

The Linguistic Analysis of Indictments in English Through Speech Acts and Evaluation Frameworks

Ly Ngoc Toan, Ph. D¹.

¹ University of Law, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Correspondence: Ly Ngoc Toan, University of Law, Nguyen Tat Thanh Street, Ward 13, District 4, Tp. HCM city, Vietnam. E-mail: intoan@hcmlaw.edu.vn

Received: January 8, 2024 Accepted: March 16, 2024 Online Published: April 3, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v14n4p190 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n4p190>

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the linguistic features of indictments in English using speech act theory and appraisal frameworks. The theoretical background draws on Searle's (1969) taxonomy of speech acts and Martin and White's (2005) appraisal model for analyzing interpersonal meaning. The methodology employs qualitative textual analysis to code speech acts and appraisal resources in a dataset of 10 English indictments sourced from legal databases. Preliminary findings identified assertive speech acts describing alleged facts, directive acts asserting charges, and expressive and declarative acts conveying the prosecutor's stance. The analysis also revealed linguistic strategies for construing attitude and graduating intensity. Key results demonstrate how prosecutors rhetorically utilize speech acts and evaluation to formally assert charges, commit to proving accusations, and align readers against defendants. This research enriches our understanding of indictments from applied linguistic and discourse analytic perspectives. It provides practitioners with insights into crafting more deliberate indictments through language choices. Further research can expand the framework cross-culturally and to other legal genres.

Keywords: speech acts, appraisal, indictments, legal discourse, textual analysis

1. Introduction

Speech act theory and evaluation frameworks have become insightful approaches for discourse analysis across various fields. Speech acts refer to utterances that serve particular functions, like requests or promises (Austin, 1962). John Searle (1969) proposed a seminal taxonomy categorizing speech acts into *assertive*, *directives*, *commissive*, *expressive*, and *declarations*. Meanwhile, appraisal frameworks are concerned with how language evaluates and expresses stance (Martin & White, 2005). Applying these linguistic theories to legal genres can reveal the underlying rhetorical strategies and evaluative orientations achieved through language use. Previous research has demonstrated the illuminating potential of utilizing speech act and appraisal analysis for understanding diverse legal texts. Kurzon (1986) identified commissive speech acts that create legal obligations in contracts. Marmor (2014) examined how speech acts relate to constitutional principles and the First Amendment. Nir and Romanov (2017) used appraisal theory to explore evaluation in Supreme Court decisions. Cao (2007) studied directive speech acts in judicial opinions. Overall, these studies highlight the value of speech acts and appraisal frameworks for gaining insights into legal discourse. However, there remain gaps in the systematic application of these theories to indictments, which are formal charging documents initiating criminal proceedings. Only a handful of studies have conducted discourse or genre analysis on indictments from varying perspectives. For instance, Tiersma (1999) compared features between indictments and court opinions. Maley (1994) examined aspects of temporality and chronology within indictments. Eades (2010) studied the sociolinguistic dimensions of indictments in one specific jurisdiction. While providing insights, these studies did not employ speech act or appraisal frameworks to categorize the range of rhetorical strategies used in indictments. This study aims to address these gaps by utilizing speech act theory (Searle, 1969) and appraisal analysis (Martin & White, 2005) to examine indictments in English. Speech acts will be classified based on their intended function. Patterns in the use of directives, declarations, and other categories will be identified. Meanwhile, appraisal strategies for expressing attitude, engagement, and graduation will be categorized. This will elucidate how prosecutors marshal speech acts and evaluation to assert charges and orient readers. The findings will demonstrate the value of applying these complementary linguistic theories to understand the persuasive and pragmatic properties of legal genres. They will also offer practical insights for crafting more deliberate and impactful indictments. Martin and White's (2005) appraisal analysis framework will be employed to code the attitude, engagement, and graduation strategies employed in the indictments, providing a comprehensive analytical approach. This will build on previous appraisal research on legal discourse (e.g., Nir & Romanov, 2017) while also extending appraisal analysis to a new domain. Searle's (1969) seminal speech act taxonomy provides a robust model for classifying the diverse range of speech acts enacted through indictments. Previous studies have demonstrated the applicability of speech act theory to multiple legal genres.

In short, the linguistic analysis of indictments through speech acts and appraisal frameworks offers a novel approach, promising deep insights compared to previous discourse analytic methods. By integrating these complementary theoretical frameworks, the study unveils a unique perspective on an understudied genre. The findings contribute to advancing academic discourse on the interplay between speech

act theory, evaluation frameworks, and legal language. Moreover, this research enriches the understanding of indictments from both discourse analytic and applied linguistic viewpoints, shedding light on the intricate relationship between language and the legal domain.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theory of Speech Acts

Speech act analysis continues to provide great theoretical sophistication and analytical rigor to study language use in complex social contexts. It offers crucial insights into the functional, action-oriented nature of communication in human society. The past few decades have seen vibrant expansions in speech act research across disciplines, interactional contexts, languages, and modes of communication.

2.1.1 Background of Speech Act Theory

J.L. Austin's (1962) groundbreaking work *How to Do Things with Words* pioneered speech act theory within linguistic philosophy. Austin challenged the prevailing view that language is used only to describe reality by proposing that utterances can also perform actions. He introduced a distinction between constative utterances that state facts and performative utterances that accomplish tangible actions. This recognition of the performative capacity of language was an important philosophical insight. Austin analyzed how utterances like promising, ordering, pronouncing, and declaring do not simply report events but rather perform distinct speech acts. He proposed several categories, like verdictives, exercitives, and behabitives, to classify types of performatives. Austin argued that performative speech acts are meaningful based on commonly accepted social conventions and appropriate circumstances of use. His theory represented a major shift in analytic philosophy toward studying language in real communicative contexts and not just idealized logical forms. However, Austin's taxonomy of speech acts was critiqued as inconsistent and lacking systematic rigor. His student John Searle later developed a more detailed and coherent classification scheme through his 1969 book "*Speech Acts*." Searle provided clearer operating principles and criteria for identifying speech acts, cementing speech act theory as a powerful tool for understanding language use.

2.1.2 Searle's Speech Act Taxonomy

In his seminal 1969 work, philosopher John Searle proposed a taxonomy of five major classes of speech acts based on their intended purpose and direction of fit between words, reality, and speakers. The categories of speech acts are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Taxonomy of speech acts

Speech acts	Purpose and Direction
Assertives	Commit the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition, e.g. stating, concluding, reporting. They aim to represent reality as the speaker believes it to be.
Directives	Attempt to get the hearer to carry out a future action e.g. requesting, commanding, advising. The speaker expects compliance from the hearer.
Commissives	Commit the speaker to a future action, e.g. promises, oaths, and pledges. They express the speaker's intent to undertake an action.
Expressives	Express psychological a state about a state of affairs, e.g. apologizing, praising, regretting. They convey inner feelings.
Declarations	Bring about change in reality per the uttered proposition, e.g. resigning, christening, or sentencing. Their success depends on institutional roles.

