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‘Speaking on the Floor’: An Analysis of Selected Parliamentary Proceedings in the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana

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Abstract

This study explores the communicative dynamics of selected proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana through the lens of Dell Hymes’ Ethnography of Communication theory. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study examines how parliamentarians employ language to construct meaning, negotiate power, and perform their institutional roles within the parliamentary speech community. Four purposively selected parliamentary proceedings were analysed through document analysis, while textual analysis was employed to interpret the data. The findings reveal five major communicative tones within parliamentary discourse: formal, informal, emotional, conflictual, and consensual. Among these, the formal tone emerged as the most dominant, underscoring the institutional and procedural character of parliamentary communication. By adopting an ethnographic perspective, the study provides deeper insight into how language use within parliament both reflects and shapes power relations, governance processes, and societal norms. The study contributes to existing scholarship on political discourse and institutional communication by demonstrating how parliamentary communication extends beyond legislative functions to mirror broader social values, influence public perception, and shape policy outcomes. The findings offer valuable implications for policymakers, communication practitioners, and scholars interested in political communication and discourse studies.

Keywords: Communicative Behaviour, Ethnography of Communication, Ghanaian Parliamentary Discourse, Political Communication

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INTRODUCTION

A speech community comprises individuals who adhere to shared norms and expectations regarding communication, including what is said, as well as when, where, and how it is expressed in a cultural context (Hymes, 1972; Coulthard, 2014). Language use varies across social factors such as class and status, emphasizing the importance of studying communication in context (Haviland, 1996). Ethnography of communication, as conceptualized by Dell Hymes, provides both a theoretical framework and methodological approach for analysing language use within cultural contexts (Carbough, 1989; Hymes, 1964). Classical ethnography extends beyond observation to study social institutions, customs, and codes, offering a holistic lens on human behaviour and communication (Malinowski, 2010; Levi-Strauss et al., 1963).

Ethnography of communication is exploratory, drawing from multiple disciplines to examine real-life communicative events, highlighting both language and its socio-cultural underpinnings (Noy, 2017; Matel, 2009). Initially termed "Ethnography of Speaking" (Hymes, 1962), the framework evolved to encompass all modes of communication, privileging situated meaning over abstract models. Hymes' SPEAKING model comprising Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre offers a systematic approach to analysing speech events and interactions, emphasizing the interrelation of language, social norms, and context (Hymes, 1972, 1974; Bakhtin, 1986).

Empirical studies demonstrate the versatility of the SPEAKING model. Karanfil (2020) analysed political speeches to reveal politeness strategies, while Afful (2007) examined academic viva sessions in Ghana, highlighting formal communicative norms. Fatma et al. (2019) investigated directive speech acts in higher education, and Zand-Vakili et al. (2012) as well as Dawson-Ahmoah (2017) explored speech events in media discourse, illustrating context-dependent patterns of communication. These studies show the applicability of ethnography of communication across verbal and non-verbal interactions and diverse cultural contexts.

In parliamentary discourse, ethnographic approaches have revealed institutional culture, communicative practices, and gendered norms. Crewe (2016) and Ferreno (2022) examined parliaments in the UK and Argentina, uncovering methodological and ethical challenges. Sieborger (2012) analysed parliamentary procedures in South Africa, while in Ghana, Mensah and Wood (2018) and Akuka et al. (2021) explored gendered contributions and politeness strategies, respectively. Despite this, the application of ethnography of communication to Ghanaian parliamentary proceedings remains underexplored, particularly regarding members of parliament's interaction patterns. The study contributes to the literature on parliamentary discourse by applying ethnography of communication to Ghanaian legislative interactions a context where this approach has been minimally applied. Its novelty lies in examining communicative behaviours and tones in a hung parliament, providing empirical insights into the socio-cultural and political dynamics of parliamentary discourse. The study examined selected parliamentary proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana through Hymes' SPEAKING model by focusing on the objectives below:

1. To explore the tones embedded in the selected parliamentary proceedings.
2. To analyse the major communicative behaviours observed in these proceedings.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do the tones embedded in the selected parliamentary proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana influence communication?

2. How are the major communicative behaviours manifested in these proceedings?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ethnography of communication, developed by Dell Hymes (1962, 1974), provides a framework for understanding language use within its social and cultural context. The theory argues that language should not be studied solely through grammatical structures but as part of broader communicative practices shaped by cultural norms, participant relationships, and communicative goals (Hymes, 1964; Saville-Troike, 2003). Carbaugh (1989) explains that ethnography of communication focuses on culturally specific meanings and communicative behaviours within speech communities.

Central to Hymes' framework are concepts such as speech community, speech event, speech act, communicative competence, and patterns of communication (Hymes, 1986). Participation in a speech community requires not only knowledge of language but also understanding socially appropriate speech behaviour (Hymes, 1974). Communication patterns are therefore shaped by social and cultural norms, with meaning often depending on socially shared conventions rather than literal interpretation (Saville-Troike, 2003).

Hymes (1986) further explains that speech acts occur within speech events, which themselves exist within broader speech situations. Speech acts involve communicative actions performed through language, such as requesting, promising, or persuading (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). The theory also introduces communicative competence, which refers not only to grammatical correctness but also to the ability to use language appropriately in specific contexts (Hymes, 1972). Gumperz (1972) similarly defines communicative competence as the ability to select language forms appropriate to particular social situations. An important component of the theory is Hymes' SPEAKING model, which identifies eight elements of communicative events: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre (Hymes, 1974). The model provides a systematic framework for analysing how communication is shaped by contextual and interactional factors.

Empirical studies have demonstrated the applicability of the ethnography of communication across different contexts. Saputro (2014) applied the SPEAKING model to a television talk show and found that communicative roles, goals, and interactional norms shaped discourse patterns. Gumperz (1982) demonstrated that contextualization cues such as prosody, lexical choice, and code-switching influence interpretation in workplace communication. Duranti (1997) also revealed that language use in a Samoan village reflected social hierarchy and identity. Studies on tone and communication further support Hymes' framework. Brown and Levinson (1987) show that politeness strategies maintain social harmony, while Goffman (1967) explains how tone and "face-work" shape interaction. Research on parliamentary discourse by Ilie (2015), Wodak (2011), and Fairclough (2015) reveals that consensual tone promotes cooperation, legitimacy, and effective governance.

