

ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS IN BARRACK OBAMA'S ELECTION VICTORY SPEECH 2008

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Abstract

This study uses a qualitative research approach to examine the illocutionary acts in Barack Obama's 2008 victory speech. The study's data, which focuses on the connection between theory and research, is composed of spoken and written words. To collect data from the speech, the researchers employ an observational strategy and a note-taking technique. The data analysis uses an identification procedure that involves watching and listening to the video and audio to pinpoint the different illocutionary acts that Obama has used. Based on Searle's theory, the researchers categorize the transcriptions and find 21 illocutionary acts, such as directive, commissive, declarative, expressive, and representative. These results demonstrate that Obama's speech contained two directive acts, two commissive acts, five representative acts, six expressive acts, and six declarative acts. This study adds to our knowledge of how theories are revived through qualitative research and offers insightful information on the dynamics of illocutionary acts in speech. The findings provide additional insight into Obama's communication tactics and the rhetorical devices he used in his victory address. Subsequent investigations in this field may examine the influence and efficacy of illocutionary actions in political dialogue.

Keywords: *Illocutionary Acts, Pragmatic, Speech*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the essential thread that binds people together and makes communication easier. Language is used to express ideas, and communication is the process by which people attempt to do so in a mutually intelligible way. It is utilized to discuss issues and accomplish multiple goals, involving at least one speaker and a listener in a conversation, where the speaker aims to be understood, and the listener seeks clarification (Rosa, 2013). Conversations are deemed effective if the listener understands the speaker's message, meaning participants should avoid disclosing material that is confusing, deceptive, or irrelevant (Yule, 1996).

This principle underlines the importance of clarity and relevance in communication, which is also crucial in the study of illocutionary acts. The illocutionary act can also be found in everyday life, serving as a practical example of how language functions to achieve specific communicative goals. A phenomenon of illocutionary acts can be easily observed in conversation. For example:

MEILIN : "He looks like a hobo."
ABBY : "A hot hobo."
(Widyasari, Sukarini, & Maharani, 2024)

Meilin and her friends Miriam, Abby, and Priya were having a chat,

according to the dialogue shown above. Searle's (1979) theory of speech actions states that the kind of illocutionary act employed in this conversation is assertive. Meilin's attempt to voice her complaints to her pals demonstrates her assertiveness. Saying, "He looks like a hobo," Meilin wants her pals to concur that Devon is not attractive. Because she wishes to complain to the audience and persuade them of her point of view, the speaker uses assertive behavior in her speech.

In a similar vein expressive acts and illocutionary acts can be seen in political speeches. Barack Obama used expressive acts in his 2008 Victory Speech. This link emphasizes how Searle's theory of speech acts may be used to both informal and formal talks, showing how illocutionary acts can be used to accomplish communicative objectives and transmit meaning in various settings.

Obama: "I love you both so much"

(Transcript of Barrack Obama's Victory Speech, 2008)

In this statement, Obama the speaker expresses deep affection and love towards the addressed individuals, most likely family members, and it is categorized as expressive acts. The function of this expressive act is to convey genuine emotions of love and to establish a personal and intimate connection with the audience. By expressing love openly, the speaker aims to create a sense of warmth and emotional bonding.

Although our grasp of illocutionary acts in educational and cinematic contexts has advanced, there is still a gap in our understanding of how to analyze political speeches within the same theoretical framework. By examining the illocutionary acts in Barack Obama's

2008 Victory Speech, this study seeks to close this gap. By doing this, it hopes to offer a greater understanding of the communication techniques used in political debate and how Searle's theory might be used to analyze them. The purpose of this study is to test the hypothesis that political speeches' persuasiveness and efficacy are greatly influenced by the deliberate employment of illocutionary acts. Moreover, the objective is to enhance the wider comprehension of how theoretical notions can be revitalized through practical analysis through qualitative research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Speech Acts

One of the pragmatics studies is speech acts. According to one language specialist, Yule (2014) defines pragmatics as a study that discusses the meaning of circumstance and context. Speech acts are included in the pragmatics subject. Speech acts are how individuals carry out various activities by using words, and when the data is created, a certain act is carried out. According to Nordquist (2020), speech-act is a branch of pragmatics that deals with how words may be used to do tasks as well as convey ideas. Since illocutionary acts are the subject of this research, illocutionary acts are the primary focus of the clarification, with a brief description of the other sorts of speech acts.