This taxonomy provides a coherent basis for identifying the diverse communicative acts performed in various contexts and genres. It captures the primary directions of fit between propositional content and the world. Searle's theory has been hugely influential across linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, and discourse studies.

2.1.3 Edmondson's Taxonomy of Speech Act

Edmondson's (1981) taxonomy of speech act types offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing the multifaceted communicative functions present in linguistic utterances. This taxonomy encompasses ten distinct categories, each serving a specific purpose within the intricate tapestry of human communication. Actions (A1) and Declarations (D1) are utterances that perform deeds or bring about transformations in reality. Assertives (A3) convey information, beliefs, and claims about the world, while Descriptives (D2) provide detailed characterizations and explanations. The taxonomy accounts for utterances that influence or direct behavior, such as Appeals (A2) and Directives (D3). Commissives (C1) bind the speaker to future courses of action. Criticism (C2) encompasses negative evaluations or judgments, while Expressives (E) convey emotional states and psychological dispositions. Inquiries (I) seek information, and the Time (T) category refers to temporal relationships.

2.1.4 Developments in Speech Act Research

In the decades since Searle's seminal taxonomy, speech act theory has been extensively applied in diverse fields. Research has examined speech acts in workplace discourse, healthcare interactions, academic writing, and various genres. Major topics include indirect speech acts, politeness, and cross-cultural variations. For example, scholars analyze how face-threatening acts like requests are performed politely in different cultures.

Other developments include analyzing multimodal speech acts across spoken, visual, and written modes. Scholars have also utilized speech act concepts to examine extended discourse units beyond single utterances. This expands the framework's scope to longer texts and conversations. Additional areas of speech act research include:

- Computational approaches using speech act recognition in natural language processing systems. Researchers have developed annotated corpora and machine learning techniques to automatically identify speech acts in textual data.
- Applications in language teaching and second language acquisition. Speech act research informs the teaching of pragmatic competence and how non-native speakers acquire appropriate speech act usage.
- Analysis of speech acts in specialized institutional discourse such as courtroom settings, doctor-patient interactions, customer service encounters, and political debates. This reveals the specialized speech act patterns in these contexts.
- Cross-linguistic research on speech acts in different languages and the challenges in translating them across languages and cultures.
- Ethnographic and anthropological studies examining speech act conventions and repertoires in different cultural communities.

2.2 Appraisal Frameworks

Appraisal frameworks significantly advance the study of interpersonal and evaluative meaning and its role in textuality. An appraisal reveals how language dynamically manages social relations. The theory provides fundamental concepts and analytical tools to systematically investigate evaluation as a meaning-making resource in society.

2.2.1 Martin & White’s (2005) Appraisal Frameworks

The appraisal framework was developed by linguists James Martin and Peter White to systematically analyze how language is used to evaluate, adopt stances, and construct textual personas. Appraisal looks at interpersonal meaning-making and how writers/speakers linguistically negotiate attitudes, align with certain positions, and manage intersubjective distance with their readers. In their seminal 2005 book *The Language of Evaluation*, Martin and White propose three main components of appraisal analysis: *Attitude*, *Engagement*, and *Graduation*. The three components are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Components of appraisal framework

Components of appraisal framework	Purpose and intention
Attitude	Deal with emotional evaluations, judging things positively or negatively. This includes affect (emotional responses), judgment (moral assessments), and appreciation (aesthetic values).
Engagement	Examine rhetorical resources for expanding or contracting dialogic space, managing intersubjective positioning, and aligning readers to certain stances.
Graduation	Attend to grading phenomena, scaling semantic intensity up and down. This includes force (intensify or soften attitudes) and focus (sharp or blur boundaries between categories).

Together, these appraisal resources allow speakers/writers to linguistically negotiate evaluations, align readers with specific values and positions, and construct rhetorical personas. Appraisal theorists analyze patterns in appraisal usage across texts and genres. The framework provides robust analytical tools to systematically study language evaluation.

2.2.2 Appraisal Strategies and Applications

The appraisal framework serves as a robust guide, delineating linguistic techniques to convey diverse forms of evaluation. Its core objectives span multifaceted aspects, which are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Linguistic devices in appraisal analysis

Components of appraisal framework	Linguistic devices
Attitude	Is conveyed through affect (emotional words), judgment (ethics words), and appreciation (aesthetic words). Resources like modal verbs and metaphors also express speaker attitudes.
Engagement	Employ pronouns, reporting verbs, modal adjuncts and other devices to expand/contract dialogic space around stances. Speakers or writers adopt dialogically expansive or contractive postures.
Graduation	Use force (intensifiers, quantifiers, repetition) to adjust semantic intensity. Focus (sharpeners, softeners) narrows/broadens category boundaries between poles.

Appraisal analysis has been applied in many discourse studies across academia, media, organizations and politics. It provides insights into how speakers or writers express viewpoints, build rapport, and rhetorically position readers. Research examples include analyzing evaluation in news discourse, corporate social responsibility reports, advertising language and political speeches. Appraisal reveals the ideological dimensions of texts through the systematic study of evaluation.

2.2.3 Interpersonal Meaning and Social Relations

A major contribution of appraisal theory is illuminating the interpersonal metafunction of language. Appraisal frameworks reveal how evaluative language negotiates social relations by construing value systems, aligning subjectivities, and rhetorically positioning readers. Appraisal is concerned with the intersubjective aspects of meaning-making. The use of engagement, attitude and graduation resources reflects speakers' or writers' stances toward their message, its validity, and the addressees. Appraisal analysis thus provides insights into the linguistic construction of social personas. Research has also examined the dialogic nature of appraisal and how evaluations are

co-constructed interactively. Speakers/writers expand or contract dialogic space around views to increase or decrease alternativity. Furthermore, appraisal resources are culturally variable. Studies find cross-cultural differences in what is considered explicit engagement or intensified graduation. Appraisal conventions reflect cultural value systems.

2.3 Previous Studies

2.3.1 Indictment Analysis from Distinct Perspectives

A number of studies have conducted discourse, genre or textual analysis of indictments from different angles. These include:

Maley (1994) examined indictments through the lens of temporal sequencing and rhetorical organization. She analyzed how indictments narrate events in chronological order but also recursively return to earlier points to fill in details. Maley demonstrated the rhetorical techniques of foregrounding, backgrounding, summation and elaboration used to structure textual progression in indictments. She also showed how factual details are selectively included or excluded to shape reader interpretations. Her close analysis reveals how indictments methodically construct a plausible account that justifies charges while also persuasively positioning facts from the prosecution's viewpoint.

