



Expressive Speech Acts in T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

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Abstract

This study explores the pragmatic dimension of T. S. Eliot's modernist masterpiece, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, by focusing specifically on expressive speech acts. The research problem arises from the limited linguistic attention given to expressive acts in poetry compared to their extensive study in daily communication. The primary objectives are to identify, classify, and analyze these speech acts to reveal the protagonist's internal psychological state. Adopting a qualitative descriptive method based on Searle's taxonomy and Ronan's classifications, the analysis examines selected poetic utterances within their modernist context. The results indicate that the speaker relies extensively on expressive acts, particularly those of lamenting and self-deploring, to communicate his inner fragmentation and paralysis. Ultimately, the study concludes that these linguistic choices effectively mirror the themes of anxiety and social alienation, proving that pragmatic analysis is a vital tool for decoding the emotional depth of literary characters.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Speech act theory enters that fascinating space where language goes beyond information transmission and becomes a tool for action. Speech act theory is based on the works of several profound thinkers. According to Austin (1962)^[3], in his book *How to Do Things with Words*, laid the basis for Speech Act Theory. Austin debunked the classical conception of language as information exchange and believed that, in most situations, to speak is to do. for example, to say the words "I promise to help you" is to do something more than to express a purpose; it creates a social commitment (Salman, Sabah, & Kareem, 2024, p. V)^[10].

John R. Searle (1969)^[11] later elaborated on the theory with his concept of *illocutionary force*, the particular communicative act an utterance produces. He made distinctions between several categories of illocutionary acts, including asserting, requesting, promising, and commanding. Speech act theory is beyond establishing what is being performed with language; it is about explaining why and how the action succeeds or fails, such as the speaker's intention, the hearer's uptake, and the social context of the speech act. Knowledge of speech act theory can help us gain a more effective analysis of communication and the power of language in structuring human interaction and relationships (p. V).

One of the five main categories proposed by Searle (1969)^[11] is expressive speech acts, which denote situations where the speaker expresses his or her psychological state or emotional reaction to a situation or event. These acts do not describe reality but rather show the speaker's inner attitude and feelings, including happiness, anger, regret, sorrow, or gratitude. Salman, Sabah, and Kareem (2024)^[10] explain that expressive acts are significant in understanding the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of communication because they reveal the sincerity and psychological involvement of the speaker. Utterances like "I apologize," "I thank you," or "I am sorry for your loss" perform an emotional rather than descriptive function. So, expressive speech acts reveal how speakers communicate empathy, emotions, and values by using language and, therefore, are quite important in social

and literary contexts (p. 7)

The theory of speech acts has also become an important analytical method used in literary analysis. It views language as action, and in most literary works, especially in poetry and drama, it is used to display intent and emotion in the speech of the speaker. They also note that expressive acts are some of the ways in which literature depicts inner conflicts and emotions among people in society. In poetry, expressive speech acts allow the readers to understand the emotional and psychological states of the poet beyond the literal message of the words. In modern poetry, for instance, T. S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" uses expressive utterances to reflect the protagonist's hesitation, anxiety, and alienation. From this perspective, Speech Act Theory offers a pragmatic way of relating linguistic meaning with emotional and artistic expression (p. 7).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Despite its extensive use in Linguistics and Pragmatic studies, the use of Speech Act Theory in poetry is an area that has received scant attention in relation to its other applications in daily communication and the study of Prose texts in Linguistics. While speech act analyses have long been appreciated for their usefulness in analyses pertinent to the expression of emotions, attitudes, and moods using poetry, in reality, few studies have investigated expressive speech acts in modern poetry in its own right, except in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, where the speech acts made by the narrator serve in an exceptional manner to explore his inner turmoil, tensions, and emotional states. Therefore, the objective of the present study investigates these expressive speech acts in their own right in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot (Rakhimovna and Sur'atovna, 2024) [7].

1.3. Research Questions

The research aims to address these questions:

1. How are expressive speech acts represented and classified in T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*?
2. How do these expressive acts reveal the speaker's emotional and psychological states within the modernist context?

1.4. Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify and classify the expressive speech acts used in T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.
2. To analyze how these expressive acts reflect the speaker's emotional and psychological states within the modernist context.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it connects linguistic theory and literary criticism through the application of Speech Act Theory to poetry. This illustrates how expressive speech acts can unveil the emotional and psychological profundity of T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The study explains how Eliot's poetic language functions as a conduit for articulating inner conflict, anxiety, and alienation. Academically, it is essential to note that this contributes to the expanding field of literary pragmatics by showing how a language theoretical perspective can be used for the understanding of contemporary poetry. Its applicability may

reside in its potential to inspire other domains of English writing.

