

EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS IN THE MOVIE *INSIDE OUT* (2015)Sicilia Fathima Nursatriawan¹, Lusi Lian Piantari²^{1,2}Universitas Al Azhar Indonesia, ^{1,2}Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Inggris,¹snursatriawan6@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines expressive speech acts in the animated film Inside Out (2015) as a representation of emotional expression through language. In communication, language functions not only to convey information but also to express the speaker's attitudes, evaluations, and psychological states. From a pragmatic perspective, utterances are understood as actions performed to achieve particular communicative purposes within specific contexts. Recent studies have shown that expressive speech acts are widely analyzed in various types of discourse, including digital communication, media texts, and public speeches, and that expressive functions contribute to interpersonal meaning and emotional construction in discourse. These findings indicate the relevance of analyzing emotional expression in contemporary communication. The film Inside Out was selected because it vividly portrays the emotional development of the main character, Riley, through dialogues rich in emotional expressions. This research aims to identify the expressive speech act functions found in the film and to explain how emotions such as anger, sadness, and happiness are linguistically realized through specific expressive functions. In this study, emotions are not categorized as direct types of speech acts instead, they are interpreted as psychological meanings manifested through expressive functions such as complaining, emotional rejection, expressing sadness, and expressing pleasure. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through observation and note-taking techniques by carefully watching the film and selecting utterances that clearly contain emotional expressions. The selected data were classified according to their expressive functions and analyzed by considering the situational context and interpersonal relationships among the characters. The findings reveal that expressive speech acts occur significantly throughout the film and play an important role in shaping the characters' emotional development. Complaining and emotional rejection are the most dominant functions used to express anger and frustration, particularly in situations involving conflict and resistance to change, while sadness is realized through expressions of loss and longing, and happiness appears through positive evaluations of experiences. These findings suggest that emotions in film discourse are systematically expressed through identifiable expressive functions, demonstrating the relevance of pragmatic analysis in understanding emotional representation in cinematic narratives.

Keywords: expressive speech acts, pragmatics, emotion, film discourse, Inside Out (2015)

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji tindak tutur ekspresif dalam film animasi Inside Out sebagai representasi ekspresi emosi melalui bahasa. Dalam komunikasi, bahasa tidak hanya berfungsi untuk menyampaikan informasi, tetapi juga untuk mengekspresikan sikap, evaluasi, dan kondisi psikologis penutur. Dalam perspektif pragmatik, ujaran dipahami sebagai tindakan yang dilakukan untuk mencapai tujuan komunikatif tertentu dalam konteks situasional yang spesifik. Penelitian-penelitian terkini menunjukkan bahwa tindak tutur ekspresif banyak dianalisis dalam berbagai jenis wacana, termasuk komunikasi digital, teks media, dan pidato publik, serta bahwa fungsi ekspresif berkontribusi terhadap makna interpersonal dan konstruksi emosi dalam wacana. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan relevansi analisis ekspresi emosi dalam komunikasi kontemporer. Film Inside Out dipilih karena secara jelas menggambarkan perkembangan emosi tokoh utama, Riley, melalui dialog yang kaya akan ekspresi emosional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi fungsi tindak tutur ekspresif yang terdapat dalam film dan menjelaskan bagaimana emosi seperti marah, sedih, dan bahagia direalisasikan secara linguistik melalui fungsi ekspresif tertentu. Dalam penelitian ini, emosi tidak dikategorikan sebagai jenis langsung tindak tutur, melainkan dipahami sebagai makna psikologis yang diwujudkan melalui fungsi-fungsi ekspresif seperti mengeluh, penolakan emosional, mengekspresikan kesedihan, dan mengekspresikan kesenangan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik observasi dan pencatatan dengan menonton film secara cermat serta memilih ujaran yang secara jelas mengandung ekspresi emosional. Data yang terpilih kemudian diklasifikasikan berdasarkan fungsi ekspresifnya dan dianalisis dengan mempertimbangkan konteks situasi serta hubungan interpersonal antar tokoh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindak tutur ekspresif muncul secara signifikan sepanjang film dan berperan penting dalam membentuk perkembangan emosi tokoh. Fungsi mengeluh dan penolakan emosional merupakan bentuk yang paling dominan dalam mengekspresikan kemarahan dan frustrasi, khususnya dalam situasi konflik dan resistensi terhadap perubahan, sementara kesedihan direalisasikan melalui ungkapan kehilangan dan kerinduan, dan kebahagiaan muncul melalui evaluasi positif terhadap pengalaman. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa emosi dalam wacana film diekspresikan secara sistematis melalui fungsi-fungsi ekspresif yang dapat diidentifikasi, sehingga menegaskan pentingnya analisis pragmatik dalam memahami representasi emosi dalam narasi sinematik.

