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A Pragmatic Analysis of Illocutionary Acts and Identity Construction in KATSEYE's EP SIS (Soft Is Strong)

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Abstract

This study investigates the types and functions of illocutionary acts in KATSEYE's debut EP, SIS (Soft Is Strong), and examines how these acts contribute to identity construction and thematic progression across its five tracks. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using Searle's (1979) theory of illocutionary acts. The data were analyzed at the utterance level using the interactive model of data analysis proposed by Miles et al. (2014). The analysis identified 67 unique utterances comprising four types of illocutionary acts: assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive, while no declarative acts were identified. Assertive acts were the most frequent, with 40 occurrences (59.7%), followed by expressive acts with 16 (23.9%), directive acts with seven (10.4%), and commissive acts with four (6.0%). Across the tracks, the functions of these acts varied. These findings show that illocutionary acts contribute to identity construction not only through their categories but also through the different communicative functions they perform across the EP. The study also shows that examining the tracks as a connected text provides insight into how illocutionary patterns support thematic progression.

1. Introduction

Language functions not only as a medium for conveying information but also as a means of performing actions in social interaction. This functional perspective forms the basis of pragmatics, which examines how meaning is constructed through context, communicative intention, and interpretation rather than through linguistic forms alone (Birner, 2025; Cole, 1978; Cutting, 2002; Leech, 2016; Mey, 2001).

From this perspective, utterances are understood as actions that speakers perform to achieve particular communicative purposes. Austin (1962) distinguishes three dimensions of speech acts—locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts—among which illocutionary acts occupy a central position because they represent the speaker's

intended communicative force. Searle (1979) classifies illocutionary acts into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Although this taxonomy provides a systematic framework for identifying communicative intentions, the interpretation of illocutionary force depends not only on grammatical form but also on contextual and discourse-level factors that shape how utterances function in communication.

One discourse context in which this issue is particularly relevant is song lyrics. Unlike spontaneous conversation, song lyrics are carefully constructed texts that present an implied speaker, an implied audience, and a communicative situation. Although they are produced in artistic settings rather than in face-to-face interaction, they still perform communicative actions through language. As Birner (2025) and Mey (2001) argue, pragmatic meaning emerges from the relationship between linguistic choices and their social context rather than from literal meaning alone. Consequently, song lyrics may be examined as discourse in which speakers express attitudes, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and position themselves through language use. Rather than functioning as isolated expressions, the utterances within a collection of songs may also interact to create broader thematic and discursive meanings.

From this perspective, speech acts are viewed not just as linguistic categories but as pragmatic tools that allow speakers to shape their identities. Increasingly, identity is understood as something constructed through discourse rather than a fixed personal trait (Bamberg, De Fina, & Schiffrin, 2011; Fisher, Evans, Forbes, Gayton, & Liu, 2020; Goffman, 2021; Linaker, 2023). Speakers continually position themselves by expressing beliefs, evaluations, commitments, emotions, and interpersonal relationships through their communicative choices. Different illocutionary acts therefore contribute to identity construction in different ways.

Assertive acts may position speakers by expressing beliefs, evaluations, or self-definitions; directive acts negotiate relationships between speakers and audiences by inviting, requesting, or instructing; commissive acts project future-oriented commitments and intentions; whereas expressive acts reveal emotional stance and personal evaluation. Examining these functions across an extended discourse makes it possible to understand not only what speakers say but also how recurring communicative actions contribute to the construction and development of identity.

Previous studies investigating illocutionary acts in song lyrics have primarily focused on identifying and classifying speech-act categories within individual songs or relatively limited datasets (Jarassri & Phennapha, 2020; Milantina, Arifin, & Rois, 2025; Sari, 2024). These studies generally report the frequency of particular illocutionary types, with assertive and expressive acts often emerging as the dominant categories. Similarly, Gawa, Munir, & Setiawan (2023) found that assertive acts predominate in selected songs by Taylor Swift, while Zaki (2025) reported the predominance of assertive acts in songs from *The Greatest Showman*.

Although these studies demonstrate that song lyrics contain diverse illocutionary forms, their analyses largely remain descriptive, emphasizing categorical classification rather than examining how speech acts function collectively within larger discourse. Consequently, relatively little attention has been given to how illocutionary acts interact across multiple songs to construct identity and thematic development within a cohesive musical work.

