



Pragmalinguistic analysis of grave threats in Philippine decided cases

GINA M. ORACION *

St. Mary's College of Tagum, Tagum, Philippines

Abstract

Aim: This paper aimed to use pragmalinguistic analysis to dissect the language used in death threats. More specifically, this research examined death threats' syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects in Philippine court decisions.

Method: Pragmalinguistic analysis and other forms of qualitative research were used in this investigation. Research for this article was based on Supreme Court rulings in cases involving death threats in the Philippines.

Findings: According to the findings, exclamatory sentences are most frequently used when making serious threats, simple sentences are most frequently used when making direct threats, and complex sentences are most commonly used when making conditional threats. Since the speaker commits an act of doing something under a certain condition, threats and challenges can be classified as commissive and directive illocutionary acts.

Implications/Novel Contribution: The findings of this study can aid those directly and indirectly involved in the investigation of linguistic crimes, especially those involving death threats.

Keywords: Linguistics, Grave Threats, Qualitative Research, Pragmalinguistic Analysis, Philippines

Received: 16 October 2018 / **Accepted:** 22 November 2018 / **Published:** 12 December 2018

INTRODUCTION

The modern era's preoccupation with crime has far-reaching consequences for all sectors of society. Evidence suggests that criminality's effects on society, immediately and over time, are intrinsic to those society's workings. Unfortunately, many of these offences are committed through the written or spoken word. Libel, oral defamation, and threats are a few examples of crimes committed through language. Crimes committed through language or words are known as crimes involving speech. The investigative efforts of law enforcement have been exhaustive in their pursuit of those responsible for these crimes. Some forms of expression have been criminalized by government decree (Coenen, 2017). The central focus of the criminalization of speech is on language crimes, but it also encompasses any crime committed through speech or writing. The use of threats, especially death threats, is a common criminal language. They argued that threats are more than words in their seminal works cited in Tiersma and Solan (2005). These acts may constitute crimes against the English language. They concluded from their research that threatening language has many similarities to other types of communication, such as warnings and predictions.

The illocutionary force attached to a speech act can be clouded by the additional context that often accompanies it, so the target of a threat must be sure they fully grasp the full extent of that context. A separate study was done on the types of threats made by Central American gangs and drug cartels (Berk-Seligson, 2017). According to the results of her research, threats are made daily in that community, and the people who have been threatened discuss them, sometimes directly quoting the person who made the threat to them and other times speaking about it more obliquely. Many 465 community stakeholders interviewed in Guatemala and El Salvador for the study, which took place between 2011 and 2013, reported receiving death threats. Gang members using cell phones from behind bars surprisingly made some of these threats.

Cultures in the Philippines have a history of resorting to violence to solve conflicts. Some people use

* Corresponding author: Gina M. Oracion

† Email: gigioracion@gmail.com

extremely threatening languages that are insulting, violent, and offensive to other societies. Others view threats as merely a casual way of expressing something or as a simple speech act often compared to that of promises, merely uttering threatening words without caring about the psychological impact on the part of the hearer.

In the Supreme Court case that was cited, the accused wrote a letter threatening to kidnap his wife and daughter if he was not given P25,000.00. This was a particularly grave case of threat motivated by personal resentment. The accused was found guilty of a serious threat because he had threatened to inflict upon the wife and daughter a wrong amounting to a crime, even though the actual crime had not been committed. As a result, people need to watch what they say in everyday situations, as they can be held legally responsible for their words if they cause emotional distress to others through speech or writing.

Moreover, speech acts are one of the most investigated areas of linguistics. Certain claims about what constitutes a speech act, including its types, were first made by Austin (1962) and continued and expanded upon by J. R. Searle and Searle (1969). The speech act theory has been dissected in great detail, and its particulars, like promises, requests, and apologies, have been studied in depth.

There doesn't seem to be any research on the pragmalinguistic analysis of death threats that I've come across in my readings. Foreign authors, such as Berk-Seligson (2017), Lipshaw (2005), Tiersma and Solan (2005), have written studies on the pragmalinguistic analysis of speech crimes, especially that of threats, but I have not come across any studies written by native English speakers. Given these circumstances, I feel compelled to investigate and examine the language of extreme threats. Since the study is meant to offer a pragmalinguistic analysis of cases involving serious threats, there is an urgent need to carry it out. In addition, this research uncovered the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of grave threats to reach a common understanding and help victims of such threats get justice.

Purpose of the Study

This paper's primary objective was to use pragmalinguistic analysis to investigate the language used in death threats. This research examined the specific varieties of threatening speech reported in the Philippines.

Research Question

What speech acts are found in grave threats in Philippine decided cases?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study can be seen through the proposition of Tiersma and Solan (2005) as cited by Berk-Seligson (2017) which stated that grave threats can be made directly and indirectly and that, in carrying out these verbal acts, certain speech acts have to be accomplished.

