

Illocutionary Acts in Print Media Discourse: A Comparative Examination of Pakistani and Indian Perspectives on the Kashmir Issue

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the use of illocutionary acts in print media discourse on the Kashmir conflict in the Pakistani and Indian press. It employs a comparative analysis of the Pakistani and Indian print media voices to explore how illocutionary acts frame the conflict and influence public opinion. The study utilizes mixed methods to analyze and identify the types of illocutionary acts used in newspapers, quantifying their frequency and distribution in the news. The theoretical framework employed in this investigation is Speech Act theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The comparison of speech acts is elucidated from news published by The Nation, The Dawn, The Express Tribune, The Times of India, Hindustan Times, and The Hindu. These findings have significant implications for understanding the media's role in shaping public opinion and attitudes toward the Kashmir conflict, suggesting that the media possesses the power to shape narratives and convey their stance on the conflict through language.

Keywords: Illocutionary acts, Print media discourse, Kashmir conflict, Pakistani press, Indian press

1. Introduction

The Kashmir conflict, a long-standing territorial dispute between Pakistan and India, has garnered significant media attention in both countries, exerting profound political, economic, and social impacts. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing political decisions, particularly for opinion leaders, the public, and legislators who rely on print media for information and analysis. This proposed research aims to investigate the use of illocutionary acts in print media discourse concerning the Kashmir conflict in Pakistan and India.

The Speech-Act Theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), delineates utterances into three levels or components: locutionary acts,

illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Illocutionary acts, which involve saying something with a purpose, are the focus of this study. We concentrate on illocutionary acts produced by the editors and columnists of leading newspapers selected from Pakistan and India.

Searle categorizes illocutionary acts into five classes: representatives, expressives, directives, commissives, and declarations, each serving distinct communicative functions. Through our investigation, we aim to deepen understanding of how media discourse on the Kashmir conflict in Pakistan and India is shaped through the use of illocutionary acts.

1.1 Research Objective

The objective of this study is to identify and analyze the types of illocutionary acts utilized in print media discourse to shape perspectives on the Kashmir conflict in Pakistan and India. Additionally, the study aims to explore the functions of these illocutionary acts in influencing public opinion and attitudes towards the conflict.

1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What illocutionary acts are utilized in print media discourse on the Kashmir conflict in the Pakistani and Indian press?
2. How do illocutionary acts differ between Pakistani and Indian media coverage of the Kashmir conflict?

2. Literature Review

The exploration of illocutionary speech acts, which are the intended effects of a speaker's utterance, has gained increasing attention in linguistic and communicative research fields. The illocutionary act is enacted through the communicative force of an utterance, such as promising, apologizing, or offering (Yule, 1996,48).

Richard Nordiques (2020) defines speech act theory as a subfield of pragmatics that examines how words are utilized to perform actions and convey information. Austin's (1962) theory of speech actions, which categorized speech acts into five types—felicitous, infelicitous, locutionary, and illocutionary—was among the pioneering studies in the field of illocutionary speech acts. According to Austin, the intended effect of a speaker's speech, such as persuasion, assurance, or information, is termed the illocutionary act.

Austin's framework has been further elaborated in subsequent research, with some scholars focusing on the quantitative analysis of illocutionary speech acts. For instance, in their study "A Pragmatic Study of CNN and BBC News Headlines Covering the Syrian Conflict," Fareed Hameed Al-Hindawi and Abid Hmood Ali found that aggressive speech acts are most prevalent in CNN and BBC news channel headlines. Similarly, Arsalan Rasheed and Mehvish Riaz's study "Framing the Kashmir Issue: The Pragmatics of Media Coverage of the Lockdown in Kashmir" revealed that 40% of the headlines were assertional, indicating they aim to report events or inform readers about ongoing developments. Conversely, the study found a minimal amount of directive speech acts (4%), suggesting a lack of guidance, direction, or educational content in the headlines.

