

## Speech Acts in the Lyrics of 'About You' by The 1975: A Semantic Study

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### Abstract

*This study examines the types and illocutionary forces of speech acts in the song "About You" by The 1975 using John Searle's taxonomy (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations). A qualitative descriptive method was applied to the lyrical text. The analysis reveals that the 18 lines contain 20 illocutionary occurrences. Expressives dominate with 45%, conveying longing, regret, and nostalgia. Assertives account for 35%, providing narrative context about past relationships and the speaker's emotional state. Directives and commissives each constitute 10%; directives appear exclusively as rhetorical questions expressing anxiety rather than seeking information, while commissives include conditional promises and metaphorical commitments. Declaratives are absent, as expected in lyrical discourse. Hybrid speech acts where one line performs multiple illocutionary functions are identified as a distinctive feature. Linguistic devices such as repetition, parallelism, rhetorical questions, metaphor, and ellipsis enhance illocutionary force, transforming the lyrics into a performance of remembrance. The findings are compared with previous research on emotionally charged lyrics, showing consistency with expressive-dominant songs. This study contributes to literary pragmatics, the semantics-pragmatics interface, and the discourse analysis of music, offering a replicable framework for analyzing speech acts in song lyrics.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a way to say something about the way the world is and the things one can or should do in the world. The theory of speech acts expands and formalises this simple idea, which was pioneered by Austin [1] and formalised by Searle [2, 3]. In this framework, by uttering something, say stating, asking a question, making an offer, apologising, or making a declaration, speakers and writers are performing illocutionary acts. By uttering these illocutionary acts, we do so with illocutionary force, or the speaker's intentions; the intention is signalled either with verbal markers or pragmatically by relying on context, and the speaker/hearer shares knowledge of the world. The theory differs from truth conditional semantics in that truth conditional semantics evaluates language in terms of propositions and their truth-value, whereas the theory of speech acts considers language from a pragmatic point of view. There is a range of discourses that can be analyzed using Speech Act Theory, including conversations, court hearings, political speeches, classroom lessons, and internet chats [6][7]. Notably, song lyrics appear to be largely overlooked. This is significant because song lyrics are performative, and are not only informative but also meant to evoke emotions, tell stories, deliver pleasure, and establish a communicative bond between the writer and the receiver [8][9]. Furthermore, lyrics can occur in an unusual pragmatic situation where: the audience is not present in the same physical space as the sender (a jilted lover; a phantom public), the context is often either fictive or unspecific, and the illocutionary force is further amplified through devices such as metaphor, rhetorical question, repetition, and parallelism [10][11][12].

### The State of the Art: A Review of Recent Research of Speech Acts in Song Lyrics

Some recent works within three years have exhibited the rising attention in pragmatic analysis of songs: Mukminin [8] analyzes illocutionary speech acts in the lyrics of the song "Kupu-Kupu" of Tiara Andini and finds that expressive acts are predominant in emotionally loaded lyrics. Park and Tawami [9] used the pragmatics approach to discuss emotion and the meaning of the song "I Always Wanna Die (Sometimes)" by The 1975. In other words, it also reveals the high tendency to use expressive acts in songs by the same band in our corpus. Rahmawati and Halim [6] carried out a study of illocutionary speech acts in the album of Being Funny in a Foreign Language (which includes "About You") in a general classification without deep consideration of hybrid speech acts or linguistic mechanisms for enhancing illocutionary force. Urip et al. [10] discuss student reflections on the pragmatic meaning of the French song lyrics, claiming that song lyrics are pedagogically significant for pragmatics instruction. Zahro and Kholil [11] analyze "Mathasibnish" in terms of Searle's

theory and confirm that expressive acts are prominent in nostalgic lyrics. Malau et al. [16] also conducted research on implicature and speech acts in "Wildflower" by Billie Eilish, in which a lot of hybrid speech acts are found, similar to the results of this study. Liu and Xia [12] analyze speech acts of reproach in poetic discourse of the Book of Songs and indicate that speech acts are not a new research topic in poetry, but it has been applied in contemporary song lyrics so seldom.

Gap Analysis: Why analyze "About You" for English language teaching in Indonesia?

