



Expressive Speech Acts of Taylor Swift in The Ellen Show

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed Taylor Swift's expressive speech acts in The Ellen Show. This study aims to identify the categories of expressive speech and the adjectives manifested in the expressive speech acts to convey her emotions or feelings. The data were taken from three interview videos and analyzed using Ronan's (2015) categories of expressive speech acts and Sinclair et al. (2017) for the types and functions of adjectives. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. From a total of 62 data, seven categories of expressive speech were identified in Taylor Swift conversations with Ellen. They are agreement, disagreement, volition, thanking, non-directed complaints in exclamations, expressing sorrow, and greetings. The most frequently used category is agreement, with a percentage 29,04%. This reflects Taylor's humble, polite, and respectful personality. While qualitative adjectives are the most dominant type of adjectives used with a percentage of 65,71%. This shows that Taylor often conveys her personal feelings and experiences in new music promotion, her past viral moments, and personal revelations emotionally and deeply.

INTRODUCTION

As a system of communication, language functions not only as a medium to convey words but also as a means for performing actions through linguistic expressions, which is known as speech acts. Speech acts theory, developed by Austin (1962), argued that language is used "to do things" other than just refer to the truth or falseness of particular statements. The central issue underlies the relationship between the literal meaning of what someone says and what he or she intends (Searle, 1976). Tutuarima et al. (2018) stated that speech acts are related to the communicative intention of the speaker, emphasizing how individuals use language to convey meanings that correspond to situational and conversational contexts.

In the context of a talk show, language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for building connection between host, guest, and audience. A talk show is a mass media format that plays an important role in sharing information, shaping public opinion, and entertaining audiences in an interactive way. One of the most popular American talk shows is The Ellen Show, hosted by Ellen DeGeneres. Known for its relaxed, humorous, and warm atmosphere, the show emphasizes entertaining and meaningful interaction, where humor, warmth, and empathy serve as the foundation of communication.

One of the celebrities who often appeared on The Ellen Show is Taylor Swift, a multitalented singer and songwriter who has won 15 Grammy Awards. She has been the subject of previous research in Linguistics. For examples, Taufik & Cahyati (2022) analyzed figurative language in Taylor Swift's album. Chuyi (2020) discussed the role and meaning of metaphors in Taylor Swift's song lyrics. Alek et

al. (2020) used critical discourse analysis approach to reveal the meaning of figurative in song lyrics and interpret the symbolic signs and gestures conveyed in the popular video clips of Taylor Swift. Deameysa et al. (2023) analyzed feminism elements in Taylor Swift's song by using stylistics approach. Gawa, et al. (2023) investigated the unique of speech acts used in of Taylor Swift song lyrics in the Theme of Life Lessons. Whereas all of the aforementioned research related to Taylor Swift employed song lyrics in different linguistic theories, the present study is different as it focuses on the categories of expressive speech acts aligning with adjectives found in Taylor Swift's expressive speech acts.

Expressive speech acts aim to express the speaker's feelings and emotional responses in everyday interaction (Yule, 1996). Ronan (2015, pp. 34-41) identified eight categories of expressive speech acts in social interaction. They are agreement, disagreement, volition, thanking, apologizing, non-directed complaints in exclamations, expressing sorrow, and greetings. These speech acts are closely related to adjectives that convey emotional states, as adjectives have an important pragmatic function in expressing emotions (Deichakivska, 2024). Adjective is a part of speech used to modify or describe a noun or a pronoun which is typically provide more information about the noun's qualities, quantity, identity, nature, condition, state, or category of an object or person (Sinclair, 2017). Based on syntactic functions, adjectives are divided into attributive adjectives and predicative adjectives (Miller, 2002). Semantically, adjectives are divided into three types: qualitative adjectives, classifying adjectives, and emphasizing adjectives (Sinclair, 2017). Therefore, analyzing adjectives in expressive speech acts provides linguistic evidence of how emotions are constructed in interaction.