1.6. Scope and Limitations

1.6.1. Scope

This study looks specifically at T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* as a key example of modernist poetry. The main goal is to identify and understand "expressive speech acts" within the poem, using the theories of Austin (1962) [3] and Searle (1969) [11]. It focuses on how these specific speech acts show what the speaker is truly feeling, such as hesitation, worry, anxiety, and loneliness, and how those feelings support the poem's main themes. This analysis is based directly on the text of the poem and the linguistic concepts introduced in the background section.

1.6.2. Limitations

There are a few boundaries to this research. First, it examines only this single poem by T. S. Eliot, rather than his whole collection or modernist poetry in general. Second, it focuses strictly on the "expressive" category of speech acts. It does not analyze other types, such as commands (directives), promises (commissives), or official statements (declarations). Finally, because of time limits and the fact that there are not many existing studies on expressive speech acts in poetry, it was difficult to compare these findings with other research. The study also relies on existing theoretical books rather than a large-scale data analysis.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1. Pragmatics

is the study of how meaning is sent by a speaker (or writer) and understood by a viewer or listener. Studying what people mean by what they say is more important than just looking at what the words or sentences mean in their literal sense (Yule, 1996) [14].

1.7.2. Speech Act Theory

It means that words aren't just used to explain things, but also to do things. When someone speaks, they do something, like apologize, promise, or give instructions (Austin, 1962) [3].

1.7.3. Illocutionary Act

The term means the main purpose or action that a speaker takes when they say something. It is the communicative force behind the words, such as when you warn someone or ask for something, instead of just saying anything (Searle, 1969) [11].

1.7.4. Expressive Speech Acts

Is one of the five types of speech acts that Searle developed. These acts show how the speaker feels or thinks about a certain scenario. Common examples include thanking, apologizing, welcoming, and congratulating (Searle, 1969) [11].

1.7.5. Modernism

is a movement in literature and art that became popular in the early 1900s. It is marked by an intelligent break from traditional and typical forms of expression. Modernist literature generally tries out new styles and focuses on the inner psychological realities of people. It often talks about feelings of being alone and how modern existence is broken up (Abrams & Harpham, 2014) [1].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This section provides the primary concepts, theories, and previous studies connected to the current study. It starts by defining the most important terms used in the study. Then, it explains the theoretical background, which focuses on Speech Act Theory as the main framework for analysis. Then, the section reviews the most important earlier studies that explored pragmatics, poetry, and T.S. Eliot's work. The objective of this section is to establish a solid foundation for the analysis of expressive speech acts in the following sections.

2.2. Definitions of Key Terms

In this section, the important terms used in the study are defined.

2.2.1. Pragmatics

According to Yule (1996)^[14], pragmatics is "the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or writer and interpreted by a listener or reader" (p. 3). Pragmatics is not limited to the dictionary meanings of words. It is about figuring out what someone really means in a certain situation or context. If someone says "It is cold in here," they can be asking someone to close the window instead of merely saying how cold it is (p. 3).

2.2.2. Speech Act

According to Austin (1962)^[3], the speech act is the action performed by producing an utterance. He famously stated that "to say something is to do something" (cited in Salman *et al.*, 2024, p. V)^[10]. This means that language is not only used to describe reality but to perform social actions like promising, warning, or apologizing.

2.2.3. Illocutionary Act

Searle (1969)^[11] defines the illocutionary act as the performance of an act in saying something, such as making a statement, a promise, or a request (cited in Sadock, 2004, p. 54)^[9]. It is the core intention or the "force" behind the words. For example, the sentence "I will come" has the illocutionary force of a promise, distinguishing it from a mere description. To systematically analyze these intentions, Searle (1976)^[12] classified illocutionary acts into five main categories based on their communicative functions. Recent pragmatic studies (e.g., Muhsen & Smeer, 2022) emphasize that these categories remain the fundamental framework for understanding how speakers achieve their communicative and psychological goals across various contexts. The five categories are detailed as follows:

2.2.3.1. Assertives (Representatives)

Assertive speech acts are those that commit the speaker, in varying degrees, to the truth of the expressed proposition. According to Mukhroji *et al.* (2019)^[6], these acts reflect the speaker's belief about reality and include verbs such as stating, claiming, concluding, asserting, and describing. In both literary discourse and everyday communication, assertives are primarily used to convey information or report facts, essentially making the words "fit the world."

