



Expressive Illocutionary Act Uttered by Main Characters in The *Look Both Ways* Movie

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Abstract

This research analyzes the types of expressive illocutionary acts in the *Look Both Ways* movie. Data were collected through non-participant observation by watching the film multiple times to identify and classify expressive utterances by the main characters, Nathalie and Cara. The data were categorized using Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory, supported by Halliday and Hasan's (1985) context of situation. A total of 39 expressive acts were found, with thanking (35.9%) as the most frequent. The context of situation field, tenor, and mode significantly influences the meaning and function of each act. This study highlights the importance of expressive illocutionary acts in building emotional connections and shaping character relationships, while also contributing pragmatic insights into film discourse and enriching linguistic research in cinematic contexts.

Keywords: Expressive, Illocutionary, Movie.

Introduction

In everyday life, we often encounter misunderstandings in communication. These misunderstandings are not merely caused by mishearing but more often result from a failure to understand the context of what is being said. This phenomenon is addressed in a branch of linguistics known as pragmatics, which examines how language is used in real-life situations and how meaning is influenced by social and contextual factors. According to Leech (1983), pragmatics is the study of how utterances convey meaning depending on specific situations. It enables us to interpret what people truly mean beyond the literal content by considering elements such as the speaker's intention, the relationship between participants, and the setting of the conversation.

A key concept in pragmatics is the speech act, introduced by J. L. Austin (1962), which views language as a form of action. Building upon this idea, Searle

(1979) categorized speech acts into five types: assertive, directives, commissive, expressive, and declaratives. Among these, expressive illocutionary acts are particularly important, as they allow speakers to express psychological states such as gratitude, apology, praise, or regret.

Expressive acts serve a vital role in everyday communication by conveying emotions and shaping interpersonal relationships. For example, saying "Thank you" communicates appreciation, while "I'm sorry" expresses remorse. These acts strengthen social bonds and create emotional resonance between speakers, which is especially relevant in media such as film, where character development and emotional expression are central.

There are several research that discuss the same topic. The research done by Winarta (2024) entitle "*Types of Expressive Illocutionary Acts Found in the Movie 'True Spirit'*," analyzes how emotions and intentions are expressed in the film using Searle's (1979) theory. By watching the movie and examining character dialogues, the researcher identified 27 expressive speech acts. "Thanking" was the most frequent (7 instances), followed by "apologizing," "attitude," and "greeting" (5 each), "wishing" (3), and "congratulating" as the least common. The findings align with Searle's six categories of expressive acts and highlight how characters convey emotion in an inspiring true story.

Previous research done by Suastha and Kesi (2025) entitle "*Expressive Illocutionary Acts in the Ken Dedes Webtoon: A Digital Pragmatic Perspective*," explores how emotions, attitudes, and social relationships are portrayed through expressive speech acts using Yule's (1996) theory. Through qualitative analysis of character dialogues and visual elements, the researchers identified five types of expressive acts: gratitude, plea for mercy, anger, surprise, and sarcasm. Gratitude was often linked to politeness and social harmony, while plea for mercy and sarcasm reflected hierarchical power dynamics. The study highlights how expressive acts in *Ken Dedes* not only enhance dramatic storytelling but also reflect Javanese cultural values such as respect, hierarchy, and responsibility.

Lastly, the research by Dewi and Candra (2024), "*The Illocutionary Acts Found in Main Characters' Conversation of the Maleficent Movie*," explores the use of illocutionary acts in *Maleficent* through Searle's (1979) classification and Halliday & Hasan's (1989) theory on context. Using a qualitative method watching the film, analysing the script, and identifying character utterances they found 39 illocutionary acts in total. Among these, directives were the most frequent (30.8%), followed by commissive, assertive, expressive, and declaratives. These results suggest that characters often use commands and requests to express authority and intention. The study further highlights how situational context shapes the meaning of speech acts, emphasizing the role of language in conveying emotional depth and narrative function in film dialogue.

