016, p. 23) state, politicians' statements have significant power. They can influence not only the immediate political landscape but also the beliefs and opinions of the public. As a result, they can initiate societal change, given that our societal values are shaped, conveyed, and established through language.

It is crucial to understand how politicians use language, given their ability to manipulate people through their words. The pragmatics analysis focuses on the contextual meanings of the utterances (Yule, 1996). The researchers found it an exciting topic to work on by analysing the

politicians' language, particularly their promises for future activities and outcomes. This is because politicians' ability to influence and shape society can be contextualised through their assurances, making it a compelling study area.

J. L Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory and Searle's (1969) sub-categories of Illocutionary acts, in Semantics and Pragmatics, is one of the key theories that suggest that individuals perform actions by speaking. Different speech acts come within this framework (see Table 1 below) but promises (commissive) are the specific speech acts that represent the speaker's commitment to the future course of action. However, it can be very challenging for politicians to make such promises, even for those politicians who have good rhetoric and public speaking skills.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Pakistani political scenario has witnessed instability, including different eras of military rule and political instability. The country has experienced a series of military coups and political assassinations, which have led to frequent changes in government and political turmoil. However, Pakistan has also seen the rise of a vibrant and active civil society, with increased political participation and the emergence of new political parties.

Newly elected prime ministers commence their term by taking an oath and delivering an inaugural address. Their speeches serve as a specific political context and a tool to unify the nation and present the leader's political direction, legitimising their role as the leader (Khors and Jamieson, 1965). While politicians' addresses and maiden speeches are famous subjects for research in the field of Pragmatics and DA, most research focuses on Critical Discourse Analysis that explores the manipulation of power, domination, and power abuse. To the best of my understanding, previous research on Political Discourse has tended to focus on aspects such as the language used or the social and pragmatic functions of the speeches (Anna & Barios, 2016; Biria & Mohammadi, 2012), rather than explicitly analysing the speech act within the context of the Pakistani Prime Ministers' maiden speeches to the nation. This study focuses on the following research question:

- Which speech acts are dominantly used by the Prime Ministers of Pakistan in their maiden speeches?

To analyse the research question, the researchers have incorporated the theoretical frameworks of speech acts. The analysis of the two inaugural addresses was mainly conducted using qualitative methodology, but some quantification was also involved in comparing the proportions of different speech acts.

This research is divided into several sections. Section 1 comprises the research question and the background of the study. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework, which outlines the theories and tools used in the analysis. Section 3 explains the methodology, including the data collection and analysis methods. Section 4 represents the study's findings, which are structured around the research question. And finally, section 5 comprises the representation of results complying with literature.

### **Literature Review**

This pragmatic discourse analysis aims to analyse the relationship between the language and the social context in which it has been used. It mainly focuses on the speech acts and their realisation. As Van Dijk (1997) outlined, the discourse analysis in this study is political, as the speakers being analysed are the Prime Minister, a prominent political figure who delivers an inaugural speech to an audience aware of their political ideology. The inaugural address aims to

unite people, validate the event, outline the new administration's policy vision and goals, and garner backing for its upcoming political initiatives (Khors and Jamieson, 1985). Thus, grasping the political backdrop is crucial to discern how the orator utilises language, especially in terms of commissive speech acts, to meet their goals. However, as emphasised by Khors and Jamieson (1985), the speaker can utilise various rhetorical strategies in this political context.

Promises can be a powerful rhetorical tool for building trust and proposing political direction (Yuan and Lyu, 2022). However, failing to keep implicit or explicit promises can have negative consequences for speakers, including a loss of trust, a diminished perception of their personality, and reduced suitability for future partnerships. In addition, the speakers may be subject to punishment and high levels of fault attribution.

In place of implicit promise, using vagueness as a rhetorical strategy is a common approach for speakers who wish to communicate in vague terms to avoid biased speech and face-threatening acts (Van Dijk, 2006). While this strategy is not typically associated with promise-making, the present study suggests that it may also be applied to political promises to make them challenge to measure, thereby circumventing the risk of loss of face while still reaping the positive benefits of making promises. (Van Dijk, 2006; Gruber, 1993).

