

# The Analysis of Illocutionary Acts and the Effects in the Debate on Trade Friction between the Hosts of China Global Television Network and Fox Business Channel

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**ABSTRACT.** *The speech act theory was employed to analyze illocutionary acts in the debate on China-US trade friction between the host of China Global Television Network (CGTN) Liu Xin and the host of American Fox Business Channel Trish Regan. The result indicated that in Liu Xin's turns, representatives were used eight times, directives and expressives twice respectively. In Trish's turns, directives were used once, expressives three times with the absence of representatives. This result showed that the western countries are more powerful in media transmission and the right of speech, while the Eastern countries are in a weak position.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Illocutionary acts, Debate on china-us trade friction, Speech act theory, Trade friction*

## 1. Introduction

The Speech Act theory was proposed by the British philosopher Austin in the late 1950s. The basic idea is to do things with words. Austin classifies speech acts into five categories, namely, verdictives, executives, commissives, expositives and behabitives. A complete speech act can be categorized into locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act [1]103. Among them, illocutionary act is considered as the representation of speech act theory.

However, there are many loopholes in Austin's classification of speech acts, which have been corrected by many scholars, among which Searle's amendment is the best-known[2]27. Searle[3][4] puts forward a new classification of speech acts according to four criteria of speech act theory classification: basic condition, sincerity condition, suitable direction and propositional condition. Speech act is divided into five categories, namely, representative act, directive act, commissive act,

expressive act and declaring act. Searle critically inherited and developed Austin's daily linguistic philosophical analysis theory and methodology, making classification more "systematic" and "rigorous" [5]543. It can be concluded that Searle was the first to propose a complete theory of speech act. Therefore, this paper takes Searle's classification of speech acts as the standard for data analysis.

In recent years, studies concerning illocutionary acts mainly center on theory, text and discourse analysis. Theoretical discussion focuses on the reinterpretation of Austin's speech act theory. For example, based on Halliday's view of language communication, it attempts to reclassify the speech acts within the framework of Austin's speech act theory [5]. Text studies focusing on the analysis of the text of the trial, film and television resources, such as through the analysis of the trial record, finding out the problems in language usage of the judge. Suggestions are offered in the aspect of illocutionary acts to improve the trial language usage[6]. Discourse studies focused on the aspects such as political speeches and debate, such as the analysis of president Xi Jinping's speech in the United Nations on September 28, 2015, aiming at examining the "righteousness" of China's principle in dealing with foreign affairs from the perspective of illocutionary acts[7]; In the 58th presidential debate in September 2016, Trump used the commissives 199 times, while Clinton only 46 times. In contrast, Trump presented a richer variety of commissives in the debate, including hope, threat, promise, proposal, veto and guarantee, while Hillary only two[8]. The scope of the above-mentioned research is to be widened, therefore, other aspects of illocutionary acts need to be further discussed.

To sum up, previous studies mostly focused on debates in a certain country in the absence of cross-cultural communication. Both sides of the debate are government officers, and people from other fields have not been involved. The theme of those debates was politics, other fields like economics and culture are expected to be explored. Therefore, based on Searle's classification of illocutionary acts, the current study adopts descriptive research methods to discuss the illocutionary acts and effects generated in the debate about China-US trade frictions between Liu Xin, the host of CGTN and Trish Reagan, the host of Fox Business Channel.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1 Research Questions**

The following questions are addressed in the current study: (1) What are the illocutionary acts in the debate between the hostesses of CGTN and Fox Business Channel? (2) What are the effects of these illocutionary acts?

### **2.2 Subjects**

The current study focuses on the live trade friction debate between Liu Xin, a China Global Television Network host, and Trish Reagan, a Fox Business Channel host, on May 30, 2019. The debate lasts for nearly 17 minutes, the content of which

forms the basis of the current research. Of the debate, 1435 words were concerning various illocutionary acts consisting of 16 paragraphs.

### ***2.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis***

The present study collects and analyzes the corpus of the live debate on China-US trade friction, and analyzes the illocutionary acts in it. Descriptive research methods were used in this study. Descriptive research solves problems by collecting, categorizing, analyzing, and objectively describing the situation. Descriptive research methods and qualitative research can be used interchangeably. The difference between them lies in that descriptive research methods pay more attention to language phenomena occurring under natural conditions without manual intervention or control variables. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe phenomena and the characteristics of them[9]129.

