

## **The Speech Acts of Virtual Academic Debating on Facebook**

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### **Abstract**

Research traditions in sociolinguistics are provided with new empirical trajectories by computer-mediated communication (Androutsopoulos, 2006). Grounded on the speech acts framework, this study investigated the speech acts of virtual academic debating on Facebook as online speech community. It sought to answer these questions: (1) What speech acts emerge in virtual academic debating on Facebook in terms of locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions?; and (2) What merits and/or complexities does virtual academic debating on Facebook reveal towards the participants?. Ten freshman tertiary level students, selected through purposive sampling, participated in the study. Academic debate speeches served as primary sources of data which were coded. Accordingly, all speech acts transpired in academic debating on Facebook. New locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts also developed. As it is both meritorious and complex, the study therefore asserts the positive affordance of speech acts of virtual academic debating. Further speech acts studies in the context of CMC should be innovated focusing on other aspects such as different genres or devising a speech acts model of virtual academic debating.

**Keywords:** *Speech acts, academic debating, online speech communities, Facebook, computer-mediated communication*

Speech communities play a very significant role in sociolinguistic research. While copious studies have been conducted in the context of speech communities, paucity of sociolinguistic inquiries exists in the domain of *online* speech communities (Skatun, 2006). Online speech communities, compared to natural speech communities, are (1) a network of individuals; (2) have people with at least a level of maintained membership; (3) possess linguistic interaction; (4) keep bi-directional communication; (5) use CMC in communicating; and (6) impart norms of linguistic performance (Skatun, 2006). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) and social networking sites (SNS) are henceforth online speech communities providing the bridge between linguistic research and sociolinguistic tradition (Androutsopoulos & Ziegler, 2003). Being an online speech community, Facebook is a famous social networking hub (Ilyas & Khushi, 2012). The number of Facebook Filipino users in the Philippines has reached 1.5 billion based on The Statistics Portal (2016, para. 1). With its popularity in the mainstream particularly in academic settings, students and teachers have used it for different purposes. One of which is being a viable tool for communicating varied notions such as sound views, scholastic concerns, social issues, and the like by which acts of speech are plausible to be of use.

Speech acts whether spoken or written are communicative actions that individuals perform when making utterances (Peccei, 1999). Speech acts may be one of the most arcane approaches

in understanding interactively argumentative events (Goodwin, 2014), such that so many have focused on speech acts. Albeit studies on speech acts have been ubiquitous over the century; Facebook as online speech community appears to have a dearth of extant sociolinguistic investigations as far as speech acts of virtual academic debating among tertiary level students are concerned. Whereas CMC research echoes views of community with respect to sociolinguistic theory, exploring language use in the case of speech acts in CMC speech communities is interesting, and calls for sociolinguistic explorations (Nartey, 2013). The current research attempts to examine the phenomena of speech acts in the context of academic debating on Facebook among tertiary level students.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Online speech communities are maintained by shared interaction, and shared communicative account (Hoflich, 1997). This study is anchored on Langacker's (1972), Searle's (1969), and Austin's (1962) speech acts theory. Speech acts or linguistic acts constitute the fundamental component of communication, and can be used for analyzing human interactional utterances (Appling, Briscoe, Hayes, & Mappus, 2013). Essentially, it is composed of three units or elements, namely; the speaker/source, message, and hearer that are demonstrative of the rudimentary communication framework simultaneously comprising three dimensions or types of speech acts (Saddock, 2009; Peccei, 1999; Holtgraves, 2002).

1. Locutionary acts (usually representative of the *speaker* or *source* but not always) are first basic acts of dimensions carrying the syntax and literal semantics of an utterance.
2. Illocutionary acts (illustrative of the *force* or *meaning* being conveyed) are the intention, purpose or goal of an utterance; and
3. Perlocutionary acts (typically carried by the *hearer* but the *source* can also take part in it) refer to the *effect* of any illocutionary act on the receiver.

Langacker (1972, as cited in Mardini, 2012) provides three types of locutionary acts based on sentence types. These are declarative, imperative, and interrogative sentences. Declaratives assert or describe something (e.g., *Pauline gave Tom a digital watch for his birthday*). Imperatives are requests, orders, or commands given to a person possessing some voluntary control (e.g., *Bring me more sugar*). Interrogatives can either be alternative or specification questions. The first asks which of two alternative propositions is factual (e.g., *Did you buy the wallet, or did you steal it, or did you find it on the street?*) while the second asks for more specifications of some reference or constituent (e.g., *Who stole my wallet?*)

Searle (1969) categorizes illocutionary acts into five basic kinds: representatives (e.g., *asserting, informing, concluding, reporting, predicting, etc.*), directives (e.g., *suggesting, questioning, requesting, commanding, ordering, etc.*), commissives (e.g., *offering, threatening, promising, vowing, refusing, volunteering, etc.*), expressives (*congratulating, thanking, apologizing, welcoming, regretting, etc.*), and declaratives (*declaring, pronouncing, sentencing, penalizing, firing, etc.*). Mendiola (2016) asserts that illocutionary act is the most important type of speech act as performing it is engaging in a rule-governed behavior (Searle, 1969).

As the World Wide Web has become more of a social community, its users join more frequently in speech acts with illocutionary force (Sovinsky, 2009).

On the other hand, perlocutionary acts can be determined through the effect of illocutionary act or the receiver's feedback to what the source has stated (Austin, 1963, as cited in Mardini, 2012). Perlocutionary acts involve persuading, intimidating, inspiring, boring, or motivating the receiver. A teacher's statement, "*Study hard or else, you will fail the assessment.*" may be interpreted as a form of intimidation or suggestion.

### Research Questions

Although several studies had been conducted to examine speech acts on Facebook (see Kurniawan, 2015; Wulandari, 2014; Appling, Briscoe, Hayes, & Mappus, 2013; Nartey, 2013; Ilyas & Khushi, 2012; Carr, Schrock, & Dauterman, 2012; ) the researcher noticed that most of the existing studies focused on only one dimension of speech acts: the illocutionary acts. There is a dearth of study concerning analysis of both locutionary and perlocutionary acts. Moreover, Facebook statuses updates had been investigated; however, none of the studies considered bi-directional Facebook messages that are interactive. Skatun (2006) explains that interactivity is a significant trait of online communities where speech acts occur. Scrutinizing the speech acts of online academic debating as a genre of communication is promising and interesting. Nartey (2013) argued that it would be proven more beneficial if sociolinguistic studies explore different virtual genres in order to discover the extent to which present findings can be validated or refuted. Motivated by these, the study seeks to examine the speech acts of academic debating as a genre of communication in Facebook, an online speech community. Specifically, the study would like to shed light on the following questions:

1. What speech acts emerge on virtual academic debating on Facebook in terms of
  - a. Locutions;
  - b. Illocutions; and
  - c. Perlocutions?
2. What merits and/or complexities does virtual academic debating on Facebook reveal towards the participants?

## Methodology

### Research Design

The research used descriptive-qualitative research design. It presents the kinds of speech acts which transpired from academic debating on Facebook among students.

### Setting and Participants

The study was set in an academic speaking class in a tertiary level private institution in Southern Luzon in the Philippines. The research participants were ten (10) tertiary freshman students taking academic speaking course. Out of forty (40) students, they were selected through purposeful sampling. They were called and considered as *virtual/online debaters* in the study.

