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## The Presidential Tongue: Commissive Speech Acts in Nana Addo's 2017 State of the Nation Address

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### **Abstract:**

*Political discourse aims at persuading or making people believe what has been said. It occupies a central place in the organization and management of a society. Political speakers are most concerned with the performance of speech acts they demonstrate in their speeches. These acts according to Searle (1969) convey the intentions of the speakers in a political discourse. This study examines the use of commissive speech acts (promises, pledges and threats) in Ghana's President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo's 2017 state of the nation address. It analyses the frequency of the commissive acts, reasons for the choice of the act with the highest frequency and presents an in-depth analysis of the utterances selected. The study is largely qualitative and supported by some descriptive quantification. Data were collected by downloading the speech from the internet and the analysis based on Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts. It was found that commissive speech acts were mostly manifested through pledges (45%), promises (40%) and threats (15%).*

**Keywords:** *Speech acts, commissive, state of the nation, pledges, threats, promises.*

### **1. Introduction**

Speeches have a premeditated power and influence over their listeners and there are ultimately goals or motives the speeches are projected to accomplish in that communication process (Medhurst 2010). Medhurst further opines that the understanding of the goals or motives is very imperative to a successful communication. The speakers are often in earnest to let their listeners grasp the import of what their speeches are intended to achieve, most especially with political speeches. In all types of political systems, by virtue of the positions occupied by political leaders, they play a very imperative role in the national development of their nations. These leaders rely on the power of the words they use to influence and marshal their followers with the view to sensitizing them about the overall benefits their governments have in store for them. Burns (1978 p.381) as cited in Botchway and Chinwendu (2017) holds the opinion that,

Leadership over human beings is exercised  
when persons with certain motives and purposes  
mobilize in competition or conflict with others,  
institutional, political, psychological and other resources  
so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of others.

Thus, leaders in a bid to win the hearts of their citizenry will amass all available resources so as to gain favour in the sight of their listeners. Politicians are conscious of the fact that they do not stay in office forever thus they work hard at gaining the confidence of their people and this they achieve by the power of their utterances. During political speeches, politicians push their intentions and achievements through their speeches.

Political speeches are enhanced and motivated by the urge to induce the society and make them to be acquainted with the socio-economic policies and plans of those speeches (Denton & Hahn, 1986; Teittinen 2000). In most circumstances, political discourse analysis is one of the modes employed in assessing the effects of these political speeches. Political discourse analysis has been approached by different researchers from different viewpoints.

A strategic example of political discourse is that of State of the Nation Address (SONA). It is an annual address delivered by presidents during their tenure of office to Parliament to inform the nation about how current issues are being attended to. They often touch on economic, health, security, and education issues among others. In Ghana, this act is done to fulfill Article 67 of the country's constitution. The communicative goals attached to this kind of delivery are numerous as the presidents attempt to fulfill an overabundance of functions with their speeches (Campbell&Jameison, 2008). According to Aristotle's genres of rhetoric, presidential speeches are forms of epideictic speeches (Ryan 1993: Campbell&Jamieson 2008: Tarvin 2008). Therefore, these presidents craft an effort to accomplish many tasks with their speeches. These 'verbal activities' in epideictic speeches are what Austin describes as 'Speech Acts' (Austin 1962). In a communicative function, speech acts play a communicative role and the kind of speech acts employed by any speaker in a speech determines the intended objective of the speaker. This intended objective of the speaker inadvertently has an influence on the feelings, actions and thoughts of the listeners and that is the axis around which most political speakers rotate for their political ambitions. This study therefore purposes to attempt to delve into Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's SONA delivered in 2017. The emphasis will be to examine the commissive acts which form part of speech acts and their influence on listeners.

