

# Addressing Multilateralism Reboot among Nations: Analysis of Speech Acts in Anwar Ibrahim's UNGA Speech

Fatin Fatinah Shamsul Bahrn, Sharifah Syakila Syed Shaharuddin, Muhammad Nasiruddin Aziz

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

This study qualitatively investigated how the prime minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim promoted dispute resolutions among nations in his speech during the recent UNGA (78th session). This study also aimed to understand how Anwar Ibrahim's cultural background influences the way in which the speech was delivered. The study employed an in-depth content analysis to investigate the sociocultural speech style and the foundational illocutionary forces of Speech Act Theory in a cross-cultural context. This was done through the following research questions: (i) How does Anwar Ibrahim address the issue of international conflicts in his speech? And (ii) how does culture influence answer Ibrahim's style of speech? The analysis revealed that Anwar Ibrahim's utterances were mostly indirect yet influential by effectively utilising context-specific language to persuade the audience towards achieving a lasting solution. This is influenced by the high-context culture that the speaker belongs to. Considering the role of leaders in establishing, maintaining and restoring cross-national understanding and commitment, future research is hence recommended to examine other world leaders' speech in an effort to promote better understanding of the shared aspirations for greater peace, especially in the current time when international conflicts are ever-growing.

**Keywords:** speech acts; content analysis; intercultural communication; illocutionary acts; Anwar Ibrahim; UN.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2022, the world witnessed the forced displacement of over 108 million people and a staggering 50 per cent increase in civilian deaths around the globe, due to the ongoing global conflicts, wars, and human right violations (The United Nations, 2023a).

These figures, among others, signal how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or more specifically Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, are gradually becoming a house of cards, our tumbling aspirations for greater world peace. Following these alarming revelations, the United Nations (UN) had since then been devising its next course of action in response to the scenario. In October last year, the UN finally addressed these growing concerns by making its long-awaited appeal for a multilateralism reform through four (4) main areas. Multilateralism according to the United Nations (n.d.) refers to a form of cooperation built upon the principles of consultation, inclusion, and solidarity.

One of the areas of the said multilateralism is the renewal of the social contract involving individuals, private sectors, states and institutions, and civil society (The United Nations, 2023b). Through its Common Agenda, the United Nations (n.d.) has therefore put forth the need for "an inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism" by expediting the 17 Goals of the SDGs which will culminate in the Summit of the Future in 2024. The 12 commitments outlined among others include ensuring no one is left behind, fostering peace and conflict prevention, adhering to international law, ensuring justice, and building trust, among others. These efforts aim to establish a future peace pact.

This very message has also been echoed by many world leaders on various occasions including the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim who during the 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) delivered a bold and courageous speech to show his stance in front of other leaders. This surprised not only Malaysians

but also other world leaders, as Malay people are often seen as indirect communicators who prioritize preserving harmony. Hence, this presents an interesting research avenue for the present study to delve into.

Not only that, though it has been the subject of much scholarly work in the areas of international relations and governance, but the concept of multilateralism has also remained understudied from the angle of linguistics, particularly how speech acts is utilised. Speech acts from the perspective of Yule (1996) is the theory that exemplifies how language holds the power of performing actions via utterances. This is done through communicative intentions (also known as illocutionary force) which the speaker communicates and later is recognised by the listener. In the context of his UNGA speech, Anwar Ibrahim's commendable speech was not merely strings of meaningless words but a spirited, compelling appeal which urged leaders as well as civilians to collectively resolve the global conflicts. On this basis, the present study has thus attempted to investigate his speech to assess the impact of the Prime Minister's maiden speech at such an occasion, how it rendered support to the UN's similar aspirations, and most importantly how his cultural background has shaped his persuasive speech.

