

**"OUR DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN TESTED TO THE UTMOST LIMIT".
AN EXPLORATION OF THE USE OF ASSERTIVES IN GHANAIAAN PRESIDENTIAL
INAUGURAL ADDRESSES**

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Abstract

Studies on presidential inaugural addresses (PIAs) in Africa have mainly focused on rhetorical elements and general pragmatic enactments in such speeches. Through such studies, it has been brought out that an assortment of speech acts are used in PIAs. Nonetheless, the deployment nature of specific speech acts like assertives largely remains unexplored. Rooted in Searle's taxonomy on speech acts (Searle, 1969), the present study investigates the use of assertives in five presidential inaugural addresses delivered by presidents of Ghana between 1993 and 2009. This study concludes that the presidents of Ghana mainly employ assertives to contextualise the country in terms of its past, present and future circumstances: the presidents usually paint the past of Ghana as murky, the present as encouraging and the future as promising. The assertives are thus used by the presidents to inspire the confidence of the populace in their respective governments. This study has implications for the literature on African presidential speeches as well as for the speech act theory.

Keywords: Assertives, Presidential Inaugural Address, Ghana, Speech Acts

1. Introduction

Speech is a force or a power that is used to accomplish different ends or goals in different circumstances, and it is important to understand the purposes or goals of the communicator and the circumstances under which the communication is taking place (Medhurst, 2010). The goal of a given speech can be determined through its communicative function, which is rendered through the kind of speech acts performed (Trosborg, 2000), as speech acts constitute the verbal actions accomplished with utterances (Yule, 2002). With presidential inaugural addresses, the communicative goals are diverse as the presidents attempt to perform a plethora of functions with their speeches (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008). Inaugurals of African presidents are not exempted as they are imbued with a variety of communicative intentions (Trosborg, 2000; Adetunji, 2006; Olaniyi, 2010; Adekunle, 2011).

Presidential inaugural addresses are speeches delivered by presidents at their inauguration ceremonies, which formally mark the beginning of their tenure of office (Larner, 2009). From the point of view of Aristotle's genres of rhetoric, presidential inaugural addresses are forms of epideictic (ceremonial) speeches delivered by presidents on their inauguration days (Ryan, 1993; Campbell & Jamieson, 2008; Tarvin, 2008). Because of the celebratory nature of inaugurals, presidents attempt to accomplish many tasks with their speeches. These 'verbal activities' in inaugurals are what Austin termed as 'speech acts' (Austin, 1962).

Studies on the speech acts enacted in presidential inaugurals, especially of African leaders, do not abound. Among the few studies, Olaniyi (2010), for instance, conducts a pragmatic study of the 2007 inaugural address of President Umaru Yar Adua of Nigeria. In a speech act analysis, Olaniyi identifies that President Yar Adua's inaugural was preponderated by commissives (32.5%), followed by assertives (30%), directives (15%), expressives (12.5%) and verdictives (10%). Olaniyi concludes that the dominance of commissives in President Yar Adua's speech implies that the political office affords the president to make promises and assurances of good governance rather than proclamations.

A similar study, however, shows that, in President Umaru Yar Adua's 2007 inaugural address, assertives (60%) dominate other speech acts in terms of Overall Relative Frequency Percentages (ORFPs) (Ayeomoni & Akinkulere, 2012). According to the authors, the ORFPs of other speech acts in the speech are as follows: directives, 35%; expressives, 15%; verdictives, 40%; commissives, 30%; and declaratives, 20%. Although employing the same inaugural as

data, Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere's study appears to be at variance with Olaniyi's findings as the latter claims to have discovered more commissives than the former. Nonetheless, the differences between the two are apparently a consequence of the methodology adopted for respective studies. Whereas Olaniyi (2010) selects 20 sample sentences for his analysis, Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere (2012) pick the first five and the last five sentences of the speeches they studied. The methodological differences between these two studies might account for the apparent contradiction in the conclusions they draw, albeit on the same inaugural address.

The predominance of assertives in inaugurals is further emphasized regarding the speeches of Presidents Barack Obama of USA and Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, which are characterized by excessive use of representatives (or assertives) (Josiah & Johnson, 2012). In this regard President Jonathan's speech records 41.5% assertives whereas President Obama's has 54.8%.