In this paper, detailed recording is adopted to collect data. Listening to recordings, reading texts and taking notes are the main methods, which are divided into the following five steps: (1) data collection, namely, the video of Liu Xin and Trish's live televised debate on May 30, 2019. (2) watch the materials, that is, watch the video materials of the debate carefully. (3) data sorting, namely the classification and integration of corpus. (4) extraction of data, that is, extraction of the required corpus from the debate between the two sides required by the current research. (5) further classification and integration, and draw the bar chart. Based on the speech act theory, this article explores the implicit meaning of the debate between Chinese and American hosts.

## **3. Results and Findings**

Based on Searle's classification of illocutionary acts[3], this paper conducts a corpus analysis of the five categories of them, namely, representative acts, directive acts, commissive acts, expressive acts and declaring acts. The results indicated that there are three categories of illocutionary acts in this debate: representitives, directives and expressives. Among them, the difference in the number of representatives is the largest, appearing 8 times in Liu Xin's debate and 0 times in Trish's debate. directives appeared twice in Liu Xin's debate and once in Trish's debate, and expressives appeared once in Liu Xin's debate and three times in Trish's debate (see Table 1).

### ***3.1 Representative Acts***

Representative acts refer to the speaker's description of the current situation, or the judgment of whether the situation is true or false. Typical representative acts include assertions, statements, and judgments. The basic condition is that the speaker guarantees that the stated proposition is true, and the sincerity condition is that the speaker believes that the stated proposition is true. The suitable direction is

that the speaker tries his/her best to make the words conform to the world [7].

### 3.1.1 On China-US Trade

Liu Xin said that the Chinese government has clearly stated China's position. As long as the United States treats the Chinese government and the Chinese negotiating team with a fair attitude, and shows good faith in the negotiations, without exerting external pressure, it is expected to achieve good results; otherwise, the two sides will be in a stalemate for a long time.

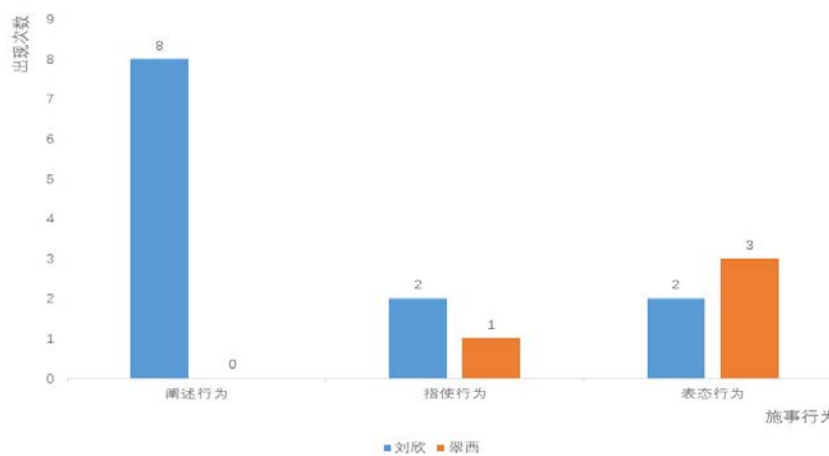


Fig.1 Comparison of Behaviors in Sino-US Trade Friction Debate by Liu Xin and Trish

Example 1. The Chinese government has made its position very clear, that unless the United States treat the Chinese government, treat the Chinese negotiating team with respect and show the willingness to talk without outside pressure, there is high possibility that there could be a productive trade deal.

The behavior described here clearly expresses China's position in the China-US trade dialogue, indicating that the Chinese government is willing to continue the trade dialogue on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, which meets the basic conditions of this speech act. The speaker believes that the content stated is in line with the true direction of the current China-US trade dialogue and meets the conditions of sincerity. This statement is fully in line with China's great power style of advocating peaceful settlement and equal dialogue in international affairs. Therefore, this paragraph is in line with the appropriate direction to match the words with the world.