Based on the previous research above, it can be concluded that the previous and current research has several similarities and differences. The similarity between previous research and current research is both is same analyzed about

pragmatic especially about illocutionary act in the movie and webtoon. The difference that arises in previous research and current research are 1) this research used Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory of expressive illocutionary acts, supported by Halliday and Hasan's (1985) context of situation and 2) the selection of data sources. In the first study, the research used the data source from "True Spirit" movie by Sarah Spillane. In the second previous study, researchers used the data source "Ken Dedes" webtoon. The third previous study used the data source "Maleficent" Movie. Meanwhile, the data source in this research was "Look Both Ways" movie.

This research is aimed at focusing on analyzing expressive illocutionary acts in the *Look Both Ways* movie. The dialogues of the main characters, Nathalie and Cara, contain various expressive speech acts that serve as valuable data for linguistic analysis. This film was chosen not only for its entertainment value but also because of its unique narrative structure, which presents two parallel life paths based on a single decision. This dual storyline offers rich emotional and psychological content, allowing for a diverse range of expressive utterances to be observed. Moreover, the film reflects real-life dilemmas commonly faced by young adults such as dealing with uncertainty, making life-changing choices, and expressing complex emotions. These features make *Look Both Ways* a relevant and meaningful object of study for pragmatic analysis, particularly in understanding how expressive speech acts are used to convey emotion, build relationships, and shape character development within cinematic discourse.

This research aims to answer the following research question:
What types of expressive illocutionary acts are used by the main characters, and how are these acts shaped by the situational context?
These acts reflect how characters express emotions such as happiness, anger, gratitude, or regret in various situations. By identifying the types of expressive acts and examining their context, the study seeks to understand how emotional expression contributes to character development, narrative progression, and the overall emotional tone of the film.

Method

The data source for this study was the *Look Both Ways* movie, accessed via Netflix. The film has a duration of 1 hour and 50 minutes and was produced in 2022, directed by Wanuri Kahiu. It was selected as the data source because it uniquely presents various forms of expressive utterances that reflect the emotional dynamics and life decisions faced by a young woman. Data collection was carried out through non-participant observation of the film, which was watched more than five times to deeply understand the storyline, situational context, and the meaning of the utterances. The researchers systematically recorded the main characters' dialogues Nathalie and Cara that contained emotional expressions. Utterances

were selected based on the presence of expressive illocutionary acts, whether explicitly or implicitly, such as thanking, praising, apologizing, congratulating, condoling, and protesting. Each utterance was documented along with its timestamp and verified using subtitles to ensure accuracy.

Expressive illocutionary acts in this study were identified based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory, using the following criteria: the utterance reflected a psychological or emotional state, was directed at an interlocutor or situation involving emotional evaluation, and served a communicative function consistent with expressive intent. To ensure data consistency and reliability, both researchers analysed and coded the data collaboratively, based on mutual agreement reached through direct discussion during the research process. Data validation was conducted by cross-checking the utterances with the film's subtitles and by examining the context of each scene to ensure interpretive accuracy.

The analysis was presented using both formal and informal methods based on Sudaryanto's (1993) theory. The formal method involved presenting the findings in tables and diagrams, while the informal method provided detailed descriptive explanations of the results. Overall, the method used in this study has limitations in terms of data scope, as it focuses only on a single film and two main characters, making the findings not widely generalizable.