Despite the potential risks associated with promises, they remain a powerful tool for political actors to convey a positive self-representation, an essential strategy in politics. This is why politicians depend on language to convince and persuade people of their opinion and thoughts. Studies of George W. Bush's speech and its power relations emphasise the same (Rudyk, 2007). Positive self-representation can be achieved not only by portraying the speaker and their in-group positively but also by highlighting the shortcomings of their opponents or out-group (Van Dijk, 2006). In this way, promises can be used in a political context to emphasise the speaker's competence by heralding positive changes or outcomes while also pointing out the areas that need improvement, which often relate to the shortcomings of their political opponents or predecessors (Anna & Barrios, 2016). By doing so, the speakers can position themselves as competent leaders who can bring positive outcomes for their constituents while differentiating themselves from their opponents.

### **Speech Act Theory**

The research draws heavily upon the speech act theory by J. L Austin (1962), which posits that our utterances perform actions. The theory distinguishes between three levels of speech acts: the locutionary act, which is the utterance's literal meaning; the illocutionary act, which is the action that the speaker performs by their utterance; and the perlocutionary act, which is the effect the utterance has on the hearer. Searle (1969) expanded on Austin's theory and classified speech acts into five macro-classes: *Assertive (or Representative) speech acts* share the speaker's views on a situation; *Commissive acts* pledge the speaker to future actions; *Directives* urge or instruct listeners to act in particular ways; *Declaratives* transform reality by their very expression; while *Expressive acts* reveal the speaker's feelings and perspectives (Austin, 1962; Cutting, 2015; Searle, 1969).

Table 1

*The Types of Illocutionary Acts and their Sub-categories*

<b>Types of Illocutionary act</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
Commissive	Promising, offering, threatening, refusing, vowing, volunteering
Representative	Describing, claiming, insisting, predicting, hypothesising
Expressive	Apologising, praising, congratulating, deploring, regretting, complaining, gratitude, honour
Directive	Commanding, requesting, suggesting, inviting, forbidding,
Declarative	Sentencing, resigning, blessing, marrying, firing, divorcing

Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969)

Furthermore, to be effective, the commissive speech act must satisfy specific criteria, termed felicity conditions (Cutting, 2015). When a speaker commits to future actions through a commissive speech act, it is essential that conditions like the preparatory, sincerity and essential ones are met. For instance, the preparatory condition is fulfilled when the speaker can deliver on their commitment, and the listener perceives it as fitting. The sincerity condition requires the speaker to be sincere in their promise. In contrast, the essential condition demands that the speaker intends to commit to their promise and for the hearer to hold them accountable. In the context of the Prime Ministers' inaugural speeches, the felicity conditions are met on a macro level, as the Prime Minister is assumed to have the ability and position to uphold their promises, and the speech is an official address. Even if the promises are not fruitful, they are still considered promises.

The field of political discourse analysis has been extensively explored, particularly through the work of Van Dijk (1997, 2006, 2018), who highlights how political discourse shapes public ideologies by employing strategies of power, dominance, and manipulation. These studies provide valuable insights into rhetorical strategies, but they adopt a broad socio-political lens, leaving limited focus on detailed analyses of speech acts within specific political contexts. While these contributions advance the understanding of political discourse as a whole, the explicit use of speech acts, especially in non-Western contexts like Pakistan, remains underexplored.

Pragmatic approaches to political speeches have drawn significant attention in Western contexts. For instance, Biria and Mohammadi (2012) analysed Barack Obama's inaugural speech, focusing on the use of assertives and directives in shaping persuasive rhetoric. Similarly, Anna and Barios (2016) examined inaugural speeches of American presidents, demonstrating how historical contexts influence rhetorical strategies. Akinkurolere and Odebunmi (2020) analysed Martin Luther King Jr.'s iconic "I Have a Dream" speech to understand how rhetorical devices and speech acts drive civil rights discourse. While these studies are insightful, they center primarily on Western or American contexts, leaving South Asian political speech acts relatively unexplored.

Specific attention to commissive speech acts, such as promises, is seen in Yuan and Lyu's (2022) work, which highlights their role in building trust and projecting political commitments in Chinese contexts. However, their findings do not extend to other geopolitical regions, such as South Asia. Hashim (2015) examined the pragmatic functions of locutionary, illocutionary, and

perlocutionary acts in political speeches but did not focus on specific categories like commissives or directives, nor did the study engage with diverse geopolitical contexts.

Efforts to analyse South Asian political discourse, such as Qayyum et al. (2018), focus on media bias and toxicity in political communication, but they do not delve into speech acts in formal political speeches. Subramanian et al. (2019) developed target-based speech act classifications for Australian political campaign texts, offering a robust methodological framework. However, this work is geographically limited, leaving a gap in the study of speech acts in South Asian political discourse.