Tiersma (1999) conducted a comparative textual analysis of indictments and judicial opinions. He examined structural patterns and lexicogrammatical features in a corpus of indictments and court judgments. Tiersma found that indictments and opinions exhibit similarities in formulaic language, lexical density, passive voice usage, nominalization, and legal terminology. However, indictments have a more varied and dramatic narrative structuring of events and factual details compared to the logical reasoning style of court opinions. Tiersma's study illustrates how indictments utilize certain linguistic resources to achieve formality, precision and structural composition comparable to judicial genres. His analysis highlights intertextual relationships between indictments and other legal documents.

Eades (2010) studied indictments from a sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on how social variables impact language patterns. Through ethnographic observation and textual analysis, she examined variations in indictments based on factors like defendant race, social class, power relations and community norms. Eades found differences in lexical choice, passivation, nominalization and other features when indicting defendants of higher versus lower social standing. Her analysis demonstrates how prosecutorial decisions on the stylistic shaping of indictments reflect ingroup/outgroup identities, stereotypes, and socio-political ideologies within a community.

Phan Tuan Ly (2022) utilized appraisal theory to analyze interpersonal meaning in a sample Vietnamese indictment. He examined patterns in attitude, engagement and graduation to reveal how prosecutors marshal evaluative language to assert charges and orient readers. His analysis provided initial insights into the rhetorical functions of indictments from an appraisal perspective. The miscellaneous approaches to indictment analysis are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Approaches to the indictment studies

Authors	Approaches	Research foci
Tiersma	Textual analysis	Structural patterns and intertextuality with judicial opinions
Maley	Rhetorical analysis	Temporal sequencing and rhetorical organization
Eades	Sociolinguistic analysis	Social factors influencing language use
Phan Tuan Ly	Appraisal analysis	Interpersonal meaning and evaluation in indictments

2.3.2 Limitations of Previous Studies

While existing research has yielded some useful findings, there are certain limitations to previous studies analyzing indictments. These studies have tended to concentrate only on specific lexical, structural or stylistic features in isolation, without utilizing a holistic analytic framework. Most do not leverage robust linguistic theories like speech act or appraisal theory to provide theoretical grounding. Their scope is frequently restricted only to indictments in a single legal jurisdiction, limiting generalizability. There has been limited systematic coding or quantitative analysis of linguistic patterns using corpus techniques. The intertextual relationships of indictments with other legal genres are underexamined. Few studies thoroughly examine how rhetorical features link to the pragmatic aims or social functions of indictments. There is little comparative analysis across prosecution contexts, types of crimes, and legal systems. The research has rarely connected findings to implications for legal practice or the efficacy of indictments as genres. Overall, the studies have been primarily descriptive rather than providing strong theoretical explanations grounded in linguistics. More rigorous and holistic analysis of the indictments is needed.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Searle's taxonomy categorizes speech acts into five classes based on purpose and direction of fit. Edmondson's (1981) taxonomy offers a more comprehensive framework with ten categories capturing diverse communicative functions. Integrating these frameworks provides a robust conceptual foundation for analyzing speech acts and intentions across specialized discourse domains. The two conceptual frameworks are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Conceptual framework

Framework	Applications
Searle's Taxonomy	- Analyze communicative acts across contexts
Edmondson's Taxonomy	- Examine multifaceted communicative functions

The appraisal framework developed by Martin and White provides tools to systematically examine interpersonal meaning and evaluative language use in texts. This approach can offer useful insights into prosecutorial strategies when applied to analyzing indictments. Specifically, appraisal analysis categorizes the linguistic resources used to convey evaluations and align readers.

Table 6. Application of appraisal framework to analyze indictments

Appraisal Resource	Analytical focus
Attitude	Prosecutor's emotions, judgments, and aesthetics regarding the case
Engagement	Prosecutor's alignment with readers
Graduation	Scaling intensity up/down to emphasize/blur perspectives

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research adopts a qualitative textual analysis approach, employing the speech act and appraisal frameworks to encode linguistic elements. This method aims to dissect linguistic attributes and expressions to better comprehend the subtleties of language actions and evaluations within the research text.

3.2 Data

- **Dataset composition:** The dataset consists of 10 English indictments sourced from legal databases like Westlaw and LexisNexis. These indictments are purposefully selected to represent a diverse range of criminal cases. These indictments are coded from EIN01 to EIN10 and according to types of speech acts which they denote: Action (A₁), Appeal (A₂), Assertive (A₃), Commissive (C₁), Criticism (C₂), Declaration (D₁), Descriptive (D₂), Directive (D₃), Expressive (E), Inquiry (I) Time (T). More particularly. These indictments are shortened as short as possible, and the names of defendants in the indictments were changed.

Table 7. The codes of indictments

EIN01	EIN02	EIN03	EIN04	EIN05	EIN06	EIN07	EIN08	EIN09	EIN10
A ₁	A ₁	A ₂	A ₂	A ₃	A ₁	A ₂	A ₃	A ₃	A ₁
A ₃	A ₃	A ₃	C ₂	C ₁	A ₃	C ₂	C ₂	C ₁	C ₂
D ₁	C ₂	C ₁	D ₁	C ₂	C ₁	D ₁	D ₁	D ₁	D ₃
T	D ₁	D ₃	D ₃	D ₁	D ₂	E	D ₂	D ₂	E
	T	I	E	I	D ₃	I	E	E	I
			T			T	T	I	T
Westlaw	Westlaw	LexisNexis	Westlaw	LexisNexis	Westlaw	LexisNexis	Westlaw	LexisNexis	Westlaw

- **Crime variation:** The chosen indictments cover a wide spectrum of crimes, including fraud, assault, theft, and other offenses. This intentional inclusion of various crime types aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of linguistic nuances within distinct legal contexts.

- **Research enrichment:** By incorporating different types of criminal cases, this dataset offers an enriched foundation for analyzing linguistic patterns and legal discourse. It allows for a more subtle exploration of language usage within the complexities of diverse legal scenarios.

3.3 Data Analysis

- **Speech act coding:** Utilizing Searle's (1969) taxonomy, speech acts within indictments are classified, enhancing comprehension of communicative intents and expressions found in legal texts.

- **Appraisal analysis:** Martin and White's (2005) attitude, engagement, and graduation systems dissect evaluative language, unveiling opinions, certainty, and involvement in the texts.

3.4 Limitations

- **Limited sample:** The small purposive sample restricts broad applicability and generalizability of findings to larger populations.

- **Reliability concerns:** Analysis reliability hinges on the quality of coding, impacting the accuracy of interpretations.

- **Contextual constraints:** Textual analysis might not fully encompass contextual subtleties embedded within legal documents.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Speech act analysis of indictments

4.1.1 Distribution of Speech Act Types in Indictments

The analysis of speech act distribution within indictments involves a comprehensive examination of linguistic acts (or speech acts) prevalent in legal charges.