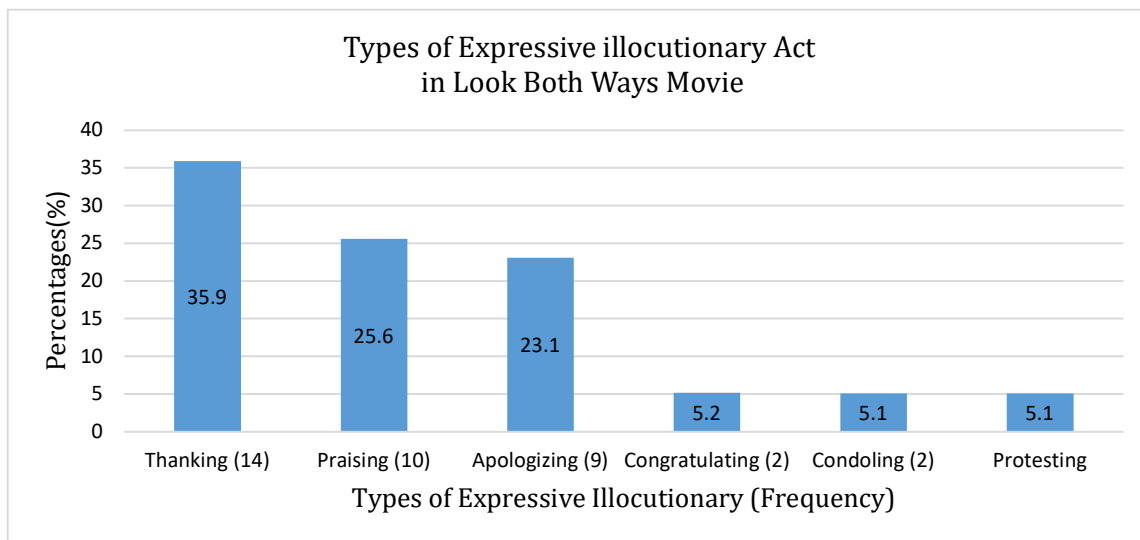
Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis, there are 39 expressive illocutionary acts identified in the *Look Both Ways* movie. These acts include thanking, praising, apologizing, congratulating, condoling, and protesting, following the classification of expressive speech acts as proposed by Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory. The findings are displayed in a table and bar chart to illustrate the number of expressive illocutionary acts identified in the *Look Both Ways* movie, along with the context of the situation implied in the main characters' utterances, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Types of Expressive in Look Both Ways Movie

| No | Types of Expressive | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Thanking | 14 | 35,9% |
| 2 | Praising | 10 | 25,6% |
| 3 | Apologizing | 9 | 23,1% |
| 4 | Congratulating | 2 | 5,2% |
| 5 | Condoling | 2 | 5,1% |
| 6 | Protesting | 2 | 5,1% |
| Total | | 39 | 100% |

Note: Percentages are rounded to one decimal place and slightly adjusted to ensure the total equals 100.0%.



The table and bar chart show that the most frequently used expressive act is thanking, which occurs 14 times (35.9%). This is followed by praising with 10 occurrences (25.6%), apologizing with 9 instances (23%) and congratulating with 2 occurrences (5.2%). Meanwhile, the acts of condoling, and protesting each appear 2 times (5.1%). These findings indicate that the characters in the movie most often express gratitude, praising, and apology in their dialogues. This pattern reflects the emotional atmosphere and the interpersonal relationships depicted in the film, highlighting the importance of appreciation, support, and empathy among the characters.

Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis, six types of expressive illocutionary acts were found. All six types serve different psychological and social functions. Thanking, as the most dominant type (35.9%), highlights the importance of appreciation in maintaining interpersonal relationships. Praising (25.6%) and apologizing (23.1%) also appear frequently, reflecting emotional support, recognition of others, and a sense of responsibility among the characters. Together, these three types form a pattern in which positive and relational expressions dominate the film, accounting for 84.6% of all expressive acts.

In contrast, congratulating with 2 occurrences (5.2%), meanwhile, the acts of condoling, and protesting each appear 2 times (5.1%), suggesting that celebration, grief, or conflict are not the central focus of the narrative. Instead, the film emphasizes reflection, acceptance, and emotionally supportive communication.

A comparison among the six types reveals that more positive, affirming acts such as thanking and praising are far more prevalent than negative or confrontational ones like protesting or condoling. This indicates a clear pattern where the film prioritizes expressions of empathy and care over those of distress.

or disagreement.

Therefore, certain types of expressive acts, particularly thanking and praising, are more dominant due to their alignment with the film's emotional tone and thematic focus on life decisions, self-growth, and meaningful human connection.

