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Expressive Speech In “To All The Boys: Always And Forever”

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Abstract. This study explores how expressive speech acts are used in the teen romantic comedy movie “*To All the Boys: Always and Forever*,” directed by Michael Fimognari. Using Searle’s theory of expressive speech acts and Yule’s framework for direct and indirect speech acts, the study analyzes the female main character’s speech acts through a descriptive qualitative approach. The study identifies few instances of expressive speech acts, with doubting speech being the most frequent. It also discovers that direct speech acts are more widely used than indirect ones. These findings contribute to the understanding of expressive speech acts in film, specifically how emotions and attitudes are conveyed through conversation.

Keywords: expressive speech act, direct speech act, indirect speech act, *To All The Boys: Always And Forever*

BACKGROUND

Expressive speech acts are important in human communication because they allow people to communicate their emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and psychological states. These behaviors allow people to express significant reactions to various situations, events, or emotional experiences, resulting in stronger interpersonal relationships and understanding. Understanding how expressive speech acts are used in various settings can provide significant insights into the complexities of human connection and communication.

The teenage romance comedy film “*To All the Boys: Always and Forever*,” directed by Michael Fimognari and released in 2021, provides an excellent setting to examine expressive speech acts. This film, the third installment in the popular “*To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before*” series based on Jenny Han’s novels, depicts the complexities of teenage emotions and relationships. The dialogues of the female main character provide an excellent opportunity to examine how expressive speech acts function in cinematic narratives, particularly in the context of a coming-of-age story.

The purpose of this study is to look into the different types and methods of expressive speech acts performed by the female main character in “*To All the Boys: Always and Forever*.” Using Searle’s (1976) theory of expressive speech acts and Yule’s (1996) framework for direct

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and indirect speech acts, the study aims to discover the prevalence and patterns of these speech acts in the film. The study uses a descriptive qualitative technique to investigate how emotions and attitudes are expressed through conversation, adding to a more comprehensive understanding of expressive speech acts in film and their impact on narrative and character development.

The findings of this study not only help to comprehend expressive speech acts in cinematic situations, and also offer insight on the numerous ways in which feelings and views are expressed in film. This information is useful for filmmakers, screenwriters, and scholars interested in the relationship between language and emotion in stories.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

¹¹ This study uses two main conceptual structures to examine expressive speech acts in the film "To All the Boys: Always and Forever." The first framework is Searle's (1976) theory of Speech acts, that are particularly concerned with expressive speech acts. Searle defines speech acts as communicative actions carried out through utterances, which are divided into five categories: representatives, instructions, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This study focuses on expressive speech acts, which are those that indicate the speaker's psychological condition or emotional response to a certain scenario. These actions include apologizing, thanking, congratulating, blaming, praising, regretting, doubting, and wishing.

Searle's theory gives the fundamental knowledge of how expressive speech acts as part of communication. By categorizing and describing these acts, the theory enables an organized analysis of how characters in the film express their feelings and attitudes through language. This classification is essential to identify and analyze the variety ⁸ of expressive speech acts performed by the main character, Lara Jean.

The second framework used in this research is Yule's (1996) theory of direct and indirect speech acts. According to Yule, direct speech acts express the speaker's goal directly, whereas indirect speech acts convey meaning through context and interpretation. This difference is critical for understanding how the characters in the film express their feelings and goals in various ways. Direct speech acts are straightforward and unambiguous, whereas indirect speech acts frequently entail subtlety and complexity, requiring the listener to guess the speaker's genuine intent.

¹² This study tries to provide a detailed analysis of the expressive speech acts used in ¹ "To All the Boys: Always and Forever," using Searle's and Yule's frameworks. Searle's theory supports in identifying and categorizing the various forms of expressive speech actions,

whereas Yule's theory helps in comprehending the methods used to convey these acts, whether direct or indirect. This dual method allows for a more in-depth examination of how emotions and attitudes are expressed in film, providing insights into the interplay of language, emotion, and story in cinematic contexts.

In summary, this study's theoretical framework combines Searle's (1976) classification of expressive speech acts with Yule's (1996) distinction between direct and indirect speech acts, providing a solid foundation for analyzing the emotional and psychological expressions of characters in "To All the Boys: Always and Forever." This integrated approach allows for a deep investigation of the language strategies employed to show complex emotional states, which improves our knowledge of expressive speech acts in film.

In addition, this study also includes the concept of felicity conditions, which are the contextual circumstances required for a speech act to be performed correctly and successfully. Felicity conditions, as stated by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle, comprise conditions linked to the speaker's intention, the usual method, the sincerity condition, and the uptake condition. By assessing whether these characteristics are met, this study can determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of the film's expressive speech acts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to examine expressive speech acts in Michael Fimognari's film "To All the Boys: Always and Forever." The Netflix film, which was released in 2021, served as the major data source for this study, with a special emphasis on Lara Jean, the female protagonist's expressive speech. When examining these acts, numerous aspects of the film, such as dialogues, character interactions, and visual signals, were thoroughly examined. By evaluating specific events and taking pictures of facial expressions and contextual elements, the aim was to improve understanding of interaction patterns, including both direct and indirect speech acts.