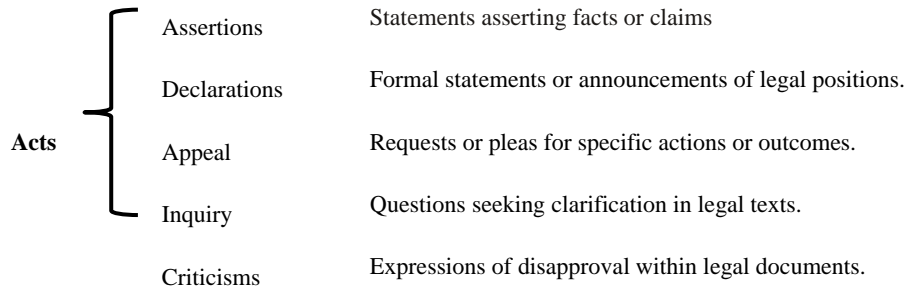


Figure 2. Speech act types in indictments

Table 8 reveals each collected indictment encompasses at least four acts in which assertives and declarations are the predominant speech acts across the documents, unveiling their fundamental roles within legal frameworks. Meticulous scrutiny uncovers that these acts consistently feature prominently across indictments, highlighting their dominance and strategic use by prosecutors. Specifically, assertives allow plain statements about alleged events, involved parties and the sequence of happenings. They provide a straightforward structure for laying out accusations. Declarations proclaim factual information like times, locations and identities to establish the case background. Both acts have a factual nature that is optimal for logically building a case grounded in alleged and known facts. Additionally, assertives state prosecutorial opinions and inferences about factual implications, enabling logical reasoning from details. Declarations introduce indisputable facts into the record. The repetitive use of these acts rhetorically emphasizes the prosecution’s version as factual truth, lending authority. Table 8 below summarizes the number of speech acts, which are utilized in each indictment, and their distributions that refer to the times they appear in the indictments.

Table 8. Distribution of speech acts in indictments

Indictments	EIN 01	EIN 02	EIN 03	EIN 04	EIN 05	EIN 06	EIN 07	EIN 08	EIN 09	EIN 10
Speech acts	4	5	5	6	4	5	6	6	6	6
Distribution	5	8	20	12	15	14	15	17	13	17

The result shows that the indictment EIN03 for financial fraud has the most speech acts (20 acts) as it details the actions and events surrounding the case. It specifically describes the false promises the defendant John Smith made to defraud the victim Jane Doe into investing in the fake company ABC. It also presents the victim's demand for her investment to be returned and Smith's refusal. Finally, it states the requests for punishment and restitution for the victim. Indictments EIN08 for rape (17 acts) and EIN10 for suicide (17 acts) also have high speech act frequency as they depict in detail the related events, actions between parties, and case progression. EIN08 describes the defendant's rape, the victim's testimony, and requests for punishment. EIN10 presents the circumstances leading to the victim's death and requests for improved mental health support systems. In contrast, EIN01 for embezzlement has the fewest speech acts (5 acts) as it concisely summarizes the defendant's misuse of public funds for personal gain during a specific timeframe. It lacks extended details about particular actions or events. The compact nature of EIN01 accounts for its lower speech act frequency compared to the more descriptive EIN03, EIN08, and EIN10.

4.1.2 Communicative Functions of Speech Acts

Speech acts serve key communicative functions within indictments to logically build the prosecution's case.

Group I: Action acts

The purpose of the Action group of speech acts is to provide direction for the progression of the legal case. Action acts guide the case forward logically.

First, directives (D3) seek specific actions or changes in behavior. Their function is to explicitly request or demand certain conduct, judgments or penalties. For instance, EIN04 states "We urge the court to severely punish Mr. John Smith for his intentional criminal act." This directive calls for punishment, showing how directives directly request actions. Then, inquiries (I) elicit additional information or clarification. Their function is to pose questions that establish specifics or resolve ambiguities. For example, EIN05 asks "They must be convicted of kidnapping and serve the maximum sentence for this heinous crime." This inquiry seeks clear sentencing, illustrating inquiries clarifying legal matters. Finally, temporal acts (T) establish timeframes and sequences. Their function is to frame events at precise times and dates. For example, EIN02 states "This indictment affirms that on the 12th of October 2023, the defendant assaulted the victim." The time act situates the alleged crime, demonstrating how temporal acts chronologically order details.

The coordinated functions of directives, inquiries, and temporal acts propel the case forward by requesting actions, clarifying information, and sequencing events. This provides direction and logical progression for the prosecution's argument through the Action group of speech acts.

Group II: Appeal acts

It is easy to recognize that the appeal group of speech acts is to strategically influence perceptions, reactions and judgments regarding the

case. Appeal acts aim to persuasively shape how the case is viewed. The complementary functions of appeals and expressives allow systematically making both reasoned, logical pleas for desired outcomes as well as emotional plays to generate sympathy. While appeals overtly state what the prosecution seeks, expressives spotlight the human cost. This coordinated approach allows the prosecution to persuasively shape perceptions of events and defendants by influencing both minds and hearts. Appeal acts strategically combine logic and emotion to convince the court to see the case as the prosecution wants it to be seen. Their persuasive purpose is achieved through sentiment and reason.

Appeals (A2) directly request specific outcomes, actions or judgments. Their function is to unambiguously communicate the desired rulings, penalties or results prosecutors want handed down. For instance, EIN03 states "We appeal for justice to deter similar frauds in the future." This appeal requests a just outcome to deter further fraud. Meanwhile, expressives (E) convey emotions, condolences, sympathies, etc. Their function is to elicit sentimental responses. For example, EIN08 expresses "Our hearts go out to Amanda and all victims affected by abuse and sexual assault." This expresses sympathy, illustrating expressives generating compassion.

Group III. Declaration and Commissive

The purpose of the declaration and commissive group is to establish facts and commitments for the legal record. These acts formally state evidence and promise to anchor the prosecution's argument.

First, declarations (D1) formally proclaim factual information like times, identities and events. Their function is to introduce undisputed facts into the record that provide an evidentiary backbone. For example, EIN07 declares "Witnesses stated the armed assailant entered the bank and demanded money." This establishes key details as facts. Then, commissives (C1) commit to future actions or positions. Their function is to stake claims regarding future conduct, convey promised actions. For instance, EIN05 states "We pledge to continue protecting the public from similar offenders." This commits to future safety, illustrating commissives. Finally, assertives (A3) make factual statements about the case. Their function is put forth the prosecution's version of events as factual claims. For example, EIN01 asserts "The defendant embezzled public funds during the specified period." This alleges illegal actions as facts.

Together, declarations formally document evidence, commissives promise future actions, and assertives present alleged facts. This provides a robust factual account and commitments that give the prosecution's case credibility and direction. The collective function is to establish an authoritative evidentiary record and direction through undisputed facts, future promises, and factual claims.

Group IV: Descriptive and Criticism

The purpose of the descriptive and criticism group is to vividly portray events and pass judgment. Descriptives (D2) offer detailed accounts of people, places and happenings. Their function is to paint a picture with words, transporting the audience to the scene. For example, EIN08 provides a description of the crime scene: "The vault door was blown open, the floor littered with shredded bills. The thick scent of gunpowder lingered in the air." This imagery allows the audience to envision the aftermath. In contrast, criticisms (C2) make negative judgments and express disapproval. Their function is to denounce actions, behaviors or situations. For instance, EIN02 declares "The defendant's greed and disregard for others is shocking and intolerable." This condemns the moral failings.