Here is the discussion from the analysis:

A. Thanking

Based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) state that thanking is to express gratitude. This is the expression of someone when they want to share their gratitude after somebody doing something that precious to speaker. By saying thank you, it is a polite way to show appreciation and to maintain good relationships with others. It's part of the social norms we use in everyday interactions. Here are example from the expressive of thanking.



Figure 1. Nathalie thanked Gabe for his understanding

Data 1

- Gabe : This should be your choice. It is... It is your choice
Nathalie : Hm?
Gabe : I don't mean that as a cop-out because, obviously, it affects me. And I support you with whatever you choose. I'm pro your choice
Nathalie : **Thank you**
Gabe : I mean it

Look Both Ways (09.15)

Data 2

- Nathalie : **Thank you for having me here**
Cara : Yeah, course!
Nathalie : Yeah. but I need to get away and I'm just thankful to be here

Look Both Ways (01.08.55)

Both Data 1 and Data 2 illustrate the expressive illocutionary act of thanking, where Nathalie expresses gratitude in different situations. While the function of

both utterances is the same expressing thankfulness the contexts differ: Data 1 occurs in an intimate conversation about life-changing decisions, while Data 2 takes place in a more casual, supportive friendship setting. This highlights how the same type of expressive act can be shaped by and interpreted differently depending on the situational context.

The following is a thorough discussion of Data 1. It takes place during a graduation party at a friend's house, where the atmosphere is joyful and celebratory. In this moment, Nathalie begins to experience early signs of pregnancy, which becomes a turning point in the narrative. In one possible storyline, she confirms the result and decides to share it with Gabe. His reaction is calm, supportive, and reassuring, stating that he respects her decision. According to Halliday and Hasan's (1985) theory of context of situation, this interaction can be analysed through three components: the field involves a personal discussion about Nathalie's lifechanging situation and decision-making regarding her pregnancy; the tenor reflects a close and emotionally supportive relationship between the characters; and the mode is informal spoken language in a private, emotionally sensitive moment.

In this context, Nathalie's utterance "Thank you" functions as an expressive illocutionary act that goes beyond social politeness it reflects a sincere emotional response to Gabe's support. The specific situational context enhances the interpretation of the utterance, turning a brief phrase into a meaningful expression of appreciation and emotional relief. The tenor of their relationship (trusting and intimate) allows for a deeper reading of the speech act. Her gratitude not only acknowledges Gabe's empathy but also reinforces the emotional bond between them. Thus, there is a clear connection between the context and the function of the illocutionary act. The supportive field and tenor shape the speech act into an authentic emotional expression, highlighting how context directly influences both the form and the interpretation of expressive utterances like thanking.

B. Congratulating

Based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) state that in congratulating one expresses pleasure with the preparatory condition that the thing in question is beneficial or good for the hearer. Congratulating is when you express congratulations or offer good wishes to someone for their good news, achievements, or successes. This expression is usually delivered to show happiness and support for the accomplishments of others. Congratulating someone helps to strengthen social bonds and create positive feelings in communication. It can be expressed both formally and informally, depending on the relationship between the speaker and the listener. Here is example of expressive illocutionary act of congratulating.



Figure 2. Nathalie Congratulating Gabe on his new house.

Data 3

- Nathalie : Hi. I brought you a housewarming gift
Gabe : Oh, wow, you shouldn't have... this is...
Nathalie : For both of us, to share
Gabe : Hmm. I don't remember the last time we both had a night off.
Nathalie : I know. **Congratulations.** Cheers.

Look Both Ways (54.47)

Data 4

- Nathalie : I saw that you engaged, **congratulations!**
Gabe : Married
Nathalie : No
Gabe : Yeah
Nathalie : You're a married man!

Look Both Ways (01.34.57)

Both parts of data above illustrate the expressive illocutionary act of congratulating, where Nathalie expresses praise in response to significant events in Gabe's life. Although both utterances serve the same function expressing congratulations the differing emotional tones and situational contexts affect how the speech acts are interpreted. This demonstrates how expressive illocutionary acts can vary in meaning depending on the speaker's emotional state and the nature of the interaction.