### 3.1.2 On Intellectual Property

In the debate over intellectual property rights infringement, Trish accused China of stealing a large amount of intellectual property from the United States. Liu said there are some cases of intellectual property theft by individuals or companies, but it is common around the world, and lawsuits for intellectual property theft occur not only in China, but also in the United States. It cannot be asserted that the United States is stealing, China and the Chinese people are stealing on the basis of individual cases alone. Blanket accusations do not help solve the problem.

Example 2. And of course there are cases where individuals, where companies go and steal, and I think that's a common practice probably in every part of the world, and there are companies in the United States who sue each other all the time over infringement on IP rights. You can't say, simply because these cases are happening, that America is stealing, or China is stealing, or the Chinese people are stealing. And basically that's the reason why I wrote that rebuttal, because that kind of blanket statement is really not helpful, really not helpful.

In the elaboration here, Liu Xin objectively stated the fact that intellectual property rights infringement cases are widespread throughout the world, and American companies are no exception, which meets the basic conditions for exposing speech acts. The speaker believes that the content stated is an objective fact and meets the conditions of sincerity. It is unreasonable and unfair to accuse China and the Chinese people of infringement due to intellectual property rights infringement cases. It clearly states that China and the Chinese people will not accept unwarranted infringement allegations, which is consistent with China's attitude and position on intellectual property rights. Words conform to the appropriate direction of the world.

### ***3.1.3 On CHINA's Development***

Liu Xin said that it's huge in terms of the overall size of the Chinese economy, but China has 1.4 billion people, three times the population of the United States. Although China is the world's second-largest economy, per capita GDP is only one-sixth that of the United States. Compared with the developed countries in Europe, the gap is even larger.

Example 3. If you look at China's overall size, the overall size of the Chinese economy, yes, we are very big. But don't forget we have 1.4 billion people, that is over three times the population of the United States. So if you divide the second largest overall economy in the world, basically when it comes down to per capita GDP we are less than one sixth of that of the United States, and even less than some other more developed countries in Europe.

This is an objective and accurate description of China's development: opportunities and challenges coexist. Although China is the second largest economy in the world, its per capita income lags behind that of developed countries. Therefore, Liu Xin's description conforms to the current development situation and the basic national conditions of China, and meets the basic conditions for elaborating the speech act theory. The data presented in the statement strongly supports the argument, and the speaker believes that it is true and meets the conditions of

sincerity. Compared with developed countries, the quality of China's economic development is far behind. Liu Xin's elaboration conforms to the world's appropriate direction.

### **3.2 Directive Acts**

Directive behavior is when the speaker expects the listener to do as he or she wishes, such as suggesting, requesting, or ordering. The basic condition is that the speaker tries to make the listener take action, the sincere condition is that the speaker wants the listener to take action, the appropriate direction is that the speaker tries to make the world conform to the words, and the propositional condition is that the speaker takes action in the future[7].

#### **3.2.1 The Introduction of Liu Xin**

Before the debate began, Trish introduced Liu Xin to the American audience assuming that she was a member of the Communist Party of China. Liu Xin stated that she was not a member of the Communist Party of China and had a case to investigate. I hope Trish does not presume that he is a Communist. In addition, the opinions in this debate only represent personal positions, that is, Liu Xin, the host of CGTN, does not represent the Communist Party of China.

Example 4. I have to get it straight, I am not a member of the Communist Party of China (CPC), this is on the record. So please don't assume that I'm a member, and I don't speak for the Communist Party of China, here today I'm only speaking for myself, as Liu Xin, a journalist working for CGTN.

The basic condition in the speech act here is that Liu Xin tried to explain through explanations that she was not a member of the Communist Party of China. Among them, a number of negative words "not" embodies this sincere condition for making speech acts, that is, hope that Trish will not assume her as a member of the Communist Party of China. The propositional condition is that Liu Xin hopes that in the next debate, Trish will regard her as a guest of ordinary programming, and all opinions are individual opinion. Therefore, any behaviors and opinions of visiting the Fox Business Channel are voluntary and not subject to the instructions of the Communist Party of China.

#### **3.2.2 On the Trade Rules**

Liu Xin expressed that some trade rules need to be changed. Both parties can negotiate on these rules and act according to the same rules. If the other party does not recognize these rules, they can change the rules together. But the premise is that it must be a joint decision reached by multiple parties.

