

EXPRESSIVE ILLOCUTIONARY SPEECH ACTS IN “WELCOME TO THE BLACK PARADE”

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of expressive illocutionary speech acts in the song Welcome to the Black Parade by My Chemical Romance. It aims to identify the types of expressive acts, analyze their communicative functions, and interpret how they construct emotional meaning. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using documentation as the data collection technique. The data consist of selected utterances from the song lyrics, analyzed based on the speech act theory proposed by Searle (1979), supported by pragmatic and semantic perspectives. The findings reveal that the lyrics contain various expressive acts, including sadness, nostalgia, hope, resilience, and defiance. These expressions not only reflect the speaker's psychological state but also function as communicative tools that shape meaning and influence listeners' interpretation. Furthermore, the expressive acts contribute to a coherent emotional narrative, moving from personal loss toward collective strength. This study contributes to pragmatic studies by highlighting the role of language in constructing emotional meaning in song lyrics. However, further research is recommended to explore broader data.

Keywords: Pragmatic, Expressive Speech Acts, Song Lyrics, Emotional Meaning.

INTRODUCTION

Music functions not only as a form of entertainment but also as a semiotic medium through which emotional, social, and ideological meanings are constructed and communicated. In contemporary popular culture, song lyrics play a crucial role in expressing human experiences, including personal struggles, identity formation, and emotional conflicts. Through language, songwriters are able to articulate complex psychological states that resonate with listeners on both individual and collective levels. In this sense, song lyrics can be understood not merely as artistic expressions but also as communicative acts that convey meaning beyond their literal interpretation (Pasaribu & Amini, 2021).

From a linguistic perspective, the interpretation of meaning in language can be examined through pragmatics, which emphasizes the role of context in shaping meaning (Yule, 1996). One of the central frameworks in pragmatics is speech act theory. According to (Searle, 1979), speech acts are categorized into assertive, directive, commissive, declarative, and expressive acts. Among these categories, expressive illocutionary acts are particularly relevant in the analysis of song lyrics, as they reflect the speaker's emotional and psychological state toward a given situation. Furthermore, expressive acts not only reveal internal feelings but also serve interpersonal and communicative functions in discourse (Leech, 1983). In addition, emotional expressions in language are often shaped by cultural and contextual meanings (Wierzbicka, 1999).

Previous studies have shown that song lyrics contain various types of illocutionary speech acts, including expressive, directive, and commissive acts, which function to convey meaning and emotion. These findings indicate that song lyrics can be analyzed as a form of discourse that facilitates communication between the songwriter and the audience. For instance (Nasim et al., 2024) found that song lyrics frequently employ different categories of

illocutionary acts to express intentions and emotions. Similarly, (Language et al., 2026) revealed that expressive acts tend to dominate song lyrics, highlighting the emotional dimension of musical discourse. However, most of these studies remain largely descriptive, focusing primarily on the identification and classification of speech act types without exploring their deeper communicative functions and interpretative meanings.

In addition, previous research often analyzes multiple songs or broader datasets, which results in general findings but lacks in-depth interpretation of individual texts. Consequently, the ways in which emotional meanings are constructed within a single song are frequently overlooked. This indicates a gap in the literature, particularly in relation to detailed pragmatic analysis that focuses on expressive illocutionary acts as a means of constructing emotional meaning.

To address this gap, this study offers a novel contribution by not only identifying the types of expressive illocutionary speech acts but also analyzing their communicative functions and interpreting how these expressions construct emotional meaning within a single song. The selected song, *Welcome to the Black Parade* by My Chemical Romance, is widely recognized for its emotionally rich narrative that explores themes of loss, struggle, and resilience. Its lyrical complexity provides a valuable context for examining how language is used to express and construct emotional experience.

Therefore, this study aims to (1) identify the types of expressive illocutionary speech acts, (2) analyze their communicative functions, and (3) interpret how these expressions construct emotional meaning within the song. This study is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic and discourse analysis, particularly in understanding how language functions as a medium for emotional expression in musical discourse.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which is commonly used in linguistic research to analyze meaning and interpretation in language use. Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena in their natural context and emphasizes interpretative analysis rather than numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014). This approach is considered appropriate for this study, as it aims to explore expressive illocutionary speech acts and their communicative functions in song lyrics.

The data of this study consist of utterances in the song *Welcome to the Black Parade* by My Chemical Romance. The song lyrics were selected as the primary data source because they contain rich emotional expressions that are relevant to the analysis of expressive speech acts. The data were obtained from official lyric sources and then transcribed into textual form for analysis.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation. According to Sugiyono (2017), documentation is a method of collecting data from written or recorded sources. In this study, the researcher collected the song lyrics, carefully read and re-read them, and identified utterances that potentially contain expressive illocutionary acts. Each relevant utterance was then selected and categorized for further analysis.

The data analysis in this study follows several steps. First, the researcher identifies and classifies the types of expressive illocutionary speech acts based on the theory proposed by Searle (1979). Second, the researcher analyzes the communicative functions of each utterance by referring to the pragmatic principles proposed by Leech (1983). Third, the researcher interprets the emotional meanings conveyed in the lyrics using a semantic approach based on Wierzbicka (1999).