2.1.1 Locutionary Acts

According to Austin (1962), a locutionary act is a communicating act that refers to or has a specific purpose. This points to the fundamental act of speaking intelligibly and in phrases with precise literal meanings. Put more simply, it's the language and syntax used by the speaker. Saying "It's raining" for

instance is a locutionary act since it literally implies that rainfall is falling from the sky.

2.1.2 Illocutionary Acts

According to Searle (2005), there are five sorts of illocutionary acts. Following that, directive (ordering a request, forbidding) intends to lead the listener to do some actions, explanation (resigning, appointing) intends to produce an alteration, commissive (promise) demonstrates that the speaker executes some actions by expressing the intention, expressive (apologies, celebrate) states the speaker's frame of mind to a condition and situation, and declaration (claim, swear) refers to the sensibility of said something. These are the five sorts of speech actions that Searle does. To put it another way, modifications and classification are required depending on the notion.

2.1.3 Perlocutionary Acts

This is the impact that a speech has on the person receiving it or the listener. It focuses on how the speaker's words are received by the audience. The perlocutionary acts as the message that the speaker intends for the listener to understand from their words. Put differently, a perlocutionary act refers to the reaction of the listener to the words spoken by the speaker. Saying something like "The presentation was impressive" could encourage the presenter to feel valued or give them more confidence.

Since illocutionary acts are the subject of this research, illocutionary acts are the primary focus of the clarification. The researcher explained all types of illocutionary acts below.

2.1.2.1 Directives

Directive illocutionary acts are speech acts that are intended to influence or direct the behavior of the listener.

They involve requesting, ordering, suggesting, advising, or commanding the listener to perform a particular action. Directive illocutionary acts are used to convey instructions, give guidance, or exert authority over the listener. Examples of directive illocutionary acts include:

Sultan : By your next birthday.
Jasmine : The law is wrong.
Sultan : ***You've only got three more days!***
(Sembiring & Ambalegin, 2019)

The statement appeared in the Alaaddin Manuscript, n.d. The Sultan exclaimed, "You have just three days left!" This statement demonstrated her father's use of a directive illocutionary act, which is advisory. They had a conversation while walking side by side in a dove cage. Sultan suggests that Jasmine be married.

2.1.2.2 Commissive

Commissive illocutionary acts are speech acts that involve committing oneself to a future course of action. They include promising, offering, committing, or vowing to do something. Commissive acts are intended to express the speaker's intention or commitment to perform a certain action or fulfill a particular obligation. Examples of commissive illocutionary acts include:

Matt : **"Don't dress me."**
Anna : "You're gonna be okey. The both of you are gonna get through this because the lord has a plan for you."
Matt : "I know, mom **but don't put on my shoe.**"
(Caniago & Afriana, 2022)

The speaker in the talk refuses to let his mother take off his shoes, which is a

commissive behavior. It implies that he disapproves of what his mother did. The lines "Don't dress me" and "But don't put my shoes" are rejections from the speaker since they contain the term "Don't," which denotes his rejection of his mother's behavior.

2.1.2.3 Representatives

Representative illocutionary acts are speech acts that involve representing or stating facts, describing events, or reporting information. These acts aim to convey information, present beliefs, or provide descriptions of the world. They are used to assert the truth or accuracy of a statement or to report on a particular situation. Examples of representative illocutionary acts include:

Obama: “Tonight, more than 200 years after a former colony won the right...”

(Kristina & Ambalegin, 2019)

In this statement, President Obama engages in representative illocutionary acts by providing temporal context and making a historical assertion. The use of the word "tonight" serves as a temporal marker, orienting the audience to the specific moment in which the statement is being made. Furthermore, Obama employs a representative illocutionary act by conveying historical information, noting that it is "more than 200 years after a former colony won the right." This historical assertion alludes to the American Revolution, emphasizing the enduring significance of the past in shaping the present moment. Through these representative acts, Obama not only grounds the audience in the immediate context but also connects the contemporary situation to the broader historical narrative of the nation's founding and the struggle for rights.