2.2.3.2. Directives

Directives are linguistic acts in which the speaker attempts to get the hearer to perform a specific future action. This category encompasses commands, requests, advice, invitations, and warnings. Muhsen and Smeer (2022) point out that the core function of directives is to make the world fit the words via the hearer's intervention. The strength of a directive can range from a polite suggestion to a strict order, heavily depending on the social power dynamics and context between the interlocutors.

2.2.3.3. Commissives

Commissive speech acts operate by committing the speaker to a certain future course of action. Promising, offering, pledging, swearing, and vowing are prominent examples of this category. Contemporary pragmatic analyses recognize commissives as critical tools for signaling credibility, accountability, and personal intention (Levinson, 1983). Unlike directives, which compel the hearer, commissives place the obligation entirely on the speaker to align their future actions with their spoken words.

2.2.3.4. Declarations

Declarations are considered the most powerful type of speech acts because they bring about an immediate change in the institutional or physical reality simply by being uttered. When a qualified speaker utters a declaration (for instance, "I pronounce you husband and wife" or "You are fired"), the state of the world changes to match the proposition. Searle (1976)^[12] notes that declarations uniquely require an extra-linguistic institution, such as the legal system, the church, or a corporate structure, for their successful and felicitous performance.

2.2.3.5. Expressives

Expressive speech acts function to express the speaker's psychological state, attitude, or emotional reaction to a specific situation. Common examples include apologizing, thanking, welcoming, congratulating, and lamenting. Wahyuningtyas and Sirmiawati (2023)^[13] emphasize that expressives do not attempt to change the world or describe empirical facts; rather, they reveal the speaker's inner feelings and manage the interpersonal dimensions of communication. As established in the introduction, this specific category represents the focal point of the current study, because it serves as the theoretical lens through which Prufrock's emotional fragmentation is analyzed.

2.2.4. Expressive Speech Acts

While mentioned previously as one of Searle's five macro-categories, expressive speech acts require distinct attention as they form the core analytical framework of this study. Searle (1976)^[12] defines expressives as acts that "express the psychological state" of the speaker regarding a state of affairs specified in the propositional content (cited in Ronan, 2015, p. 28)^[8]. These utterances are primarily used to reveal the speaker's inner emotions and attitudes rather than stating facts about the external world. To provide a precise analytical tool for literary texts, Ronan (2015)^[8] further sub-categorizes expressives into specific emotional functions, such as deploring or lamenting, wishing, apologizing, and expressing

an attitude or psychological state. In the context of this research, these specific sub-categories are utilized to decode the complex emotional and psychological landscape of T. S. Eliot's protagonist.

2.3. Review of Related Literature

This section reviews important studies that are connected to the topic. These studies are divided into those dealing with pragmatics in poetry, studies on T.S. Eliot, and studies on expressive speech acts.

2.3.1. Pragmatics and Poetry

Rakhimovna and Sur'atovna (2024) ^[7] conducted a study titled *Pragmatic Insights into English Poetry*. The aim was to show how pragmatics helps readers understand the deeper meaning of poems. They argued that analyzing speech acts in poetry reveals the communicative intentions of the poet. This study is relevant because it confirms that Speech Act Theory is a valid tool for analyzing literary texts.

2.3.2. Stylistic and Literary Analyses of T.S. Eliot's Poetry

Several researchers have studied T.S. Eliot's style. For example, Ali and Ayyed (2022) investigated the use of *Metaphor* in Eliot's poems. They focused on how Eliot uses body parts metaphorically to create images. Similarly, Maxmaraximova (2024) ^[5] analyzed *Symbols* in Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Prufrock*. She found that Eliot uses symbols to show the "complexities of modern consciousness." These studies are important because they analyze the same poet, but they focus on metaphors and symbols, not speech acts.