These gaps highlight the need for research focusing on speech acts in South Asian contexts, particularly in the inaugural speeches of Pakistani leaders. This study contributes by addressing these gaps, examining the speeches of Pakistani Prime Ministers Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif through the lens of Speech Act Theory. It provides valuable insights into how speech acts are utilised to shape political narratives and commitments in Pakistan.

### **Methodology**

The data for this study was collected from the maiden speeches of Pakistani Prime Ministers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Imran Khan (2018-2022) and Shahbaz Sharif (2022-current), both were delivered during their regime in their respective years. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Prime Minister who served Pakistan for 5 years was Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, but his maiden speech was unavailable on any news channel forum or YouTube. Therefore, only two Prime Ministers were selected for this study. The source material was selected because these Prime Ministers served or are still serving the nation of Pakistan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, they belong to two different political parties, giving depth and worth to this study's comparative analysis and making this data significant in the current scope.

The first inaugural speech of each Prime Minister was analysed to support an even distribution of data between the Prime Ministers and to prevent the impact of incumbency that may affect how the speech is shaped. The initial data was retrieved from YouTube in the form of video recordings. Transcriptions of the speeches were conducted manually from video recordings and normalised to ensure consistency in language use, including transliteration of Urdu phrases into English for analysis. Then, their discourse was transcribed into English. A table (table 2) presents the details of both speeches in terms of length and word count; their length and word count vary, as there is no time limit or length requirement for the address to the nation. In short, data for this study comprises two maiden speeches by Pakistani Prime Ministers, totalling 13,282 words. Imran Khan's speech contains 11,400 words, while Shahbaz Sharif's includes 1,882 words. These speeches were selected to represent contemporary political discourse in Pakistan.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

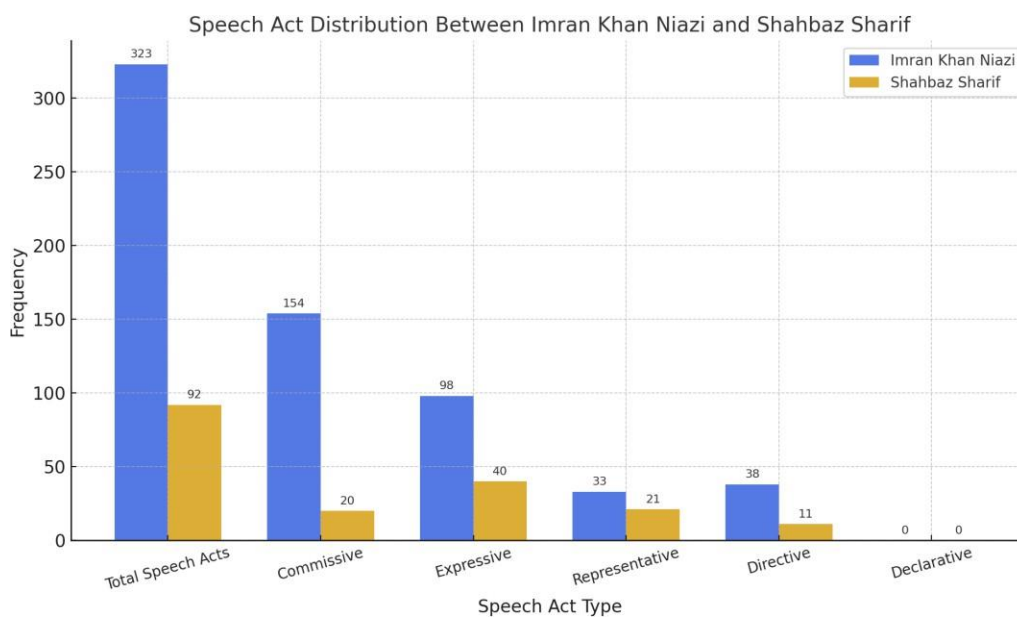
The nature of this research is qualitative, focusing on the realisation of speech acts from both speeches along with measuring the frequency of the use of these speech acts. Afterward, a comparative analysis was made between the speeches of both political leaders to ascertain the proportional speech act usage.

Considering the focus of this study, which is to analyse the speech acts and their proportion in the two maiden speeches, Searle's (1969) all macro speech act categories have been considered. Since the length of both speeches varies, it may be misleading and inappropriate to count the number of speech acts for the comparative analysis of political speeches. Therefore, the researchers have

also analysed all the other four speech acts to generate a percentual distribution of speech acts. Speech acts were categorised using Searle's (1969) taxonomy. Frequencies of the commissive, expressive, representative, directive and declarative acts were calculated to compare their proportional distribution between the two speeches.