2.1.2.4 Expressive

Expressive illocutionary acts are speech acts that involve expressing emotions, attitudes, feelings, or psychological states. They are used to convey the speaker's personal experiences, reactions, or subjective perspectives. Expressive acts aim to evoke emotional responses, establish rapport, or create a sense of connection with the listener. Examples of expressive illocutionary acts include:

Colin : Is that real? *Show a ring

Nick : Yes.

Colin : What? Yes, man,
**congratulations! That is
frickin' amazing!**

(Rahmawati, 2021)

Colin's statement represents an expressive illocutionary act characterized by enthusiasm, surprise, and congratulations. The use of exclamatory language, such as "frickin' amazing," underscores Colin's emotional and positive reaction to the news, highlighting the expressive nature of his response. Overall, the exchange is marked by a series of expressive acts, including confirmation and enthusiastic congratulations, reflecting the emotional tone of the conversation.

2.1.2.5 Declaration

Declaration illocutionary acts involve making pronouncements, declarations, or announcements that bring about a new state of affairs through the act of utterance itself. They are authoritative and have the power to create or change reality. Declarations are often used in formal settings, legal contexts, or situations where the speaker holds a position of authority or expertise. Examples of declaration illocutionary acts include:

Lawyer Uhm : **“I can never be a lawyer in this circumstance. I can’t”**

(Sartika, Marzuqoh, & Majid, 2019)

In Lawyer Uhm's statements, declarative illocutionary acts are prominent as they unequivocally express a clear position regarding their role as a lawyer in a particular circumstance. The declaration, "I can never be a lawyer in this circumstance," signals a firm assertion of incapability or unsuitability to fulfill the duties of a lawyer under the specified conditions. This is further emphasized by the succinct and conclusive statement, "I can't," reinforcing the negative assertion and solidifying Uhm's stance on the matter. The declarative nature of these utterances reflects a decisive and unambiguous expression of the individual's perceived inability or reluctance to function as a lawyer within the given context.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Data is defined as any information or fact that is used in deciding and discussing something, claims Hornby (2010). Barack Obama's 2008 Victory Speech served as the data source for this qualitative study, which focused on illocutionary acts. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), qualitative research usually focuses on how theories are rejuvenated and shows how theory and research are related. As mentioned by Sudaryanto (2015), an observational approach was used to collect the data, along with a note-taking strategy. The observational approach is a way to get data by discovering how language is used. The researcher noted the statements in the data source that demonstrated illocutionary acts. As a result, the researcher indicated applying the observational approach and

employed a note-taking technique. To accurately record information, the researcher listened to and watched Barack Obama's 2008 victory speech several times. The researcher carefully wrote down every step of the process, noting the context of each illocutionary act and transcribing significant passages of the speech. To get the data, several steps were taken: first, the speech was watched; then, the speech script was transcribed; and last, the comments that were determined to be illocutionary acts according to (Searle, 2005) were bolded. The data was analyzed to detect illocutionary behaviors, this required examining the data source structuring and analyzing the data and reporting the data analysis to get the desired findings. The results were given in an organized manner, with a clear definition and instance for each category of illocutionary acts to show the frequency and distribution of various illocutionary acts in the speech. This strategy made it easier to explain the research findings and gave a brief rundown of the different illocutionary techniques Obama used in his speech.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Transcript of Barrack Obama's Victory Speech (2008) yielded 21 data points for the illocutionary actions described by Searle (2005): directive, commissive, representative, expressive, and declarative. There are 21 examples of illocutionary deeds Based on John Searle's theory, a qualitative analysis of Barack Obama's 2008 victory speech revealed 21 illocutionary behaviors. The categories for these acts were directive (2), commissive (2), representative (5), expressive (6), and declarative (6) listed below:

Table 1. The Types of Illocutionary Acts

Types of Illocutionary Acts	Frequency
Directive	2
Commissive	2
Representatives	5
Expressive	6
Declaratives	6
Total 21	

Table 1 outlines the various types and frequency of illocutionary acts used in Barack Obama's 2008 victory speech. The analysis divided these activities into five categories: directive (2), command (2), representative (5), expressive (6), and declarative (6). These findings show how Obama employed a variety of communication strategies—such as motivating action, committing to plans, delivering information, expressing emotions, and declaring facts—to effectively communicate and connect with his audience during this crucial speech.

