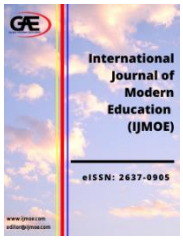
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PATTERNS OF EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS IN YOUTUBE BOOK REVIEW OF @jack_edwards

Raisa Rastom[1]*, Anis Mardhiah Ahmad Khairuddin[2], Nur Zafirah Amani Mohamad Zamri[3]

[1]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis, Malaysia
raisa@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0485-4606
[2]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perlis, Malaysia
anismardhiah@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9430-6040
[3]Faculty of Education and Humanities, UNITAR College Penang, Malaysia
amani.zamri@unitar.my https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0604-7439
*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

This study investigates the patterns of expressive speech acts employed by YouTube book reviewer, Jack Edwards in his video reviews. This study aims to understand the role of expressive speech in one's verbal expressions especially in this modern day whereby people have the easy access to gather information before making a decision. In this case, well-known book reviewers become a reference for bookworms for their next read. Drawing on speech act theory, this study analyses how the reviewer uses expressive acts —such as greeting, disagreeing, offering thanks and exclamations when articulating his opinions about books.The present research data focused on a video titled *Books I'd Rate 6-Stars If Goodreads Made It Possible* by employing a qualitative content analysis, the study addresses two primary research questions: (1) What are the most frequent types of expressive speech acts used by the YouTube book reviewer? (2) How do these expressive acts function to engage audiences and build reviewer credibility? Drawing upon eight categories by Ronan (2015), the findings revealed that the most used expressive speech act in Jack Edwards' book review is agreement, followed by exclamation, volition and giving thanks. The evidence also demonstrates that the use of expressive speech acts in reviewing books builds trust, confidence and engagements among the audience. It establishes connection and maintains social interaction which in this study, the speaker successfully engaged with his audience with his heartfelt reviews and became one of the credible reviewers online today.

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Introduction

The Internet has made it possible for everyone today to articulate their opinions and ideas to niche audiences, not only in written form but in other formats such as in video form. Semrush Traffic Analytics Tool reveals that as of May 2026, YouTube ranks the second most-visited website in the world with 53.12B visits. The video sharing platform has become a place where everyone who has access to the internet and proper recording equipment can share whatever they have in their minds. Teachers share knowledge, chefs show their cooking methods, musicians can upload their original songs and many more. Some of these advanced users are known as YouTubers, the content creators who make their own video productions and monetize their video sharing on this platform (Zorraquino, n.d).

Consequently, Youtube builds communities and becomes a space for certain groups of people such as gamers and book clubs. Bookish community or BookTube is one of the well-known communities that can be discovered on the platform. It began in 2010 as a way for readers to bring public attention to certain books and genres that had largely been ignored (Ellis, 2021). Booktube has been widely recognised as the best place for people seeking book recommendations. The idiom word of mouth is no longer limited and applicable to face-to-face interactions, but it also can be done by watching videos by these content creators. It must be noted that these content creators are highly eloquent in sharing their thoughts and persuading their audience to pick up a new book. Their highly persuasive language can be related to the linguistic feature in which language is used to accomplish things, as in this context, it aims to attract one's attention and encourage readers to explore the recommended books.

This paper aims to analyse the pattern of expressive speech acts used by Youtuber, Jack Edwards, or known as the "youtube's resident librarian" per his Youtube bio. He started his Youtube from secondary school mainly on his life as a student and began to gain attention during his undergraduate studies for education related content (Edutube). He also published a selfhelp book The Uni-Verse: The Ultimate Guide to Surviving University in 2020 as a guide for university students. Now, Edwards has more than 1.41 million subscribers and he is mainly posting reviews of books that he read both on Youtube and TikTok. It should be highlighted that Edwards' impact on the bookish community was when he posted raving reviews about White Nights by Fyodor Dostoyevsky back in 2024 then Madonna in a Fur Coat by Sabahattin Ali in 2025. As a result, the pattern of classic book selling in the UK experienced a dramatic change from the predictable Austen topping the selling to Fyodor Dostoyevsky in 2024 with more than 100,000 copies sold, as reported by Jessica Harrison, publishing director of Penguin Classics UK (Self, 2025). It is also evident that Edwards is luminary in the bookish world as