### Source/s of Data or Language Samples

The primary source of data were the participants' academic debate speeches (i.e. opening statements, first rebuttals, second statements, second rebuttals, and closing statements) on Facebook. Students' reflections were also considered for triangulation purposes.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

1. The researcher built a Facebook group account for this class. This was done on the first few weeks of the third term of academic year 2015-2016.
2. Students were informed about their participation in academic debate on Facebook and were enjoined to be members of the said Facebook group.
3. Students were tasked to decide on the proposition through online debating, and they chose, *The More Qualified Presidential Candidate in the 2016 Philippine Election is Duterte and not Defensor-Santiago* as this was a timely issue in light of the forthcoming Philippine presidential elections.
4. The class was then divided into two teams. The affirmative team was *Team Whatata* who favored Rodrigo Duterte as a presidential candidate, while the negative team was *Team Hwa* who preferred Miriam Defensor-Santiago.
5. The online academic debate was structured into five parts or stages: 1. Opening Statement, 2. First Rebuttal, 3. Second Statement, 4. Second Rebuttal, and 5. Closing Statement. It was informal since it did not really follow a particular debate format used in formal debates.
6. Through these stages, the virtual debaters proceeded with the online debate for seven days. Since the online debate was asynchronous, the temporal aspect of the activity was not in any way rigid; however, it adhered to the alternate format by which the virtual debaters took turns following the stages listed in number 5, which is similar to the usual flow of face-to-face debates. Each member of the two opposing teams performed the role of a debater. The first two debaters were Opening Statement debaters. The second two were First Rebutters. The third two were the Second Statement debaters. The fourth two were the Second Rebutters, and the final two were the Closing Statement debaters.
7. They were expected to meet the criteria set for online debating. Only the specific elements appropriate for an online debate using Facebook as a platform were used. Paralanguage and non-verbal cues of oral speech such as pronunciation, tone, intonation, eye contact, facial expressions, etc. were not considered; however, observable elements of debate that could be seen online were used. It was announced that the the winning team would receive an prize. Thus, the students' debating skills were assessed using the following criteria (adapted from the debate rubric system of California State University):
  - **Organization and clarity** – the main arguments must follow the keyhole structure, that is, introduction-body-conclusion, and their rebuttals must be set in an orderly and clear manner;
  - **Use of arguments** – the stance must be supported with reasons/evidence and citations must be given to support claims/arguments;
  - **Cross-examination and rebuttal** – the ability to identify weak spots against opposing arguments and the ability to defend their own claims against attack; and
  - **Appropriateness of style** – the argumentative tone, clarity of expression, certainty of arguments, and ethical behavior.
8. Data were collected as the online debate progressed and each stage was archived. Students' reflections were written after every stage of virtual debating and were collected during the three-day classroom meetings.

### Data Analysis

The data were coded and analyzed on the sentential level using the speech acts framework of Langaker (1972), Searle (1969, 1983), and Austin (1962). For validation purposes, the researcher sought the assistance of two other coders who were given orientation and who did some trial analysis (three rounds) prior to the actual coding process. The first round yielded a 40% similarity in the coding of sample data, while round two produced 75% similarity rate. The researcher and the inter-coders convened again and each discussed the reasons behind their system of coding the trial data. Further explanations were done concerning coding processes and In the third round, a 90% similarity rate was achieved. Conventionally, analysts accept as reliable an inter-coding reliability rate of 80% - 90% (United States General Accounting Office, 1989).

### Findings and Discussion

The following are the findings based on the students' online academic debate speeches. It is important to note that these data were original and unaltered. Overall, findings were found parallel with the previous studies; however, more speech acts had been identified that may be considered unique to virtual academic debating on Facebook. Extracts of the speech acts are given to illustrate these points. Table 1 gives the summary of the observed speech acts analyzed in the virtual debate both from the affirmative and negative teams.

Table 1

*Summary of the Speech Acts in Academic Debating in Facebook*

<b>Speech Acts</b>	<b>Opening Statement</b> f	<b>First Rebuttal</b> f	<b>Second Statement</b> f	<b>Second Rebuttal</b> f	<b>Closing Statement</b> f	Total	%
<b>Locutionary Acts</b>							
1 Statements	9	21	37	25	55	147	25.00
2 Interrogatives	4	13	1	10	20	48	8.16
3 *Descriptions	13	8	11	0	0	32	5.44
4 *Conditionals	1	0	0	1	1	3	0.51
5 *Conclusions	3	0	0	5	0	8	1.36
6 Imperatives	0	3	1	0	6	10	1.70
7 *Negatives	0	4	10	1	16	31	5.27
Total	30	49	60	42	98	279	47.44
<b>Illocutionary Acts</b>							
<i>Representatives</i>							
1 Asserting	8	10	25	5	17	65	11.05
2 Informing	8	5	5	2	16	36	6.12
3 Concluding	7	9	8	5	8	36	6.29

4	Predicting	2	3	0	0	1	6	1.02
5	*Emphasizing	2	5	3	2	7	19	3.23
6	*Exemplifying	3	4	2	2	0	11	1.87
7	*Citing	0	0	2	1	1	4	0.68
8	*Explaining	0	0	1	8	2	11	1.87

***Directives***

1	Questioning	1	15	3	10	26	55	9.35
2	Suggesting	1	2	1	0	5	9	1.53
3	Requesting	0	2	1	0	6	9	1.53
4	Commanding	0	0	1	0	1	2	0.34
	Total	32	55	52	35	90	264	44.90

***Perlocutionary Acts***

1	*Agreeing	0	2	3	0	0	5	0.85
2	*Proving	0	1	2	0	1	4	0.68
3	*Clarifying	0	0	2	5	1	8	1.36
4	*Suspecting	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.17
5	*Negating	0	4	5	1	10	20	3.40
6	*Euphemising	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.17
7	*Referring	0	1	1	3	1	6	1.02
	Total	0	8	14	9	14	45	7.65

Overall Total	62	112	126	86	202	588	100
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Note: Table 1 shows the summary of the speech acts in academic debating in Facebook. *f* stands for frequency.

The table shows the frequencies of the manifest and latent speech acts with a total of 588 instances. Newly discovered speech acts had been marked by asterisks. It can be seen that the locutionary acts with 279 instances (47.45%) ranked first, followed by illocutionary acts with 246 (44.90%), and lastly, by the perlocutionary acts with 45 (7.64%). This, however, cannot be regarded as absolute in online debating as the percentage of illocutionary acts (44.90%) was relatively close to the percentage of the locutionary act (47.45%). It can be noted that online debaters used more types of illocutionary acts and their subtypes, such as, representatives and directives. Although instances of perlocutionary acts have the lowest percentage in the study, they cannot be considered as slight *effects* of illocutions because perlocutionary acts are associated with illocutions.

The succeeding section presents and discusses the answers to the research questions. Where applicable, these results will be compared and contrasted with previous studies.

**What speech acts emerged from academic debating on Facebook in terms of locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions?**

### Locutionary Acts

Locutionary acts are basic acts of speech dimensions which carry the syntax and literal semantics of an utterance. Identified locutionary acts in the sample data were declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives (Langacker, 1972).

**Declaratives.** Declaratives in the context of the study are termed as *statements* to avoid confusion with other locutionary acts which have been identified as illocutions by Wulandari (2014). *Statements* are sentences that present a proposition aiming at asserting and describing something. One hundred forty-seven (147) *statements* equivalent to 25% of the data were coded across the online debating process. *Statements* had the most number of occurrences. Table 2 below shows examples of *statements* across the online debate.

