

The Use of Representative Speech Acts in Political Vaccine Defence: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

The present study presents a pragmatic analysis of representative speech acts employed by three British officials, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, MHRA Chief Executive Dr. June Raine, and Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty, during a press conference on March 22, 2021, in defense of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. It is based on the Speech Act Theory, drawing on the theoretical framework of Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1976), and the classifications provided by Yule (1996), with a particular focus on the representative category of speech acts. One hundred statements of the officials were chosen of which 57 utterances, representing Representative Speech Acts, were analyzed to investigate how language is used to assert facts, present evidence, and build public trust in the vaccine's safety and effectiveness during a time of public concern over potential side effects. Results reveal that various linguistic elements highlighting representative speech acts are employed effectively in the officials' discourse, underscoring their central role in conveying information and legitimizing scientific claims. They also demonstrate how the strategic use of representative speech acts and their linguistic elements would play a significant role in reassuring a skeptical audience, offering insights into the power of pragmatic language choices in public health communication.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Oxford AstraZeneca, Pragmatics, Representative acts, Speech Act Theory

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only created unprecedented challenges for public health systems, but also highlighted the critical role of communication in influencing public behavior. Vaccine hesitancy has become a major concern, particularly regarding the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, which has faced public skepticism due to reported side effects. In March 2021, amid European suspensions of the vaccine over rare blood-clot concerns, British officials sought to defend its safety and effectiveness through carefully crafted public statements.

Vaccine refusal not only endangers those who reject vaccination, but also puts medically vulnerable individuals at a greater risk (Flanigan, 2014). The World Health Organization (2021) endorses the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine as a safe, effective, and affordable option, costing roughly one-tenth the price of other vaccines. However, concerns over rare blood clots might lead some European countries, including Germany, to temporarily limit its use in March 2021. At that time, only Pfizer–BioNTech and Oxford–AstraZeneca has been approved as vaccines in the UK.

Grounded in pragmatics and the Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), the present study examines how representative speech acts in statements not only use to assert or describe facts, as well as the linguistic elements embodied in them, but also are strategically employed to reassure the public and affirm trust in the vaccine. By analyzing selected statements issued by key British officials, it also sheds light on the pragmatic role of factual assertion in countering public doubt during health crises.

The present study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. How did British officials employ representative speech acts to defend the Oxford–AstraZeneca vaccine during the COVID-19 crisis?
2. What are the most frequently used linguistic elements of the representative speech acts in the selected

statements?

3. What pragmatic functions do these acts serve in affirming the vaccine's safety and effectiveness?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Within the field of pragmatics, the Speech Act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1976) provides a framework for understanding how utterances function as actions rather than mere words and how meaning is shaped by speakers' intentions and listeners' interpretations. It also discusses the categorization of speech acts (Yule, 1996) and explores the ways in which scholars have applied and contextualized these concepts across a range of disciplinary and situational settings. Representative speech acts are central to the present study because of their role in conveying truth claims, affirmations, and assurances. There are also previous studies that have applied the Speech Act theory in various domains, highlighting the gap in research on speech acts in vaccine-related discourse.

2.2 Pragmatics

Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, is concerned with how speakers use language in various contexts to convey intended meanings beyond the literal interpretation of words. It examines how utterances perform communicative functions within social interactions, taking into consideration such factors as context, shared knowledge, and speakers' intentions. Central to pragmatics is the view that language is a form of action rather than merely a vehicle for transmitting information. This perspective paves the way for the development of the Speech Act theory, which investigates how speakers perform acts such as asserting, promising, or requesting through language. Within this framework, Representative Speech Acts are particularly significant, as they are issued by speakers to express beliefs, describe realities, and convey information which they hold to be true. Understanding pragmatics, therefore, provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing how officials employ representative acts to assert credibility, convey assurance, and influence public perception through their discourse.

