

ASSERTIVE ACTING FOR RHETORICAL IDENTITY IN SELECTED 2024 AFRICAN PRESIDENTS' INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECHES

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Abstract

Rhetorical identity through linguistic structures reveals how thought patterns are expressed to project a person's worldview. This study explores speaker's identity in African political discourse using act of Searle's Speech Acts Theory for the revelation of African presidents' identity in selected Independence Day speeches delivered in 2024. Assertives act of Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory is used to examine a corpus of ten Independence Day speeches of African presidents delivered in 2024 across the five regions of the continent. Mainly, this study displayed how African presidents deployed specific assertive act of Searle's (1969) Speech Act such as report, remind, affirm and assure in political discourse. A total of 19 extracts were culled from the 10 speeches. This study found out that African presidents have strategically made use of assertives acts to drive the Aristotle's appeal mechanism (ethos) to reshape their audience's established knowledge of their leadership. Significantly, the selected African presidents have deployed subtypes of assertive acts (report, remind, affirm and assure) as persuasive mechanisms which project social, national and political cohesion as veritable construction of democratic norms. This study has added to the understanding on African presidents' rhetorical identity, especially how their assertive statements in the selected texts facilitate leadership credibility.

Keywords: Africa; African presidents; Aristotle's Appeal mechanism; Assertive act; Rhetorical identity; Independence Day speeches

1.0 Introduction

In contemporary discourse, Independence Day speeches raises critical reflections on the extent of political and economic autonomy achieved since independence. In many African countries, Independence Day is used by political leaders to reinforce

legitimacy, reflect on development achievements, some critical socio-economic issues and mobilise support. Critics argue that such occasions have been co-opted by political elites for performative nationalism, often ignoring pressing issues such as poverty, corruption, and inequality (Mbembe, 2016; Akinola, 2021). This day has become norms in a general system of the world that this particular day is marked with celebrations and parades that honour history and achievement of a country after six (6) decades ago of its first instance. An Independence Day Speech is a delivery of speech using exemplifications, persuasive strategies and narration that showcases inclusive themes. As observed by Alo (2012), the Independence Day Speech contains high instances of persuasive strategies including greetings as opening, and modalities utilised by the political leader.

The essence of human language cannot be delimited to daily communication and interaction alone. Human language has strength to display power, energy and influence that can innovate and counteract its opinion. There are systemic patterns the human language relates with people and interactional stances in their society. Stoic ancient Greek philosophies believe that words create comprehension, feeling, and sensation (Roberston, 2024). It is interesting to note, words are used for certain befitting roles to procure a specific goal in speech-making. In state affairs, political discourse especially rhetoric, stretches the fundamental activities of democratic affairs. Kane and Patapan (2010), opine that “because public discussion and debate are essential in a democracy, and because leaders are obliged to rule the sovereign people by means of constant persuasion, rhetoric is absolutely central.” (p. 372). In the same vein, “Rhetoric facilitates the making and hearing of representation claims spanning subjects and audience... democracy requires a deliberative system with multiple components whose linkage often needs rhetorics.” (Dryzek, 2010, pp. 319-339). Thus, this is a very crucial aspect in democracy as it is the subject that advocates closer dialogue between leaders and sovereign people. Ultimately, the goal of political rhetoric is to seek effectiveness in political communication. Aristotle (1991, p.38) sees ethos as the following:

There is a persuasion through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way to make the speaker worthy of credence... And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person.

Rapp (2002, p.9) supports the above by claiming that ‘if the speaker appears to be credible, the audience will form the second order judgment that propositions put forward by the credible speaker are true or acceptable’. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the ethos of selected African presidents with a focus on how they deployed assertive acts of Searle (1969) Speech Act Theory in the selected Independence Day addresses delivered in 2024 to project rhetorical identity.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Scholars have extensively researched African Independence Day addresses within different fields of scholarship in linguistics. Early contributions to political rhetoric

focused on the rhetorical aspects of political conducts and affairs, leading to extensive research on the concept of political rhetoric. More recently, research on political rhetoric discusses terrorism (McGarty, 2011), political debate (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2011), Independence Day speeches (Alo, 2012), political campaigns and party marketing (Balogun, 2018; Muriith & Nabcy, 2022; Mulindi, 2023); international relations/diplomatic discourse (Rohid & Mahdi, 2018; Zhang, 2018) and so on. In the domain of primary linguistic levels and the broad field in linguistic analysis, there are research on socio-pragmatic analysis (Medubi and Amuda, 2016), semantics (Ugoala, 2017), stylistics (Agbo, Ngwoke and Ijem, 2019), lexico-syntactic analysis (Ogungbe, 2021), while they all had explored political rhetoric and Independence Day speeches in various aspects of linguistic analysis such as persuading practs, ethical implications and modalities, little attention has been paid to assertives acting of rhetorical identity of African presidents for identity reconstruction in the selected Independence Day Addresses delivered in 2024 across the five regions of Africa.