The following is a thorough discussion of Data 3. The conversation occurs at Gabe's new house in a calm and intimate setting. Nathalie visits with a housewarming gift, indicating warmth and a thoughtful gesture of support. This moment takes place after several significant milestones in their lives, such as graduating college and having a child. The interaction marks a quiet reunion that suggests emotional growth and a fresh chapter in their relationship. Based on Halliday and Hasan's (1985) theory of context of situation, the field of discourse canters on personal milestones and reconnection between two individuals. The tenor is marked by familiarity and emotional closeness between Nathalie and Gabe, while the mode is informal spoken language during a relaxed, face-to-face conversation. These contextual elements shape the meaning and emotional tone of the exchange.

Nathalie's utterance "Congratulations" serves as an expressive illocutionary act of congratulating, expressing happiness and acknowledgment of Gabe's achievement moving into a new home. Within this context, the congratulatory expression does more than recognize a factual event, it conveys Nathalie's emotional support and approval, reinforcing the positive development in Gabe's life. The interpersonal tenor shaped by past shared experiences, deepens the meaning of the utterance, turning it into a symbol of emotional solidarity. Thus, the context significantly influences the interpretation of the speech act. Her congratulation becomes an act of empathy and emotional validation, showing a clear link between the situational context and the function of the illocutionary act. The warm atmosphere, shared history, and relaxed interaction all enhance the expressive force of "Congratulations," making it not just polite acknowledgment, but a genuine emotional connection.

C. Apologizing

Based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) state that the point of apologizing is to express sorrow or regret for some state of affairs that the speaker is responsible for. This is the way when someone wants to share their apology or regret to someone after made some mistakes that already happened. Here are example from the expressive of apologizing.



Figure 3. Nathalie Apologizing to Gabe for not being able to be together

Data 5

- Gabe : What if Ro gets to be with both of her parents... together?
 Nathalie : **I'm scared. I'm sorry. I can't**
 Gabe : That's... I get it, um...

Look Both Ways (57.55)

Data 6

- Nathalie : **I'm sorry about LA.** How I left. So far away, I can't handle this Gabe situation. I didn't handle it well, **I'm sorry.**
 Cara : Hey listen. It is really okay.

Look Both Ways (01.25.08)

Both Data 5 and Data 6 illustrate the expressive illocutionary act of apologizing,

where Nathalie expresses regret in emotionally charged contexts. Though both utterances serve the same function to express regret the surrounding contexts differ significantly. Data 5 involves an intimate moment with a romantic partner about co-parenting, while Data 6 centers on repairing a friendship. This comparison highlights how apologies, though structurally similar, can convey varied emotional depths depending on the relational and situational context.

The following is a thorough discussion of Data 5. The conversation takes place at Gabe's new house, where the atmosphere is calm yet emotionally significant. In this scene, Gabe expresses his hope that he and Nathalie could live together and raise their baby, Rosie, as a family. Nathalie responds with hesitation and eventually refuses his offer, explaining her fear and emotional unpreparedness. She believes it is best for her and Rosie to remain with her parents and encourages Gabe to move forward independently. Applying Halliday and Hasan's (1985) context of situation framework, the field involves a deeply personal and emotional decision about family structure and future relationships. The tenor reflects a close but strained emotional bond between two co-parents negotiating their roles and expectations. The mode is spoken, face-to-face interaction in an intimate domestic setting, allowing for emotional vulnerability and sincerity.

Nathalie's utterance, "I'm scared. I'm sorry. I can't," functions as an expressive illocutionary act of apologizing, where the apology is closely tied to her emotional struggle and decision. The apology is not just a surface-level expression of regret, but a deeply felt acknowledgment of how her refusal might hurt Gabe. The tenor of their relationship honest, emotionally complex, and grounded in shared responsibility amplifies the meaning of "I'm sorry." In this context, the speech act functions as both an emotional release and an attempt to preserve mutual respect despite a painful decision. The context directly shapes the interpretation of this utterance. It is not simply a rejection, but a sincere recognition of emotional consequences. This demonstrates a clear connection between the situational elements and the function of the expressive act, showing how Nathalie's apology becomes a meaningful expression of care, responsibility, and internal conflict.

