ANALYZING POLITICAL DISCOURSE AS A MACRO SPEECH ACT

STANCA MĂDA[1]

Abstract. By analysing several partisan political speeches delivered by Romanian Members of the Parliament (MPs) in a session dedicated to the debate and vote of investiture for a new government (28.12.2004), the paper aims at demonstrating their role as macro speech acts. The corpus covers complex discursive functions (agenda setting, debates, decision making, or proclaiming), suitable for both a quantitative analysis (the frequency of speech acts, according to Searle's (1969) typology, for each category of speakers) and a qualitative one (how the macro speech act is built by means of political speeches). The distribution of the speech acts is correlated with the communicative strategies assigned to each role (the chair, the designated Prime Minister, the MPs from the government coalition, the MPs from the opposition, others). The discussion focuses on ways in which politicians do complex identity work (building and maintaining personal, group, and institutional identity), manage face-work, and construct power relations.

Keywords: political discourse, macro speech act, Romanian Parliament, communicative roles, identity work.

1. POLITICAL DISCOURSE – LINGUISTIC FRAMEWORKS OF ANALYSIS

Communication has always been a major social and political fact, with an essential contribution to establishing social order. By means of political discourse, speakers act upon the world and especially on their constituency. Therefore, it is, simultaneously, a specific way of action and a way of representation. Political discourse is a specific form of communication that is established as a force producing both meaning and reality. The performative aspects of political communication lead to behaviours such as: vote or abstention, party affiliation, street demonstrations and so on, in an attempt to either maintain the adherence of the audience who already shares the choices and values of the speaker or to conquer the "hesitant", seeking to determine the adherence of a larger segment of the population. Partisan political messages conveyed through speech must be

[1] Stanca Măda is an Associate Professor at *Transilvania* University of Braşov. She teaches courses in sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis. Her research interests include communication in professional settings, humour and media studies. She was a member of several granted projects and published articles and reviews in Romanian and international peer reviewed journals. E-mail: stanca.mada@unitbv.ro.

RRL, **LXIII**, *1–2*, p. 133–146, Bucureşti, 2018

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

repeated constantly, but at the same time, they must exclude the possibility of the alternative or contradictory messages (Arsith 2005), in order to ensure the sustainability of influence.

Political discourse covers an important place in the organization and management of societies nowadays. It is identified by its actors and/or authors, namely the politicians, but has various recipients: the public at large, certain categories of people (e.g. veterans, members of the working class, militants for environment, etc.), citizens who have the right to vote, and others. In order to communicate their political messages to citizens, politicians "have adopted a more personalized rhetoric of choice and life style values" (Simpson and Mayr 2010: 22–23). In this respect, the frameworks of linguistic analysis of current political discourse cover not only the language of professional politicians and political institutions, but also the means through which politicians convey power relationships, ideologies, or powerful arguments. A discourse analytical perspective (for a review of literature, see Chilton 2004: 14) focuses mainly on the language produced by politicians in institutional settings, while a critical discursive perspective approaches the ways in which political language makes use of power to organize people's minds and opinions (Fairclough 1989, 1995) and as an instrument used to control society in general and to convey ideas and ideologies (Fairclough 1992).

It has been argued (Beard 2000) that political discourse is no longer the creation of politicians. Nowadays, political discourse is composed by professional speech writers educated to produce persuasive language. Various linguistic means are used or omitted in order to affect meaning in different ways. Thus, "a political discourse is not necessarily successful because of correctness of truth; rather it may be a matter of presenting arguments." (Beard 2000: 18) The argumentative intention can be easily recognised when marked by certain discursive indicators (mainly verbal clues) or it can be less visible (even unmarked), requesting a more detailed analysis of the general and specific background information, or of the broader, non-verbal context (van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Snoeck Henkemans 2002). Professionalized to a great extent and confined to the restrictions imposed by the institutional settings, the discourse produced by politicians can be approached as a text, as an output, and as a process.

A pragmatic approach unfolds the implications of context in the process of political communication. Context helps to realize what one can take for granted, to make deductions on the basis of the context, and to understand what is implied by what is said or left unsaid (Leech 1983, Thomas 1995). The impact of context on political interactions involves the structure of the participatory framework, along with politicians' intention and knowledge of the world. In all communication forms, there is a link between what is said, what is meant, and the action conveyed by what is said. In political communication, the speeches are a means of establishing and maintaining social relationships, expressing feelings, *selling* ideas, implementing policies and programmes in any society. The theory of speech acts (Austin 1962) proposes a useful framework of interpreting the meaning and function of words in different situations, since a speech act performed by a particular word often depends on the speaker's intention and the context in which the word is uttered. People perform various actions through the use of words, and when words are uttered, a particular act is performed. Political discourse is not about stating public propositions, it is about doing politics, one of the most obvious means of "doing things with words". Since political discourse aims at actions and determining behaviours, it is interesting to notice the kinds of

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

actions envisaged by the pragmatic management of speech acts and the interactional self-presentation. Words are used to affect the political body, they effectively "emphasize political attitudes and opinions, manipulate public opinion, build political consent, or legitimate political power" (Hashim 2015: 700). The effectiveness of discourse relies on the force of the speech act being achieved.