Sociolinguistic studies also reinforce the relationship between language and social identity. Fishman (1972) demonstrates that language choice reflects identity and power relations, while

Labov (1972) establishes that language variation is systematic and socially meaningful. Eckert (1989) further reveals how language is used to construct social identity within peer groups.

Despite the extensive scholarship on ethnography of communication, limited studies have applied Hymes' framework to parliamentary discourse in Ghana. Existing research has largely focused on workplaces, classrooms, media discourse, and intercultural communication.

The present study therefore applies Hymes' ethnography of communication theory and the SPEAKING model to analyse selected proceedings of Ghana's 8th Parliament. The framework is appropriate because it enables analysis of how parliamentary communication is shaped by institutional norms, communicative goals, participant roles, and socio-cultural context. By integrating ethnographic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic perspectives, the study contributes to understanding the interactional dynamics of parliamentary discourse in Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically qualitative content analysis, to examine communication dynamics in selected parliamentary proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana. Qualitative content analysis systematically examines textual data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings embedded within communication materials (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2012). The approach was considered suitable because it enables the analysis of large volumes of parliamentary discourse while preserving the contextual subtleties and interactional features of speech events. In addition, the method accommodates both inductive identification of themes and deductive interpretation guided by theoretical frameworks such as Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication. Its structured yet flexible procedures provide depth and rigor in understanding the social and political interactions embedded in parliamentary discourse.

Sampling

Using purposive sampling, the study was guided by the principles of appropriateness and adequacy (Morse & Field, 1996; Creswell & Poth, 2018). An initial documentary pool of 37 Hansard reports were identified from the official website of the Parliament of Ghana by reviewing the Hansard records available for the period January 2021 to December 2022. The search was undertaken to identify parliamentary records containing proceedings relevant to the objectives of the study. Each Hansard report constitutes an official record of parliamentary proceedings associated with a particular sitting date or period and may contain more than one sitting or substantive proceeding. Thus, a Hansard report was not treated as equivalent to a single parliamentary sitting or proceeding.

The 37 Hansard reports constituted the initial documentary pool from which relevant parliamentary proceedings were identified. The researchers examined the contents of the available reports and identified proceedings that were relevant to the focus of the study. Four information-rich proceedings were subsequently purposively selected for detailed analysis: the Electronic Transaction Levy Bill 2021, the Debate on Government Financial Policy 2021, the Debate on Government Financial Policy 2022, and the Vote of Censure Motion on the Minister for Finance. These proceedings were selected because they provided substantial and relevant communicative interactions for examining how parliamentarians used language to negotiate meaning and power within the institutional context of parliamentary discourse.

The 37 Hansard reports are therefore treated as the documentary pool accessed and reviewed for the study rather than as an exhaustive census of all Hansard reports produced by the Eighth Parliament between January 2021 and December 2022. This distinction recognises that individual Hansard reports may contain multiple sittings or proceedings and that the study's analytical focus was on specific information-rich proceedings contained within the broader documentary records. The four selected proceedings constituted the cases for analysis, while the utterance served as the unit of analysis.

Thus, the study employed purposive sampling, specifically information-rich case selection, to select four parliamentary proceedings from the Hansard records of the 8th parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana. The four parliamentary speech events were selected due to their national significance, public attention, and interactional richness. These included the Proceedings on the Electronic Transaction Levy (E-Levy) Bill, 2021; the Proceedings on Debate on Government Financial Policy, 2021; the Proceedings on Debate on Government Financial Policy, 2022; and the Proceedings on the Vote of Censure on the Minister for Finance, 2022. These proceedings were purposively selected because they were considered information-rich cases and of significant public interest characterized by intense debates and high-stakes parliamentary interaction, providing relevant and varied textual data, making them appropriate for examining communicative dynamics (Patton, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection was therefore guided by the relevance and richness of the proceedings to the research question rather than by their statistical representativeness. This approach is consistent with Patton's (2002; 2015) explanation of purposive sampling as the deliberate selection of information-rich cases that enable in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The selected proceedings contained 63, 866 words and 5, 096 sentences representative of the specific speech events or portions selected for analysis, providing sufficient qualitative data for in-depth analysis. representative of the specific speech events or portions selected for analysis. The unit of analysis of this study was the utterance. An utterance was treated as a stretch of spoken discourse produced by a parliamentary participant (MP) within the selected proceedings and considered as a meaningful communicative unit in its immediate context. The unit of analysis was appropriate because the study sought to examine how a member of parliament enacted communicative acts through particular tones, behaviours and functions. Although the selected Hansard records contained 5,096 sentences obtained through Microsoft MS word count, the figure represents the total number of sentences contained in the selected proceedings and provides an indication of the size of the textual corpus.

Data Collection Method

Data were collected through document analysis of official parliamentary Hansards (Bowen, 2009). The Hansards were retrieved from the Ghanaian Parliament's official database to ensure authenticity, accuracy, and reliability of the records. The use of official transcripts provided verbatim accounts of parliamentary debates and interactions, thereby preserving the natural communicative features of the proceedings. Document analysis enabled the systematic extraction of meaningful information relating to parliamentary speech patterns, interactional strategies, and communicative behaviour. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study to ensure objectivity, anonymity, and data integrity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Pseudonyms were used where necessary to protect identities (Yu, 2008), and all sources were properly acknowledged in accordance with APA 7th edition referencing guidelines.

Instrumentation

The primary analytical instrument for the study was a coding framework developed from Dell Hymes' (1972) Ethnography of Communication, particularly the tone component of the SPEAKING model. The framework provided a systematic basis for examining the communicative features of utterances in the selected parliamentary proceedings. It operationalised the eight components of the SPEAKING model; Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre according to their relevance to the parliamentary context under investigation. The framework facilitated the systematic organisation and interpretation of utterances, and interactional patterns, thereby ensuring consistency and analytical rigor in the coding process. The coding framework was theoretically grounded in Hymes' (1972) conceptualisation of communicative events. However, the study does not assume that the SPEAKING model provided predetermined categories for all the identified features identified in the data. In particular, Hymes' concept of Key refers to the tone, manner, or spirit in which a communicative act is performed, but does not prescribe a fixed set of tone categories. Therefore, Key served as the theoretical basis for examining variations in the manner and spirit parliamentary utterances, while the specific tone categories used in the study were developed inductively from recurring patterns identifies in the selected speech events in the Hansard data.