In the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and J. R. Searle (1975), they asserted that when we are making certain statements, it entails the use of words of sorts in order to convey our meaning- be it implicit or explicit. Austin categorized three kinds of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. The locutionary act refers to the speaker's utterance, the illocutionary act refers to how the speaker strategize his/her utterance in order to convey words of advices, promises and warnings while the perlocutionary act refers to how the audience receive or understand the message, ultimately, it refers to the effect of the act to the audience or hearer (Boonyarattanasoontorn, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Hilao, 2016; Mai & Thuy, 2015).

Importance of the Study

This study is deemed beneficial to various entities that are indirectly and directly involved in investigating speech crimes particularly that of grave threats converging linguistics, law and criminology with the hope of providing a well-founded basis and evidences in interpreting language crimes.

Firstly, this study may benefit all citizens in the country despite differences in ethnicity and other cultural conventions. Some cultures in the Philippines are predisposed to make threats without necessarily the intention of performing (absence of the perlocutionary aspect of a speech act) the threat. This study would point out that threats even if made without necessarily performing them have legal underpinnings and impediments. The results may help people to be refined in their speech and manner since threats can create lasting wounds. Analyzing verbal and

written threats and presenting the results in conferences may warn people to take extra precaution in their daily affairs- be it verbal and written communication so as not to inflict emotional trauma to those whom we come in contact with. Some take threats lightly but a considerable number of people take threats seriously especially with the culture of violence that thrive in our society today.

Secondly, this study may help students in applied linguistics to further make an attempt in analyzing corpora-based speech act since there have been a relatively few publications on various legal issues involving the use of language. As of now, speech crimes are not the point of interest among linguists but these have been the cause of emotional injury for most people adding up to the brokenness in our society today.

Thirdly, this study can also provide acumens (understanding and insights) to the speech community on how Filipinos configure words in making threats so as to perpetrate direct and indirect harm and intimidation especially to the emotionally vulnerable people who are most likely the prey of threats.

Fourthly, this study may help curriculum developers particularly in linguistics to include pragmalinguistic analysis of speech crimes in Philippine decided cases to embark on a new interesting field for their future research endeavors. Lastly, this study may help address social issues related to grave threats by bringing to the fore cases of grave threats that have been decided by the Supreme Court and with that, the speech community will have full awareness of the elements that constitute grave threats be it orally or in writing and thus, gain insight and deeper understanding of the severity and gravity of grave threats which are just commonly uttered by certain people from all walks of life.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was delimited to ten (10) Supreme Court decided cases of grave threats. There have been a lot of cases of grave threats filed in different courts in the Philippines. However, many of these cases of grave threats have been downgraded to light and other threats as decided by the Supreme Court. In this study, I only used the cases of grave threats from the different regions in the Philippines from year 1909 to present. These cases are from the different regions in the Philippines. From these cases of grave threats, words that constitute the substantial basis for the case of grave threats became the linguistic data for the conduct of pragmalinguistic analysis. Since these cases of grave threats have been decided by the Supreme Court of the Philippines, they have been uploaded online as legal sources for public consumption. In this study, I culled out these cases from Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank- The Lawphil Project and Chan Robles Virtual Library, both are online legal resources in the Philippines.

This research examined the language of grave threats in Philippine decided cases. Furthermore, this study only analyzed the speech acts of grave threats particularly the very texts that constitute the grave threat found on those cases. This study does not provide a legal analysis on the cases of grave threats more so, in addressing legal issues in relation to grave threats.

Definition of Terms

To provide the readers a common understanding of the key terms used in this study, the following terms are operationally defined:

Grave Threats. In this study, these refer to the language used in the cases of grave threats that have been decided by the Supreme Court of the Philippines which constitute certain provisions under Article 282 of the Revised Penal Code.

Pragmalinguistic Analysis. This refers to the analysis of the linguistic form such as grammatical structure and word choice or linguistic function in a social context involving a combined analysis of its pragmatic and linguistic features (Fadden, Heelis, & Palmer, 2010). In this study, it refers to the linguistic and pragmatic analysis of text structures used on the cases of grave threats. For linguistic analysis, it focused on the syntactic and semantic properties of the language used in grave threats. For pragmatic analysis, it converged on the pragmatic features of a language concentrating on the illocutionary force of speech acts.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a description on how the research methods were carried out. The discussion includes the research design, research participants, data sources, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and

ethical consideration.

Research Design

This study employed qualitative research particularly pragmalinguistic analysis. [Bell, Bryman, and Harley \(2018\)](#) stated that the purpose of qualitative research is to explore and to look into the experiences of a person or of a certain group of people in order to have deeper understanding. It deals with finding out the how and why of certain phenomena and how human behavior has a role on the occurrence of those phenomena. This study employed pragmalinguistic analysis. This is a kind of analysis that combines both linguistic and pragmatic analysis so as to unveil the language of grave threats. Linguistic and pragmatic features were dichotomized in order to analyze the text structures used on the cases of grave threats. For linguistic analysis, it focused on the syntactic and semantic features of the language used in grave threats. For pragmatic analysis, it focused on the pragmatic features of a language concentrating on the illocutionary force of speech acts.