2. SPEECH ACTS - FROM UTTERANCE TO DISCOURSE

Considering all the above mentioned, my approach follows the ways in which political discourse maintains and exploits the features of speech acts, namely: (i) *contextual determination*, that reveals social, spatial and temporal conditions of enunciation, and peculiarities of the interlocutor to whom the speech is addressed; (ii) *intentionality*, which concerns the proper interpretation by the interlocutor of the speaker's intention of communication; (iii) *action dimension*, which emphasizes the force of political discourse to change the state of the world, to produce changes; (iv) *conventionality*, which assumes a set of 'conditions of success' of discourse in attention, which are conditioned by the circumstances of the utterance, the status and intentions of the speakers, but also the effects pursued by the utterer.

The speech act simultaneously displays three components: (i) the *locutionary* act, that is the act of saying something, of producing an utterance; (ii) the *illocutionary* act, identified by an explicit performative which conveys the conventional force achieved in the saying of that utterance; it can be assessed through the successful realization of the speaker's intention (Austin 1962) and is simply a product of the listener's interpretation (Searle 1969); (iii) the *perlocutionary* act, that is the effect or influence on the feelings, thoughts or actions of the listener/hearer (e.g. inspiring, persuading, consoling etc.); it brings about an effect upon the beliefs, attitudes or behaviours of the addressee.

Argumentation in political discourses is an attempt at convincing (a perlocutionary act) the listener of the acceptability or unacceptability of an expressed opinion. Thus, argumentation can be defined as "the relation between the illocution arguing and the perlocution convincing" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984: 3). Still, illocutionary acts are the core ingredients of any theory of speech acts. Politicians articulate many intentions in their speeches: they inform, inspire, assure, accuse, promise, direct, suggest, apologize, disagree, criticize, etc. A speech acts analysis of political discourse may reveal how these intentions are rendered. For the purpose of this research, I adopted Searle's (1969) typology of illocutionary acts, listed as follows:

1) ASSERTIVES (also *representatives*). They commit speakers to the truth of the expressed proposition; e.g., stating, claiming, reporting, announcing.

2) DIRECTIVES. These are statements that compel or make another person's action fit the propositional element. It is usually used to give orders thereby causing the hearer to take a particular action, request, command or advice.

3) COMMISSIVES (also *promises*). They commit speakers to some future actions, e.g., promising, offering, swearing, etc. to do something.

4) EXPRESSIVES. These count as the expression of some psychological state, e.g., thinking, apologizing, congratulating, etc.

5) DECLARATIVES (also *statements*). These statements are used to say something and make it so, such as pronouncing someone guilty, resigning, dismissing, accepting, declaring a war.

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

The actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts. The utterance of the relevant words is the action itself. Without the utterance, the action is not done. Hashim's study (2015) on political speeches focuses on the pragmatic functions of twenty sentences selected from John Kerry's speech in the 2004 presidential campaign and George Bush's inaugural address in 2001 from a speech acts perspective. His results showed the difference between the politicians who commit to some future actions, relying on sentences that performed commissive acts, and those who use assertive acts more than other speech acts, in order to give the weight of the truth value on the asserted proposition.

In his work on pragmatic macro-structures in discourse and cognition, van Dijk argues that the notion of a speech act, or that of illocutionary force, applies not only to single sentences, but

> also seems to apply to utterances consisting of a sequence of sentences, viz. of a whole discourse or conversation. That is, we may utter several sentences and thereby, at least at a more global level, accomplish one speech act. We may promise, warn, state, congratulate or accuse by uttering a whole discourse. (...) In such cases, then, it is assumed that we accomplish what may be called a macro-speech-act. (van Dijk 1981: 195)

In van Dijk's opinion, "the notion of a macro-speech-act is necessary in order to understand the cognitive processes involved in the planning, execution, control, interpretation, and other processing of discourse and speech acts in communicative interaction" (van Dijk 1981: 195–196).

Arsith's (2015: 622–623) attempt to demonstrate how the political discourse can function as a language macro-act takes fragments from several political speeches (Abraham Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation", one of the discourses of the US President Lyndon B. Johnson, one of general De Gaulle's, a speech of the Romanian MP Nicolae Iorga, and one of Mihail Kogălniceanu's) and demonstrates their illocutionary force (of a declaration, of an expressive, of a directive, and of a commissive). The author relates the practical motivations of each historical period to the illocutionary force performed by each politician through his speech.