The coding process was conducted at the level of the utterance, which constituted the unit of analysis. Each utterance was examined in relation to its linguistic features, immediate interactional context, communicative purpose, participants, and the institutional setting of parliamentary discourse. Recurring patterns associated with the manner and spirit of the utterances were identified and subsequently grouped into five tone categories: formal, informal, emotional, conflictual, and consensual. Formal tone referred to utterances characterised by institutional, procedural, respectful, and conventionally parliamentary language. Informal tone referred to utterances displaying a relatively conversational, relaxed, or less ceremonially marked manner of expression. Emotional tone captured utterances characterised by affective expression, heightened intensity, or explicit expression of feelings and attitudes. Conflictual tone referred to utterances involving disagreement, challenge, accusation, confrontation, or adversarial positioning. Consensual tone captured utterances displaying agreement, accommodation, support, solidarity, or convergence with another participant's position. Thus, the five tone categories were treated as empirically grounded analytical categories situated within Hymes' broader concept of Key, rather than as categories directly prescribed by Hymes.

The coding framework was operationalised by specifying the meaning of each SPEAKING component within the context of parliamentary discourse, the indicators used to identify each component in the data, and representative examples of the communicative features coded. The operational definitions and coding indicators are presented in table X

Operationalisation of Hymes' SPEAKING framework

Speaking component	Operational definition	Coding indicators	Example
Setting/Scene (S)	Physical, institutional and situational context of parliamentary communication.	Parliamentary chamber; proceeding; debate stage; issue; formal setting.	Table office, this is part of the precinct of parliament,

Participants (P)	Individuals or institutional actors involved in or addressed.	Speaker; MP; Minister; Deputy Minister; Majority/Minority member.	Rt. Hon. Speaker, Hon. member for Bolgatanga central, Hon. minister for finance, Hon. majority leader, Hon. minority leader, Hon. member for Yapei/Kusawgu etc.
Ends (E)	Purposes or intended outcomes of the communicative event or utterance.	Providing Information, expressing position, providing and seeking information, persuading others, influencing decisions, eliciting accountability, and; questioning; challenging; defending; proposing; directing; clarification.	
Act Sequence (A)	Organisation and sequence of communicative acts.	Question–response; claim–counterclaim; proposal–response; accusation–defence.	
Key (K)	Tone, manner or spirit in which an utterance is performed and interpreted.	Formal; informal; emotional; conflictual; consensual; agreement/disagreement; intensity.	Mr Speaker: Hon Members, please give him the opportunity because he is the Hon Leader of the House, Mr. speaker: "He is a sportsman and not "he used to be". He still plays football every weekend. Unfortunately, there are people living in glass houses who do not know poverty so they would visit poverty on the

			poor. Etc.
Instrumentalities (I)	Linguistic means, channels, varieties and registers used.	English; parliamentary register; formal expressions; technical/policy vocabulary.	Face-to-face debate of bills, motions, questions and answer sessions
Norms of Interaction and Interpretation (N)	Institutional and socially recognised rules governing participation and interpretation.	Parliamentary procedures; turn-taking; Speaker's authority; rules of address; conventions.	Mr. Speaker: Hon Deputy Minority Whip, you cannot just close the case like that, Mr. Speaker: "You need leave to insert that further amendment. You have to seek my leave to insert that amendment into your current amendment then I can grant it and you do so," Hon. minister for finance: Mr Speaker, I seek your leave to insert "or any other" after "an instant pay" in the first line read: ….,", Mr Speaker: Hon Members, please give him the opportunity because he is the Hon Leader of the House. *At least, give some modicum of respect to your Hon Leaders.* ,
Genre (G)	Recognised type/form of parliamentary communicative activity.	Bill debate; financial policy debate; motion; question; response; censure motion.	Electronic Transaction Levy (E-Levy) Bill, 2021. Debate on Government

				Financial Policy, 2021. Debate on Government Financial Policy, 2022; Vote of Censure on the Minister for Finance, 2022.

For the Key component, coding was initially sensitised by Hymes' (1972) conceptualisation of Key as the tone, manner, or spirit in which a communicative act is performed. The utterances were examined repeatedly in relation to their linguistic features and immediate interactional contexts to identify recurring patterns in communicative manner. Through this iterative process, the five tone categories—formal, informal, emotional, conflictual, and consensual—were developed and applied to the data. The categories were therefore not treated as predetermined subcategories of Hymes' Key, but as empirically grounded classifications developed within the theoretical framework provided by the Key component.

The coding framework also provided indicators for identifying the communicative behaviours and functions emerging from the analysis. The behaviours were identified inductively from recurring patterns in the utterances, while the communicative functions were interpreted in relation to the purposes and interactional roles performed by the utterances within the parliamentary setting. This approach enabled the coding instrument to accommodate both the theoretically informed contextual analysis provided by the SPEAKING model and the communicative patterns emerging from the data. The table below is the coding framework for Key (Tones).

Coding framework for Key (Tones)

Analytical category	Sub-category	Operational definition	Coding indicators	Example from Hansard
Tone	Formal	Institutional, respectful and procedurally appropriate language.	Formal address; institutional/procedural language, ceremonial and ritualistic expressions.	Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, Mr. 'Y', Hon. majority leader, Hon. minority leader, Hon. deputy minority whip. We would, I would appeal to leadership, Mr Speaker: Hon Members, please give him the

				opportunity because he is the Hon Leader of the House. At least, give some modicum of respect to your Hon Leaders. etc.
Tone	Informal	Relatively conversational, relaxed or less ceremonially marked manner. casual, chatty, humorous, playful and utterances which were identified to emphasize familiarity	Conversational wording; familiar forms of address personal references colloquial/relaxed casual, chatty and humorous expression.	Hon. majority leader: "Mr. Speaker, let us give him a minute or two to catch his breath, so we could take item numbered 8," An Hon. Member: "He used to be a sportsman." Mr. speaker: "He is a sportsman and not "he used to be". He still plays football every weekend.
Tone	Emotional	Affective or heightened expression of language forms used to express sympathy, empathy, anger, disappointment, mockery and in some instances show support for others	Expressions of anger, sadness, excitement, sympathy, frustration, joy, disappointment, mockery.	Hon. member for Bolga Central: Mr Speaker, I am very sad. I am emotionally distressed particularly because I am from a very rural constituency, and I know what it takes to

				give the people just GH₵20.00 to survive.
Tone	Conflictual	Adversarial manner involving disagreement, confrontation, opposition, accusation or interpersonal tension.	Direct disagreement, resistance and insistence, criticism, accusation, challenge, rebuttal, confrontation or strongly oppositional language.	Mr. Speaker, I rise to, in all honesty, and with a very emotionally distressed mood, reject the Electronic Transfer Levy Bill unequivocally
Tone	Consensual	A manner of communication characterised by agreement, convergence, accommodation, cooperation or the pursuit of common ground.	Expressions of agreement, support, acknowledgement, compromise, cooperation or shared positions.	"I guess we agree to —", "Mr Speaker, I agree; I think it "So, we do it,"

Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analysed qualitatively using textual analysis within the ethnography of communication framework. The analytical process followed the five-step procedure proposed by Altheide and Schneider (2013). The first stage involved identifying the issue and selecting relevant parliamentary proceedings for analysis. The second stage focused on reviewing the documents and determining categories relevant to the research objectives. The third stage involved repeated readings of the texts to identify recurring themes and sub-themes, while initial coding was guided by Hymes' SPEAKING model. The fourth stage entailed conceptual refinement through the grouping and categorization of utterances such as directives, requests, and information-sharing patterns using tabulation techniques. The final stage involved interpreting and reporting the findings thematically with the support of illustrative quotations and descriptive statistics, including tables and graphs, to provide a rich and meaningful analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). To enhance trustworthiness, the study ensured credibility through dependability, rich description, intercoder reliability, and the inclusion of contradictory evidence and negative cases (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

RQ1: What are the tones embedded in the selected parliamentary proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic Ghana?

The study examined the tones (keys) embedded in selected parliamentary proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana, specifically the Proceedings on the Electronic Transaction Levy Bill (2021), the Debate on Government's Financial Policy (2021 and 2022), and the Vote of Censure on the Minister for Finance (2022). Guided by Hymes' ethnography of communication and the SPEAKING model, particularly the "Key" component, the analysis explored how communicative tone reflects interactional meaning within parliamentary discourse.

Findings indicate that tone is a significant communicative feature in the selected speech events, shaped by both verbal expressions and contextual cues. These tones reflect the emotional stance, style, and attitude of participants, thereby influencing the interpretation of parliamentary interactions. Consistent with Hymes' (1962; 1972; 1974) view that language is both a medium for learning and expressing behaviour, the study shows that communicative behaviour and language use are closely intertwined in parliamentary settings.

Emotional Tone

The findings revealed that emotional tone in parliamentary proceedings was expressed through lexical choices and rhetorical expressions that conveyed personal feelings, frustration, and emotional alignment with public concerns. Evidence from the data included excerpts such as:

"Mr. Speaker, you have indeed disarmed me" **and**

"Can you imagine being taxed for the purpose of withdrawing your own cash from your own bank account?" which reflected surprise, frustration, and emotional appeal.

The rhetorical question ***"can you imagine"*** was particularly significant in invoking empathy and audience reaction, while the repetition in ***"your own cash from your own bank account"*** intensified the speaker's emotional concern regarding the issue under discussion. Similarly, the expression ***"to speak in support of the Motion"*** indicated personal commitment and emotional investment in the parliamentary debate.

The analysis showed that participants employed emotional tone strategically to express personal attitudes, represent the sentiments of their constituents, and emphasize the social impact of parliamentary decisions on livelihoods. The findings support the work of Parkinson, who argues that emotional expression is shaped by social and group processes, particularly shared social identity and contextual expectations (Parkinson, 2011). In this regard, the emotional expressions observed in the proceedings reflected not only individual feelings but also the collective concerns and experiences of the groups and communities represented by the speakers.

Using a deductive approach based on Hymes' classification of keys, the study identifies five dominant tones in the data: formal, informal, emotional, conflictual, and consensual. These emerged as the most recurrent communicative styles across the selected parliamentary proceedings. Overall, the analysis demonstrated that parliamentary discourse in Ghana is characterised by dynamic tonal variation, which reflects both procedural formality and

interpersonal negotiation of meaning within legislative communication (Hymes, 1962; 1972; 1974).

Formal Tone

The analysis of parliamentary proceedings revealed that formal tone was achieved through the consistent use of respectful titles, procedural expressions, and courteous parliamentary vocabulary. Excerpts such as

"Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would appeal to leadership to assist us to enforce the dress code… Am I at liberty to proceed now?"

"Please give him the opportunity because he is the Hon. Leader of the House"

illustrate the use of honorifics, polite requests, and ceremonious expressions that reinforce institutional respect and parliamentary decorum. Similarly, the statement, *"Hon. Deputy Minority Whip, you cannot just close the case like that,"* demonstrates restrained and formal correction, while *"thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the motion, and to speak in support of the motion"* reflects procedural and legislative formality through expressions associated with parliamentary discourse. The designation *"MP. for Ofoase/Ayirebi"* further contributes to the institutional and official tone of interaction.

Overall, the excerpts show that formal tone in parliamentary proceedings is characterized by the use of titles such as ***"Mr. Speaker"*** **and** ***"Hon.",*** polite and diplomatic expressions such as ***"would appeal"*** **and** ***"please"***, and formal vocabulary including ***"motion," "support,"*** **and** ***"dress code."*** These linguistic features establish respect, maintain social hierarchy, and preserve decorum within parliamentary interaction. The findings support the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson, who argue that formal tone functions to maintain social relationships, avoid conflict, and demonstrate deference through honorifics, indirectness, and formal linguistic structures (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Informal Tone

The findings revealed that informal tone in parliamentary proceedings was characterized by humour, conversational expressions, and relaxed interactions among participants. Evidence from the data included excerpts such as:

"They were not sleeping but meditating. [laughter]" **and**

"they may be meditating and not sleeping," which employed playful and humorous language that reduced the seriousness of the interaction and created a relaxed atmosphere. Similarly, expressions such as:

"Mr. Speaker, he is panting,"

"He was running," and

"He used to be a sportsman" reflected casual and conversational exchanges that conveyed familiarity and friendliness among members. The inclusion of *"[laughter]"* further signalled informality and collegiality within the parliamentary proceedings.

The analysis showed that participants strategically used an informal tone to build rapport, reduce social distance, and create a cordial communicative environment during proceedings.