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he introduces non-English classic books that some may not be familiar with and consequently, elevates these books from being on the bottom of bookshelves to being on the window display. Jack Edwards is now the literary editor at Esquire magazine and has done a number of interviews with prominent figures in the film world such as Cillian Murphy and Steven Spielberg, whereby they share about their required readings.

Problem Statement

Pertaining to this, there is limited research analysing expressive speech acts in the spoken content of YouTubers. Despite the growing body of research in analysing speech acts in the context of YouTube video, none of the research specifically targets YouTube book reviewers (Afzaal et al., 2024). This indicates several gaps in the existing literature, such as contextual, categorical, discourse, and functional gaps. By looking at the contextual gap, existing studies on YouTube book reviewers or known as BookTubers focused more on the literacy and audience engagement, instead of researching on how BookTubers used their language to express their personal responses, emotions, attitudes and evaluations towards books that are being reviewed. Inevitably, there remains a lack of proficiency in understanding the function of expressive speech acts in the spoken discourse of YouTube book reviewers (Paladines & Aliagas, 2023). Notably, on the categorical gap, the previous research on YouTube related to speech acts generally focusing on examining the speech acts as a broader category rather than expressive speech acts and their individual functions (Chen et al., 2023). Relatively, on the discourse gap, most of the existing research in Malaysia and internationally examined written forms of online communication, such as comments in the YouTube section rather than looking at the naturally occurring spoken discourse that is produced by the Youtubers especially the BookTubers (Hambali et al., 2024; Makhsunah et al., 2024).

Consequently, limited attention has been given to the naturally occurring spoken discourse of YouTubers themselves, particularly the spoken content of YouTube book reviewers. As there are gaps in functionality, concerning the expressive speech acts that are used to express evaluations, appreciation and criticism within book review discourse (Chen et al., 2023). Concerning this, narrow it down to Malaysian context itself, most of the expressive speech act studies are relatively focusing on the other platforms aside from YouTube and focus on the different genres. Significantly, study by Ardi et al., (2020), focuses on the expressive speech act among Malaysian on Twitter which stressed on insults and swearing through the online interaction, meanwhile Nor and Hassan (2022), analysed comments on Facebook and their response towards Malaysian National Security Council on COVID-19 reports. Although these past studies analysed the expressive speech acts, they give limited attention to the spoken language of YouTube book reviewers. To address the gaps, this study specifically examines the patterns of expressive speech acts and the function to have more apprehension on BookTubers context.

Literature Review

Speech Act Theory

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) proposed that when people talk, they are not simply saying things, they are actively doing something. A person is not merely producing a string of words; they are producing these strings of words in order to complete a certain task. For example, saying “I appreciate your help” is not solely informing a person of something that you

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appreciate, you are also performing the act of thanking them for their help. Furthermore, Austin (1962) noted that when we talk, we are simultaneously committing 3 acts; a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act. A locutionary act plainly refers to the literal meaning of each utterance and an illocutionary act conveys the speaker's intended purpose while a perlocutionary act is the effect of an utterance on the listener. For instance, consider a person saying, "I need help". The locutionary act in uttering this sentence is just relaying the information that the speaker is in need of help. The illocutionary act when the speaker is saying it to a certain audience is to specifically ask that person (the listener) for help, without explicitly saying that they are expecting help from the listener. The perlocutionary act, thus, would be how the listener reacts to listening to the phrase "I need help". They may respond by offering help, saying that they are busy with something (thereby declining the request for help) or they may direct the speaker to another person that could help them. These different facets of utterances highlight why speech act is an intensely studied field in linguistics.