4.1 Directive

Directive acts is one type of speech in which speakers attempt to directly affect the actions of the audience. This comprises directives, pleas, and invites, in which the illocutionary force is intended to prompt the listener to do a specific action or reaction.

Data 1

"Let us resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long."

Function: Call to action, inspiring audience

In his statement, Obama uses a directive illocutionary act, urging the audience to reject polarizing political habits like partisanship, pettiness, and immaturity. Using the directive 'let us

resist,' he actively encourages people to refrain from taking actions that impede political progress. According to Searle (2005), instructions occur when a speaker attempts to persuade the audience to do something. Obama's purpose here is to drive action and encourage a more cooperative political environment in which issues are constructively resolved and common goals are pursued collaboratively.

Data 2

"So tonight, let us ask ourselves: If our children should live to see the next century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper, what change will they see?"

Function: Provoking audience, introspection

In this statement, Obama uses a directed illocutionary act, urging the listener to reflect on the future. He asks listeners to examine the kind of legacy they want to leave behind by offering rhetorical questions and suggesting, "Let us ask ourselves." Searle (2005) defines the directive act as when a speaker attempts to persuade the audience to think about or do something specific. Obama's goal here is to encourage deliberation and foresight while emphasizing individual responsibility in defining the country's long-term course.

4.2 Commissive

Commissive acts represent commitments or promises made by the speaker about future actions or behaviors. Promises, pledges, and vows are examples of behaviors that reflect the speaker's intention to take on specific activities or duties.

Data 3

"I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree."

Function: Build credibility and trustworthiness

Obama's speech employs a commissive illocutionary act by promising to be open and honest about difficulties as well as to listen, particularly when there is disagreement. Commissive acts, in Searle's view (2005), bind the speaker to further actions. Obama emphasizes his commitment to open communication and accountability in leadership in an effort to increase trust and confidence. He does this by pledging to be transparent and to have courteous conversations.

Data 4

"We proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals."

Function: Reaffirm confidence, inspire unity

In his statement, Obama employs a commissive illocutionary act by committing to a course of action when he states, 'We proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals.' According to Searle (2005), a commissive act commits the speaker to a future action or behavior. Here, Obama commits to defending and promoting America's enduring ideals, emphasizing their importance over material wealth or military strength.

4.3 Representative

An illocutionary act that seeks to depict a situation or make an assertion about the world is known as a representative act.

Data 5

"It's the answer told by lines that stretched..."

Function: Asserting facts, describing events

In describing the lengthy line scene, Obama uses representative illocutionary acts, saying, 'It's the answer told by lines that stretched.'" Representatives aim to portray a situation or make claims about the world, according to Searle (2005). Obama portrays the lengthy lines as an accurate depiction of people's physical presence and active engagement in this instance. This act's purpose is to argue that people's deeds, as represented by the lines, provide an answer to any uncertainties or concerns.

Data 6

"Americans who sent a message to the world..."

Function: Describing events, asserting facts.

The speaker uses typical illocutionary acts in this remark while reporting the occasion in which Americans sent a message to the globe and saying, 'Americans who sent a message to the world...' Representatives aim to portray a situation or make claims about the world, according to Searle (2005). Here, the speaker affirms that it is a fact that Americans actively communicate. This act's purpose is to describe the incident in detail and state that it happened as a matter of fact.

Data 7

“He fought long and hard in this campaign”

Function: Asserting facts, describing events

In stating that Senator McCain "fought long and hard in this campaign," the speaker employs a representative illocutionary act. This action highlights Senator McCain's commitment and tenacity. Representatives seek to characterize occurrences or declare worldly truths, according to Searle (2005). In this case, the act's purpose is to clarify Senator McCain's involvement in the campaign and to affirm the factual validity of his efforts.

Data 8

"Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington"

Function: Asserting facts, describing events, providing information.