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This limitation is particularly relevant when examining contemporary debut projects, as albums and extended plays (EPs) are increasingly treated as cohesive artistic works whose sequencing and thematic continuity contribute to meaning that goes beyond individual songs. Such works often portray evolving identities through recurring themes, interpersonal positioning, and changing communicative stances across tracks. KATSEYE's debut EP, *SIS (Soft Is Strong)*, provides an appropriate context for examining this phenomenon, as its five tracks collectively explore themes of confidence, relationships, autonomy, vulnerability, and self-exploration. Rather than treating each song as an independent text, the EP can be interpreted as a connected discourse in which identity is progressively constructed through recurring pragmatic choices and thematic continuity.

Based on these considerations, this study examines the use of illocutionary acts in KATSEYE's debut EP, *SIS (Soft Is Strong),* by treating the EP as a cohesive discourse rather than a collection of individual songs. Specifically, the study aims to (1) identify the types of illocutionary acts realized across the five tracks, (2) examine how these illocutionary acts function as pragmatic resources for expressing stance, agency, relational positioning, and identity construction, and (3) analyze how the distribution and interaction of these illocutionary acts contribute to thematic progression throughout the EP. By addressing these objectives, the study extends previous research beyond speech-act classification toward a discourse-level understanding of how language use contributes to identity construction in contemporary song lyrics.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine the realization of illocutionary acts in the lyrics of KATSEYE's debut EP, *SIS (Soft Is Strong)*. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because the study seeks to interpret how utterances function pragmatically within their discourse context rather than to measure variables statistically (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The analysis was grounded in speech act theory, particularly the concepts of illocutionary force and the classification of illocutionary acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979). The study focuses on how utterances perform communicative actions and how these actions contribute to identity construction and thematic progression across the EP's five tracks.

The data source of this study was KATSEYE's debut EP, *SIS (Soft Is Strong)*, which consists of five tracks: *Debut, Touch, My Way, I'm Pretty,* and *Tonight I Might*. The primary data consisted of the complete lyrics of all five songs, obtained from the physical copy of the EP. They were cross-checked with the official lyric releases available on KATSEYE's Spotify page to ensure textual accuracy. Both sources were compared prior to analysis, and the verified lyrics were used consistently throughout the coding and analysis process.

The unit of analysis in this study was the utterance. Rather than treating every lyric line as a separate unit, an utterance was defined as a segment of discourse that expresses a single complete communicative intention within its lyrical context. Accordingly, an utterance could consist of: a complete lyric line expressing one communicative act; multiple consecutive lines expressing a single communicative intention; or a clause functioning independently as one pragmatic act. Repeated choruses and recurring lyric lines were treated as a single analytical unit when they conveyed the same communicative intention.

Consequently, identical lyric repetitions were coded only once, whereas utterances with different communicative functions or contextual meanings were treated as separate units. This procedure enabled the analysis to focus on the range of illocutionary acts realized in the EP rather than on the frequency of lyrical repetition.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification as iterative and interconnected processes. During data condensation, the lyrics were segmented into utterances, and each utterance was examined according to its linguistic form, contextual meaning, and communicative purpose. Each category was identified using operational criteria adapted from Searle (1979). Because no declarative acts were identified in the dataset, the analysis focused on the remaining four categories.

Table 1. Operational Definitions and Linguistic Indicators of Illocutionary Acts

Illocutionary Type	Operational Definition	Linguistic Indicators
Assertive	Utterances through which the speaker commits to the truth of a proposition by stating, describing, evaluating, or claiming something.	Statements, evaluations, beliefs, self-definitions, judgments
Directive	Utterances intended to influence the hearer's future action through requests, invitations, commands, advice, or suggestions.	Imperatives, invitations, requests, instructions
Commissive	Utterances committing the speaker to a future course of action or expressing future intention.	Promises, commitments, intentions, willingness
Expressive	Utterances expressing the speaker's emotional or psychological state toward a situation.	Feelings, appreciation, regret, frustration, emotional evaluation

After classification, the coded data were organized into coding tables containing five analytical components: utterance, illocutionary type, linguistic indicator, contextual meaning, and functional interpretation. This organization enabled systematic comparison both within individual tracks and across the EP as a whole. During data display, frequencies of each illocutionary category were summarized for every track before patterns across tracks were examined. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involved interpreting how the distribution and interaction of illocutionary acts contributed to identity construction and thematic progression throughout the EP.

