

Expressive Speech Acts in Cross-Cultural Communication: A Pragmatic Analysis of Lost in Translation Film

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 2 June 2025

Revised: 28 October 2025

Accepted: 31 October 2025

Keywords

Expressive speech acts

Intercultural communication

Collectivism

Individualism

Lost in Translation

ABSTRACT

This research investigates expressive speech acts in intercultural communication as depicted in the film *Lost in Translation*. Focusing on complimenting, critiquing, appreciating, apologizing, and expressing confusion, the study draws on Searle's theory of expressive speech acts, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions – particularly individualism and collectivism. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the researcher analyses interactions between American and Japanese characters, exploring how emotions and social intentions between American and Japanese characters, exploring how emotions and social intentions are conveyed across cultures. The study finds that American reflecting individualist values, tend to communicate emotions directly, using strategies that promote validation and closeness. Conversely, Japanese speakers, shaped by collectivist norms, prefer indirect, polite speech that prioritizes harmony and social etiquette. These contrasting pragmatic politeness strategies reveal the need for balance and adaptability in intercultural communication. The findings suggest that expressive speech acts are deeply embedded in cultural and social hierarchies, and misinterpretation may lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. The research also highlights the role of the film as a medium for observing authentic communication within a controlled context. Ultimately, the study underlines the importance of pragmatic sensitivity in a globalized world and calls for more research in cross-cultural pragmatics to foster effective and respectful Intercultural interactions.

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Introduction

Intercultural communication occurs when people interact with one another from different cultural backgrounds, often leading to difficulties in understanding and accepting the messages conveyed. According to [Mailani et al. \(2022\)](#), communication is a process of

exchanging or conveying messages between individuals through language, symbols, signals, or behavior or actions directed from one person to another. The recipient will easily understand the process of conveying messages using effective methods. Messages can be conveyed through gestures, speech, or writing. The use of language as a means of communication has two types based on the form of delivery, namely written and spoken language. These two types of language differ in delivery; written language requires a written medium or is textual and often associated with structural equipment.

The spoken language is more expressive than the written language. This is because spoken language is conveyed through words, facial expressions, intonation, and body movements. In this increasingly connected world, understanding how people from different cultural backgrounds communicate can better understand how communication occurs in complex and challenging situations ([Salsabila et al., 2024](#)). Cross-cultural communication is important in social interactions in an increasingly global world. One of the main aspects of this communication is how individuals from different cultural backgrounds express their feelings, attitudes, and statements in expressive speech acts. Expressive speech acts are significant in this communication because they allow speakers to convey their feelings, emotions, or opinions about something.

Speech acts used to express feelings, emotions, or opinions about something are called expressive speech acts. In many cases, these speech acts convey a person's feelings or psychological reactions to events or circumstances, such as saying thank you, apologizing, congratulating, or expressing annoyance, anger, or joy. According to [Searle \(1975\)](#), expressive speech acts are communication that reveals the speaker's feelings without changing the situation. Expressive speech acts are significant in intercultural communication for building emotional understanding. However, how they are expressed can vary depending on the culture of each individual. In cross-cultural communication, the meaning contained in words can be highly dependent on the social and cultural context surrounding them ([Hardini, 2009](#)).

The film *Lost in Translation* (2003) tells the story of the interaction between Bob Harris, an American actor working in Japan, and Charlotte, a young American woman who has travelled to Japan with her husband and is searching for meaning in her life, provides an interesting example for analyzing how expressive speech acts are used in cross-cultural communication. In this film, the two main characters face feelings of alienation and discomfort in a foreign environment, which they try to overcome through various forms of verbal expression. Compliments, criticism, expressions of gratitude, and apologies serve as communication tools to strengthen interpersonal relationships and resolve tensions arising

from significant cultural differences. Expressive speech acts (compliments, criticism, expressions of gratitude, and apologies) are fundamental because they carry different emotional connotations across cultures. In cross-cultural communication, the meaning and function of speech acts can vary greatly, often leading to misunderstandings if not understood correctly. For example, a sincere compliment in one culture may be perceived as excessive or even demeaning in another. Direct criticism in one culture may be considered rude in a culture emphasizing politeness and social harmony.