These findings align with the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson, who argue that informal tone is associated with positive politeness strategies that promote friendliness, familiarity, and solidarity while minimizing face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The findings also corroborate Halliday's systemic functional linguistic perspective, which explains that informal tone is characterized by colloquial vocabulary, ellipsis, and everyday language used to establish solidarity and facilitate casual interaction (Halliday, 1994). Thus, although parliamentary discourse is largely formal, the occasional use of humour and informal expressions contributed to maintaining interpersonal relationships and fostering cordiality among interlocutors during the speech event.

Conflictual Tone

The findings revealed that conflictual tone in parliamentary proceedings was characterized by criticism, accusation, confrontational rhetoric, and ideological opposition. Evidence from the data included the excerpt:

"The Hon. Minister for Finance has mismanaged the Ghanaian economy, and is therefore incompetent and not fit for purpose",

which directly criticized the minister's competence and performance. Expressions such as ***"join us"***, ***"let your vote count"***, **and** ***"bidding him farewell"*** further demonstrated persuasive and adversarial language aimed at mobilizing opposition and challenging the minister's continued stay in office. These lexical choices created a confrontational atmosphere and reinforced political division within the parliamentary debate.

The analysis showed that participants employed a conflictual tone strategically to assert entrenched positions, challenge opponents, defend political interests, and influence parliamentary decisions. The findings corroborate Ilie's study on parliamentary discourse, which explains that conflictual tone is manifested through adversarial questioning, confrontational rhetoric, and personal attacks used to establish party identity, defend policies, and engage audiences (Ilie, 2015). The findings also align with Ekman's work on emotions and communication, which highlights how verbal expressions of anger, contempt, and disapproval contribute to conflictual interaction (Ekman, 2003). Thus, the conflictual tone observed in the proceedings reflected both ideological contestation and the emotional intensity associated with parliamentary debate.

Consensual Tone

The findings revealed that consensual tone in parliamentary proceedings was characterized by agreement, cooperation, and shared understanding among participants. Evidence from the data included excerpts such as:

"I guess we agree to —",

"Mr Speaker, I agree; I think it was a typographical error,"

"So, we do it,"

and *"Yes,"* which demonstrated collaborative interaction and collective decision-making. Expressions such as ***"we agree," "I agree,"*** **and** ***"we do it"*** functioned as cooperative discourse markers that emphasized unity and mutual understanding, while the hedge ***"I guess"*** softened the assertion and encouraged negotiation rather than confrontation.

The analysis showed that despite ideological differences, participants strategically employed inclusive and cooperative language to negotiate consensus on procedural and substantive issues. These findings support Hymes's assertion that consensual tone reflects collaborative language forms aimed at establishing mutually beneficial relations (Hymes, 1972). The findings also corroborate Ilie's study on parliamentary discourse, which explains that consensual tone is achieved through inclusive language, hedging, modal expressions, and cooperative discourse markers that facilitate agreement and institutional cooperation (Ilie, 2015). Furthermore, the coexistence of consensual, conflictual, emotional, formal, and informal tones within the proceedings validates Goffman's view that tone significantly shapes social interaction and communicative outcomes in institutional settings (Goffman, 1967).

The table shown below is a representation of the analysis of the keys (tones) and their frequency of manifestation as observed in the context of the selected speech events (selected parliamentary proceedings).

Table 1: Tones (Keys) Observed in the Selected Parliamentary Proceedings

Types of Tone (Key)	Frequency (Freq)	Percentage (%)
Formal Tone	417	73.03
Informal Tone	14	2.45
Emotional Tone	48	8.41
Conflictual Tone	55	9.63
Consensual Tone	37	6.48
Total	**571**	**100%**

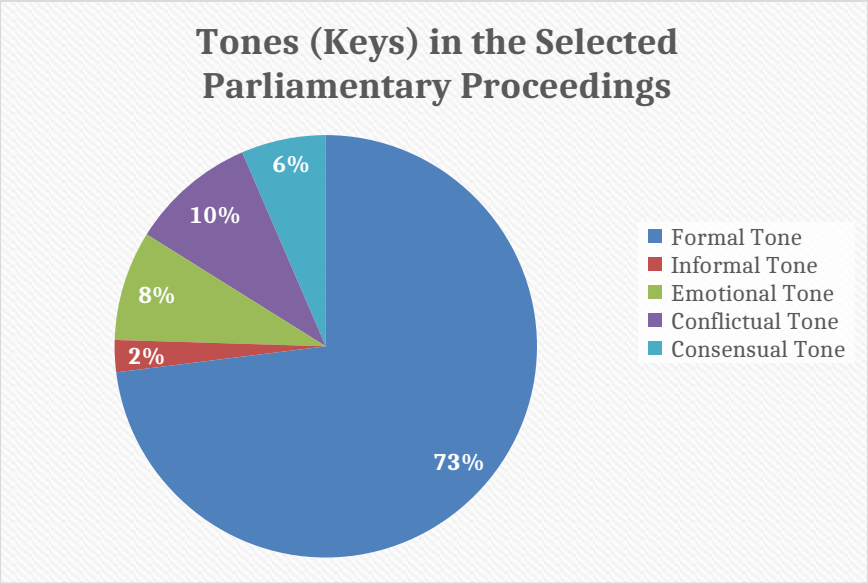


Figure 1: Distribution of the tones (keys) in the Selected Parliamentary Proceedings.

RQ 2: How are the major communicative behaviours manifested in the selected Parliamentary proceedings of the 8th parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana?

The study identified key communicative behaviours in selected parliamentary proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana, specifically the Proceedings on the Electronic Transaction Levy Bill (2021), the Debate on Government's Financial Policy (2021 and 2022), and the Vote of Censure on the Minister for Finance (2022). Through an inductive analysis of recurring interactional patterns, five main communicative behaviours emerged: giving directives, making requests, offering information, asking for clarification, and making proposals. The table below is the operational categories of the communicative behaviours analysed.