The studies above give an indication that, in presidential inaugurals, assertives dominate other speech acts, hence the need for in-depth investigation to ascertain what they are used to accomplish. The current study is purposed to shed light on Ghana's presidents' use of assertives in their inaugurals. This is in view of the fact that the extant literature on Ghanaian political speeches (e.g., Obeng, 2000; Agyekum, 2004; Mensah, 2008) has left a considerable gap on the use of illocutionary forces, let alone assertives in presidential inaugurals. Thus, the present study is guided by the question: What do Ghana's presidents use assertives for in their inaugurals? The study begins with a brief exposition on its theoretical background, followed by the methodology and then a discussion of the findings.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

The present study is theoretically rooted in Austin and Searle's speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). The fundamental assumption of Austin's speech act theory is that the meaning of a sentence or of an utterance is made up of *locution*, *illocution* and *perlocution*. Locution is the act of saying or making a grammatical utterance; an illocutionary act is performed in saying something, while a perlocutionary act makes reference to the effects that illocutionary acts have on the hearer (Carter & Simpson, 1989). The illocutionary meaning of an expression indicates

the intention behind that expression (Searle, 1969; Halliday, 1975). As noted by Sekyi-Baidoo, illocution is what the speaker intends or conceives as his intention or what the hearer makes out of an expression (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2002: 273).

The communicative functions of utterances can be ascertained through the identification of their illocutionary forces. Illocution constitutes one of the key assumptions of the speech act theory. This theory, as a built up of Jakobson's (1960) work, was promulgated by J. L. Austin in 1962 in a work with the eponymous title *How to Do Things with Words*. According to Umar (2006), Austin classifies speech acts into five groups including: "verdicatives" (giving a verdict), "expositives" (fitting utterances into the course of an argument or conversation), "exercitires" (exercising power, rights or influence), "behabitatives" (demonstrating attitudes or social behavior), and "commissives" (promising or otherwise undertaking). However, Marquez-Reiter (2000) sees one problem with Austin's taxonomy to be the fact that the categories are not mutually exclusive and they often overlap.

Some of the claims in Austin's work were later revised by a student of Austin, John Searle (1969 and 1975). According to Natri et al. (2006), Searle's classification of speech acts was based on their illocutionary purposes, i.e. what the speaker is doing with the utterance, their fit to the world, their psychological state, and their propositional content. Since Searle's publication, several authors have classified these illocutionary acts differently by labelling the speech acts differently and breaking or conflating some of them. Searle identifies five speech acts, which are assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations (Searle, 1979). Traugott and Pratt (1980) add verdictives, which was among the original classification by J. L. Austin (Trosborg, 2000). According to Searle's (1979) work, assertives commit speakers to the truth of the expressed proposition. Some assertives are occasioned by asserting, concluding and confirming. Secondly, directives are acts which speakers use to cause their hearers to do something like requesting and questioning. Searle mentions that commissives, like promising and offering, commit speakers to some future course of action. Expressives indicate the emotional and psychological states of speakers in the form of thanking, apologizing and others, and finally, declarations, which affect immediate changes in the state of affairs, include declaring war, christening, excommunicating and others.

Searle's taxonomy is considered to have some inadequacies (Bach, 1994). One of such is its inability to cater for new illocutionary acts. Another problem is its assumption that each

speech act category is mutually exclusive although some studies have found speech acts overlapping the various categories (e.g., Clark, 1996). In spite of these challenges, the speech act schema of Searle continues to be widely accepted and provides a useful framework for linguistic analysis (Nastri et al., 2006). The data of the present study will thus be analysed based on Searle's taxonomy of speech acts, with a particular focus on assertives.

As mentioned earlier, assertives (also referred to as 'representatives' in Searle's taxonomy) are illocutionary forces which are basically used to express facts or truths. Among the two major categories of utterances made by Austin (1962), only assertives fall under constantives, which are used to describe the world while all other speech acts are classified as performatives. In this regard, assertives indicate what is verifiable in the real world. According to Trosborg (2000), representatives (assertives) are usually reports and informative statements. Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere indicate that assertives "are statements that describe a state of affairs in the world which could be true or false. They commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition" (Akinkuolere, 2012: 463). According to Searle (as cited in Young, 1989), speech acts are performed based on the satisfaction of certain conditions. Below is an outline of some conditions for an utterance to be deemed an assertion:

- Any proposition;
- Speaker has evidence for the truth proposition;
- It is not obvious to speaker that hearer knows proposition;
- And counts as an undertaking to the effect that proposition represents an actual state of affairs.