3. Result

The analysis identified 67 unique utterances across the five tracks of KATSEYE's *SIS (Soft Is Strong)*. The utterances were classified according to the taxonomy of illocutionary acts (Searle, 1979). Repeated lyric lines, including recurring choruses, were coded only once when they conveyed the same communicative function, as the analysis focused on unique utterances rather than the frequency of lyrical repetition. The findings show that four categories of illocutionary acts—assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive—

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are realized throughout the EP, whereas no declarative acts were identified. The distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall Distribution of Illocutionary Acts

No	Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Assertive	40	59.7%
2	Expressive	16	23.9%
3	Directive	7	10.4%
4	Commissive	4	6.0%
5	Declarative	0	0.0%
	Total	**67**	**100%**

As shown in Table 2, assertive acts are the most frequent category, accounting for 40 of the 67 utterances (59,7%); expressive acts constitute the second-largest category with 16 utterances (23,9%), followed by directives with 7 utterances (10,4%) and commissives with 4 utterances (6,0%). No declarative acts were identified. The predominance of assertives is also evident across individual tracks, although the relative distribution of the other categories varies according to the communicative content of each song. To demonstrate how the utterances were classified, Table 3 presents representative examples from the five tracks.

Table 3. Representative Coding Evidence

Track	Representative Utterance	Type	Contextual Meaning	Analytical Justification
Debut	"I don't need nobody tryna tell me how to run it."	Assertive	Rejecting external control.	The speaker presents a claim about her independence.
Touch	"Thought about you way too much."	Expressive	Expressing emotional preoccupation.	The speaker expresses emotional vulnerability (attachment).
My Way	“Yeah, I tried to fit in your box of pink Barbie dolls….”	Assertive	Unsuccessful attempt to meet an external standard.	Rejects external standards and embraces individuality.
I'm Pretty	"Heartbreak, move on."	Directive	Urging movement beyond emotional pain.	The imperative construction functions as an attempt to encourage action.
Tonight I Might	"Tonight I might do it a little different than I did before."	Commissive	Indicating a tentative intention to change behavior.	The speaker commits herself to a possible future action.

Table 4 shows the analysis of *Debut*, in which 13 unique utterances were identified. Assertive acts were predominant, with 10 occurrences (76.9%), followed by two directives (15.4%) and one expressive act (7.7%). No commissive or declarative acts were identified.

Table 4. Classification of Illocutionary Acts in Track 1: *Debut*

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	10	76.9%
Directive	2	15.4%
Expressive	1	7.7%
Total	**13**	**100%**

Table 5 presents the analysis of *Touch*, which contains 20 unique utterances, making it the track with the most coded utterances. Assertives account for 10 utterances (50.0%), expressives for 7 (35.0%), and directives for 3 (15.0%). No commissive or declarative acts were identified.

Table 5. Classification of Illocutionary Acts in Track 2: *Touch*

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	10	50.0%
Expressive	7	35.0%
Directive	3	15.0%
Total	**20**	**100%**

Table 6 summarizes the 13 unique utterances in *My Way*. Assertives account for 10 utterances (76.9%), while expressives account for 3 (23.1%); no directives, commissives, or declaratives were identified.

Table 6. Classification of Illocutionary Acts in Track 3: *My Way*

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	10	76.9%
Expressive	3	23.1%
Total	**13**	**100%**

The analysis of *I'm Pretty*, presented in Table 7, identified 12 unique utterances, with no declarative acts. Five are assertive (41.7%), four are expressive (33.3%), two are directive (16.7%), and one is commissive (8.3%).

Table 7. Classification of Illocutionary Acts in Track 4: *I'm Pretty*

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	5	41.7%
Expressive	4	33.3%
Directive	2	16.7%
Commissive	1	8.3%
Total	**12**	**100%**

Table 8 provides an overview of the illocutionary acts distribution in *Tonight I Might.* Assertive acts account for 5 utterances (55.6%), commissive acts for 3 (33.3%), and expressive acts for 1 (11.1%), and no directives were identified.