Table 2

#### *Statements in Academic Debating on Facebook*

<b>Parts/Stages of Online Academic Debating</b>	<b>Statements</b>
1 Opening	A: Leadership is practiced not so much in words but in actions. N: Miriam Defensor – Santiago, a woman of strong will and justice, is giving us Filipinos a hope that our rotting country has a chance for change.
2 Rebuttal	A: We all know that Philippines was a GOD-FEARING nation, seeing almost every Filipinos devoted and patronizing Jesus Christ. N: I would rather choose someone who has a good will in our country than someone who is religiously inclined but he has the guts to do some murderous acts such as stealing.
3 Second Statement	A: In fact, political ideology may even replace a person's religion. N: Miriam Defensor-Santiago isn't just a leader with experience and an intelligent one.
4 Second Rebuttal	A: Rodrigo Duterte can be a good leader or even the best leader that this country is aiming for. N: Speaking of respect, all of us has different perspective in the true definition of RESPECT
5 Closing	A: He simply knows what was best for our country and he was willing to do everything for it. N: ..we heard about those facts and achievements of Duterte leading his people and his ways to control or to diminish the crimes in Davao.

Note: Table 2 shows the examples of *Statements* from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate.

The speech acts above are considered declaratives or *statements* as they presented the online debaters' arguments aiming at asserting and describing their stance in connection to the proposition assigned to them. The online debaters were probably keen in adhering to the clarity, and appropriateness of style as essential mechanics of the debate.

Each team explicitly expressed their stance through the use of *statements* identified and spread in the opening, first rebuttal, second statement, second rebuttal, and closing. The use of *statements* through the stages can be observed as most dominant as there were 147 cases of the said speech acts as compared to the other types. As seen in the table, both teams used this speech act throughout their online debate.

**Interrogatives.** A total of forty-eight (48) interrogatives or 8.16% of the data was coded. Table 3 shows some examples of this type of locutionary act.

Table 3

*Interrogatives in Academic Debating on Facebook*

<b>Parts/Stages of Online Academic Debating</b>	<b>Interrogatives</b>
1 Opening	A: Why DUTERTE for president? N: (None observe)
2 Rebuttal	A: But, <i>does Miriam-Defensor Santiago portray this?</i> N: Duterte on the other hand, <i>do you really think he is the "model" you are looking for?</i>
3 Second Statement	A: What's the connection of religion in politics? N: Why did we even say yes?
4 Second Rebuttal	A: But, Miriam stated that her cancer was Boom! Perfectly Gone! <i>But until now she was not able to show in public her medical records?</i> N: What is your point if she really dont want to show her medical records to everyone?
5 Closing	A: Team Hwa was saying Bongbong was different from his father, <i>Really? How do you know that?</i> N: But <i>why are you patronizing Duterte as the next president of the Philippines when he is violating some religious acts?</i>

Note: Table 3 shows examples of *Interrogatives* from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate. The interrogatives have been italicized.

The interrogatives identified in the study were Wh-questions (e.g., *Why DUTERTE for president?*; *What's the connection of religion in politics?*; *Why did we even say yes?*) and Yes/No-questions (e.g., ... *does Miriam-Defensor Santiago portray this?*; ... *do you really think he is the "model" you are looking for?*) that tried to confirm, probe, or question the arguments of

the other team. While these questions predominantly occurred in the first and second rebuttals and in closing statements, they are also seen in the opening and second statements. This can be considered normal as debaters initially presented their stand or belief towards an issue even before they present their rebuttal statements.

In addition, imperatives are utterances that express a command, request or order to a person possessing some voluntary control. In the analysis, ten instances of imperatives (1.70%) were observed. Table 4 shows some examples from the data.

Table 4

*Imperatives in Academic Debating on Facebook*

Parts/Stages of Online Academic Debating		Imperatives
1	Opening	A: (None observed) N: Not all politicians should be stereotyped to be corrupt and involved in those serious crimes.
2	Rebuttal	A: Better watch the video. N: ... let us all focus on the achievements and bearings of our candidates.
3	Second Statement	A: Now, let us move on to another question... N: Let's face the truth,....
4	Second Rebuttal	A: (None observed) N: Everyone should understand and give the privacy to her personal life.
5	Closing	A: We advise you to re-read that part... N: Although, it will be one of the reasons for the betterment of the place, <i>let us all think for the children living in the near future. Would you imagine if a child would hand a gun instead of a book.</i>

Note: Table 4 shows examples of *Imperatives* from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate. Some imperatives are actually italicized.

**Imperatives.** The debaters used imperatives to propose their arguments, to command their opponents to do certain things in order to understand their points, or to request their opponents to turn their attention to some points that they believed to be more valid. However, no imperatives were observed in the opening statement and second rebuttal statement of the affirmative team and this may be attributed to the fact that only one debate was used for analysis.

Other locutionary acts observed in the data are descriptions, conditionals, conclusions, and negatives.

**Descriptions.** In contrast to declaratives, descriptions are sentences that define subjects or arguments through the use of concrete and specific words. Some of these are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

*Descriptions in Academic Debating on Facebook*

<b>Parts/Stages of Academic Debating Online</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
1 Opening	<p>A: Rodrigo Duterte was the <i>former</i> mayor of Davao City, Philippines for <i>22 long years</i>. His term as a mayor saw the transformation of Davao City from a <i>crime-infested</i> area into a <i>thriving</i> business hub <i>equipped</i> with its own <i>24/7</i> emergency hotline (Central 911).</p> <p>N: Miriam Defensor - Santiago, <i>a woman of strong will and justice,..</i> She has an <i>amazing</i> record in the <i>three branches</i> of the government...</p>
2 Rebuttal	<p>A: Yes, indeed! Miriam has lots of experiences <i>and</i> gained <i>tons of awards</i> for being a <i>one of a kind</i> politician.</p> <p>N: Saying things against Miriam that she is <i>not a God-fearing</i> person and that she is someone that is <i>not holding onto her own words</i> may get us in trouble.</p>
3 Second Statement	<p>A: Duterte was <i>one of the models</i> for a <i>good</i> leadership our country was looking for.</p> <p>N: She (referring to Miriam) has the key apparatuses, the <i>most vital</i> of which is a <i>working</i> brain that is <i>propped up</i> by a <i>solid</i> character and <i>years of involvement in broad daylight</i> administration</p>

Note: Table 5 shows the *Descriptions* from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate. Sensory details have been italicized.