Illocutionary Act

Next, Searle (1969) had categorised illocutionary act into 5 categories; assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. An assertive speech act represents the truth of something i.e. informing the audience of a certain truth. For example, saying "you are wrong" asserts that the listener is incorrect about an issue. A directive is meant to induce the listener to do something, which includes requests, invitations and commands. For example, saying "please sit down" is directing the listener to sit down. A commissive is used when a speaker is committing themselves to something. For instance, uttering "I will be here by 7 am" is committing oneself to be at a certain place by 7 am. After that, an expressive is used to express the speaker's feelings or psychological states. "Thank you", "I appreciate your help" and "thanks for helping me" express a speakers' gratitude to the listener. The last illocutionary act is declarations, in which, granted that speaker are speaking from a seat of authority, are acts that can change the social reality. A simple example would be a pastor saying "you are now husband and wife" which changes the reality of (previously) two unmarried people into that of a married couple.

Expressive Illocutionary Act

With the rise of multiple social media platforms, listeners pay special attention to speakers that they listen to and how the speakers talk to them to better choose the influencers to trust and to navigate their social media presence. The expressive illocutionary act, in this sense, plays a big role as it allows the listeners to gauge what the speakers are feeling, especially when they are trying to influence the readers regarding a certain issue. Ronan (2015) explicitly differentiated 8 types of expressive illocutionary speech act; agreement, disagreement, volition, offering thanks, apologies, exclamations, expressions of sorrow and greetings.

The first category of expressive utterances is agreement which is defined as a positive attitude regarding a proposition or a person. Giraud et al. (2011, as cited in Ronan, 2015) separated agreement into liking, when the agreement is of a person, and agreement, when a person agrees on a proposition. Regardless, any utterances aimed to express an agreeable stance towards a proposition, or a person falls under agreement.

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The direct opposition to agreement is disagreement, in which a person expresses negative values to certain propositions or people. Norrick (1978, as cited in Ronan, 2015) used the term deploring to encapsulate this expression to mean evaluating a situation negatively and to express a negative emotional attitude. Notably, when expressing disagreement, speakers often avoid explicit disagreement. For example, when addressing a less intimate (wider) audience, a speaker may not bluntly criticise or contradict a certain notion and would opt for apparent ignorance; saying 'I don't know if this is true' or 'I might be wrong'. Disagreement, therefore, can also be used to express insecurity regarding a proposition, when a person does not fully agree with a certain proposition.

Next, a volition speech act is used when a speaker is trying to express the ideals and wishes that they have, which are not met by the current state of affairs. Essentially, when a person talks about doing something in the future, which by default may still hang in the 'will do or will not do' perspective of reality, they are merely expressing a certain desire or ambition.

After that is expressing gratitude or thanks which is one of the most ubiquitous expressive speech acts. A speaker usually thanks a person at the end of their contribution or to people (or even actions) that are not participating in the current conversation. This can be done by simply saying "thank you" or by implicit words such as "I appreciate you being here."

An apologizing expressive speech act conveys being sorry, usually with the use of apologies. This includes apologizing for speech errors such as mispronunciations or wrong word usage and its repairs. Any apologies in interactions, like when a speaker drops his microphone and immediately says sorry, is also part of this speech act even though it does not neatly fall into the notion of being sorry.

In addition, expressive speech acts also account for exclamations that comprises of religious or nonreligious profanity. Usually, an exclamation is used to express agitation or reproach to a certain topic or person. However, Murphy (2009) noted that exclamation itself may plainly refer to any emotionally charged speech acts. Certain profanities, whether they are used for the intended purpose of cursing or swearing ("you're a piece of shit"), or simply as an interjection ("shit, I'm late!"), therefore, are acceptable uses of exclamations as an expressive illocutionary act.