The speaker claims that 'Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington.' It is an example of representative illocutionary deeds. This claim seeks to explain the campaign's beginnings and offer details regarding its sources of power and vigor. Representative acts are employed to make claims about the truth or to characterize events, according to Searle (2005). Here, the speaker uses these actions to educate the audience on the history of the campaign and the difficulties it is currently facing.

Data 9

"Our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared"

Function: Asserting facts, describing events, stating beliefs

The speaker makes the claim that "Our tales are distinct, but our destiny is

shared" in this statement by using representative illocutionary acts. This claim highlights both the singularity of personal experiences and the group's common destiny. Representative acts are used to make claims about the truth or to characterize events, according to Searle (2005). Here, the speaker makes use of these deeds to emphasize harmony, foster a sense of community, and communicate the idea that, in spite of individual differences, everyone is linked in their path towards a common future.

4.4 Expressive

The goal of expressive acts is to communicate the speaker's feelings, attitudes, and psychological states. Expressive illocutionary acts primarily aim to communicate the speaker's emotional or psychological stance.

Data 10

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts..."

Function: Expressing belief, inspiring hope

The speaker in this statement uses expressive illocutionary acts to convey their strong belief in the limitless potential that America has to offer. The speaker effectively engages the audience and delivers a message by addressing any potential uncertainties with the phrase "If there is anyone out there who still doubts..." Expressive activities are employed to communicate attitudes, psychological states, and sentiments, according to Searle (2005). Here, the intention is not only to educate but also to instill optimism and hope, strengthening the conviction that America has great potential and a promising future.

Data 11

"It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor..."

Function: Conveying emotions, inspiring hope

In this remark, the speaker uses expressive illocutionary acts to convey a sense of unity and common purpose. According to Searle (2005), expressive behaviors are designed to convey the speaker's emotional state rather than to directly impact the listener's conduct. By emphasizing that people from many backgrounds have contributed to the collective answer with the phrase 'It's the answer uttered by young and old, rich and poor...,' the speaker hopes to promote feelings of unity and hope in the audience.

Data 12

"It's the answer that led those who have been told for so long..."

Function: conveying emotions, inspiring hope

In this case, the speaker uses expressive illocutionary acts to convey determination and generate hope, as described by Searle (2005). Expressive behaviors are intended to communicate the speaker's emotional state rather than immediately impact behavior. By addressing the problems faced by people who have been discouraged or doubted with 'It's the answer that led those who have been told for so long...,' the speaker hopes to instill in the audience a spirit of resilience and tenacity.

Data 13

"I love you both so much"

Function: Expressing emotions, love

In this statement, the speaker performs an expressive illocutionary act, as defined by Searle (2005), in which the

primary goal is to transmit the speaker's emotional condition rather than directly affect behaviors. By saying "I love you both so much," the speaker communicates deep regard and concern for the people being addressed, who are most often family members. The purpose of this expressive act is to convey true feelings of love and to develop a personal and close connection with the audience, generating a sense of warmth and emotional bonds. This act emphasizes the speaker's personal thoughts and fosters a deep connection with those listening.

Data 14

"I congratulate him and Gov. Palin for all they have achieved"

Function: Extending congratulations and acknowledging achievements.

In this statement, the speaker performs an expressive illocutionary act, as defined by Searle (2005), in which the primary goal is to transmit the speaker's emotional condition rather than directly affect behaviors. He starts by expressing his felicitations to Senator John McCain and Governor Sarah Palin, exhibiting tactful recognition of their political accomplishments. It goes beyond a simple formality as Obama expresses his appreciation for all their achievements.

Data 15

"God bless you"

Function: Conveying blessings and goodwill.

In this statement, the speaker performs an expressive illocutionary act, which, according to Searle (2005), communicates the speaker's emotional or psychological condition rather than directly affecting behaviors. By saying "God bless you," the speaker sends blessings and goodwill to the audience.

This act is designed to convey pleasant wishes, seek divine favor or protection, and instill a sense of warmth and well-being in the audience. It serves as a type of benediction, stressing the speaker's concern for the listeners' well-being and communicating a passionate message of friendliness.

