

EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS AS PEDAGOGICAL FEEDBACK: A PRAGMATIC INSIGHT INTO EFL SPEAKING CLASS INTERACTION

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Abstract: This study examines how expressive speech acts function as pedagogical feedback in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking classroom. Drawing on Searle's taxonomy of speech acts and a pragmatic discourse-analytic approach, the research identifies the types of expressive speech acts used by the teacher and explains their pragmatic and pedagogical functions. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, utilizing classroom observations, audio recordings, and field notes as the primary data sources. The findings show four types of expressive speech acts: praise, thanking, encouragement, and positive acknowledgment. Praise appeared most frequently and provided immediate reinforcement, supporting student confidence and participation. Encouragement helped reduce anxiety and prepared learners for speaking tasks. Thanking maintained politeness and mutual respect, while positive acknowledgment strengthened motivation and affirmed student progress. The study concludes that expressive speech acts serve both affective and instructional functions, helping to build a supportive classroom atmosphere and promote active engagement in EFL speaking activities. The findings suggest that expressive feedback deserves greater attention as a deliberate pedagogical strategy rather than an incidental feature of teacher talk.

Keywords: EFL Classroom Interaction; Expressive Speech Acts; Pragmatics Teacher Feedback

Introduction

The development of speaking competence has long been treated as a core objective in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. As oral communication becomes increasingly important in

international settings, speaking instruction requires approaches that extend beyond grammatical control and address the demands of interactional fluency and pragmatic sensitivity. This challenge is especially visible in the Indonesian secondary and vocational context, where curricular reforms continue to seek more effective approaches to developing learners' speaking skills.¹ Brown² describes speaking as a multidimensional activity involving real-time processing, social interpretation, and the management of interpersonal exchanges. Such complexity places teacher feedback at the center of learners' communicative development. Hattie and Timperley³ view feedback as a mechanism that helps learners recognize discrepancies between their current performance and targeted outcomes. In speaking classrooms, feedback not only addresses linguistic accuracy but also supports learners' confidence, persistence, and pragmatic awareness.⁴ These conditions point to the need for feedback practices that respond to learners' emotional and interactional demands.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) regards classroom interaction as a socially constructed and pragmatically shaped activity rather than a simple transfer of information. CLT-based approaches have been shown to have a significant positive effect on learners' speaking skill compared with conventional methods.⁵ Pragmatics, which examines how meaning is shaped by context, forms an essential component of communicative competence.⁶ Learners must be able to

¹ M. Labib Al Halim, Salamun, and Omnia Mohamed, "Teachers' Challenges and Approaches in Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills within the Merdeka Curriculum in Junior High School," *JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 9, no. 1 (2025): 171–188, <https://doi.org/10.33754/jalie.v9i1.1492>.

² H. Douglas Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*, 3rd ed. (White Plains, NY: Pearson, 2007).

³ John Hattie and Helen Timperley, "The Power of Feedback," *Review of Educational Research* 77, no. 1 (2007): 81–112, <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>.

⁴ Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, "Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): 37–66, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263197001034>; Susan M. Brookhart, *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2017).

⁵ Arjulayana and Tri Pujiati, "Optimize Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach for Non-English Learners' Speaking Skill," *JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 8, no. 2 (2024): 215–238.

⁶ Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," *Applied Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (1980): 1–47, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1>; Gabriele Kasper, "Can Pragmatic Competence Be Taught?" (Network #6; Honolulu: University of Hawai'i,

interpret intentions, convey attitudes, and maintain interpersonal balance in spoken exchanges. As a result, teacher talk requires examination not only for its linguistic form but also for the functions it performs within classroom discourse.⁷ Speech Act Theory, first proposed by Austin⁸ and elaborated by Searle,⁹ offers a framework for viewing teacher utterances as actions that carry instructional and interpersonal consequences.

Within Searle's taxonomy, expressive speech acts occupy a particularly relevant position in educational discourse. These acts reveal the speaker's affective stance through expressions such as praise, gratitude, encouragement, apology, and sympathy. In classroom interaction, expressive utterances often carry both relational and pedagogical intentions. Praise, for instance, can acknowledge a student's effort while simultaneously strengthening the student's willingness to participate. Expressions of empathy or reassurance may reduce anxiety and help learners feel more prepared to contribute orally. Such functions align with the notion of feedback as a process that combines cognitive guidance with emotional support.¹⁰ Effective speaking instruction frequently depends on a teacher's ability to balance correction with encouragement and interpersonal sensitivity.

Empirical studies conducted in various EFL settings provide insight into the role of expressive speech acts. Astuti and Lestari¹¹ observed that Indonesian teachers commonly relied on praise and encouragement to maintain student engagement. Ningsih and Mahmud¹² reported that expressive and directive acts helped build positive classroom relationships and supported student motivation.

Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center, 1997), <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/networks/NW06/>.

⁷ Naoko Taguchi, *Pragmatic Competence in English as a Lingua Franca* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019).

⁸ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

⁹ John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

¹⁰ David Carless and David Boud, "The Development of Student Feedback Literacy: Enabling Uptake of Feedback," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 8 (2018): 1315–1325, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>.

¹¹ Wahyu Astuti and Fitri Lestari, "Teachers' Speech Acts and Their Pragmatic Functions in EFL Classroom Interaction," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10, no. 3 (2020): 600–610, <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i3.24791>.