D. Condoling

Based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) state that when one condoling one expresses sympathy, and the preparatory condition is that the thing in question is bad for the hearer, usually some great misfortune. Condoling is an expression of sympathy or compassion offered to someone who is experiencing grief, sadness, or misfortune, such as receiving news of the passing of a loved one. This act of expressing condolences is an important part of human interaction, as it shows care, empathy, and emotional support for others during difficult times. Condoling can be delivered through words, gestures, or even silence that conveys understanding and shared sorrow. It helps to comfort the person who is grieving and can strengthen social and emotional bonds. Here is example of expressive illocutionary act of condoling.



Figure 4. Cara expressed her sympathy to Nathalie

Data 7

- Cara : Anyway, how are you?
- Nathalie : I'm kinda terrible, actually. Yesterday, I just basically ate crackers and took three naps and then threw up for the rest of the day.
- Cara : **Oh, honey. I'm sorry. I mean, that's normal, right? It's part of the process. I'm sure it will get better.**

Look Both Ways (29.00)

Data 8

- Nathalie : I don't know what to do.
- Cara : **It'll be okay, Nat. It will be okay**

Look Both Ways (07.12)

Both Data 7 and Data 8 illustrate the expressive illocutionary act of condoling, where Cara provides emotional comfort to Nathalie in moments of distress. While both utterances serve the same function offering consolation the emotional contexts differ. One reflects ongoing hardship, while the other responds to sudden, life-changing news. This shows how condoling expressions adapt based on the speaker's emotional needs and the urgency of the moment.

The conversation in Data 7 takes place over a phone call between Cara, who is in Los Angeles, and Nathalie, who is in Texas. This dialogue occurs during the early stages of Nathalie's pregnancy, a time when she feels physically uncomfortable and emotionally overwhelmed. Despite the geographical distance, Cara initiates the call to check on Nathalie, demonstrating her emotional closeness and concern. Applying Halliday and Hasan's (1985) theory, the field of discourse centres around Nathalie's health and emotional wellbeing during a significant personal transition. The tenor reflects a close friendship, where Cara takes on a comforting and supportive role. The mode is spoken interaction via telephone, which allows emotional connection even without physical presence. This context sets the stage for a compassionate and empathetic exchange.

In this emotionally vulnerable moment, Cara's utterance "Oh, honey. I'm sorry. I mean, that's normal, right? It's part of the process. I'm sure it will get better" functions as an expressive illocutionary act of condoling. The choice of words, tone,

and informal endearment “Oh, honey” signal genuine sympathy and concern. The tenor of their relationship marked by intimacy and mutual care deepens the emotional impact of the condoling act. The context of the situation, particularly Nathalie’s emotional state and the supportive field of conversation, directly shapes how Cara’s words are interpreted. Rather than offering a solution, Cara’s condolence works to validate Nathalie’s feelings, provide comfort, and reinforce their emotional bond. This illustrates a clear link between the situational context and the function of the expressive act, showing how the meaning of condoling is amplified by the relational and emotional circumstances in which it is uttered.

E. Protesting

Based on Searle and Vanderveken’s (1985) theory, protesting includes acts such as complaining and lamenting. These speech acts assume that the situation or event being talked about is negative or undesirable. When someone protesting, they express their dissatisfaction or unhappiness indirectly or directly. This kind of expression shows that the speaker feels something is wrong or unfair. Therefore, protesting always involves a negative judgment about the topic being discussed. Here are example of expressive illocutionary act of protesting.