Kata kunci: tindak tutur ekspresif, pragmatik, emosi, wacana film, Inside Out (2015)

INTRODUCTION

Language is not only used to share information, but also to express feelings and attitudes. In daily communication, people do not just say something, but they also perform actions through their words. In pragmatics, this is explained through speech act theory, which sees utterances as actions performed by speakers. According to Searle (1979), speech acts are divided into several types, and one of them is expressive speech acts, which are used to show the speaker's feelings and psychological condition. This shows that language is closely related to emotion, and what people say often reflects what they feel. In real life, people express emotions in different ways depending on the situation, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly.

This study focuses on expressive speech acts because emotions often appear in everyday communication and influence how people interact with each other. People express feelings such as anger, sadness, and happiness through words, for example "I miss home" to show sadness or "Just leave me alone" to show anger. However, the meaning of an utterance cannot always be understood only from the words, but also from the context and situation. Because of this, analyzing expressive speech acts can help us understand how emotions are conveyed through language (Yule, 2016). Previous studies have also discussed expressive speech acts in different contexts, such as digital communication and public discourse, which shows that this topic is still relevant (Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024; Ramadhani & Rido, 2025; Novia, 2023). However, studies that analyze expressive speech acts in film, especially related to emotional functions, are still limited. Film is not only entertainment, but it also reflects real-life communication, and the dialogue often sounds natural even though it is arranged for storytelling. Because of that, film can be used as data in pragmatic studies (Dynel, 2016). In addition, language in film also helps build characters and show their emotions (Bednarek, 2018; Piazza et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aims to analyze expressive speech acts in the movie *Inside Out* (2015), especially how emotions are expressed through functions such as complaining, emotional rejection, expressing sadness, and expressing pleasure based on Searle's theory.

Therefore, this study is important because it provides a deeper understanding of how emotional expressions are constructed through language in film discourse. By focusing on expressive speech acts, this research also contributes to the study of pragmatics by showing how language can be used to represent psychological states in a structured and meaningful way. In addition, this study is expected to enrich previous research by offering a more specific analysis of expressive functions in cinematic contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach in the field of pragmatics because the data are in the form of words and utterances, not numbers. This approach allows the researcher to understand meaning more deeply and not just focus on counting data. In this study, the researcher tries to explain how language is used to express emotions in certain situations. The goal is to describe how expressive speech acts are used by the characters and how those expressions reflect their feelings (Yule, 2016). The data are taken from the animated movie *Inside Out* (2015), which is chosen because it clearly shows emotional experiences through the main character, Riley Andersen. The movie presents various emotional situations that are easy to observe, especially how emotions like anger, sadness, and happiness appear in daily interactions. Because of this, the movie is suitable for analysis (Dynel, 2016; Bednarek, 2018). The unit of analysis is the utterances spoken by the characters, especially those that contain expressive meanings. However, this study mainly focuses on Riley's utterances because she shows the most significant emotional changes in the story and becomes the center of the narrative.

The data were collected using observation and note-taking techniques. The researcher watched the movie several times to better understand the story and the context of each scene. This is important so that the meaning of each utterance is not misunderstood. During the process, the researcher noted dialogues that show emotional expressions, while utterances that are not relevant were excluded. After that, the data were classified based on their expressive functions using Searle's theory (1979), such as complaining, emotional rejection, expressing sadness, and expressing pleasure. Each utterance was then analyzed based on its context, meaning, and situation in the story. The researcher also paid attention to why the character said those words and what emotion was behind them. Finally, the data were interpreted to explain how emotions are expressed through language in the movie (Piazza et al., 2019). This approach is considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to analyze meaning based on context rather than

relying on numerical data. In addition, the use of repeated observation helps ensure that the data are interpreted accurately, especially in understanding the emotional nuances behind each utterance. By focusing on both linguistic forms and situational context, this method supports a more comprehensive interpretation of expressive speech acts in the movie.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study come from utterances spoken by Riley Andersen in the movie *Inside Out* (2015), since she shows clear emotional changes throughout the story, especially when adapting to a new environment. Riley is chosen as the main focus because her character represents how a person responds emotionally to change and new situations. The utterances were selected and classified based on their expressive functions, and the results are presented in Table 1 to make the data easier to understand. From the data, it can also be seen that Riley's language reflects her emotional condition, where her choice of words changes depending on what she feels in a certain situation. This shows that language is not only used to communicate ideas, but also to express inner feelings and emotional reactions. In many cases, the way Riley speaks becomes an indicator of her emotional state, which makes her utterances important to analyze in relation to expressive speech acts.