Thus, an assertive is simply a statement that advances the speakers perspective on events. It can also be a conclusion or a judgment a speaker draws from occurrences in the environment. Assertives are considered to be truths, hence representing the state of affairs. This kind of illocutionary act is used to inform auditors about what is transpiring at a given moment. Josiah and Johnson summarize what assertives are with the following examples: "assertion, claim, description, hypothesis, conclusion, report, suggestion, prediction, as well as making statement of facts" (Johnson, 2012: 263).

3. Methodology

To identify the assertives in the inaugural addresses, a theory-driven coding of the sentences in the speeches was made. Here, three of Searle's (1969) dimensions for the identification of speech acts informed the selection of utterances as constituting assertives. These dimensions are the illocutionary point, the direction of fit and the expressed psychological state of the speakers. Since this study is focusing on assertives, these dimensions will be described in terms of assertive speech acts. Thus Eriksson (1999) explains, "The *illocutionary point* of assertives is to commit the speaker of the truth to the expressed proposition. The *direction-of-fit* is word-to-world and the *expressed psychological state* is a belief" (p.3). In this sense, utterances, which were considered as assertives in the inaugurals, were those which committed the presidents to truths, described states of affairs and indicated the disposition of the speakers. Although this study focuses on assertives, a frequency distribution of the speech acts in Ghanaian inaugurals was collated. This approach enabled references to be made to other speech acts for the enrichment of the discussion. Table 1 below presents a frequency distribution of speech acts in the inaugurals of Ghana's Presidents from 1993 to 2009:

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Speech Acts in Ghanaian Presidential Inaugurals (1993-2009)

President	Speech Acts													TOTAL
	Assertives		Commissives		Declaratives		Directives		Expressives		Hybrids			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Rawlings (1993)	54	56	20	21	1	1	10	10	8	8	4	4	97	
Rawlings (1997)	50	56	7	8	4	4	7	8	12	13	9	10	89	
Kufuor (2001)	40	36	26	23	4	3	21	19	14	12	7	6	112	
<i>Table continues</i>														

President	Speech Acts												TOTAL
	Assertives		Commissives		Declaratives		Directives		Expressives		Hybrids		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Kufuor (2005)	43	58	4	5	2	3	7	9	6	8	12	16	74
Mills (2009)	8	15	28	54	2	4	1	2	9	17	4	8	52
TOTAL	195	46	85	20	13	3	46	11	49	12	36	8	424

Table 1 indicates a predominance of assertives in Ghanaian presidential inaugurals. In all, assertives constitute 46% of all speech acts in the inaugurals studied. This shows that assertives are the most utilised speech acts in all the inaugurals studied, with the exception of President Mills' 2009 inaugural, which rather contains more commissives. The preponderance of commissives in President Mills' speech agrees with Olaniyi's (2010) finding; however, as mentioned earlier, this finding has been brought into dispute as a similar study by Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere (2012) identifies majority of speech acts in the same speech to be assertives. Therefore, the predominance of commissives in an African inaugural address may be uncharacteristic. In spite of this, the exigencies of the context and the individual proclivity of a president like Mills to constantly reassure his citizens of his preparedness to tackle the nagging problems of Ghana might account for his overuse of commissives, albeit in the shortest of the inaugurals (see Table 1 for the total number of speech acts).

4. Discussion

The analysis and discussion of assertives used in Ghana's inaugurals is done per the presidents who delivered the various addresses. In all, the discussion centres on five inaugurals with the first two by President Jerry John Rawlings (delivered in 1993 and 1997), the second

two by President John Agyekum Kufuor (delivered in 2001 and 2005) and the last one by President John Evans Atta-Mills (delivered in 2009). The discussion is split among the presidents because of the need for attention to be paid to specific contexts of the inaugurals. The discussion commences with President J.J. Rawlings's 1993 inaugural address.