To do this, the study has therefore qualitatively examined the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia's speech at the 78th UNGA, via document analysis made possible by the following research questions:

1. How does Anwar Ibrahim address the issue of international conflicts in his speech?
2. How does culture influence Anwar Ibrahim's style of speech?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Malay culture

In Malaysia, the Malays constitute the largest population in Malaysia. According to World Atlas (n.d.), the Malays, excluding people of other Bumiputera ethnicity, make up 50 per cent of the total population. Due to this, the Malays' dominance can also be seen in the political landscape of Malaysia. A Malay according to the Federal Constitution of Malaysia refers to an individual whose religion is Islam, able to speak the Malay language, as well as practises the Malay cultures (Ramdani, 2022).

Generally, the Malays are characterised as an instance of high-context culture of which is indicated by Hall and Hall (1990) to communicate with very little reliance on explicit code: most parts are often communicated through unsaid, implicit message. The subtleties according to Salleh (2005), are important as they provide what is called 'wholeness' of the context. Many have further elaborated this aspect of the Malays' style of communication.

Zawawi (2008) for one, clarifies that one key cultural value of the Malays is indirectness and politeness and this is reflected in their communication. This refers to Malays' tendency to only communicate parts of their message and leaving the rest for the listeners to assume on their own, usually through the manifestation of nonverbal communication (Salleh, 2005). This could be explained by the non-confrontational behaviour of the Malays who tend to avoid conflict in both professional and social settings by maintaining their subtleness (Zawawi, 2008; Awang et al., 2013; Ali, 1995). When being indirect, the Malays would usually resort to the use of poems and metaphors (Rashid & Ibrahim, 2008) and humours (Awang et al., 2013). Politeness in Malays' communication extends to negotiation as they often prioritise preserving harmony and safeguarding one's feeling rather than achieving their goals.

However, about two decades ago, the Malay culture was claimed by Salleh (2005) to gradually become more low context. This includes both professional and social settings in which messages are clearly and explicitly transmitted, indicating a shift in the concern from building relationships to achieving goals. This according to Salleh (2005) is attributed to global mobilisation.

### Multilateralism and Speech Acts

Multilateralism serves as a feasible and efficient solution for various cooperation problems, with powerful states choosing institutions that serve their interests and are stable in changing power distributions (Martin, 1992). In

order to address global issues, multilateralism is important as domestic goals can also be reached (Caporaso, 1992). Through Anwar Ibrahim's speech, it is apparent that his speech addressed not only global problems but also concerns on ensuring global peace and security with effective multilateral efforts. Speech acts are a theory of language that explains expressions, and meaning (Searle, 1969).

Searle (1969) proposed that speech act theory explores the meaning of language by analyzing the connection between what is said and the actions that follow. This concept is based on the idea that speech is the main form of communication, with meaning expressed through conversational elements like assertions, questions, instructions, and requests. Yule (1996) supported this view, suggesting that speech acts are actions carried out through utterance. Similarly, Mey (1994 as cited in Zumaroh, 2012), indicated that speech acts are activities relevant to current conditions. Additionally, speech acts are described as psychological speech, with their effectiveness determined by the speaker's linguistic abilities in specific contexts. It is important to help structure illocutionary acts in a speech. The five categories of a speech act are: assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives according to Searle (1969).

Below are basic types of speech acts as outlined by Searle:

- 1) Assertives. E.g.: statements, descriptions, classifications, and explanations. Illocutionary Point: "To commit the hearer to the truth of the proposition. It is to present the proposition as representing a state of affairs" (Searle 1999: 148).
- 2) Directives. E.g.: orders, commands, and requests. Illocutionary Point: "To try to get the hearer to behave in such a way as to make his behaviour match the propositional content of the directive" (Searle 1999: 148-149).
- 3) Commissives. E.g.: promises, vows, pledges, contracts, and guarantees. Illocutionary Point. For the speaker to commit "to undertake the course of action represented in the propositional content" (Searle 1999: 149).
- 4) Expressives. Some examples are apologies, thanks, congratulations, welcomes, and condolences. Illocutionary Point: "To express the sincerity condition of the speech act" (Searle 1999: 149).
- 5) Declaratives. E.g.: "I pronounce you man and wife," "War is hereby declared," "You are fired," and "I resign."