¹² Ayu Sri Ningsih and Muhammad Mahmud, "The Role of Teachers' Speech Acts in EFL Classroom Interaction," *Journal of Language and Education* 7, no. 4 (2021): 143–152.

Studies in Middle Eastern and Asian contexts¹³ similarly point to the influence of expressive acts on reducing speaking anxiety and promoting willingness to communicate.

Despite these findings, expressive acts are often treated primarily as interpersonal devices rather than as intentional components of pedagogical feedback. This leaves a gap in understanding how teachers employ expressive language strategically to support learning, particularly in speaking classes where psychological readiness has a considerable impact on student performance. Such issues are especially visible in classrooms where learners show hesitation, low confidence, or cultural reservations toward public error. Speaking classes carry specific challenges because learners must coordinate linguistic processing, self-presentation, and interactive demands simultaneously. These pressures can intensify anxiety and reduce participation. Supportive expressive feedback can influence whether a student chooses to speak or remain silent.

Studies that have examined expressive utterances in EFL classroom interaction to date, notably Astuti and Lestari, Ningsih and Mahmud, Al-Subahi, Rashidi and Rafieerad, and Wahyuni and Amri, are primarily typological: each catalogues the forms and general interpersonal functions of expressive acts, but none analyzes how such acts operate sequentially as feedback moves within specific pedagogical episodes, nor connects expressive-act taxonomy to feedback theory. Examining expressive speech acts as pragmatic tools rather than incidental expressions is therefore essential for understanding how teachers shape learners' engagement with speaking tasks.

The novelty of the present study is threefold and is directly evidenced in the data reported in Section 4: (a) contextually, it examines expressive feedback in a vocational-EFL speaking class, a setting underrepresented in the typological literature reviewed above; (b) analytically, it moves beyond frequency-based classification to a sequential, discourse-based analysis of how expressive acts are distributed and combined across lesson phases; and (c) theoretically, it integrates Searle's speech-act taxonomy with feedback theory (Hattie

¹³ Nasser Rashidi and Sara Rafieerad, "An Analysis of Teacher Speech Acts in Iranian EFL Classrooms: A Pragmatic Approach," *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research* 6, no. 3 (2019): 92–108; Ali Al-Subahi, "Speech Acts in Teacher Feedback: A Pragmatic Analysis of EFL Classrooms," *Asian EFL Journal* 28, no. 3 (2021): 91–109; Anita Wahyuni and Saiful Amri, "Teachers' Expressive Speech Acts in Online EFL Learning: A Pragmatic Perspective," *Studies in English Language and Education* 9, no. 2 (2022): 321–337.

and Timperley) to interpret expressive utterances as pedagogical feedback moves rather than as isolated markers of rapport.

Recent scholarship reinforces the relevance of this focus. A 2025 systematic review of dialogic feedback research in English Language Teaching found that empirical studies remain concentrated in written feedback within higher-education writing instruction, while feedback practices supporting speaking skills, particularly at the secondary level, remain markedly under-researched.¹⁴ In a related line of inquiry, an experimental study on praise in EFL classrooms found that the pragmatic quality of a teacher's expressive utterance, rather than its mere presence, determines its effect on learners' speaking anxiety and willingness to communicate.¹⁵

These studies, however, isolate expressive acts such as praise as a variable under controlled or self-report conditions; they do not capture how such acts are naturally distributed, sequenced, and combined with other expressive types within authentic, moment-by-moment classroom discourse. The present study departs from both the experimental and the general-typology traditions by offering a naturalistic, discourse-based account of how a teacher's expressive utterances function as feedback within real speaking-class interaction. Its contribution is therefore twofold: empirically, it documents how four related expressive types operate together across different phases of an authentic lesson to perform an integrated affective-instructional function; theoretically, it extends Searle's taxonomy beyond a classificatory tool into an analytic lens for pedagogical feedback, addressing a gap that prior typological and experimental studies have left unresolved.

The present study examines how expressive speech acts function as pedagogical feedback in EFL speaking class interaction. The investigation focuses on the types of expressive speech acts used by teachers, the pragmatic work these acts perform in classroom discourse, and the potential pedagogical functions they may serve in supporting

¹⁴ Ani Susanti, Tengku Intan Suzila Tengku Sharif, and Alex Masardo, "Dialogic Feedback in English Language Teaching (ELT): Modalities, Outcomes, and Research Trends," *English Language Teaching Educational Journal* 8, no. 1 (2025): 37–53, <https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v8i1.14057>.

¹⁵ Nourollah Zarrinabadi, Nigel Mantou Lou, and Zeinab Darvishnezhad, "To Praise or Not to Praise? Examining the Effects of Ability vs. Effort Praise on Speaking Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate in EFL Classrooms," *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 17, no. 1 (2023): 88–101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1938079>.

instructional goals. By treating expressive utterances as strategic feedback rather than incidental politeness, the study contributes a pragmatic, classroom-grounded account of how affective language supports speaking instruction, an angle that remains underrepresented in EFL feedback research. Based on the explanation above, this study formulates the following research questions: (1) What types of expressive speech acts are used by EFL teachers when providing feedback? (2) What pragmatic functions do these expressive speech acts serve within classroom interaction? (3) What potential pedagogical functions do these expressive speech acts serve in supporting feedback within EFL speaking classes?