4.1. President J. J. Rawlings (1993)

From Table 1, it is evident that assertives dominate all other speech acts in President Rawlings's 1993 inaugural in terms of frequency. In this sense, the president attempts not to perform actions with his words as performatives do, but rather he merely depicts situations to the audience. These situations included what was immediately transpiring during the inauguration and those that happened in the past and things that could happen in the future. Focusing on immediate events, the president uses assertives like:

- (a) "We determined in a national referendum held last year that today, January 7, 1993 would usher in the new Constitution."
- (b) "All of us to whom the people have given the mandate to exercise the trust and authority of government... stand before the nation today, conscious of our obligation to serve the nation's interest."

In (a), President Rawlings uses an assertive to state the purpose of the gathering: to inaugurate a new Constitution. Also, in (b) the president informs his audience about the awareness that he and other elected representatives have of their duties; by extension, the speaker uses the assertive to assure his listeners that he and the others will live up to expectations. President Rawlings's use of "today" in both examples is quite significant as it makes it more apparent that the assertives refer to what was transpiring at the inaugural ceremony.

Most of the assertives on current happenings were didactic in nature as the president uses them to describe the 1992 Constitution and democracy. Some of such assertives include:

- (c) "The Constitution is a framework we have created to guide our affairs so that there shall be consistency and equity in our efforts to make life more meaningful for all Ghanaians."

- (d) "[The Constitution] has been fashioned by well-meaning men and women who tried to set out guidelines for the just and fair governance of our nation."
- (e) "Fellow citizens, as I have said before, democracy is much more than its outward forms and procedures."
- (f) "The inner content of democracy, without which the outward forms are nothing but a hollow shell, consists of mutual respect and understanding, responsible and disciplined involvement in civic affairs, and a spirit of humble and accessible leadership."

The assertives (c) to (f) throw light on the fact that the January 7, 1993 inaugural ceremony was not just intended to induct into office a new president of Ghana, but also to introduce Ghana into a new constitutional era and a democratic form of government. Therefore, the president's use of assertives serve the purpose of sensitising Ghanaians on the Constitution [(c) and (d)] and democracy in general [(e) and (f)]. Hitherto, the political scene in Ghana had been inundated by coup d'états purported to overthrow abysmally performing civilian governments. These made people's attitude towards a constitutional democracy range from overzealous participation to ambivalent observation; hence, President Rawlings uses the assertives above to whip up people's interest in the democratic dispensation being inaugurated.

On assertives that describe the past, President Rawlings mainly employs them to draw links between the area of the Provisional National Development Council (PNDC, a military dictatorship spearheaded by President Rawlings, which governed Ghana from 1981 to 1992) and the new democratic period. To the president, the PNDC mainly laid the foundation for the democracy which was being inaugurated. Some of the assertives he utilises in this regard include:

- (g) "Fellow citizens, over the past 11 years we have all worked very hard in an attempt to put in place the kind of foundation that can best guarantee the stability, growth and development of our nation."
- (h) "All that has happened during the last decade cannot be divorced from today's new constitutional order."

In (h), President Rawlings indicates how closely-knit the PNDC was to the new democratic era. This appears to be a response to the criticisms the PNDC received for its responsibility for toppling the democratically elected government of President Hilla Limann on 31st December, 1981. With the assertive illocutionary acts above, the president seems to be replying his critics that the PNDC was, after all, not anti-democratic. This idea is further illuminated and supported with other assertives, which make reference to the District Assembly system as to have contributed largely in paving way for popular participation in government. Thus, President Rawlings adopts assertives to justify his military government as he creates the impression that his military dispensation was harbinger to a democratic one.

President J. J. Rawlings (1997)

Like the 1993 inaugural, the 1997 inaugural address of President Rawlings is overwhelmingly dominated by assertive speech acts (see Table 1). In all, there are 50 assertives among an overall number of 89 speech acts. This generally hints that, in his second term inaugural address, President Jerry John Rawlings mainly describes the world around him to his audience (Ayeomoni & Akinkuolere, 2012). In this regard, the president embarks on portraiture of his worldview thereby enlightening his listeners on his perspective on the socio-economic and political milieu they found themselves. One of the first assertives that the President employs is a tribute to Ghanaians for their massive turnout during the General Elections. The president states:

- (a) "The impressive voter turnout of over 75% which is by far one of the highest in the electoral history of Ghana and elsewhere is a reflection of the new consciousness sweeping across the country."