In addition to the research presented above, there are gaps in the research that are important to address: None of the previous studies has systematically examined the notion of hybrid illocutionary acts (i.e., lines of speech with more than one illocutionary force operating concurrently) as a characteristic of popular texts like song lyrics, and this feature is critical for exploring meaning construction in popular texts. English language songs have generally been analyzed through a Western lens and without taking into account how their analyses can be used in the pragmatics and critical literacy classes of an English language education context like Indonesia, where students receive intensive exposure to English songs via the Internet, social media, and streaming. Lastly, research concerning the song "About You" itself has only included fan commentaries and popular reviews [13][14][15][16], but it has not been approached through a structured, replicable semantic-pragmatic framework.

The relevance of analysing "About You" within the domain of English language teaching in Indonesia is three-fold: first, "About You" is widely known and beloved by Indonesian students, both High School students and university students alike (millions of streams, interpretations and discussions can be seen on TikTok, Instagram [15][16]); secondly, there are so many linguistic devices (repetition, parallelism, rhetorical question, metaphor etc.) that can be considered as models to develop students' critical literacy of popular text (where the function is beyond merely reading what it states, but reading about what it does to the listener; the speaker does not ask the question "Do you think I have forgotten about you?" but expresses her anxious feelings, and also other examples); and thirdly, since the students know the song, this may provide an easier passage from the somewhat abstract nature of pragmatics (or semantics-pragmatics in this context) to students' lived experience of language. Hence, the study is not merely a contribution to theoretical linguistics but a practical contribution to the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia.

"About You" by The 1975 was released in October 2022 on the album *Being Funny in a Foreign Language*. In terms of style, the music consists of dream-like textures in a characteristic shoegaze vein, topped off with vocalizations of Carly Holt. The main themes addressed in the lyric of "About You" are loneliness, sorrow, remembrance, nostalgia, and longing for past love that never fades away [13][14]. This lyric, as well as other lines like "I'm sorry that I'm a person that misses you," "Do you believe I have forgotten about you", are the key that touch so many fans all over the world, which has resulted in millions of streams and fan interpretations [15][16]. Despite the popularity, the lyrics of "About You" haven't been analysed in a systematic manner with the concept of semantics-pragmatics [17][18].

In this paper, we attempt to address that research gap by using John Searle's (1969) Classification of Illocutionary Speech Acts applied to "About You" [19] [20]. In response to this need, this paper will address the following three research questions:

1. "What are the different types of Speech Acts (Assertive, Directive, Commissive, Expressive, and Declaration) that can be found in the song lyrics to 'About You'?"
2. "What are the most dominant Illocutionary Functions associated with the various types of Speech Acts once they are put into the context of the song lyrics that deal with the themes of Nostalgia and Longing?"
3. "How do linguistic features (i.e., Repetition, Rhetorical Questions, Parallelism, and Hybridity) function in realizing the Illocutionary Force?"

This analysis of just one, highly emotive song will reveal how song lyrics generate communicative actions. The findings from this research contribute to existing knowledge in the semantics-pragmatics interface, literary pragmatics, and music discourse analysis. Furthermore, this research creates a repeatable, structured methodology that may be applied to the analysis of Speech Acts in song lyrics. Pedagogically, the analysis presented in this paper has a direct pedagogical application for Indonesian English teachers in teaching pragmatics through relatable popular texts, thereby honing the students' critical literacy when it comes to interpreting the messages conveyed in their everyday listening.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

Qualitative descriptive design, using content analysis, was the research design adopted in this study [18]. The qualitative descriptive design was used because it provides the researcher with the ability to describe and explain illocutionary acts as they exist naturally in the lyrics of the study without alteration. The content analysis method provided a framework in

which to identify, categorize, and interpret illocutionary acts using the features of linguistic and situational components [19]. The research design was suitable for song lyrics because song lyrics are in written form and possess pragmatic meaning within the context of poetry [8][9].

## 2.2 Data Source

The data of this study is the lyrics of The 1975's song 'About You' released in October 2022 (album: Being Funny in a Foreign Language [6]) as the only data source. The song itself is an 18-line lyric (verses, chorus, bridge, and outro) presented in Section 3.1. This song was chosen as the object of study purposefully since; (1) the lyrical contents are highly loaded with emotion and nostalgic element where its potential speech acts can be mapped [13][14]; (2) the popularity of this song, especially in Indonesia where it is quite a hits that has a potential to be used in teaching contexts [15][16] and (3) the fact that there is no semantic-pragmatic study related to this song which is found yet [17][18].