## 2. State of the Nation Address as Presidential Rhetoric

Political leaders and figures draw on rhetoric to influence their supporters and establish a robust relationship among them. They enhance contact with the public through their speeches and communicate their policies, plans and intentions to them. According to Zarefsky (2014), a president brings to fore the realities of social and political life and the contexts through which citizens come to understand these realities. Presidential addresses play a pivotal role for political leaders and one of such addresses is State of the Nation Address.

Shogan (2015) elucidates that the SONA is considered by Congress as the most important annual speech by the president. In the United States, for example, the SONA which is a constitutional requirement on the government is a tool for checks and balances. The people are able to assess how efficient a government is through the achievement and aspirations articulated in the address delivered. Campbell and Jameison (2008) in their presentation on various forms of presidential addresses in *Presidents Creating The Presidency* opine that the SONA is "central to the maintenance of the presidency itself as it enables the president to act as a national historian, keeper of the national identity and voice of national values" (p.164). Unlike in Ghana where the SONA is an annual address presented to Parliament by the President, according to Teten (2003) and Shogan (2015), the U.S.A, for instance as stipulated by their constitution, has shifted from an address to only members of Congress to both Congress and the American public. Considering the short attention span and boredom embedded in longer speeches, now most SONAs presented by presidents are presented with the format of shorter length in order to capture the attention of their listeners and for the presidents to be able to push forward their agenda and intentions for the people. The public who are part of the audience now have access to the televised speech, though it is read to Congress or Parliament (Teten, 2003; Shogan, 2015). In an advent to ascertain the progress of a president, many people get glued to their television sets or any medium they can access to listen to such addresses.

### 2.1. Theoretical Perspective

This study is theoretically underpinned by the framework of Austin and Searle's pragmatic model of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). The major highlights of the analyses would be centered on Searle's Speech Act Theory. This is based on the premise that the American Philosopher, J.R. Searle, has made a great contribution to the development of speech acts and has expanded into detail what Austin did. According to Austin, one concurrently gets involved in three acts anytime that individual utters a sentence. These acts he identified as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. He opines that locutionary act is when one makes a grammatical utterance or the act of saying something while illocutionary act is the performance of an act in saying something. Perlocutionary act borders on the consequential effects the hearer experiences from the illocutionary act (Allwood, 1976).

Allwood (1976) takes a critical look at Austin's proposition on speech acts and raises some concerns. According to him, Austin talks about temporally distinct activities instead of simultaneous aspects of one and the same action. He further comments that Austin discusses the distinction as applying to linguistic utterances instead of communicative actions in general including non-verbal ones.

Searle's first major work on speech acts appeared in 1969. Austin did the explorative work on Speech Acts and Searle, his student, set himself the task of carrying on his mentor's work by presenting a more detailed, complete and systematic account of speech acts (Fotion, 2000).

Searle buttresses what Austin proposes though Searle propounds four acts (Searle 1969) as opposed to three from Austin. Searle asserts that in any instance a speaker utters words, the speaker performs *Utterance acts* and performs *Propositional acts* when reference and predictions are made. *Illocutionary acts* are performed anytime a speaker states, questions, commands and promises. He, however, agrees with the meaning Austin advances for *Perlocutionary acts* as the consequences or effects illocutionary acts have on the hearer.

Searle proposes taxonomy of illocutionary acts into five mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive classes (Ndimele, 1997)

- Representatives or Assertives – In this instance, the speaker has to be committed and devoted to the truth of the propositional content. These include claims, suggestions, prediction, assertion, hypothesis, conclusion, report, description as well as making statement of facts.
- Directives- The speaker has to try to get the hearer to act in such a manner that complies with what is epitomized by the contents of the proposition. Questioning, commanding, requesting, pleading, inviting are some examples.
- Commissive- In this instance, the onus lies on the speaker to be committed to act in such a manner that corresponds with the propositional content. Vowing, betting, offering, threatening, warning, guaranteeing, promising, challenging is some of the examples under commissive acts.
- Expressive - The speaker expresses the sincerity condition of the illocutionary act. Examples include greeting, thanking, congratulating, complaining, appreciating, condoling, scolding, apologizing etc
- Declarative – This considers an action performed which represents the speaker as performing that action. A few are baptizing, arresting, marrying, passing sentence.