Table 8. Classification of Illocutionary Acts in Track 5: *Tonight I Might*

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	5	55.6%
Commissive	3	33.3%
Expressive	1	11.1%
Total	**9**	**100%**

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4. Discussion

This section discusses how illocutionary acts are realized across the five tracks in the KATSEYE's EP *SIS (Soft Is Strong)*. The analysis examines patterns of language use across the tracks and considers what these patterns reveal about meaning and identity construction. Although each track is examined individually, the songs are interpreted as a connected whole, allowing the discussion to move beyond identifying illocutionary act types to examining their contribution to thematic development and the construction of the speaker's identity throughout the EP. This approach highlights both the distinctive characteristics of each track and the thematic progression that connects them.

A. Track 1: Debut

Debut contains 13 unique utterances, of which 10 are assertives (76.9%), two are directives (15.4%), and one is expressive (7.7%). The high proportion of assertives is closely tied to lexical and structural choices that describe the speaker's identity. In *"I don't need nobody tryna tell me how to run it,"* the negative expression *"don't need nobody"* rejects external control. In *"Know just how to make a scene, just me, myself, my best friends,"* the speaker presents herself as capable of handling things on her own. Similarly, *"I don't need no cookie cutter, perfect ordinary"* rejects the idea of conforming to a standard or ordinary image. These utterances therefore construct a sense of independence by clearly articulating what the speaker accepts and rejects, repeatedly positioning her as capable of determining her own actions and resisting externally imposed norms.

This pattern aligns with the role of assertives identified in previous studies of song lyrics. Gawa et al. (2023) found assertive acts to be the most frequent category in Taylor Swift's life-lesson songs, including acts such as stating, informing, rejecting, and insisting. Jarassri & Phennapha (2020) likewise found assertive acts to be the most common in encouragement songs and noted that these acts frequently convey truth, experience, and storytelling. In *Debut*, however, these acts are mainly used to make statements about independence, ability, and rejection of external control. This supports Bamberg et al.'s (2011) view that identity can be constructed through discourse, particularly in how speakers demonstrate agency and position themselves relative to others. Chen & Qiu (2025) similarly show that assertive acts can serve as linguistic resources for constructing pragmatic identity.

The two directives add an interpersonal function. *"Wanna pull up on us? Check in at the gate and come through"* contains an interrogative invitation followed by imperative forms. The phrases *"check in"* and *"come through"* clearly indicate that the speaker is asking the listener to take action and specify how that participation will occur. Within Searle (1979) framework, directives are speech acts through which a speaker attempts to get a hearer to perform an action, including invitations and requests. In this track, the directive also supports the assertives' confident identity, as the speaker determines how the audience can participate in the interaction.

The expressive act *"Uh-huh, I like it, it's simple as that"* adds a clear positive evaluation. The word *"like"* directly expresses approval, consistent with Searle's (1979) description of expressive acts. Overall, *Debut* primarily uses assertive acts to present independence, ability, and rejection of conformity, while directives help create a controlled interaction with the audience.

B. Track 2: Touch

Touch contains 20 unique utterances, including 10 assertives (50.0%), seven expressives (35.0%), and three directives (15.0%). Assertives remain the most frequent type, but the large number of expressives gives the track a more emotional focus than *Debut*. The assertives mainly evaluate another participant's behavior and the development of a relational narrative. This is evident in *"'Cause you been so out of touch," "You could've had my love, but you been so out of touch,"* and *"Yeah, you went and messed it up."* These statements portray the other person as emotionally distant and responsible for problems in the relationship. The repeated phrase *"out of touch"* and the verb *"messed"* convey a negative evaluation, while *"You could've had my love"* frames the relationship as a lost possibility. These linguistic choices position the speaker through judgment of the other participant rather than through autonomous self-description, as in *Debut.*

One particularly important case is *"First, you're gonna say you're sorry, promise you won't do it anymore."* Although the word *"promise"* is typically associated with commissive acts, the speaker is not making a promise in this utterance. Instead, she predicts what the other person will say. It is therefore classified as an assertive prediction. This example shows that speech-act classification should be based on the function of the whole utterance rather than on a single word (Searle, 1979).

This finding remains compatible with previous studies that identified assertive acts as the most frequent type in song lyrics (Gawa et al., 2023; Jarassri & Phennapha, 2020; Sari, 2024). What differs is the propositional focus of the dominant acts. In *Debut*, assertives primarily describe independence and ability, whereas in *Touch*, they are mainly used to evaluate interpersonal behavior and attribute responsibility. This illustrates the contextual nature of illocutionary force, as the function of an utterance may vary according to the context in which it occurs (Mey, 2001; Mey & Brown, 2009).