2.3 Speech Act Theory

The concept of a speech act, first introduced by Austin (1962), refers to the idea that speaking is not merely a way of conveying information, but can also function as an action that brings about change in a given context. Accordingly, Searle (1969) argues that an utterance constitutes a speech act when it performs an action, rather than serving solely as a means of communication. The essence of the Speech Act theory lies in the interplay between speakers' intentions and the contextual circumstances in which the utterance occurs. Over the years, this theory has been further refined by scholars such as Searle (1969), and Yule (1996), who have explored its broader applications in pragmatics and the study of language use.

Within the framework of the Speech Act Theory, Searle (1969) identifies several types of illocutionary acts, among which Representative Speech Acts are particularly significant. These acts are used by speakers to convey information, assert facts, or describe states of affairs, with the intention of committing the speaker to the truth of the proposition. In other words, Representative acts are statements that reflect the speaker's belief about reality and aim to inform or convince the listener. This type of speech acts is especially relevant in such contexts as public health communication, where officials must present reliable information and reassure the public, as in the defense of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

2.4 Types of Speech Acts

The term 'Speech Act', which typically refers to the 'Illocutionary Act or Illocutionary Force' (Levinson, 1983), is primarily attributed to the works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Austin first introduces the notion of illocutionary acts, laying the groundwork for later developments in the Speech Act theory. Searle (1969) builds upon Austin's ideas, defining illocutionary acts as the fundamental units of communication that express a speaker's intentions through language. Speech acts generally fall into five categories; namely, declarative, expressive, representative, directive, and commissive. The present study aims to examine 'Representative Speech Acts', foregrounding their linguistic elements and their vital role in shaping effective public communication.

2.5 Representative Speech Acts

Representative speech acts, sometimes referred to as assertives, constitute one of the fundamental categories of the Speech Act theory as introduced by Austin (1962) and later refined by Searle (1969). These acts commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition and reflect their beliefs about the world. According to Yule (1996), representatives, which include utterances such as describing, asserting, concluding, citing, and reporting,

convey information that the speaker considers factual. In political communication, representatives are particularly significant as they allow officials to construct authority, project reliability, and guide public interpretation of unfolding events. When investigating a health crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, officials rely heavily on representative acts to defend policies and reassure citizens through statements grounded in evidence and expertise. In this regard, the present study focuses on how British officials employ representative speech acts to affirm the safety and effectiveness of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, aiming to shape public confidence and reduce vaccine hesitancy during a period of uncertainty.

2.6 Previous Studies

A number of studies has explored speech acts across a variety of contexts, enriching our understanding of how language functions in communication. By examining different approaches and applications, researchers gain insights into both the theoretical and practical dimensions of the Speech Act theory. These investigations not only highlight the strengths and limitations of various methodologies, but also demonstrate the relevance of speech acts in fields such as linguistics, communication, psychology, and artificial intelligence. The study provides a foundation for applying speech act principles to enhance communication strategies, language instruction, and even computational language models.

Sofian (2021) investigates the dominant speech acts in Biden's victory speech, focusing on how he uses language to affirm his victory, inspire hope, and engage his audience. The study finds that assertive speech acts are the most prevalent, accounting for 56% of all illocutionary acts, reflecting the speech's purpose of providing information, praise, and encouragement. Expressive acts are used for 19%, conveying gratitude and uplifting supporters. The remaining categories which are Directives, Declaratives, and Commissive are also present, comprising 12%, 7%, and 6% respectively, indicating that all five types of speech acts contribute to effectively delivering the speaker's intended message. The study emphasizes that the frequent occurrence of these acts helps reinforce the communicative and psychological impact of the selected speeches.

Mufiah and Rahman (2019) analyze the illocutionary speech acts in Trump's Inaugural Address, using Yule's (1996) framework, focusing on 63 utterances. The study indicates that Representative speech acts are the most frequent, comprising 46% of the corpus, as Trump asserts facts and outlines his intended actions to influence and guide his audience. Directive acts are the second most common, reflecting the exercise of presidential authority, while Expressive acts are the least frequent. All five types of speech acts are identified, highlighting how the strategic use of language in a political speech serves to assert power, persuade listeners, and communicate intentions effectively.