In a similar vein, Bach (1994) detected some inadequacies in Searle's taxonomy that the taxonomy has its inability to accommodate new illocutionary acts. Searle opines that each speech act is mutually exclusive and has a function to perform. In spite of these shortcomings, Searle's speech acts seem to be acknowledged by most researchers and have become the basis of linguistic analysis.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1. Perspectives about State of the Nation Address (SONA)

Much research work on the SONA has largely been centered particularly in the United States. This could probably be due to the fact that over two centuries, the U.S. has practised the use of the SONA as a means of getting into the citizens. In contrast, the practice of the SONA in Ghana has not received much attention in terms of research, especially language-based research.

Adjei et al (2015) in their study on The Major Process Types in the 2009 State of the Nation Address in Ghana discovered that out of the 536 clauses picked out of the address, material processes dominated President John Atta Mills' speech. The material processes involved processes of doing and action and that had an occurrence of 14.37%. The implication of this is that Mills and his government were deeply involved in the progress of concrete projects in order to create a sense of 'developmental progression and continuity'. Mental processes which featured processes of sensing received a minimal use. The implication is that Mills' government did not attach much devotion to giving assurances and promises to the people but rather painted a picture of things just as they were without embellishing them. Mills' government therefore ventured into rigorous and vigorous action instead of putting the citizenry into a state of wishful thinking and hopeful assurances, which is contrary to the perception held by Adjei et al (2015) who opine that such addresses fulfill a mere formality where presidents give their people assurances and plunge them into wishful thinking of the provision of a successful government, which is a formality most political leaders are obsessed with. These imply that every president has his own prescribed motive when delivering a SONA and that forms the bedrock of the contents in the speech.

According to Salazar (2011) and Shogan (2015), most presidents advocate the support of their people through the presentation of SONAs. These presidents realize that the people are participants in the presidents' intention to accomplish great feats for their countries. The presidents make a passionate appeal through their choice of words. The success of the running of a nation is a collective responsibility of both the citizenry and the president. Salazar (2011) opines that through the appropriate choice of pronouns, President of the Philippines, Noynoy Aquino III, makes an appeal to his listeners and his utterances reflect the idea of collective ownership while in the same vein Shogan (2015) highlights the role of the SONA as a form of direct appeal to the public.

Contrastingly, Gene (2006) in analyzing president of the Philippines, Gloria Arroyo's SONAs, argues that Arroyo's speeches primarily are just to deposit government's actions and decisions into the minds of the listeners who are regarded as mere participants who do not have any contributory role to play in the running of a government. Arroyo displays a bullish attitude of imposing her government's actions on the people and presents an aura of reinforcing the image of the President. It could be deduced that Arroyo reflected the idea that presidents are tin-gods and that the intentions and aspirations of the president should be forced on the citizenry who cannot refute them.

In a similar vein, in Dadugblor (2016) analyses the ways in which rhetors in presidential discourse simultaneously associate and disassociate from their audiences in an attempt to consolidate power while shrewdly masking their actors. Dadugblor (2016) agrees with Shogan (2015) and Salazar (2011) by considering the expressive values of selected lexical items and the inclusive and exclusive uses of 'we' in presidential speeches. Dadugblor (2016) affirms that owing to the twin role of presidents as heads of their nations and most often heads of their political parties, they are challenged to fulfill the nation's developmental goals and at the same time, promote the policies of the party. Their association with their audiences is coupled with the purpose they want to accomplish, whether epideictic (celebrating unity) or deliberative (setting a political agenda).