Online debaters used descriptions to provide particular characteristics exclusive to their preferred presidential candidates; implying that they were worthy of their votes. Thirty-two (32) descriptions or 5.44% was observed from the opening through the second statement part of the online debate. Descriptions were used to support their statements. For instance, the Affirmative team was describing Duterte as *the former mayor of Davao City, Philippines for 22 long years. His term as a mayor saw the transformation of Davao City from a crime-infested area into a thriving\_business hub equipped with its own 24/7 emergency hotline (Central 911)*, while the Negative team supporting Defensor-Santiago as Miriam Defensor-Santiago described her as *a woman of strong will and justice,.. She has an amazing record in the three branches of the government...*

**Conditionals.** Conditionals are sentences that usually begin with *if*, expressing known facts or hypothetical scenarios and outcomes. Two conditionals (0.51%) were observed in the data:

Opening Statement Affirmative Team (WHATTATA):  
February 20, 2016

*...If he can make Davao a better place, there was no reason he cannot do the same to the Philippines...*

Second Rebuttal Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*If Duterte can be a good leader or even the best leader, then why not vote for him?*

**Conclusions.** Conclusions are sentences that indicate the perspective that online debaters favor to elaborate their points, however, they do not establish closure. Some of these instances are illustrated below:

Opening Statement Negative Team (Hwa):  
February 20, 2016

*...With the help of her smart mouth and for being a straightforward person, many people believe in her because she's a woman of her own words, she always meant what she had said...*

Rebuttal Statement (Team Hwa):  
February 23, 2016

*...So I guess nothing is wrong to that...*

Second Affirmative Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*...but surely Duterte can make Philippines the way the Filipinos wanted it to be.*

**Negatives.** These are sentences stating what is not true or correct. Some examples are given below:

Rebuttal Statement (Team Hwa):  
February 23, 2016

*We cannot agree more to that.*

Second Negative Statement (TEAM HWA):  
February 24, 2016

*... For some countries it is surely applicable, but, in this country it is not...*

Closing Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*You can never put Bongbong “inside a vacuum” and say it was all to his father, because it was NOT, fact is, the Martial Law did happen and Bongbong had an active participation.*

Online debaters used thirty-one negatives (5.27%) based on the examined the data. Negating was used by the virtual debaters to emphasize their stance on the issue, and to express opposition or disagreement.

The researcher argues that these speech acts are not embodiments of the personalities of the online debaters contrary to what Appling, Briscoe, Hayes, and Mappus’ (2013) claimed. These locutionary acts—declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives, descriptions, conditionals, conclusions, and negatives—associate with the illocutionary acts which became apparent in the online debating.

### **Illocutionary Acts**

Illocutionary acts carry out the point or purpose a speaker has speaking. The illocutionary acts that were dominantly used by the online debaters are representatives and directives.

**Representatives.** These illocutionary acts are utterances addressing a particular proposition, idea or belief. They are typical moves in both formal and informal debates. Correspondingly, four types of representatives – asserting, informing, concluding, and predicting – with different purposes occurred in the academic debating on Facebook. Wulandari (2014) identified only three types used in his study while Carr, Schrock, and Dauterman (2012), Kurniawan (2015), and Ilyas and Khushi (2012) had identified only one. This was so, as academic debates require assertive, informative, conclusive, and predictive behaviors or speeches. Table 6 shows the instances of asserting across the academic debating on Facebook.

Table 6

#### *Asserting in Academic Debating on Facebook*

<b>Parts/Stages of Academic Debating Online</b>	<b>Utterances</b>
1 Opening	A: Leadership is practiced not so much in words but in actions. N: Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a woman of strong will and justice, is giving us Filipinos a hope that our rotting country has a chance for change.
2 Rebuttal	A: The success of a Nation has something to do with faith. N: Peace is a necessity.
3 Second Statement	A: ...a leader who wanted the oppressed to receive more benefits, a leader who wanted delinquent people, common or politician, to be punished, and a leader that was fearless, honest, and confident. Those are the characteristics possessed by Rodrigo Duterte.  N: Miriam Defensor-.....She is a mother who surely knows what is best for her child and a concern citizen of this nation. She can oppose the crimes

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		and any other problems that this country is facing by not being physically brutal to someone. Through her intelligence, she can surely think of alternative ways to punish those people who committed crimes and to give justice for us Filipinos.
4	Second Rebuttal	A: Rodrigo Duterte can be a good leader or even the best leader that this country is aiming for. N: Speaking of respect, all of us has different perspective in the true definition of RESPECT.
5	Closing	A: It was time for our country to have an aggressive president, a disciplined person who has the ability to rule our country, not only by hearts and kisses but by claws as well. N: They are all up there because of their potentials...

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Note: Table 6 shows the utterances that assert from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate.

It was observed that asserting had the highest frequency (65 instances) among the other types of representatives similar to Wulandari (2014), Appling, Briscoe, Hayes, and Mappus (2013), and Carr, Schrock, and Dauterman (2012). In their opening statement, the Affirmative Team stated that *'Leadership is practiced not so much in words but in actions'* to assert that Duterte was the more qualified candidate for presidency because of his known achievements in politics. The Negative Team, on the other hand, expressed, that *'Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a woman of strong will and justice, is giving us Filipinos a hope that our rotting country has a chance for change'*, to assert that Defensor-Santiago reinforces the people's opportunity for transformation; thus, she was the one who deserved the presidency. The same kind of association was observed for the speech acts in the second statement, second rebuttal, and closing statements of the debating teams. However, asserting cannot only represent the stance of the virtual debaters; they can also represent rebuttals of the opponent's arguments (e.g., *The success of a Nation has something to do with faith* which seemed to attack Defensor-Santiago's statement about the non-existence of God; *Peace is a necessity* did not mean being in favor of the affirmative side as the negative team proceeded with *But do you think that the implementation of the killings by Duterte is the answer? I think not. Living in peace and harmony is way far different in living in peace and fear*).

**Informing.** Informing is expressing valuably relevant information on an issue. Thirty-six statements (6.12%) had been identified as informative illocutionary acts. This was slightly higher than Wulandari's (2014) finding (5.88%). Table 7 shows the instances of informing across the online academic debating.

Table 7

*Informing in Academic Debating on Facebook*

<b>Parts/Stages of Academic Debating Online</b>	<b>Utterances</b>
1 Opening	<p>A: It was also during Duterte’s term when his community was recognized for the third time as Outstanding Local Government Highly Urbanized City, cementing Davao City’s place in the National Literacy Hall of Fame.</p> <p>N: She became a judge, a commissioner and a cabinet member.</p>
2 Rebuttal	<p>A: Miriam has lots of experiences and gained tons of awards for being a one of a kind politician.</p> <p>N: Duterte admits ordering killing drug suspects.</p>
3 Second Statement	<p>A: Another, Duterte’s killing was not for any reasons, he was doing it to let other people saw the results of their wrong doings and what could possibly happen to them, and it was shown that it was very effective,...</p> <p>N: Many people are afraid of him because of those killings that he did...</p>
4 Second Rebuttal	<p>A: Today we were celebrating the 30th EDSA people power revolution anniversary.</p> <p>N: Anyways, base on the requirement of being an aspiring presidential candidate it is not required there if you have a God or you are inclined in a religious organizations.</p>
5 Closing	<p>A: Duterte does admit that he killed criminals and many people do fear him because of it.</p> <p>N: Miriam was a con at death penalty.</p>

Note: Table 7 shows the utterances that inform from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate.

Through informing, online debaters were able to describe their bet or viewpoint. It is associated with statements and descriptions as locutionary acts. Both teams displayed the use of arguments – using reasons to support their purposes. Both teams put these in the body of their speeches; thus, they functioned as supporting concepts. As can be seen in Table 7, the utterances carried an informative tone, and the virtual debaters were likely supposing that their opponents lacked backgrounds about their candidates, but their purpose was also to establish the reputation

of their candidates and stress their qualifications. In terms of frequency, informing had the second most number of speech acts, second to asserting, and was spread through all the stages of the debate.

**Concluding.** Concluding is indicating the perspective that online debaters favor to elaborate their stand. So, it can be seen as a manifestation of use of arguments. Across the stages of online debate, thirty-six (6.29%) occurrences were identified. Table 8 shows the utterances that conclude.