This article is organized into five sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 reviews relevant literature on speech act theory, expressive speech acts in educational contexts, and teacher feedback as a pedagogical practice, before outlining the conceptual framework that guides the analysis. Section 3 describes the qualitative methodology, including the research design, participants, data collection, and analysis procedures. Section 4 presents and discusses the findings on the types, pragmatic functions, and pedagogical roles of expressive speech acts identified in the classroom data. Section 5 concludes the article with the main findings and their pedagogical implications.

Literature Review

Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory, originally proposed by Austin¹⁶ and further developed by Searle,¹⁷ provides the theoretical foundation for understanding language as a form of action. Austin introduced the concept that every utterance performs three simultaneous acts: the locutionary act (the act of saying something with meaning), the illocutionary act (the communicative intention behind the utterance), and the perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the listener). Building upon this, Searle classified speech acts into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives.

Among these, expressive speech acts are particularly relevant to this study. Expressive acts reflect the speaker's psychological or emotional state, such as thanking, apologizing, congratulating, praising, complaining, and sympathizing. According to Leech,¹⁸ expressives are

¹⁶ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

¹⁷ John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

¹⁸ Geoffrey Leech, *The Pragmatics of Politeness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

vital in maintaining social harmony and managing interpersonal relationships because they convey attitudes and evaluations rather than factual information. In educational contexts, these acts are not only polite expressions but also serve pedagogical and motivational purposes.¹⁹ From a linguistic perspective, expressive acts are often realized through performative verbs (“I thank you”, “I apologize”), evaluative adjectives (“Great job”, “Excellent answer”), or interjections and modals that signal affective stance.²⁰ Pragmatically, their interpretation depends on the classroom context, the teacher-student relationship, and the institutional norms of communication.²¹ These linguistic and pragmatic realizations make expressive speech acts a significant component in understanding how teachers communicate both emotion and pedagogy in classroom discourse.

Expressive Speech Acts in Educational Contexts

In language classrooms, communication serves both instructional and interpersonal purposes. Teachers not only transmit linguistic knowledge but also manage affective engagement through their speech. Expressive speech acts therefore function as part of what Noddings²² calls emotional pedagogy, the affective dimension of teaching. These acts help create a positive classroom climate by expressing empathy, encouragement, and appreciation, all of which are essential for maintaining learner motivation.²³

Several studies have investigated expressive speech acts in classroom discourse. Astuti and Lestari²⁴ found that expressive acts, especially praise and encouragement, dominated teacher talk in Indonesian EFL classrooms, fostering rapport and motivation among

¹⁹ George Yule, *Pragmatics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).

²⁰ Indramini Indramini et al., “Antropolinguistik” (CV. Luminary Press Indonesia, 2025).

²¹ Jenny Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics* (London: Longman, 1995).

²² Nel Noddings, *The Ethics of Care: A Personal, Political, and Global View* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).

²³ Zoltán Dörnyei, *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Yasuo Nakatani, “Identifying Strategies That Facilitate EFL Learners’ Oral Communication: A Classroom Study Using Multiple Data Collection Procedures,” *The Modern Language Journal* 94, no. 1 (2010): 116–136, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00987.x>.

²⁴ Wahyu Astuti and Fitri Lestari, “Teachers’ Speech Acts and Their Pragmatic Functions in EFL Classroom Interaction,” *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10, no. 3 (2020): 600–610, <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i3.24791>.

learners. Likewise, Al-Subahi²⁵ reported that teachers in Saudi EFL classrooms frequently used appreciation, sympathy, and congratulations to reinforce students' emotional engagement. Similar findings were noted by Ningsih and Mahmud,²⁶ who observed that expressive and directive acts often worked together to promote supportive classroom communication. In an Iranian university context, Rashidi and Rafieerad²⁷ found that compliments and encouragement enhanced students' confidence and reduced anxiety, while Wahyuni and Amri²⁸ showed that expressions of empathy and praise in online EFL learning increased learners' sense of belonging and motivation. Beyond the EFL classroom proper, speech-act analyses of Arabic-language instructional materials similarly show conversational speech acts clustering around identifiable pedagogical functions rather than occurring at random,²⁹ reinforcing the case for examining expressive acts as structured, function-bearing units rather than incidental talk.

Overall, these studies demonstrate that expressive speech acts play both affective and pedagogical roles in classroom interaction. They help establish a positive learning environment where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to speak. However, despite these insights, the five studies reviewed above stop at classifying expressive acts and their general interpersonal functions; none of them explicitly examines how expressive speech acts function as pedagogical feedback, that is, how teachers' affective language contributes not only to emotional support but also to learners' cognitive and interactional development in EFL speaking classrooms.

²⁵ Ali Al-Subahi, "Speech Acts in Teacher Feedback: A Pragmatic Analysis of EFL Classrooms," *Asian EFL Journal* 28, no. 3 (2021): 91–109.

²⁶ Ayu Sri Ningsih and Muhammad Mahmud, "The Role of Teachers' Speech Acts in EFL Classroom Interaction," *Journal of Language and Education* 7, no. 4 (2021): 143–152.

²⁷ Nasser Rashidi and Sara Rafieerad, "An Analysis of Teacher Speech Acts in Iranian EFL Classrooms: A Pragmatic Approach," *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research* 6, no. 3 (2019): 92–108.

²⁸ Anita Wahyuni and Saiful Amri, "Teachers' Expressive Speech Acts in Online EFL Learning: A Pragmatic Perspective," *Studies in English Language and Education* 9, no. 2 (2022): 321–337.