The main intention behind the utterance above is to announce both to the audience and to the international community, how advanced Ghana's democracy had been. To the president, the voter turnout of 75% was an achievement that was worthy of being trumpeted to the whole world. Nevertheless, this assertive comes with another that imposes a responsibility on Ghana in view of the achievement the nation had chalked in the successful election. In that sense, President Rawlings states:

- (b) "This ceremony marks the re-emergence of Ghana as a player of real consequence in the global transformation."

The president, therefore, declares to the world that Ghana had once again re-appeared on the global stage as a leader in heralding change. This statement indirectly alludes to the foremost role Ghana played in the fight with colonialists by being the first sub-Saharan African country to attain independence in 1957. The political upheaval into which the nation plunged shortly after independence diminished that accomplishment and so the assertive President Rawlings uses above proclaims Ghana's restoration to her leading role. Most of the assertives President Rawlings employs in his 1997 inaugural contextualised Ghana. They portrayed the socio-economic picture of both the present and the immediate past of Ghana. Some of such assertives include the following:

- (c) "It has taken many turbulent years to bring this country to this point where we can say democratic institutions and the empowerment of our people have begun to take firm root."
- (d) "From the near state of economic collapse, Ghana has become a magnet attracting international credits and investments."
- (e) "More than a decade ago, under the PNDC, we in Ghana examined our circumstances and decided to change the direction of our economy."

In these assertives, President Rawlings reflects on the state of Ghana by comparing the congenial atmosphere of the present to the chaotic past. In (c), he examines how painstaking it has been for democratic institutions to be established in the country. Also, the president uses the assertives in (d) and (e) to make his audience aware of the interventional role of the PNDC government to restore Ghana from economic catastrophe. The president, therefore, draws on these assertive illocutionary forces to paint the gloomy picture of the past and the pleasant picture of the present. Doing so, the president justifies (as he did in his inaugural) the choices made by his governments, both the PNDC and the first administration of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party, as being apt for the country.

Moreover, some of the assertives President Rawlings makes use of in his 1997 address sold the ideals of the NDC party/government to the public. In this case, the president attempts to

elevate his party above other parties by portraying it as the best option for Ghanaians in view of the standards he spells out. Assertives that express this situation include:

- (f) "Our shared vision will remain a bond of commitment and solidarity."
- (g) "As a party and as government we are committed to dialogue."
- (h) "We did not make any unrealizable promises on our campaign trail."

The president contrasts his party with other parties by painting them in a different light; thus:

- (i) "Some opposition members have subjected the electorate to ethnic insinuations and name calling."
- (j) "However, dialogue cannot be a one-way street where government is expected to bend over backwards to accommodate the opposition while the opposition on its part surrounds itself with a barrier that prevents them from hearing any other views but their own."

Looking at the assertives above, President Rawlings succeeds in differentiating his party from the opposition. On the one hand, he intersperses his inaugural address with the principles of his party and, on the other hand, he portrays the members of the opposition as being mischievous as in (i) and (j). The assertive in (f) clearly sells out what the NDC party believes in; once again, the president justifies the victory of the NDC. However in (g) President Rawlings situationally creates the identity of his party as more committed to brokering peace in Ghana than the opposition whom the president reckons in (j) as surrounding themselves with a barrier that makes them unmindful of other's views. In addition, the president uses extract (h) to represent his party as more realistic than the opposition since, during the electioneering campaigns, his party did not make promises which could not be fulfilled. It can be surmised from this assertive that, according to President Rawlings, whatever promise was made by the NDC was more pragmatic, hence assuring the populace of a better second term administration.

John Agyekum Kufuor (2001)

The inaugural address of President J.A. Kufuor, who succeeded President Rawlings in 2001, also abounds in the use of assertive illocutionary acts. Evidently, the frequency of assertives in the speech outnumbers that of commissives, which are deemed to be the most

recurrent speech act in presidential inaugurals (Olayini, 2010). Some of the assertives which appear in President Kufuor's speech are:

(a) "One hour ago, I took a solemn oath before Parliament..."