Table 1. Expressive Speech Acts Found in *Inside Out* (2015)

No.	Expressive Function
1.	Complaining
2.	Emotional Rejection
3.	Expressing sadness
4.	Expressing pleasure

Based on Table 1, expressive speech acts in *Inside Out* (2015) are classified into four categories, namely complaining, emotional rejection, expressing sadness, and expressing pleasure. Among these categories, expressing sadness appears to be the most dominant, followed by complaining, while emotional rejection and expressing pleasure occur less frequently.

This distribution indicates that the movie emphasizes emotional struggle and adaptation, especially in relation to Riley's experience in adjusting to a new environment. The dominance of sadness reflects the central theme of the story, which focuses on emotional conflict and personal change. Meanwhile, complaining and emotional rejection represent Riley's responses to pressure and discomfort, while expressions of pleasure appear less frequently, indicating that positive emotions are not the main focus of the narrative.

Complaining

Expressions of complaining in *Inside Out* (2015) appear in several forms, both direct and indirect. The utterances included in this category are "*What is your problem? Just leave me alone!*", "*Let's go!*", "*School was great, alright.*", "*What's the point?*", "*I gotta go!*", and "*Stop saying everything will be alright.*". These utterances show how Riley responds to uncomfortable situations, especially when she feels upset, pressured, or unable to cope with changes in her life. This indicates that language is not only used to communicate ideas, but also to express emotional reactions.

Some utterances clearly show strong emotions. For example, "*What is your problem? Just leave me alone!*" reflects anger and frustration, while "*What's the point?*" shows a sense of hopelessness and lack of motivation. Similarly, "*I gotta go!*" expresses urgency and discomfort, suggesting that Riley wants to escape from an unpleasant situation. The utterance "*Stop saying everything will be alright.*" shows resistance toward reassurance, indicating that Riley does not feel comforted and instead reacts negatively. These expressions function as a way to release emotional tension and reflect Riley's psychological condition, which supports John Searle's (1979) idea that expressive speech acts reflect the speaker's inner state.

Besides direct expressions, some utterances show complaining in a more indirect way. For example, "*Let's go!*" reflects impatience rather than explicit anger, while "*School was great, alright.*" shows irony, where the sentence sounds positive but actually expresses dissatisfaction. This

shows that expressive speech acts are not always direct, and the listener needs to understand the context to get the real meaning. This idea is in line with pragmatics, where meaning depends on context and intention (George Yule, 2016). It also shows that speakers can use language in a subtle way to express feelings without stating them explicitly.

Emotional Rejection

Emotional rejection is expressed through utterances such as “*Just shut up!*” and “*What is your problem? Just leave me alone!*”. These expressions show Riley’s attempt to reject interaction and distance herself from others when she feels emotionally overwhelmed. In many cases, the way Riley speaks becomes an indicator of her emotional state, especially when she tries to avoid communication.

The utterance “*Just shut up!*” is a direct and forceful command that reflects anger and frustration. The use of the word “just” emphasizes the intensity of the rejection, making it sound more immediate and emotional. Similarly, “*What is your problem? Just leave me alone!*” combines questioning and commanding forms, which intensifies the emotional reaction. This utterance not only shows dissatisfaction but also clearly expresses Riley’s desire to withdraw from social interaction.

These expressions are not only commands, but also a way for Riley to express her feelings and release emotional tension. In this case, language becomes a tool to show resistance and emotional stress, which supports John Searle’s (1979) theory. Similar findings are also shown in previous studies (Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024; Ramadhani & Rido, 2025), where expressive speech acts are used to show dissatisfaction and emotional reactions in communication.

Expressing Sadness

Expressions of sadness appear more often in the data and become the most dominant emotion in *Inside Out* (2015). The utterances included in this category are “*We did till we move away.*”, “*We used to play tag and stuff.*”, “*But everything’s different now, since we move.*”, “*I miss home.*”, “*I miss Minnesota.*”, “*I want my old friend and my hockey team.*”, and “*I wanna go home.*”. These utterances clearly reflect Riley’s emotional struggle when adapting to a new environment.