Expressive speech acts research aligning with adjectives is under-investigated. This research fills a gap in pragmatic studies on expressive speech acts in celebrity talk shows by adopting Ronan's (2015) classification of expressive speech acts and Sinclair et al.'s (2017) theory of adjective types and functions. By employing these theories, this study explores how Taylor Swift uses language to shape her public image and build emotional resonance with audiences through media interaction. Therefore, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are categories of expressive speech acts found in Taylor Swift's utterances in The Ellen Talk Show?
2. How are the adjectives manifested in the expressive speech acts to convey Taylor Swift's emotions or feelings?

METHOD

This study employs qualitative research to analyze the use of expressive speech acts in Taylor Swift's interview with Ellen. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative descriptive research focuses on an in-depth exploration of social and linguistic phenomena through descriptive analysis. This method is selected because it examines and describes expressive speech acts linguistically in real interactions and in its social contexts. The source of data in this study is Taylor Swift's interview video uploaded on The Ellen Show YouTube Channel, namely *Taylor Swift's Full Interview with Ellen*, *All of Taylor Swift's Speak Now*, and *Taylor Swift's Deepest Fear*. They were intentionally selected as they represent her most recent interviews available on YouTube. The interview videos were found to have a lot of verbal interactions that occur naturally, where expressive speech acts can be observed directly, supported by the dynamic nature of the conversations which often involve humor and emotional expressions. The data were collected through purposive sampling technique, where the videos were searched, downloaded, repeatedly watched, transcribed, and utterances containing expressive speech acts were highlighted. In data analysis, the expressive speech acts were found and classified based on Ronan's expressive speech act categories (2015), while adjectives within the expressive speech acts were analyzed using the semantic types and syntactic functions proposed by Sinclair et al. (2017). The data are presented in the order in which they appear in the interview to show the frequency and percentage of expressive speech acts, and adjective types conveying emotional resonance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis discusses the categories of expressive speech acts and the adjectives in Taylor Swift's expressive speech acts on The Ellen Show. The analysis is based on three interview videos from YouTube

Channel Ellen DeGeneres. From these interview videos, a total of 62 categories of expressive speech acts among them.

Categories of expressive speech acts

There are eight categories of expressive speech acts by Ronan (2015, pp. 34-41). The overall categories of expressive speech acts can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The percentage of the types of expressive speech acts used by Taylor Swift's in Ellen show talk show

Types of expressive speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Agreement	18	29.04%
Disagreement	5	8.06%
Volition	11	17.75%
Thanking	15	24.19%
Apologizing	-	-
Non-directed complaints in exclama- tions	9 3	14.51% 4.84%
Expressing sorrow	1	1.61%
Greetings		
Total	62	100%

Based on the table above, agreement is the most dominant category of expressive speech acts, accounting for 29.04%, followed by thanking at 24.19%. These two categories frequently appear in a friendly and relaxed interaction, reflecting Taylor Swift's humility, politeness, and respect toward the interlocutor, particularly in responding to Ellen's statements and compliments. The third most frequent category is volition, at 17.75%, indicating Taylor's intentions, desires, and personal or artistic preferences. Non-directed complaints in exclamations account for 14.51%, expressing surprise or emotional reactions without targeting a specific person. Disagreement appears at 8.06% and is expressed politely and humorously. Expressing sorrow occurs at 4.84%, mainly when Taylor recalls emotionally challenging past experiences. Greeting appears only once, that is, 1.61% because greetings were generally initiated by Ellen as the host, while Taylor responded non-verbally. Apologizing does not occur in the data, as the interviews took place in a relaxed and humorous atmosphere that did not require expressions of regret or apology. As the sample of data analysis, each category of expressive speech acts is analyzed and represented below.

Agreement

Dialogue 1: Video 1, Datum 8 (04:05)

Ellen: No no no but look at all the content we had and you haven't been here in four years you'd think you'd want to come back because you had so much fun.

Taylor: I know and now I have.