2.3.3. Features of Speech Acts

According to pragmatic theorists, speech acts possess several distinct features that separate them from mere grammatical sentences. First, they are performative. As Austin (1962) ^[3] established, speech acts perform specific actions rather than merely describing reality or stating facts. Second, they are highly context-dependent. Yule (1996) ^[14] explains that the exact same utterance can carry a completely different illocutionary force depending on the physical, social, and psychological context in which it is spoken. Third, speech acts are driven by intentionality. The speaker must have a clear intention to communicate a specific message to the hearer (Searle, 1969) ^[11]. Finally, they are rule-governed phenomena. This means they operate under specific linguistic and cultural conventions that both the speaker and the listener must recognize to ensure successful communication (Mey, 2001). In literary texts, these features help readers decode the unstated motives of the characters.

2.3.4. Principles of Speech Acts

The successful performance and interpretation of speech acts are guided by specific underlying principles, fundamentally known in pragmatics as "Felicity Conditions." These principles, initially proposed by Austin (1962) ^[3] and systematically developed by Searle (1969) ^[11], govern whether a speech act is valid and effective. Searle outlined four primary principles. First, the propositional content principle dictates that the utterance must predicate a specific act or state. Second, the preparatory principle requires that specific contextual requirements be met, such as the speaker having the appropriate authority or reason to perform the act. Third, the sincerity principle dictates that the speaker must genuinely hold the feelings, beliefs, or intentions they are

expressing. For expressive speech acts, which are the focus of this study, the sincerity principle is highly crucial because the speaker must truly feel the anxiety, regret, or sorrow they verbalize. Fourth, the essential principle determines that the utterance must conventionally count as the performance of the intended act, binding the speaker to the consequences of their words (Sadock, 2004) ^[9].

2.3.5. Expressive Speech Acts in Cinematic Discourse

Wahyuningtyas and Sirniawati (2023) ^[13] analyzed *Expressive Speech Acts* in the movie *The King's Speech*. They used a descriptive qualitative method to find types of expressives like thanking, apologizing, and wishing. Their findings showed that expressive acts helped reveal the character's personality. This study is very important because it uses the same method and theory that the current research will use, even though the data (a movie vs. a poem) is different.

2.4. The Need for Expressive Act Analysis in Eliot's Work

Based on the review above, it is clear that Speech Act Theory has been applied to many types of texts, such as movies and daily conversations (Wahyuningtyas & Sirniawati, 2023; Mukhroji *et al.*, 2019) ^[13,6]. Also, many scholars have studied T.S. Eliot's poetry, but they mostly focused on metaphors, symbols, and imagery (Ali & Ayyed, 2022; Maxmaraximova, 2024) ^[5]. However, there is a lack of studies that specifically analyze Expressive Speech Acts in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Therefore, this study fills this gap by focusing on how expressive acts reveal the speaker's emotional state in this specific modernist poem.

2.5. Summary

In conclusion, this section has presented the key concepts, theoretical background, and previous studies related to the research. It defined pragmatics and speech acts, and explained Searle's theory of Expressives. The review showed that while Eliot's work is famous, it has not been fully explored through the lens of expressive speech acts. This gap justifies the present study. The next section describes the methodology adopted to conduct the analysis.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This section outlines the methodological framework adopted to conduct the study. It provides a detailed description of the research design, the data source (corpus), the instruments used for analysis, and the specific procedures followed to collect and classify the linguistic data. Finally, it explains the analytical process used to interpret the expressive speech acts within T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The aim of this methodology is to ensure a systematic and objective analysis of how the protagonist's psychological states are linguistically realized.

3.2. Research Design

To achieve the objectives of this study, a descriptive qualitative method is employed. This design is considered the most appropriate for this research because the study aims to describe and interpret the "quality" of a linguistic phenomenon—specifically, emotions and intentions—rather than quantifying numerical data. As noted by Wahyuningtyas and Sirniawati (2023) ^[13], qualitative research is essential when analyzing speech acts in literary works because it

allows the researcher to explore the deeper meaning of utterances within their specific context. By using this design, the study moves beyond mere identification to explain *how* and *why* Prufrock uses specific expressive acts to reveal his inner fragmentation.

3.3. Data of the Study

The data source for this study is the complete text of the modernist poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T. S. Eliot.

3.3.1. Selection Criteria

This poem was selected as the corpus because it operates as a dramatic interior monologue. The protagonist, Prufrock, is constantly engaging in self-reflection, making the text a rich repository of *expressive* utterances.