Thus, the specific objectives of this study are to: explore the subtypes of assertives act of Searle's Speech Act engaged in projecting rhetorical of the African presidents in the selected Independence Addresses; and to identify how these identified subtypes of assertives act of Searle's Speech Act have assisted in projecting rhetorical identity.

2.0 Literature review

Researchers have investigated African Independence Day speeches as a political discourse within their different scholarship. Amurudu and Oduola (2017) carry out a comparative study of critical discourse analysis of concession habits between Nigerian politicians and American politicians. They found that almost all concession speeches have reluctant acceptance and the speeches maintain same pattern. In their study, the rhetorical relations in presidential concession speeches of Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria and John Mahama of Ghana, Osisanwo and Chinaguh (2018) attempted the communicative functions and effects of rhetorical language in the concession speeches of these selected African presidents. They found that there was peaceful transition adopted by these presidents. The study, therefore, concludes that the democratic morals of these two African presidents should be promoted in Africa because the morals will bring democratic development in Africa.

Balogun (2018) explores communicative styles, intention and credibility of Nigerian presidential aspirants in the 2015 general elections picking insights from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and Searle's model of Speech Acts. The study reaffirms the linguistic power of effective communicative strategies and styles of political stakeholders as linguistic structures have the strength to unveil the performance of a political office-seeker to the electorates. Also, Balogun (2018) investigates the roles of women in politics with specific focus on the

linguistic structures for their political goal to seek office post. The study redefines the role of woman in Nigerian politics by contributing towards how language use democratically builds developed society. Ugoala and Israel (2020) examines pragmatic strategy of practs used by Presidents Muhammadu Buhari and Nana Akufo-Addo on the coronavirus pandemic in their first public speeches. It was noted that the two presidents adopted practs to instruct, condemn, pacify, persuade, and warn. This means that pragmatic practs can also be used to flaunt achievements and give more cautions. They concluded that these pragmatic strategies were adopted to actualised most important point at issue in the speeches. In another study by Akano (2022) on Rhetoric and persuading practs in Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari's broadcasts on the covid-19 pandemic, it was shown that the President Muhammad Buhari (PMB henceforth) adopts 66 instances of rhetorical appeal tools with 31 instances of ethos, 10 instances of logos and 25 instances of pathos. The researcher affirms that the realised percentage of appeals instances indicate more focus on the ethical and emotional appeals in the address of PMB on the pandemic. The study concludes that rhetorical elements adopted in PMB's address on COVID-19 are carefully used to prove government's efforts to the curb of the pandemic.

Khaemba (2024) investigates the discursive practices used in the general election of August, 2022, in Kenya. The study shows that people of Kenya cast their votes for their candidates through the rhetorical power of the politicians seeking election and they do not vote independently rather by the power of words of contestants and the media. The study concludes that Kenyan politicians use self-serving biases language on the voters. Despite the plethora of studies that existed on political rhetoric and Independence Day speeches, no existed study of assertive act of rhetorical identity for identity reconstruction of African presidents in the selected Independence Day Addresses delivered in 2024 across the five regions of Africa. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the assertive acting of rhetorical identity for identity reconstruction in selected 2024 Independence Day Addresses of Africa presidents.

3.0 Theoretical framework

J. L. Austin was the scholar who first used the term *speech act* (Austin, 1962, p.52). He argues that we perform acts with utterances. Austin further expands the theory by deviating from the general knowledge of constative utterances and performative utterances. He avoids the bridge between these linguistic elements (constatives and performatives) because the two linguistic elements refer to both genuine and pseudo proposition. What is more, performative utterances are used to perform certain actions in statements. Meanwhile, Searle (1969) developed the speech act theory by expanding mainly the illocutionary acts. He developed five types of speech acts which are: commissives, representatives, directives, declarations, and expressives. The hierarchical chain of speech acts has been studied since 1962 by Austin to most noticeable authors like Searle (1969); Bach & Harnish (1979);