### Data Analysis

The data revealed that the proportion of speech acts differs in both speeches. In Imran Khan's speech, commissive speech acts have the most significant proportion, which is 48%, whereas the proportion of commissive speech acts in Shahbaz Sharif's speech is 22%. Next to this is expressive speech acts, which account for 33% of Imran Khan's speech, whereas the expressive speech acts account for the largest proportion, with 43% of the total speech acts in the speech of Nawaz Sharif. Then there are representative speech acts, with the proportion of 10% in Imran Khan's speech and 23% in Shahbaz Sharif's speech. After that, there is the directive speech act, which is 12% in the speech of Imran Khan and the same proportion of 12% in Shahbaz Sharif's speech. The last one is the commissive speech act, with a 0% proportion in both speeches. The summary of the proportions of speech acts represented by Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif's maiden speeches is presented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1** The Summary of the No of Speech Acts in the Median Speeches

### Commissive Acts

Commissive speech acts provide information about the future action intentions of a participant, for example, promising, vowing, offering, volunteering, swearing, and threatening. The researchers have found that 48% of the speech acts in the speech of Imran Khan and 22% in the speech of Shahbaz Sharif. Here are the samples taken from the data of speeches where both Prime Ministers have used this act and the interpretation about them.

#### Samples from Prime Minister Imran Khan's Speech

**Sample 1** *Ab hum ne apni civil service ko uthana hai* (now, we have to improve our civil service).

**Sample 2** *Lekin agar logon ka kaam nahe ho raha, hum un ko penalise karein gy* (But if people's work is not getting done, we will penalise them).

**Sample 3** *Kisi qisam ki unko madad chahiye, unko hamary se manpower chaheye, unko funds chaheye, ham unki poori madad karain ge* (If they need any kind of assistance, manpower or funds from us, we will provide them with full support).

**Sample 4** *agar Allah ne chaha to mai ap per sabit kar don ga ke ye pehli hakoomat hogi jis mai mere mukhalefeen mai se kisi k khilaf koi political victimisation nhi hogi.* (If Allah wills, I will prove it to you that this is going to be the first government in which there will be no political victimization towards any of my opponents).

Sample 1 represents a promise in which Imran Khan is committing the nation of Pakistan that they will have to improve the civil services department, which has been in decline for the last two decades. Similarly, Imran Khan has made promises to the whole nation in a proportion of % of the whole commissive speech acts. Sample 2 is an example of a threatening speech act. Imran Khan seems to threaten civil services officers and officers from government departments (like NADRA, PESCO, Passport office, etc.) to help the needy and poor. If they do not help them, we will punish them. The threatening act is in the ratio of % in this speech.

Similarly, Sample 3 shows the example of an offering, which is part of the total commissive speech act, in which Imran Khan is offering help and assistance to the NAB (National Accountancy Beauru) chairman by putting emphasis on the functions of NAB in eliminating corruption from this country and to pass a whistle pro act in Pakistan. According to this act, NAB officers can increase their income by just identifying corrupt people from Pakistan. In sample 4 again, Khan is making a commitment to prove friendly towards his opponents. Usually, the regime of one political leader is a horrible time for the opponents, but Imran Khan is promising that no political action will be taken against the opponents. This is another example of a promising type of commissive speech act.

#### **Samples from Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's Speech**

**Sample 1** *Hum ap say ehed karty hain k mil kar amanat or diyanat k sath shabana roz niyyat karein gy or kisi bhi kurbani se daraigh nahi karein gy* (We promise to work together with honesty and integrity, and to remain steadfast in our commitment to our goals without fearing any sacrifice).

**Sample 2** *Hum gareeb awam ko petrol or diesel ki keematon mein izafay k bojh se bachane k liye 28 Arab rupay mahana se naya relief package ka aghaaz kar rahe hein* (We are starting a new relief package worth 28 billion rupees per month to save the poor from the burden of increased prices of petrol and diesel).

**Sample 3** *yeh wakt ki awaz or komi zarorat ha is charter par ittefaq k liye main tamam siyasi jamaton k sath mushawarat ka agaz kr raha hun* (The voice of the time and national need is for consensus on this charter, and I am initiating consultations with all political parties for agreement on it).