El Faouziah and Rahayu (2021) analyze Johnson's public address on March 23, 2020, which urge citizens to follow social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, they identify all five types of speech acts, with Representative acts being the most frequent, 79 out of 222 utterances. This dominant occurrence reflects Johnson's efforts to convey truth, assert the seriousness of the situation, and encourage public compliance through factual and persuasive language. The study highlights how Representative speech acts can function as an effective tool for building trust and guiding public behavior during health crises.

Ashfira and Harjanto (2020) analyze assertive speech acts in three of Trump's presidential speeches using Bach and Harnish's (1979) Speech Act Schema (SAS). Their study identifies 152 assertive acts, showing how Trump employs language to mobilize public opinion and justify his political stance. The statement acts emerge as the most frequent, underscoring his intention to persuade the audience of his decisions' legitimacy. The researchers also compare Trump's assertive acts with those of previous U.S. presidents, revealing that contextual factors shape each leader's communicative approach. In addition, the study traces the development of the Speech Act theory from Austin's (1962) foundational work through Searle's (1979) refinement to Bach and Harnish's (1979) attitudinal classification, offering valuable insights into the evolution and application of assertive speech acts in political discourse.

McLaughlin et al. (2021) conduct a corpus linguistic analysis of the speeches delivered by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, which aims at persuading the public to follow government guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focuses on how the Prime Minister uses language to encourage cooperation, counter resistance, and clarify confusion surrounding the restrictions. It also investigates the effectiveness of public health messaging in official communication. Therefore, the researchers employ a particular software programme to analyze transcribed speeches and identify recurring lexical and thematic patterns. By collecting several speeches within a specific time frame, they trace the most prominent linguistic features and themes. Findings show a frequent use of inclusive pronouns such as *we* and *our*, reflecting an appeal to unity and shared responsibility in confronting the crisis. The repeated use of *I* emphasizes the Prime Minister's leadership role and personal engagement with

the public. Moreover, the frequent occurrence of the modal will highlight determination and future commitment, while the use of war metaphors functions to inspire public cooperation and resilience. As a result, these linguistic features demonstrate the commissive, directive, and expressive nature of the Prime Minister's speeches, linking them to a pragmatic analysis of official discourse related to a significant public issue.

3. Methodology

The present study uses a mixed-method approach to examine the representative speech acts issued by three British officials in defending the AstraZeneca vaccine. This approach helps identify how these officials use language to present facts, express beliefs, and reassure the public. The linguistic analysis also takes into account the context in which each speech act occurs, including the setting, the speakers, and the social expectations surrounding the event. For example, when an official encourages people to get vaccinated, the same statement may function as reassurance depending on the situation. The data in this study are taken from formal press conferences where the three British officials have publicly defended the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine.

The present study adopts Yule's (1996) framework of speech acts to help with the analysis of the British officials' statements. According to Yule, speech acts can be categorized into five main types, each serving a distinct communicative function. Focusing on representative speech acts, which are used to convey information, assert facts, or express beliefs that the speaker considers true, they are particularly relevant in public health communication, as they allow officials to present evidence, clarify misconceptions, and reinforce the safety and effectiveness of a vaccine. The framework also emphasizes the role of context, including the participants, setting, and social norms, in shaping the meaning and impact of each utterance. Following this theoretical framework, the present study aims to identify, categorize, and interpret representative speech acts to examine how language is strategically used to persuade and reassure the public.

The data under study are collected from an official press conference and the speeches were delivered by three British officials; namely, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty, and Chief Executive June Raine. The speeches were chosen on the basis that they explicitly address the public in relation to the AstraZeneca vaccine and that they include statements that aim to explain, defend, and reassure. Each speech is transcribed manually and carefully to ensure accuracy before analysis. The selected utterances are then examined to identify the frequency and occurrence of the representative speech acts used by the officials when discussing the vaccine's safety, effectiveness, and importance.