Illocutionary Point: "To bring about change in the world by representing it as having been changed" (Searle 1999: 150).

Searle's principles were applied by Alhudhaif (2005) applied with the aim of identifying the micro speech acts that form the basis of persuasive speech acts in American and Arabic editorials, and examining how these acts enhance persuasiveness. The study demonstrated that speech acts contributed to the overall persuasiveness of the editorials, and it could be classified into representatives, directives, and expressives. However, the findings showed that commissives and declaratives did not play a role in persuasion. Other than that, Alkirbash (2016) has done research where he analysed a speech by the previous prime minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. In the selected speeches of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, it was found that Assertive and Directives speech acts were mostly used. He employed persuasive devices and there were no other speech acts (Expressive, Commissive and Declarative) used to persuade his audience. However, Alkirbash (2016) did not consider the multicultural aspects of his speeches.

Additionally, cultural values significantly influence the execution of speech acts. Ignoring them can lead to misunderstandings and less effective negotiation of meaning and identity. Thus, speech acts are used to better explain the thoughts of the speaker in relation to multilateralism in this case to focus more on the content and ideas of Anwar Ibrahim's speech.

### **Political speeches**

Discourse-analytical studies of professional politicians and political institutions are prevalent in the field of

political discourse analysis (Chilton, 2004, p. 14). Politicians, as the performers or writers of political discourse, are what distinguish them. In this context, politicians refer to the class of individuals who are elected or appointed to key positions in politics and who receive compensation for their (political) activity. Therefore, we should also include the public, people, and citizens, among other receivers, in political communication events. Individuals and groups, along with their institutions and organizations, according to Van Dijk (1997, p. 13) have the capacity to be involved in politics, and a significant number of them are actively involved in political dialogue. Consequently, Simpson and Mayr (2010) opined that it is understandable that politicians have increasingly embraced a personalized rhetoric emphasizing choice and lifestyle values to convey their political messages to the public.

Political debate involves more than just making public claims. It relates to politics whereby language is utilised to achieve desired objectives. Speech has the ability to sway political entities. Noteworthy, when it comes to politics, lexical choices may be made not only in line with formal etiquette norms. but also due to their ability to legitimately wield political power, effectively shape public opinion, emphasise political attitudes and opinions, and manufacture political consent. Both how speech acts are pragmatically controlled as well as how an individual interactively presents himself is said to be comparable. Put another way, while political discourse structures may not always be mutually exclusive, normal and productive political discourse may have preferred structures and methods that are useful for carrying out political acts in appropriate political situations. Research on presidential addresses as a component of political discourse has been done from a variety of approaches. Certainly, political speech has been extensively studied by researchers as it is a significant area of language use to be explored. What makes political discourse as an interesting subject of analysis is that it represents a complex social process that demands thorough analysis, given its pivotal role in governing and shaping societies.

Language serves as an essential medium for expressing ideas and ideologies effectively in political speeches, ensuring they are understood and accepted by both immediate audiences and those who may encounter them later through media channels. Conveying meaning through words and expressions effectively demands the utilisation of various approaches. Therefore, political speeches are usually written by a team of skilled speechwriters trained in persuasive language. Bread (2000, p. 18) asserted that the impact of a political speech often depends on the effectiveness of its argumentation rather than the accuracy of its facts. Usually, pre-election special addresses are delivered during rallies and campaigns when an election approaches.

Applying language to specific communicative contexts or situations as needed is the core concern of pragmatics. The analysis will involve the communicated speech act or message, the participants involved, their intentions, background knowledge, and how interactions are impacted by these factors. Pragmatics also examines assumptions within the context, inferences made from it, implications of statements, and the implicit as well as explicit communication, among other factors. (Leech, 1983, p. 20; Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 146; Thomas, 1995, p. 7). Many politicians may not realize the interconnectedness between what is said, what is intended, and the actions conveyed through their speech. This study conducts an in-depth content analysis of Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's speech at the recent 78th session of the UNGA. It aims to explore the sociocultural speech style and focuses on the illocutionary force within the framework of speech act theory in a cross-cultural context.

