The Functions of Expressive Acts on X Regarding Liam Payne's Death

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the functions of expressive acts in picturing someone's emotions on X platform (formerly Twitter) regarding Liam Payne's death. The theory used in this research is Searle and Vandervaken's (1985) about illocutionary acts specifically in expressive acts. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the researcher identified any kind of post on X platform, within a time span of one week, that contains about expressive acts related to Liam Payne's death. Furthermore, there are six expressive acts found in this research namely apologize (to express regret), thank (to express gratitude), condole (to express sympathy), lament (to express hard expression of sorrow), protest (to show disagreement), and deplore (to condemn someone). Related to that, lament and condole are the most frequently used in expressing sadness and shock over the news of Liam's death. These findings then show that expressive acts in the context of mourning on digital media not only serve as expressions of individual grief, but also as a way to create a sense of community among users. This sense of community is reflected in shared grief, empathy, and mutual support, both among fans who have lost their idol and among the wider social media user base who acknowledge the tragedy. Therefore, this study contributes to pragmatics by showing how expressive acts are used in social media, highlighting the role of language in facilitating emotional connections.

Keywords: Expressive acts; Liam Payne; One Direction; X platform; death

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fungsi tindak tutur ekspresif dalam menggambarkan emosi seseorang di media sosial X (sebelumnya Twitter) terkait kematian Liam Payne. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori Searle dan Vandervaken (1985) tentang tindakan ilokusi, khususnya dalam tindak tutur ekspresif. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, peneliti mengidentifikasi segala jenis unggahan di media sosial X, dalam rentang waktu satu minggu, yang mengandung tindak tutur ekspresif terkait kematian Liam Payne. Selain itu, terdapat enam tindakan ekspresif yang ditemukan dalam penelitian ini, yaitu *apologize* (untuk mengekspresikan penyesalan), *thank* (untuk mengekspresikan rasa syukur), *condole* (untuk mengekspresikan simpati), *lament* (untuk mengekspresikan kesedihan yang mendalam), *protest* (untuk menunjukkan ketidaksetujuan), dan *deplore* (untuk mengutuk seseorang). Berkaitan dengan itu, *lament* dan *condole* adalah ekspresi yang paling sering digunakan dalam mengekspresikan kesedihan dan keterkejutan atas berita kematian Liam. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa tindak tutur ekspresif dalam konteks berkabung di media digital tidak hanya berfungsi untuk mengekspresikan kesedihan perorangan, tetapi juga sebagai cara untuk menciptakan rasa kepedulian di antara pengguna. Rasa kepedulian ini tercermin dalam bentuk saling berbagi kesedihan, empati, dan dukungan mutual, baik di antara penggemar yang kehilangan idola mereka maupun di kalangan pengguna media sosial yang lebih luas yang mengetahui peristiwa kematian tersebut. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pragmatik dengan menunjukkan bagaimana tindak tutur ekspresif digunakan di media sosial, menyoroti peran bahasa dalam memfasilitasi koneksi emosional.

Kata kunci: Tindak tutur ekspresif; Liam Payne; One Direction; sosial media X; kematian

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become crucial nowadays. There are several social media that are often used by people, such as Instagram, Facebook, X, and many more. X (formerly Twitter) is one of people's favorites. The data shows that the number of global X users reached 415,3 million. It stated on Reuters Institute that X is the most widely used social media platform for people to get news and new perspectives compared to other platforms (Robertson, 2023). This reflects the prevalence of X users in socializing with people around the world. Along with that, celebrities' news become one of the most frequently discussed topics on X.

About a year ago, the death of Liam Payne became a trending topic on X. His death on October 16, 2024 shocked many people in the world. The cause of it is because he was One Direction's ex-member and One Direction was the biggest boy band back then. Related to that, both fans and non-fans who like One Direction considered Liam's role essential in their life. That is why many of X users expressed their feelings of loss. When people express their feelings, they express emotions. Emotions are the "reactions that human beings experience in response to events or situations" (Cherry, 2023). Moreover, emotions consist of various types, for instance sadness, happiness, fear, anger, surprise, and many more. Furthermore, this study aims to see how people express their emotions on social media X regarding the death of Liam Payne.