The linguistic analysis in the present study focuses on identifying and interpreting the functions of the representative speech acts used by the three British officials in their speeches defending the AstraZeneca vaccine. Each transcribed speech is carefully examined using Yule's (1996) classification of speech acts, which provides a framework for distinguishing between different illocutionary types. The researchers first identify utterances that function as representative acts, those expressing facts, beliefs, or assertions about the vaccine. These utterances are then analyzed to determine their linguistic elements, their impact, and how they contribute to assuring and persuading the public. The frequency of representative speech acts is also recorded to highlight their prominence in the British officials' discourse.

The data analyzed consist of 100 statements issued by three British officials in defense of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. Each statement is examined and categorized according to the types of speech acts identified in the Speech Act Theory. The analysis reveals that 57 utterances indicate Representative Speech Acts, making them the most frequently used type. The linguistic elements of these 57 utterances are identified and examples are provided to showcase how the officials use the language strategically to make assertions. In comparison, 14 utterances are classified as Directives, 12 as Commissives, 11 as Expressives, and 6 as Declaratives. Since the focus of the present study is on Representative Speech Acts, the other speech acts are not analyzed. Table 1 displays the frequencies and percentages of all speech acts performed by the three British officials.

Table 1
Speech Acts' Categories and Frequencies

Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage %
Representatives	57	57%
Declaratives	14	14%
Directives	12	12%
Commissives	11	11%
Expressives	6	6%
Total	100	100%

4. Analysis and Discussion

The present study aims to examine the linguistic elements within each statement, such as assertions and statements of fact, evidence, and findings, to uncover how British officials convey information and assert their positions. The analysis highlights the frequency and function of these Representative Speech Acts, showing how these utterances are strategically used to inform, persuade, and reassure the public. By identifying the linguistic features that characterize these speech acts, it provides insights into the role of language in shaping public perception and promoting trust in official health communication.

Table 2 displays a breakdown of the analyzed Representative Speech Acts.

Table 2
Breakdown of the Representative Speech Acts

(57 Utterances)					
	Linguistic Elements	Keywords	Number of Utterances (Locutions)	Intended meaning (Illocutions)	Effect on public (Perlocutions)
1	Assertions and Statements of Fact (Facts)	safe, effective, reviewed, conclusion, thoroughness, retested, report, publish	26	Expressing beliefs and conclusions, providing information and data	assuring, encouraging, relieving, confirming, influencing, urging, and convincing
2	Presenting Data and Statistics (Evidence)	evidence, provide, protection, 60%, 90%, reduce, risk, 80%, 85%	2	Using statistical data, reports, and scientific reviews to support assertions	
3	Describing Current Conditions and Observations (Explanations)	have, supply, need, because of, quantities, naturally	7	Providing reasons and context	
4	Professional Judgments and Expert Opinions (Using Citations)	testimony, really, confirmed, robust, vigilance, WHO	6	Citing reputable organizations and experts	
5	Evaluations and Risk Assessments (Findings)	review, assessment, determined,	4	Providing factual assertion	
6	Reporting Achievements and Progress (Comparing situations)	more, enable, targets, smaller,	4	Highlighting benefits or risks in comparison to other options	
7	Predictive Statements (Expectations)	remain, inevitable, will, within, still, offer, happens	8	Making future predictions based on current information	

Representative speech acts, which are utterances in which the speaker expresses what they consider to be true, include statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions, reflecting the speaker's perspectives on reality. In the present study, they occur 57 times, accounting for 57% of all speech acts. Their prevalence indicates that the British officials primarily aim to convey information, present evidence, and assert beliefs about the AstraZeneca vaccine. This emphasis aligns with the goals of public health communication, where providing factual, evidence-based statements is essential to reassure the public about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness. These speech acts demonstrate the speakers' role in legitimizing the vaccine through data, expert opinion, and logical reasoning.