Though the semantic level of discourse should be accounted for in terms of "global meaning, topic, or subject, taken as semantic macro-structures of the discourse" (van Dijk 1981: 196), pragmatically speaking, I am interested in how sequences of sentences in a discourse are related with sequences of speech acts. By analyzing an even larger discursive sequence, I attempt to identify communicative actors and actions, taken as units in action sequences, and how such composite actions are connected in the form of a macro speech act.

3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research investigates the role of language in the communication and interpretation of intentions (focus on meaning, the understanding of which is a function of reaching the illocutionary force of a speaker's utterances). The aims of this research are: i) to identify the speech act features of the selected speeches; ii) to analyze the features in relation to the contexts in which they were presented, and iii) to determine how the identified features project the message in the speeches.

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

By analysing several partisan political speeches delivered by Romanian Members of the Parliament (henceforth MPs) in a session dedicated to the debate and vote of investiture for a new government, the research aims at demonstrating their role as macro speech acts. The research involves a speech acts analysis of several political speeches from a Romanian parliamentary session - the common session of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, on December 28th, 2004 occasioned by the vote of investiture for a new Government after general elections. The source text represents a transcript of 32600 words of this session, which is available on the official website of the Romanian Parliament.

The various speeches cover complex discursive functions (agenda setting, debates, decision making, proclaiming and others), depending on the role of each speaker. I have identified five main communicative roles (the chair, the designated Prime Minister, the MPs from the government coalition, the MPs from the opposition, others) which are easily recognized by their employment of specific communicative strategies. The role of the *chair* is usually held by the President of the Senate and, in his absence, by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, while the category of *others* refers to the secretaries and the quaestors of the two chambers of the Parliament.

The utterances of each category of speakers were subjected both to a quantitative analysis of the frequency of the speech acts assigned to each communicative role, according to Searle's (1969) typology, and to a qualitative analysis relying on how a predominant macro speech act is built at the discursive level.

The quantitative analysis reveals the frequency in the use of marked speech acts. The distribution of the speech acts is correlated with the communicative strategies assigned to each of the five roles. Through this approach, I aimed at proving that the illocutionary force components at the level of the speech build the macro-actional function of the discourse. The qualitative analysis makes an in-depth study into the linguistic features that have been explored by the speakers to inculcate meaning into the formal linguistic properties of the selected speeches.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The structure of the analysed Parliamentary session includes the following stages, corresponding to the sections of the corpus, as they were organized in the transcribed version, made available on the official website:

1) Approving the agenda;

2) Approving the allotted time for speeches for each party;

3) Designated Prime Minister's speech – presenting the programme and the list of the members of the proposed government;

4) Presenting the points of view of the political parties on the programme and the list of members of the government. Debate;

5) Designated Prime Minister's answers to the problems raised by the parties;

6) Vote of investiture (of trust) of the parliament on the proposed government.

For the purpose of the present study, 553 utterances were selected rendering all the marked speech acts from 24 speakers (the 2 Chairs of the session, the designated Prime Minister, 7 MPs from the opposition, 10 MPs supporting the government coalition, 4 others/ independent).

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

The Speech Act Theory was applied with Searle's (1969) five categories. The results of the quantitative analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Quantitative analysis of the illocutionary acts used by MPs.

Type of illocutionary speech acts (no. - %)	**Chairs of the Parliamentary Session (2)**	**Designated Prime Minister**	**MPs from government coalition (10)**	**MPs from opposition (7)**	**Others (4)**
ASSERTIVES* (282 – 51%)	22	56	78	**120**	6
DIRECTIVES (104 – 19%)	**53**	18	18	14	1
COMMISSIVES (91 – 16%)	0	**65**	22	4	0
EXPRESSIVES (48 – 9%)	12	8	7	**18**	3
DECLARATIVES (28 – 5%)	**27**	0	0	0	1
Total no. 553	114	147	125	156	11

*Unmarked ASSERTIVES were not taken into consideration.

A quick view reveals that the ASSERTIVES (only those marked by an explicit performative) occur in approximately half of the total number of illocutionary speech acts, DIRECTIVES account for one fifth, COMMISSIVES represent 16%, EXPRESSIVES are close to one tenth, and DECLARATIVES amount to 5%. As expected, each of the five communicative roles renders a certain combination of illocutionary speech acts, and one or two dominant ones that establish the type of the macro speech act which defines a particular role. In what follows, I will describe and exemplify the instances in which the macro speech acts assigned to each communicative role become relevant. The examples in Romanian are labelled with the name of the speaker, the date of the meeting, followed by the number of the section of the parliamentary session and the number of the intervention (e.g. Văcăroiu, 28.12.2004_ 1.1 stands for Văcăroiu's first intervention in the first section of the meeting). In the examples translated into English, I underlined the performatives and other relevant markers for each illocutionary act.