4.5 Declarative

Declarative acts are declarations intended to assert the status of the world. Declarative acts have the illocutionary force to declare something the speaker feels to be true or, by acting, to create a new situation.

Data 16

"Change has come to America."

Function: Declaring, announcing

In this statement, the speaker performs a declarative illocutionary act, as described by Searle (2005), with the primary function of asserting the truth or existence of a state of circumstances. By saying "Change has come to America," the speaker proclaims a big event or shift in the country. This declarative act seeks to assert the actuality of change that has occurred, indicating a shift in the present situation. It acts as a decisive declaration regarding the new state of circumstances, demonstrating the speaker's authority in revealing this reality to the audience.

Data 17

"This victory truly belongs to you"

Function: Declaring, and attributing ownership.

In this remark, the speaker engages in a declarative illocutionary act, as defined by Searle, to assert a reality or condition of events. By stating "This victory truly belongs to you," the speaker gives the audience ownership of the

victory. This act declares and affirms the audience's critical part in attaining triumph, highlighting their importance and contribution to the outcome.

Data 18

"This is your victory"

Function: Declaring, attributing ownership

In this statement, the speaker engages in a declarative illocutionary act, as defined by Searle, which asserts a state of affairs or fact. By declaring "This is your victory," the speaker explicitly attributes ownership of the victory to the audience. This act serves to emphasize the audience's central role and contribution to the achievement, aiming to foster a sense of shared ownership and celebrate their collective success.

Data 19

"This victory alone is not the change we seek"

Function: Declaring, setting expectations

In this remark, the speaker performs a declarative illocutionary act, as defined by Searle, by claiming a condition of events or fact. By proclaiming, "This victory alone is not the change we seek," the speaker applies the sub-strategy of expectation setting. This remark tries to indicate to the audience that triumph alone is insufficient to bring about the desired change, urging continuing work. It also employs the sub-strategy of expressing ownership, emphasizing that the audience bears shared responsibility for accomplishing long-term change. This declarative act sets expectations, inspires continued commitment, and emphasizes the need of long-term effort in addition to immediate accomplishment.

Data 20

“America can change”

Function: Declaring, and asserting possibilities

In this remark, the speaker performs a declarative illocutionary act, as described by Searle, by stating a state of circumstances or possibility. By proclaiming "America can change," the speaker claims the nation's potential for progress and transformation, using the sub-strategy of asserting possibilities. This declaration seeks to generate hope and optimism, motivate collective action, and inspire individuals to believe in the power of positive change. It promotes a forward-thinking mindset and galvanizes efforts to achieve a brighter future for the country.

Data 21

"Our union can be perfected"

Function: declaring, asserting possibilities

In this remark, the speaker uses a declarative illocutionary act, as defined by Searle, in which the speaker states a state of events or possibility. Using the sub-strategy of stating possibilities, the speaker declares that "Our union can be perfected," implying that there is room for improvement and refinement within the American unity. This declaration seeks to instill hope and a shared commitment to attaining a better condition of national unity. It aims to instill a sense of communal responsibility and promote efforts to improve community peace and cohesiveness.

5. CONCLUSION

Using Searle's (2005) theory, the study's analysis of illocutionary actions in Barack Obama's victory speech produced a complex classification of 21

acts, including directives (2 instances), commissive (2 instances), declarative (6 instances), expressive acts (6 instances), and representatives (5 times). These results offer a comprehensive picture of the rhetorical dynamics of the speech, highlighting the intentional use of language for authoritative, affective, and informational goals. While expressive acts demonstrate Obama's capacity to establish a personal connection with the audience, representative acts are more common and draw attention to the political environment. Declarative actions highlight the authority of the speaker.

The findings imply a number of theoretical and practical application consequences. The study shows how Searle's theory can be applied to political speeches, which theoretically advances political discourse analysis and communication studies. In practical terms, the analysis's conclusions may guide political speechwriting and communication training by providing a framework for comprehending the relationship between language, politics, and persuasion. Future studies could examine how Obama's illocutionary behaviors affect audience perception and involvement or follow their development over the course of his speeches. These paths can improve the strategic use of language in political communication and offer more insight into the efficacy of illocutionary acts in many circumstances.

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