In the analysis of the 57 Representative speech acts identified in this study, seven main linguistic elements are found and examined. These elements include:

- Assertions and Statements of Fact (Facts)
- Presenting Data and Statistics (Evidence)
- Describing Current Conditions and Observations (Explanations)
- Professional Judgments and Expert Opinions (Expert Opinions – Using Citations)
- Evaluations and Risk Assessments (Findings)
- Reporting Achievements and Progress (Reports – Comparing Situations)
- Predictive Statements (Expectations).

For each element, specific examples are provided to illustrate how the officials employ language to convey information, express beliefs, provide evidence, and guide public understanding regarding the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. These examples serve to demonstrate the practical application of Representative speech acts in public health communication and the strategies used to inform, persuade, and reassure the audience. There are numerous linguistic elements representing representative speech acts, as follows:

1. Assertions and Statements of Fact
The officials convey factual information and express what they believe to be true. Here are some examples.
 - ✓ “The vaccine is safe and effective.” – Asserts the vaccine's safety and efficacy.
 - ✓ “The Independent Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has reviewed the evidence as it does every week.” – Reports routine review processes and conclusions.
 - ✓ “The European Medicine Agency has come to a clear scientific conclusion, and I quote ‘This is a safe and effective vaccine.’” – Presents scientific conclusions to assert vaccine safety.
 - ✓ “The public can have every confidence in the thoroughness of our review.” – Expresses confidence in regulatory evaluation.
 - ✓ “So, the Oxford jab is safe. The thing that isn't safe is catching COVID-19 which is why it is so important that we all get our jabs as soon as our turn comes.” – Compares risks, asserting vaccine safety.
 - ✓ “The road to freedom continues unchecked.” – Metaphorical assertion reflecting confidence in progress.
 - ✓ “The center where I'm getting jabbed is currently using the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine.” – Provides factual and personal information.
 - ✓ “It is true that in the short term we're receiving fewer vaccines than we had planned for a week ago.” – Reports the current situation.
 - ✓ “A batch that we currently have in the UK that needs to be retested. These vaccines are a multinational effort produced through international cooperation.” – States facts about supply and collaboration.
 - ✓ “A further review of these events is ongoing, but a causal relationship with the vaccine has not yet been established. And the rate of occurrence of these CSVT events is extremely rare.” – Provides factual information about adverse events.
 - ✓ “This is, believe me, by no means the end of the story of the UK's relationship with the Serum Institute of India. Our progress along the road to freedom continues unchecked.” – Asserts ongoing collaboration and future progress.
 - ✓ “So, this is a very significant disease that is very common with a very effective vaccine; two vaccines in the case of AZ and Pfizer. There's a very strong professional consensus on that. They understand this is a dangerous disease, an effective vaccine and one that's got very low side effects compared to the risk of catching the disease.” – Medical facts, reinforcement of professional consensus, and comparative