4.1. The role of the chair. Declaring

The strategies related to the role of the chair are linked to: issuing declarations, setting the agenda, keeping discussions within the established timeframes and on track, managing turn-taking in official discussions (inviting speakers, thanking), and congratulating. In line with these strategies, the predominant illocutionary acts used by the presidents of the two chambers are the DECLARATIVES and the DIRECTIVES. Thus, only the chairs (27) and the general secretary (1) of the Parliament use DECLARATIVES, and 53 out of 104 DIRECTIVES were employed by the chairs. They used 12 out of 48 EXPRESSIVES for

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

thanking the participants and congratulating the newly formed government and very few ASSERTIVES for announcing the agenda and informing the audience on the results. Another relevant feature of their institutional role is the absence of COMMISSIVES.

The session is opened by the President of the Senate, Nicolae Văcăroiu:

(1) Doamnelor şi domnilor senatori şi deputaţi, vă rog să vă ocupaţi locurile.
Vă rog să-mi permiteţi să declar deschisă şedinţa de astăzi a Senatului şi Camerei Deputaţilor, anunţându-vă că din totalul de 468 deputaţi şi senatori şi-a înregistrat prezenţa la lucrări un număr de 448. (Văcăroiu, 28.12.2004_ 1.1)

Ladies and gentlemen senators and deputies, *please take your seats*.
Please, allow me *to declare* today's meeting of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies *open*, by *announcing* that out of 468 deputies and senators, a number of 448 registered their presence.

In example (1), after bringing the participants to order (by using the directive *please take your seats*), the president of the Senate issues a declarative (*declare today's meeting … open*), based on an assertive (*announcing that…*). The official forms of address and the communicative procedures related to opening the session prepare the next step: announcing the agenda of the meeting and ratifying it through the vote of the MPs.

(2) Vă întreb dacă sunt observaţii la această ordine de zi. Nu sunt.
Supun votului dumneavoastră ordinea de zi.
Cine este pentru? Mulţumesc. Împotrivă? Abţineri?
Ordinea de zi a fost votată în unanimitate. (Văcăroiu, 28.12.2004_ 1.1)

I am asking you if there are any observations regarding this agenda.
There aren't any. I *open the voting* for this agenda.
Who is in favour? Thank you. Against? Refraining?
The agenda was unanimously approved.

In example (2), a rapid succession of various speech acts occurs. After announcing the agenda, the procedure imposes a directive (*I am asking you…*), followed by an assertive (*There aren't any*). The ratifying process starts by means of a declarative (*I open the voting…*), followed by a directive (*Who is in favour?*), an expressive (*Thank you*), and other directives (*Against? Refraining?*), which mark the steps of the voting process. The results are asserted by the same chair (*The agenda…*) and thus, the procedure of approving the agenda of the meeting is closed. In the first two stages of the meeting, the chair assumes the validity of the meeting and establishes the agenda. After the presentation of the program by the designated Prime Minister, the chair manages the parliamentary debate, by keeping track of the time allotted for each speaker or party and by making sure that everyone's opinion is registered by the secretary. In the final stage of the meeting, the chair manages the vote of investiture and announces the result.

The role of the chair is very important in institutional settings. In parliamentary sessions, the chairs follow the established routines and contribute to increasing the formality of the meetings. Their identity as members of the government party or of the

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

opposition party is temporarily suspended. They no longer act as politicians running a campaign or defending opinions. 'Bearing the hat' of the chair in an official meeting of the Parliament imposes a strictly impartial role, with communicative strategies assigned by means of the existing institutional procedures. Their utterances keep the discussions on track, bring the MPs to order, and bear the power of decision. More than the statements of politicians in other communicative roles, the assertives of the chairs are perceived as having an increased truth value.

4.2. Designated Prime Minister's speech. Promising

In the third stage of the meeting, the designated Prime Minister's role is to present the programme and the list of proposed members of the Government. Later on, after the debates on the proposed programme and the list of ministers, the designated Prime Minister answers the questions from MPs, and in the end of the voting procedure, he thanks for the vote of investiture. In this line of action, the designated Prime Minister employs the largest number of COMMISSIVES (65 out of 91), in order to commit to the actions from the proposed programme, 56 ASSERTIVES (presenting the state of the economy, the strategies adopted by the new Government), 18 DIRECTIVES, and 8 EXPRESSIVES. Examples (3) and (4) were chosen to illustrate this role.