Some expressions are direct, such as “*I miss home*” and “*I miss Minnesota*,” which clearly show feelings of longing and homesickness. The repetition of “I miss” emphasizes Riley’s emotional attachment to her previous life. Similarly, “*I wanna go home.*” shows a strong desire to return, indicating that she is not comfortable in her current situation.

Other utterances express sadness more indirectly. For example, “*We used to play tag and stuff.*” reflects nostalgia by referring to past experiences. The phrase “used to” highlights the contrast between past happiness and present conditions. Likewise, “*We did till we move away.*” suggests that enjoyable activities stopped because of the move, indicating a sense of loss. The utterance “*But everything’s different now, since we move.*” emphasizes change as the source of sadness, where the word “everything” strengthens the emotional impact.

In addition, “*I want my old friend and my hockey team.*” shows that Riley’s sadness is not only about place but also about relationships and identity. By referring to her past social environment, Riley expresses a deeper emotional loss. This reflects her situation after moving to a new place, where she has to leave her previous life behind. This finding is similar to previous research (Novia, 2023), which shows that expressive speech acts can reflect emotional development over time.

The dominance of sadness also shows that emotional change plays an important role in the story, especially in how Riley deals with new experiences and challenges. This supports George Yule (2016), who emphasizes that meaning is influenced by context, including emotional and situational factors.

Expressing Pleasure

Expressions of pleasure appear less frequently in the data. The only utterance in this category is “*I like that time on the dinosaur.*”, which shows a positive feeling.

The use of the verb “like” indicates enjoyment and satisfaction, suggesting that Riley feels happy when recalling that moment. Compared to other utterances that are dominated by negative emotions, this expression shows a contrast by presenting a moment of happiness. It may also indicate that positive emotions are often linked to memories or imagination rather than current experiences.

The limited presence of positive expressions suggests that *Inside Out* (2015) focuses more on emotional conflict and adaptation rather than happiness. However, the presence of this expression still shows that emotional experiences are not only negative but also include positive moments. This highlights that sadness plays a central role in the construction of emotional meaning in the movie.

Overall, the findings support John Searle's (1979) theory that expressive speech acts are used to express the speaker's psychological condition. Emotions such as anger, sadness, and happiness are expressed through different types of utterances, both directly and indirectly, which shows that language plays an important role in representing emotional experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that expressive speech acts are significantly used in the movie *Inside Out* (2015), particularly in the utterances of Riley Andersen as the main character. The findings reveal that emotions such as anger, sadness, and happiness are not expressed as direct types of speech acts, but are realized through expressive functions, namely complaining, emotional rejection, expressing sadness, and expressing pleasure. Among these, complaining and emotional rejection are the most dominant functions, especially in situations involving conflict, discomfort, and resistance to change. Meanwhile, expressions of sadness also appear frequently, mainly through utterances that reflect feelings of loss, longing, and adaptation to a new environment. In contrast, expressions of pleasure are less dominant and are generally associated with positive past experiences. These findings indicate that expressive speech acts function as a linguistic strategy to represent the speaker's psychological condition, which supports Searle's theory (1979). In addition, the study highlights that film dialogue can reflect patterns of emotional expression in real-life communication, showing the relevance of pragmatic analysis in understanding how emotions are constructed and conveyed in discourse. These findings also imply that understanding expressive speech acts can help in interpreting emotional meaning not only in film discourse but also in broader communication contexts, including everyday interaction and media communication. This highlights the importance of pragmatics in analyzing how language functions beyond literal meaning. These findings may also contribute to the study of language and emotion by showing how expressive speech acts can be used as a tool to analyze emotional representation in various forms of discourse.

Suggestions that can be proposed from the results of this study are as follows. First, future researchers are encouraged to examine expressive speech acts in different types of discourse, particularly in digital communication such as online interactions and digital conversations, in order to understand how emotional expressions are constructed in more contemporary contexts. Second, future studies are expected to explore other types of speech acts in relation to expressive functions, so that the analysis of meaning in communication becomes more comprehensive. Lastly, future researchers are recommended to investigate contextual factors more deeply, including social and cultural aspects, to provide a broader understanding of how expressive speech acts function in different communicative situations.

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