



Article

## Governance in the Digital Sphere: A Speech Act Analysis of Presidential State of the Nation Addresses

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### Abstract

*As technology continues to shape the modern world, political speeches are no longer confined to podiums but are shared and have far-reaching consequences in the online world. This research analyzes the language of Duterte's State of the Nation Addresses (SONAs) to understand the speech acts within them and to show how political power is exercised through language in digitally mediated contexts. It is based on speech act theory and employs a qualitative-descriptive design, analyzing the SONAs to identify communicative functions and patterns of language use to reveal linguistic governance. The analysis brought to light seven speech acts: Assertive, Directive, Commissive, Expressive, Declarative, Quotational, and Poetic. Assertive Acts were most prevalent during the 2019 SONA with a total of 68 occurrences, followed by other forms of lesser prominence such as Commissive (n=33), Directive (n=21), Expressive (n=20), with even lower counts of Declarative (n=3), Quotational (n=4), and Poetic (n=1). Observing the 2020 SONA also shows prominence of Assertive Acts (n=84). Notable were also instances of Directive (n=40), and other lesser forms such as Commissive (n=15), Expressive (n=16), Declarative (n=6), Quotational (n=1), and Poetic (n=1). The prominence of both assertive and directive types indicates the president's focus on performative governance: commanding political power, enforcing state narratives and shaping public feelings through speeches. Given that these addresses are issued and consumed extensively online, their rhetorical techniques enhance digital governance through steering public discourse and the interpretation of policies, creating a collective regard towards them. This highlights the importance of speech acts in analyzing political language as a tool for governing within the digitally connected public sphere.*

**Keywords:** digital sphere, governance, political speeches, speech act analysis, state of the nation address

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## **Table of Contents Journal Speech Act Analysis**

1. Understanding the eBook Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - The Rise of Digital Reading Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Exploring Different Genres
  - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
  - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
  - Popular eBook Platforms
  - Features to Look for in an Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Personalized Recommendations
  - Journal Speech Act Analysis User Reviews and Ratings
  - Journal Speech Act Analysis and Bestseller Lists

5. Accessing Journal Speech Act Analysis Free and Paid eBooks
  - Journal Speech Act Analysis Public Domain eBooks
  - Journal Speech Act Analysis eBook Subscription Services
  - Journal Speech Act Analysis Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Journal Speech Act Analysis eBook Formats
  - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
  - Journal Speech Act Analysis Compatibility with Devices
  - Journal Speech Act Analysis Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
  - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Highlighting and Note-Taking Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Interactive Elements Journal Speech Act Analysis
8. Staying Engaged with Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Joining Online Reading Communities
  - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
  - Following Authors and Publishers Journal Speech Act Analysis
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Benefits of a Digital Library
  - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Journal Speech Act Analysis
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
  - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
  - Minimizing Distractions
  - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Setting Reading Goals Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Journal Speech Act Analysis
  - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning

- Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
  - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
- Integration of Multimedia Elements
  - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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