Taylor's utterance is classified as the agreement category of expressive speech acts. Based on Ronan (2015) agreement indicates acceptance, alignment with the attitude of the interlocutor. In this context, Ellen stated that Taylor Swift had not appeared on The Ellen Show for four years, even though they had previously shared many fun moments together, Taylor responded with 'I know' which shows that she agreed with Ellen statement and acknowledged the fact that she had indeed not appeared on the show for four years.

Disagreement

Dialogue 5: Video 1, Datum 16 (05:56)

Ellen: You know you I mean I really people thought oh God she's been away for so long how is this album going to do and they put so much now, I don't think pressure on you because I don't think.

Taylor: **Yeah, there's pressure.**

Ellen: Really.

Taylor: Yeah, for sure.

The dialogue above happened when the host expressed confidence by saying, "I don't think pressure on you in releasing the album." Then Taylor responded Ellen words "Yeah, there's pressure". Taylor utterance suggests that she does not agree with the emotional assessment given by Ellen, as Taylor is indeed under pressure and her response contradicts Ellen's assumptions. In this context, Taylor's utterance is included in expressive speech acts category of disagreement because Taylor expresses an emotional attitude that is different and opposite to Ellen's. Disagreement is an expression with the different opinion with the other interlocutor.

Volition

Dialogue 7: Video 1, Datum 3 (01:16)

Ellen: Kitty corner is a show for people who love cats.

Taylor: **And we'll answer your questions about cats.**

Ellen: Yeah

In this dialogue, Taylor clearly conceives her willingness and intention to get involved in the fictional cat-themed show 'Kitty corner' by saying that they will answer questions from the audience about cats. Taylor Swift's utterance: "And we'll answer your questions about cats" is categorized as expressive speech acts volition. By Ronan (2015), volition expression is often used in both formal and informal contexts and the interlocutor can act according to the speaker's wishes, desires or expectations.

Thanking

Dialogue 13: Video 2, Datum 43 (02:11)

Ellen: Right. Right. So, you're very proud that everybody likes it because everybody does like it to be number one.

Taylor: **Thank you.**

In the dialogue above the utterance conveyed by Ellen is a form of praise for Taylor Swift's success, Ellen said "so you're very proud that everybody likes it because everybody does like it to be number one". The utterance shows that Taylor has the right to feel proud of her work, which is appreciated by many people. Taylor responded by saying 'thank you' as a form of gratitude for the compliment given by Ellen. 'Thank you' is an expressive speech act that is of the Thanking category.

Non-directed complaints in exclamations

Dialogue 17: Video 3, Datum 58 (00:04)

Ellen: Let's talk about your fear of sea urchins.

Taylor: **Don't even, sea urchins. Can't.**

This dialogue occurred in an interview entitled Taylor Swift's deepest fear. At the beginning of the video Ellen immediately discussed sea urchins. Ellen said "let's talk about your fear sea urchins," with the intention of having a casual conversation with Taylor. Taylor immediately responded to that by saying "don't even, sea urchins. Can't". She was unable to talk about sea urchins, Taylor's response showed that there was a sense of trauma and fear in her. This showed an expression of rejection or discomfort conveyed in a way like a complaint. According to Ronan (2015), Taylor's utterance is included in the

expressive speech acts type of non-direct complaint in exclamation, which is a complaint or emotional reaction that is not directed directly to someone, but expressed spontaneously. Taylor didn't blame anyone for this remarks, but she only disliked for the topic at hand.

Expressing sorrow

Dialogue 19: Video 2, Datum 44 (02:31 – 02:42)

Ellen: You say you started when you were 12. Even at 12, I mean, when you're writing songs, have you always just been this honest since you were a little girl? You just said what's on your mind?

Taylor: With music, that's where I can say whatever. I mean, I remember when I was in school, the whole reason I started writing songs was because **I was alone a lot of the time. And I'd sit there in school, and I'd be hearing people like, oh, my god, this party we're going to be is going to be so awesome on Friday. Everyone's invited, except for her over there.** And I just wouldn't be invited to stuff. And I would sit there, and I'd be like, it's okay because I can write a song about this later. And here I am at 20, and I'm still saying that when I go through tough times. So, it's like it's worked out.