Together, descriptives and criticisms complement each other. Descriptives sketch an objective picture of events and conditions. This gives the audience context to understand what happened. Then, criticisms build on that foundation with subjective opinions and unfavorable judgements. This teaches the audience how to interpret the descriptions. The collective function is to influence perceptions by coupling vivid portrayals with harsh condemnation. The prosecution uses these acts to shape the audience's impressions and direct their interpretations. Descriptives draw the picture, while criticisms tell the audience how to see it. This couples emotional appeal with logical arguments to make a compelling case. The prosecution marshals these speech acts to vividly recreate events and pass severe judgment, driving their narrative.

4.2 Appraisal Analysis of Indictments

4.2.1 Strategies for Construing the Prosecutor's Attitude

Prosecutors frequently express strong negative attitudes toward defendants through emotional language like "confronted aggressively" (EIN02) and harsh moral judgments like "utterly irresponsible act" (EIN04). They use affect terms, appreciation resources, and metaphors to provoke reactions against defendants. However, I believe relying heavily on negative emotions risks perceptions of bias rather than rationality. While righteous anger has its place, prosecutorial attitudes aligned solely with inflamed passions rather than facts and justice principles may undermine credibility and dehumanize defendants.

Some caution is warranted to ensure attitudes remain grounded in evidence and balanced with recognition of human frailties. The facts themselves should speak louder than naked appeals to emotion. While severe condemnation is fitting for egregious acts, prosecutors should also acknowledge mitigations and not exaggerate consequences. Justice is best served when prosecutorial attitudes flow from reasoned evaluations of merit rather than attempts to inflame prejudice. The wisest course lies in constraining attitudes to those rationally entailed by evidence and justice rather than dramatically demonizing defendants. Facts and ethical analysis should drive attitudes more than emotional appeals. Table 9 summarizes the typical strategies for construing the prosecutor's attitude, which were collected from the data. These strategies provide a clear insight into the prosecutor's stance in each case, from detailing events to strong condemnation, proposing legal and societal improvements, and offering specific guidance and recommendations for the court.

Table 9. Strategies for construing the prosecutor's attitude

Order	Strategies	Indictments
1	Full assertion of information, no delay	EIN03
2	Clear condemnation of criminal actions	EIN04
3	Detailed description of events	EIN06
4	Strong criticism of criminal behavior	EIN08
5	Strong commitment to community protection	EIN05
6	Demand for severe punishment	EIN09
7	Explicit criticism of discriminatory and violent actions	EIN02
8	Call for enforcement of justice	EIN07
9	Proposal for improving mental health support for adolescents	EIN10
10	Specific guidance and recommendations for the court	EIN01

4.2.2 Use of Engagement Resources to Align Readers

Prosecutors strategically utilize engagement tools to sway readers' alignment with their perspective. The prosecution employs inclusive pronouns like 'our' in EIN05 and EIN07, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and inviting readers to unite behind the cause being advocated. By employing declarative statements rather than interrogative ones, as seen in EIN03, EIN08, and EIN10, they assert viewpoints as established facts, assuming a common moral ground with readers. Rhetorical questions, such as those evident in EIN09, guide readers toward predetermined conclusions, subtly reinforcing the prosecutor's stance. These tactics collectively narrow the space for dialogue, shaping readers' inclination towards embracing the prosecution's viewpoint as the normative position. However, while seeking solidarity, an excessively controlled dialogue could potentially undermine the fairness of legal proceedings. It's crucial for readers to maintain independence, ensuring impartial judgment based on factual analysis rather than succumbing to persuasive tactics. In my view, prosecutors should encourage critical examination of facts and charges, fostering active and reasoned deliberation. Persuasion should prompt reflection on principles rather than mere compliance. Advocacy, while essential, must be balanced with the prosecutor's duty as a guardian of justice. Striking a balance between advocacy and objectivity is imperative. These resources include various linguistic tools such as assertive statements, declarations, criticisms, appeals, directives, expressiveness, and elements of time, actions, descriptives, and inquiries, each used differently in the context of the respective indictments as in Table 10.

Table 10. Use of engagement resources to align readers

Indictment	Engagement Resources
EIN01	Assertive, Time, Actions, Descriptives
EIN02	Assertive, Time, Action, Criticism, Declaration
EIN03	Assertive, Commissive, Directive, Appeal
EIN04	Declaration, Criticism, Directive, Appeal, Expressive
EIN05	Declaration, Assertive, Criticism, Inquiry, Commissive
EIN06	Assertive, Descriptive, Action, Commissive, Directive
EIN07	Declaration, Criticism, Inquiry, Assertive, Appeal, Expressive
EIN08	Declaration, Descriptive, Assertive, Expressive, Commissive, Directive
EIN09	Declaration, Descriptive, Assertive, Inquiry, Commissive, Expressive
EIN10	Action, Declaration, Criticism, Directive, Inquiry, Expressive

4.2.3 Graduation for Adjusting Emphasis

Prosecutors adeptly manipulate the intensity of their arguments, employing repetition, quantifiers, metaphors, and other gradative techniques. Instances like EIN02's repetition of "severe injuries" or EIN04's use of "utterly irresponsible" intensify the gravity of the crimes, while terms such as "significant financial harm" (EIN03) or "maximum sentence" (EIN05) heighten the impact. Metaphors like "fiercely burning" (EIN04) or personification as seen in "our hearts ache" (EIN09) further amplify the emotional resonance. These techniques, utilizing quantification and metaphors, magnify the perceived severity of the consequences, shaping readers' perspectives to align with the prosecutors. While it's justifiable for prosecutors to emphasize the gravity of crimes, exaggerating emphasis risks distorting interpretations beyond factual evidence.

In my view, the most prudent approach involves allowing facts and rational arguments to stand independently. Effective rhetoric should derive its intensity from sound logic rather than overly dramatic language. While condemnable acts deserve reproach, sentencing should adhere to impartial jurisprudence rather than emotional impulses. Constructing prosecutorial arguments on objective premises, rather than hyperbolic rhetoric, endows them with the greatest credibility. Achieving justice in determining penalties necessitates a balance between rationality and moral conviction. These instances showcase the various levels of severity, emphasis, and condemnation used by prosecutors across different indictments.