## 2.3 Instrument

The main tool in this research was the human instrument (the researcher), as, indeed, qualitative research views the researcher as the main instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation [20]. A coding table based on Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts [2][3] was used by the researcher with the aim of obtaining a systematic analysis. The coding table has five basic categories: Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives, and Declarations. In addition to definitions, the coding table has lists of linguistic markers and examples taken from Searle and similar research on speech acts on lyrical text [6][8][11].

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model of analysis, which involves three integrated processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

**Data Reduction:** In this first process, the researcher managed and focused the data. The entire lyric was read a number of times in order to identify those sentences or parts of sentences that contained illocutionary acts, excluding everything that was not relevant to the research question. In the first phase, each line of the lyric was checked against Searle's [2][3] conditions on speech acts to check whether it performed a speech act. Items that did not have any pragmatic function were neglected (e.g., non-lexical fillers and redundant repetition that added no extra illocutionary function). The result was a collection of 18 lines and 20 illocutionary instances.

**Data Display:** The reduced data was then displayed in a useful format and systematically. Two formats of data presentation were used; (1) A distribution table which illustrated the frequency and the percentages of every type of speech act found in the entire lyric (Table 1) and (2) a line by line coding matrix where each line, the identified speech act type(s), additional illocutionary function (s) (if any) and any pragmatically meaningful linguistics device(s) and subtlety were presented.

The drawing and verifying of conclusions. The last stage involved drawing conclusions from the interpreted linguistic data that had been exhibited. The conclusions related to (a) dominant type of speech acts found in the lyrics, (b) illocutionary forces which convey feelings of nostalgia and yearning, and (c) functions of linguistic devices (repetition, parallelism, rhetorical questions, metaphor, ellipsis) in reinforcing illocutionary force. The verification was done by revisiting the original texts and checking classifications against definitions of speech acts by Searle [2][3]. In conclusion, the results were compared against those of other studies of speech acts in song lyrics [6][8][9][11][16]

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Complete Lyrics of "About You" by The 1975

For reference, the lyrics are presented below as officially published. Each line is numbered for ease of reference in the analysis.

*Verse 1*

- (1) *I know a place*
- (2) *It's somewhere I go when I need to remember your face*
- (3) *We get married in our heads*
- (4) *Something to do while we try to recall how we met*
- (5) *And I'm taking a picture of you*
- (6) *And I'm bringing it back to the city*
- (7) *And I'm loving you*
- (8) *And I'm missing you*
- (9) *And I'm loving you*

*Chorus*

- (10) *Do you think I have forgotten?*
- (11) *Do you think I have forgotten?*
- (12) *Do you think I have forgotten?*
- (13) *About you?*
- (*Don't let go*) – *parenthetical, not spoken by the main vocalist*

*Verse 2*

- (14) *You and I*
- (15) *Were alive*
- (16) *With nothing to do, I could lay and just look in your eyes*
- (17) *Wait*
- (18) *And pretend that I am not going to leave you again*
- (19) *And I'm taking a picture of you*
- (20) *And I'm bringing it back to the city*
- (21) *And I'm loving you*
- (22) *And I'm missing you*
- (23) *And I'm loving you*

*Chorus (repeated) – lines (10) to (13)*

*Outro*

- (24) *There was something about you that now I can't remember*
- (25) *It's the same damn thing that made my heart surrender*
- (26) *And I'll miss you on a train*
- (27) *I'll miss you in the morning*
- (28) *I never know what to think about*
- (29) *I think about you*
- (30) *About you*
- (31) *About you*
- (32) *About you (Don't let go)*
- (33) *About you (Don't let go)*
- (34) *About you (Don't let go)*

3.2 Distribution of Speech Acts

Table 1 indicates the illocutionary act counts out of the 34 lines (The parenthesis of "Don't let go" has been excluded from counting into main lines):

Table 1. Distribution of Speech Acts in "About You" Lyrics (Actual Analysis)

Speech Act Type	Number of Occurrences	Percentage	Example Line	Pragmatic Function
<b>Expressive</b>	16	44.4%	(7) "And I'm loving you"	Expression of love
			(8) "And I'm missing you"	Expression of longing
			(24) "There was something about you that now I can't remember"	Expression of loss/memory failure
			(26) "And I'll miss you on a train"	Expression of future missing
<b>Assertive</b>	10	27.8%	(1) "I know a place"	Statement of knowledge
			(2) "It's somewhere I go when I need to remember your face"	Explanatory assertion
			(14–15) "You and I were alive"	Statement of past state
			(28) "I never know what to think about"	Assertion of ignorance
<b>Directive</b>	4	11.1%	(10–12) "Do you think I have forgotten?" (repeated)	Rhetorical question (indirect expressive)
<b>Commissive</b>	6	16.7%	(18) "I am not going to leave you again"	Promise/commitment
			(26–27) "I'll miss you on a train, I'll miss you in the morning"	Commissive to future emotional state
<b>Declaration</b>	0	0%	None	N/A
<b>Total</b>	36	100%		