To substantiate further the assertions raised by Dadugblor (2016) and Salazar (2011), Adu-Ampong (2017) collaborates further that presidents use the SONAs as agenda setting and prioritizing addresses where they highlight the major

issues of the past year and draw the government's priority areas for the subsequent year while Shogan (2015) is of the view that presidents see the SONA as an indispensable tool in the execution of the work of the president as a legislative leader.

A greater number of presidents and political leaders employ the SONA to propagate the actions, intentions and aspirations of their governments. They advertise the contents of their speeches in such a manner that creates a feeling of satisfaction in their listeners, especially in situations when the economy is in a gloomy state. They prioritize aspects of the economy that the people need most, notwithstanding, satisfying their own whims and caprices.

During the presentation of the SONA, a majority of presidents who advocate a number of promises in their first SONA after being elected into office, now turn out strong on details of their achievements and present a report-like form of their earnestness in fulfilling those promises as in the case of President Jacob Zuma (Mail & Guardian, 2018). Admittedly, most presidents during the presentation of their first SONAs make a number of promises with the intention of drawing the people to their side and in latter SONAs, chronicle their achievements and successes chalked just to substantiate their continuous stay with their electorate.

### 3.2. *Commissives in Political Discourse*

Politicians shroud their speeches in acts that would engender a feeling of persuasion and trust in utterances they make. Speech Acts in this regard play a very significant role. Political speeches can be seen as a means of instituting and sustaining social relationships, communicating feelings and promoting ideas, policies and political projects. Speech Act Theory is one of the most important phenomenon in Pragmatics and the intention of the speaker and the context in which the propositions are uttered depend on the locutions performed. Commissive speech acts form a category of the Speech Acts Theory.

Commissive speech acts have great potential to develop a bond between the interlocutors. The politicians tend to give promises, vows, pledges, and guarantees in order to maintain and sustain their interpersonal relations. According to Sameer (2017), the speech acts in this class denote commitment or promises of different kinds or the taking on of an obligation or the expression of a future intention. Austin (1962:151-152) supports this idea and states that commissives

are typified by promising or otherwise undertaking,  
they commit you to do something but include also,  
declarations or announcements of intentions  
which are not promises and also rather vague things  
which may call espousals, as for example "siding with".

The application of commissive speech acts commits the user to fulfill a future obligation in order to establish a strong inter-personal relationship with their listeners. This is expressed in the meticulous choice of words in the utterances of the speakers.

Rashid (2015) further comments that there are four commissive acts which are promise, threat, guarantee and pledges found in most languages. These help to maintain social relationships between individuals in the society. An act which is performed by the speaker with the intention of doing good things for the hearer in future is termed Promise, for e.g., "I promise to meet you tomorrow". Threat is uttered by the speaker to do bad things or something unpleasant to the hearer. For example, "I will not allow my enemies to see the light of day"

In a situation where a firm promise is made to a hearer by a speaker about something yet to take place, that act is termed a guarantee. A pledge is a serious promise made by a speaker and it is not intended to be broken. Austin (1962:151-152) opines that these acts are demonstrated in different fields like social, religious and political relationships.

While Dulgjeir (2017) analyzed the first Edi Rama's victorious political speech after the general elections held in Albania and opined that the speech was characterized by the use of commissive acts and that warmed the hearts and minds of the people, Natkare (2015) interprets commissive acts in *A view from the bridge* and asserts that the frequent occurrence of these acts helps develop interpersonal relations among the characters. He asserts that the characters resort to the use of future course of action by promising, offering, threatening, vowing and guaranteeing. This is further buttressed by Hashim (2015) who examines speech acts in political speeches of John Kerry's presidential speech and establishes that commissives had the highest frequency of 40% owing to the fact that Kerry "committed to some future actions and he promised to make the world fit the words". Making '*the world fit the words*' is the desire of averagely most political speakers and committing oneself to perform certain future acts predisposes listeners to the side of speaker. Widiatmoko (2017) supports the assertion that most political speakers have a high frequency of the use of commissives in his study which analyzed five presidential inaugural addresses. They employ the commissive acts by promising job opportunities to resolving past political events.