Table 8

*Concluding in Academic Debating on Facebook*

Parts/Stages of Academic Debating Online	Utterances
1 Opening	A: ...That is one of the most important thing a leader must possess,... N: People nowadays are already losing hope when it comes to the betterment of our country...
2 Rebuttal	A: ...Philippines also needed a leader who was God Fearing enough... N: When she was diagnosed with cancer, we can assume that that situation was her awakening and her enlightenment to actually establish her faith and relationship with God.
3 Second Statement	A: ... a political activist could dedicate his life to the poor in the same way a person might dedicate himself to a religion.. N: I think we have a little confusion between RESPECT and FEAR.
4 Second Rebuttal	A: SHE TOOK THE HANDS OF THE MARCOS FAMILY AND WASHED THEM HERSELF, in front of the families of the disappeared, in front of all those people whose most basic human rights were stepped upon during the dark days of the Martial Law, and IN FRONT OF THE COUNTRY THAT WAS STILL FEELING THE PAIN OF A DECADES-OLD WOUND. N: As long as you have a good will into this country and you are qualified then you can run.
5 Closing	A: Duterte was still at the peak of his career. N: Peace can be achieved highly without using such violence.

Note: Table 8 shows the utterances that conclude from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate.

All utterances such as, *SHE TOOK THE HANDS OF THE MARCOS FAMILY AND WASHED THEM HERSELF, in front of the families of the disappeared, in front of all those*

people whose most basic human rights were stepped upon during the dark days of the Martial Law, and *IN FRONT OF THE COUNTRY THAT WAS STILL FEELING THE PAIN OF A DECADES-OLD WOUND* of the affirmative team, and *As long as you have a good will into this country and you are qualified then you can run* of the negative team that transpired in the second rebuttal meant that students were concluding. Concluding acts had equal cases as informing; but in the online debate examined, they are not actually found in the latter part of the debate speeches. Their locations were unpredictable. Take for example, *Duterte was still at the peak of his career* found at the end of the Affirmative Team's speech, while *Peace can be achieved highly without using such violence* stated by the negative team was at the beginning. See the underlined cases of concluding below:

*Most of the 2016 presidential candidate was warm-hearted EXCEPT Duterte. He simply knows what was best for our country and he was willing to do everything for it. His platform was very basic which was to fight corruption and eliminate criminals. And given his track record, he would be able to achieve it.... Duterte was still at the peak of his career*

*Peace can be achieved highly without using such violence. Every life is worth living. And who are you to sentence once life to an end? Let's put it this way. Not all people that are in jail are criminals. Some are just victimized. Framed. What if the crime that are charged at them is wrong? That they are just fooled. And the court trials were not enough to prove someone's innocence?*

The speech acts of concluding behaved in no predictable position across the debate stages. It implies that conclusions as important parts of the keyhole structure of speech debates though culturally or normally placed in the latter portion of speeches are not always expressed in the last part. Noteworthy is the fact that concluding was not observed in the previous studies.

**Predicting.** Predicting is forecasting what could or may possibly happen if an action is made or performed. So, it can be seen as a manifestation of cross-examination and rebuttal. Some instances of predicting observed in the data were equivalent to 1.02%. This small number of predicting cases were seen as mere opinions that are typically considered a sign of weakness in debates; hence, avoided. Interestingly, predicting was not found in the previous studies. Here are some examples:

Opening Statement Negative Team (Hwa):  
February 20, 2016

*Some says that this sickness that our country is experiencing will last forever.*

Rebuttal Statement: (Team Whattata)  
February 23, 2016

*Maybe some of you would say that "does it matter?" or "and so?" or "I don't see any problem with that."*

Moreover, predicting was analyzed as reflective of conditionals as illocutionary acts. One instance that was illustrated earlier is cited below.

Opening Statement Affirmative Team (WHATTATA):  
February 20, 2016

*...If he can make Davao a better place, there was no reason he can not do the same to the Philippines...*

On the other hand, the researcher identified more than four functions of representatives—emphasizing, exemplifying, citing, and explaining—that were not found in the previous researches. They can be understood as reflective of organization and clarity, use of arguments, cross-examination and rebuttal, and appropriateness of style.

**Emphasizing.** Reflective of descriptions, emphasizing is reiterating what has been asserted and/or informed. Moreover, it also means that the debater is underscoring his points by restating them. Nineteen utterances or 3.23% were determined. Table 9 shows these utterances that emphasize.

Table 9

*Emphasizing in Academic Debating on Facebook*

Parts/Stages of Academic Debating Online	Utterances
1 Opening	A: If he can make Davao a better place, there was no reason he cannot do the same to the Philippines... <u>That was one point,</u> N: (None observed)
2 Rebuttal	A: <i>Yes, indeed!</i> Miriam has lots of experiences... N: <i>Yes.</i> Philippines do need a leader who...
3 Second Statement	A: “What’s the connection of religion in politics?” .... <i>Well, absolutely, definitely, certainly, and surely it does have connections.</i> N: Some thought that he might kill someone who is innocent or maybe someone who has been pin pointed out as the suspect on such crime. <i>Yes it is possible.</i>
4 Second Rebuttal	A: I think we have a little confusion between RESPECT and FEAR..., Well, definitely NOT... <i>It was very clear as it was stated.</i> N: (None observed)
5 Closing	A: <i>SO again and again,</i> on that day Miriam chose to embrace the Marcoses with open arms, she irrevocably betrayed the Filipino. N: <i>We reiterate</i> that Miriam is just against the way of killing criminals.

Note: Table 9 shows the utterances that emphasize from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate.

Less instances of emphasizing were found in the opening and second rebuttal, but more were identified in the other parts of the online debate. Structures or word class emphasizing the sides or arguments of the debaters: *That was one point;\_Yes, indeed!; Well, absolutely, definitely, certainly, and surely it does have connections' Yes it is possible; It was very clear as it was stated; SO again and again;* reiterate were either phrasal, one-word, sentential or interjections. It was obvious that they meant to stress the team's arguments, and because of it, they afforded either to stay on their track or remind their opposing team regarding their claims they perceived worthy of rebutting, and/or questioning.

**Exemplifying.** Exemplifying, reflective of descriptions, is providing examples or instances in order to specify an argument making it clearer to the receiver or to support a particular viewpoint like the sample credentials (i.e deeds, service, etc.) of the presidential candidates. Instances may be based on facts or improvisations. Eleven statements or 1.87% prove this. Table 10 shows statements which exemplify.

Table 10

*Exemplifying in Academic Debating on Facebook*

Parts/Stages of Academic Debating Online	Utterances
1 Opening	A: Fourth, He was a problem solver, <i>HE WAS ABLE TO SOLVE A LOT OF CITY'S MAJOR ISSUES LIKE TRAFFIC, DRUG ABUSE, CRIMINALITY, AND CORRUPTION...</i> N: Some says that this sickness that our country is experiencing will last forever. Especially <i>CORRUPTION, BRUTAL CRIMES and DRUG ACTIVITIES...</i>
2 Rebuttal	A: Philippines also needed a leader who was God Fearing enough. But, does Miriam-Defensor Santiago portray this? Better watch the video. (VIDEO 1.0) (Watch first then proceed reading) This was what Miriam said: <i>"I DON'T understand why GOD be all love and still inflict this kind of pain, this GOD is an UNDER ACHIEVER, He does not do whatever He is supposed to be doing whatever HIS sex is...."</i> N: (None observed)
3 Second Statement	A: ... the Davao City, Philippines as an example. N: (None observed)
4 Second Rebuttal	A: According to some professional analyst, October 15, 2015 was the day Miriam Defensor Santiago betrayed the Filipinos... <i>SHE TOLD THE FILIPINO PEOPLE THAT THE MARCOSES DO NOT OWE THEM AN APOLOGY.</i> N: (None observed)
5 Closing	A: (None observed) N: (None observed)

Note: Table 10 shows the utterances that exemplify from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate.