### **Malaysian Malay communication**

The Malay communication style is deeply rooted in cultural norms, historical influences, and linguistic intricacies. Characterised by a harmonious and indirect approach, communication in Malay culture often prioritises maintaining social harmony and saving face (Gudykunst, 2003). Politeness and respect are paramount, with individuals typically employing honorific titles and intricate forms of address to show deference to others, especially elders and authority figures (Abdul-Raof, 2015). To effectively communicate meaning and context, nonverbal signals which include facial expressions, body language, and vocal tone are significantly crucial. Noteworthy, these cues often complement, but can potentially also overshadow verbal communication (Gudykunst, 2003). Moreover, the concept of "saving face" is central to Malay communication, with individuals often opting for subtle hints or implicit expressions to avoid causing embarrassment or confrontation (Abdul-Raof, 2015). This communication style reflects the collectivist nature of Malay society, emphasising the

importance of communal relationships and group cohesion (Hofstede, 2001).

Hall's (1990) cultural dimension, as outlined in his seminal work "The Silent Language" (1990), provides valuable insights into understanding intercultural communication, including Malay communication patterns. One of Hall's key dimensions is high-context versus low-context communication styles. In high-context cultures like Malay culture, much of the meaning is implicit and embedded in the context, including nonverbal cues, shared experiences, and cultural norms (Hall, 1990).

In the context of Malay communication, this means that a significant portion of the message is conveyed through indirect means such as facial expressions, body language, and cultural subtleties rather than explicit verbal statements. For example, rather than directly expressing disagreement, a Malay individual might use nonverbal cues or subtle hints to convey their dissent, preserving social harmony and avoiding confrontation. Similarly, moments of silence or pauses in conversation can hold considerable significance, providing opportunities for reflection or demonstrating respect.

Furthermore, in high-context cultures like Malay culture, relationships and trust play crucial roles in communication. Therefore, messages are often tailored based on the existing relationship between communicators, with greater emphasis placed on maintaining rapport and harmony rather than conveying information efficiently (Hall, 1990). This aligns with the collectivist nature of Malay society, where group cohesion and social harmony are highly valued.

Understanding Hall's cultural dimension of high-context communication provides valuable insights into navigating communication in Malay culture, emphasising the importance of interpreting nonverbal cues, understanding the underlying context, and building strong interpersonal relationships.

Table 1: High-context and Low-context communication

High-context communication	Low-context communication
Words do not convey every meaning	Most information expressed in the message
Much stress of emotions and close relationship	Less personal and logical
Higher dependence on nonverbal behaviours	

The Malay are often indirect in their communication to avoid being impolite, maintain relationships, and safeguard the interlocutor's feelings. Abdullah (1996) and Tamam et al. (1996) asserted that this reflects the Malaysian Malay's collective nature. However, Malay communication has shown to change from High to Low-Context Culture (Salleh, 2005). Communication is becoming more explicit, direct apart from basing on the concepts of objectivity and rationality.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employed interpretive qualitative design using document analysis of one speech transcription for the purpose of acquiring the findings. The transcription used was based on a speech delivered by Anwar Ibrahim on the 22nd of September 2023, which could be retrieved via the United Nations General Assembly official website. The speech addressed how deeply polarising the world was and intervention through peaceful means to resolve conflicts among nations was needed.

From a total of 75 sentences found in the speech, 59 sentences were extracted and analysed based on the 5 categories of speech acts proposed by Searle (1969). Then, Hall's Cultural Dimension (High-Low context) was used to further classify the speech acts in order to understand the influence of culture on Anwar Ibrahim's speech sentences. Table 2 below shows the classification of speech acts with their respective characteristic(s).