In sample 1, Shahbaz Sharif promises to work with integrity and honesty without fearing sacrificing anything. This represents the promising feature of commissive speech act. He has used emotive language like 'dayanat', 'amanat' and 'shabana roz niyyat' to highlight their dedication and determination to work for this country. Sample 2 represents the offering speech act, as Shahbaz Sharif has addressed out a pressing issue by presenting their solution. In this example, he is offering a new relief package to ease the burden of increased fuel prices for needy people. He has highlighted the extent of the relief package to emphasise the importance of his offerings. In sample 3, Shahbaz Sharif used another commissive speech act: volunteering. Here, he is initiating a consultation with

different political party leaders for consensus on a specific charter. By using phrases like ‘qoumi zaroorat’ and ‘waqt ki awaaz’, he has put emphasis on the importance of this charter.

### **Expressive Acts**

#### **Samples from Prime Minister Imran Khan’s Speech**

**Sample 1** *Jinko ham ne muashry me peachy chor dia. Hmaari riasat ne peachy chhor dia hai* (Those we have left behind in society, our state has left them behind).

**Sample 2** *Mere Pakistan se bahir jitni bhi hamsaye hein un sb se meri baat hui hai. Un sb ne mujhe telephone kiya un sb ka shukriya* (All of my neighbours outside of Pakistan, I have spoken to them on the phone. I thank all of them for calling me).

**Sample 3** *Pakistanion ko wo alaida line me kharra kr dety hain* (They put Pakistanis in separate lines).

**Sample 4** *Gandy naaly k sath bachay wahan cheezain utha utha k kha rahy hain* (Children are picking up things there and eating them along with dirty drains)

**Sample 5** *lekin main un sary karkunon ko aj salam paish krta hun or khairaj e tehseen paish krta hun jo bary mushkil waqt mein mere sath chaly* (But today, I salute all those workers and express my appreciation for those who stood by me during difficult times).

In sample 1, Imran Khan employed a complaining strategy to put emphasis on the issue of the downgraded population of Pakistan that the government has left behind. This speech act serves as an approach to tie the listener's attention to the problem and set the stage for his proposed solutions. Imran Khan, in sample 2, has expressed feelings of gratitude to the neighbouring countries of Pakistan as they wished him to elect the Prime Minister of Pakistan. This gratitude speech act helps the speaker build rapport with the audience and the Prime Ministers and Presidents of the neighbouring countries, showcasing humility.

In sample 3, the commissive speech act of sentiment was used by Imran Khan to express his feelings and sentiments about the experiences of Pakistanis and the problems they face in living a life of poverty. Such speech acts of sentiments evoke feelings and aim at making a connection with the audience by showing empathy. In sample 4, Mr Khan uses the expressive speech act of empathy, where he talks about the lack of health facilities and says that poor children have no access to clean food. Khan has used the tool of empathy to highlight the poor living standards of slums in Pakistan. In sample 5, the expressive speech act of gratitude is used by the prime minister, who is all thankful to his party workers.

#### **Samples from Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif’s Speech**

**Sample 1** *Hum ne hakoomat sambhali to har showba tabahi ki dastan suna raha tha* (When we took over the government, we were hearing stories of destruction everywhere).

**Sample 2** *Nawaz sharif ne apne dor-e-hakoomat mein liye gaye karz se awam ko 10400 mega watt bijli mohaiya ki, sarkon ka jal bichaya, behreen public transport di, kharbo rupy k tarakki or kush’hali k mansoobay banaye, or mehngai tareekh ki kam tareen satah per le k aye* (During his tenure in government, Nawaz Sharif provided the public with 10,400 megawatts of electricity from the loans taken, improved the roads, provided excellent public transport, initiated development and welfare schemes worth billions of rupees, and brought inflation to its lowest level in history).

**Sample 3** *Hum ne dil pe pathar rakh kar petroleum masnuat ki qeemton mein guzishta roz izafa kiya hai* (We have increased the prices of petroleum products yesterday, albeit reluctantly)



In sample 1, Shahbaz Sharif spoke negatively about the previous government by complaining about the destruction of this country and that it was in its worst condition when they took over the government. Sample 4 presents the praising speech act by admiring the accomplishments of his elder brother, Nawaz Sharif's government. He has used such praising acts to underline the positive aspects of their leadership and create an optimistic sense for the future.

In sample 2, Mr Sharif used a complimentary speech act. He is full of praise for his elder brother (earlier prime minister) and mentions his achievements during his reign. In sample 3, Shahbaz Sharif used a tactful apology speech act to show empathy to the nation as his government increased the petroleum prices right after 3 days of his reign.