(3) În mod egal, vom fi preocupaţi şi de românii de pretutindeni. Cunoaştem multiplele lor nevoi şi aşteptări şi dorim ca împreună să construim cele mai bune soluţii pentru cei care sunt tot români, dar uneori nu le este uşor să recunoască acest lucru în străinătate. Noi vom fi un Guvern al tuturor românilor şi le vom reda demnitatea de a fi români, acasă şi în lume. (Tăriceanu – 28.12.2004_3.2)

We will be equally concerned with the Romanians all over the world. *We know their multiple needs* and expectations and wish to find together the best solutions for those who are still Romanians, but find it difficult to admit this when they're abroad. *We will be a Government of all Romanians and we will redeem their dignity of being Romanians, here at home and in the world.*

An assertive (*We know their multiple needs…*) is preceded and followed by several commissive acts (*We will be equally concerned…, We will be a Government of all Romanians…*). The proposed program is presented by the designated Prime Minister in the first person plural. Being the voice of a political coalition and of a team of ministers, Tăriceanu assumes this mission in their name. This strategy is rarely interrupted by a personal touch:

(4) Am înţeles că, despre mine, oamenii cred că sunt competent şi cinstit şi au încredere în Alianţa pe care o reprezint. Sunt onorat şi îmi asum aceste aşteptări. Să fim calmi, să fim entuziaşti, să rămânem fermi şi să promovăm proiecte folositoare pentru ţară. Ceea ce este bun pentru România este bun pentru Guvern. Cu ajutorul Parlamentului vom confirma această încredere. Sper să putem răspunde cu adevărat aşteptărilor oamenilor. (Tăriceanu – 28.12.2004_3.2)

I understood that people thought about me that I was competent and honest and they trusted the Alliance *I represented. I am honoured* and *I commit to meeting* these

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

expectations. *Let's be calm, enthusiastic, stay firm and promote projects* that are useful for the country. What is good for Romania is good for the Government. With the help of the Parliament, *we will confirm this trust. I hope* we can indeed respond to peoples' expectations.

In example (4), inclusive *we* is replaced by *I* in certain ASSERTIVES (*I understand… I was competent… I represented. I am honoured and I assume these expectations. I hope…*), while the directive acts (*Let's be calm… stay firm and promote projects…*) preserve the inclusive *we*, with reference to the *people*, in general, to the alliance and to the proposed governmental team. The commissive act of promising (*we will confirm this trust*) is assumed by the designated Prime Minister in the name of his team. Both his individual identity (rendered by the use of the first person singular) and his group identity as a member of a party, alliance or team of ministers (expressed in the various uses of *we*) are confirmed by Tăriceanu's political speech.

A typical strategy used in this speech is to issue an assertive which is immediately followed by a commissive act. In twenty-eight such instances, the designated Prime Minister issues statements about the problems of the country, followed by promises regarding the measures the Government will take to remedy them. The communicative role of the designated Prime Minister is that of assuming the act of governing the country, being aware of its problems and promising to solve them in good faith. At this stage, the directives used are mild ones, encouraging people to come together and trust the proposed programme. The expressives used by the designated Prime Minister are concentrated in his final speech (the fifth stage of the meeting), in which he thanks the MPs for the vote of investiture.

4.3. The discourse of power. Claiming support

The political alliance DA (Dreptate şi Adevăr – *Justice and Truth*) was built in order to oppose the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the 2004 general elections. It consisted of two parties – The Democratic Party and The National Liberal Party, and was supported by UDMR (the Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania), PUR (The Romanian Humanist Party), and by the representatives of the minorities. This was the first democratic coalition to win general elections after the Romanian revolution in 1989, at the expense of SDP, the party that continues the socialist ideology in Romania.

The discourse of the MPs of the DA alliance does no longer fit the procedures. It appears impregnated with elements of political debate. Promising, offering, requesting, recommending, claiming, and reporting back are just a few of the strategies employed by the MPs from the governmental coalition to persuade the hesitant MPs to vote for the new government. The quantitative analysis reveals the equilibrium between COMMISSIVES (22 out of 91), DIRECTIVES (18 out of 104), ASSERTIVES (78 out of 282), and EXPRESSIVES (7 out of 48). The most transparent of all are the commissive illocutionary speech acts that are meant to claim for support of the programme and the list of ministers presented by the designated Prime Minister.