Table 2: Classification of Speech Acts

Speech Act	Characteristic(s) of Speech Act
Assertive	expresses a state of an event or an affair states a proposition to be true
Commissive	uses speech acts to commit him/her to do an action in the future
Declarative	uses speech acts that change the state of affairs in the world
Directive	uses speech acts to make H do something
Expressive	uses speech acts to express the attitude about a state of affairs

For the purpose of analysis, the speech extracts were numbered (e.g. Extract 7). Next, the classification of speech acts was further analysed using Hall’s Cultural Dimension (High-Low context) to understand the influence of culture on Anwar Ibrahim’s speech sentence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### How does Anwar Ibrahim address the issue of international conflicts in his speech?

Table 3: Classification of Speech Acts

Speech Act	No. of occurrences	Percentage (%)
Assertive	39	66.10
Commissive	4	6.78
Declarative	0	0
Directive	11	18.64
Expressive	5	8.47

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of the types of speech acts within a given dataset through the number of occurrences and their corresponding percentages.

The most used speech act by Anwar in his UNGA speech is Assertive, with 42 occurrences, making up 71.19% of the total utterances. Directive speech act is the second most frequently employed by Anwar Ibrahim, with 11 occurrences, which is approximately 18.64% of the total utterances. Expressive speech act is noted five times, constituting about 8.47% of the total utterances. Only 1 occurrence of commissive speech act, accounting for 1.69% of the total utterances, can be found. Lastly, no declarative speech act is present in the utterances. In summary, the data in the table above shows strong predominance of the assertive speech act in Anwar Ibrahim’s UNGA speech, with the other types being much less common, especially commissive and declarative speech acts.

### Assertive Speech Act

*When this August assembly was established almost 80 years ago, the world was still reeling from the horrors of a catastrophic bloodletting that our nations resolved should never be repeated. [Extract 1]*

*A decision – profound in wisdom, magnanimous in intent and bold in ambition – was made so that the General Assembly would become the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. [Extract 2]*

*A decision that manifested no less than the very strength and courage of our convictions. [Extract 3]*

These utterances show facts and beliefs about the UN assembly that was established 80 years ago to help resolve a conflict between nations and to ensure that such an event would never happen again. Anwar Ibrahim also highlighted the qualities of the decisions, through adjectives and an adverb “wisdom”, “magnanimity” and “boldness” and how the decisions were a direct representation of the strength and courage behind the nations’ convictions. In addition, he is asserting his belief that the strength and courage of the world leaders’ convictions are reflected through the decision of establishing the General Assembly.

*We are living in a deeply polarised world. [Extract 9]*

*We are seeing major power rivalry unfolding with consequences that would negatively impact nations, especially the smaller ones, in the regions of conflict. [Extract 10]*

[Extract 9] and [Extract 10] commit Anwar Ibrahim to the truth with regard to the state of the world. Through the use of the pronoun “we”, he implies that the “deeply polarised world” we are living in is a shared reality. He then presents factual information on “major power rivalry” through his observation as a truth and provides an affirmation on the negative impacts of the rivalry through the observation of the situation.

*On Afghanistan, Malaysia remains deeply concerned with the dire humanitarian situation in the country. [Extract 28]*

*This is especially so given that the country is grappling with its third consecutive year of drought and a devastating locust infestation that severely undermined wheat harvests. [Extract 29]*

*On our part, Malaysia is committed to continue its existing people-to-people relations with Afghanistan, including through the provision of humanitarian aid. [Extract 30]*

*However, we remain resolute and firm in our call on the authority of Afghanistan to reverse their exclusionary and discriminatory policies against women and girls. [Extract 31]*

These four utterances show assertiveness. [Extract 28] is uttered to show Malaysia’s stance on the conflict that is happening in Afghanistan through the phrase “deeply concerned”. [Extract 29] provides evidence to the previous excerpt (concern) by highlighting the severity of the situation in the mentioned country. On the other hand, [Extract 30] asserts Malaysia’s aim in supplying aid and maintaining relationships with Afghanistan, showing its proactive stance. The most direct assertion is conveyed through [Extract 31] in requesting the Afghan authorities to amend their policies.