- assertion.
- ✓ “The higher the proportions of the population are vaccinated the smaller the risk to everybody. If everybody is protected, that also protects everyone else in society. This is something that absolutely is in their interest as well as everyone around those interests for them to take.” – Explains herd immunity, communal benefits, and personal advantages.
 - ✓ “This is still a common disease and it is a very dangerous disease for many people. That’s one of the risks of COVID. The biggest risk is in those who are older or have health conditions.” – States medical facts and highlights vulnerable groups.
 - ✓ “So, all drugs have some side effects that are rare.” – General statement about drug safety.
2. Presenting Data and Statistics (Evidence)
- ✓ “We also saw yesterday from Public Health England that a single dose of either vaccine provides 60% protection against getting COVID-19 and reduces the chances of hospitalization by 80% and the risk of death by 85%.” – Cites trusted data sources.
 - ✓ “Over 90 percent in the age groups that have gone through their vaccination have chosen to take this up.” – Provides statistical evidence of uptake.
3. Describing Current Conditions and Observations (Explanations)
- ✓ “The thing that isn’t safe is catching COVID.” – Describes the danger of infection.
 - ✓ “We have the supply that we need.” – Confirms adequacy of vaccine supply.
 - ✓ “It is clear that the British public also have taken that message.” – Notes observed public behavior.
 - ✓ “The general public is as always sensible and steady on this.” – Comments on public behavior.
 - ✓ “That is because of a delay in a shipment from the Serum Institute who are doing a herculean job in producing vaccines in such large quantities.” – Explains supply issue.
 - ✓ “This type of blood clot can rarely occur naturally in unvaccinated people as well as in people with COVID-19 disease.” – Provides context about risks.
 - ✓ “And what we have here is an incredibly small potential risk and even this is a potential risk not one that is certain.” – Clarifies low risk associated with the vaccine.
4. Professional Judgments and Expert Opinions (Using Citations)
- ✓ “The best testimony I can offer about the safety of the Pfizer and the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccines is what you’ve heard from Dr. Raine and Professor Whitty.” – Cites experts to support claims.
 - ✓ “I think they are medical professionals whose view is that these are safe and effective vaccines, confirmed by the European Medicines Agency.” – Relays expert opinion.
 - ✓ “The MHRA has been carrying out robust safety vigilance in tandem with the COVID-19 vaccination programme.” – Describes regulatory monitoring.
 - ✓ “So, this is a universal view. It’s also the view of the World Health Organization, WHO.” – Supports claims with authoritative source.
 - ✓ “The overwhelming professional view of doctors around the world is these vaccines are highly effective against infection and very safe relative to the risk of infection.” – Presents global professional consensus.
 - ✓ “I suspect a lot of them will think about it; see the reassuring data from the MHRA, WHO, and the European Medicines Agency, and realize this is something they want to do.” – Predicts public response based on evidence.
5. Evaluations and Risk Assessments (Findings)
- ✓ “Our review shows no difference that blood clots are occurring more than would be expected in the absence of vaccination for either vaccine.” – Reports review findings.

- ✓ “The risk-benefit is really strongly in favor of getting vaccinated.” – Evaluates vaccination benefits versus risks.
 - ✓ “The MHRA assessed this data alongside the benefits of the vaccine in preventing COVID-19 and determined that benefits firmly outweigh the risks.” – Summarizes regulatory conclusion.
 - ✓ “The question is: ‘Are the benefits big enough to justify that?’” – Poses critical evaluation.
6. Reporting Achievements and Progress (Comparing Situations)
- ✓ “That is still more than we received in February.” – Reports comparative progress.
 - ✓ “The supply we do have will still enable us to hit the targets we have set.” – Expresses confidence in meeting goals.
 - ✓ “There are real issues with all drugs, but they are so much smaller than the benefits of getting the vaccine.” – Compares risks and benefits.
 - ✓ “Look at the potential risks of treatment; all drugs have some rare effects. Yet the benefits outweigh them.” – Uses comparison to illustrate relative safety.
7. Predictive Statements (Expectations)
- ✓ “We remain on track to reclaim the things we love, to see our families and friends again, and return to local activities.” – Expresses optimism for the future.
 - ✓ “Some interruptions in supply are inevitable.” – Predicts challenges.
 - ✓ “We will receive slightly fewer vaccines in April than in March.” – Predicts supply.
 - ✓ “By mid-April, we’ll offer a first dose to all over-50s and vulnerable under-50s.” – Outlines vaccination schedule.
 - ✓ “We will have the second doses that people need within the 12-week window.” – Ensures follow-up vaccination.
 - ✓ “We will still offer a first dose to every adult by the end of July.” – Sets future targets.
 - ✓ “All of course happens as long as the data continue to go in the right direction.” – Conditional statement based on progress.