Akhimien (2007) among others to trace the functions of specific verbs, with a few differences in their taxonomy. This current study only engages the “assertive” since the major issue related to the space of this study is the ‘assertive’-

Searle (1969) developed ‘assertive’ as one of the five (5) speech acts. The assertive has been put closely to be a truth-content, belief expression and explicitness (Searle, 1969; Vanderveken, 1990; Sbisa, 2020). Assertives are quickly identifiable by the presence of verbs like recognise, acknowledge, praise, blame, insist, assure, certify, attest, swear, alarm, describe, inform, reveal, sustain, forecast, alert, report, deny, affirm, believe, conclude among others when explicitly captured in the utterance. This type of speech act by Searle (1969) mainly improves on what Austin (1962) put as expositives and verdictives

4.0 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method to examine the assertives acting of rhetorical identity of selected Independence Day Addresses of African presidents. This study adopts random sampling technique. Ten Independence Day Addresses delivered in 2024 were examined across the five regions of Africa. The choice of the year 2024 is to provide context for understanding post-2023 political narrative after the World Health Organisation (WHO) suspended the global health emergency phase of COVID-19 in 2023. Therefore, Independence Day speeches in 2024 function as post-crisis rhetorical instruments for African presidents. The selected countries across the five regions of Africa in this study are Western Africa (Nigeria and Ghana); Southern Africa (South Africa and Zimbabwe); Eastern Africa (Rwanda and Kenya); Northern Africa (Algeria and Western Sahara) and Central Africa (Central Africa Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo). The selected texts were culled from online news network of each country. The study adopted a service translation for some selected addresses that are not in English. Consequently, an Atlanta Public Schools (APS) translation service was adopted because of its provision of original English version of the source language. The service was to keep clarity of the expected messages from the selected Independence Day speeches. The Independence Day addresses were already valid and existing documents in the archive of each of the nations. Assertive Act as an aspect of Searle’s (1969) Speech Act Theory was deployed as the analytical tool for this study. In addition, the study earths the rhetorical identity of these African presidents in the selected texts through different assertives subtypes such as *report*, *remind*, *affirm* and *assure*.

5.0 Data presentation and analysis

Assertive speech act in the selected Independence Day speeches of African presidents

Assertives are the types of performative verbs that explicitly state what words do and how they fit the world we live in. Assertives are verbs which help to reveal the truth or falsehood of a proposition. As a result, the main function of the

assertives is to state facts or beliefs in utterances. Meanwhile, it is good to note that there are numerous instances of assertives and no specific numbers of these verbs. However, noticeably, Vanderveken (1990) have put forward about 37 instances of assertives (see Vanderveken, 1990, to access a more succinct list of these thirty-seven assertives verbs). There are numerous assertives in the selected Independence Day speeches delivered in 2024 by these selected African presidents to capture the rhetorical identity of the selected texts.

Assertive Act of Report

This is a subtype of assertive which is realised in the Searle's (1969) classification of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of assertive put the speaker or rhetor to report or state information about past events and actions while presenting these events or actions as verifiable and factual account of the past. A speaker uses this act to give recorded actions to the public to present outcomes or consequences of taken actions. African presidents use reporting as an instance of assertive to present speaker's identity through factual discourse.

- i. The decision to rotate the scene of the national celebrations around the country, instead of staging them only in Accra, the national capital, has, certainly, turned out to be a welcome, nation-building exercise, that helps to focus attention on a different region every year, and, at the same time, rallies the nation together. (Akufo-Addo, Ghana, 2024)
- ii. I also wish to report that during my recent visit to the US, we negotiated the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, an instrument which has enhanced access to the US market for African exports, and catalysed the rapid growth of Kenyan exports, especially in the textile and apparel industry. (Ruto, Kenya, 2024)
- iii. At his inauguration here at the Union Buildings on the 10th of May 1994, President Nelson Mandela spoke of the realisation of our democratic breakthrough. He said that: "The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!" Let us stand together, united in purpose, to build a future where the promise of freedom rings true for every single South African. (Ramaphosa, South Africa, 2024)
- iv. The "Call to Action" initiative, which I launched last year, compels all Local Authorities to re-focus towards a people centred development thrust and quality service delivery. (Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe, 2024)
- v. It is in this spirit of responsibility and self-transcendence that, a few weeks ago, I held a frank and republican meeting with Mr Martin Fayulu, one of the leaders of the opposition. This gesture marks an important step toward a policy of reconciliation, mutual listening, and reciprocal respect – in service of the greatness of our Republic. (Tshilombo, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2024)