While some researchers have explored illocutionary speech actions in print media coverage of the Kashmir conflict in Pakistan and India, to our knowledge, no study has specifically examined how print media in these countries cover the Kashmir conflict in terms of illocutionary acts. This proposed study aims to address this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of illocutionary actions in print media discourse on the Kashmir dispute in Pakistan and India. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the types of illocutionary acts used in print media discourse, compare their usage in Pakistani and Indian press, and investigate how these acts influence the framing of the Kashmir conflict in both countries.

3. Methodology

The researcher has adopted a mixed-method approach (Cresswell, 2014) for this study. The methodology employed involves a comparative content analysis of Pakistani and Indian print media coverage of the Kashmir conflict.

3.1 Data Collection

To ensure a comprehensive analysis of illocutionary speech acts in print media discourse on the Kashmir conflict, the study utilized a corpus-based approach. Data on news items relevant to the Kashmir conflict were collected from prominent Indian newspapers, including The Times of India, Hindustan Times, and The Hindu, as well as Pakistani newspapers, including The Nation, The Dawn, and The Express Tribune. The data collection period spanned from September 2020 to January 2023. The data maintains face validity as it comprises news about the topic obtained from leading newspapers of the arch-rivals. It is reliable, as the results of the specific data can easily be generalized to the rest of the print media in both countries.

3.2 Data Analysis

The study is purely benchmark, as the analysis is based on the framework proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), which define illocutionary speech acts as the intended effects that speakers aim to achieve through their utterances. This framework will be used to identify the illocutionary speech acts used by each speaker and to categorize the communicative goals and strategies employed to achieve these goals.

3.2.1 Quantitative Analysis

Findings from the data analysis reveal that assertive speech acts were the most frequently employed across newspapers. This prevalence was particularly notable in Pakistani newspapers, where assertive acts were used in 90 out of 237 instances, and Indian newspapers, where they were utilized in 75 out of 218 instances. This indicates a tendency towards factual, informative, and supportive discourse within Pakistani media.

The second most prominent speech act observed was the directive, with 51 occurrences out of 218 in Indian newspapers. However, in Pakistani newspapers, it ranked third in dominance. This suggests a potentially greater assertiveness or authority conveyed through Indian media regarding the situation in Kashmir compared to Pakistani media.

Expressive speech acts, ranking third in frequency of use, were prevalent in both Pakistani (49 out of 237) and Indian (45 out of 218) newspapers. These speech acts convey the emotional and psychological states within the discourse, reflecting sentiments such as pain, preferences, or sorrow. The consistent use of expressive language across both Pakistani and Indian newspapers underscores the emotional aspect of the discourse surrounding Kashmir.

In summary, the analysis indicates that Pakistani discourse predominantly focuses on providing factual information while expressing the emotional and psychological states of the Kashmiri people. Meanwhile, Indian discourse, while also informative, appears to exhibit a stronger directive tone, potentially reflecting a more dominant stance on Kashmir-related matters.

Table 1

Illocutionary Speech act used by Pakistani Newspaper

No.	Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage
1	Assertive	90	38%
2	Directives	48	20%
3	Commissive	27	11%
4	Expressive	49	21%
5	Declarative	23	10%

Table 2

Illocutionary Speech act used by Indian Newspaper

No.	Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage
1	Assertive	75	34%
2	Directives	51	23%
3	Commissive	16	7%
4	Expressive	45	21%
5	Declarative	31	14%

3.2.2 Qualitative Analysis of Pakistani Newspapers

Textual Example 1 (PN):

Moments ago, some people shared with me in the [speaker's] chamber that a plot was conceived to defer the plebiscite in Kashmir until the next 20 years. There cannot be any conspiracy and cruelty with the Kashmiris bigger than this.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive - Information

Analysis: The speaker presents information about a purported plot to defer the plebiscite in Kashmir, framing it as a conspiracy and cruelty against the Kashmiris.

Textual Example 2 (PN):

“I **think**, no Pakistani politician or serviceman or soldier can even think anything like this,”

Illocutionary Act: Assertive - Prediction/Opinion (it might be true or false)

Analysis: The speaker expresses their opinion on the likelihood of Pakistani politicians, servicemen, or soldiers engaging in a certain action, suggesting a prediction about their behavior.