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applies theoretical triangulation by using multiple theoretical frameworks, including speech act theory, pragmatic function analysis, and

semantic interpretation. This triangulation helps to strengthen the reliability of the findings and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how expressive speech acts function in constructing emotional meaning (Denzin, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study identifies several expressive illocutionary speech acts in the song *Welcome to the Black Parade* by My Chemical Romance. The findings show that the lyrics predominantly contain expressions of sadness, hope, resilience, and defiance, which are conveyed through emotionally charged utterances.

To present the findings systematically, the identified data are summarized in the following table:

No	Utterance	Type of Expressive Act	Communicative Function	Emotional Meaning
1	<i>"When I was a young boy..."</i>	Nostalgia/Sadness	Recalling past experience	Emotional Memory
2	<i>"Your memory will carry on"</i>	Hope	Affirming Continuity	Immortality of Memory
3	<i>"I'm not afraid to keep on living"</i>	Hope/Courage	Self-assertion	Resilience
4	<i>"We'll carry on"</i>	Solidarity/Hope	Collective Encouragement	Unity
5	<i>"Do or die, you'll never make me"</i>	Defiance	Resistance	Rebellion

The table shows that expressive speech acts are not only used to express personal emotions but also to communicate broader meanings related to struggle, identity, and collective experience.

Discussions

The findings indicate that expressive illocutionary acts in the song *Welcome to the Black Parade* by My Chemical Romance are not merely used to express emotions, but also function as a mechanism for constructing meaning and shaping the listener's interpretation. In line with (Searle, 1979), expressive acts reflect the speaker's psychological state; however, in this context, they extend beyond personal emotion and operate within a broader communicative framework.

Expression of Emotional Experience

The utterance *"When I was a young boy..."* represents an expressive act of nostalgia that functions as an entry point to the song's emotional narrative. Rather than simply recalling the past, this expression frames the entire discourse by establishing a reflective tone. It introduces a temporal contrast between past innocence and present struggle, which becomes central to the song's meaning.

From a semantic perspective, emotional expressions are not isolated but embedded within cultural and experiential contexts (Wierzbicka, 1999). The nostalgic tone in this utterance enables listeners to project their own memories into the narrative, thereby creating a shared emotional space. This suggests that expressive acts play a role in shaping how listeners engage with the text on a personal level.

Construction of Hope and Resilience

The line *"I'm not afraid to keep on living"* represents an expressive act of courage and resilience. This utterance does not merely describe an emotional state but actively constructs the speaker's identity as someone who resists despair. In this sense, expressive speech acts function as performative elements that shape self-representation.

According to Leech (1983), speech acts serve interpersonal functions that influence the relationship between speaker and listener. Here, the utterance extends beyond individual expression and becomes motivational, encouraging listeners to adopt a similar stance. This transformation from personal emotion to collective inspiration highlights the persuasive dimension of expressive acts.

Collective Meaning and Solidarity

The repetition of the phrase “*We’ll carry on*” demonstrates how expressive acts can shift from individual to collective meaning. The use of the pronoun “we” indicates inclusivity, positioning the listener as part of the emotional experience. This creates a sense of solidarity and shared resilience.

In this context, expressive acts function as tools for building interpersonal connection. The emotional message is no longer confined to the speaker but becomes a shared discourse between the artist and the audience. This supports the view that song lyrics operate as a form of communicative interaction rather than a one-directional expression.

Expressions of Defiance and Resistance

The utterance “*Do or die, you’ll never make me*” represents an expressive act of defiance that conveys resistance against external forces. Unlike expressions of sadness or hope, this form of expression reflects an active stance toward conflict. It highlights the speaker’s determination to maintain autonomy and reject imposed limitations.

This finding indicates that expressive speech acts are not limited to passive emotional states but can also function as expressions of power and agency. Such expressions contribute to the construction of identity, particularly in contexts where resistance and rebellion are central themes.

Emotional Meaning Construction

Overall, the expressive speech acts identified in the song form a dynamic emotional progression. The lyrics move from nostalgia and sadness, to struggle and conflict, and finally to hope, resilience, and solidarity. This progression reflects a structured emotional journey rather than a collection of isolated expressions.

This finding suggests that expressive illocutionary acts function cohesively to construct meaning at the discourse level. Rather than being analyzed individually, these expressions should be understood as interconnected elements that contribute to the overall narrative. Through this process, the song not only communicates emotion but also guides the listener through a transformative interpretative experience

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the use of expressive illocutionary speech acts in the song *Welcome to the Black Parade* by My Chemical Romance, focusing not only on their types but also on their communicative functions and their role in constructing emotional meaning. The findings reveal that expressive acts in the song predominantly represent emotions such as sadness, nostalgia, hope, resilience, and defiance. However, these expressions are not merely reflections of the speaker’s psychological state, as proposed by (Searle 1979), but also function as communicative tools that shape interpretation and engage the listener.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that expressive speech acts contribute to the construction of a coherent emotional narrative, moving from personal memory and loss toward collective strength and perseverance. In this sense, the lyrics function not only as artistic expressions but also as a form of discourse that facilitates emotional connection and shared meaning between the songwriter and the audience. The analysis also shows that expressive acts can serve interpersonal and persuasive functions, supporting the view proposed by (Leech, 1983) that speech acts operate within broader communicative contexts.

This study contributes to the field of pragmatics by providing a more in-depth analysis of expressive illocutionary acts, particularly in relation to how emotional meaning is constructed in song lyrics. However, this study is limited to a single song, which may not fully represent broader patterns in musical discourse. Therefore, future research is suggested to analyze a wider range of songs, genres, or cultural contexts in order to obtain more comprehensive findings

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