Operational categories of the communicative behaviours

Communicative Behaviour	**Giving directives**	Utterances of members of parliament that seek to require, instruct, urge, regulate procedure, maintain order, and guide participants during deliberations, call upon, refrain, or respond to an action	Explicit Instruction or command, call to order, guiding, indicating procedure	Mr. Speaker: Table Office, take note., Mr. Speaker: *Page 7 —*, Mr. Speaker: We are on page 7, we are moving now to page 8., Hon. MP. for New Edubiase: Mr. Speaker, if I may take you back to page 8? The item numbered 107; the Hon Member for Assin North was in the House on Friday but was marked absent. Mr Speaker: Hon Member, hold on for the Hon First Deputy Speaker to take the Chair. [Pause]
Communicative Behaviour	Making requests	Utterance though which a participants seek information,	Seeking information, or clarification,	Hon. MP for Adansi-Asokwa: Mr Speaker, one last

		clarification, assistance, permission, consideration, Utterances, characterized by politeness, deference, and collaborative interaction. Evidence from the data included the excerpts	seeking assistance, requesting permission,	minute, Senior Prefect. Hon. Majority leader: Mr Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu: Mr Speaker, can I yield to the Hon Member? He is a former Hon Minister for Energy
Communicative Behaviour	Offering information	Language forms used to share knowledge or provide information, describe situation or state of affairs, report on something which appears to be a fact (convey statements of facts), to notify, to announce something, and also to express opinion.	Informing, declaring, declaring, stating facts, reporting, updating,	**Mr Speaker:** Yes, he is a Ranking Member, so he has some more minutes because he ended at 12 minutes 30 seconds. Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, I heard you. You asked whether he would make arrangements to cover the public holiday An Honorable Member: He used to be a sportsman
Communicative Behaviour	Asking for clarification	Language variants used by participants to clarify situations, confirm situations and to clarify intentions.	Seeking explanations, elaborations, seeking further details or specification, seeking clarity on policy, position, figures, facts, procedure or decisions.	Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, kindly give me a minute. I am confused as to how much time you have. I thought it was that the Chairmen and Ranking Members had 20 minutes, Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, are you denying the fact of

				it or you are making your submission?
Communicative Behaviour	Making proposals	Language forms characterized by utterances used to put forward a suggested course of action, policy option, amendment, recommendation or solution for consideration.	Suggested course of actions, recommended solutions, suggested measures,	Mr Speaker, we have done enough for the day and I would pray that we adjourn the House, in order for us to have some good rest until tomorrow, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon. I so submit., Hon. member for Effutu: Speaker, I beg to second the Motion.

Giving Directives:

The findings revealed that giving directives was a prominent communicative behaviour in parliamentary proceedings, primarily employed to regulate procedure, maintain order, and guide participants during deliberations.

Evidence from the data included the excerpts:

"Mr. Speaker: Page 7—",

"MP. Sakyere Afram Plains: Mr. Speaker, on page 8, item numbered—",

"Mr. Speaker: we are on page 7, we are moving now to page 8."

The expressions ***"we are on page 7"*** **and** ***"we are moving now to page 8"*** functioned as procedural directives that controlled the flow of discussion and directed members' attention during proceedings. Although declarative in structure, these utterances performed directive functions through the Speaker's institutional authority and the use of the collective pronoun *"we"* to coordinate participation and maintain order within the House.

The analysis showed that directives were strategically used to provide guidance and ensure the orderly progression of parliamentary business. This finding corroborates Bhatia's assertion that giving directives is a common communicative behaviour in parliamentary discourse because of the need for clear leadership and procedural coordination in institutional interaction (Bhatia, 2006). Furthermore, the dominant use of directive language demonstrated the participants' communicative competence, as they appropriately adjusted their language to fit the parliamentary context and achieve the goals of the speech event. This supports the views of Hymes and Saville-Troike, who argue that effective communication requires not only knowledge of linguistic forms but also awareness of how language should be appropriately used in specific social and cultural contexts (Hymes, 1966; Saville-Troike, 2003).

Making Requests

The findings revealed that making requests was an important communicative behaviour in parliamentary proceedings, characterized by politeness, deference, and collaborative interaction. Evidence from the data included the excerpts:

"Majority Leader: Mr. Speaker, let us give him a minute or two to catch his breath, so that we could take item numbered 8,"

"Mr. Speaker: Leadership, any guidance?"

"Minister for Finance: Mr. Speaker, I seek your leave to insert 'or any other' after 'an instant pay' in the first line read: …."

Expressions such as ***"let us give him a minute or two"*** **and** ***"we could take item numbered 8"*** functioned as softened proposals through the use of inclusive and modal expressions, while ***"any guidance?"*** operated as a request for direction or advice. Similarly, the phrase ***"I seek your leave"*** represented a highly formal request for permission, reflecting parliamentary decorum and institutional respect.

The analysis showed that requests were strategically employed to seek cooperation, permission, clarification, and collective agreement in the conduct of parliamentary business. This finding corroborates Ilie's assertion that making requests is a significant feature of parliamentary communication because it reflects collaboration and the willingness to seek input from others (Ilie, 2003). The findings also demonstrated participants' communicative competence through their ability to appropriately use polite and context-sensitive request forms in achieving communicative goals. This aligns with Muriel Saville-Troike's view that effective communication involves knowing how and when to make requests appropriately within specific contexts (Saville-Troike, 2003).

Furthermore, the relatively low frequency of requests observed in the proceedings reflected the communicative goals and interactional style of the speech event, supporting Enkvist's argument that linguistic style is determined by the frequency and contextual suitability of language forms in particular communicative situations (Enkvist, 1964). The findings also validate Dell Hymes's ethnography of communication theory, which posits that communicative behaviours are patterned

Offering Information

The findings revealed that offering information was a significant communicative behaviour in parliamentary proceedings, characterized by declarative statements used to inform, clarify, and report procedural developments. Evidence from the data included the excerpts:

"Mr. Speaker: I have taken notice of it. We were debating item numbered 27 on the order paper, which had been moved by the Hon Minister for Finance. Based on the guidance of leadership, we agreed….

An Honorable Member: He used to be a sportsman."

"Mr. Speaker: Alright. Hon. Members, the Hon. Majority Leader has adopted what has already been submitted and so I would proceed to……"

These utterances demonstrate information-giving functions through procedural clarification, factual reporting, and explanatory commentary. Key informational expressions include ***"I have taken notice of it,"***

"We were debating item numbered 27 on the order paper,"

"which had been moved by the Hon Minister for Finance,"

"Based on the guidance of leadership, we agreed,"

"He used to be a sportsman,"

"has adopted what has already been submitted," all of which function to inform, update, or clarify parliamentary proceedings.