Table 11. Graduation for adjusting emphasis

Indictments	Graduation
EIN01	Orchestrate illicit transfers, concealing the misappropriation of funds
EIN02	Deliberately inflicted bodily harm, causing severe injuries
EIN03	Caused significant financial harm, severe punishment
EIN04	Fiercely burning, utterly irresponsible and unacceptable act
EIN05	Demanded a £200,000 ransom for Mary's safe return, severely punish this kidnapping group
EIN06	Heated argument with his neighbor, fatally stabbing Mr. Smith repeatedly
EIN07	Demanded money from the tellers, strongly request the court punish this repeat offender
EIN08	Violently forced himself upon her, Monstrous actions
EIN09	Disastrous four-car pileup that left three people dead and two more critically injured, strongly urge the harshest punishment allowed
EIN10	Took her own life by overdosing on prescription medications, emphatically demand improved access to quality youth counseling services

4.3 Relationships between Speech Acts and Appraisal

4.3.1 Speech Acts as Means for Enacting Evaluation

Speech acts serve as mechanisms for prosecutors to express appraisal and evaluative meanings. For instance, in EIN02 the criticism act enables harsh condemnation of the defendant's actions as "deliberately endangering the victim's wellbeing." This speech act provides the means for critiquing the assault. Similarly, the appeal act in EIN03 allows requesting "severe punishment" to convey a negative judgment of the fraud. Speech acts thus provide conduits for conveying attitudes like criticizing crimes or appealing penalties. Furthermore, directives like demanding "improved mental health support" in EIN10 enact graduation by intensifying the call for change. Declarations also enact engagement, committing to evidentiary facts like "Witnesses stated" (EIN07). Overall, speech acts facilitate the expression of appraisal resources, enabling prosecutors to evaluatively charge defendants, critique crimes, heighten intensity, and commit to evidence. The bidirectional relationship between speech acts and appraisal demonstrates their interconnection in serving prosecutorial aims.

4.3.2 Appraisal Creating Persuasiveness of Speech Acts

Appraisal resources enhance the rhetorical persuasiveness of speech acts in indictments. For example, strong affect terms like "monstrous actions" (EIN08) make directives for punishment more compelling. Vivid descriptives like "flames fiercely burning" (EIN04) increase engagement by transporting readers to the scene. Intensifying repetition of "violently forced himself upon her" (EIN08) strengthens commands to penalize rape. Judgment metaphors like "hearts ache" (EIN09) give emotional appeal to appeals for justice. Through these techniques, appraisal provides stylistic force and persuasive intensity to speech acts. It makes directives more convincing, declarations more vivid and assertions more dramatic. This generates buy-in from readers. Furthermore, appraisal resources like pronouns ("our hearts") foster identification while criticism ("blatant disregard") cues appropriate interpretations. The prosecutor strategically utilizes appraisal to energize speech acts, shaping reader alignments. This demonstrates appraisal's vital role in imbuing speech acts with rhetorical force.

4.4 Roles of Speech Acts and Appraisal in Aims of Indictments

4.4.1 Asserting Charges and Calling for Court Action

Speech acts and appraisal resources allow prosecutors to assert charges and call for court action. Assertives backed by declaratives directly state allegations like "deliberately inflicted bodily harm" (EIN02) to accuse defendants of crimes. Sharp criticism establishes wrongdoing like "monstrous actions" (EIN08). Vivid descriptions make charges concrete for readers. Then directives like "strongly request the court punish" (EIN07) demand penalties, made more forceful through intensifying the repetition of harm. Commissives commit to proving charges while appeals request judgments. Together, these speech acts authoritatively assert crimes committed, portray their severity through appraisal, and insist on consequences. This enactment of charges and calls for action is strengthened by appraisal resources which heighten intensity, elicit emotions, judge defendants, and align readers. Speech acts and appraisal enable prosecutors to not just make static declarations but persuasively assert, portray, critique and demand in pressing charges.

4.4.2 Constructing the Prosecutor's Stance toward the Case

Prosecutors strategically utilize speech acts and appraisal to construct their stance and alignment toward the case. Assertives backed by evidence from declarations authoritatively state prosecutors' alleged version of events. Vivid descriptions support this narrative like portraying the crime scene (EIN08). Criticisms clearly indicate prosecutors' disapproval of defendants alongside terms like "condemnable" (EIN05) that convey moral outrage. Commands to punish demonstrate prosecutors' adversarial positioning while commitments to protect the public align prosecutors with social order. Inclusive pronouns (EIN05, EIN07) connect prosecutors with the community. Together, these speech acts and appraisal resources allow prosecutors to stake out their moral stance, assign culpability, portray events from their perspective, and announce interests. This enactment of a prosecutorial stance through language facilitates advocacy and alignment.

4.4.3 Creating Persuasive Influence on Readers

Appraisal and strategic speech act usage allow prosecutors to persuasively shape readers' interpretations and conclusions. Emotive language, metaphors and repetitively harsh condemnation shape negative perceptions of defendants. Vivid descriptives make events salient for readers while directives insist, they demand justice. Assertives present prosecutors' version as factual truth while foreclosing alternative perspectives. Criticisms provide cues for appropriate judgments. Limited interrogatives (EIN09) guide readers to predetermined outcomes. Perspective-taking through inclusive pronouns fosters identification with prosecutors. This creative shaping of readers' interpretations through speech acts and appraisal facilitates persuasion and advocacy aims. However, an excessively controlled dialogue risks undermining reasoned deliberation and impartiality. Prosecutors should balance advocacy aims with upholding justice principles.

5. Conclusion

This study conducted an innovative linguistic analysis of indictments in English using speech act theory and appraisal frameworks. The analysis of 10 sample indictments revealed prevalent use of assertives describing alleged facts and declarations introducing evidence. These served an evidentiary function in building the prosecution's case. Meanwhile, directives made charges and demands while appeals and expressives persuaded through logic and emotion. Criticisms and vivid descriptions condemned defendants and portrayed events. Together these speech acts enabled prosecutors to assert charges, portray crimes, demand penalties and align readers against defendants. Furthermore, appraisal analysis categorized multifaceted techniques for construing the prosecutor attitudes, aligning readers and graduating intensity. Negative affect, appreciation and metaphors conveyed condemnation while repetitions and quantifiers amplified gravity. Declaratives and directives enacted engagement through proclaiming facts and demanding actions. Pronouns and rhetorical questions also aligned readers with prosecutors' stances. These appraisal resources operationalized persuasion and advocacy aims.

Overall, the study demonstrates prosecutors strategically combine speech acts and appraisal to assert charges, construct prosecutorial stances, and shape reader interpretations. The findings provide novel insights into the discourse features and persuasive functions of indictments from applied linguistic perspectives. However, as a qualitative textual analysis of a small sample, the research has limitations in scope and generalizability. Further studies should analyze larger corpora across jurisdictions, crimes and legal systems using mixed methods. More context is needed regarding extra-textual factors influencing language choices. Future research can expand the frameworks for cross-cultural analysis of indictments and other legal genres.