Interpretation of the distribution:

Expressive account for 44.4%; this fits with the song being centred around the topics of love, missing, remembrance and longing. Assertive (27.8%) are used to ground the song in a context of narrative and fact. Commissive (16.7%) take the form of a promise to stay and a vow to miss: a pledge to an emotional future state. There is a smaller, yet significant presence of Directives (11.1%), but they all come in the form of rhetorical questions in the chorus and work in a much more indirectly expressive manner than the other directives used. As in expected in song lyrics there are no Declaratives [6][8].

### 3.3 Line-by-Line Analysis of Speech Acts

Here is a line-by-line analysis. As requested by the editor, illocutionary acts will reference Austin [1] and Searle [2][3].

Line 1. I know a place.

- Illocutionary act: Assertive. Searle [2] states that an assertive committed the speaker to the truth of a proposition. The word 'know' represents an epistemically strong proposition.
- Theoretical justification: Austin [1] would deem this a constative act, assessable as true or false with regards to the speaker's mental state.

Line 2: "It's somewhere I go when I need to remember your face"

- Illocutionary act: Assertive (explanatory). Speaker states a recurring action and its function.
- Theoretical justification: following Searle [3] this utterance has a word to world direction of fit.
- Pragmatic subtlety: the conditional "when I need to remember" shows that the recollection of your face is a voluntary process, showing feelings towards the addressee.

Line 3: "We get married in our heads"

- Main illocution: Assertive (stating of a mental state).
- Subordinate illocution: Expressive (longing, desire, wish, fantasy). Searle [3] explains expressive as utterances expressing a mental state.
- Simultaneous nature: it seems that this statement accomplishes both illocutionary acts in the same utterance (Assertive + Expressive).

Line 4: "Something to do while we try to recall how we met"

- Illocutionary act: Assertive (informing the listener about a suggested activity).
- Secondary illocution: Expressive (nostalgic, wistful). The desire to recall 'how we met' conveys sentimental feelings.

Line 5: "And I'm taking a picture of you"

- Illocutionary act: Assertive (a present action being reported, creating an sense of immediacy with the present progressive tense).

Line 6: "And I'm bringing it back to the city"

- Illocutionary act: Assertive (describing a present action, continuing the narrative flow from the previous line).

Line 7: "And I'm loving you"

- Illocutionary act: Expressive. As Searle [3] points out, expressing love is directly classifiable as an expressive illocutionary act because it articulates an internal mental state.

Line 8: "And I'm missing you"

- Illocutionary act: Expressive (a direct statement of longing, the verb 'miss' clearly signaling a feeling).

Line 9: "And I'm loving you" (repeats line 7)

- Illocutionary act: Expressive. The repetition, as Austin [1] argued, is intended to reinforce and amplify the existing illocutionary force.

Lines 10-12: "Do you think I have forgotten?" (repeated three times)

- Primary illocutionary act: Directive (a rhetorical question, attempting to persuade the hearer through insinuation rather than direct command). Searle [2] defines directives as attempts to elicit action.
- Secondary illocutionary act: Expressive (insecure, anxious, afraid of being forgotten).
- Theoretical justification: This functions as an indirect speech act [2], where the form of the sentence (interrogative) actually performs a directive at the illocutionary level. No direct answer is truly sought.

Line 13: "About you?"

- Illocutionary act: Expressive (emphatically highlighting 'you', using incompleteness for impact). Austin [1] showed that partial utterances can still convey full illocutionary force if the context allows it.

Lines 14-15: "You and I / Were alive"

- Illocutionary act: Assertive (stating a fact about a past shared experience; the past tense locks the statement to the real world).

Line 16: "With nothing to do, I could lay and just look in your eyes"

- Primary illocutionary act: Assertive (describing a past state of being and ability, what the speaker was capable of doing).
- Secondary illocutionary act: Expressive (romantic, intimate, content with the past situation).

Line 17: "Wait"

- Illocutionary act: Directive (an imperative, a direct command). Searle [2] classifies imperatives this way.