(5) S-a spus că PSD pregăteşte un guvern din umbră. Astăzi, am auzit pe la ora 14.00 la radio. Le reamintesc celor din PSD că umbra este răcoroasă şi poate duce cel puțin

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

la reumatism. Le recomand colegilor din PSD să profite mai bine de soarele Coastei de Azur şi să facă Guvernul la una din superbele vile ale colegului lor, prea cinstitul Corneliu Iacubov.
Tuturor cetăţenilor României, colegilor mei parlamenatari, chiar şi celor care nu-şi pot depăşi condiţia de simpli membri de partid şi nu vor dori să voteze Cabinetul Tăriceanu vreau să le spun în încheiere şi chiar cu colegialitate, doar atât: Să trăiţi bine. (Haşoti – 28.12.2004_4.4)

It has been said that SDP is preparing a shadow cabinet. Today, around 2 p.m., *I heard it* on the radio. *I remind* those (MPs) from SDP that it is cold in the shadow and it can cause at least rheumatism. *I recommend* the colleagues from SDP *to take advantage* of the sun on the French Riviera and *to prepare* the Government in one of the gorgeous villas of the all too honourable Corneliu Iacubov.
Finally, to all the citizens of Romania, to my fellow MPs, even to those who cannot overcome their condition of simple members of a party and will not vote for the Tăriceanu Government, *I want to wish them, even cordially: Live well!*

In example (5), after several assertives (*It has been said…, I heard it on the radio. I remind…*), the speaker warns the members of the SDP in the form of an ironic recommendation (*I recommend… to take advantage… and to prepare…*) to give up the idea of a shadow cabinet. The intervention ends with an expressive act (*I want to wish them, even cordially: Live well!*). The meaning of the wish differs, depending on the addressee. When addressed *to all the citizens of Romania, to my fellow MPs* the literal meaning seems appropriate. Still, when addressed *to those who cannot overcome their condition of simple members of a party and will not vote for the Tăriceanu Government*, the wish becomes slightly ironic. It is also worth noticing that "Live well!" echoes the slogan used by Traian Băsescu, the successful candidate of the Presidential elections in 2004.

(6) Vreau să spun încă de la bun început că grupul nostru parlamentar va vota pentru învestitura acestui guvern, *(aplauze)* hotărâre pe care am luat-o după o îndelungă chibzuinţă în care elementele care ţin de stabilitatea politică – economică şi socială a României au primat. (Pambuccian – 28.12.2004_4.20)

I *want to say* from the very beginning that our group of MPs *will vote* for the investiture of this Government (applause). *It's a decision that we have reached after a long period of consideration,* in which the elements that belong to the political, economic, and social stability of Romania prevailed.

Another MP from the coalition expresses the support of his colleagues for the new government (*I want to say from the very beginning that our group of MPs will vote for the investiture of this Government*). The commissive act of promising (*will vote…*) is followed by the statement of the arguments of the group he represents.

The MPs from the government coalition have a unitary communicative strategy aimed at convincing the other MPs to vote for the proposed programme and list of ministers. As expected, the mixture of speech acts used by these MPs can be seen as a general offer for support.

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

4.2. Doing politics in opposition. Taking a position and criticizing

In order to give voice to the opposition, I have selected the deputy Victor Ponta (examples 7 and 8), a member of the SDP, and Corneliu Vadim Tudor (examples 9 and 10), a senator of the far-right party – Greater Romania. Doing opposition means stating antagonistic points of view and criticizing the proposed programme and ministers. The MPs from the opposition employed the majority of the marked ASSERTIVES (120 out of 282) and EXPRESSIVES (18 out of 48), few DIRECTIVES (14 – most of them negative recommendations) and COMMISSIVES (4).

(7) Am dori să-l întrebăm pe domnul prim-ministru desemnat Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu dacă aceştia sunt miniştrii cei mai buni pe care Alianţa îi poate oferi. Dacă nu, e grav, dacă da, e şi mai grav. Eu mai sper încă că e vorba de o farsă, un exerciţiu de imagine, o testare a atmosferei, şi că atunci când vom fi toţi supăraţi, va apărea adevăratul prim-ministru, domnul Traian Băsescu, cu adevăratul guvern, aşa cum ne-a promis la toţi.
(Ponta – 28.12.2004_4.2)

We would like to ask the designated Prime Minister, Mr. Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, if these are the best ministers the Alliance could offer. If not, it is bad, if yes, it is even worse. *I still hope* that this is a farce, an exercise (of image), a test of the atmosphere and that when we are all upset, the real Prime Minister, Mr. Traian Băsescu will appear, with the real government, as he has promised all of us.

The abundance of marked and unmarked assertives in example (7) is meant to build an alternative script in which the former president of Romania, Traian Băsescu, was meant to be *the real Prime Minister* and propose *the real government.* As opposed to the assertives used by the chairs or by the designated Prime Minister, those employed by the opposition display a highly questionable truth value.

