

## EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS IN ENGLISH: LINGUISTIC FEATURES AND COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Language is not only a tool for conveying information but also a means of expressing human emotions, attitudes, and psychological states. In pragmatics, this function of language is studied through the theory of speech acts. Among various types of speech acts, expressive speech acts occupy a special place, as they reflect the speaker's inner feelings and emotional reactions. This article explores the nature of expressive speech acts in English, their main types, and their communicative significance.

**Keywords:** expressive speech, speech acts, emotions in language, pragmatics, linguistics, lexical features, grammatical structures

**Introduction.** Expressive speech acts are utterances through which the speaker expresses emotions, feelings, or personal attitudes toward a particular situation or event. Unlike representative speech acts, which describe facts, expressive acts focus on the speaker's subjective experience. They do not change the external reality but reveal the emotional state of the speaker. For example, utterances such as *"I'm sorry," "Thank you," "What a pity," "Amazing!"* or *"Congratulations!"* primarily serve to express feelings rather than to provide new information.

In addition, expressive speech acts play a significant role in maintaining social relationships and communication harmony. They allow speakers to show empathy, appreciation, approval, or regret, which helps build trust and mutual understanding between interlocutors. The interpretation of these acts is often context-dependent, as the same expression may convey different emotions depending on the situation, social norms, and cultural background. For instance, indirect expressions of apology or gratitude are more common in formal contexts to soften emotional impact, while direct expressions are typical in informal or intimate settings.

### **Main part.** Types of Expressive Speech Acts in English

Expressive speech acts in English can be classified into several categories based on the type of emotion conveyed:

Apologies, which express regret or responsibility ("I apologize for the mistake.")

Gratitude, used to show appreciation ("I'm grateful for your support.")

Congratulations, expressing joy for someone's success ("Congratulations on your promotion!")

Sympathy and condolence, reflecting compassion ("I'm sorry to hear about your loss.")

Praise and admiration, showing approval ("That was an excellent performance.")

Complaints and dissatisfaction, expressing negative emotions ("I'm disappointed with the results.") These types demonstrate how emotions are linguistically encoded in everyday communication.

Expressive speech acts represent an important area of pragmatic study, as they focus on the linguistic realization of emotions, feelings, and personal attitudes. In English, expressive

speech acts are widely used in both spoken and written discourse to reflect the speaker's psychological state rather than to describe objective reality.

One of the most noticeable linguistic characteristics of expressive speech acts is the use of emotionally charged vocabulary. Verbs such as appreciate, regret, apologize, and admire explicitly signal the speaker's emotional stance. In addition, evaluative adjectives and adverbs (*wonderful, terrible, deeply, sincerely*) intensify emotional meaning. Interjections (*oh, wow, alas*) also play a significant role in spontaneous emotional expression, especially in spoken English.

Expressive speech acts often appear in exclamatory and elliptical sentence structures. Exclamatory sentences emphasize emotional intensity, as in "*What a relief!*" or "*How kind of you!*" First-person pronouns are frequently used, highlighting the subjective nature of expressives. Furthermore, performative verbs in the present tense (*I apologize, I thank you*) clearly indicate the expressive function of the utterance.

The interpretation of expressive speech acts strongly depends on context. The same linguistic form may convey different emotions depending on situational and social factors. Politeness strategies, levels of formality, and cultural norms influence the choice of expressions in English. For example, indirect expressives are often preferred in formal contexts to soften emotional impact.

In spoken English, prosody plays a crucial role in expressing emotions. Stress, pitch variation, and intonation patterns help listeners recognize expressive intent. Rising or falling intonation may indicate surprise, sympathy, or dissatisfaction. These phonetic features often complement lexical and grammatical markers of expressiveness.

Expressive speech acts serve important discourse functions, such as maintaining social harmony, expressing empathy, and strengthening interpersonal relationships. They contribute to the emotional dimension of communication and help speakers establish rapport. In English discourse, appropriate use of expressives reflects pragmatic competence and communicative effectiveness.

**Communicative Importance.** One of the primary communicative functions of expressive speech acts is the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Utterances expressing gratitude, apology, sympathy, or praise help create trust and mutual understanding between speakers. For example, saying "*Thank you for your help*" or "*I'm sorry for the inconvenience*" strengthens social bonds and demonstrates respect and consideration.

Expressive speech acts are closely connected with politeness strategies in English communication. They help speakers adhere to social norms and expectations by softening requests, reducing tension, or mitigating conflict. Apologies and expressions of regret, in particular, function as tools for restoring social balance and maintaining harmony in interactions.

Expressive speech acts add an emotional dimension to communication, making it more engaging and human-centered. By expressing emotions such as joy, disappointment, or admiration, speakers reveal their attitudes and involvement in the communicative situation. This emotional engagement enhances listener response and contributes to more dynamic and meaningful exchanges.

In English-speaking cultures, the appropriate use of expressive speech acts reflects pragmatic competence. Overuse or underuse of expressives may lead to misunderstanding or perceived impoliteness. Therefore, understanding when and how to use expressive speech acts is essential for successful cross-cultural communication and language learning.

Expressive speech acts also contribute to discourse coherence by signaling speaker stance and emotional orientation. They help structure conversations, mark transitions, and indicate reactions to previous utterances. As a result, expressives support the flow and continuity of interaction.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, expressive speech acts constitute a vital component of English pragmatic communication, as they linguistically encode the speaker's emotions, attitudes, and subjective evaluations. Their distinctive lexical choices, such as emotive verbs and evaluative adjectives, together with characteristic grammatical structures and prosodic features, enable speakers to convey nuanced emotional meanings effectively. The strong dependence of expressive speech acts on context and pragmatic norms further highlights their complexity and communicative value. Moreover, the analysis of linguistic characteristics of expressive speech acts demonstrates that emotional expression in English is not random but systematically structured through language. Mastery of these features enhances pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative ability, particularly for non-native speakers. Therefore, the study of expressive speech acts is essential for a deeper understanding of how language functions as a tool for both emotional expression and social interaction.

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