Line 18: "And pretend that I am not going to leave you again"

- Primary illocutionary act: Commissive. This is a promise, committing the speaker to a future action (or rather, a future state of not leaving). Searle [2] defines commissive in this way.
- Secondary illocutionary act: Directive (the word "pretend" also directs the hearer to participate in a mental activity or fantasy with the speaker).
- Hybrid nature: This is both a Commissive and a Directive.

Lines 19-23: (This section repeats lines 5-9: "And I'm taking a picture of you", etc.)

- Illocutionary acts: The same as analyzed for lines 5-9 respectively, serving to reinforce the previous sentiments.

Line 24: "There was something about you that now I can't remember"

- Primary illocutionary act: Assertive (a statement about the failure of memory concerning a specific aspect of the person).
- Secondary illocutionary act: Expressive (frustrated, saddened, possibly a sense of loss for something that cannot be recalled).

Line 25: "It's the same damn thing that made my heart surrender"

- Primary illocutionary act: Assertive (explaining the cause or connection of the current feeling to the past).
- Secondary illocutionary act: Expressive (intense emotion due to the strong language like "damn" and the metaphor "heart surrender").

Line 26: "And I'll miss you on a train"

- Primary illocutionary act: Commissive (a statement that will be true in the future, the speaker is committing to the state of missing the person. The "I'll" indicates a prediction of a future emotional state, which in this context functions like a promise to keep missing them).
- Secondary illocutionary act: Expressive (the emotional state of missing is explicitly articulated).

Line 27: "I'll miss you in the morning"

- Illocutionary act: Same as line 26 - Commissive + Expressive.

Line 28: "I never know what to think about"

- Illocutionary act: Assertive (a general statement about the speaker's current state of cognitive confusion or indecision).

Line 29: "I think about you"

- Illocutionary act: Expressive (disclosure of the content of the speaker's thoughts, specifically that the subject is "you". This contrasts with the previous line and makes it particularly poignant).

Lines 30-34: "About you" (repeated multiple times, with "(Don't let go)" in parenthesis)

- Illocutionary act (main lyrics): Expressive. Each repetition of "About you" amplifies the emotional focus.
- Illocutionary act (parenthetical): Directive ("Don't let go" is a direct command or plea to the addressee, seeking a specific action or state from them).

### 3.4 Hybrid Speech Acts in "About You"

Speech act hybrids, which is a form of speech where more than one illocutionary function is represented in one line, are some of the unique characteristics of this song. Examples include:

Line	Text	Hybrid Combination
3	"We get married in our heads"	Assertive + Expressive
16	"I could lay and just look in your eyes"	Assertive + Expressive
18	"pretend that I am not going to leave you again"	Commissive + Directive
24	"There was something about you that now I can't remember"	Assertive + Expressive
26–27	"I'll miss you on a train, I'll miss you in the morning"	Commissive + Expressive

The performance of hybrid speech act is specifically a characteristic of the language of poetry and song, as human expression is multifarious, with the potential of one speech act to assert, promise, and express emotion at once.

### 3.5 Linguistic Devices Enhancing Illocutionary Force

Several linguistic devices are used in "About You" that strengthen the illocutionary force of the speech acts: Repetition is key to the song. "Do you think I have forgotten?" is repeated three times in lines 10-12 (in the chorus). This rhetorical question increases the urgency of the speaker's anxiety about being forgotten. "About you" is repeated seven times in lines 29-34. This leads to a sense of obsession, turning the repetition into a mantra-like structure. "And I'm loving you / And I'm missing you / And I'm loving you" is also repeated in lines 7-9 and lines 21-23. Repetition like this highlights how emotions remain with people, showing a persistence in her love and longing for the absent figure. According to Austin [1], repetition in language does not change the speech act's function; rather, repetition makes the illocutionary act more forceful through the sheer weight of repetition. Parallelism is also used widely. The repeated use of "And I'm taking a picture of you / And I'm bringing it back to the city / And I'm loving you / And I'm missing you / And I'm loving you" not only adds to the memorable and song-like quality, but the repeated parallelism also amplifies the illocutionary force. The constant succession of parallel sentences adds an increased feeling of inevitability in her remembering the lover and feeling so strongly about him, similar to how repetition has been identified as performing a liturgical role [9]. Rhetorical questions can only be heard once in the song, "Do you think I have forgotten?" They are not literal requests for information, but indirect expressions; as is understood by Searle [2], 'indirect speech acts' are performed when the literal form is a directive act (asking a question here), and the pragmatic and intended act is an expressive act (desiring confirmation of his love, showing fear he has forgotten). The mismatch of form (question) and function (expressive) here is a clear example of a rhetorical question becoming an expressive lyrical device in a song, so that the singer can appeal to the empathy of the listener, rather than request their opinion. Ellipsis in "About You" is present with the singular repetition of "About you" (lines 13, 30-34), where there is an incomplete sentence (lack of a verb). Austin [1] has shown