Despite limitations, this research makes worthwhile contributions to understanding the complex interplay of speech acts, appraisal and persuasion in legal discourse. The frameworks provide transferable analytic tools applicable to diverse texts. Practically, the findings can help prosecutors craft more deliberate and impactful indictments through informed language choices. Overall, this innovative linguistic study enriches comprehension of the rhetorical properties of indictments specifically and legal genres broadly. It also advances conceptual understandings of how speech acts and evaluative language construct social relations and persuasive discourse more generally.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the University of Law and the Faculty of Legal English for their invaluable support throughout this endeavor. I am deeply indebted to my esteemed colleagues in the Faculty of Legal English, whose insightful feedback and unwavering encouragement were instrumental in shaping this work. A special thanks to those who assisted in proofreading and refining the manuscript.

Author' contributions

Ly Ngoc Toan was solely responsible for the study design, data collection, drafting and revising the manuscript. As the single author, Ly Ngoc Toan conducted all aspects of the research and writing process independently and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. The author solely funded this work independently without external financial support.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

Reference

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cao, D. (2007). *Translating law*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853599552>
- Eades, D. (2010). *Sociolinguistics and the legal process*. Channel View Publications. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847692559>
- Edmondson, W. (1981). *Spoken discourse: A model for analysis*. Longman.
- Kurzon, D. (1986). *It is hereby performed...: Explorations in legal speech acts*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pb.vii.6>
- Maley, Y. (1994). The language of the law. In J. Gibbons (Ed.), *Language and the Law*. Routledge.
- Marmor, A. (2014). Speech acts and the First Amendment. *Legal Theory*, 20(4), 1-24.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230511910>
- Nir, R., & Romanov, D. (2017). Who calls the shots: An appraisal analysis of two landmark US Supreme Court decisions. *Language & Law/Linguagem e Direito*, 4(1), 112-133.
- Phan, T. L. (2022). Appraisal analysis of evaluative language in a Vietnamese indictment. *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*, 29(1), 1-20.
- Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139173438>
- Tiersma, P. M. (1999). *Legal language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

APPENDIX

Indictments	Acts	Contents
EIN01	A ₁ -A ₃ -D ₂ -T	In the United States District Court, Southern District of New York, this indictment (Assertive) asserts that between January 2018 and March 2021 (Time), the defendant, John Smith, systematically embezzled public funds. The defendant, a government official, purportedly diverted financial allocations intended for public welfare programs to personal accounts. During the specified period (Time), the defendant used his position to orchestrate illicit transfers (Actions), concealing the misappropriation of funds. These actions transpired during office hours (Time) and involved falsifying official documents to cover up the misdeeds (Descriptives).
Total	4	5
EIN02	A ₁ -A ₃ -C ₂ -D ₁ -T	In the Crown Court of England and Wales, this indictment (Assertive) affirms that on the 12th of October 2023 (Time), the defendant, Mr. James Anderson, deliberately inflicted bodily harm upon Mr. Robert Johnson (Action). The incident occurred at the corner of High Street and Elm Avenue in Oxford (Time), where the defendant aggressively confronted the victim, instigating a physical altercation (Action). During this confrontation (Time), the defendant, with willful intent, physically assaulted Mr. Johnson, causing severe injuries (Action). This act of violence (Criticism) is condemned as it deliberately endangered the victim's well-being. Furthermore, this indictment serves as a declaration (Declaration) of the prosecution's intent to pursue charges against Mr. Anderson for the aforementioned offense.
Total	05	09
EIN03	A ₂ -A ₃ -C ₁ -D ₃ -I	On March 15, 2022, the defendant John Smith (Assertive) intentionally defrauded the victim Jane Doe (Assertive) by making false promises about investing in Company ABC. (Assertive) Mr. Smith approached Ms. Doe and said "I have a terrific investment opportunity for you. If you invest \$50,000 in my company ABC, I promise (Commissive) you will double your profit in 6 months." (Assertive) Based on this promise, Ms. Doe agreed to invest \$50,000 in Company ABC. (Assertive) However, after 6 months, Company ABC had not generated any profit for Ms. Doe. (Assertive) When Ms. Doe requested (Directive) Mr. Smith to return her investment plus the promised profit, he refused and disappeared. (Assertive) Police later investigated and found Mr. Smith did not actually own Company ABC. (Assertive) He had used the fake company name to defraud Ms. Doe of her \$50,000 investment. (Assertive) Mr. Smith's actions violated the law and caused significant financial harm to the victim. (Assertive) We ask (Directive) the court to punish Mr. Smith severely for his fraudulent actions. We request (Directive) he repay Ms. Doe the amount defrauded plus interest. We recommend (Commissive) the court consider aggravating factors like his premeditated, intentional fraud and abuse of the victim's trust. (Assertive) Finally, we appeal (Appeal) for justice to deter similar frauds in the future. (Assertive) We trust (Assertive) the court's fair and transparent judgement. (Appeal)
Total	05	20
EIN04	A ₂ -C ₂ -D ₁ -D ₃ -E-T	(Time) On May 15, 2022, police received reports of a fire at a furniture store on Orchard Street in the city of Bristol. (Declaration) Upon arriving, they found flames fiercely burning the store and quickly called firefighters to extinguish the blaze. (Declaration) The fire was then contained but had completely destroyed the store. (Declaration) Police later identified the arsonist as John Smith, a customer who had previously bought items from the store. (Declaration) Mr. Smith admitted he deliberately set the fire to get revenge on the store owner after a prior dispute. (Declaration) Expressive This was an utterly irresponsible and unacceptable act. (Criticism) The fire completely destroyed the store, causing estimated damages of £100,000. (Declaration) We urge the court to severely punish Mr. John Smith for his intentional criminal act. (Directive) He must compensate the store owner and serve a minimum 5-year sentence for destroying someone else's property. (Criticism) We hope this case will sternly deter any acts of vandalism against community property. (Appeal) Finally, Expressive we express our deepest condolences to the store owner for this tremendous loss. (Expressive)
Total	06	12
EIN05	A ₃ -C ₁ -C ₂ -D ₁ -I	On May 20, 2022, police received a report about 20-year-old Mary who mysteriously disappeared after leaving home for work. (Declaration) Her family searched everywhere but found no trace of her. (Declaration) Police later determined Mary had been kidnapped by a group of strangers. (Assertive) The investigation revealed the kidnappers demanded a £200,000 ransom for Mary's safe return. (Assertive) Mary's family complied and transferred the money but still heard nothing about her. (Assertive) Police then arrested the 3 male kidnappers while trying to flee the country. (Assertive) The group admitted to kidnapping and unlawfully detaining Mary for ransom. (Assertive) They released her in a remote area after receiving the payment. (Assertive) This was a condemnable criminal act. (Criticism) Luckily Mary did not suffer any serious injury. (Declaration) We urge the court to severely punish this kidnapping group. (Inquiry) They must be convicted of kidnapping and serve the maximum sentence for this heinous crime. (Assertive) Commissive We pledge to continue protecting the public from