In the extract i above, President Akufo-Addo reports the effect and positive influence of their national rotational policy of the freedom day venue by reporting

that this decision “rallies the nation together”. This rhetorical pattern constructs that the speaker is a credible national leader by reporting what has led to the implementation of the new national policy and identifying the observable result of this policy. He presents himself as a unifier and the gateway to the national cohesion. In this process of deploying assertive of report, the speaker frames his identity as someone who prioritises equity and collective belongings. He strengthens his ethos by reporting the practical benefits already achieved by the movement. In the extract ii above by the Kenyan president, Mr President deploys the direct assertive act of report through the word ‘report’ in the phrase “I also wish to *report* that during my visit to the US, we negotiated the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity” to present him as a committed leader to economic development through diplomatic engagement. He strengthens his ethos by constructing himself as a competent and internationally engaged statesman by reporting the success in their negotiation to boost the national progress. In extract iii above, President Ramaphosa, opens this extract with an instance of assertive act of report by giving the historical event of democratic breakthrough and its significance on the nation. President Ramaphosa reports the direct statement of Nelson Mandela who was attributed to be a father of democracy in Africa. Meanwhile, he uses this report to align his identity with that of Nelson Mandela by constructing democratic heritage. In extract iv above, the Zimbabwean president draws a connection to the past and present time by stating the fact that is known to the audience. The Zimbabwean president deploys an/the assertive act of report to project himself as a leader who is responsive to citizens and value reform. In extract v above, President Tshilombo uses the expression “I held a frank and republican meeting...” to give a factual statement about his direct engagement. He adopts a core assertive act of report through the clause “I held a frank and republican meeting...” Through his reporting act, President Tshilombo establishes an identity of a democratic and responsible leader. This assertive act of report used by President Tshilombo is expected to enhance the audience perspectives about Mr. President’s credibility and commitment to republican ideals.

Assertive Act of Remind

This is a subtype of assertive which is mainly seen in the Searle’s (1969) classification of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of Seale’s assertive puts the speaker to reassert the truth of an established or assumed account known to the audience by reintroducing this account back to the listener’s mind. African presidents use assertive act of reminding for re-establishing a common ground such as making historical references and persuasion to a shared-knowledge account.

- vi. Our host this year, the Eastern Region, was very much at the centre of the independence struggle of our country – it is home to three (3) members of the BIG SIX of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the acknowledged founders of our nation, Joseph Boakye Danquah, Edward Akufo-Addo and William Ofori-Atta. Their love of politics would seem to have continued into succeeding generations

- with the son of one of them being the current president of our country. (Akufo- Addo, Ghana, 2024)
- vii. On this day, the sacred national flag of our beloved motherland, Zimbabwe was raised, and the Union Jack brought down, symbolising the end to the racist and brutal colonial rule. (Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe, 2024)
 - viii. Three decades ago, this building was the site of refuge and rescue. From the surrounding neighbourhoods, Rwandans flowed here for safety. And many were saved, thanks to the Rwandan Patriotic Army, an act that was repeated countless times, all across our country. (Kagame, Rwanda, 2024)
 - ix. Exactly 64 years ago, our founding fathers chose democracy as a form of government and launched the dream of a great country that would lead the rest of Africa out of poverty, ignorance, and underdevelopment, a beacon of hope to the rest of Africa and the world. (Tinubu, Nigeria, 2024)
 - x. The 62nd anniversary of our national independence that we celebrate these days represents the pinnacle of a series of historic stages that began with the Revolution of November 1954. (Abdelmadjid, Algeria, 2024)

In the first extract above under the assertive of remind, the Ghanaian president relies on a collective memory and the historical evidence which promotes the nationalist historiography. The speaker rides on the assertive act of remind by connecting the past which names the love of politics and political success of the Big Six of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) to the present. However, the speaker uses the present political space to remind the audience about their identity and connecting with that identity by saying “*with the son of one of them being the current president of our country*”. President Akkufo-Addo maintains his ethos with the assertive act of remind which construct his rhetorical identity as an independence hero who acquired his trait from the natural transmission of patriotic values from the past heroes, especially his father. This persuasive strategy reinforces both national pride and regional pride by guiding how the people see both history and their contemporary leadership. The second extract begins with ‘a commemorative reminder’ from the opening ‘*On this day*’ to remind the audience on the victory over the injustice experienced under the colonial rule. The speaker further took back the audience to the days of colonial rule by giving insight from the US vs THEM ideology. The speakers adopt this persuasive pattern to enhance his ethos by strengthen the emotional attachment of the citizens to the nation. Again, President Mnangagwa presents his rhetorical identity as a rightful heir and continuer of democracy values which is very necessary during the era of postcolonial tensions in Africa. President Mnangagwa could achieve this only because he linked the present-day identity from precolonial days to the postcolonial political movement.