3.3.2. The Sample

The sample consists of selected excerpts and utterances from the poem where the speaker explicitly or implicitly expresses a psychological state. These include moments of hesitation, regret, fear, and desire (e.g., utterances reflecting his fear of aging or social rejection). The analysis focuses on these specific lines to decode the emotional architecture of the character.

3.4. Instruments of the Study

The primary instrument used for data analysis is a theoretical framework based on the principles of Pragmatics. Specifically, the study adopts Searle's (1976)^[12] Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts as the analytical tool. To facilitate the classification, a coding scheme was developed based on the categories of expressive acts discussed by Ronan (2015)^[8]. The instrument categorizes the data into the following types:

3.4.1. Deploring/Lamenting

Expressing sorrow or regret over a situation (e.g., Prufrock's regret over his passivity).

3.4.2. Wishing/Desiring

Expressing a desire for a different reality.

1. **Apologizing:** Expressing regret to others (or oneself).
2. **Greeting/Welcoming:** (If applicable in the social settings of the poem).
3. **Attitude/State:** General expressions of psychological disposition (anxiety, hesitation).

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection followed a systematic, step-by-step procedure to ensure accuracy:

1. **Close Reading:** The poem was read multiple times to gain a holistic understanding of the themes, tone, and context.
2. **Identification:** The researcher scanned the text to identify utterances that function as "Expressive Speech Acts" based on Searle's definition (utterances expressing a psychological state).
3. **Extraction:** The relevant lines were extracted from the poem. For example, lines like "*I should have been a pair of ragged claws*" were marked for analysis as

expressions of self-deploring.

4. **Tabulation:** The extracted data were organized into a structured table containing the linguistic form (Locution) and the context, preparing them for the analysis phase.

3.6. Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data is conducted qualitatively using a pragmatic approach. The process involves three levels of interpretation for each selected extract:

1. **Locutionary Level:** Identifying the literal meaning and the linguistic structure of the utterance.
2. **Illocutionary Level:** Determining the specific "force" of the utterance using Searle's classification. For instance, determining if an utterance is an act of *blaming* or *regretting*.
3. **Contextual Interpretation:** Explaining *why* the speaker performed this act. This involves linking the speech act to the broader themes of the poem, such as alienation and modern angst. This step interprets how the speech act reflects Prufrock's psychological condition (Maxmarximova, 2024)^[5].

4. Results, Analysis, and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This section aims to present the results obtained from the pragmatic analysis of T. S. Eliot's poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. It explores how the protagonist utilizes Expressive Speech Acts to reveal his psychological state. The section presents the data, details the analytical procedures, and provides a comprehensive qualitative analysis of selected excerpts. Finally, it discusses the findings in light of the research questions and links them to Searle's (1976)^[12] theoretical framework to demonstrate how linguistic choices reflect modern alienation and anxiety.

4.2. Description of the Data

The data analyzed in this section consists of specific poetic utterances extracted from the corpus, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (Eliot, 1963). The selected items are exclusively those that function as Expressive Speech Acts according to Searle's taxonomy. The utterances were gathered through a meticulous close reading of the text and were isolated based on their illocutionary force—specifically, instances where the speaker expresses emotions such as regret, fear, lamentation, and self-deploring.

4.3. Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis follows a qualitative descriptive procedure. Each selected extract is examined pragmatically through three levels:

4.3.1. Locutionary Act

The literal, surface meaning of the linguistic structure.

4.3.2. Illocutionary Act

The intended pragmatic force behind the utterance, categorized into specific expressive types based on Searle (1976)^[12] and further sub-categorized using Ronan (2015)^[8].

4.3.3. Contextual Meaning

The psychological and thematic interpretation of the speech

act within the context of Prufrock's internal monologue.

4.4. Presentation of Results

The following is the practical analysis of selected expressive utterances from the poem:

Extract 1: "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." (Eliot, 1963, lines 73-74)

- **Locutionary Act:** The speaker states that he ought to have been a crab-like creature moving on the bottom of the ocean.
- **Illocutionary Act:** Expressive (Self-Deploring / Wishing).
- **Contextual Meaning:** Prufrock performs an expressive act of self-deploring. By wishing to be a primitive creature without high consciousness, he expresses deep regret over his human existence. The speech act reveals his desire to escape the anxieties of social interaction, reflecting his profound sense of isolation (Maxmaraximova, 2024) [5].