(8) Vreau să cred că există mulţi liberali, democraţi şi umanişti care se ruşinează de compromisurile făcute, motiv pentru care o să vă sfătuiesc să faceţi vot controlat acolo, pe prima bancă, ca să fiţi siguri că Guvernul trece.
Pentru toate motivele expuse anterior şi pentru multe altele, şi eu, şi colegii mei social-democraţi, nu putem să girăm, prin votul nostru, un guvern în care nu credem şi care, probabil, va avea o viaţă foarte scurtă. (Ponta – 28.12.2004_4.2)

I want to believe that there are many liberals, democrats, and humanists who are ashamed of the compromises that you've made. *That is the reason why I advise you to do a controlled voting out there* in the front row, to be sure that the government passes.
For all the previously stated reasons and for many others, I and my social-democratic colleagues *cannot give our vote* to this government, in which we do not believe and which will probably have a short life.

In example (8), the assertive acts (*I want to believe…*) are followed by an ironic directive (*I advise you to do a controlled voting out there*) and a commissive (*I and my*

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

social-democratic colleagues cannot give our vote to this government). The negative promise of not voting for the government is a constant in the speeches of the opposition (see also example 10).

A particular case of opposition is that of the Greater Romania Party (GRP). Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the head of the party, voices his discontent towards both the governmental coalition and the Social Democratic Party.

(9) Constatăm că dumneavoastră tot daţi vina unii pe alţii. (...) Hotărât lucru, dar oratoria nu e punctul tare al domnului Popescu-Tăriceanu, care are alte calităţi şi, probabil, Guvernul propus de domnia sa va trece. Important este cât va rezista. Eu îi doresc viaţă lungă. (...) Eu am curajul să o spun şi n-o să-mi ia nimeni microfonul de la gură şi nici stiloul din mână. (Tudor_28.12.2004_4.46)

We notice that you keep blaming one another. (…) It's true that the art of rhetoric is not the best point of Mr. Popescu-Tăriceanu, who has other qualities and, probably, the government he proposed will pass. *The important fact here is for how long it will last. I wish it a long life*. (…) *I have the courage to say it* and nobody will take me away from the microphone or take the pen out of my hand.

In successive assertives, Tudor tries to discredit both the members of the opposition and the proposed government. He asserts his disbelief in the validity of the governmental formula. The expressive (*I wish it a long life*) is not to be taken seriously since in the next example (10), the same speaker commits himself and his party not to voting for the government. The next assertive (*I have the courage to say it…*) alludes to Tudor's already established identity of a good speaker and a skilled poet and journalist.

(10) Iată de ce Partidul România Mare nu numai că va vota contra acestui Guvern suprarealist şi mult prea eterogen, e nevoie şi de o opoziţie puternică, şi vă asigur că va fi o opoziţie constructivă, dar ne reînnoim convingerea că doar alegerile anticipate pot rezolva această criză din care România nu a ieşit. În Italia, Israel şi în alte ţări au fost perioade în care erau alegeri în fiecare an şi ţările respective nu s-au mai prăbuşit, dimpotrivă. Vă reamintesc tuturor că Imnul Naţional al României nu este "Somnoroase păsărele", ci "Deşteaptă-te, române!" Totuşi, noi vă iubim pe toţi şi vă dorim sărbători fericite şi la mulţi ani! (Tudor_28.12.2004_4.48)

That is why the Greater Romania Party *will not only vote against* this surrealistic and much too heterogeneous Government, offering a strong opposition, and I assure you it is going to be a constructive one, *but we also renew our conviction that* only anticipated elections can solve this crisis out of which Romania has not recovered yet. In Italy, Israel and in other countries there were times in which there were elections every year and the countries did not collapse. On the contrary, *I remind you all* that the national anthem of Romania is not "Sleepy birdies", but "Wake up, Romanian!" *Still, we love you all and wish you merry holidays and a happy New Year!*

The controversial figure of the leader of the Greater Romania Party commits himself to voting against the government, and to making a strong, constructive opposition (*That is why the Greater Romania Party will not only vote against…*). He states that the only

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

solution for the foreseen political crisis is to organize anticipated elections (*our conviction that only anticipated elections*…). The politician continues his intervention in a humorous manner (*I remind you all that the national anthem of Romania is not "Sleepy birdies", but "Wake up, Romanian!*"), alluding to a poem of the Romanian national poet, Mihai Eminescu. Tudor ends his speech with winter holidays wishes, an expressive illocutionary act (*Still, we love you all and wish you merry holidays and a happy New Year!*).

The identity of the MPs from opposition is built around the statements regarding the incapacity of the coalition to propose a viable government and around the commitment to vote against the cabinet. Criticizing directly or indirectly the designated Prime Minister, the programme and the list of the proposed ministers was to be expected. Victor Ponta and Corneliu Vadim Tudor had different but powerful personalities that impregnated their political discourse with questionable assertives, ironic expressives and negative recommendations.