Textual Example 3 (PN):

The Almighty has ordained for sagaciousness and consultations to resolve issues and if we adopt this course and employ all of our resources while having full faith in Him, we can get the Kashmiris their right.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive - Claiming

Analysis: The speaker asserts that resolution of issues can be achieved through sagaciousness and consultations, emphasizing the importance of faith in a higher power.

Textual Example 4 (PN):

This answer is not easy. **We will have to** hold ourselves accountable to find it, . . .

Illocutionary Act: Commissive - Commitment of future action

Analysis: The speaker commits to holding themselves accountable to find an answer to a challenging question in the future.

Textual Example 5 (PN):

I **swear** both areas will certainly gain it. But this has to be done by deeds, not by mere words.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive - Assuring/Promising/Guarantee

Analysis: The speaker assures that certain areas will achieve something, emphasizing the necessity for actions rather than mere words.

Textual Example 6 (PN):

Police have blamed groups like the PAFF for targeted killing.

Illocutionary Act: Expressive - Blaming

Analysis: The speaker expresses blame towards certain groups for targeted killings.

Textual Example 7 (PN):

but fighters **have not killed** any security official of Lohia's seniority in recent years.

Illocutionary Act: Declarative - Negative Judgment

Analysis: The speaker makes a negative judgment about the absence of targeted killings by certain individuals or groups in recent years.

Textual Example 8 (PN):

She expressed the hope (expressive)[hope] that her **visit would pave the way** for "many more conversations" on the Kashmir issue.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive - Future Action

Analysis: The speaker expresses hope for future conversations on the Kashmir issue and commits to taking action to facilitate those conversations.

Textual Example 9 (PN):

One of them also asked if former prime minister and PTI chief Imran Khan, who blames the US for regime change in Pakistan, had also complained about it during their meeting the other day and if yes, what was her reply?

Illocutionary Act: Directive - Question

Analysis: The speaker poses a question, directing it towards the audience.

Textual Example 10 (PN):

However, Ms Omar **avoided** replying to it.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive - Action of refusing/denying

Analysis: The speaker refuses or denies replying to a particular question.

Textual Example 11 (PN):

She thanked journalists for their "very spirited questions"

Illocutionary Act: Expressive - Thanking

Analysis: The speaker expresses gratitude towards journalists for their questions.

Textual Example 12 (PN):

And said she would address a formal press conference at the end of her trip and “probably answer some of the questions you all asked [here].”

Illocutionary Act: Expressive - Promising

Analysis: The speaker promises to address questions during a future press conference.

Textual Example 13 (PN):

Due to India’s obduracy, no progress whatsoever has been made on the issue since 1947.

Illocutionary Act: Declarative - Truth Statement

Analysis: The speaker states a fact regarding the lack of progress on the Kashmir issue due to India's obduracy.

Textual Example 14 (PN):

In early April, she questioned the alleged reluctance of the US government to criticise Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government on human rights.

Illocutionary Act: Directive - Indirect Questioning

Analysis: The speaker indirectly questions the alleged reluctance of the US government to criticize the Indian Prime Minister's government on human rights.

Textual Example 15 (PN):

The Independent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Friday "strongly condemned" the Indian government's recent delimitation of electoral constituencies in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, terming it a violation of OIC and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Illocutionary Act: Declarative

Analysis: The speaker states the condemnation of the Indian government's action by the Independent Human Rights Commission, terming it a violation of resolutions.

3.2.3 Qualitative Analysis of Indian Newspapers

Textual Example 1 (IN):

The economic survey report 2016 **declared** irreversible loss in education in the state.

Illocutionary Act: Declaration – Threatening (educational crises threat)

Analysis: The speaker declares the irreversible loss in education in the state, implying a threat of an educational crisis.

Textual Example 2 (IN):

In her first address to the United Nations Human Rights Council, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on Monday **praised** the Supreme Court for decriminalising same-sex relations between consenting adults but urged India and Pakistan to take meaningful action on addressing issues highlighted in the UN report on human rights violations in Kashmir.