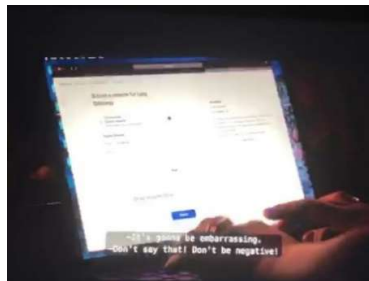


Figure 5. Cara rejecting Nathalie’s negativity

Data 9

- Cara : If you don’t apply.. I’m gonna scream.
Nathalie : Please, don’t. We’re just got here, Okay.. I’m, I will apply. It’s gonna be embarrassing
Cara : **Don’t say that! Don’t be negative!**

Look Both Ways (20.40)

Data 10

- Gabe : I’m also a drummer in a band
Tina : Does that pay?
Gabe : Not yet
Tina : Then, you are not a musician, you are a dry cleaner
Nathalie : **No. You can’t do that! You can’t tell him to give up on his dream!**

Look Both Ways (16.04)

Both Data 9 and Data 10 illustrate the expressive illocutionary act of protesting, in which the speakers oppose statements or behaviors they find disagreeable or unacceptable. In both instances, the protest functions as a defense Nathalie defends Gabe, while Cara defends Nathalie from herself revealing how expressive acts of protest can be used to challenge discouragement or negativity in different relational contexts.

The conversation in Data 9 occurs in an alternate narrative where Nathalie's pregnancy test result is negative. She and Cara have just moved to Los Angeles to pursue new opportunities, including job searches and personal growth. While the atmosphere is filled with excitement, there is also a sense of anxiety and self-doubt as they navigate unfamiliar territory. Nathalie finds a job opening that aligns with her passion for animals but hesitates to apply due to a lack of confidence. Cara, noticing her friend's insecurity, expresses strong encouragement. According to Halliday and Hasan's (1985) context of situation, the field involves a discussion about job application and personal motivation, the tenor is between two close friends where one takes a supportive and assertive role, and the mode is informal spoken dialogue that reflects urgency and emotional involvement. The setting allows emotional expressions and direct feedback, shaping the tone of their exchange.

Cara's utterance "Don't say that! Don't be negative!" functions as an expressive illocutionary act of protesting, where she challenges Nathalie's self-deprecating remarks. Though brief, the speech act reflects Cara's emotional response and disagreement with the negativity Nathalie expresses. The tenor of their relationship characterized by deep trust and familiarity enables Cara to speak frankly and emotionally, showing concern without fear of offending. The context enhances the interpretation of her protest as an act of motivation and care, rather than confrontation. Here, the situational elements clearly influence both the form and function of the speech act. Cara's protest serves to uplift and empower Nathalie, emphasizing how expressive utterances of protest can emerge not from conflict, but from emotional investment and support in close interpersonal dynamics.

F. Praising

Based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) statement, praising is to express approbation. It therefore presupposes that the thing praising is good. In other words, when someone offers praising, they are not only acknowledging a positive quality or achievement, but also implicitly affirming its value or worth. This act of praising serves to reinforce desirable behavior or attributes, both in the eyes of the recipient and those who witness the praising. Furthermore, praising can strengthen social bonds and encourage continued excellence or improvement. By expressing approbation, the speaker positions themselves as supportive and appreciative, fostering a positive. Here is an example from the expressive

illocutionary act of praising. Here is example of expressive illocutionary act of praising.



Figure 6. Nathalie praising Gabe's sincerity and willingness to take responsibility

Data 11

- Nathalie : Gabe, I know and **if I'm gonna be in this situation with anyone, I'm glad that it's with you.**
- Gabe : Okay..

Look Both Ways (18.34)

The conversation in Data 11 takes place at Nathalie's parents' house in Texas, during a tense and emotionally charged moment. Nathalie and Gabe are about to share the news of her pregnancy with her parents, who react with anger and disappointment. Despite the hostility, Gabe accompanies Nathalie and takes responsibility for the situation, showing maturity and commitment. Although he feels disrespected and uncomfortable, Nathalie stands by him and offers emotional support. Using Halliday and Hasan's (1985) framework, the field of discourse involves a sensitive family revelation, the tenor captures the emotionally supportive and affirming relationship between Nathalie and Gabe, and the mode is a spoken, face-to-face interaction within a family setting. These contextual elements create a space for subtle, emotionally nuanced communication.