²⁹ Siti Maesaroh, Mirwan Akhmad Taufiq, Muhammad Ryan Charisma, and Muhammad Rashief Fawaz, "Conversational Speech Act Patterns in Arabic Books at the University Level," *JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 9, no. 1 (2025): 51–70, <https://doi.org/10.33754/jalie.v9i1.1464>.

Teacher Feedback as Pedagogical Practice

Feedback is widely recognized as one of the most influential factors in learning and achievement.³⁰ In the language classroom, feedback functions as both cognitive input, providing information about errors or progress, and affective support, building confidence and motivation.³¹ Feedback can be broadly categorized into formative feedback, which aims to guide learning through ongoing support, and evaluative feedback, which focuses on judgment or assessment of performance.³² Recent approaches, however, emphasize that feedback is not a unidirectional process but a dialogic and interactive practice,³³ a form of classroom talk in which teachers and learners co-construct understanding through language.³⁴ Within this interactive process, expressive acts such as praise (“That’s an interesting answer”), empathy (“I understand it’s challenging”), or apology (“Sorry, let’s clarify that”) become vital elements of pedagogical feedback.

Expressive feedback thus combines evaluation with affection. It helps reduce learner anxiety, increase engagement, and make feedback moments more meaningful and humanized.³⁵ Pragmatically, this reflects the teacher’s ability to use language both as an instructional tool

³⁰ John Hattie and Helen Timperley, “The Power of Feedback,” *Review of Educational Research* 77, no. 1 (2007): 81–112, <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>.

³¹ Susan M Brookhart, *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students* (Ascd, 2017); Agung Ilham Prastowo, Muh Sabilar Rosyad, and M Idris Nasrullah, “The Concept of Deep Learning in The Perspective of Philosophy and Its Implementation in Schools,” *JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 9, no. 2 (2025): 345–66, <https://doi.org/10.33754/jalie.v9i2.1720>.

³² Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, “Assessment and Classroom Learning,” *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 7–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102>; Muh Sabilar Rosyad, “Student-Centered Arabic Teaching Materials in Internasional Undergraduate Programs: Empirical Evidence from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta,” *PROSIDING KONIPBSA: Konferensi Nasional Inovasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab* 5, no. 1 (2025): 217–32.

³³ David Carless, *Excellence in University Assessment: Learning from Award-Winning Practice* (London: Routledge, 2015).

³⁴ Fiona Hyland and Ken Hyland, “Feedback on Second Language Students’ Writing,” *Language Teaching* 39, no. 2 (2006): 83–101, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444806003399>.

³⁵ David Carless and David Boud, “The Development of Student Feedback Literacy: Enabling Uptake of Feedback,” *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 8 (2018): 1315–1325, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>.

and as a means of emotional connection.³⁶ In communicative EFL classrooms, this integration of expressive and directive acts enhances learners' pragmatic competence and participation in speaking activities.

Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

Although a growing number of studies have investigated speech acts or teacher feedback separately, few have integrated expressive speech acts and feedback pragmatics within a single analytical framework. Existing works³⁷ have provided valuable typologies of speech acts in EFL classrooms, yet they tend to treat expressives as social or emotional expressions rather than pedagogical strategies. The specific link between expressive acts and pedagogical feedback, that is, emotional utterances that fulfill instructional objectives, remains underexplored, particularly in EFL speaking contexts.

This study seeks to fill this gap by offering a pragmatic analysis of how expressive speech acts are employed by teachers as pedagogical feedback during EFL speaking class interaction. It examines not only the linguistic realization of these acts but also their pragmatic functions (e.g., motivating, comforting, affirming) and pedagogical purposes (e.g., enhancing confidence, promoting participation, supporting formative learning). The conceptual framework, which distinguishes three jointly operating dimensions rather than a linear sequence, can be outlined as follows:

*Expressive Speech Act (form) ↔ Sequential/Interactional
Context (when and after what it occurs) ↔ Pedagogical
Orientation (the instructional purpose it appears to serve)*

Rather than a linear causal chain, this framework treats expressive form, sequential context, and pedagogical orientation as three jointly constitutive dimensions of a single feedback event: the same expressive form (e.g., praise) can be associated with different pedagogical orientations depending on the sequential context in which it occurs (see

³⁶ Lan Li and Alessandro Vuono, "Teacher Feedback as Dialogic Interaction: A Sociocultural and Pragmatic Perspective," *Language Teaching Research* 23, no. 5 (2019): 552–571, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818822075>.

³⁷ Wahyu Astuti and Fitri Lestari, "Teachers' Speech Acts and Their Pragmatic Functions in EFL Classroom Interaction," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10, no. 3 (2020): 600–610, <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i3.24791>; Ali Al-Subahi, "Speech Acts in Teacher Feedback: A Pragmatic Analysis of EFL Classrooms," *Asian EFL Journal* 28, no. 3 (2021): 91–109; Nasser Rashidi and Sara Rafieerad, "An Analysis of Teacher Speech Acts in Iranian EFL Classrooms: A Pragmatic Approach," *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research* 6, no. 3 (2019): 92–108.