Then, a speaker can also choose to express sorrows or sadness. This particular category of expressive speech act can be separated into 2, first of which is the act of expressing sorrows on another person's behalf. Giraud et al. (2011) calls this sympathising while Norrick (1978) termed it as condoling. The other expressive speech act that denotes sorrow is a sadness of one's own behalf; lamenting (Norrick, 1978). Ronan (2015) noted that the number of expressions of sorrow may be considerably less than other categories of expression depending on the nature of the topic of discussion.

Finally, a speech act is incomplete without greetings. When a speaker says "hi" just for the sake of greeting someone with something or saying "bye!" to express farewells, they are greeting the listeners. Other interactive expressions, such as "Happy holidays" and "Welcome home", are also greetings that speakers can use to express their mood.

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Methodology

This research employed content analysis using document analysis of conversation transcription to identify the patterns of speech acts. This method allows for a comprehensive examination of the structure and function of the expressive acts, providing insights into the book reviewing style. The present research data focused on one video posted by Jack Edwards titled *Books I'd Rate 6-Stars If Goodreads Made It Possible* which has more than 1 million views on Youtube. The selection of the video was made due to the big number of views and the title itself reflected what viewers could expect from the Youtuber in which the video content would be filled with positive reviews of books that he had read and loved. The 38-minute video provided a variety of utterances and expressions employed by Edwards when talking about the books.

The transcription of the video was accessed by downloading it via *Downsub.com*. Then, to analyse the data, this study adopted the eight subcategories of expressive speech acts formulated by Ronan (2015) based on the categorisation of speech acts by Guirraud et. al (2011) and Norrick (1978) which are agreement, disagreement, volition, offering thanks, apologies, exclamations, expressions of sorrow and greetings. This framework was selected because it was developed for analysing spoken English interactions regardless of the degree of formality. Furthermore, these categories allowed the researchers to do analysis of the present data based on the existing studies. Every utterance in the video is manually analysed to categorise the specific utterances and words that correspond to Ronan's (2015) subcategories of expressive speech act.

Findings

The result yields that the most used expressive speech act in Jack Edwards' book review is agreement with 41 occurrences (60.3%). It is the most dominant as it expresses the speaker's positive feelings and opinions on books that he read and share with the audience as a way to attract them to read the books too. Some of the expressive speech acts applied by Jack Edwards to show agreement are as follows.

Excerpt	Locutionary	Illocutionary
5	But of the 120 odd books that I read last year, *these are the best of the best.* Trust me on this one. This is now your required reading. This is now your syllabus.	The speaker shares his opinion on the books that he had read to be the best and it should be considered as required reading among his viewers.
13	This book is horrible at times, but it's also hilarious. It's dark, but it's also enlightening. And in that sense, *I think* that Pival Everett is faithful to the original tone of the book of Huckleberry Finn	The speaker praises the author, Pival Everett, for his writing skill. This expresses his positive opinions of the author.
18	*I say* anti-hero because *she's definitely* not really the hero of the book, but she's a	The speaker shares his interpretations on a

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	complicated villain as well. *She's sort of* both simultaneously.	character by applying several discourse markers
19	*I guess* this book is about confronting your life as you reach middle age.	The speaker interprets the theme of the book in his own words.
47	*I suppose* this book invokes a lot of historical figures and philosophers and thinkers and so you actually learn a lot while reading it as well. like a whistle-stop tour through philosophy, *I guess.*	The speaker shares his analysis on the book being a whistle-stop for readers to learn philosophy to interest the viewers.

The above are the few examples of agreement that are categorised under opinion as the speaker shares positive thoughts and sentiments about books that he read. The speaker is often observed to repeat the use of epistemic markers like *I think* and *I guess* to inform his views and opinions. It is also a way to validate and establish his credibility in which consequently, the viewers are fully convinced of his claims due to the fact he had read those books and opinions about them (Langacker, 2009;Marín-Arrese, 2021 as cited in Wei & Wang, 2025). Jack applied such markers to assert his stance and preference on certain subjects.