Based on the various types of emotions, people's emotions can be analyzed using a theory named illocutionary act. The theory of illocutionary act is proposed by Searle and Vanderveken (1985). In their book, Searle and Vanderveken divided illocutionary act into five types, which are assertive (related to the speaker's belief), commissive (related to the speaker's specific action in the future), directives (related to speaker's order to the hearer), declaratives (related to the speaker's invocation), and expressive (related to people's feeling).

Connected to that, several studies on illocutionary acts have been conducted by other researchers, particularly focusing on expressive acts. For instance, first, Indriyana et al. (2021) examined expressive speech acts in netizens' comments on Joe Biden's Instagram account. Using Searle (1976), they found that the expressive act of *thanking* was the most frequently used, as many people expressed gratitude to Joe Biden for his futuristic plans for the United States. Second, Gunawan and Hikmaharyanti (2024) analyzed expressive illocutionary acts on the Manchester United Instagram account. They used Searle (1979)

as the method to analyze their study. However, unlike the previous study, they found that the expressive act of *complaining* dominated, reflecting fans' dissatisfaction with the club's recent performance. Third, Abbas et al. (2021) studied about expressive acts in the 2019 Indonesian presidential election debates. Their analysis revealed a different use of the expressive act used by two candidates. It leads to the conclusion that although candidate 02 often offended candidate 01, the debate still remained under control and did not violate social norms and values.

Fourth, research conducted by Anggraeni et al. (2020) showed an expressive speech act on Ridwan Kamil's comments in his Instagram posting about the first case of coronavirus in Indonesia. They aimed to see how netizens respond to the news about the first patient who was infected by Coronavirus on Ridwan Kamil's Instagram account. They found that expression of wishing, complaining, and protest on social media play a role in conveying people's aspirations. Fifth, Irawansyah et al. (2024) researched expressive acts on YouTube comments in Prince EA's videos. They discovered that the expression of thanking was the most commonly found. It is because those videos discuss about student concern and many students in the comments section thanked EA for speaking up about what they felt.

With the same topic as those previous studies, this research covers two main questions: 1.) What types of expressive acts are used on X comments regarding Liam Payne's death? 2.) What are the functions of expressive speech acts in picturing X users' emotions on X comments? After knowing the previous studies mentioned above, the researcher found the gap between five of them. In the previous studies, expressive acts were used to analyze utterances on debate as well as on social media comments specifically on Instagram and YouTube platform. On the other hand, there are infrequently previous studies that used expressive acts to analyze post on X platform mainly in the content of someone's death. Thus, this research aims to analyze expressive acts focusing on its functions on X platform related to Liam Payne's death.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Illocutionary Act

Illocutionary act was promoted by Austin in 1975 and modified by his student Searle in 1985. Illocutionary act, according to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), is focusing on the speaker's intention. In explanation, when people produce utterance, the utterance must have the intended meaning, either to give an order, make a request, just simply say

something, or even express any feelings and opinions. In addition, Searle and Vanderveken (1985) classified illocutionary acts into five types which are assertive, commissive, directive, declarative, and expressive.

Expressive Acts

Expressive acts is one of the illocutionary acts introduced by Searle and Vanderveken (1985). This act is focusing on expressing the speaker's feelings. In their book, Searle and Vanderveken classified expressive acts into thirteen, namely apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, complain, lament, protest, deplore, boast, compliment, praise, welcome, and greet. To exemplify, when someone says, "Congratulations on your new store launch!" it means that the speaker expresses his/her happiness on the launch of the hearer's new store. By saying "congratulation", the speaker specifically congratulates the hearer.

Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)

Illocutionary force indicating device or known as IFID is one of the linguistic factors used to help clarify the intended meaning of a speaker's utterance. There are four types of IFID that can be used to analyze utterance, which are using performative verbs, linguistic structure, intonation and stress, and contextual cues. For further explanation, the use of performative verbs like agree, congratulate, apologize, etc. can be utilized to emphasize the utterance. Afterward, linguistic structure is focusing on the grammatical structure of the text. Intonation and stress is focusing on how the speaker's tone when conveying the utterance. And the last, contextual cues is focusing on the context of the utterance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research approach used a descriptive qualitative research method. Based on Cresswell (2009), qualitative research is the type of research that is used to explore the meaning of some individuals or groups of people ascribing to a social problem. Furthermore, the qualitative approach is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). Thus, qualitative research emphasizes on a study that explains about someone's behavior in dealing with societal problems. As shown above, the descriptive qualitative approach is a method of research used to understand in depth about the previous studies but employing a different perception to gain some valuable insight (Regionel, 2023). From the explanation above, the

data analyzed in this research are any post on X platform regarding the issue of Liam Payne's death within a time span of one week after the death.

The instrument of this research was the researcher herself. While conducting this research, the researcher read the data relating to this research topic. In this case, the researcher analyzed expressive acts and its functions encountered in the post on X platform relating to the issue of Liam Payne's death. Further, the data were collected by the researcher using a random sampling technique. Specifically, the data were taken from randomly selected posts on X within one week after the news of Liam Payne's death emerged. The researcher then searched the post regarding Liam Payne's death on X using a keyword: Liam Payne since:2024-10-16 until:2024-10-23. To ensure relevance, only comments containing clear expressive elements were included, while irrelevant or spam comments were excluded. Furthermore, the researcher selected any post on X that may contain expressive acts.

After collecting the data, the researcher then analyzed the data through the following step: classified the comments based on the kind of expressive acts using Searle and Vanderveken's theory, identified each datum using IFID theory, interpreted the function of each expressive acts, and concluded the function of expressive acts in picturing someone's emotions in bereavement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of this research. By using Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory, the researcher found six types of expressive acts used by people as their response to someone's death. The findings are expressive acts to apologize, thank, condole, lament, protest, and deplore.

Apologize

Datum 1: I am one of them, **I'm fuckin hate myself right now**. (@humandailys)

The comment of the datum can be categorized as an apology. The user account of @humandailys commented on a tweet that showed a photo of Liam and Niall in the same frame. The caption of it said that there were fans who used to treat Liam badly. They were telling him to stay away from Niall because Liam was labeled as a problematic person.

According to Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory, an apology is to express sorrow or regret. In this context, by saying "I'm fucking hate myself right now", the user expressed regret because he/she was once part of the fans who posted hate comments

about Liam. It shows how users used emotional language to release their individual grief. Furthermore, based on the IFID theory, this utterance can be analyzed using contextual cues due to the analysis used by the researcher focusing on the context of the utterance.

Thank

Datum 2: I just can't believe it's been a week already. I'm still in shock and it still does not feel real. **I just wanna thank you for everything Liam James Payne, thank you for all the amazing memories and a damn good show in 2015, just thank you for my early teenage years**. (@DinasArmy)

The comment of the datum can be categorized as a thanking. The user account of @DinasArmy posted a video that showed Liam singing his last song entitled *Teardrops* ith the caption stated above. He/she thanked Liam for giving him/her a lot of good memories, especially when he/she was a teenager.

According to Searle and Vanderveken's theory (1985), a thanking is used to express gratitude and the phrase "thank you" is often symbolized to express emotion. In this context, the user thanked Liam for making his/her teenage memorable. It also helps shift the community's grief into collective appreciation and healing. Along with that, based on the IFID theory, this utterance can be analyzed using the performative verb "thank you" which can make the utterance clear or not ambiguous.

Condole

Datum 3: **Rest in peace, Liam**. Your legacy and music will live on in our hearts. (@omprg)

The comment of the datum can be categorized as condole. This user account of @omprg commented on a post that gave information about Liam Payne's death.