Another way of describing the language of grave threats was through pragmatic analysis citing the speech acts of [Austin \(1962\)](#) and [J. R. Searle and Searle \(1969\)](#). This refers to the analysis of the linguistic form such as grammatical structure and word choice or linguistic function in a social context involving a combined analysis of its pragmatic and linguistic features ([Fadden et al., 2010](#)).

For this study, the linguistic analysis focused on the grammatical features concentrating on the syntactic and semantic features of the language used in grave threats. For pragmatic analysis, it focused on the pragmatic features of a language concentrating on the illocutionary force of speech acts. All these linguistic and pragmatic analyses aided me in uncovering and understanding the language of grave threats in the Philippine context.

Material Selection

The research materials used in this study were the cases of grave threats in the Philippines that have been decided by the Supreme Court. These cases were culled out from Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank-The Lawphil Project and Chan Robles Virtual Library.

[Braun and Clarke \(2013\)](#) recommend 10-100 corpora-based materials for analysis. There have been a lot of cases of grave threats filed in different courts in the Philippines. However, many of these cases of grave threats have been downgraded to light and other threats as decided by the Supreme Court. In this study, I only used ten (10) cases of grave threats that have been decided in the Philippines from year 1909 to present. These decided cases of grave threats are taken from the different regions in the Philippines.

Data Sources

The data for this study were primarily taken from the Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank- The Lawphil Project and Chan Robles Virtual Library. These online legal sources have the databank for Philippine Jurisprudence, Philippine Constitution, statutes, judicial issuances, rule of courts, civil code, presidential decrees and general legal links. The data used in this study were the ten (10) cases of grave threats in the Philippines that have been decided by the Supreme Court.

Data Collection

As a researcher, I took intensive steps in the data collection procedures. [Creswell and Poth \(2017\)](#) postulates that qualitative researchers need to be engaged into series of activities in the process of collecting data before completing the entire research study.

First, I did a close reading of all the decided cases of grave threats in the Philippines. With the help of a competent lawyer and legal researcher, Atty. Daniel Besina, he assisted me in ensuring that the cases of grave threats were already decided by the highest court since it is one of the most important criteria- the conviction of the case for the crime of grave threat. Second, I culled out those cases of grave threats which are relevant to my present study so as to fulfill the centrality of purpose of this study; Third, I made use of the protocol design in data gathering such as corpora-based analysis of grave threats in varying contexts. And fourth, I employed syntactic and

semantic analysis of the linguistic corpora that I have gathered.

Data Analysis

Before the data were analyzed, linguistic corpora were gathered for a closer study. The process of studying the cases helped me to have a deep understanding of the data gathered. Another method used was the thorough analysis of texts following specific framework for each type of approach.

In analyzing the data, I followed the procedures proposed by [Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers \(2002\)](#). First, cases of grave threats were read and reread for several times. After close reading, I did a syntactic and semantic analysis of the corpora focusing on the types of sentences according to structure and function used in grave threat. The semantic features of the words particularly the figurative language being used and some word features were highlighted and explained.

When all the documents were ready, I proceeded to the over-all analysis of the linguistic corpora focusing on the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of the language used in grave threats.

To ensure anonymity of individuals, I deliberately removed the names of the persons involved or known to be as the aggrieved party. Specific case numbers of the grave threats found were not revealed purposefully so as to protect the interest of these individuals from public scrutiny and judgment.

Trustworthiness of the Study

[Guba and Lincoln \(1985\)](#) as cited by [Cohen and Crabtree \(2008\)](#) posit that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry and that is, to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth paying attention to. Guba proposed four issues of trustworthiness of a study that demand attention: credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility

For the purpose of addressing credibility in this study, I employed three techniques: First, I addressed credibility by ensuring that my linguistic corpora or data are credible. This means that the data used came from legitimate sources; Second, I asked the help of experts in the field- competent lawyer, Atty. Daniel Besina and my competent adviser and professor, Dr. Teresita Adriano in the PhD- Applied Linguistics program who aided me in refining my procedure, after the collection of data, and during the process of data analysis. They received regular progress reports of my study and asked questions regarding the research questions, methodology, ethics, trustworthiness, and other research issues. Thus, to be consistent in addressing the literature cited by [Guba and Lincoln \(1985\)](#), the persons cited herein were the evaluators of the data; Third, I conducted a thorough review of the various analyses made. In the process, I made a review on the summary of the data analysis procedure and a summary of the final results of the inquiry.