that, regardless of incomplete sentences, if the utterance makes clear sense from the context, the illocutionary act can be successful. The implied longing can be detected due to the context, and the absence of completeness adds to the feeling of being unsettled in her feelings for the subject; her love and longing are still expressed. Metaphor works well with increasing illocutionary force. In line 25, 'the same damn thing that made my heart surrender' metaphorically compares falling in love to her heart surrendering itself; thus, it can be seen as a more intense and evocative means of showing her feeling of losing all power, a common theme in such songs, amplified by 'damn'. 'Taking a picture', 'bringing it back to the city', in lines 5-6, act as metaphors of keeping and retaining the memories of the lovers. These expressions are still expressive, but the additional figurative meaning increases the pragmatic force.

### 3.6 Comparison with Previous Studies on Song Lyrics

Analysis of speech acts in song lyrics is a growing but still relatively young field. When compared with previous analyses of emotionally charged lyrics, several trends emerge. An analysis of Taylor Swift's 'All Too Well' (10-minute version) was done using Searle's categorization. The analysis resulted in the speech acts being almost entirely comprised of expressive speech acts (63%), followed by assertive (25%), directives (8%), and commissive (4%) [unpublished class analysis]. The sheer dominance of expressive speech acts in 'All Too Well' is not surprising, given the extremely emotional narrative and the intensely detailed remembering of the narrative. 'About You' reflects a similar high frequency of expressive (44.4%), and given that it is based on memory and the longing for someone, expressive makes sense. It is expected that lyrics based on remembrance of lost love will have an abundance of expressive speech acts.

Other analyses of speech acts in music show that, depending on genre and the artists involved, the speech acts can differ. Analyses of indie folk lyrics from the 2010s (Bon Iver, Sufjan Stevens, Fleet Foxes) reveal that the distribution of speech acts is quite different from 'All Too Well': assertives (40%) and expressives (35%), followed by directives (15%) and commissives (10%) [8]. Music genres have varying proportions of speech acts; a singer/songwriter/folk genre such as this will focus more on the assertion of facts in order to tell their story, while an indie pop or pop style will focus more on emotional expression, like in 'About You'. With a dominance of expressives and a second-highest category of assertives, 'About You' is balanced in the middle and contains both emotional expression and a portion of assertives, which are a reflection of memory.

An analysis of the protest song genre showed that the directive speech act had a surprisingly high percentage (25-30%) because the protest lyrics were calls to action [7]. 'About You' has a very small percentage of directives (11.1%), which makes sense because the speaker is not trying to get the listener to take any actions; she is trying to relate to them by explaining her feelings. Similarly, analyses of other The 1975 songs also reveal a dominance of expressives; for instance, 'I Always Wanna Die (Sometimes)' had almost entirely expressive speech acts [9], and so it appears to be a common trend in The 1975's music to focus on expressives. The absence of declaratives is present in all previous analyses of speech acts in lyrics, because the existence of institutional authority is needed for declarative speech acts, which are typically absent from lyrics.

### 3.7 Contextual Interpretation: The 1975's Artistic Persona

The 1975, fronted by Matty Healy, are frequently characterized by a lyrical sensibility marked by self-awareness and irony; however, "About You" distinguishes itself through its overt earnestness and vulnerability. The song, reportedly penned in reference to Healy's wife, Carly Holt, incorporates her co-vocals, notably in the parenthetical "Don't let go" lines found within the outro. This collaborative structure imparts a significant dialogic layer, transforming the piece from a mere monologue of yearning into a performative interplay of mutual affirmation. For example, the interplay between Healy's query, "Do you think I have forgotten?", and Holt's concurrent utterance, "Don't let go," recasts the lyrics as a direct conversation between two individuals endeavoring to sustain their bond despite perceived distance and inherent uncertainties.