#### **4.1.2 Commissive Speech Act**

*On our part, Malaysia is committed to continue its existing people-to-people relations with Afghanistan, including through the provision of humanitarian aid. [Extract 30]*

The utterance above is a commissive speech act because Anwar Ibrahim, representing and speaking on behalf of Malaysia, is making a commitment to persist in their existing relationship with Afghanistan and to provide humanitarian aid. This utterance indicates a promise to perform certain actions in the future, which is one of the characteristics of a commissive speech act.

*I truly believe that no challenge, however formidable, is insurmountable if we secure the collective commitment of this global community, the member states of this august Institution. [Extract 51]*

The major parts of the statement above are an expression of Anwar Ibrahim's intention to work towards securing a collective commitment, where he implies a readiness to engage actively. The statement can be seen to present an implied commissive element.

*Early this year, I introduced 'Malaysia MADANI' – a vision built on the pillars of core values that we believe are indispensable in any harmonious, thriving, and peaceful society – Compassion, Respect, Trust, Innovation, Prosperity, and Sustainability. [Extract 53]*

The statement uttered above is a promise for future action and policy direction, done through a commitment to a vision and its underlying values, that amounts to a pledge to uphold and further these values in the functioning of the society.

#### 4.1.3 Directive Speech Act

*Nevertheless, time is not on our side, and owing to the protracted failure to deal with this Russian- Ukraine crisis, I urge for a concerted multilateral effort led by the UN to resolve this. [Extract 17]*

The use of "I urge" creates a directive force to communicate his desire for the world leaders to undertake "a concerted multilateral effort" as the action being directed. Additionally, he also specifies the agent who shall be responsible in coordinating the action (led by the UN) and at the same time highlights the goal behind the directive (to resolve this).

*It is imperative for all parties to return to dialogue and resolve their differences through the negotiation table. [Extract 20]*

Here it can be seen that Anwar Ibrahim is instructing or commanding all parties to take a specific action, which is to return to dialogue and resolve their differences through negotiation. The phrase "It is imperative" expresses a strong necessity for an action to be taken, which clearly functions as a command rather than a suggestion. "... and resolve their differences" is also uttered by him to continue the directive by outlining the specific aim of the action.

*The international community must speak up against the atrocities committed towards the Palestinians even as they so vehemently speak out against human rights violations, injustice and abusive regimes. [Extract 27]*

Through the use of "must", Anwar Ibrahim is explicitly demanding the international community to "speak up against the atrocities committed towards the Palestinians...", which also demonstrates the action he wants the community to take, eliminating any ambiguity. He regards it is a moral obligation to speak up "... against human rights violations, injustice and abusive regimes."

#### 4.1.4 Expressive Speech Act

*That vision, in my opinion, has been utterly shattered to pieces. [Extract 6]*

The statement above highlights the use of an expressive speech act. Anwar Ibrahim expresses his strong personal feeling, specifically his disappointment or frustration regarding the outcome of the vision visualised by the founder of UN.

*What we need is trust and the conviction to make the world a better place, the will to work together on a platform of consensus and solidarity. [Extract 52]*

Although this utterance is not framed as a direct command, it outlines the path that Anwar Ibrahim desires (making the world a better place) and urges the audience to work towards a better world through the adoption of "trust" and "conviction".



## 4.2 How does culture influence Anwar Ibrahim’s style of speech?

Table 4: Classification of Direct/Indirect Speech Act based on Anwar Ibrahim’s UNGA Speech