Extract viii above uses the temporal marker '*Three decades ago*' to situate the audience to a reminder of a particular time in the history of the country. Lexical choices like '*three decades ago*', '*this building*' and '*site of refuge and rescue*' are solid rhetorical construction to portray a long-term national memory. The word '*our*' from the phrase '*our founding fathers*' mainly positions the speaker as shared-knowledge whenever he makes reference to same origin 'Nigeria'. However, this act of inclusiveness strengthens the speaker's ethos and end factions memory of the past. The temporal marker '*Exactly 64 years ago*' definitely serves as an assertive act of remind to portray a historical assertion placing the speaker as a knowledgeable individual about the history of the nation. The speaker proceeds to give the background of the practiced democracy with the lexical choices such as '*our founding fathers*', '*chose*', '*launched the dream*', '*would lead*' and '*a beacon of hope*' to remind the moral vision of democracy which was a deliberate soften moral driven decision. The speaker projects himself as a continuer of democratic patriotism by reminding the audience about the decisions of their founding fathers. This positioned the speaker by establishing his rhetorical identity as a pan-African voice and moral international glory. The last excerpt above also constructs the speaker as a narrator of history; meanwhile, the speaker is framed as an heir to the national growth of the nation and as the state man who establishes the current socio-political issues as the continuation of the struggle of the past heroes.

Assertive Act of Affirm

This is a subtype of assertive which is seen in the Searle's (1969) classification of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of Seale's assertive assist the speaker to re-state a proposition as the truth in response to clearing doubtful mind of the audience by reasserting the validity of a proposition back to the listener's mind. African presidents use assertive act of reaffirming a position to establish commitment to an established stance.

- xi. Today, we are no longer at the starting blocks of the race to progress; we have come a long way. In the course of our journey, we have made Kenya a strong State anchored by a people united by fierce patriotism, love for one another, a shared vision of progress and a public service with a high capacity to coordinate development and security. Additionally, our country is a thriving, competitive and diversified economy well into its transformational take-off, and a democracy which protects freedom, drives democracy, and places the people of Kenya at the front and centre, as the authors and beneficiaries of this nation's affairs. (Ruto, Kenya, 2024)
- xii. Fellow Nigerians, better days are ahead of us. The challenges of the moment must always make us believe in ourselves. We are Nigerians—resilient and tenacious. We always prevail and rise above our circumstances. (Tinubu, Nigeria, 2024)
- xiii. We have established a society founded on the rule of law and the premise of equality before the law. (Ramaphosa, South Africa, 2024)

- xiv. The Congo of today is no longer the Congo of fatalism and powerlessness. It is a nation determined to assert itself on the global stage, committed to restoring the dignity of every Congolese citizen, and resolved to ensure shared prosperity for all.(Tshilombo, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2024)
- xv. We must transform our resources into jobs and shared prosperity for all.(Faustin,Central African Republic, 2024)

Extract xi, the Kenyan president through different lexical choices such as ‘*Today*’, and ‘*we are no longer at the starting blocks of the race to progress*’ relies on ethos which affirms advancement and progress. The Kenyan president presents his rhetorical identity as a vision driven leader who invites the citizens to assume themselves as agents of the national development. Extract xii, the Nigerian president relies much on the contextual resources of future-orientated certainty and proposition that projects hope to the audience as truth to be welcomed and not debated. The statement ‘*better days are ahead of us*’ is a powerful statement that frames a strong act of affirmation. Through many lexical choices, the Nigerian president presents himself as a symbolic leader who gives an ethos of a leader capable of building a well systemic nation. The Nigerian president through an assertive act of affirmation tries to stabilise the national consciousness by constructing inclusiveness in the Nigeria’s shared spirit and future day. In the extract xii, Presidents Tinubu strengthens the assertive act of affirm force through the lexical choice ‘*we have established a society founded on the rule of law and the premise of equality before the law*’ to give a clear institutionalized reality. This situation and persuasive strategies construct President Tinubu an individual who maintains democratic values. Again, this power of ethos reassures the citizens and also reinforces trust in the established institutions in the government. President Tshilombo in extract xiv positions himself as an authoritative voice of a forward-looking Congo through the lexical choices such as “*a nation determined to assert itself on the global stage*”, “*committed to restoring the dignity of every Congolese citizen*” and ‘*resolved to ensure shared prosperity for all*’ to show Congolese citizens that they can be situated within the international power space. He continued in the same opinion to use lexical choices in the statement ‘*shared prosperity for all*’ to frame his identity as an economic vision leader. President Tshilombo through the lens of assertive act tries to affirm by saying ‘*must*’ which remains affirmation rather than directive.