Section 4). An utterance is interpreted as feedback when it directly follows a student contribution within an identifiable feedback episode (see Method), and its pedagogical orientation is identified through the convergence of its linguistic form, its position in the lesson sequence, and the classroom activity it accompanies, cross-checked through the coding and validation procedures described in Method. Because the corpus does not include systematically coded student-response data, the relationships proposed in this framework are treated as interpretive associations grounded in utterance form and context, not as confirmed causal mechanisms linking teacher expressive acts to learner outcomes; the extent to which these associations approximate actual effects on learners remains an open question for future research combining discourse analysis with learner-focused data.

Method

This study employed a qualitative exploratory single-case design using pragmatic discourse analysis to investigate how expressive speech acts function as pedagogical feedback in EFL speaking class interaction. According to Creswell,³⁸ qualitative research is appropriate for exploring social and linguistic phenomena where meaning is derived from participants' natural contexts. Gay, Mills, and Airasian³⁹ similarly emphasize that qualitative inquiry allows researchers to interpret human communication as it occurs naturally, making it well-suited for examining teacher-student interaction. Pragmatic discourse analysis, therefore, provided a lens for understanding how teachers' expressive utterances carry both affective and pedagogical meaning in classroom communication. This design was considered appropriate because the study's aim was to interpret the function of naturally occurring teacher talk rather than to test a predetermined hypothesis through numerical measurement.

Given its aim of interpreting one naturally occurring lesson in depth rather than establishing generalizable patterns, the study is more precisely characterized as a qualitative exploratory case study bounded by one classroom, one teacher, and one lesson (see Limitations). Four analytic units are distinguished for reproducibility: a turn (an uninterrupted stretch of talk by one speaker); an utterance (the minimal unit of analysis, one illocutionary act; a turn may contain more than

³⁸ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014).

³⁹ L. R. Gay, Geoffrey E. Mills, and Peter W. Airasian, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*, 12th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2019).

one); a feedback episode (a student contribution plus the teacher's evaluative/affective response to it, the contextual boundary for coding); and an expressive speech act (an utterance within a feedback episode whose primary force expresses the teacher's evaluative or affective stance rather than asserting fact or directing action). An utterance was coded as expressive when it (a) occurred within a feedback episode, (b) its performative verb, evaluative lexis, or prosodic marking expressed an affective stance, and (c) this was corroborated by the surrounding transcript and field-note context. A single utterance can in principle carry more than one illocutionary force (e.g., praise that also functions as an implicit directive to continue speaking); each was assigned one primary category, with any clear secondary function noted in Section 4 rather than double-counted in Table 5.

To ensure methodological transparency, it is important to specify the scope of the corpus analyzed. The dataset comprised a single, fully transcribed classroom session of approximately 90 minutes, audio-recorded in its entirety and supplemented by field notes covering the opening, core instructional activities, group work, and closing stages of the lesson. Within this session, every teacher's utterance functioning as feedback was identified and coded, yielding a total of 14 expressive speech act instances distributed across four categories (see Table 5). The researchers acknowledge that this single-session, single-teacher scope constrains the range of expressive patterns that could be captured; this constraint is addressed further in the Limitations section. Future replications extending the corpus to multiple sessions and teachers would allow the frequency patterns reported here to be verified across a larger data set.

The participants of this study were an English teacher and students in an EFL speaking class at the vocational high school level. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling based on their active engagement in interactive speaking activities in which teacher feedback played a key role.⁴⁰ The classroom served as a natural setting, enabling the researcher to capture authentic communicative practices. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were ensured in accordance with Creswell and Creswell.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2015).

⁴¹ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018).

The data collection involved several instruments to obtain rich and contextual data. Classroom observations were conducted to record real-time teacher-student interactions, following Gay, Mills, and Airasian's⁴² recommendation that observation allows researchers to understand behavior in its natural environment. All sessions were audio-recorded to capture linguistic details accurately, while field notes documented contextual and non-verbal aspects that complemented the discourse data. The recorded interactions were then transcribed verbatim, focusing on teacher feedback moments. Each feedback instance was coded to identify expressive speech acts such as thanking, praising, apologizing, sympathizing, and congratulating.

The coding procedure followed a deductive approach informed by Searle's taxonomy, complemented by an inductive check for utterances that did not fit existing categories, consistent with recommendations for combining deductive and inductive steps in thematic coding.⁴³ Concretely, the transcript was first segmented into individual utterance units; each unit was then assigned to one of Searle's five illocutionary categories, and units classified as expressive were further coded into one of the four sub-types reported in this study (praise, thanking, encouragement, and congratulation/positive acknowledgment) based on their performative verb, evaluative content, and surrounding classroom context. This procedure is summarized in Appendix A, and each stage, from raw transcript segmentation to categorized results, is illustrated with a representative example.

The data analysis followed the stages proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña:⁴⁴ data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the transcribed data were reduced and categorized according to Searle's taxonomy of expressive acts. Second, each expressive act was analyzed for its pragmatic function using linguistic and contextual cues to identify the speaker's communicative intention and its impact on the learner. Finally, the researcher interpreted the data to determine the pedagogical value of these expressive acts and how

⁴² L. R. Gay, Geoffrey E. Mills, and Peter W. Airasian, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*, 12th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2019).

⁴³ Muhammad Naem, Wilson Ozuem, Kerry Howell, and Silvia Ranfagni, "A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 22 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>.