Moreover, praises and feelings are also considered as agreement. Below are some examples demonstrating the agreement speech act.

Excerpt	**Locutionary**	**Illocutionary**
9	*I adore these books. These are so brilliant.*	The speaker expresses his deep sense of fondness towards the books.
13	Actually, Mark Twain claimed that he was the first person to ever write a full book using a typewriter. That's kind of a useless fact. My literature degree is kind of a long-term investment into being good at pub quizzes, but *I'm glad I could flex that knowledge now*	The speaker is happy that he could use his literature knowledge which he gained back when he was a student to share with his audience.
15	*I became obsessed* with her work through reading it in my writing school program. And when I saw that she'd released her first book in a decade, *I was very excited about that.*	The speaker showed his positive reactions towards an author's works
33	You would have to pry this book out of my white knuckled hands like Jack we've landed. You have to get off. *I was like no I'm I'm reading this until the end. phenomenal, but also insane that this is a debut piece of fiction. It's just that good*	The speaker acted out a scenario to express how good the book was when he was on a plane.

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Praises and good feelings are considered as agreement because it shows positive feedback towards something. Based on the above example, Jack Edwards is very enthusiastic with his reading experience, and this infectious enthusiasm resonates with his audience which results in deeper engagement and building his credibility as a book reviewer online. Expressions like *I became obsessed* and *I adore these books. These are so brilliant* are the great examples that exude positive feelings toward the audience.

Meanwhile, exclamations accounted for 14 times (20.6%) of the identified expressive speech acts. Below are some examples and the explanation (illocutionary).

Excerpt	**Locutionary**	**Illocutionary**
1	*Okay*, here's what I'm going to need you to do	Instead of greeting, the speaker made such an exclamation to get quick attention once the viewers clicked on his video and jumped right into the subject.
6	And I need you to know that *I am so dedicated* to the cause of telling you about these that I stopped reading the new Hunger Games book to tell you about them. *Yeah, it's that serious. It's that deep.*	The strong emotion can be observed in which the speaker took his reading time off to record and share his favourite of the year with his audience.
11	There's kind of a brand of books which are essentially kind of like literary fanfiction. So you have books like Whit Saraso that is a retelling of Jane Air but from the perspective of Bertha. Recently Sandra Newman released a book called Julia which is a retelling of 1984. *Hell,* even Milton's Paradise Lost is essentially Bible fanfiction. So this book kind of comes under that category.	The use of *Hell* here is to demonstrate that it is an astounding fact that there are books written based on other works that even the Bible has a work that is based on it.
17	Every time you turn the page there's something *batshit insane. Like it is whacka doodle time with this book. It is whack a doodle time*	The speaker employed viral phrases (meme) which can be considered as exclamation in which those phrases/sounds can deliver the experience of reading in short and effectively.
21	Every chapter is a new predicament or mental anguish or preoccupation and it is honestly just	The speaker relates the experience of reading the book is like reading

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	rip roaring fun. *Like make literature fun again. This is such a riot.*	literature and demands the genre to be part of entertainment again.

Based on the above examples, exclamation is an expressive speech act that is used when one is full of emotions. The use of hell and batshit insane are the intensifiers the speaker used to express extreme emotion at the moment of talking about the books. These exclamations are highly relatable as they deliver the universal emotional states and at the same time it shades the formality and closes the gap between the speaker and his audience. It allows Jack to show to his audience that he is also an ordinary person, and the audience can expect vulnerability in his content.

Meanwhile, volition makes up 10 of the totals of expressive speech acts (14.7%).