No samples of exemplifying were identified in the closing part. Giving examples, hence, appeared as not so necessary in particular part/s of the online debate. For example, the negative team did not use examples in the rebuttal and second statement parts because the group expressed their stance using more assertions, information, emphases, and conclusions. Table 10, however, shows more specific and clearer examples which supported their claims, which is the fundamental function of exemplification.

**Citing.** Citing is referring to some reliable sources of information to further strengthen and validate one's claims. When the debaters cited information from media sources such as, newspapers and news videos, it was counted as citing. A small number of citing (0.68%) was observed in the data which may be due to the fact that students performed only an informal academic debate on Facebook and not a formal one. Examples of *citing* are as follows.

Second Negative Statement (TEAM HWA):  
February 24, 2016

*According to Frank Lucas, "Its okay for the people to respect you, but when they fear you, you know you have the power."*

Second Rebuttal Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*According to some professional analyst, October 15, 2015 was the day Miriam Defensor Santiago betrayed the Filipinos.*

It was clear that citing occurred in the virtual debate as signaled by *According to...* which made each team's ideas stronger and reliable as they defended their own claims. Though it was an informal online debate, it still became scholarly in a way because the students also posted news videos to support their arguments.

**Explaining.** Explaining, which embodies descriptions, is expressing the essence or meaning of a particular idea. Almost two per cent of explaining occurrences were coded. This is illustrated in the examples that follow:

Second Rebuttal Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*That was the worst thing in being too genius, the tendency wherein an individual would be too proud to herself and not think that there was someone out there who was much more superior.*

Closing Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25 at 10:44pm

*When you are a criminal, you kill for your personal interest, while when you kill a criminal; you are doing it for the common greater good.*

Explaining was used in the online debate especially in the second rebuttal part perhaps to clarify some ideas that might have been misunderstood by the other team. It was also used in giving background information as a response to their opponents' claims. Their rebuttal sessions were observably governed by a number of explanations so each team could expound more on their arguments. Through explaining, they were able to at least clarify their respective standpoints or reinforce them.

### **Directives**

The second illocutionary acts observed in the data were directives. Directives are attempts at getting the receiver or addressee to do something. These functioned in four various ways: questioning, suggesting, requesting, and commanding. Ilyas and Khushi (2012) reported that 18.12% of Facebook updates were directives, while Wulandari (2014) found 34 cases, with prohibiting as a more specific kind of directives. In the current study, 12.75% or 75 cases were found. This may be so due to the nature of online activity and the number of participants. The directives analyzed were further categorized as interrogatives and imperatives.

**Questioning.** The first directive is questioning or raising objections against an argument. Fifty-five cases of interrogatives (9.35%) were coded. Most of this transpired during the first rebuttal and second rebuttal among participants which is banal in debates. More questions with 26 frequencies were raised during the closing part. The affirmative team in the rebuttal part, however, used the same question thrown at them by the negative team as illocutionary act. The cases were as follows.

Table 11

#### *Questioning in Academic Debating on Facebook*

<b>Parts/Stages of Academic Debating Online</b>	<b>Utterances</b>
1 Opening	A: Why DUTERTE for president? N: (None observed)
2 Rebuttal	A: Do you think God-Fearing Filipinos could take this kind of leader? Saying that GOD is UNDERACHIEVER,.. N: Duterte on the other hand, do you really think he is the "model" you are looking for?
3 Second Statement	A: "What's the connection of religion in politics?" N: Why did we even say yes?
4 Second Rebuttal	A: But until now she was not able to show in public her medical records? N: Do you even think that he will brain wash Miriam's mind just to have another Martial Law?

- 5 Closing            A: Team Hwa was saying Bongbong was different from his father, Really?  
How do you know that?  
N: But why are you patronizing Duterte as the next president of the Philippines  
when he is violating some religious acts?

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Note: Table 11 shows the utterances that question, from the Affirmative team (A) and Negative team (N) in each part/stage of the online debate.

Questioning utterances were indeed questions because they were either WH or Yes-No interrogative types. Questioning was used by the debaters to challenge or mentally stimulate one another as seen in their speech exchanges. After the affirmative team presented their arguments, these were cross-examined by the negative team and vice versa across the stages of the virtual debate. They actually met the element of being argumentative in tone – a hint of appropriateness of style, and identification of weak points, that is, cross-examination through questioning. Moreover, the debaters held their opponents to carry out an action (Nartey, 2013) that was to respond to each other's questions. Directives are used to get the receiver of the message act in a way to control his behavior making it equal to the propositional content of the source directing (Searle, 1969). Thus, they answered through statements, descriptions, and even interrogatives as the debate progressed. For example, in the second rebuttal, the negative team uttered, *Bongbong Marcos is different from his father, he even said it himself. Do you even think that he will brain wash Miriam's mind just to have another Martial Law?* The affirmative team responded and also countered the other in the closing statement quoting and questioning,

*Team Hwa said: "Bongbong Marcos is different from his father, he even said it himself." Of course he would said that, and that was what you called self-serving. Did you even thought he would actually said that because obviously he would not dare betray himself and his family. Team Hwa was saying Bongbong was different from his father, Really? How do you know that?*

The questions were underlined in the example above. Associated with imperatives, *suggesting* (1.53%), *requesting* (1.53%), and *commanding* (0.34%) vary in functions. They can be attributed to two criteria: organization and clarity, and appropriateness of style.

**Suggesting.** Suggesting is mentioning an idea that could possibly be considered by the opponents but is delivered in a polite manner. To some extent, the online debaters across the stages of online debating became polite in suggesting. Instances in the second rebuttal and closing parts are shown below.

Second Rebuttal (Team HWA):  
February 25, 2016

*Everyone should understand and give the privacy to her personal life.*

Closing Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*We advise you to re-read that part...*

Closing Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*..Try to understand this.*

Closing Statement (Team HWA):

*...We can punish them by giving them some hard productive things...*

The ones above exemplified instances of *suggesting* entailing that the debaters avoided ad hominem or attacking the persons who were the debaters themselves. The online debaters used *advise*, and *try*, and general statements addressed no particular people such as *Everyone should understand and give the privacy to her personal life*, and *...We can punish them by giving them some hard productive things...Suggesting* with those words and expressions served as transitional or rhetorical devices to lead the debaters into actions.

**Requesting.** Requesting, that can be slanted to imperatives, is formally asking the opponents to do something, also expressed in a polite manner. Like suggesting, online debaters across the stages of online debating became polite in requesting. Instances in the second affirmative and second rebuttal parts are shown below.

Second Affirmative Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*Now, let us move on to another question..*

Second Rebuttal (Team HWA)  
February 25, 2016

*...Lets stop beating around the bush,*

*Now, let us move on to another question..and...Lets stop beating around the bush* were transitions as well. Requesting with these utterances served also as transitional or rhetorical devices to make the debate progress and to sustain the focus of the discourse. Both suggesting and requesting were exemplifications of achieving organization and clarity of the debaters. Searle (1975), however, clarifies that directives could be adhered to, disobeyed, given, or repudiated. This was likewise for suggesting and requesting speech acts. The researcher analyzed that no team conceded because they probably liked to win and if they do, a prize awaits them.