Example 5. Maybe these old rules need to be changed. You know what, let's talk about it, let's do it according to the rules, the same rules, but if you don't like the rules, we'll change the rules, but it has to be a multilateral process.

The basic condition for this directive act is that we hope that China and the United States will work together to negotiate and formulate more reasonable new trade rules. The sincerity conditions are expressed through the willing verb “let’s”, which means that the United States can abandon the existing unreasonable trade rules, reasonably reduce tariffs, and promote fair trade. At the same time, the willing verb “has to be” expresses the propositional conditions of the speech act here, that is, it can change the current trade rules and establish a new trade order on this basis, but the premise is that multilateral consultations must be carried out with all countries to coordinate with each other. common interests should be pursued based on the consensus reached by all countries so as to achieve mutual benefit and win-win situation.

### ***3.2.3 At the End of the Debate***

As the debate came to an end, Trish stated that she expected that China can be more open and embrace free trade so as to realize the growing prosperity of China and the United States.

Example 6. I think you need to probably keep being open. I think that that, as a free trade person myself, I think that that's the direction to pursue and ultimately that leads to greater economic prosperity for you and better economic prosperity for us, so then you get a win-win.

The basic condition for directive acts here is to hope that China can remain open and that China and the United States will be more prosperous and realize the win-win condition. By using the willing verb “need”, the quotation of Example 6 means that the sincere condition for the expression of speech acts is to hope that Liu Xin, as the host of CGTN can convey to the Chinese people the willingness of the United States that China can further open up in term of international trade. The propositional condition is that China will only be more prosperous in international trade under the rule of the US dollar system if it expands the scope of opening trade and enhances trade transparency in accordance with the will of the United States.

### ***3.3 Expressive Acts***

Expressive acts refer to the speaker's statement of his/her mental state and attitude, such as gratitude, criticism, satire and so on and so forth. The basic condition is that the speaker expresses the psychological state. The sincere condition is to reflect the speaker's attitude towards the listener. The suitable direction is to assume that the words are consistent with the world. And the propositional condition is to describe the state of affairs [7].

#### ***3.3.1 At the Beginning of the Show***

When introducing Liu Xin in the opening remarks, Trish said that for the sake of transparency, her views only represent herself, the host of Fox Business Channel, rather than that of others'. The guests on the show tonight are members of the

Communist Party of China, but it does not matter. She welcomes different views.

Example 7. She's the host of a primetime English language television programme overseen by the CCP, the Chinese Communist Party...In the interests of transparency, I should explain that I don't speak for anyone but myself as the host of a Fox Business show. My guest however is part of the CCP and that's fine. As I said, I welcome different perspectives on this show.

When Trish introduced Liu Xin at the beginning of the show, she assumed that Liu was a member of the Communist Party of China. The proposition condition here is that the American people are unwelcome to the Communist Party of China. However, in the previous sentence, Trish expressed exactly that her views represent only individuals and are completely transparent. The sincere condition conveyed here is that the opponent's argument is assigned by the institution to which she belongs, and her views are manipulated.

### ***3.3.2 When Liu Xin Showed Up in the Show***

Liu Xin thanked Trish for inviting her to be a guest on the show. It's an unprecedented opportunity to connect directly with Trish and the vast American audience that she has never thought she would have.

Example 8. Thank you Trish. thank you for having me. It's a great opportunity for me, unprecedented, I never dreamed that I would have this kind of opportunity to speak to you and to speak to many audiences in ordinary households in the United States.

The propositional condition of this expressive act is that the Chinese host has an unprecedented opportunity to convey the Chinese voice to the American people on mainstream US media. Therefore, Liu Xin cherishes this opportunity very much, which constitutes the basic condition for the speech act here. Trish's invitation provided Liu Xin with the opportunity to display China's image in the mainstream media reception room in the United States. Liu Xin expressed gratitude for this sincere condition.

### ***3.3.3 On Intellectual Property***

Trish said that it was fundamentally wrong to take away things that did not belong to oneself. But we have seen many such cases, such as report from independent international organizations like the WTO, the US Department of Justice and the Bureau of Investigation have published such cases. These evidences indicate that China has stolen a large amount of intellectual property, worth hundreds of billions of dollars, a huge amount.