Extract 2: "And in short, I was afraid." (Eliot, 1963, line 86)

- **Locutionary Act:** The speaker explicitly declares that he experienced fear.
- **Illocutionary Act:** Expressive (Attitude/Psychological State).
- **Contextual Meaning:** Here, the expressive force is direct. Prufrock admits his overwhelming anxiety regarding social judgment and rejection. The "felicity condition" for this act is his genuine internal dread. This utterance is central to understanding his character; his fear is the core reason for his constant hesitation and inability to act.

Extract 3: "I grow old.. I grow old.." (Eliot, 1963, line 120)

- **Locutionary Act:** The speaker repeats the factual statement that his age is advancing.
- **Illocutionary Act:** Expressive (Lamenting / Sorrow).
- **Contextual Meaning:** Through the repetition of this phrase, the illocutionary act goes beyond stating a biological fact; it is a profound lamentation over lost youth and missed opportunities. Prufrock is expressing his sorrow and despair over his physical decay.

4.5. Discussion of the Results

The analysis reveals that Prufrock relies heavily on Expressive Speech Acts, particularly those of lamenting, self-deploring, and expressing fear. Unlike Directives or Commissive, which require action and interaction with others, Expressives merely state an internal psychological condition. According to Yule (1996, p. 53) [14], expressive speech acts are those kinds of speech acts that state what the speaker feels, reflecting psychological states such as joy, sorrow, or likes and dislikes. In Prufrock's case, these acts highlight his "paralysis." He is incapable of making decisions or engaging with the external world; therefore, his language turns entirely inward. The dominance of these specific expressive acts aligns with the findings of Maxmaraximova (2024) [5], who notes that Eliot's language emphasizes modern man's fragmentation. Prufrock does not speak to change the world; he speaks to lament his inability to do so.

4.6. Summary of Findings

The main findings of this analysis can be summarized as follows:

- Expressive Speech Acts in the poem primarily function to communicate negative psychological states, such as anxiety, regret, and sorrow.
- The most frequent sub-categories of expressives used by the protagonist are "Lamenting" and "Self-deploring."
- The overwhelming presence of these expressive acts mirrors the thematic core of the poem: the tragic paralysis and social alienation of the modern individual.

This section has successfully presented, analyzed, and discussed the expressive speech acts in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. By applying Searle's theoretical framework to the textual data, the analysis demonstrated how the protagonist's linguistic choices serve as a direct reflection of his internal emotional struggles. The findings confirm that pragmatic analysis is an effective tool for decoding literary characters. The next section will provide the overall conclusions of the entire study, along with recommendations for future research.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The journey of this study leads to several pivotal conclusions regarding the intersection of pragmatic linguistics and modernist poetry. Through the meticulous analysis of T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, it has become evident that expressive speech acts are not merely linguistic ornaments but are the very pulse of the poem's emotional architecture. The study successfully identified that the protagonist's discourse is heavily saturated with acts of lamenting, self-deploring, and expressing fear, which serves as a profound reflection of the modernist "psychological paralysis."

Unlike other types of speech acts that aim to change the external world or influence others, the expressives used by Prufrock are predominantly inward-looking. This linguistic choice captures the essence of social alienation; the protagonist does not speak to interact, but to reveal his internal fragmentation and his inability to bridge the gap between his thoughts and the social world. Ultimately, this research proves that Speech Act Theory is a powerful and indispensable tool for literary criticism. It allows readers to move beyond metaphors and imagery to understand the communicative intentions and failures of a character, providing a grounded, linguistic explanation for the themes of anxiety and hesitation that define Eliot's work.

5.2. Recommendations

Building upon the insights gained from this analysis, several paths for future scholarly inquiry emerge. First, it is highly recommended that researchers expand this pragmatic lens to include a comparative study between *Prufrock* and Eliot's later works, such as *The Waste Land*, to track how the use of expressive language evolved as the poet's vision of modernity deepened. Furthermore, while this study focused exclusively on expressive acts, a broader investigation into other categories, such as directives or commissives, could offer a more complete picture of why Prufrock's social interactions consistently fail.

Beyond the work of T.S. Eliot, this qualitative pragmatic approach should be applied to other modernist genres, including the stream-of-consciousness prose of authors like Virginia Woolf or James Joyce. Such research would help

determine if the dominance of expressive speech acts is a universal linguistic feature of the modernist "interior monologue." By continuing to bridge the gap between linguistics and literature, future studies can further unveil how the technical structures of language are used to articulate the complexities of the human soul in the modern age.

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