**Commanding.** Commanding is imposing an order to be followed or task to be performed. To some extent, the tone of commanding would manifest through utterances especially when any of the teams seemed to not comprehend the arguments of another. The tendency of any of the debaters, nevertheless, was to command to reiterate or reemphasize their points. Compared to Wulandari's (2014) 6.9 per cent of commanding instances in her study, the present paper had 0.34 per cent which could be due to the difference in number of participants. It could also be attributed to the level of ethical behavior displayed by them. Examples of commanding instances in the current paper are shown below:

Second Affirmative Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*But remember, having fear was not always bad, it does not only meant " to be afraid; to threat", fear can be beneficial and encouraging.*

Second Rebuttal (Team HWA)  
February 25, 2016

*See for yourself on what she does as a Senator of the PHILIPPINES.*

Closing statement (Team HWA):  
February 26, 2016

*Do not claim that you have won this debate my dear.*

No *commissive*, *expressive*, and *declarative* acts were analyzed as they were absent in the data. This was because debaters usually did not express commitments to future course of actions such as offering, threatening, promising, vowing, and volunteering. Perhaps, they just adhered to the criteria of the virtual activity that they had to meet certainty of their arguments as far as offering, promising, vowing, and volunteering are concerned, and ethical behavior so they avoided threatening.

Unlike Wulandari's (2014) report on 64 expressive statuses and Ilyas and Khushi's (2012) finding on 33.33% expressive updates as the most dominant speech act in Facebook, the researcher found no *expressive* or emotive acts – revealing or expressing emotions and mental state like congratulating, thanking, apologizing, welcoming, regretting, etc. The absence of *expressive* acts may be related probably to the style of argumentation expected of the students when debating. The argumentation style criterion that was vital to them controlled their communication style.

Similarly, *declaring* that changes the world or people's affairs such as pronouncing, sentencing, penalizing, firing did not emerge. If online debaters attempted at showing many of these speech acts at the onset of debating, they would otherwise be questioned, excluded or disqualified as either formal or informal debate is actually grounded on ethical standards of speech. Circumventing subjectivity is a must, and debater's decorum must be observed. Importantly, as it is, the absence of declaring can be associated to the criteria that set the standards of the online activity.

The online speech community, moreover, was *not* an *open* Facebook where online users usually post Facebook status updates. The online speech community was a *closed Facebook group* where academic debating as a genre of communication ensued. Given that representatives and directives emerged from the online debate, they turned as academic approaches; therefore, classroom ethics in a face-to-face setting was expected implicitly in a way among the students. Likewise, the researcher identified ethical behavior in the debaters' perlocutionary acts.

### Perlocutionary Acts

Finally, perlocutionary acts were also observed. The previous studies did not elaborate on perlocutionary acts. These refer to the *effect* of any illocutionary act on the receiver or hearer. However, they are not perlocutionary acts alone because they can simultaneously be illocutionary acts as the genre of academic debating is interactive or bidirectional. Being bidirectional, academic debating allows for perlocutionary acts that can also be illocutionary acts through which propelling of arguments takes place.

In academic debating on Facebook, the participants were chiefly receivers and not hearers of written speeches. As the context was academic debating, virtual debaters less likely demonstrated relatively positive responses as debating is naturally a matter of proving one's ideas as more clever, and more credible. Somehow, none of Austin's (1963) forms of perlocutionary acts took place. Instead, other effects transpired which can probably be due to the academic debating on Facebook as the genre of communication. One positive perlocutionary act was agreeing (0.85%), while the rest was more inherently expected among oral debaters which were observed from the online debaters: *proving* (0.68%), *clarifying* (1.36%), *suspecting* (0.17%), *negating* (3.40%), satirizing (0.17%), and *referring* (1.02%). They had one certain underlying goal in performing these, and that was to win in the communicative event.

**Agreeing.** Agreeing, as illustrated in the utterances below, is the act of accepting one's arguments as truthful. It is concomitant with accurate assertion, factual information, acceptable conclusion, and prediction, and other representative acts. When viewed as an effect of illocutionary act, it is a response against asserting and/or emphasizing. As locutionary act, it is formed by statements and/or descriptions.

Given the examples below, it can be deduced that the online debaters were respectful or considerate of their opponent's arguments without abandoning their stance.

Rebuttal Statement (Team Hwa):  
February 23, 2016

*I agree of [sic] what the team whatata said that Philippines was a God-fearing nation.*

Second Negative Statement (TEAM HWA):  
February 23, 2016

*Fair point well made on the answer that you had said regarding the connection of religion to politics. For some countries it is surely applicable.*

**Proving.** On the other hand, proving is a relative response to questioning, suggesting, requesting, and commanding. It is establishing the fact to be valid with the use of citations. When used as an illocutionary act, it can be viewed and used as citing, informing, and/or asserting. As a locutionary act, it can be expressed through statements and/or descriptions. Examples have been underlined in the extracts below:

Second Affirmative Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*What's the connection of religion in politics?" this was just one of the questions team Hwa left us.... According to Some political scientists and sociologists recently they discovered an intense bond between religious identity and political movements in different parts of the world.*

Second Affirmative Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*The live proofs and evidences for his good leadership would explain why.*

Closing Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*"In front of the country that was still feeling the pain of a decades-old wound" the proof? The proof was today; up until now Filipinos were still commemorating EDSA revolution, wherein people chose to fight their rights to the MARCOS family.*

**Clarifying.** Clarifying, like questioning, is making a statement more comprehensible primarily when questioning transpires in the online debate which is a product of certain arguments that have been less likely understood by a debating team. Like agreeing, it turns as asserting and/or emphasizing when used as an illocutionary act. As a locutionary act, it can be expressed by using statements and/or descriptions. They are responses toward questions. The same was analyzed in the online debate. Examples are given above.

Second Negative Statement (TEAM HWA):  
February 24, 2016

*Let me just clarify that fear is not respect.*

Second Rebuttal Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*It was not just Ferdinand who shut on the Filipino people. It was their entire family who took a dump on this country, who ultimately declared themselves nobility, and stripped this country of its wealth and more importantly — its dignity.*

*What we mentioned in our first rebuttal statement was that Miriam does not believe in God a...*

**Suspecting.** Suspecting is expressing skepticism against the genuineness of an action or person. This can be a response against concluding, predicting, and even explaining mainly for the first two as they are weak arguments. The latter may be suspect when it contains distorted information. In the example below, the negative side questioned the point of the affirmative side that Duterte was a role model of good leadership as response to the stand of the affirmative team.

Second Negative Statement (TEAM HWA):  
February 24, 2016

...Some thought that he might kill someone who is innocent or maybe someone who has been pin pointed out as the suspect on such crime.

**Negating.** Associated with concluding and predicting, negating is nullifying an assertion with the use of negative statements. It can also be the effect against faulty assertions, information, emphases, exemplifications, citation, and explanations. Negating takes the form of negatives as locutionary acts. The cases of negating in the debate resembled negative sentences in the locutionary acts as illustrated by the examples given where both of the teams refuted each other's misinformation.