The analysis showed that offering information served to enhance transparency, support decision-making, and maintain procedural continuity within the House. This finding is consistent with Gastil's position that the provision of information is essential in parliamentary discourse for enabling informed deliberation and decision-making (Gastil, 2008). The findings also demonstrate that participants possessed communicative competence, as they appropriately deployed declarative structures to provide relevant contextual and procedural information. This aligns with Saville-Troike's assertion that effective communication involves knowing when to offer information appropriately within specific contexts (Saville-Troike, 2003). Furthermore, the variation in frequency and use of informational statements reflects context-sensitive stylistic choices, supporting Enkvist's view that style is shaped by patterned language use within specific communicative situations (Enkvist, 1964). The findings also reinforce Hymes's ethnography of communication, which emphasizes that communicative behaviours are structured and context-dependent, reflecting speakers' competence in adapting language to social and institutional settings (Hymes, 1974).

Asking For Clarification

The findings revealed that asking for clarification was a key communicative behaviour in parliamentary proceedings, primarily achieved through interrogative structures used to confirm meaning, reduce ambiguity, and ensure procedural accuracy. Evidence from the data included the excerpts:

"Mr. Speaker: Hon. Majority Leader, am I to understand that you are forgoing your submission and want to put the question?",

"Mr Speaker: Hon Members, what I understand the Hon Finance Minister to be saying is that at paragraph (4), on the first line, we should delete the phrase, 'carried out using the following modes…' Hon Minister, is that what you are proposing?",

"Mr. Speaker: Is it a further amendment?"

These utterances illustrate clarification-seeking through confirmation requests embedded in parliamentary discourse. Key clarification signals include:

"am I to understand…",

"what I understand…",

***"is that what you are proposing?"*,**

and ***"Is it…?"*,** all of which function to verify intent and ensure shared understanding among participants.

The analysis showed that clarification requests played a crucial role in maintaining accuracy, preventing misunderstanding, and ensuring procedural coherence in parliamentary debate. This finding aligns with Harris's assertion that asking for clarification is essential for ensuring understanding and preventing miscommunication (Harris, 2001). It also demonstrates participants' communicative competence, as they appropriately employed context-sensitive interrogatives to achieve clarity within institutional interaction. This supports Saville-Troike's view that effective communication involves knowing how to use language appropriately across different contexts (Saville-Troike, 2003). Furthermore, the patterned use of clarification strategies reflects style variation shaped by context, corroborating Enkvist's argument that style is defined by predictable linguistic patterns in specific communicative situations (Enkvist, 1964). The findings are also grounded in Dell Hymes's ethnography of communication, which emphasizes that communicative behaviour is shaped by contextual factors such as participants, setting, and communicative goals (Hymes, 1974).

Making Proposals

The findings revealed that making proposals was a key communicative behaviour in parliamentary proceedings, characterized by the use of modal expressions, formal motion structures, and amendment language to suggest actions for consideration and approval. Evidence from the data included the excerpts:

"Majority Leader: Mr. Speaker, I believe we can deal with the consideration stage of the Electronic Transfer Levy Bill, 2021. Mr. Speaker….."

"Minister for Finance: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, sub-clause (1), line 1, delete '1.75%' and insert '1.50%'. Question put and amendment agreed to."

These utterances demonstrate proposal-making through expressions such as ***"I believe we can…", "we can deal with…",* and *"I beg to move…",*** which introduce suggested actions rather than impose directives. The amendment statement specifying *"delete '1.75%' and insert '1.50%'"* represents the substantive content of the proposal, while *"Question put and amendment agreed to"* indicates formal acceptance after deliberation.

The analysis showed that proposals were used to initiate legislative action, facilitate negotiation, and support decision-making processes within parliamentary proceedings. This finding corroborates Johnston and Buckley's assertion that making proposals is central to parliamentary communication as it supports policy development and problem-solving (Johnston & Buckley, 2017). The findings also demonstrate that proposal-making was used selectively and in accordance with contextual expectations, reflecting communicative competence. This aligns with Saville-Troike's view that effective communication requires knowledge of how to use language appropriately in specific contexts (Saville-Troike, 2003). Similarly, it supports Gumperz's concept of communicative competence, which emphasizes selecting linguistically correct forms that also conform to social norms in interaction (Gumperz, 1972). Furthermore, the variation in the frequency of proposals reflects context-dependent stylistic choices, supporting Enkvist's argument that style is shaped by contextual probabilities of language use (Enkvist, 1964).

These categories were derived from systematic coding of the data, reflecting how parliamentary discourse is shaped by functional communication needs within legislative debate. The findings demonstrate that parliamentary interaction is highly action-oriented, with participants engaging in directive and responsive communicative acts to facilitate deliberation and decision-making processes. This supports the view that communicative behaviour in institutional discourse emerges from patterned interactional practices within specific contexts of use.

Table 2 below shows the frequency of the major communicative behaviours and their corresponding percentage ratings that emerged from the selected speech events or proceedings.

Table 2: Major communicative Behaviours manifested in the Selected Parliamentary Proceeding

Communicative Behaviour (CB)	Frequency (Freq)	Percentage (%)
Giving directives	191	38.98
Making Request	44	8.98
Offering Information	185	37.76
Asking for Clarification	47	9.59
Making Proposals	23	4.69
Total	**Total = 490**	**100%**