Confirmability

To address the issues of confirmability, I relied on an independent audit of my research methods by competent reviewers ([Guba & Lincoln, 1985](#)). My reviewers were a lawyer who guided me in the legal aspect of the study and a doctor in the field of Applied Linguistics for the linguistic dimension of my study since they are experts in the fields of law and language. After the completion of my data analysis, my auditor thoroughly examined my analyses consisting of the original linguistic corpora and documents. Based on established precedent in qualitative research, they assessed the confirmability of the study, as well as the completeness and availability of auditable documents.

Transferability

To address transferability, I included in my Appendices, several of the data analyses that were used in generating answers to the research questions as suggested by [Guba and Lincoln \(1985\)](#). The complete set of data analyses were placed on file and were made available upon request. These were labeled properly so that it would always be available.

Dependability

It stressed the close ties between credibility and dependability, arguing, that in practice, a demonstration of the former goes some distance in ensuring the latter. This was achieved by providing thick descriptions on the processes used in the study and through the use of overlapping methods of inquiry.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is known to be an instrument to ensure the smooth proceedings and measures in doing this qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The qualitative researcher needs to describe relevant aspects of self, including any biases and assumptions, any expectations and experiences to qualify his or her ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003).

In this study, I can consider myself as a reviewer who made a close reading and pragmalinguistic analysis on the decided cases of grave threats in the Philippines.

Moreover, in this study, I asked the help of the lawyer in the actual gathering of decided cases of grave threats which served as my linguistic data from legitimate online legal sources such as the Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank and Chan Robles Virtual Library. Efforts to ensure reliability and validity involved the use of proper vocabulary, describing content, and documenting sources.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Poth (2017) emphasized that qualitative research faces many ethical issues that surface during the data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports.

This study did not make use of any research participants. However, it utilized the cases of grave threats that are culled out from Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank and Chan Robles Virtual Library.

Beneficence is an ethical principle where any research risks will be alleviated to refrain jeopardizing or imperiling the individuals, organizations and institutions that will be involved in this study. Permission from the people in authority from the Graduate School Dean, the UIC Research Ethics Committee were sought to guarantee that no restrictions were violated during the entire process of the study.

To ensure ethical consideration, I deliberately removed all the names of individuals, organizations and institutions that were mentioned on those cases of grave threats. The criminal case numbers of those cases were also deliberately concealed to protect the rights of those people from public scrutiny and malicious judgment. Further, as the researcher, I took due and careful attention in protecting the good name of those people involved. Furthermore, accurate information was explained and made clear to the readers of this study so that they would really understand the very purpose and nature of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the pragmalinguistic analysis on the cases of grave threats in Philippine decided cases. All these cases have been decided as grave threats by the Supreme Court of the Philippines. These cases have been culled out from Philippine Jurisprudence Databank. The presentation of the results follows the order of the research questions found in Chapter 1. For research question 1, it presents the speech acts found in grave threats. For research question 2, it presents the linguistic structure found in grave threats. For research question 3, it presents the meanings conveyed in the cases of grave threats.

The locutionary acts constitute the exact utterance or statements made by the speaker. Locutionary acts are roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference. The illocutionary acts constitute the type of illocutionary force used in the utterance including its specific type of illocution. Illocutionary acts are performed via the communicative force of an utterance with some kind of function in mind. These utterances have a certain (conventional) force. Moreover, the perlocutionary acts constitute the reaction of the listener upon hearing what has been said. Perlocutionary acts are the consequent effect of the utterance on the hearer, or the overall aim of the utterance. Table 1 presents the speech acts in grave threats which are comprised of the locutionary illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

Table 1: Examples of speech acts in found in grave threats in Philippine decided cases

Case no.	Locutionary Acts (Sample Statements)	Illocutionary Acts		Perlocutionary Act
		Illocutionary Force	Specific Type	
1	KUNG MATANGTANG AKO SA TRABAHO, BUAKON KO ANG ULO NI ... (If I will lose my job, I will break the head of ...)	Commissive	Threatening	The aggrieved party filed a case and the accused was convicted for grave threat.
2	", PUTANG INA MO!...,MAWAWALA KA., LUMABAS KA. PAPATAYIN KITA!" (, You son-of-a-bitch, , you will vanish, you go out, i'm going to kill you!)	Commissive	Threatening	The aggrieved party filed a case and the accused was convicted for grave threat.
3	.. CONFRONTED .. WITH A GUN, POKED IT AT THE FOREHEAD, AND SAID SAAN KA PUPUNTA? GUSTO MO ITO?(.Where are you going? Do you want this?)	Commissive	Threatening with Instrumentality (Gun)	The aggrieved party filed a case and the accused was convicted for grave threat.
4	.THRUST HIS BOLO TOWARDS HIM, SHOUTING BISAG GULANG KA, BUKON NAKO IMO ULO! (Even if you are old, I will break your head!)	Commissive	Threatening with Instrumentality (Bolo)	The aggrieved party filed a case and the accused was convicted for grave threat.
5	PUTANG-INA MO MAG-IINGAT KA SA AKIN! PAPATAYIN KITA! (Son-of-a-bitch! Beware! I will kill you!)	Commissive	Threatening	The aggrieved party filed a case and the accused was convicted for grave threat.