In this conversation, Taylor shares her personal experience as a teenager. She often felt isolated and ostracized. She recounted her school days, when her friend talked about a party and invited her by saying "everyone's invited, except for her over there." Taylor explained that it was a painful experience because she felt ignored, alone and excluded. However, this experience was the main reason she started writing songs at the age of 12. She used the songwriting as an emotional outlet, saying "I was alone a lot of the time" Taylor comforted her director by saying "it's okay because I can write a song about this later" Taylor utterance is categorized as an expressive speech acts of expressing sorrow. According to Ronan (2015), this occurs when a speaker expresses emotional pain, disappointment, or sadness. Although Taylor delivered it in a calm tone, the content of her speech reflected a sense of emotional loneliness.

Greeting

Dialogue 20: Video 2, Datum 38 (00:10)

Ellen: We are thrilled. Our first guest is here to celebrate the release of her number one CD, *Speak Now*. Please welcome four-time Grammy Award winner Taylor Swift.

Taylor: **Hi.**

Ellen: Hi, Taylor. Number one CD, they expect to sell a million copies of this thing. Like ... more. That's the first week. And then what do you...

In this dialogue, which occurs at the beginning of the video entitled All of Taylor Swift's *Speak Now* interview, Ellen greets Taylor enthusiastically and praises the success of the *Speak Now* album, which became the number one CD. It was sold up to one million copies in its first week. Taylor responds to Ellen's greeting simply by saying 'Hi'. This response serves as a greeting to both the audience and Ellen, as Taylor has just entered the set of the Ellen talk show. Taylor's utterance can be categorized as expressive speech acts of the greeting. According to Ronan (2015), greeting marks the beginning of interaction and shows a polite attitude. This expression means a greeting, a sign of recognition, or welcome greeting.

Adjectives in Taylor Swift's expressive speech acts

Table 2. Adjectives in Taylor Swift's Expressive speech acts

No	Adjectives Types (Semantically)	Adjectives	Syntactic Functions	Frequency	Percentage
1	Qualitative adjectives	the right side of history though; it's a good demonstration; to go near clear water; true though; that's how happy you were to see me fall down; that's nice of you to say; what feels right at the time; I think it's a little late; They're excellent at figuring, He was he was just amazing ; it's a beautiful life, that's nice thank you, really proud of this album, I was alone a lot of the time, is going to be so awesome on Friday; It's really uncanny ; it's just unbelievable ; I think it's just obnoxious ; I just think it's fun to live; this water's so beautiful ; it's amazing ; that would be stuck in you like a knife.	Attributive adjective Predicative Adjective	23	65,71%
2	Classifying adjectives	four years I was recovering from the fall; Those are the two things; just what my personal life looks like; There were many reminders of that; I would say the same thing about you; it's you as a kitty kind .	Attributive adjective Predicative adjective	8	22,86%
3	Emphasizing adjectives	thank you so much for going so above; Thank you so much , Thank you so much . I love the most in the world most.	Attributive adjective Predicative adjective	4	11,43%
Total				35	100%

Based on Table 2, qualitative adjectives are the most dominant type found in Taylor Swift's expressive speech acts, with 23 occurrences (65.71%). Qualitative adjectives function to describe qualities or characteristics and play an important role in conveying emotional resonance. Their frequent use indicates that Taylor often expresses her personal feelings and experiences in an emotional and descriptive manner. Classifying adjectives appear 8 times (22.86%) and are used to indicate specific categories or aspects of her life. Emphasizing adjectives are the least frequent, with 4 occurrences (11.43%), showing that Taylor rarely intensifies her expressions excessively.