Illocutionary Act: Expressive

Analysis: The speaker praises a decision by the Supreme Court while urging India and Pakistan to take meaningful action on addressing human rights violations in Kashmir.

Textual Example 3 (IN):

Bachelet also **reiterated the UNHRC's request** for unconditional access to Kashmir on either side of the Line of Control.

Illocutionary Act: Directive - Indirectly requested

Analysis: The speaker indirectly requests unconditional access to Kashmir on either side of the Line of Control.

Textual Example 4 (IN):

I urge the Council to pass a resolution, and refer the matter to the General Assembly for its endorsement so that such a mechanism can be established.

Illocutionary Act: Directive - Request

Analysis: The speaker urges the Council to pass a resolution and refer the matter to the General Assembly for its endorsement.

Textual Example 5 (IN):

It has become untenable for the BJP to continue in the alliance government in the state, . . .

Illocutionary Act: Declaration - Informing

Analysis: The speaker declares that it has become untenable for the BJP to continue in the alliance government in the state, providing information about the situation.

Textual Example 6 (IN):

“Are you (government) capable of giving the pilgrims security?” he asked at a press conference here.

Illocutionary Act: Directive

Analysis: The speaker asks a question, directing it towards the government regarding the security of pilgrims.

Textual Example 7 (IN):

He accused the BJP of turning Kashmir into an “abhorrent laboratory” of its experiment of “communal politics” and alleged that the situation in the Valley is not only a failure of the central government’s internal policies but also its foreign policy.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive

Analysis: The speaker accuses the BJP of certain actions, asserting their viewpoint regarding the situation in Kashmir.

Textual Example 8 (IN):

In a statement issued in Srinagar, the Joint Resistance Leadership (JRL) also asserted that New Delhi could not bypass the people of Kashmir in their talks with Pakistan and must consider them as the “third stakeholder”.

Illocutionary Act: Assertive - Disclosing

Analysis: The speaker asserts that New Delhi cannot bypass the people of Kashmir in talks with Pakistan, disclosing their stance on the matter.

Textual Example 9 (IN):

The trio agreed to join the conflict-resolution process if the Centre cleared the ambiguity on the talks offer.

Illocutionary Act: Commissive - Statement of agreement

Analysis: The core act is agreeing to join the process. However, this agreement is conditional upon the Centre clarifying the ambiguity. By stating the condition, the speaker indirectly requests the Centre to remove the ambiguity, essentially asking for a specific action.

Textual Example 10 (IN):

I'm constrained to take the floor to respond to the frivolous remarks made by the representative of Pakistan against my country.

Illocutionary Act: Expression - Expression of Disappointment/Indirectly Pardoning

Analysis: The speaker expresses disappointment with remarks made by a representative of Pakistan, indirectly pardoning their actions.

Textual Example 11 (IN):

I **would also like** to clarify that I do not endorse the views, ideas and actions of Osama Bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri or individuals like Abdullah Azzam.

Illocutionary Act: Commitment

Analysis: The speaker clarifies that they do not endorse the views, ideas, and actions of certain individuals, demonstrating a commitment to their own beliefs.

4. Conclusion

According to speech-act theory, an illocutionary act occurs when a sentence is used to convey an attitude with a specific purpose or "force," known as an illocutionary force. Illocutionary acts stand apart from other forms of speech acts due to their sense of urgency and their appeal to the speaker's intentions.

In line with the aforementioned theory, the analysis of an ad-hoc corpus comprising Indian and Pakistani newspapers reveals that three types of illocutionary acts—assertive, directive, and expressive—were notably more frequent than other types of speech acts. This observation highlights the prevalence of these particular forms of communication in the discourse surrounding the Kashmir issue.

The findings suggest that Pakistani print media tends to adopt a supportive, informative, and clear stance on the Kashmir issue, as evidenced by the high frequency of assertive illocutionary acts. Conversely, Indian media appears to adopt a more dominant approach, as indicated by the greater frequency of directive illocutionary acts. This dominance may imply an authoritative attempt to suppress the voices of Kashmiris within the discourse.

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