Expressive acts are also substantially more frequent in this track. *"Thought about you way too much," "Monday, I was dreaming 'bout ya," "Tuesday, I was waiting near the phone,"* and *"Thursday, I was losing interest"* directly express thoughts, expectations, and shifts in interest. These examples fit the definition of expressives because they convey the speaker's psychological state (Searle, 1979). This pattern aligns with the findings of Milantina et al. (2025), whose analysis of Sabrina Carpenter's *Don't Smile* identified expressive acts as the most frequent category, followed by assertives and directives. In *Touch*, however, expressives remain secondary to assertives. Their comparatively high frequency nonetheless shifts the discourse toward explicit emotional evaluation, as evidenced by the lexical choices *"thought," "dreaming," "waiting," "getting bored,"* and *"losing interest."*

The directives further reshape interpersonal positioning through imperative constructions that specify the actions expected of the hearer. *"Come up with a different story"* rejects the hearer's previous explanation, *"…say something I ain't heard before"* requests a different response, and *"If I ever call again, don't press ignore"* sets a condition for future communication. Compared with the invitation in *Debut*, these directives are more corrective and restrictive, as they place limits on future interaction.

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C. Track 3: My Way

My Way contains 13 unique utterances, comprising 10 assertives (76.9%) and three expressives (23.1%), with no directives or commissives identified. The assertives center on personal choice and rejection of external expectations. In *"At least I can say that I did it my way"* and *"Yeah, I did it my way,"* the repeated phrase *"my way"* places personal choice at the center of each utterance. *"Gas pedal like 95, flyin' eastbound, hands up, no slowing me down"* uses a metaphor to convey unrestrained movement. These utterances create a strong sense of personal agency through repeated references to the speaker's choices and actions.

The theme of nonconformity is also clear in *"Yeah, I tried to fit in your box of pink Barbie dolls, found I still couldn't win them all."* As an assertive utterance, the speaker frames conformity as a past experience through the verbs *"tried"* and *"couldn't,"* while the metaphor *"fit in your box"* represents an external standard the speaker attempted to meet. The possessive determiner *"your"* places the standard outside the speaker, and the metaphor *"box"* frames that standard as a fixed space into which the speaker is expected to fit. The contrast between *"tried to fit"* and *"couldn't win them all"* therefore marks a shift from attempted conformity to recognition of its limits. Similarly, *"Thick hair, big curls and they all stare"* uses descriptive noun phrases to foreground the speaker's distinctive physical appearance, while *"they all stare"* introduces others' attention and places the speaker in relation to a social audience. These lexical and grammatical choices construct a contrast between fitting in and standing out.

The three expressive acts add a reflective dimension through different linguistic choices. "Pickin' apart, what's wrong with me?" is a rhetorical question that focuses on self-doubt to express internal conflict. Rhetorical questions can serve functions beyond asking for information and can strengthen implied meaning (Chen & Qiu, 2025). *"Oh, never wanna do what I'm told, even if I mess it all up and make a million mistakes"* uses the negative-frequency adverb *"never"* to emphasize refusal and the passive construction *"what I'm told"* to foreground the speaker's refusal to be directed by others. Meanwhile, *"even if I mess it all up"* shows that the speaker accepts the possibility of failure rather than giving up her personal choice.

Finally, *"I kinda miss being young, dumb and naive, 'cause now I realize growing up ain't what it seems*" contrasts the past with the present through the use of *"miss"* and *"now I realize."* The words *"young, dumb and naive"* describe the former self, while *"ain't what it seems"* shows her changed understanding of growing up. These expressions reflect self-questioning, resistance, and evolving self-awareness centered on personal choice, consistent with the finding that expressive acts in song lyrics can reveal vulnerability, inner struggle, and emotional reflection (Milantina et al., 2025).