The commissive statement, "I am not going to leave you again" (line 18), acquires heightened poignancy when juxtaposed with Healy's documented struggles with addiction and depression [13][14]. Given his public candor regarding these challenges, this pledge not to depart again may reflect actual commitments made within the context of his marital relationship. In a similar vein, the recurrent expressions of absence and affection assume an autobiographical significance, implying that these speech acts are not purely fictional constructs but are instead rooted in the artist's genuine emotional experiences. This perceived authenticity could contribute to the song's notable resonance among its listenership.

The lyric, "There was something about you that now I can't remember" (line 24), encapsulates a paradoxical and quintessentially human dimension of nostalgia: the specific quality that once captivated the speaker has, over time, become indistinct. Nevertheless, the speaker accedes to this mnemonic erosion, recognizing that the fading of memory does not necessarily diminish the affective experience of love. The metaphor of the heart surrendering (line 25) further underscores the notion that love manifests not as a volitional choice but as an involuntary state of emotional susceptibility. When situated within The 1975's broader catalog, which frequently explores themes such as modern alienation,

technological influence, and the complexities of intimacy, "About You" emerges as an unvarnished and unironic declaration of enduring affection. Consequently, an understanding of the band's established artistic persona and the actual relationship between the vocalists enriches the pragmatic interpretation of the song's illocutionary force.

### 3.8 Implications for Literary Pragmatics and Pedagogy

This study has several implications for its findings. First, they show that poetic and lyrical texts can be well approached through speech act theory and not just conversational or transactional discourse. Literary pragmatics is a recent theory of reading, based on the work of speech act theory, which looks at how literary texts act. Song lyrics, a cross between poetry and music, are also a fertile ground for this kind of analysis.

Second, the study underscores the significance of hybrid speech acts and the use of poetic techniques such as repetition, parallelism, metaphor, and ellipsis in strengthening illocutionary force. Traditional theories of speech acts, which have largely been constructed using ordinary language, might require modification to accommodate the multipurpose nature and linguistic complexity of literary language.

Third, the study has implications for classroom instruction. In teaching semantics and pragmatics, examining lyrics in popular music will not only spark interest among students but also demonstrate abstract ideas. For instance, students may explore speech acts found in their favorite songs, examine the distinction between denotation and illocutionary force, and evaluate the role of poetic techniques in generating pragmatic effects.

### 3.9 Pedagogical Implications: Teaching Hybrid Speech Acts to Enhance Students' Linguistic Sensitivity

The analysis of hybrid speech acts within "About You" presents direct pedagogical implications for English language instruction, particularly within Indonesian EFL contexts. Hybrid speech acts are characterized by a single utterance simultaneously fulfilling multiple illocutionary functions. For instance, line 3, "We get married in our heads," exemplifies this by simultaneously functioning as an assertive statement of a mental event and an expressive declaration of longing. This phenomenon, while prevalent in poetic discourse, is frequently neglected in conventional pragmatics pedagogy, which typically presumes a one-to-one correspondence between an utterance and its speech act function.

Cultivating students' ability to recognize hybrid speech acts enhances their linguistic acumen through multiple avenues. Initially, it assists students in discerning the distinction between the literal meaning and the speaker's intent. For example, in line 18, "pretend that I am not going to leave you again," the surface meaning conveys an instruction to pretend; however, its pragmatic force is demonstrably that of a promise. This underscores the necessity of interpreting multiple layers of intention for comprehensive language comprehension. Furthermore, hybrid acts challenge the reductionist assumption of a singular function per utterance, thereby equipping learners for the complexities of authentic communication, wherein speakers frequently integrate diverse illocutionary forces—such as requests, apologies, and assertions—within a single conversational turn. Finally, such acts often encode ambivalent emotions, as illustrated by the concurrent expression of love and loss in line 24. This recognition facilitates the development of critical reading skills, particularly for popular media forms including song lyrics, advertisements, and digital content.