Speech Acts Found in Grave Threats in Philippine Decided Cases

Speech acts can be interpreted and analyzed on three levels: first, locutionary act which refers to the performance of an utterance: the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning corresponding to verbal, syntactic, and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance; second, illocutionary act is all about the pragmatic illocutionary force of the utterance; third, perlocutionary act, refers to the effect, it may be a thought of, in a sense and the action taken as the effect of the illocutionary act via the locutionary act. In other words, utterance of the sentence refers to the locutionary act, the very intention of the sentence is illocutionary act, and the effects or actions carried out in the sentence refer to the perlocutionary act.

Grave Threat Case No. 1

Kung matangtang ako sa trabaho, buakon ko ang ulo ni

("If I will lose my job, I will break the head of ...")

Locutionary Act

The first speech act concern of this study is the locution of the grave threats presented in Case No. 1. As cited above, locutionary act refers to the performance of an utterance or the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning, corresponding to verbal, syntactic, and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance. In this part, I only focused on the syntax and semantics as part of the analysis in locutionary act. In addition, the syntax analysis focused on the kinds of sentence according to structure namely: simple, compound, complex and compound complex concentrating further on the clauses and their syntactic importance on the formulation of the grave threats.

Syntax

In terms of the kind of sentence according to use, the grave threat is expressed in exclamatory sentence. It is a sentence that expresses heightened emotions such as anger, fury and annoyance.

In terms of sentence structure, the case of grave threat presented in Case No. 1 is categorized as a complex sentence. A complex sentence consists of one independent clause and at least one dependent clause joined by subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun. The above case used complex sentence because it contains a subordinate if-clause expressing condition, If I will lose my job and independent clause, I will break the head of.

Furthermore, this kind of sentence structure has realized its being a conditional grave threat as provided for in Article 282 of the Revised Penal Code. It is considered conditional since the accused makes a demand so that he/she will not do what he/she threatened, such as a demand for money or another condition which may not be unlawful. E.g. If I will lose my job, I will break the head of ...

Semantics

In terms of semantics, I focused on the figurative language used in the grave threat. I analyzed here what figure of speech is found. In addition, I also established how important the usage of figurative language is to make the statement qualify for a grave threat.

The statement in the above case falls under hyperbole. Hyperbole is an exaggeration used to create emphasis. The speaker exaggerates his expression which is considered a hyperbole, buakon ko ang ulo ni to express his intense anger which created fear on the hearer and which according to the court ruling is a grave threat. The statement is a grave threat since the speaker pointed out a particular person when he mentioned the name of the person. Given that the speaker intends to break the head of the addressee for a certain condition. Further, it seemed to be an exaggerated statement because the person who is in his/her right frame of mind could never break literally someone's head or skull let alone influenced by intense force. However, this utterance also qualified as a grave threat given that the speaker mentioned the proper name of the subject.

Further, the elements of grave threats where the offender attained his purpose include the following: one, that the offender threatens another person with the infliction upon the latter's person of any wrong; two, that such wrong amounts to a crime; three, that there is a demand of money or that any other condition is imposed, even though not unlawful; and fourth, that the offender attains his purpose of threatening the subject (Revised Penal Code, Article 282).

Illocutionary act

As to the above case of grave threat, it falls under commissive illocutionary force because the speaker commits an act of doing something under a certain condition. Specifically, this commissive illocutionary force falls under threatening because it involves coercion wherein a course of action is proposed to avoid a negative response.

Perlocutionary act

In the case cited above, the listener/hearer filed a case afterwards.

Grave Threat Case No. 2

" , PUTANG INA MO!..,MAWAWALA KA., LUMABAS KA. PAPTAYIN KITA!" (You son-of-a-bitch, You will vanish You go out, I'm going to kill you!)

Locutionary act

Syntax

Case number 2 is expressed and constructed in an exclamatory manner. In English grammar, an exclamatory sentence is a sentence that expresses strong feelings embellished with an exclamation point in order to deliver the emotion accompanying the feeling of the speaker at the time of expressing.

It can also be noticed that this case used simple sentences. Simple sentences consist of one independent clause containing a subject and a verb showing complete meaning. Simple sentences are often used when a speaker states directly and emphatically what he/she wants to convey.

Furthermore, this kind of sentence structure has realized its being an unconditional grave threat as provided for in Article 282 of the Revised Penal Code which clearly states that threats are declarations to do wrong or harm amounting to a crime.

Semantics

It can also be marked that the utterance used literary device like expletive in the form of single word or phrase usually interrupts normal syntax, used to lend emphasis to the words immediately proximate to the expletive. It is used to emphasize the words on each side of a pause or interruption in order to maintain continuity of the thought. Additionally, it is an expression of oath or exclamation, esp. an obscenity or profanity such as in this case, the use of a cuss phrase, putang-ina (son-of-a-bitch).