### **Directive Acts**

#### ***Samples from Prime Minister Imran Khan's Speech***

**Sample 1** *Hum ne bara challenge lia, hum ne 50 lac ghar banana hein, sastay ghar, 5 salon k ander* (We have taken on a big challenge, we have to build 5 million affordable homes within 5 years).

**Sample 2** *Ab tou social media ka zamana hai, ap ko bolna chahiye, aap hamare uper check rakhein* (Nowadays, it's the era of social media, you should speak up and keep a check on us).

**Sample 3** *Mai barry barry businessmen ko daawat doon ga wo aen aur ye jo hmaari bullet proof gaarian hain jo bahir se mangwai gai hain mehngi mengi in sb k ham auction krwain ge* (I invite big businessmen to come and participate in the auction of these expensive bulletproof vehicles that were imported from outside).

**Sample 4** *Ap ki affiliation jis marzi jamaat se hai, mujhe is se koi farak nahe parta. Mujhe sirf yeh chahiye k ap mere mulk k liye kaam karein* (It doesn't matter to me which political party/party you are affiliated with, all I want is for you to work for my country).

**Sample 5** *Hamara aam admi jb sarkari offices mein aye, ap ne us ko izzat deni hai, ap ne us ko insan samajhna hai, us ko VIP banana hai* (When our common man comes to government offices, you should treat him with respect, see him as a human being, and make him feel like a VIP).

In sample 1, Imran Khan's speech act of taking a challenge sets an aspiring aim of constructing 5 million affordable homes within 5 years. This huge challenge represents his obligation and commitment towards needy people by improving the living standards of these people. In sample 2, Imran Khan suggests the nation use the social media platform for accountability and to get themselves updated about the current issues of Pakistan and the world. This suggestion promotes a transparent relationship with the government, and people can actively participate in monitoring the actions of the government.

In sample 3, Mr Khan has used directive speech acts of invitation and suggestion. He is inviting businessmen from different countries to come and participate in the auction of expensive bulletproof vehicles. He is also suggesting the auction of the vehicles here. So, Mr Khan endorses the implementation of a simple lifestyle even for the prime minister of a country. In samples 4 and 5, Imran Khan used a directive speech act of commanding by commanding the government employees to treat the underprivileged people with respect. He commanded the politicians to focus on public service and the national interest.

#### ***Samples from Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's Speech***

**Sample 1** *Yehi wajah hai k hum ne Pakistan ko bachany ka challenge kabool kiya* (That is precisely why we have accepted the challenge of saving Pakistan).

**Sample 2** *Hamare samne dehshat gardi or bad-amni ki surat mein aik or challenge mojud hai* (We are faced with another challenge in the form of terrorism and lawlessness).

**Sample 3** *Hum Pakistan k is asoli mokaf ka puri kuwwat se irada krte hain k janubi asia main paidaar aman k liye bharat ki zimadari ha k 5 aug 2019 k yaktarfa or gairkanoni ikdamat ko khatam kare ta k bamakasd bat cheet say jammo Kashmir samait tamam mutanaza amor kohal krny ki taraf thos paishraft ho* (We are determined to hold India responsible for ensuring durable peace in South Asia and urge them to end their unilateral and illegal actions, including those on and after 5th August 2019, to pave the way for meaningful dialogue and resolution of all outstanding disputes, including the core issue of Jammu & Kashmir).

**Sample 4** *Pakistan ki awaam ne mutalba kiya k is na-ehal or corrupt hakumat say un ki fori tor par jan churai jaye* (The people of Pakistan demand that their immediate relief is ensured from this incompetent and corrupt government).

**Sample 5** *main ny utility store corporation ko hidayte ki ha k Pakistan bhar main 10 kilo atay ka thaila 400 rupy mein awam ko farokht kiya jaye* (I have directed the Utility Stores Corporation to sell a 10 kg bag of flour to the public for Rs. 400 across Pakistan).

Samples 1 and 2 represent the challenge speech act used in Shahbaz Sharif's speech. He specified that we have a challenge of confronting terrorism and lawlessness in Pakistan and that they are ready to fight in any situation to overcome these issues. In sample 4, Shahbaz Sharif spoke negatively about the government of Imran Khan by using the strategy of negative representation. He requested on behalf of the whole nation that the people of Pakistan want to get rid of this incompetent and corrupt government. Sample 5 is an example of a commanding speech act. Here, Shahbaz Sharif's use of commanding strategy signifies that he has empathy for the poor and has emphasised the importance of stating the economic issues faced by the people.