According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), a condole is an expression of someone's sympathy over something. In this context, it is clearly stated that the user expressed his/her condolences by saying "Rest in peace, Liam". Not only that, the act of saying rest in peace create shared grief and mutual empathy within the online community. In addition, based on the IFID theory, this comment can be analyzed using a verb phrase of "rest in peace". Thus, with the use of a verb phrase, it makes the comment clear in its intent and purpose.

Lament

Datum 4: **THERES LITERALLY NO FUCKING WAY HES DEAD WTFFF** (@littlesunie)

The comment of the datum can be categorized as lament. This user account of @littlesunie responded to a post that said Liam just died about thirty minutes after posting something on his Snapchat.

According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), when people lament on something, it means people feel sorrow about something. The datum can be categorized as lament due to the comment that expressed shock and disbelief. It represents individual grief and contributes to shared mourning, especially when others echo similar emotions. Above all, based on the IFID theory, this utterance can be analyzed using intonation and stress. Although there is no tone in the data in the form of comments, it can be seen through the way he/she typed the comments using capital letters. Further, in digital discourse, capitalization is frequently employed to intensify expression, signaling emotions like anger or shock.

Protest

Datum 5: **tweeting stuff like this right after someone dies is so shitty. do better.** (@harveystwoface)

The comment of the datum can be categorized as a protest. This user account of @harveystwoface commented on a post that stated about fans who mourn over Liam Payne's death. Its post said that fans can mourn but they should not forget about Liam's past misdeed as an abuser.

Protest is an expressive act that shows people's disagreement, disapproval, or opposition on something. In this context, the user showed a disagreement toward the post as he/she thought that it is wrong to say something bad about someone who just died. Additionally, the user expects that someone should post anything better than that. Further, based on IFID theory, that kind of comment can be analyzed using contextual cues because the context of Liam's past misdeed plays an important role in understanding the meaning of the comment.

Deplore

Datum 6: sorry i don't feel an ounce of sympathy for an abusive predator? **liam payne was a piece of shit who took advantage of MINORS. he abused his ex.** stop using 1D nostalgia to cloud ur judgement (@FILMR0SE)

The comment of the datum can be categorized as deplore. The user of @FILMR0SE said something bad about Liam Payne in his/her post. The hate speech came because many fans mourned Liam based on his past role in their teenage years, ignoring the fact that Liam is an abuser.

209

Deplore means to say or think that something is so bad or it can also mean condemning something. In the context of this post, the user condemned Liam Payne for all his past misdeeds such as taking advantage of minors and abusing his ex-wife. Related to that, the post can be analyzed using IFID theory of contextual cues. It is related to the contextual background of Liam Payne's past lives.

Based on the findings above, this research highlights that expressive speech acts are not only a linguistic theory but also a medium to look at emotional expressions in society. This refers to the concept of the previous studies that was used by the researcher to expand the ideas in this article. Thus, based on the findings about how people express their feelings regarding someone's death, it can be said that when someone is mourning, they will always link to past events where the person has been very influential in their life. Even if the person who had passed away was becoming a bad person, yet people will always remember the side of his/her good back then.

CONCLUSION

The news of Liam's sudden death shocked everyone, both fans and non-fans. In this case, they actively expressed their sadness through their personal X accounts until the topic became a trending topic. Thus, this study examined the expressiveness felt by X users over this issue. As a result, six expressive acts were found, which are apologize (to express regret), thank (to express gratitude), condole (to express sympathy), lament (to express hard expression of sorrow), protest (to show disagreement), and deplore (to condemn someone). Further, various reactions emerged when news of Liam Payne's death spread on social media, especially on X. Many expressed sympathy and condolences for Liam Payne's death showing how users used emotional language to release their individual grief. Some also expressed gratitude for what Liam Payne had done during his lifetime as a role model who played an important part during their youth helping to shift the community's grief into collective appreciation and healing. However, there were also those who did not sympathize with Liam Payne's death, considering him as an abuser and quite problematic. To conclude, this study contributes to pragmatics by showing how expressive acts are used in social media, highlighting the role of language in facilitating emotional connections.

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