⁴⁴ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014).

they contribute to learner motivation, rapport building, and effective feedback in EFL speaking classrooms.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied validation strategies consistent with Lincoln and Guba's framework,⁴⁵ tailored to its single-session, single-teacher scope. All fourteen instances came from one audio-recorded lesson, so the recording is the primary source for identifying and coding expressive utterances; field notes were not an independent source of instances but a complementary one, documenting non-verbal cues and activity context that supported interpretation. Trustworthiness was therefore strengthened mainly through methods triangulation (recording vs. field notes) rather than source triangulation across independent data sets. Peer debriefing and member checking (with the participating teacher) validated interpretation and transcription accuracy; together with the investigator triangulation from second-rater coding below, these enhanced credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

To further strengthen the reliability of interpretation beyond triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking, a second rater who was not involved in the initial data collection independently coded the transcript using the same coding scheme; discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached, following current guidance on strengthening intercoder agreement in discourse research.⁴⁶ A complete audit trail, comprising the raw transcript, the coding scheme, coding memos, and records of coder discussions, was maintained throughout the analysis to allow the coding decisions to be traced and independently reviewed.

Result and Discussion

This section presents the integrated findings and discussion on the use of expressive speech acts as pedagogical feedback in the EFL speaking classroom. The analysis was grounded in Searle's classification of expressive acts, utterances that convey the speaker's psychological state, such as praising, thanking, congratulating, apologizing, and expressing empathy. All expressive acts identified from the classroom

⁴⁵ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1985).

⁴⁶ Renske van Enschoot, Wilbert Spooren, Antal van den Bosch, Christian Burgers, Liesbeth Degand, Jacqueline Evers-Vermeul, Florian Kunneman, Christine Liebrecht, Yvette Linders, and Alfons Maes, "Taming Our Wild Data: On Intercoder Reliability in Discourse Research," *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics* 13 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.51751/dujal16248>.

transcript were categorized and interpreted according to their pragmatic function and pedagogical implications. The findings and discussion are combined into a single integrated narrative to present a comprehensive account of how expressive speech acts operated within the classroom interaction.

Types and Pragmatic Functions of Expressive Speech Acts

The analysis revealed that the teacher employed four major types of expressive speech acts: praise, thanking, encouragement, and congratulation/positive acknowledgment. These expressives appeared throughout various stages of the lesson, including the opening, core activities, group work, and closing discussion, indicating their role in fostering student motivation, building rapport, sustaining engagement, and reducing learning anxiety. The following tables present the data extracts, followed by analytical interpretation.

Table 1. Expressive Speech Acts (Praise)

Time	Teacher's Utterances	Context
00.08.35/SMK /T	<i>Yes, very good. Give applause to us.</i>	The teacher praises students after correctly answering the difference between formal and informal letters.
00.36.06/SMK /T	<i>Yes, very good.</i>	The teacher praises a student who successfully identifies the video content.
00.59.17/SMK /T	<i>Give applause!</i>	The teacher expresses positive reinforcement after students finish their presentation.
01.16.48/SMK /T	<i>Very good.</i>	The teacher praises students for answering a true/false question correctly.
01.17.55/SMK /T	<i>Good job.</i>	The teacher praises students for summarizing the material learned that day.

A total of five praise utterances were identified. Praise appeared consistently throughout the lesson, especially during question-answer sessions, presentations, and review activities. These utterances functioned as positive reinforcement, encouraging students to remain engaged and confident. Praise aligns with the pedagogical role of expressive acts described by Holmes,⁴⁷ who argues that expressive language maintains positive interpersonal relationships and supports motivation in learning contexts. In this classroom, praise acted as both

⁴⁷ Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).

affective feedback and instructional scaffolding, strengthening students' willingness to participate.

Table 2. Expressive Speech Acts (Gratitude)

Time	Teacher's Utterances	Context
00.05.48/SMK/T	<i>Thank you, you may sit.</i>	The teacher expresses appreciation after students finish singing an Indonesian song.
00.47.54/SMK/S&T	<i>Thank you, Miss. (student) / You're welcome. (teacher)</i>	The teacher responds politely to a student thanking her during group work.

Although thanking appeared only twice in the dataset, it played an important interpersonal role. Expressions such as "Thank you, you may sit" and the reciprocal politeness of "You're welcome" signaled mutual respect between the teacher and students. Searle⁴⁸ conceptualizes thanking as an act that conveys appreciation rather than factual information, and the teacher's use of thanking here also reflects the caring dimension of communication emphasized by Noddings,⁴⁹ who highlights that emotional warmth and attentiveness nurture a positive classroom climate. In addition, Carless and Boud⁵⁰ argue that effective feedback is dialogic, relational, and built upon trust. In this study, thanking contributed to an atmosphere of respect, politeness, and connectedness that supported meaningful interaction and student comfort during speaking activities.

Table 3. Expressive Speech Acts (Encouragement)

Time	Teacher's Utterances	Context
00.12.48/SMK/T	<i>Do your best and be the winner. Explore yourself, show your skills.</i>	The teacher reads aloud a motivational side to energize students before the lesson begins.
00.13.23/SMK/T	<i>Are you ready to learn today?</i>	The teacher encourages students to prepare mentally.

⁴⁸ John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁴⁹ Nel Noddings, *The Ethics of Care: A Personal, Political, and Global View* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ David Carless and David Boud, "The Development of Student Feedback Literacy: Enabling Uptake of Feedback," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 8 (2018): 1315–1325, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>.