D. Track 4: I'm Pretty

I'm Pretty contains 12 unique utterances, consisting of five assertives (41.7%), four expressives (33.3%), two directives (16.7%), and one commissive (8.3%). The track strongly focuses on appearance and how emotional pain is presented or concealed. The assertive utterances present the speaker's experiences, actions, and attitudes, consistent with Searle's (1979) definition of assertives as acts through which speakers present something as the case. In *"New face, new song,"* the repeated word *"new"* frames change as visible and tied to a fresh outward identity. In *"...I dry my tears with makeup," "tears"*

represents emotional pain, while *"makeup"* links that pain to outward appearance. Similarly, in *"I'm not afraid to cover up, put on a front, put on a face and show it off,"* the phrases *"cover up," "put on a front,"* and *"put on a face"* describe ways of hiding what is felt, while *"show it off"* shifts the focus to the image presented to others. Together, these linguistic choices create a contrast between the publicly presented appearance and the emotions kept beneath the surface, highlighting the difference between what is shown to others and what is felt internally.

The expressive acts complement these assertions by explicitly articulating the concealed emotional state. *"You'd never know that I hurt," "Pretty sure I'm not done healing," "Pretty sure that I'm still breathing,"* and *"Pretty far from feeling, pretty sure I'm not done healing"* contain lexical items directly associated with hurt, healing, and feeling. Their expressive force is therefore evident in the speaker's explicit articulation of emotional states, consistent with the characterization of expressives (Searle, 1979). This pattern aligns with the findings of Milantina et al. (2025), who found that expressive acts can be especially prominent in lyrics centered on emotional experience, although expressives are not the dominant category in *I'm Pretty*.

Unlike the audience-oriented directives in *Debut* and the interpersonal directives in *Touch*, the directives in this track, *"Heartbreak, move on"* and *"Try to hold on,"* are directed toward the self. Their imperative forms indicate that the speaker is telling herself what action to take. The commissive *"I'll meet someone, then back to square one"* adds a future-oriented statement, but it appears only once. Thus, the track mainly combines assertions about appearance with expressions of emotional experience, while the directives and commissive provide smaller supporting functions.

E. Track 5: Tonight I Might

Tonight I Might contains nine unique utterances, comprising five assertives (55.6%), three commissives (33.3%), and one expressive (11.1%). Assertives remain the most frequent type, but commissives are more common in this track than in the other four tracks. The track therefore gives greater attention to possible future actions while still relying mainly on self-description. The assertives describe the speaker's behavior and personality. *"There's a hundred reasons why I show up late and then I don't talk," "I'm such an overthinker, loner, the one who misses all the jokes,"* and *"I'm not the perfect example…"* directly describe personal habits and limitations. Lexical labels such as *"overthinker," "loner,"* and *"not the perfect example"* explicitly construct the speaker's self-description.

The commissives then shift the focus toward possible future actions, as seen in *"Tonight I might do it a little different than I did before,"* and *"Do all of the shit I know I didn't do when I was a kid…,"* which present actions the speaker may undertake. According to Searle (1979), these utterances can be classified as commissives because they concern the speaker's future actions, a function also identified in Zaki's (2025) analysis of commissive acts in song lyrics, particularly through expressions of determination and future-oriented action.

In *Tonight I Might*, however, the future orientation is less categorical because the speaker repeatedly uses the modal construction *"might,"* which reduces the force of commitment by presenting the future action as possible rather than definite. The commissives in this track therefore differ from more categorical forms of commitment, such as promises or vows. This future-oriented possibility is connected to the expressive

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act, *"But I'm tired of focusing on all the things I don't got,"* where the adjective *"tired"* directly expresses dissatisfaction with the speaker's present situation, while the subsequent commissives introduce possible actions in response to that dissatisfaction. The sequence thus moves from self-description and dissatisfaction toward possible future action.

F. Overall Thematic Progression Across the EP

Analyzing the five tracks together reveals that assertives are the predominant type of illocutionary act in the EP, but their roles vary across tracks. In *Debut*, they mainly express independence, ability, and rejection of conformity; in *Touch*, they evaluate interpersonal behavior; in *My Way*, they focus on personal choice and resisting external expectations; in *I'm Pretty*, they describe outward appearance and ways of hiding emotional pain; and in *Tonight I Might*, they serve as explicit self-descriptions and self-assessments. Although assertives are the most common category overall, their content and functions differ throughout the EP. This supports prior research identifying assertives as the most frequent lyric category (Gawa et al., 2023; Jarassri & Phennapha, 2020; Sari, 2024). However, this study emphasizes that frequency alone does not explain their role; their significance depends on the meaning and context within each track. This finding is vital for understanding identity, as Bamberg et al. (2011) note, because identity is constructed through discourse—how speakers portray agency, differentiate themselves, and navigate change.