Data collection entailed a methodical procedure of watching the film several times to understand the details of each line and event. Lara Jean's utterances that show expressive speech acts were carefully documented, with a focus on categorizing them according to their types. These statements were then examined to determine if they were direct or indirect speech acts. The goal on this approach was to create a complete dataset that would shed light on the many ways in which expressive speech acts occur in the film.

Subsequent data analysis focused on thorough examination of the the movie's interactions, with a particular emphasis on Lara Jean's expressive speech. Using Searle's speech

act theory and other relevant theoretical frameworks, the researcher thoroughly classified and evaluated these acts. In addition, the researcher used felicity condition theory to evaluate the effectiveness of communication in successfully conveying these speech acts. By evaluating the film's narrative and aesthetic choices, the analysis hoped to shed light on the complexities of expressive speech acts, contributing to a better understanding of communication dynamics in cinematic situations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of expressive speech acts in the teen romantic comedy film "To All the Boys: Always and Forever" revealed several significant findings. The data, obtained through a careful examination of dialogues and interactions involving the main character, Lara Jean, provided valuable insights into the communication dynamics portrayed in the movie.

Findings

1. Apologizing

Data 1.1

Lara Jean : we're trying **I'm sorry**
Chris : Okay, we're almost there

In this situation, Lara Jean apologizes to a stranger for blocking the hotel entry with Chris' luggage, meeting Levinson's Felicity Conditions for an apology. Her reply, "we're trying, I'm sorry," demonstrates a willingness to apologize, sincerity, and acknowledgement of fault, which meets the conditions for an apology. It qualifies as a direct speech act because Lara Jean's goal of apologizing is openly stated without ambiguity, in accordance with Yule's definition of direct speech acts. The illocutionary force of "I'm sorry" as an expressive act is obvious and unambiguous, conveying regret and admitting wrongdoing.

2. Blaming

Data 2.1

Peter : Then what are you so afraid of? You know, I mean, maybe we make it to Christmas or the end of first semester but...four years?
Lara Jean : **you're making it worse.** Go away

In this situation, Lara Jean apologizes to a stranger for blocking the hotel entry with Chris' luggage, meeting Levinson's Felicity Conditions for an apology. Her reply, "we're trying, I'm sorry," demonstrates a willingness to apologize, sincerity, and acknowledgement of fault, which meets the conditions for an apology. It qualifies as a direct speech act because Lara Jean's goal of apologizing is openly stated without ambiguity, in accordance with Yule's

definition of direct speech acts. The illocutionary force of "I'm sorry" as an expressive act is obvious and unambiguous, conveying regret and admitting wrongdoing.

3. Doubting

Data 3.1

Lara Jean : Is it just me or she getting meaner with age?

Margot : And more opinionated.

During the conversation, Lara Jean expresses uncertainty that Kitty is becoming meaner with age. This uncertainty is indicated by Lara Jean's questioning tone and word choice, which are in line with Levinson's Felicity Conditions for Doubting Speech Acts. Furthermore, Lara Jean's comment is defined as a direct speech act because it directly requests confirmation or agreement from Margot on her view. The interrogative form of Lara Jean's question meets Yule's criterion for direct speech acts because it clearly expresses Lara Jean's worry or concern without forcing Margot to figure out any hidden meaning.

Data 3.2

Lara Jean : Yeah, I mean, I thought that I was gonna hate it or I thought that I would feel overwhelmed, but I could really see myself living there, you know? I get why so many books are set there. Everywhere you look, there's a story. And NYU has this amazing lit program where they invite real authors to come speak to their students. And I could even intern at a publishing house. so, it's just umm, doesn't really matter 'cause I'm not sure that- I don't even think I got in so...

Margot : LJ, college is about more than just geography

Lara Jean expresses doubts about her chances of being accepted to NYU. The doubt is expressed through her uncertainty about her own beliefs about academic acceptance. Lara Jean's emotion meets Levinson's Felicity Conditions for Doubting Speech Acts because she demonstrates genuine uncertainty and hesitation, meeting both the preparation and sincerity criteria. Although Lara Jean's statement is not framed as a question, her hesitation effectively expresses doubt, satisfying the prerequisite for doubting. Furthermore, Lara Jean's statement qualifies as an indirect speech act since she conveys her doubt and displeasure without directly declaring so. The indirect form of the speech act requires the listener to infer the underlying meaning of the speaker's words, emphasizing Lara Jean's fragility and doubt regarding her academic future.