Excerpt	**Locutionary**	**Illocutionary**
38	And so when you think about the booker prize the question is not just which are the books that are the best written although that is a component that's an ingredient to the formula. I think it's also *you have to ask yourself the question what is the book that will define this year? What is the book that speaks to some sort of universal truth that we need to acknowledge? I think that's what this book does.*	The speaker asked the viewers to contemplate the criteria of the Booker Prize award.
40	So, I will say if you are feeling a little worldly weary and you want to just slow down and linger, *pick this one up.*	The speaker recommended the viewers to pick the book he mentioned about if they are in the aforementioned mood.
53	*If you are wanting to read a character's perspective where you just feel every single line, every single letter in your soul, this is the book to read.*	Another recommendation made by the speaker for his viewers who are interested to read such writing.
55	If you've ever had an incredibly intense crush or a situationship, *you will eat this one up.*	The speaker thought that the viewers who are in such situation would enjoy the book.

Based on the findings, volition, in the context of expressive speech act, refers to the wishes and hopes made by a speaker that do not require replies from the listeners. They are not necessarily meant to be committed and executed instantly. These above utterances give time for viewers to think and contemplate for themselves.

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On the other hand,giving thanks comprises 3 occurrences (4.4%) which is identified to be the least used of expressive speech acts.

Excerpt	Locutionary	Illocutionary
25	*Thank you, Milano. We love you, Milano*	The speaker expresses his gratitude to the sponsor.
61	If a book makes me cry, I basically am like, well, I'm yours for life. I will tell everyone about this. I will shout about it from the rooftops. *Thank you so much for that experience.* So, that's how I feel about this book.	The speaker thanked a book for the experience it's given to him.
65	Thank you so much for being here. Thank you for watching this video.	The speaker thanked his viewers for tuning in his video.

Generally known, giving thanks is the act of being polite and to show appreciation uttered by a speaker towards hearers. Giving thanks is identified to occur the least in the video as it is the expression used when a person is given something meaningful and he or she feels obliged to the other person. In this context, the speaker expresses gratitude for multiple parties such as sponsorship (Excerpt 25) for trusting him to endorse the product, his viewers (Excerpt 65) for tuning in and listening to his content and even one of the books (Excerpt 61) that he reads which gave him an experience that he had never felt before. To answer the second research question, this kind of speech act develops a sense of positivity and consequently, captures the audience's hearts. The speaker continuously builds his credibility as a book reviewer by employing expressive speech acts in which such expressions are relatable and anticipated by the audience. When one expresses gratitude, he or she demonstrates humbleness and agreeable personality.

Overall, the summary of the identified expressive acts is compiled as below.

Expressive Act	**Occurence**	**Percentage**
Agreement	41	60.3%
Exclamation	14	20.6%
Volition	10	14.7%
Offering thanks	3	4.4%

Conclusion

The findings show that expressive speech acts are frequently used by Jack Edwards to express his thoughts and sentiments. The most expressive speech act used is in the form of Agreement in which he often evaluated his experience reading the books, sharing his perspective on

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characters and plots. Moreover, this analysis demonstrates the expression of profound esteem for these writers by the readership as Jack frequently compliments writers for their writing skills that makes him immersed in the reading and consequently appreciate their talents. The evidence also demonstrates that the use of expressive speech acts in reviewing books builds trust, confidence and engagements among the audience. Jack Edwards is a proof of this considering that he is an outstanding bibliophile who uses his platforms to promote reading habits to online audiences. This study provides further understanding into the usage of expressive acts in BookTube discourse and their role in shaping digital persuasion. Future research stands to enrich the field of studies through the investigation of the effects of the different types of speech acts and other pragmatic analysis on digital platforms and online audience engagement. Aside, comparative studies across different platforms like BookTube and BookTok could enrich further pragmatic norms and variation in the language used by the reviewers. Examining the audience response through these two different platforms from the comment sections could allow a deeper insight into how expressive speech acts could influence viewer's perception and the decision making. Comprehensively, these would contribute to a broader understanding on how language works within the digital context through a pragmatic lens.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) "The authors declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used during the preparation of this manuscript. The following tool was used: Google Gemini. The tool was used for language editing and data tabulation. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the author(s), who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the manuscript."

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