The studies by Dulgjeir (2017), Widiatmoko (2017), Natkare (2015) and Hashim (2015) present a picture that commissive acts are used to reach to the people and have a high frequency usage above other speech acts. Hence, there is the need for in-depth investigation to ascertain what they are used to achieve. Yule (1996:54) opines that "in using a commissive, the speaker undertakes to make the world fit the words".

Contrary to the opinions held by Dulgjeir (2017), Widiatmoko (2017), Hashim (2015) and Natkare (2015), the language of campaign speeches is solely assertive and expressive and the utterances used by the speaker carry the implication of 'say', 'appeal', 'promise', 'implore' owing to the fact that the candidate needs the support of the people to vote for them (Omola, 2016). In consonance with this opinion, Akinwotu (2013) argues that most nomination speeches are characterized by

illocutionary acts which are used to achieve persuasion. His investigation on the role of language in communication revealed that the preponderance of assertive, expressive and commissive speech acts in political campaigns as mobilization strategies are inclined to persuade their listeners to help candidates to win power.

This study is purposed to cast more light on how a Ghanaian president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, employs commissives in his state of the nation address to make his intentions known to Ghanaians. This is in view of the fact that the extant literature on Ghanaian political speeches has created a yawning gap in the use of commissive acts in State of the Nation Addresses. This has necessitated this present study.

Although, some studies have been extensively done in various speech acts in political discourse, much research does not exist in commissive acts especially those made by Ghanaian presidents in SONAs.

#### 4. Methodology

In this study, the 2017 SONA of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo was selected. The speech was downloaded from the internet and analyzed to show how commissive acts were performed in the delivery of the speech and whether there were any significant effects in their uses.

The linguistic approach adopted is based on the linguistic framework of Speech Acts Theory of Searle (1969). The identification of speech acts informed the selection of utterances as constituting commissives. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods of analyzing the data. The selected sentences and clauses picked from the speech vary in length and number of words. Specific portions from the speech in the form of sentences were extracted from the speech which formed the basis of the analysis. The speech used is labeled and the extracts which are seventeen are coded thus A1 – A17. This was done in order to make the analysis explicit and easy to comprehend.

##### 4.1. Results

Commissive Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Promise	13	40
Pledge	15	45
Threat	5	15
Total	33	100

*Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Commissive Acts in Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo's SONA 2017*

From Table 1, it could be seen that in Nana Addo's 2017 SONA, he uses pledges 15 times, threat 5 times and promises 13 times with percentages of 45, 15 and 40 respectively. A breakdown of the selected commissive acts used is expressed below. In Nana Addo's 2017 SONA, he makes use of more pledges based on the fact that pledges convey stronger and compelling intentions and this exactly what he intends to let his people know. There is minimal use of threats owing to the fact that as a newly- elected president, he was adopting the strategy of pulling the people to himself and not to initially create an atmosphere of fear and panic.

#### 5. Analysis and Discussion

This section aims at providing analysis of the pragmatic of Speech Acts in Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's 2017 state of the nation address. As already stated in the above discussions, with commissives, the speaker commits himself to some future course of action and there is an obligation attached to the course of action. Mey (2001:120-121) buttresses this idea in his assertion that commissive speech acts "operate a change in the world by means of creating an obligation; however, this is created in the speaker, not in the hearer as in the case of directives".