4. Praising

Data 4.1

Lara Jean : ² **It's a great school and it's perfect**

Margot : Okay

Lara Jean exhibits significant appreciation for Stanford University throughout their chat regarding college aspirations. This adoration is described as praising, reflecting Lara Jean's positive attitude toward and contentment with the school. Lara Jean's remark satisfies Levinson's Felicity Conditions for Praise since she really views the school positively, shares her adoration sincerely, and demonstrates acceptance and support of its advantages. Contextually, Lara Jean's statement is consistent with the conversation's focus on educational opportunities and meets the contextual appropriateness criteria. As a result, Lara Jean effectively conveys praise for Stanford University, showing her passion and approval for the institution. Additionally, Lara Jean's statement is considered a direct speech act because it shows admiration and approval for the institution without ambiguity or the need for interpretation.

5. Greeting

Data 5.1

Lara Jean : **Peter, hi! What are you doing up?**

Peter : Waiting for you.

Lara Jean's greeting to Peter: "Hi, Peter!" "What are you up to?" satisfies Levinson's Felicity Conditions by showing sincerity, appropriateness, and relevance for effective communication. It directly acknowledges Peter and shows real concern for his well-being, encouraging meaningful participation. This direct speech act starts a cordial discourse with no hidden implications or meanings, which aligns with Yule's notion of direct speech actions. Lara Jean's direct greeting and question are clearly related to their separate duties of greeting and requesting information, which improves the interaction's clarity and effectiveness.

6. Thanking

Data 6.1

Gen : Hey, I heard you went to Korea for spring break. That's awesome. I know you always wanted to go.

Lara Jean : **thanks!** It was

Lara Jean's expression of gratitude, "Thanks! It was," satisfies Levinson's Felicity Conditions by exhibiting sincerity and appropriateness while acknowledging and appreciating a previous action or remark. "Thanks!" is a direct speech act that shows plain gratitude with no hidden implications, with "Thanks!" expressing appreciation and "It was" signifying agreement

with the previous statement or deed. Lara Jean's clear and honest statement of gratitude is consistent with Yule's idea of direct speech acts, since the form matches directly to the function of expressing gratitude, enabling clear and unambiguous communication.

7. Congratulating

Data 7.1

Lara Jean : **congrats** on NYU.

Gen : Yeah, this week. Are you waiting to hear?

Lara Jean's congratulatory message, "Congrats on NYU," fits Levinson's Felicity Conditions by displaying sincerity and appropriateness while acknowledging and celebrating Gen's admission to NYU. This direct speech act expresses clear congratulations with no hidden connotations, sticking to societal standards of informal communication among friends. Lara Jean's clear and heartfelt congratulations represent Yule's idea of direct speech acts, since the form matches directly to the function of expressing congratulations, providing clarity and unambiguous communication.

8. Regretting

Data 8.1

Lara Jean : **Maybe I should just go to Berkeley**

Chris : Okay, no. You made the right decision, Lara Jean.

Lara Jean's regretful speech: "I'm sorry. **I really wanted to make it work for us,**" fulfills Levinson's Felicity Conditions by exhibiting sincerity and appropriateness, accepting responsibility, and expressing genuine regret about the circumstance. This direct speaking act expresses honest regret and repentance, with no concealed connotations, in accordance with interpersonal social norms. Lara Jean's clear expression of remorse exemplifies Yule's idea of direct speaking acts, since the form matches directly to the function of expressing regret and repentance, enabling clear and unambiguous communication.

9. Wishing

Data 9.1

Lara Jean : Uh, there was this one thing. **This girl, she came up to me speaking Korean, and it's like, they see me and they think I understand and then I don't, and it's like I don't belong. I don't know. I guess I just wish that my mom was here to teach me**

Peter : Well, I bet Stanford offers Korean Classes. We could take 'em together.

Lara Jean's statement, "I guess I just wish that my mom was here to teach me," expresses her genuine longing for her mother's presence and guidance, meeting Levinson's Felicity Conditions through authenticity and appropriateness in the context of her emotional vulnerability. This direct speech act reveals her wish without any hidden connotations, which is consistent with Yule's notion of direct speech acts, which includes a variety of expressions other than commands and requests.

CONCLUSION

This study explored into the expressive speech acts used by the female main character in "To All the Boys: Always and Forever" and revealed important findings. Apologizing, blaming, doubting, praising, welcoming, thanking, greeting, regretting, and wishing are some of the expressive speech acts observed. Doubt appeared as a frequent speech act found in the movie, expressing uncertainty, skepticism, or a lack of commitment.

The research also looked into the use of direct and indirect speech acts, with direct speech acts being the most common way seen. Direct speech acts, in which a character expresses their ideas, feelings, or intentions directly through spoken words, are critical for understanding character dynamics and narrative themes. Analyzing direct speech in films provides useful insights into how language is used to create meaning and emotion in cinematic discourse.

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