		similar offenders in the future. (Commissive)
Total	05	15
EIN06	A₁ - A₃ - C₁ - D₂ - D₃	On January 5th, 2023, police received a 911 call reporting a body found at a residence in the suburbs of London. (Assertive) Officers arrived at the scene and discovered the deceased victim, Mr. James Smith, with multiple stab wounds. (Descriptive) Preliminary investigation determined the cause of death to be homicide from excessive blood loss. (Assertive) Further probing revealed Mr. Smith had a heated argument with his neighbor, Mr. John Wells, the night prior. (Assertive) Upon extensive questioning, Mr. Wells admitted he stabbed Mr. Smith to death in a fit of rage during their dispute. (Assertive) He recounted going to Mr. Smith's home, confronting him about property boundaries, and a violent fight ensuing. (Descriptive) In his statement, Mr. Wells described pulling out a knife and fatally stabbing Mr. Smith repeatedly. (Descriptive) After his confession, Mr. Wells was promptly arrested by police for the murder of Mr. Smith. (Action) Search warrants uncovered the murder weapon and blood-stained clothes hidden in Mr. Wells' home. (Assertive) This was an unconscionable crime that severed a precious human life. (Commissive) We strongly condemn such a merciless act of violence. (Commissive) The perpetrator must face the fullest extent of the law and be handed the harshest maximum sentence for such a reprehensible offense. (Directive) We are committed to pursuing justice and protecting the safety of our citizens. (Commissive)
Total	05	14
EIN07	A₂ - C₂ - D₁ - E - I - T	(Time) On the afternoon of June 10th, 2022, police received a report of an armed robbery at a local bank in Los Angeles. (Declaration) Witnesses stated that at approximately 2 PM, an armed assailant entered the bank wearing a ski mask and demanded money from the tellers. (Declaration) He waved a handgun aggressively and threatened to shoot if they did not comply. (Declaration) The tellers filled a bag with over \$100,000 in cash which the robber then seized before fleeing out the door. (Declaration) He jumped into a parked getaway car outside the bank and sped off. (Declaration) The vehicle was later found abandoned a few miles away. (Declaration) Through investigation, the perpetrator was identified as Frank Booth who had previous convictions for similar armed robberies. (Declaration) His fingerprints were matched to those recovered from the getaway vehicle. (Declaration) This was an extremely dangerous and brazen crime that threatened innocent lives. (Criticism) We strongly request the court punish this repeat offender to the fullest possible extent. (Inquiry) The perpetrator must face charges of armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, and grand theft for terrorizing the bank and community. (Declaration) We urge the judicial system to take all efforts to keep dangerous criminals like this off our streets. (Appeal) The public's safety and peace of mind must be protected at all costs. (Appeal) Our hearts go out to the traumatized victims of this senseless crime. (Expressive) Justice must prevail.
Total	06	15
EIN08	A₃ - C₂ - D₁ - D₂ - E - T	(Time) On the night of May 5th, 2022, a young woman was admitted to the local hospital showing signs of sexual assault. (Declaration) The victim, Amanda, was accompanied by police to whom she reported being raped behind a bar downtown earlier that evening. (Declaration) She was badly shaken and had visible bruising on her arms and neck. (Descriptive) Amanda told investigators she was waiting for a friend outside the bar when she was approached by a man named Tyler who offered to buy her a drink. (Declaration) After conversing briefly, Tyler led her behind the building and proceeded to violently force himself upon her despite loud protests. (Declaration) After the assault, Tyler fled while Amanda contacted police. (Declaration) Detectives identified and arrested Tyler the next day based on Amanda's description. (Assertive) He admitted to the sexual assault, claiming the incident was consensual. (Assertive) However, the physical evidence clearly indicated non-consensual attack. (Assertive) This was an extremely traumatic violation of both Amanda's body and trust. (Expressive) Tyler's actions were monstrous and the farthest thing from consensual relations. (Assertive) We strongly condemn the horrific crime of rape and vow to always support survivors in seeking justice. (Commissive) The perpetrator must be prosecuted to the fullest extent for sexual battery and face lengthy imprisonment. (Assertive) Our system must send a message that such dehumanizing acts of violence will not be tolerated. (Commissive) Our hearts go out to Amanda and all victims affected by abuse and sexual assault. (Expressive) Justice must be served.
Total	06	17
EIN09	A₃ - C₁ - D₁ - D₂ - E - I	On the evening of (Time) March 20th, 2022, police responded to a major car accident on Highway 101. (Declaration) At the scene, officers found a disastrous four-car pileup that left three people dead and two more critically injured. (Descriptive) According to eyewitnesses, a car driven by Diane Smith had veered out of control across the median into oncoming traffic, causing the massive collision. (Declaration) Data from the vehicle's event data recorder and a blood sample from Ms. Smith showed she was driving over 100 mph at the time of the crash and had a blood alcohol level twice the legal limit. (Declaration) Officers also found open beer cans inside her car. (Declaration) Interviews with other motorists revealed Ms. Smith had been spotted weaving dangerously between lanes and tailgating cars before losing control. (Assertive) Her reckless actions demonstrated a blatant disregard for others' safety. (Assertive)

		This was an enormous tragedy that claimed innocent lives and forever devastated families. (Expressive) Ms. Smith's choices were inexcusable and cost others their futures. (Assertive) Inquiry We strongly urge the harshest punishment allowed for Ms. Smith, including charges of vehicular manslaughter, DUI, and reckless endangerment. (Inquiry) Her destructive behavior must be duly punished by the full weight of the law. (Assertive) Our system vows to prioritize public safety on the roads and prevent such negligent loss of life. (Commissive) Our hearts ache for the loved ones of those killed and injured in this preventable accident. (Expressive) Justice is sought.
Total	06	13
EIN10	A₁ - C₂ - D₃ - E - I - T	On (Time) the morning of February 2nd, 2023, the body of teenager Stacy Adams was discovered by her parents after she took her own life by overdosing on prescription medications. (Action) Empty pill bottles were found next to her along with a suicide note describing her struggles with severe depression. (Declaration) An investigation into the tragic incident found Stacy had repeatedly reached out for help from both her school counselors and a local youth mental health center during the prior month. (Declaration) However, inadequate resources and attention meant her pleas went largely unanswered. (Criticism) Interviews with classmates revealed Stacy had confided in them about suicidal thoughts due to bullying and isolation. (Declaration) She felt hopeless and uncared for by the very systems meant to support her. (Declaration) This heartbreaking outcome represents a devastating failure of our community's mental health safeguards. (Criticism) We emphatically demand improved access to quality youth counseling services and anti-bullying programs in all schools. (Directive) Every child's wellbeing must be made a top priority. (Expressive) Proper authorities must be directed to immediately address gaps in the mental health support system to prevent similar tragedies. (Inquiry) Young lives depend on taking action. (Expressive) Our hearts ache for Stacy's family and all others impacted by her death. (Expressive) We grieve the loss of someone so dear taken far too soon. (Expressive) As a society, we must do better supporting those struggling with mental health issues. (directive)
Total	06	17