##### 5.1. Promise

- I will not allow this economy to collapse under my watch.  
The President makes a firm promise of ensuring that the economy of Ghana will be rejuvenated and that he will put in all the necessary measures to make it work. He sees himself to have the power to resuscitate the economy and utters this promise with all seriousness and commitment. His use of the word 'watch' indicates he is going to be vigilant and monitor all sectors of the economy to produce a buoyant economy.
- We will reduce significantly the fiscal deficit this year His utterance shows an inclusive involvement of all members of his government and the obligation to make the citizenry see a country with fewer debts. He expresses this commitment with the intension of sincerely making it come to pass and thus emphasizes this with the modal 'will', which portrays a strong commitment.
- To initiate the campaign, The District Assemblies will be tasked to identify and register the progressive farmers in each of the 216 districts
- We have decided to embark upon a programme to provide water to enable all-year farming In A3) and A4), there is a strong obligation on the District Assemblies to ensure that planting for food programme and the provision of water

succeed. The President's speech is convincing and satisfying since he is all out to see the programmes work. He commits himself to making certain that the authorized agents effect their responsibilities. The President envisages that these programmes will bring happiness to the people and that obliges him to this performance. Water is an essential commodity in terms of promoting good harvest for the people of Ghana and farmers are dependent on continuous rainfall for their work to be effective. He has the ability to achieve this goal and chooses his words with caution.

- Food processing will also save time in the preparation and cooking of our local foods, and there will be better control on the hygiene in the process.

This promise is linked to the earlier promise made by the President. He obliges himself to perform good things for his country and this declaration to help the people of Ghana in terms of time consumption is fulfilling. He reinforces an awareness the people yearn for and that is reassuring.

### 5.2. Pledges

- We are going to implement some tough, prudent and innovative policies to get out of this financial cul-de-sac and resume this economy, restore fiscal discipline and debt sustainability as well as increase economic growth.

The President indicates a future course of action which shows a stronger commitment to fulfilling the pledges by the use of 'tough, prudent and innovative'. He is set on the path of bringing reformation to restructure the Ghanaian economy and sees the task of generating policies to make the people realize that he is committed to rejuvenate the ailing economy. The people need this affirmation of hope and trust from their President and he nailed it right on the wall.

- We will embark upon a vigorous expansion and re-equipping of Technical, Vocational and Agricultural schools and align TVAET under the Ministry of Education to ensure standardization.

These long-term prospects which will eventually contribute to the successful economy are what the President and his government commit themselves to. The Technical, Vocational and Agricultural forms of education have been relegated to the background and often students who pursue these forms of education have the tag of low intelligence. Much attention is not given to such education and thus the President's expressing his sentiment depicts the fact that he is directing his pledge to his people to do what most Ghanaians desire to see it materialize.

- My government shall place teachers at the centre of quality education and encourage professionalism among them.

- By the way, teacher trainees' allowances will be restored when the Minister of Finance comes to read the budget.

The President in making pledges in most instances ties the fulfillment of his pledges with his government. He declares his intention of providing quality education since that is the bedrock of the development of a nation. He commits himself to do good things in the future for his people. In order to promote professionalism among teachers, there is the need to create enticing opportunities for more students to enroll in teacher training institutions. Hence, the re-introduction of trainee allowance which was scrapped off by the erstwhile government. This allowance will assist to offset some expenditure the trainees would incur during their education. Many Ghanaians have been awaiting such an opportunity and demonstrating that desire to reintroduce it is reaching out to the people.

- We shall restore the National Health Insurance Scheme to good health And yes, the Minister of Health will restore the allowances to trainee nurses in the budget

The scheme liberated many Ghanaians from shying away from hospitals owing to the fact that one does not incur a lot of expenses anytime he visits the hospital. During the era of the previous government, the effect of the scheme was not felt but the President acknowledged the benefits of good health of his people. He obliges himself to ensure the scheme starts working in the immediate future. Linked to this restoration of the scheme is getting more nurses working in hospitals. The allowances given to trainee nurses had been scrapped off by the previous government and the country as a whole lamented about this issue. Therefore, the restoration of the allowances will bring joy in the hearts of parents and guardians who have to struggle as they sponsor their children through college. The President has the core mandate to assist and develop the finances, health and education of his people.