Furthermore, in the above example, some of the elements of grave threat can be categorized under hyperbole such as the expression Mawawala ka! (You will vanish!) which is an exaggeration used to create emphasis. The speaker exaggerates his utterance by pronouncing that the hearer would vanish. Another angle of this utterance that qualified as a grave threat is the speaker's distinct utterance of the subject.

Illocutionary act

In this part, the illocutionary force found in grave threat Case No. 2 is commissive. It is an illocutionary act in making the speaker do something like expressing a promise, threat, intention, and vow to do or to refrain from doing something. The speaker commits an act of doing something under a certain condition. Specifically, this commissive illocutionary force falls under threatening because it involves compulsion in which an action is proposed to avoid an adverse occurrence.

Perlocutionary act

Aggrieved and hurt by what the speaker has spoken, the listener/hearer filed a case against the speaker.

Grave Threat Case 3

CONFRONTED .. WITH A GUN, POKED IT AT HER FOREHEAD, AND SAID SAAN KA PUPUNTA? GUSTO MO ITO? (Where are you going? Do you want this?).

Locutionary act

Syntax

In terms of the kind of sentence according to use, the grave threat is expressed in a combination of interrogative and exclamatory sentences. In grammar, an interrogative sentence is a sentence that expresses a question. On the other hand, an exclamatory sentence is a type of sentence that expresses heightened feelings such as anger, fury and annoyance. It is also called an exclamative clause.

Examining closely the structure of the sentence, the above case of grave threat used series of simple sentences. A simple sentence consists of a clause that can stand alone comprising of a subject and a verb and it shows

complete meaning. It is used in this case to stress the instrument on hand and intense emotion of the speaker.

Furthermore, this kind of sentence has realized its being an unconditional grave threat, simply because of a declaration to do wrong or harm amounting to a crime. Moreover, apart from the utterance *Saan ka pupunta? Gusto mo ito?* (Where are you going? Do you want this?), there is also a wilful threatening act made with the use of a weapon (gun) and poked it at the forehead of the subject which made the act and the utterance qualified for grave threat.

Semantics

The utterance as can be read did not use any figurative language used. It simply made use of a direct question straightforward to the addressee. But the underlying meaning of the utterance, *Saan ka pupunta? Gusto mo ito?* (Where are you going? Do you want this?) was made clear because of the use of the weapon such in the case was the use of the gun, poke it at the head of the subject with a wilful and deliberate intention to inflict harm or danger on the person which clearly manifest a threatening behavior.

Illocutionary act

The illocutionary act found in grave threat Case No. 3 is commissive. It is an illocutionary act for getting the speaker to refrain from doing something. The speaker commits an act of doing something under a certain condition. Specifically, this commissive illocutionary force can be categorized as threatening because it involves coercion with instrumentality since the speaker poked a gun to the hearer which is already a direct threat in itself.

Perlocutionary act

The intense effect of the expression which was added with a poking action and instrumentality compelled the listener/hearer to file a case.

Grave Threat Case No. 4

THRUST HIS BOLO TOWARDS HIM, SHOUTING *BISAG GULANG KA, BUKON NAKO IMO ULO!* (Even if you are old, I will crack open your skull!).

Locutionary act

Syntax

As indicated in the sentence above, the grave threat is expressed in an exclamatory sentence supplemented by an exclamation point. It is also eminent that the grave threat is categorized as a complex sentence because it contains a subordinate clause *Bisag gulang ka* (Even if you are old) and an independent clause *Buk-on nako imong ulo* (I will crack open your skull). The clause is also introduced by *Bisag* (Even if) which is a subordinating conjunction which could mean that the speaker may carry out the threat regardless of the age of the addressee. Furthermore, the speaker shows no respect to the addressee.

Furthermore, this kind of sentence structure has realized its being a conditional threat as provided for in Article 282 of the Revised Penal Code .

Semantics

In the case cited above, hyperbole is used in the grave threat. Hyperbole is an exaggeration used to create emphasis. The speaker exaggerates his expression, *Bisag gulang ka, buk-on nako imo ulo!* (Even if you are old, I will crack open your skull!), which according to the court ruling is a grave threat. Given that the speaker intends to break the head of the hearer who is older than the speaker, it is an exaggerated statement because any person who is in his/her right frame of mind could never break someone's head or skull let alone influenced by intense force. However, this utterance also qualified as a grave threat given that the speaker was holding a bolo at the time of speaking. The threat was made with the premeditated purpose of impressing into the mind of the person threatened that such act would be carried into effect.

Illocutionary act

In this part, the illocutionary force found in grave threat Case No. 4 is commissive. It is an illocutionary act in making the speaker does something under a certain condition. Specifically, this commissive illocutionary force falls under threatening because it involves compulsion in which the act is made to avoid an adverse occurrence sometime in the future.