Looking at the illustration above, the president simply announces to his audience that he had sworn the oath-of-office in the hour before. In the speech, the speaker goes on to briefly recount the content of the oath to them since the swearing in took place earlier at the Parliament House. The assertive in (a) is therefore informative. It gives a hint about the people-centeredness of the inaugural (Lim, 2002). However, most of the other assertives used by President Kufuor in his address, either detail the socio-economic problems that the nation had been grappling with as in

(b), (c) and (d):

(b) "Our greatest enemy is poverty."

(c) "There has been enough suffering in this country."

(d) "There has been enough of our elders who... are forced into indignity in their old age.",

or express the optimism that there is a leeway for the country to revive itself as in (e) and (f):

(e) "We have all the ingredients here, a fertile and beautiful land endowed with goodness and richness and blessed with a dynamic and entrepreneurial people."

(f) "The potentials of our nation have always been known..."

The assertives employed by President Kufuor in his 2001 inaugural mostly paint pictures of the situation Ghana had been in, what Ghana was going through and what will be in future. The first situation is historical in nature as the president focuses on the chequered history of Ghana and on its inimical impact to development. For instance, President Kufuor states elsewhere in the speech: "We have been down this road before... when adventurers were able to exploit temporary difficulties [to topple governments]..." (Kufuor, 2001). The second type of assertives mainly looks at the present situation as it bestrides the past and the future: President Kufuor indirectly blames previous governments (including President Rawlings's) for Ghana's woes. This contrasts with what President Rawlings says in his inaugurals, which readily showered the military led

PNDC government with praise and appeared blind to the socio-economic problems of the country. Finally, some of the assertives in President Kufuor's 2001 inaugural contrasted the gloomy picture of the present and the past with one filled with hope and expectation of a brighter future. The assertives were therefore intended to edify the audience and, for that matter, sensitise them on the state of Ghana on President Kufuor's assumption of office.

President J. A. Kufuor (2005)

Like President Rawlings's second tenure inaugural, President Kufuor's second inaugural is overwhelmingly dominated by assertives. Although President Kufuor makes use of all the illocutionary acts mentioned in Searle's (1975) typology, he tends to employ more assertives and fewer commissives. Overall, the president uses 43 assertives and 4 commissives. The rationale behind this may possibly be due to the president's drive to use his second inaugural to characterise the Ghanaian polity, with much attention to the conditions which prevailed in Ghana after independence. The president allots a great space in his inaugural in performing this role, hence the dominance of assertives. Some examples of the assertives that President Kufuor uses are the following, which the president mainly utilises to set up the context of his address by recapping what transpired in his first inaugural:

- (a) "Four years ago, I swore before the nation that I would be President to every Ghanaian..."
- (b) "I pledged to tackle the economic and social quagmire..."
- (c) "I pledged that the Rule of Law would be the guiding principle under my administration."

Using the assertives above, President Kufuor connects his first inaugural with the second by indicating that the realization of his second investiture is the result of the fulfilment of the promises he made in his first inaugural during his first tenure as president. Therefore, with these assertives, the president attempts to remind his listeners about his pronouncement in the first address thereby following what Searle (1975) indicates about assertives as utterances, which commit speakers to the truth of a proposition. Thus, by recounting his previous inaugural,

President Kufuor simply justifies his re-endorsement by the population to be by dint of hard work. (It should be noted that President Rawlings made similar attempts in his two inaugurals.)

Also, some of the assertives employed by President Kufuor in his second address were intended to inform the listeners about the three states of Ghana; thus, the challenging past, the encouraging present and the auspicious future. Examples (d), (e) and (f) below illustrate these respectively:

- (d) "Within six years of independence, not only had the foreign exchange reserves disappeared, but Ghana had also joined the list of beggar nations."
- (e) "The nation has now undergone four consecutive elections and with every one, the determination of the people to defend, protect and nurture democracy has grown stronger."
- (f) "I can foresee a prosperous and self-confident people in a politically stable and maturing country."

In (d), President Kufuor uses the assertive to paint a picture of the gloom which befell Ghana shortly after independence. The president sees in (e) that Ghanaians' determination to adopt democracy will yield a flourishing future for the country, as indicated in (f). These assertives, thus, enable the president to characterise to his audience the various episodes which Ghanaians have gone or were about to go through. Apart from characterising Ghana, some of the assertives used by President Kufuor merely serve as announcements to his listeners. An example is below:

- (g) "In a little over two years, Ghana will attain the 50th anniversary of her nationhood, and it would be my honour and privilege to preside over the celebrations."