Expressive acts show a different pattern. They are limited in *Debut*, become much more frequent in *Touch*, remain secondary in *My Way*, become almost as frequent as assertives in *I'm Pretty*, and appear only once in *Tonight I Might*. The lexical evidence also shifts across the sequence: positive evaluation in *Debut*; thought, anticipation, disappointment, and shifting interest in *Touch*; self-questioning and retrospection in *My Way*; hurt and incomplete healing in *I'm Pretty*; and dissatisfaction with negative self-focus in *Tonight I Might*. The pattern, therefore, shows that emotional expression plays different roles at different points in the EP.

The directives also show a clear change in their function. In *Debut*, they control audience participation; in *Touch*, they set conditions for interpersonal interaction; and in *I'm Pretty*, they are directed toward the speaker herself. This progression indicates that directives evolve from managing interactions with others to regulating the speaker's own behavior. These shifts are linked to how speech acts shape relationships and pragmatic identity (Chen & Qiu, 2025). Consequently, directive force not only reflects attempts to influence actions but also highlights changes in interactional focus throughout the EP.

Commissive acts are generally the least common and only appear in *I'm Pretty* and *Tonight I Might*. However, their presence becomes more prominent in the final two tracks. The single commissive in *I'm Pretty* discusses a potential future relationship, while the three commissives in *Tonight I Might* consider possible behavioral changes. This shift emphasizes a stronger focus on future actions in the latter part of the EP. This pattern aligns with the role of commissives as acts related to future intentions or actions (Searle, 1979).

Taken together, these patterns support the view that identity in the EP is constructed through language and varies with the situation represented in each track. Bamberg et al. (2011) emphasize agency, the relationship between self and others, and

change as important parts of identity construction through discourse. Chen & Qiu (2025) similarly show that speech acts can serve as language resources for constructing pragmatic identities. In *SIS (Soft Is Strong)*, these identity-related patterns are evident in the repeated use of statements about independence, evaluations of relationships, expressions of emotion, self-directed instructions, and statements about possible future actions.

Overall, the five tracks can be understood as a connected sequence in which different aspects of identity become increasingly visible through changing patterns of illocutionary acts. Previous studies have shown that assertive acts are prevalent in song lyrics, whereas other types of speech acts serve distinct communicative purposes (Gawa et al., 2023; Jarassri & Phennapha, 2020; Milantina et al., 2025; Sari, 2024; Zaki, 2025). The present findings extend these observations by showing how the functions and configurations of illocutionary acts vary across a connected EP, contributing to identity development and thematic progression from one track to the next. Thus, the thematic progression of *SIS (Soft Is Strong)* is realized in part through changes in the configuration of illocutionary force. Identity is consequently constructed through the cumulative interaction of assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive across the EP rather than through a single recurring speech-act function.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the types and functions of illocutionary acts in KATSEYE's *SIS (Soft Is Strong)* and their contributions to identity construction and thematic progression across its five tracks. The analysis identified 67 unique utterances comprising assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive acts, with no declarative acts; assertives were the most frequent (40; 59.7%), followed by expressives (16; 23.9%), directives (7; 10.4%), and commissives (4; 6.0%). Across the tracks, *Debut* mainly used assertives to establish independence and confidence; *Touch* combined assertive evaluation with more frequent emotional expressions; *My Way* emphasized personal choice and resistance to conformity; *I'm Pretty* combined statements about outward appearance with expressions of hurt and incomplete healing; and *Tonight I Might* combined self-description with tentative intentions for future action.

These findings show that illocutionary acts contribute to identity construction by presenting independence, evaluating relationships, expressing emotions, regulating actions, and expressing future possibilities. In contrast, the changing functions of the acts contribute to the thematic connection among the tracks. The study contributes to research on speech acts in song lyrics by examining not only their categories and frequencies but also their functions across a connected EP. However, the findings are limited to *SIS (Soft Is Strong)* and therefore should not be generalized to other artists, genres, or forms of musical discourse. The analysis is also limited to the written lyrics and does not consider musical, visual, or performance elements. Future studies may examine larger or comparative datasets and include musical, visual, and performance elements to explore meaning and identity construction further.

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