Perlocutionary act

In the case cited above, the listener/hearer filed a case afterwards.

Grave Threat Case 5

PUTANG-INA MO MAG-IINGAT KA SA AKIN! PAPTAYIN KITA! (Son-of-a-bitch! Beware! I will kill you!).

Locutionary act

Syntax

The sentence structure of the above case of grave threat used series of simple sentences.

In terms of the kind of sentence according to use, the grave threat is expressed in exclamatory sentences Mag-iingat ka sa akin! Papatayin kita (Beware! I will kill you!). The exclamatory construction in case expresses both a warning and a threat. It has an underlying meaning, however, that the addressee has to be discreet otherwise he will be put to death by the speaker.

Moreover, there is also an element of directive appearance of an imperative Mag-iingat ka sa akin! (Beware!) that expresses a certain content related to the addressee's future actions; conveys that the speaker wants the content to become reality; and acts as an inducement for the addressee to bring about the content. The uses of imperatives that are intended to get the addressee to do something. An utterance of an imperative creates an obligation for the addressee, a view explicitly espoused by [J. R. Searle and Searle \(1969\)](#).

Furthermore, this kind of sentence structure has realized its being an unconditional grave threat as provided for in Article 282 of the Revised Penal Code which clearly states that threats are declarations to do wrong or harm amounting to a crime.

Semantics

Another observable element found in the grave threat is the intention of the speaker towards the addressee. Additionally, the use of rude expression esp. an obscenity or profanity such as in this case, the use of a cuss phrase, Putang-ina mo! (Son-of-a-bitch!) is in this sense a form of profanity. Moreover, this utterance also qualified as a grave threat given that the speaker mentioned the name of the subject.

Illocutionary act

The illocutionary force found in grave threat Case No. 5 is commissive. It is a commissive illocutionary act when the speaker is committed to some future action. Specifically, this commissive illocutionary force falls under threatening because it involves coercion wherein a course of action is proposed and that one will cause trouble if he/she does not get what he/she wants.

Perlocutionary act

Both the warning and the threat of the speaker have adverse effect on the listener so much so that the latter filed a case afterwards.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the types of speech acts found in the cases of grave threats in the Philippines through the use of pragmalinguistic analysis.

Speech Acts in Grave Threats in Philippine Decided Cases

Locutionary act

Locutionary acts include the syntactic and semantic analysis of the corpora culled out from the cases of grave threats that have been decided by the Supreme Court.

Syntax

Types of sentence according to structure

The most commonly used sentence structures configured in grave threats are simple and complex sentences. Simple sentences are used in venting direct threats especially in expressing unconditional grave threats. The use of complex sentences are observed in expressing conditional threats with the use of simple future modal like will and the presence of a subordinate if-clause expressing condition. These findings run parallel to the study conducted by renowned grammarians who asserted and demonstrated that a threat can be performed through a transitive clause of action written in simple future tense. They also asserted that it can also be performed by future modals will in the first person and shall or should in the second and third persons. There is a close relationship between a threat and the imperative mood and the conditional meaning of an if-construction.

Types of sentence according to structure

The most commonly used sentences according to function in expressing grave threats are exclamatory sentences. Since most threats are made at the peak of one's emotions particularly in the heat of anger, the one making threats expressed his/her words in a highly emotionally-charged and intensified manner and thus cannot do away with exclamative clause for emphasis. This result is in consonance with the statement of Yule (1996) who stated that a threat is a declaration of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done. Many believe that threat of violence may arise from feelings or ideas that range from one person to another. Thus, the speech act of threat is manifested by different strong emotions and expressions.

Semantics

Figurative language used in grave threats

The most commonly used figurative language in grave threats is hyperbole. Hyperbole is an exaggeration used to create emphasis. Since most threats are made at the peak of one's emotions, the one making threats expressed his/her words in exaggerated manner in order for the hearer to feel intimidated and threatened. Another linguistic feature which is common in grave threats is the deliberate use of expletives in the form of cuss and curse words. Cussing and cursing are highly derogatory and offensive and the one making the threat would deliberately use profane languages in order to intimidate the hearer.

This observation is in congruence with what Estrada (2011) posited that most curses and cusses are expressed in hyperbole. In the Philippines, most curses are mother-directed such as putang ina mo (your mother is a whore), hijo de puta (son of a bitch), puta madre (bitch mother) and tu puta madre me la chupa (your bitch mother sucks me). Language anchors itself on culture and its rules are formulated through social conventions. The cultural undertones of these insults form part in expressing strong emotions such as anger and pleasure.

In addition, threats are intentional acts performed by speaker to make the hearer do something, which may cause some harm, trouble, danger and fear to him/her as required by speaker. Threat is thus the susceptibility in which threat involves relatively serious or noxious consequences as well as reasons of being exposed to those consequences.