00.43.52/SMK/ T	<i>For more spirit, if I say English, answer yes, I can!</i>	The teacher uses a motivational cue to energize the class.
00.44.10/SMK/ T	<i>Repeat again, English!</i>	The teacher builds enthusiasm.
00.56.30/SMK/ T	<i>Are you ready to present your work?</i>	The teacher encourages students before presenting.

Encouragement appeared five times and served an important motivational function. These utterances aimed to energize the class, reduce anxiety, and prepare students emotionally for cognitively demanding tasks such as presentations. Nakatani⁵¹ argues that emotional support is crucial for lowering speaking anxiety and increasing willingness to communicate. Encouragement in this classroom created a positive affective climate that promoted participation, consistent with Dörnyei’s⁵² claim that motivational strategies enhance learners’ engagement and confidence in learning.

Table 4. Expressive Speech Acts (Congratulations/Acknowledgment)

Time	Teacher’s Utterances	Context
01.29.40/SMK/T	<i>Show me, is there anyone who got 100 or 80?</i>	The teacher acknowledges achievement after a quiz.
00.43.52/SMK/T	<i>How was the learning today, enjoyable or not?</i>	The teacher affirms students’ positive engagement.

Congratulatory or acknowledgment acts were used when students achieved high scores or demonstrated active engagement. Such utterances validated students’ performance and aligned with Hattie and Timperley’s⁵³ argument that positive feedback focusing on the learner increases confidence and perceived competence. In an EFL speaking classroom, where anxiety is common, these acknowledgments encouraged students to take risks and value their own progress.

⁵¹ Yasuo Nakatani, “Identifying Strategies That Facilitate EFL Learners’ Oral Communication: A Classroom Study Using Multiple Data Collection Procedures,” *The Modern Language Journal* 94, no. 1 (2010): 116–136, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00987.x>.

⁵² Zoltán Dörnyei, *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵³ John Hattie and Helen Timperley, “The Power of Feedback,” *Review of Educational Research* 77, no. 1 (2007): 81–112, <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>.

Table 5. Summary of Expressive Speech Acts

Type of Expressive Speech Act	Frequency
Praise	5
Thanking	2
Encouragement	5
Congratulation / Acknowledgment	2
Total	14

A total of fourteen expressive speech acts were identified, with praise and encouragement emerging as the dominant types. This pattern suggests that the teacher prioritized the creation of an emotionally supportive, motivating, and learner-centered classroom environment, an approach that is especially important in speaking-oriented EFL contexts. The use of expressive acts in this classroom reflects the broader theoretical perspective that language is not merely a vehicle for delivering content but also a social tool that shapes emotional experiences and interpersonal relationships.⁵⁴ Through expressive speech acts, the teacher actively constructed a classroom atmosphere that reduced anxiety, strengthened rapport, and promoted active oral participation. Overall, the findings highlight that expressive speech acts are not peripheral or decorative but serve as strategic pedagogical resources essential for facilitating engagement, confidence, and successful speaking performance.

Synthesis: Expressive Feedback and the Research Questions

Returning explicitly to the research questions guiding this study, the findings can be summarized as follows. In response to RQ1, the teacher employed four types of expressive speech acts: praise ($n = 5$), encouragement ($n = 5$), congratulation/positive acknowledgment ($n = 2$), and thanking ($n = 2$), with praise and encouragement dominating the corpus. In response to RQ2, each type performed a distinguishable pragmatic function within classroom discourse: praise provided immediate reinforcement following correct or successful performance, encouragement offered motivational priming before cognitively or affectively demanding tasks, thanking maintained interpersonal politeness and mutual respect, and congratulation/acknowledgment affirmed achievement and engagement at points of evaluation or closure. In response to RQ3, these expressive acts appear, on the basis of their form, timing, and sequential placement, to serve potential

⁵⁴ Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).

pedagogical functions consistent with reducing speaking-related anxiety, reinforcing participation, and sustaining a supportive classroom climate; because the study did not systematically analyze learner responses, these are interpreted as the likely pedagogical orientation of the acts rather than as demonstrated instructional effectiveness.

Beyond confirming that expressive acts support classroom rapport, the pattern identified here refines Speech Act Theory's account of the perlocutionary effect in instructional settings: the same illocutionary act (e.g., praising) appears oriented toward distinguishable pragmatic functions, ranging from immediate reinforcement to anxiety reduction and rapport maintenance, depending on the lesson phase in which it occurred and the expressive type it was paired with; because the corpus centers on teacher utterances rather than systematically coded student responses, these functions are interpreted from the form and sequential placement of the utterances rather than confirmed as observed perlocutionary effects on learners. This suggests that the pedagogical force of an expressive act is not fixed at the level of its illocutionary category but is co-determined by its sequential position within the lesson, extending Searle's taxonomy from a static classification of utterance types toward a dynamic, context-sensitive model of feedback function.

This dynamic view also speaks to pedagogical feedback models: whereas formative feedback is often theorized primarily as informational, correcting a gap between current and desired performance, the findings indicate that its affective component, carried through expressive speech acts, may function as a mechanism through which learners become willing and able to act on informational feedback; given this study's teacher-centered corpus, this mechanism is proposed as an interpretive hypothesis rather than a demonstrated effect confirmed through learner-outcome data. In speaking classes, where the learner must risk public error to receive corrective input, the expressive layer of feedback arguably regulates whether informational feedback is engaged with or avoided, a theoretical link that has remained implicit in prior speech-act and feedback research.

Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

This study offers an analytical contribution to pragmatic theory rather than a fully validated theoretical extension: Searle's original taxonomy classifies expressive acts by illocutionary type but does not specify how multiple expressive sub-types combine sequentially within

a bounded instructional event to perform a joint feedback function. The present analysis addresses this specific gap by showing, within one classroom corpus, that four expressive sub-types recurred at identifiable points across the lesson (opening, core activity, group work, closing) in a pattern consistent with a feedback-support function. From this pattern, the study proposes one modest, testable theoretical proposition for future research: that the pedagogical force of an expressive speech act in classroom discourse is co-determined by its sequential position within a lesson, not solely by its illocutionary category, such that the same expressive type performs different feedback work depending on where in the lesson it occurs. This proposition is offered as a hypothesis to be tested across multiple teachers, classrooms, and lessons, rather than as an established theoretical extension, since the current single-case corpus cannot by itself establish generalizable theoretical claims. For pedagogical feedback models, the findings similarly suggest, at the level of contextual application rather than confirmed causal mechanism, that affective and informational functions may be usefully theorized together rather than as separate strands of teacher talk.

Regarding transferability, the specific frequencies reported here are tied to one teacher and one vocational secondary EFL classroom and should not be read as representative proportions for other settings; what is more likely to transfer is the underlying pattern, that expressive feedback clusters around high-exposure moments such as presentations, question-answer sequences, and lesson transitions. This pattern is consistent with findings from other EFL contexts on the affective role of praise and encouragement in reducing speaking anxiety.⁵⁵ In practical terms, the findings imply that teacher professional development for pragmatic competence should move beyond encouraging feedback in general toward training teachers to vary expressive type and timing deliberately, for example, pairing effort-oriented praise with encouragement before high-stakes speaking tasks such as presentations, consistent with evidence that the framing of praise, rather than its frequency alone, shapes learners' willingness to communicate. Teacher education programs and in-service workshops could incorporate explicit modules on the pragmatics of feedback, using authentic classroom transcripts such as the one analyzed in this

⁵⁵ Ismail Khoudri, "Teachers' Strategies to Alleviate Speaking Anxiety and Foster Willingness to Communicate among EFL High School Students," *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research* 11, no. 2 (2024): 236–249.

study to help teachers recognize and diversify their own repertoire of expressive feedback strategies.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the data were drawn from a single classroom session led by one teacher, which constrains the range of expressive strategies observed and limits generalizability to other teachers, grade levels, and lesson types; a teacher known for an expressive communication style may not represent EFL teachers more broadly. Second, as a qualitative descriptive study, the analysis prioritizes interpretive depth over statistical generalization, and the frequency counts reported here describe this particular corpus rather than population-level tendencies. Third, although triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and second-rater coding with an audit trail were used to strengthen credibility, coding expressive speech acts inherently involves interpretive judgment, and some borderline utterances could plausibly be classified under more than one category. Finally, the study did not capture learners' own perceptions of the teacher's expressive feedback, so claims about its effect on confidence and anxiety are inferred from classroom discourse patterns and existing literature rather than from direct learner reports. Future research combining classroom discourse analysis with learner interviews or surveys across multiple teachers and sessions would help verify and extend the patterns identified here.

Taken together, these limitations place the article's claims at three levels of certainty. Observed: the form of the fourteen expressive utterances and their classroom context, resting directly on the transcript, is the most secure finding. Interpreted: the likely pragmatic orientation of each type (e.g., reducing anxiety, reinforcing participation), grounded in Searle's taxonomy and context, is plausible but not verified against learner responses. Unproven: any statement about the actual effect of expressive feedback on anxiety, motivation, or speaking achievement remains a hypothesis consistent with prior literature, not a demonstrated outcome. Claims in Results and Discussion and in Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications above are worded, and are further qualified here, to reflect this distinction between what was observed, interpreted, and left unproven.

Conclusion

This study examined how expressive speech acts function as pedagogical feedback in one EFL vocational speaking classroom. Analysis of a single 90-minute lesson identified fourteen expressive utterances across four types, praise (5), encouragement (5), congratulation/positive acknowledgment (2), and thanking (2), distributed across the opening, core activity, group work, and closing phases of the lesson. Praise and encouragement dominated the corpus and, on the basis of their form and sequential placement, appear oriented toward immediate reinforcement and anxiety reduction, respectively, while thanking and acknowledgment appear oriented toward maintaining interpersonal respect and affirming progress; because learner responses were not systematically analyzed, these are interpretive readings rather than confirmed effects.

Analytically, the study contributes a sequential, discourse-based account of how these four expressive types combine across lesson phases to perform an integrated affective-instructional feedback role, extending prior typological descriptions of expressive acts in EFL classrooms toward a function-oriented, context-sensitive reading, and it offers one modest, testable proposition that the pedagogical force of an expressive act depends on its sequential position rather than solely its illocutionary category, for future research to examine. This contribution is bounded by the study's single-teacher, single-session, single-classroom scope and by the absence of learner-response data, both of which limit generalizability and restrict claims about actual pedagogical effectiveness; consequently, the findings are best read as an empirically grounded, context-specific account rather than as evidence of generalizable instructional impact. Future research extending the corpus to multiple teachers, classrooms, and lessons, and pairing classroom discourse analysis with learner interviews, surveys, or uptake data, is needed to verify whether the patterns identified here, and the sequential-position proposition advanced above, hold across broader EFL speaking contexts.

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