Utterance	Direct/Indirect Speech Act	Explanation
When this august assembly was established almost 80 years ago, the world was still reeling from the horrors of a catastrophic bloodletting that our nations resolved should never be repeated. [Extract 1]	Indirect	This utterance serves as an implicit reminder on the establishment of the UN assembly and how its principles should be upheld to ensure that history will not repeat itself.
A decision – profound in wisdom, magnanimous in intent and bold in ambition – was made so that the General Assembly would become the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. [Extract 2]	Indirect	Anwar Ibrahim is indirectly showing an assessment on the decision made regarding the General Assembly of the UN through descriptive language (“profound in wisdom, magnanimous in intent and bold in ambition”).
A decision that manifested no less than the very strength and courage of our convictions. [Extract 3]	Indirect	The phrase “...manifested no less than the very strength and courage of our convictions.” is used by Anwar Ibrahim to indirectly express his evaluation made during the General Assembly of the UN almost 80 years ago.
That vision, in my opinion, has been utterly shattered to pieces. [Extract 6]	Direct	It can be seen that Anwar Ibrahim is directly stating that a the vision (of a more democratic world) has been shattered.
We condemn unequivocally the Russian invasion of Ukraine. [Extract 15]	Direct	The word “condemn” is used by Anwar Ibrahim to directly denote his stance about the invasion of Ukraine committed by Russian.
Nevertheless, time is not on our side, and owing to the protracted failure to deal with this Russian- Ukraine crisis ,I urge for a concerted multilateral effort led by the UN to resolve this. [Extract 17]	Direct	Anwar Ibrahim makes a direct assertion that a concerted multilateral effort is needed through the use of “urge”. The pronoun “I” is also used to directly exert his power as one of the world leaders.
It is imperative for all parties to return to dialogue and resolve their differences through the negotiation table. [Extract 20]	Direct	A direct correlation between the structure of this utterance and its function can be seen through the use of the phrase “it is imperative”.

<p>On our part, Malaysia is committed to continue its existing people-to-people relations with Afghanistan, including through the provision of humanitarian aid. [Extract 30]</p>	<p>Direct</p>	<p>This utterance directly expresses Malaysia’s commitment with regard to its alliance with Afghanistan.</p>
<p>I truly believe that no challenge, however formidable, is insurmountable if we secure the collective commitment of this global community, the member states of this August Institution. [Extract 51]</p>	<p>Direct</p>	<p>Anwar Ibrahim makes a direct expression of belief (“I truly believe...”) to trigger action.</p>
<p>Early this year, I introduced ‘Malaysia MADANI’ – a vision built on the pillars of core values that we believe are indispensable in any harmonious, thriving, and peaceful society – Compassion, Respect, Trust, Innovation, Prosperity, and Sustainability. [Extract 53]</p>	<p>Direct and Indirect</p>	<p>The direct speech act can be seen in the initial part of this utterance where Anwar Ibrahim introduces “Malaysia MADANI”. The rest of the utterance serves to persuade or promote the framework’s value.</p>

As illustrated in Table 4, the selected utterances of Anwar Ibrahim in his UNGA speech were categorised into the category of direct and indirect speech acts. In general, Anwar Ibrahim can be seen to employ direct speech acts in his speech in addressing global issues and expressing his stance. The direct speech acts are used to convey Malaysia’s commitments, actions and provide strong statements of belief. On the other hand, the historical context and the importance of the UN are presented through indirect speech acts to set the mood of the speech and persuade the audience.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the prime minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim has been found to use various approaches in his effort to indicate various communicative intentions with regards to multilateralism reform at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), including assertives, directives, commissives and expressives. Based on the analysis, we found that most of his utterances are assertives, which are commonly employed in a formal speech, especially in international or diplomatic contexts. While most intentions were reflected by the use of indirect acts (consistent with the indication that the Malays are often subtle and indirect), some acts were in fact achieved more directly through the use of sentence types that agree with the functions.

Other indirect acts, though were not used using the direct forms, did generally comprise the use of some strong words. This may support Salleh’s (2005) findings on the gradual change in the Malay culture (from high to low-context culture), considering that although most of Anwar Ibrahim’s messages were indirect, they did suggest the stand that the politician had. This suggests another possible area in which the shift can be observed, other than professional and personal settings indicated by Salleh (2005). The study however was not able to extensively elaborate on this. Future research is recommended to consider looking into the use of certain adjectives in other Malay politicians’ speech. This analysis is also in line with the study reported by Khalib and Tayeh (2014), who mentioned that although Malaysians value implicitness when communicating to maintain social harmony and save face, but when it comes to addressing an international audience or making a formal declaration, direct speech acts is much more preferred.

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