### Representative Acts

#### **Samples from Prime Minister Imran Khan's Speech**

**Sample 1** *Tu sb se pehle ye samajh jaein k Pakistan ki tareekh mein kabhi bhi itne mushkil muashi halaat nahe they jo aaj hein* (First and foremost, we must understand that Pakistan has never experienced such difficult economic conditions in its history as it is facing today).

**Sample 2** *ma apko abhi bhi ye bta doon k jab ye ham hath daalain ge corrupt logo k ooper, ap sb tyaar ho jaen ye shor machain ge* (I must tell you now that when we go after corrupt people, you all need to be prepared to raise a lot of noise).

**Sample 3** *ap sirf yeh daikhain k peechly prime minister ny bairony mulk doron pay kitna kharch kia ha, koi 65 core rupiya aik prime minister doray pe kharch krta ha?* (You only look at how much the former prime minister spent on foreign trips, does a prime minister spend 65 crore rupees on a trip?).

In sample 1, Imran Khan claims that the economic situation of Pakistan is unprecedented in the history of Pakistan. This is an example of 'claiming' from the representative speech act. Then, in sample 2, Imran Khan predicted that there would be a significant uproar when his government acts against these corrupt people/politicians. This prediction prepares the public for potential backlash from those targeted and reinforces his commitment to combat corruption. This is a clear example

of prediction from the speech act of a representative. In sample 3, Imran Khan informs the public about the misuse of resources by the previous prime ministers, making it an example of a representative speech act.

### **Samples from Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's Speech**

**Sample 1** *bila shuba mushkilat be panah or rasta kanto say bhara huwa hai* (No doubt, the path ahead is full of countless difficulties and obstacles).

**Sample 2** *ap gawah hein k mazi mein bhi hum ne mushkil halaat ka kamyabi se samna kiya* (You can bear witness that we have successfully faced difficult situations in the past as well).

**Sample 3** *apne mazmoom siyasi maqsad k liye safarti khat ki naam niyhad sazish tak ghari gai, aik khtarnak jhot bola gia, halan k national security kameeti ny aik nahi do bar puri wazahat k sath kaha k aisi koi sazish nahe hui* (You went as far as concocting a fictitious foreign conspiracy for your political agenda, telling a dangerous lie, despite the fact that the national security committee stated twice with full clarity that no such conspiracy occurred).

In samples 1 and 2, Shahbaz Sharif used the speech act to claim that he acknowledged the inconvenient situation that lay ahead for Pakistan and that his party had prepared to deal with such obstacles. By recalling past successes in difficult situations, Shahbaz Sharif seeks to build credibility for his party and instil confidence in their ability to handle the current challenges. In sample 3, he accused his political opponent (Imran Khan) of fabricating a foreign conspiracy to further their political agenda, which he describes as a dangerous lie. This speech act of describing aims to discredit the opposition and emphasise the importance of truth and transparency in political discourse.

### **Findings**

The analysis underscores the significance of speech acts as tools for political persuasion, public engagement, and policy framing. Imran Khan's speech is characterised by a predominant use of commissive acts (48%), reflecting his emphasis on promises and commitments. This reliance on future-oriented language projects a vision of determined leadership and policy-driven governance. His frequent use of directives (12%) reinforces a narrative of accountability, transparency, and public service, while his expressive acts (33%) establish an emotional connection with diverse audiences, from political allies to marginalised communities. Such strategic speech acts demonstrate an effort to position himself as a reformist leader, fostering trust and mobilizing support for his agenda. However, the high density of commitments raises questions about the feasibility and impact of these promises, suggesting a need for critical evaluation of their fulfillment.

Shahbaz Sharif's approach contrasts sharply, with expressive acts constituting the largest proportion (43%) of his speech. His use of emotive language, including gratitude and empathy, resonates with audiences on an emotional level. However, his extensive negative representation of political opponents suggests a defensive posture, aimed at discrediting rivals while bolstering his own credibility. The lower proportion of commissive acts (22%) indicates a relatively cautious approach to making explicit commitments, which may reflect an awareness of the risks associated with unfulfilled promises. This strategy, while safe, may limit his ability to project a visionary or transformative leadership image.

Both leaders use representative acts to frame challenges and opportunities, but their focuses differ. Khan emphasises economic reforms and anti-corruption efforts, portraying himself as a

disruptor of the status quo. Sharif highlights governance challenges and the achievements of his political lineage, suggesting a continuity-based approach. Directive acts in both speeches emphasise action plans, but their content reveals differences in priority: Khan's directives focus on institutional reform, while Sharif's aim to address immediate socio-economic concerns.