Example 9. Fundamentally, I think we can all agree it's never right to take something that's not yours. And yet in going through so many of these cases, cases that the independent World Trade Organization, the WTO, that China is a member of, as well as the DOJ and FBI cases – you can actually see some of them on the screen right now – there's evidence there that China has stolen enormous amounts of



intellectual property. Hundreds of billions of dollars' worth. That's a lot of money.

The statement here is based on the proposition that Trish has assumed that it is a fact that Chinese companies has stolen intellectual property from US companies. Its basic condition is Trish's criticism and satire on China and Chinese enterprises. The term "stolen" is used to describe Chinese companies, and it conveys that Trish regarded listener Liu Xin as one of the reasons for the theft of intellectual property, and Trish accused all Chinese of infringing intellectual property rights because of cases of intellectual property infringement. This constitutes the sincere condition of Trish's speech act.

### **3.3.4 On Tariffs**

Liu Xin said that it is a very good idea for China and the United States to reduce tariffs uniformly. For American consumers, they can enjoy more affordable Chinese products. For Chinese consumers, the prices of American products will also be more affordable.

Example 10. Don't you think for American consumers, products from China would be even cheaper? And for consumers in China, products from America would be so much cheaper too?

The propositional condition of the expressive acts here is that there is room and possibility for trade tariff reduction between China and the United States. At the same time, the speech act here expresses the basic condition through rhetorical questions, that is, the speaker's expectations of China and the United States to reduce tariffs and product prices. Liu Xin's objective statement and accurate use of words indicate a frank attitude towards Trish, which is the sincere condition for the speech act here, showing the openness and tolerance of China's national media, and the willingness of China and the Chinese people to work with other countries all over the world and the willingness to confront international problems and actively work out solutions.

## **4. Discussion**

This study examines Liu Xin, the host of CGTN, and Trish, the host of Fox Business Channel in the United States. It is not difficult to find that in the debate on the trade friction between Chinese and American hosts, Trish has been in a strong position and dominated the debate. Trish's illocutionary acts have been baked by the superpower of the United States and the hegemony of Western capitalist countries led by the United States. It can be seen that the relationship between China and the United States is not so much a trade friction caused by a trade deficit as a game of rights dominated by the United States.

The root cause of trade friction between China and the United States is the superpower's containment of emerging countries, which is essentially a strategic move by the United States to maintain hegemonism. The United States must not only compete for the dominance of the world economy, but also control the power to

formulate rules for economic globalization [10]77. In order to safeguard the original international system, safeguard its own interests, and consolidate its hegemonic status, the defending powers will contain and suppress the rise of emerging powers. Therefore, the United States, as a conservative superpower in the face of the rise of emerging economies like China, preemptively curbed China's development. On the economic front, it has provoked China-US trade disputes and created obstacles for China's international trade development. In terms of science and technology, China's high-tech has been advancing along the way, challenging cutting-edge technology that the US has been proud of and monopolized. Almost all of the US independent tariff projects are targeted at the "Made in China 2025" industry. In terms of geopolitics, the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" is used to suppress "the Belt and Road initiative" and promote China's "debt trap" to curb China's development.

In the face of profound changes in international relations, the Chinese government has proposed the concept of building a community with shared future for mankind. This concept advocates abandoning the Cold War mentality and zero-sum game, emphasizing the coordinated development of all countries and making common progress, which is in line with the trend of the times for peace, development, cooperation and win-win. The "Belt and Road initiative", the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, the BRICS leaders' meeting and other international activities will all perform the concept of a community of human with shared destiny.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the theory of speech act, this article analyzes the live debate between Liu Xin, the host of CGTN, and Trish, the host of Fox Business Channel, from the perspective of illocutionary acts. By extracting the corpus of the debate between the two sides, the author analyzes the use of the illocutionary acts and the effect generated accordingly, based on which interprets the game of the great powers behind the speech acts.

This explosive research analyzes the use of illocutionary acts in China-US host trade friction debates and inevitably with some limitations. First, the author only analyzed the debates on the trade friction between the media professionals in China and the United States, people from other fields have not been involved. Second, limited by the author's knowledge, the interpretation of the results may not be comprehensive and in-depth. For future research, debates from people on trade friction in different fields can be selected for comprehensive evaluation and comparative analysis.

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