Nathalie's utterance "Gabe, I know and if I'm gonna be in this situation with anyone, I'm glad that it's with you" serves as an expressive illocutionary act of praising, though indirectly. She does not overtly use words like "brave" or "thank you," but her message conveys admiration, gratitude, and emotional reassurance. The tenor of the situation intimates and emotionally complex shapes the interpretation of her words as praise, aimed at validating Gabe's effort and reinforcing their connection during a difficult moment. In this way, the context enriches the meaning of Nathalie's utterance, transforming a seemingly simple statement into a heartfelt recognition of Gabe's support and character. This demonstrates how expressive speech acts like praising can be deeply influenced by situational dynamics, especially when expressed through indirect but emotionally resonant language.

- **Ambiguous Expressive Act of Praising**

An ambiguous expressive act is a type of speech where the speaker's true feelings are unclear and open to different interpretations. This often happens when what someone says does not quite match how they say it for example, their tone of voice, facial expression, or body language might tell a different story. The following is an example of ambiguous expressive act in *Look Both Ways* movie.



Figure 7. Nathalie hides her disappointment by praising Jake.

Data 12

- Jake : Uh.. we got the Sable Island Project. I'm gonna have to go to Nova Scotia.. for six months, maybe, a year. Ah, it's just bad timing
- Nathalie : So we're not looking for apartment, then?
- Jake : I mean, we can still
- Nathalie : You just won't be living on it.. It's okay, **this is so great for you!** We'll make it work, I'm not worried about it
- Jake : Okay..

Look Both Ways (01.06.52)

In Data 12 above, the utterance reflects an ambiguous form of the expressive illocutionary act of praising. This is indicated by Nathalie's statement, "It's okay. This is so great for you! We'll make it work. I'm not worried about it," to Jake after learning that he would be moving to Nova Scotia for a six-month to one-year work project. Although her words sound supportive, Nathalie's sad facial expression and teary eyes reveal her disappointment, as their plans for the future will no longer be realized.

Although Nathalie explicitly praises Jake and supports his decision, there is a strong emotional tension conveyed through her nonverbal expression. This indicates an internal conflict between her desire to support her partner and the sense of loss she is experiencing. Thus, the praise she offers is not merely a genuine expression of appreciation, but also a way to mask her disappointment and maintain warmth in the relationship, even though her heart is not entirely willing. This highlights how emotional context and facial expressions greatly influence the interpretation of expressive illocutionary acts, making Nathalie's praise an example of an ambiguous

expressive act. The data above can also be interpreted differently depending on the interpreter's perspective. For example, the utterance "It's okay, this is so great for you" may be read as a sincere compliment or as a form of emotional denial. This alternative interpretation shows that expressive illocutionary acts do not always carry a single, fixed meaning and can shift depending on the speaker's hidden emotions or intentions.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, six types of expressive illocutionary acts were identified in *Look Both Ways* using Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory: thanking, congratulating, apologizing, condoling, protesting, and praising. Thanking was the most frequent (14 times or 35.9%), mostly expressed through direct speech. Some praising acts appeared ambiguous when verbal expressions conflicted with nonverbal cues, often due to emotional tension such as wanting to support others while feeling disappointed or sad. Expressive speech acts shape the genre of *Look Both Ways* by emphasizing emotions and relationships, aligning it with drama or romance. Acts like thanking, praising, and apologizing add a personal, emotional tone. In contrast, more directive or commissive acts would shift the genre. U.S. cultural context also affects expression praise may be indirect, and apologies can carry deeper meaning. Social ties influence how emotions are expressed. The expressive illocutionary act of praising was hard to categorize due to ambiguity. Nonverbal cues like tone and facial expressions also impact interpretation, requiring careful contextual analysis. This study is limited to one film and two main characters, so the findings can't be generalized. The lack of data triangulation also reduces the depth of the pragmatic analysis.

For future research, it is suggested to examine expressive illocutionary acts across various movie genres or cultures to gain broader insights. Comparative studies between languages or including all speech act types could offer a more comprehensive understanding of their use in films.

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