### Discussion

This study examined how Pakistan's 21st-century Prime Ministers, Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif, used speech acts in their maiden speeches in office. The goal was to explore how these leaders used language to influence public opinion and shape the nation's mindset. The speeches by the leaders are a tool to call the public towards their cause and thoughts (Anna & Barrios, 2016). Recent research on speech acts in political discourse highlights how important these strategies are for understanding the goals and tactics of politicians (Pardo et al., 2021).

The analysis of both speeches done in this study has revealed some interesting points concerning their communication strategies. The qualitative analysis of the research question showed that Imran Khan extensively focused on commissive speech acts which are (48%). The use of these commissive speech acts demonstrates his fortitude to fulfil commitments and promises to the nation. He has also used expressive speech acts (33%), for example, gratitude, sentiments, complaining, and honour, to expressively make connection with his party workers, nation, and the leaders of other countries.

The use of commissive speech acts in political speeches can be considered a vital tool for leaders to create trust and credibility among the public (Bavelas, 2014). Imran Khan's heavy reliance on commissive speech may indicate a strong focus on policy and future-oriented goals in this context. Moreover, making commitments can be beneficial for the politicians as these promises allow them to build a positive self-representation and it also helps them to bring the people together while defining the directions of the newly formed administrative policies. This idea is supported by previous research of Van Dijk (2006).

In contrast, Shahbaz Sharif has used a larger proportion of expressive speech acts (43%) and a comparatively smaller proportion of commissive speech acts, which are 22%. His speech style suggests a more emotive, empathetic, and expressive nature of communication. As Austin (1962) & Searle (1969) state, a higher proportion of expressive speech acts give rise to emotive and empathetic speech styles, which can be seen in the speech of Shahbaz Sharif. But emotions are not the mere speech acts that made the proportion of expressive speech act higher rather it was complaining and negative others representation act. Shahbaz Sharif has negatively spoken about his opponents thirty times in his speech and spoke positively about himself using the strategy of positive self-representation twenty-nine times. This depicts that he made the nation mindful of the actions of Imran Khan by using the strategy of negative others-representation.

The directive speech acts observed in the speeches of both Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif reflect their commitment to address significant challenges Pakistan is facing, such as constructing affordable housing and combating terrorism. These speech acts project an image of strong leadership and determination and galvanise public support for their initiatives (Van Dijk, 2018). Additionally, their use of suggestion and commanding strategies aims to promote transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of the people (Pardo et al., 2021).

The representative speech acts found in the samples encompass a range of communicative functions, such as claiming, predicting, asserting, and describing. These speech acts establish the speakers' credibility, articulate their perspectives on the issues at hand, and present a narrative that resonates with their target audience (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002). For instance, both Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif use claims to highlight the challenges faced by Pakistan and their respective parties' ability to address them effectively. Predictions and assertions warn of potential backlash resistance from their political opponents and emphasise their commitment to tackling corruption and ensuring good governance (Van Dijk, 2018).

### Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse the speech acts, explicitly in the maiden speeches of Pakistani Prime Ministers Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif. The analysis was based on Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory and its application in political discourse. The findings indicated that both leaders employed speech acts to varying degrees in their addresses, with Khan making more promises as compared to Sharif. The study also revealed that both leaders utilised a mix of other speech acts to convey their messages, with Khan showing a higher proportion of representatives and directives. In comparison, Sharif's speech featured a higher proportion of expressive.

The study highlights the importance of understanding the pragmatic implications of political speeches, as politicians can significantly influence public opinion and bring about social and political change through their language. By examining the use of speech acts in inaugural addresses, this research sheds light on how political leaders commit to future actions and outcomes, which can ultimately shape society.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to the existing literature on political discourse analysis by focusing on the specific context of Pakistani Prime Ministers' maiden speeches. This study also emphasises the role of promises as a rhetorical tool for politicians to build trust, propose political direction, and maintain a positive self-representation. In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the use of language by political leaders, particularly in Pakistan. It underscores the potential of speech act analysis as a tool for understanding the complexities of political discourse.

### Recommendations

Future researchers could extend the analysis to include maiden speeches of other Pakistani Prime Ministers or political leaders from different countries. They could compare the patterns of speech acts used by Pakistan's 1<sup>st</sup> and current prime ministers. Moreover, future research could explore the extent to which politicians fulfil their promises and investigate the impact of promise fulfilment on their political careers, public trust, and overall perception.

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