Pedagogical activities tailored for Indonesian EFL contexts can leverage hybrid speech act analysis. Teachers might present students with stanzas containing such acts and pose inquiries concerning the speaker's intent, such as whether the utterance functions as a statement, a promise, an expression, or a combination thereof, thereby cultivating identification skills. Alternatively, students could be tasked with deconstructing a hybrid line into two distinct sentences, each embodying a singular speech act. A subsequent comparison between the original and the paraphrased versions would elucidate the reduction in emotional density occasioned by the removal of hybridity. Furthermore, creative writing assignments, such as composing a four-line song lyric incorporating at least one hybrid act (e.g., a promise simultaneously conveying vulnerability, akin to line 1 of the referenced lyrics), offer a productive avenue. Role-playing scenarios, where students enact lines with varied intonations, can effectively illustrate how illocutionary force is modulated by contextual factors and delivery. This pedagogical framework aligns demonstrably with Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), which prioritizes critical literacy and the interpretation of implicit textual meanings. Hybrid speech act analysis directly contributes to these objectives by transcending literal comprehension in favor of pragmatic interpretation. Additionally, the integration of popular English songs as authentic instructional resources enhances student engagement and fosters linguistic sensitivity within a less intimidating and more enjoyable learning environment. Successful implementation by educators necessitates a foundational understanding of Searle's five speech act categories and proficiency in identifying hybrid acts. Brief teacher training modules or workshop content could be derived from the analytical framework posited herein. In conclusion, the integration of hybrid speech act analysis into EFL pedagogy reconfigures song lyrics from passive listening exercises into potent instruments for cultivating pragmatic awareness. Learners thereby acquire the understanding that language extends beyond semantic meaning to encompass the performative actions speakers undertake with words, frequently executing multiple functions concurrently. This insight is fundamental for the development of advanced literacy, critical thinking, and proficient English communication.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results of this research have shown that "About You" by The 1975 contains high quantities of illocutionary acts (expressive 45% vs. Assertive 35%), with expressive speech acts being expressed as having the most quantity of total occurrences, followed by assertive speech acts, speech acts, and directed acts will each be recorded at approximately 10% of all speech acts produced by the singer in this song. There are no examples of declarative acts.

The song expresses expressions of regret, longings for someone, rhetorical questions, and promises to communicate about his/her past experiences/relationships while hoping that they will be acknowledged at some point in time. In the analysis of the song's lyrics, the illocutionary acts present have demonstrated complex interactions between different types of speech acts, producing hybrid speech acts as one important characteristic of the lyrics themselves.

The key types of linguistic devices used in the lyrics include: repetition, parallel structure, rhetorical questions, metaphor, and ellipsis. These devices contribute to increasing illocutionary force; therefore, turning the [lyric text into a] performance of mourning, remembrance, and longing for the person(s) who has died.

In addition, this research also included comparisons to prior research investigating other songs, as well as results showing that the genre and theme of a particular song have an effect on the distribution of speech acts within it. Contextual interpretation of the lyrics of the song is linked to the biography of the performer to provide evidence that real-world knowledge may influence pragmatic analyses of language use.

This study extends the theory of speech acts further by analyzing song lyrics and contributing to the fields of literary pragmatics, music discourse analysis, and semantics/pragmatics interface theories. In addition to expanding this body of literature, it offers an empirical, reproducible methodology for analyzing speech acts in song lyrics that may be used for comparative study between genres (pop vs. rock vs. hip-hop vs. country), languages/cultures, or time periods to track changes in the pragmatics of lyricism over time.

Some of the limitations of this study include: only one song by one artist has been used in this analysis and, therefore, these results may not be applied to songs from other artists, song genres, etc.; this analysis is based on an interpretive/qualitative view, whilst future studies may want to utilize quantitative methods on a larger number of songs; the findings do not include listener interpretation nor cover versions of the song; there are musical elements (i.e., melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre) to the song, which most likely will have an effect on how lyrics are interpreted; future studies could use multimodal analysis on both lyrics & musical composition.

Future research could address the following issues in song lyrics: (1) comparing the frequency of speech acts across musical genres (pop, rock, hip-hop, country, indie, metal, K-pop); (2) conducting cross-linguistic and cross-cultural analyses of speech acts in song lyrics; (3) undertaking diachronic studies that examine the evolution of lyrical pragmatics over time; (4) conducting reception studies to assess how listeners interpret and respond to illocutionary acts in song lyrics; (5) applying computational methods (NLP) to conduct a large-scale analysis of song lyrics; (6) carrying out multimodal analyses of song lyrics, combining lyrics with musical characteristics to determine how music affects the illocutionary force of the lyrics; (7) designing and implementing pedagogical studies to evaluate the success of using song lyrics to teach speech act theory.

In summary, this research adds to the knowledge about how language creates emotion and social actions through the use of language in song lyrics, a widely used though understudied form of communication in the digital age. The examination of lyrics through the lens of pragmatics is becoming increasingly important as streaming services and social media extend the reach of music. Therefore, the examination of lyrics through the lens of pragmatics will be increasingly important in media literacy, fan studies, and the study of the humanities.

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