Assertive Act of Assure

This is a subtype of assertive which is mainly realised in the Searle’s (1969) taxonomy of Speech Act Theory. This subtype of assertive puts the speaker or rhetor to commit to the truth of a proposition purposively to strengthening the listener’s confidence in the truth. Speaker uses this act to remove doubt and uncertainty in the audience mind. However, African presidents often find a brilliant

way to reassure their citizens at any/every moment they have the avenue to persuade the people.

- xvi. As your President, *I assure* you that we are committed to finding sustainable solutions to alleviate the suffering of our citizens. (Tinubu, Nigeria, 2024)
- xvii. The road ahead remains long, but *I am confident* that the spirit of 13 August will guide us toward lasting peace, inclusive development, and renewed hope. (Faustin, Central African Republic, 2024)
- xviii. I stand here, therefore, to urge our farmers and other agriculture sector entrepreneurs to work with renewed confidence, with *the assurance* that the fruit of their labour will meet demand in Kenya, East Africa, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the African Continental Free Trade Area. (Ruto, Kenya, 2024)
- xix. *I assure* you a rich legacy of bravery that will look into the future with hope and confidence in our own abilities as an independent and free people. (Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe, 2024)

In extract xvi above, President Tinubu commits himself to the reliability of a proposition through the deployment of the verb ‘*assure*’ in the first extract above to give an explicit performative assurance. He strengthens this force by making the statement “*As your president*” to foreground an institutional self-identification of his authority and his official role. The citizens are expected to give no skepticism about the speaker because this linguistic arrangement gives the source as a reliable source. President Tinubu through his deployment of this linguistic force is expected to appear to the citizens as a close leader and a competent hand to solve the problem of their nation. The president frames himself to be a problem-solver. In the same vein, President Tinubu in the extract xvi adopts the same explicit performative assurance through the verb ‘*assure*’ to frame that he takes the full responsibility of reliability of a proposition spelled out in the statement. In the extract xvii above, President Faustin utilises the implicit performative assurance because he does not directly or explicitly use the verb ‘*assure*’ but the clause ‘*I am confident that the spirit ...*’ commits him to a reliability of a proposition. Through the deployment of this persuasive strategy, he is expected to be pictured by the citizens as a visionary builder who will reassure the nation’s confidence. President Ruto in the extract xviii uses an explicit or direct assertive act in the statement “*with the assurance that the fruit of their labour will meet demand in Kenya*” to create a certainty to the audience about the reliability of a proposition. He frames his rhetorical identity as a credible leader who can facilitate the development of the nation and this is applicable to them all.

6.0 Conclusion

The subtypes of assertive acting for rhetorical identity of African presidents in the selected 2024 Independence Day addresses have been explored and analysed. It is identified that these African presidents projected their rhetorical identity through different subtypes of assertive act. Mainly, these African presidents have strategically adopted the identified subtypes of assertive act to rebrand their ethos. It can be deduced that African presidents evoke the identified assertive acts to construct rhetoric that concerted movements which improves their character in political atmosphere within and beyond Africa. The identified assertive acts in the selected texts of African presidents are assertive acts of *report*, *remind*, *affirm* and *assure*. These African presidents have strategically made use of assertive acts to drive Aristotle's appeal mechanism (*ethos*) to reshape their audience established knowledge of their leadership and credibility. Significantly, these African presidents have developed these subtypes of assertive acts for persuading their people to see social, national and political cohesion as construction of democratic norms. This study has added to the understanding on African presidents' rhetorical identity, especially how their assertive statements in the selected texts can facilitate leadership credibility.

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