Rebuttal Statement (Team Hwa):  
February 23, 2016

*We cannot agree more to that.*

Second Affirmative Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*maybe he does not have achievements such as to those in Miriam being honor student and whatever but surely Duterte can make Philippines the way the Filipinos wanted it to be.*

Second Negative Statement (TEAM HWA):  
February 24, 2016

*For some countries it is surely applicable, but, in this country it is not.*

Second Rebuttal (Team HWA)  
February 25, 2016

*Wake up everyone, people don't need a leader to ordering killing drug suspect.*

Closing Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*You can never put Bongbong "inside a vacuum" and say it was all to his father, because it was NOT, fact is, the Martial Law did happen and Bongbong had an active participation.*

**Euphemizing.** Moreover, euphemizing is expressing something that is unpleasant or embarrassing using mild or indirect word or expression. It may be used or viewed as sarcastic informing and not a type of expressing. This is in the form of conditionals. The underlined segment of the utterance below was found as an example from the students' online debate. As can be seen, the affirmative side used the word pleasure whose semantics was a paradox to Well

if team Hwa cannot really see the connections. The group, likewise, had displayed kindness so they can respond appropriately to others.

Closing Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 25, 2016

*Well if team Hwa cannot really see the connections, It would be our pleasure to repeat it, so they would understand. Again "SHE TOOK THE HANDS OF THE MARCOS FAMILY AND WASHED THEM HERSELF..."*

**Referring.** Referring, in the form of statements and descriptions, is pointing to a matter mentioned by the opposing team. It may serve as an introduction or an initial retort prior to an actual response against logical fallacies made by the other team. The following is an example of referring:

Second Rebuttal Statement (Team Whattata):  
February 24, 2016

*Team Hwa stated that the connection of religion to politics was not applicable in this country. Was there...*

Closing statement (Team HWA):  
February 26, 2016

*You once said that the Philippines is a religious country. But why are you patronizing Duterte...*

These perlocutionary acts such as *agreeing, proving, clarifying, suspecting, negating, euphemizing, and referring* as well as the locutionary and illocutionary acts displayed the virtual debaters' cross-examination, organization and clarity, use of arguments, and style of appropriateness being the criteria to performing the online debating on Facebook. To move on, the succeeding part discusses the merits and complexities of virtual academic debating on Facebook.

### **What merits and/or complexities does virtual academic debating on Facebook have towards the participants?**

The researcher found two-fold implications of academic debating on Facebook towards online debaters: (1) *merits* observed as relative with face-to-face academic debating, and (2) *complexities* of debating in an online speech community.

#### **Merits**

Virtual academic debating on Facebook towards online debaters was determined as meritorious in several ways.

First, virtual academic debating on Facebook served as a *means for collaborative learning* as most of the online debaters revealed that prior to posting their speeches, they had initial

processes of communicating, discussing, and chatting. Specifically, online brainstorming, teamwork, thought-sharing, decision-making and group bonds transpired among them. Through collaboration they can be prepared; thus, be more knowledgeable and communicative in the debate.

Second, academic debating on Facebook provided *opportunities for archival or secondary research*. Most of the online debaters were provided the chance to do online searches. They had more time to research as the debate was asynchronous. The World Wide Web served as a rich data storage of information that the debaters found viable. As a support to this, the students were able to cite sources and even post news videos that enriched and supported their claims.

Third, academic debating on Facebook had the *ease of use*. Posting their speeches was comfortable. The students' speeches can be altered. Their debate speeches were editable, accessible for proofreading, and much easier for self-correction as Facebook features such as, edit, delete, post, reply, and so on are absolutely available. Online debaters had less hassle posting their speeches, and they found it more convenient to react because debating was asynchronous.

Fourth, academic debating on Facebook rendered an *extension of the class*. Most of the online debaters had access to the speeches of other online debaters as accessibility of online debating was everywhere due to the free internet connection provided by the campus. Because of this, most of the online debaters were capable of performing multiple readings such as speeches of debaters and feedback of other members of the Facebook group before creating their own.

In regards to being an extension of the class, academic debating on Facebook became *facilitative of learning*. The students, as the online debaters, reflected that it supported them in learning from others' speeches. In addition, it also helped them in understanding the topic based on debaters' research and arguments. Hence, it assisted them in becoming aware of current issues.

For most of them, academic debating on Facebook served as an exciting, interesting, enjoyable communicative activity.

### Complexities

On the other hand, academic debating on Facebook also has some complexities or difficulties encountered by the virtual debaters along the way.

Some of the online debaters noted *the lack of personal expressions*, also known as paralanguage, such as, live countering, absence of visible emotions, and lack of co-debaters. This was probably the effect of Facebook wall that was used as a platform for academic debating. The wall is actually a plain writing platform where messages or updates are written, then, posted. In terms of technological affordances, Facebook is not Skype by which teleconferencing can be afforded. Though Facebook also features face-to-face call, it was not utilized in the study.

For others who used their internet at home, they encountered *inconsistent internet connection* that limited their participation. Lack of internet connection was one of the reasons why the researcher considered academic debating on Facebook as *not* time-coordinated; to give more time for online debaters to research, read, and prepare, and for all their teams to participate in the activity.

Lastly, some also conveyed that academic debating on Facebook carried an *indirect kind of communication* and that it took time to post and respond to their opponents. Some preferred actual over online debates.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Grounded on the speech acts tradition, this study investigated the speech acts that emerged in asynchronous academic debating on Facebook in terms of locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions. It also analyzed the merits and complexities that this type of communication had towards online debaters.

Overall, the findings were parallel with the previous studies; however, more speech acts have been identified that may be considered unique in virtual academic debating on Facebook. As the study focused on virtual academic debating on Facebook, more speech acts such as *descriptions*, *conditionals*, *conclusions*, and *negatives* for locutions, *emphasizing*, *exemplifying*, *citing*, and *explaining* for illocutions, and *agreeing*, *proving*, *clarifying*, *suspecting*, *negating*, *euphemizing*, and *referring* for perlocutions emerged. Hence, speech acts and their purposes surfaced depending on the genre of communication and based on the criteria set for the online activity which controlled the online academic debaters' written speeches. Some percentages of some speech acts were observed to be lower than in the previous studies which may be due to the size of data examined. An increase in the number of academic debate speeches may lead to more conclusive findings.

Accordingly, the researcher asserts that in today's generation the speech acts of virtual academic debating do exist, quite contrary to several people's notions that speech acts are accessible in face-to-face communication and formal debates only.

The merits of academic debating on Facebook made the online debater's debating experience positive and meaningful. Certain merits such as a *means for collaboration*, *opportunities for research*, and *facilitative of learning* are comparative with the nuances of face-to-face academic debating; hence, online academic debating as a genre of communication is relatively meritorious with other genres of communication such as face-to-face formal debates. For language teachers, CMC featuring Facebook can be recommended as a tool for setting virtually communicative activities for students. While functional languages in speech acts are not stipulated in the English for Academic Purposes syllabus of the college where the study was made, incorporating such language functions into the course syllabus may be useful so that students can be taught to be more knowledgeable on the type of utterances they use when they communicate.

Academic debating on Facebook's complexities such as *lack of personal expressions*, *inconsistent internet connection*, and *indirect kind of communication* had essentially revealed the distinctions between speech communities and online speech communities. By the same token, however, speech acts as the fundamental foundations of communication exist in both speech communities and online speech communities.

With the preceding claims, it may be deemed that "CMC provides a new empirical arena for various research traditions in sociolinguistics" (Androutsopoulos, 2006, p. 419). People's means of communication has undergone far-reaching transformation, getting more virtual in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hence, more speech acts studies are necessary to be undertaken exclusively in the context of the CMC. As it is, speech acts variation from one genre of communication to another may be analyzed or a model of speech acts of virtual academic debating could be developed. The researcher concludes that the current study has not arrived yet at its finality. It is, therefore, recommended that further research be continued.

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