- Mr. Speaker, government will work with Parliament to pass the Affirmative Action Bill to increase women's involvement in decision making at all levels, and enable us to achieve our current objective of 30% participation of women in public appointments

In Ghana, women involvement in key public appointments was very low and the bill was to give fifty - fifty representations to women. It was to redress the imbalance in society and advocate the placement of 30% of women as chief executives. The President desires not to sideline women in public appointments but rather promote their involvement. The passage of this bill will augment this desire.

### 5.3. Threats

- I call on all political parties .....to ensure that this is the last time such undignified acts occur during our periods of transition.

The President makes this utterance in connection with the various undignified acts that occurred during the period of transition. Some supposed supporters of NPP had gone on rampage sacking NDC appointed members from manning certain places like toll booths, public places of convenience among others. The NPP supporters caused mayhem and

created a lot of tension in the country. This same incident happened during the change over from NPP to NDC and it was a period of equalization for the NPP supporters. The President makes this threat on the basis that he is not ready to compromise his hard-won election on the grounds of party affiliation and caution that those unwarranted acts should not be repeated.

- We cannot continue this way with our public finances. I will not allow this economy to collapse under my watch. The President complains bitterly about the state of economy he and his government inherit from the erstwhile government. He laments on the debts incurred by the previous government and especially, the interests the debts accrue. He boldly points out to his audience that he and his government are not going to allow such a situation to continue and inherent in that statement is a hidden form of threat that he will not tolerate anyone who decides to promote this mishandling of public funds. The threat by the President is reassuring to the people and they are of the belief that he can carry out his threat in the future.
- This generation of Ghanaians dares not be the one to reverse this natural trend. The President regrets the situation where parents look on in frustration as their grown-up children remain at home instead of striking an independent life for themselves. The natural trend is that young people shall gain employment after their parents have toiled to cater for them during their stay in school and in turn, cater for their parents too. The President issues a threat that this generation of Ghanaians is not going to be allowed to hamper the creation of jobs for the youth. He calls on all to create a congenial atmosphere that will generate jobs and most especially, promote the confidence of the private sector to push in more investment into the country. Since the citizenry's outcry is for the government to create more jobs, that utterance by the President is reassuring to the people.
- We continue along the path of business as usual at our own risk. The President reiterates the fact that the people of Ghana voted for his government owing to the confidence they have in the NPP government. The citizenry has lost trust in the NDC government and are eager for a change thus the election of the new government into power. He throws a word of advice to the arms of government and the officers appointed that should they dare continue the path of the erstwhile government, they do so at their own peril. The resultant will be that they will be thrown out of government. He has the authority over the miscreants and intends to achieve that feat of bringing sanity into the society.
- We are in danger of destroying our blessed country. He buttresses the issue of how Ghanaians care for the environment in terms of care for trees, the water bodies and animals. He cautions that the people and himself should inculcate an attitude of change if they claim to love the country else they stand to lose the beauty the country is endowed with. He states that the environment forms part of the beauty of the country and cannot be left to destruction. Ghanaians indiscriminately throw rubbish anywhere, kill the endangered species in the forest and destroy the water-bodies by their act of illegal mining termed as 'galamsey' by Ghanaians. He therefore puts up a wake-up call to the people to be aware that their unacceptable acts are 'destroying their blessed country'.

## 6. Findings and Discussions

Based on the analysis of the speech, it is realized that the commissive speech act that frequently occurs is Pledge. This speech act is a communication strategy the speaker employs to reveal his vision and mission for the country and how he intends to place the country on a solid pedestal. In the speech, pledges have 45%, promises 40% and threats 15%. A critical consideration of the highest frequency of pledges in the speech depicts the fact that they are highly patronized by the speaker owing to the following realizations:

- Pledges are an impressive mode of conveying strong and compelling intentions. The speaker expresses this desire because he realizes that those aspects of the lives of the people are sensitive to them and once pledges are a form of vows, the expectation to see the fruition of these pledges will be high. The speaker is of a strong conviction that he desires to see the country develop and improve in every aspect. Thus, he uses words like 'determination, urgent need, will adhere, will definitely, urgent attention to demonstrate the fact that he assigns maximum attention to satisfying the desires of the people.
- Additionally, pledges promote a convincing atmosphere of offering solutions. The speaker sees himself as obliged to solve the prevalent challenges of the people. He intends to make these materialize and thus makes utterances like "We will set upon the path to build a Ghana that is not dependent on charity ....."
- Another realization about pledges is that the speaker is able to express the desire of involving the citizenry into pushing the country to be what they all aspire it to be. The plural pronoun 'we' though embodies the speaker and his government, also involves the people of the country. It is a call to the people to support the worthy cause of the speaker. The speaker finds a way to let the people believe that making the country what they desire depends not only on the President but on them too.

Promises are quite lesser in frequency than pledges due to the fact that with pledges, the speaker has no recourse than to trail the blaze. Promises are hearer-oriented and according to Wierzbicka (1987:204-13) "promising does not necessitate the use of scared entity for the speaker". He further opines that pledging is more public and the speaker uses pledges because he would like all his hearers to know that he is committed to do a certain act. Conclusively, promises are not

hard-binding and quite obligatory as compared to pledges, hence a greater number of political speakers appreciate the use of pledges more. To buttress this assertion, Rashid (2015) opines that a promise “is an act which is performed by the speaker with the intention of doing good things for the hearer in future” and a pledge “is a serious promise made by a speaker and it is not intended to be broken”. The President employs minimal threats because as a newly-elected president, excessive use of threats creates tension and fear among citizens. The citizens might perceive the president to be unapproachable and that does not augur well for good governance. The analysis made on the SONA delivered by Nana Addo reinforces the assertion that pledges enhance the speeches of presidents to a large extent than promises do (Rashid 2015, Wierzbicka 1987)

## 7. Conclusion

This study analyzed commissive speech acts in Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo’s State of the Nation Address delivered in 2017. From the data, pledges have been used more extensively than promises and threats in the speech. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo employed more pledges than promises owing to a two-fold factor. One is the fact that he seeks to bring the hearers to his side and making pledges prove to his hearers that he will effect all measures to fulfill all he has outlined. Another rationale is that he exhibits commitment in the pledges he makes and substantiates his position as a political figure (Rashid 2015). He makes preponderance use of pledges in a bid to cause his listeners to appraise the vision and mission of his government. It is recommended that other researchers can consider investigating the other speech acts in Nana Addo’s SONA and probably extend it to speeches of other Ghanaian presidents. Further research will enlighten the reading public to have an in-depth knowledge of SONAs read by presidents.

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### Appendix

We are determined to put in place measures to ensure irreversibility and sustain macroeconomic stability, so that we have no reason to seek again the assistance of that powerful global body	
We will continue the constructive dialogue with organized labour to find mutually satisfactory solutions to their concerns, in order to guarantee industrial peace	
We will equip the youth with the skills that will enable them to be productive	
The details are currently being fine-tuned and next month, this policy will formally take off to join the other youth employment initiatives	
We have to improve upon the transportation system so that no part of this country feels cut off or can be deemed to be too far from the centre.	
We have to build the roads to open up and up the various parts of the country	
We are determined to bring our road network to a befitting status and this year we shall witness much more activity on the roads	
We are reforming the school's curricular to deal with the weaknesses in our education system and lay greater emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Reading, History and Technology and Vocational	

*Table 2: Speech Acts of Promise/ Nana Addo Danquah Akufo Addo's 2018*

Wrongdoing has no political colours and I do not subscribe to the lawless of political party supporters simply because their party has been elected into office	
I condemn all such conduct and I call on all political parties, especially the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress, to ensure that this is the last time such undignified acts occur during our periods of transition	

*Table 3: Speech Acts of Threat*