Dialogue 1: Video, 1, Datum 12 (04:57-05-07)

- Ellen : You still sold a bunch of albums without even talking, I mean usually people go to promote their music because it helps sell albums you don't have to do that.
- Taylor: well that's **nice** of you to say I mean I am having **fun** being back here it's been really **great** to be back here and like I definitely do I think as a songwriter I enjoy communicating about what I've made like I really do like that part of the process but I also just feel like with my career I want to do what feels **right** at the time you know like so it just at that time I coined this phrase there will be no explanation there will just be reputation because I am dramatic

Taylor's response "that's nice of you to say" is categorized as an expressive speech act of agreement. The adjective 'nice' is a qualitative adjective that conveys positive emotional resonance, expressing appreciation and acceptance of Ellen's praise. The other adjectives 'fun' and 'great' also indicate positive feelings. Similarly, the adjective 'right' in "do what feels right at the time" reflects emotional firmness and personal conviction, and the utterance is categorized as volition.

Dialogue 2: Video 3, Datum 59 (00:23-00:37)

Ellen: No listen, there just there in there, rocks.

Taylor: They're like a grenade. They're like-- they're sitting there waiting to completely injure you to the point where okay so you step-- you can't see a sea urchin. okay, like, if you're in the Caribbean. You're like, this water's so **beautiful**, it's **amazing**. And you're walking, it's **clear** water. You can't see a sea urchin's right there. And then you step on one.

Taylor expresses fear of sea urchins through a non-directed complaint in exclamation. Qualitative adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'amazing', and 'clear' describe the seemingly pleasant environment, creating emotional contrast that intensifies her fear of the hidden danger.

Dialogue 3 : Video 1, Datum 1 (00:30)

Ellen: Your musical crush somebody in the business

Ellen: Oh, Justin Timberlake

Taylor: Justin Timberlake is your favorite? Justin (call Justin)

Ellen that's the **best** surprise ever this is the best day ever

The adjective 'best' is used twice and categorized as an emphasizing adjective. It highlights strong positive emotions such as excitement and happiness, intensifying the emotional impact of Taylor's utterance.

Dialogue 3: Video 2, Datum 44 (02:31 – 02:42)

Ellen: You say you started when you were 12. Even at 12, I mean, when you're writing songs, have you always just been this honest since you were a little girl? You just said what's on your mind?

Taylor: With music, that's where I can say whatever. I mean, I remember when I was in school, the whole reason I started writing songs was because I was **alone** a lot of the time.

The adjective 'alone' is a qualitative adjective used in an expressive speech act of expressing sorrow. It conveys Taylor's feelings of loneliness and emotional pain during her school years, reflecting deep emotional resonance.

CONCLUSIONS

This study theoretically contributes to the field of pragmatics by providing empirical evidence on the use of expressive speech acts in a talk show context between Ellen DeGeneres and Taylor Swift in The Ellen Show. The data were selected from three interview videos in YouTube, resulting in a total of 62 instances of expressive speech acts. The expressive speech acts used by Taylor Swift are examined based on Ronan's expressive speech acts categories (2015) and the adjectives manifested in those expressive speech acts are analyzed by Sinclair et al.'s adjective types and syntactic functions (2017). The findings reveal seven categories of expressive speech acts used by Taylor Swift, namely agreement (29.04%), thanking (24.19%), volition (17.75%), non-directed complaints in exclamations (14.51%), disagreement (8.06%), expressing sorrow (4.84%), and greetings (1.61%), while apologizing did not occur in the data. Agreement is the most dominant category, meaning that Swift tends to maintain positive image in front of the host and audience. In terms of adjective usage, Taylor Swift employs qualitative (65.71%) being the most dominant, classifying (22.86%), and emphasizing adjectives (11.43%). in her expressive speech acts. These findings indicate that adjectives play an important role in strengthening emotional expression and emotional resonance.

Practically, this study provides insights for linguistics students, researchers, English language learners, and educators by presenting authentic examples of emotional expression in media discourse. However, this study is limited to three interview videos of Taylor Swift on 'The Ellen Show' and focuses only on expressive speech acts and adjectives, so the findings cannot be generalized to other talk shows, speakers, or linguistic features. Therefore, future research is suggested to examine expressive speech acts

in different talk show contexts, involve different speakers or cultural backgrounds, analyze other types of speech acts or linguistic features, and apply a multimodal approach to explore the role of verbal and non-verbal elements in conveying emotional resonance.

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