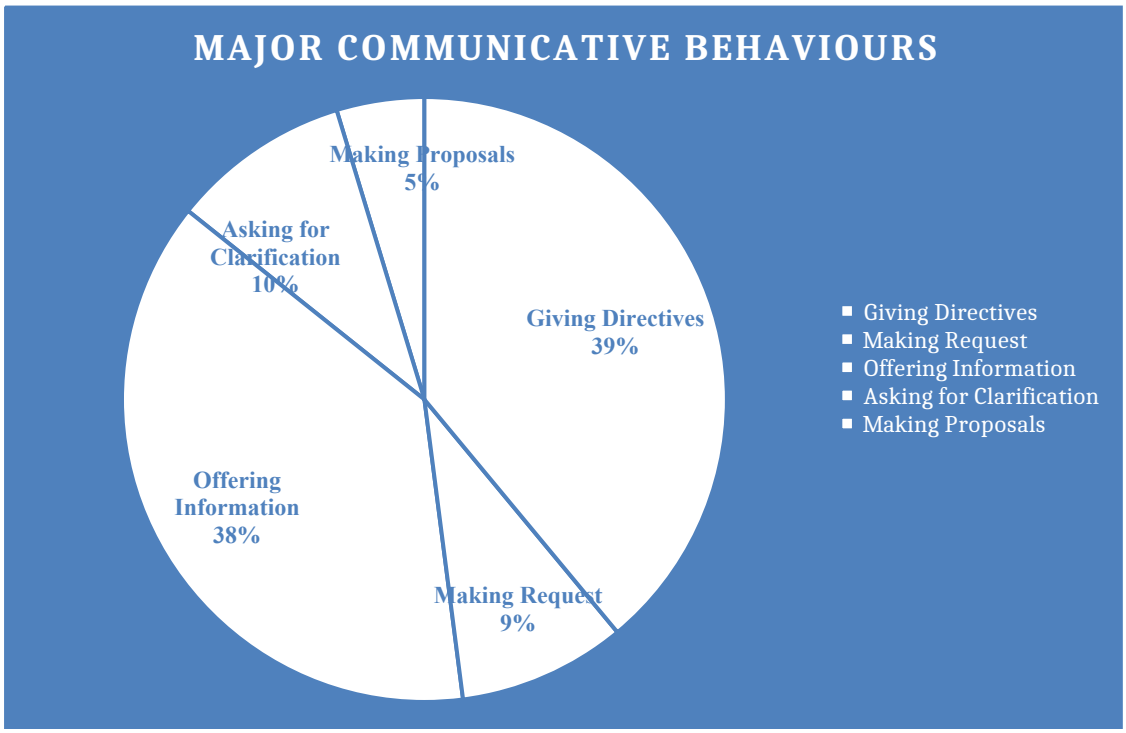


Figure 2: Distribution of the Major Communicative Behaviours in the Selected Parliamentary Proceedings.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that five major tones characterized the selected parliamentary proceedings of Ghana's 8th Parliament: formal, conflictual, emotional, consensual, and informal tones. Guided by Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication theory and the SPEAKING model, the analysis showed that formal tone was the most dominant, recording 417 occurrences (73.03%). This confirms the institutional and ceremonial nature of parliamentary discourse, which was largely marked by official, serious, persuasive, and ritualistic expressions. The predominance of formal tone supports Hymes' (1972) assertion that the "Key" of formal speech events is often serious and official. It also aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which emphasizes the use of formal language to sustain respect, social harmony, and institutional order.

Conflictual tone emerged as the second most dominant tone with 55 occurrences (9.63%), indicating the inherently confrontational nature of parliamentary debates, particularly on contentious national issues. Emotional tone recorded 48 occurrences (8.41%), consensual tone appeared 37 times (6.48%), while informal tone had the lowest frequency with 14 occurrences (2.45%). Overall, the findings validate Hymes' (1972) view that communicative events may embody multiple overlapping tones simultaneously and support Goffman's (1967) argument that tone significantly shapes meaning and interaction in institutional communication.

The findings revealed that five major communicative behaviours characterized the selected parliamentary proceedings of Ghana's 8th Parliament: giving directives, offering information, asking for clarification, making requests, and making proposals. Guided by Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication framework, the study identified giving directives as the most dominant communicative behaviour, recording 191 occurrences (38.98%). This behaviour was essential in maintaining order, regulating debates, and ensuring procedural control during parliamentary sessions. The finding supports Hymes' (1964) assertion that language reflects institutional structures and social roles, and aligns with Bhatia's (2006) view that directives are central to parliamentary discourse because they promote leadership and clarity.

Offering information emerged as the second most frequent communicative behaviour with 185 occurrences (37.76%), reflecting participants' efforts to share knowledge, provide evidence, and facilitate informed decision-making. This corroborates Gastil's (2008) argument on the importance of information-sharing in deliberative communication and supports Hymes' (1974) emphasis on contextualized language use. Asking for clarification recorded 47 occurrences (9.59%), while making requests and making proposals accounted for 44 (8.98%) and 23 (4.69%) occurrences respectively. These behaviours promoted cooperation, accuracy, and problem-solving, supporting the views of Harris (2001), Ilie (2003), Saville-Troike (2003), and Johnston and Buckley (2017). Overall, the findings reinforce Hymes' (1974) claim that communication reflects the interaction between language, culture, and institutional context.

Statement of Limitation

This study is limited by its focus on the proceedings of a single parliament, specifically the 8th Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. As a result, the findings may not fully represent communication patterns across all parliamentary settings or legislative periods, thereby limiting the generalizability of the results. The dynamics, interactions, and communicative practices observed within this parliament may reflect context-specific realities rather than broader parliamentary trends. In addition, the study relied primarily on Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication theory and Searle's (1977) categories of communicative

functions as analytical frameworks. Although these theories provided significant insights into parliamentary discourse, they may not comprehensively capture the full complexity and multidimensional nature of parliamentary communication. Furthermore, the Ghanaian parliamentary context possesses unique cultural, historical, and institutional characteristics that may shape communicative behaviour differently from other parliamentary contexts, thereby limiting the wider applicability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the tones and communicative behaviours embedded in selected parliamentary proceedings of the 8th Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, including debates on the Electronic Transaction Levy Bill (2021), Government Financial Policy (2021 and 2022), and the Vote of Censure on the Minister for Finance (2022). Drawing on Hymes' (1974) Ethnography of Communication Theory and the SPEAKING model, alongside Searle's (1977) classification of communicative functions, the study demonstrated that parliamentary discourse in Ghana is highly institutional, strategic, and context-dependent.

The findings revealed that formal tone was the dominant tone, recording 417 occurrences (73.03%), thereby affirming the official, ceremonial, and procedural nature of parliamentary communication. However, the presence of conflictual, emotional, consensual, and informal tones further highlighted the dynamic and multifunctional character of parliamentary discourse. In terms of communicative behaviours, giving directives emerged as the most dominant behaviour with 191 occurrences (38.98%), followed closely by offering information with 185 occurrences (37.76%). These behaviours played crucial roles in maintaining order, guiding deliberations, and facilitating informed decision-making. Overall, the study reinforces Hymes' (1974) view that communication is shaped by social context and institutional norms, while also demonstrating the relevance of Searle's (1977) communicative functions in understanding parliamentary discourse.

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