The analysis of the speech acts employed by MPs in the five communicative roles identified in the corpus examined the ways in which politicians did complex identity work (building and maintaining personal, group, and institutional identity), managed face-work, and constructed power relations. When employing DECLARATIVES and DIRECTIVES, the chairs consolidate institutional procedures, doing power and politeness. They establish the formal context of the meeting and make sure the procedures are followed (validity of the session, the time allotted for each party, the turn taking in debates, the voting). The designated Prime Minister takes responsibility for and pleads in favour of the presented programme and list of ministers. By his use of COMMISSIVES, the designated Prime Minister commits to future actions based on the ASSERTIVES of the present state of affairs. The MPs who support the government coalition also employ COMMISSIVES and claim the vote of their fellow MPs. In addition to that, they use ironic ASSERTIVES and EXPRESSIVES that are specific to political debates. In response, the MPs from the opposition deny the statements of the power coalition and question the validity of both the programme and the proposed cabinet. Their use of negative DIRECTIVES and EXPRESSIVES is specific to this communicative context. The utterances of the MPs listed under *others* are of a mere organizational nature. Their use of ASSERTIVES (6), DECLARATIVES (1), EXPRESSIVES (3), and DIRECTIVES (1) is restricted to the institutionalized role of secretaries and quaestors of the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament. Each speech act respects the contextual determination. The intentionality and the action dimension are recognizable although the conditions of success of the majority of the speech acts are in strict dependence of the political context.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Communication has always been a major social and political fact, with an essential contribution to establishing the social order. The communicative actors and actions were considered in larger action sequences, as macro speech acts, on the basis of the communicative roles played by politicians during a parliamentary meeting. I examined the speech act features of political discourse in relation to the particular context of each performance and to how successful it was in terms of projecting the political message.

Political discourse is, simultaneously, not only a specific way of action, a way of representation, but also a linguistic approach that speakers act upon the world and especially on their peers. The structures of political discourse may seldom be exclusive, but typical and

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)

effective discourse in political contexts may well have preferred structures and strategies that are functional in the adequate accomplishment of political actions in political contexts.

In the analysed data, I have noticed the distribution of speech acts on the most important communicative roles in a parliamentary meeting: the chairs, the MPs representing the power, the MPs representing the opposition, and the designated Prime Minister, invited to present a new governmental programme. Through this approach, inspired by the theory of speech acts, I offered evidence to support that, by valorisation, at the level of discourse, of the illocutionary force components at the level of the speech, the actional function of language used in political settings becomes more transparent.

More than other analytical frameworks, analysing political discourse from the perspective of the speech act theory proved, both quantitatively and qualitatively, that discourse is a way of action and a way of representation. The actors of political discourse do complex *identity work* in their attempt to build and maintain personal, group, and institutional identity. They also do *politeness* especially by means of expressives, and *power*, visible in their use of directives and declaratives. The actional dimension of the speeches belonging to each communicative role was identified by the majority of illocutionary speech acts and confirmed by the analysis of speech excerpts. Each of the analysed sequences became part of the larger macro structure identified both as a semantic and as an actional unit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation, CNCS - UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-0056.

SOURCE TEXT

Ședința comună a Camerei Deputaților și Senatului din 28 decembrie 2004, available at http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.sumar?ids=5788&idl=1, on 31.07.2017.

REFERENCES

Arsith, M., 2005, Semiotica discursului politic [Semiotics of political discourse], Iași, Editura Ștefan Lupașcu.
Arsith, M., 2015, "Political Discourse and the Theory of Speech Acts", *EIRP Proceedings*, 10, 619–624.
Austin, J. L., 1962, *How to do Things with Words*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Beard, A., 2000, *The Language of Politics*, New York, Routledge.
Chilton, P., 2004, *Analyzing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*, London, Routledge.
van Djik, A., 1981, *Studies in the Pragmatics of Discourse*, The Hague, Mouton de Gruyter.
van Eemeren, F. H., R. Grootendorst, A. F. Snoeck Henkemans, 2002, *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation*, Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum.
Fairclough, N., 1989, *Language and Power*, London, Longman.
Fairclough, N., 1992, *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
Fairclough, N., 1995, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, London, Longman.
Hashim, S. S. M., 2015, "Speech Acts in Political Speeches", *Journal of Modern Education Review*, Vol. 5, 7, 699–706.
Leech, G., 1983, *Principles of Pragmatics*, New York, Longman.
Searle, J. R., 1969, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Simpson, P., A. Mayr, 2010, *Language and Power. A Resource Book for Students*, London, Routledge.
Thomas, J., 1995, *Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics*, New York, Longman.

BDD-A27740 © 2018 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 22:56:22 UTC)