The results found in Case numbers 1 and 6 have similar situations expressing a strong warning coupled with a threat if such conditions will not be achieved by the addressee. Threats focus on what the target has to lose and invoke a loss frame that encourages resistance. In general, it is related to the intention of the speaker in performing

the act and the hearer recognizing the speaker's intention. However, any threat conveyed to a person even if the source has no intention to execute it, but if it causes sustained fear to the person's life or family's safety, the source is legally accountable for it.

Illocutionary act

Illocutionary acts focused on the pragmatic analysis particularly the illocutionary force being manifested in the corpora culled out from those cases of grave threats that have decided by the Supreme Court.

Pragmatics

Illocutionary force

The most commonly used illocutionary forces in grave threats are that of commissives and directives particularly threatening and challenging.

As pointed out by J. Searle and Vanderveken (1985), the case of directive-commissive conditional threats is somewhat more complex, although, there are instances that may only involve the threatener and the threatened party, and others that also involve witnesses or other third parties. Additionally, however, as a number of authors like Pearsall and Hornby have pointed out, all conditional threats are associated with a complementary conditional promise and, vice versa, all conditional promises with a complementary conditional threat.

Perlocutionary act

Perlocutionary effects are those effects that are achieved indirectly as by-products of the total speech act.

In this study, it was found out that the aggrieved party filed a case after the grave threat has been hurled at them and that the accused were convicted for a crime of grave threat.

Implications for educational practice

It is of noble purpose that this academic endeavor is conceived for the benefit of shedding some light and understanding on some societal issues related to language crimes particularly that of grave threats. The results of this present investigation may provide insights to the speech community on how Filipinos configure words in making and posing threats so as to perpetrate direct and indirect harm and intimidation especially to the emotionally vulnerable people who are most likely the prey of threats. The results of this study may be used to address various entities that are indirectly and directly involved in investigating crimes particularly that of grave threats converging linguistics, law and criminology with the hope of providing a well-founded basis and evidences in interpreting language crimes.

For all citizens in the country despite differences in ethnicity and other cultural conventions, that they may realize the value of restraint and tact in language use. Threats violate the Tact Maxim since any course of action related to threat is disastrous to the aggrieved party. Some cultures in the Philippines are predisposed to make threats without necessarily the intention of performing (absence of the perlocutionary aspect of a speech act) the threat. Threats even if made without necessarily performing them have legal underpinnings and impediments. And this is the very reason why people have to be refined in their speech and manner since threats can create lasting wounds. Analyzing verbal and written threats, people can take extra precaution in their daily affairs- be it verbal and written communication so as not to inflict emotional trauma to those whom we come in contact with. Some take threats lightly but a considerable number of people take threats seriously especially with the culture of violence that thrive in our society today.

For the teachers and students in Applied Linguistics, that they further make an attempt in analyzing corpora-based speech act since there have been a relatively few publications on various legal issues involving the use of language. As of now, speech crimes are not the point of interest among linguists but these have been the cause of emotional injury for most people adding up to the brokenness in our society today. Findings of their future studies could add up to the existing body of knowledge in the field of applied linguistics since the linguistic structure of grave threats in the Philippine context has not been carefully examined and studied.

Recommendations for future research

First, as the researcher of this study, I would like to suggest that future researchers will embark on exploring other language crimes. With the help of certain linguistic tools, it is well hoped that they will provide a thorough discussion and analysis of those crimes so that the public will know about the impact and power of language.

Second, future research may be conducted on felicity conditions as proposed by Austin and Searle and Cooperative Principle of Paul Grice to have a holistic grasp of the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of the language with emphasis on its social goals.

Third, future research may be done by conducting a cross-sectional analysis on language crimes converging law, criminology and linguistics.

Fourth, further research may be conducted on forensic linguistics since it is one of the most unexplored areas in the field of linguistics to address many of the societal issues in our times involving speech.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The result of the study shows that grave threats in Philippine decided cases have commonly used certain speech acts. Grave threats are linguistically structured in such a way that underlying meanings are conveyed based on the intention of the speaker. Common, hackneyed expressions and utterances which are not brought to the consciousness of people have legal underpinnings which would result to legal impediments if taken from a legal perspective. Proper knowledge of appropriate rules of conduct, demeanor and propriety displaying finesse and tact in our daily affairs are to be observed to foster good will and harmonious relations among people.

Moreover, this humble work is a work of love. This study has become so meaningful since at the onset of this research venture, I just felt the urgency to choose this study as I feel compassion for those who have become victims of threats. Words have lasting and deep impact. The psychological trauma that threats have caused to people from all walks of life can never be undermined. Thus, it is of utmost importance to have that basic understanding of our humanity where there is mutual respect, tact and courtesy in our dealings with people especially with how we use our words so that we can never hurt the sensibilities of other people. After all, there is that invisible thread that links us all together as one and that is our humanity.

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