In answer to the second research question of the study, the quantitative analysis reveals that various linguistic elements are used by the three officials with the linguistic element of presenting facts as the dominant element of all seven elements. Figure 1 displays the frequency of the various linguistic elements which are employed by the three officials as a means of adopting the Representative speech act in their statements.

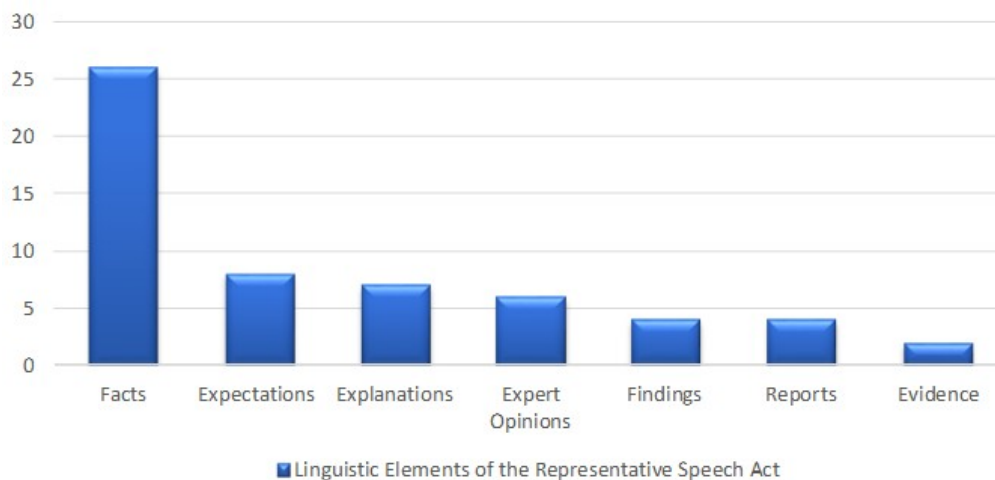


Figure 1

Linguistic Elements Representing Representative Speech Acts

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of the seven linguistic elements within the Representative speech acts used by the three British officials. As shown, facts dominate the discourse, occurring 26 times, which highlights the officials' primary aim of presenting accurate and verifiable information to strengthen the credibility of their statements. This frequent use of factual language reflects their attempt to reassure the public about the safety and effectiveness of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. The use of expectations and explanations, each appearing eight and seven times respectively, further supports this goal by emphasizing future outcomes and clarifying complex issues in an accessible manner. Expert opinions, with six occurrences, add authority to the officials' claims, while findings and reports (four occurrences each) demonstrate reliance on data-driven communication. Finally, evidence, though used less frequently (twice), reinforces the officials' arguments with accurate evidences. Accordingly, the prevalence of factual and explanatory language underscores a deliberate communicative strategy aiming at promoting trust, transparency, and confidence about the vaccine by means of clear and credible information.

These linguistic elements demonstrate how the officials assert facts, provide data, explain situations, cite expert opinions, evaluate risks, report progress, and make predictions. In other words, they use Representative speech acts to present information, justify the vaccine, and reassure the public based on evidence and expertise.

5. Conclusion

The present study highlights the crucial role of Representative speech acts in the public statements of the selected British officials defending the AstraZeneca vaccine. Findings indicate that these officials use a variety of linguistic elements embodied in Representative speech acts to convey factual information, assert beliefs, and provide evidence about the vaccine's safety and efficacy. The variety of these linguistic elements within the representative speech acts underscores their strategic use of language to inform, persuade, and reassure the public during a moment of uncertainty. By focusing on what they believe to be true, the officials effectively establish credibility and authority, reflecting the importance of evidence-based communication in public health contexts. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Representative speech acts and their linguistic elements are central to conveying scientific reasoning and fostering trust, making them an essential tool in managing public perception and promoting adherence to health measures.

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