With the extract above, President Kufuor informs his audience about the impending Golden Jubilee of Ghana's independence and he also makes the audience aware of his preparedness to superintend the celebrations. From the discussion on President Kufuor's use of assertives in his second inaugural, it has been revealed that the president exploits such speech acts to create a context by summarising what he said in his previous inaugural address, to characterise the socio-economic milieus of Ghana (a theme he also exploits in his first inaugural) and to simply make announcement to his listeners.

President Mills (2009)

From the speech act analysis of President Mills's inaugural, assertives occur in 8 instances: President Mills's inaugural has fewer assertives than all the other inaugurals studied. As seen the previous inaugurals, the assertives in President Mills's speech mainly convey the president's observations of present and past events in Ghana. Some of the statements identified as assertives include:

- (a) "A short while ago, I took the oath of office as the Third President of the Fourth Republic."
- (b) "We have emerged from one of the most keenly-contested elections."
- (c) "Our democracy has been tested to the utmost limit."
- (d) "There is only one Ghana..."

The statement in (a) is a comment on the immediate past event of the oath-taking. This verifiable announcement is intended by the President to assert his position as the new President of Ghana. However, the President's addition of "the Third President of the Fourth Republic" hints that his utterance celebrates a milestone chalked up in Ghana's political history. The President appears content with the fact that the Fourth Republican Constitution has succeeded in instituting a third successive President of Ghana. This statement is somewhat supported with (b) and (c), in which the President once again observes that Ghanaians' resolution to adopt democracy has been stretched to its elastic limit because of the "keenly-contested elections". President Kufuor also makes similar observation in (e) under his second inaugural. Finally, in advancing the unification drive of the inaugural, President Mills makes it clear to his audience in (d) that there is only one Ghana and adds that "and that Ghana must work in the interest of every Ghanaian". Thus he makes it clear that Ghanaians have nowhere but Ghana to seek solutions to their problems. Of all the inaugurals analysed so far, President Mills' is the shortest and makes use of fewer total number of speech acts. Another difference in President Mills' speech from the others is the dominance of commissives over assertives unlike the first four inaugurals studied. Nevertheless, President Mills' assertives are employed for purposes akin to those of the first two presidents.

5. Conclusion

The speech acts analysis carried out on five Ghanaian presidential inaugurals has made it more apparent that assertives are predominant. The data indicates that the presidents have a greater tendency to use more assertives in their second inaugurals as it can be seen in the second term addresses of Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor. An exploration of the assertives employed reveals that they are mainly used to put past, contemporary and future issues into perspective. This is usually for the edification and the stimulation of the citizens' thoughts on such matters. Thus, the rationale behind Ghana's presidents' profuse use of assertives in their inaugurals is twofold. One is to simply describe to their audience the prevailing state of affairs in the country and the other is to inspire confidence in their audience in the promising future that their respective governments were to usher the country into. This is in line with Sigelman's (1996; as cited in Ratsibe, n.d.) framework on PIAs, which characterises presidential inaugurals as speeches that commemorate the nation's past, envision its future and set the tone for the years ahead. Indeed, this study has made it clear that assertives are pragmatic tools, which presidents use to accomplish the tasks, which Sigelman says inaugurals are intended for.

One question that arises is why the presidents have a greater tendency to use more assertives in their inaugurals. The answer is that presidents are less compelled to be persuasive in their inaugurals than in campaign speeches (Trosborg, 2000). In this sense, while a political speech genre like campaign speeches is more likely to use commissives to garner votes, presidential inaugurals, which are ceremonial speeches and do not require a lot of persuasion, will use more assertives. What this suggests is that presidential inaugurals, especially in the Ghanaian situation, lean more towards musing about the past and inspiring audiences to buy into the visions and aspirations of new presidents rather than merely making promises. In fact, this finding seems dissonant with the result of other studies, like the one of Olaniyi, which, although accepts the heterogeneity of speech acts deployed in inaugurals, generally concludes that political inaugurals are used to make promises to the audience (Olaniyi, 2010).

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