Furthermore, expressions of gratitude in one place can be an important means of building and maintaining social relationships. In the film *Lost in Translation*, the meaning of every expressive speech act uttered by the American and Japanese characters can vary depending on their cultural backgrounds. It is represented very clearly, showing how cultural backgrounds shape how they express their feelings and respond to others. Therefore, examining the forms of praise, criticism, expressions of gratitude, and apologies in the context of this film is highly relevant and important for understanding the dynamics of cross-cultural communication. This research can provide insight into how emotional communication is influenced by culture and how individuals adapt their verbal expressions to interact effectively in different cultural environments. This study's importance lies in its more profound understanding of the dynamics of intercultural communication, which occur not only in direct interactions but also in situations involving media such as films. By examining expressive speech acts in the film *Lost in Translation*, this study further explores how culture influences how individuals express their feelings and how others understand those expressions in different cultural contexts. Given the growing understanding of cross-cultural communication in an increasingly interconnected world, this research is also relevant.

Oral expression in specific cultural contexts has been the subject of several studies. For example, research on speech acts used in the film *Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini* by [Ruhiat et al. \(2022\)](#) shows how Javanese cultural values are reflected in speech. Additional studies by [Sidiq et al. \(2023\)](#) investigate expressive speech acts used in Sampoerna A Mild cigarette advertisements using a pragmatic approach and politeness strategies. This research shows that, by considering appropriate politeness strategies, the expressive speech acts in the advertisement convey social criticism. However, there is little research on expressive speech acts in cross-cultural communication, especially in films that feature significant cultural differences, such as *Lost in Translation*. In [Jeric \(2014\)](#), expressive speech acts in the film *Eat Pray Love* were analyzed using a pragmatic approach,

demonstrating how language as an expression of feelings can transcend cultural boundaries and foster stronger communication between people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

This study analyses the types of expressive utterances found in the dialogues and interactions of the characters in the film. The variables analyzed include the types of expressive utterances, the cultural context that influences the use of these utterances, and how expressive utterances affect communication between characters. This study uses a pragmatic approach involving descriptive qualitative discourse analysis. According to [Searle & John \(1979\)](#) expressive speech acts include various categories such as praise, criticism, expressions of gratitude, and apologies. Each category has different characteristics and functions in communication. For example, praise is used to express appreciation, while criticism is used to convey evaluation or judgment. This study aims to understand the expressive speech acts performed by the main characters in the film and its research, as well as the influence of culture on emotions and relationships between people from different cultures. These expressions reflect personal feelings and are influenced by prevailing cultural norms, which shape how these expressions are understood and accepted in social interactions.

A theory of politeness developed by [Brown & Levinson \(1987\)](#) offers insights into how individuals use communication strategies to protect their own and others' "face" (self-esteem) in communication. In this theory, "face" refers to the self-image one wishes to maintain in social interactions. Positive politeness focuses on building social closeness and showing concern for others, while negative politeness focuses on avoiding threats to others' freedom in communication. The selection of politeness strategies is greatly influenced by cultural dimensions, with two main cultural dimensions influencing social interaction according to [Hofstede, \(2001, p. 27\)](#): collectivism and individualism. Collectivist cultures emphasize group interests over individual interests. In these cultures, people prioritize social harmony, cooperation, and avoidance of confrontation.

On the other hand, individualistic cultures emphasize personal freedom and individual achievement. The selection of politeness strategies is greatly influenced by cultural dimensions, particularly collectivistic and individualistic. Through their meta-analysis, [Oyserman et al. \(2002\)](#) demonstrated that differences in collectivistic and individualistic cultural orientations influence individual cognitive processes. This study found that individuals with a collectivistic orientation tend to have a more interdependent self-view, focusing on social relationships and group harmony. In contrast, individuals with an individualistic orientation have a more independent self-view, focusing on personal

achievement and individual freedom. These findings suggest that these cultural dimensions influence how individuals process information and interact in social contexts.

A study by [Usmani & Almasham \(2024\)](#) highlights that in collectivist cultures such as Japan, expressive speech acts are often conveyed more cautiously and indirectly. For example, praise and criticism are carefully given to avoid offending others or disrupting social harmony. On the other [Brown & Levinson \(1987\)](#) hand, in individualistic cultures such as the United States, verbal expression is more open and direct, emphasizing individual freedom and personal achievement. Additionally, [Klein et al. \(2024\)](#) also emphasize that individuals with a collectivist orientation are more likely to use emotion regulation strategies focused on maintaining social harmony, while individuals from individualistic cultures are more likely to use strategies emphasizing self-expression and personal achievement. These findings support the view that verbal expression in collectivist cultures is more controlled to ensure harmonious relationships, while in individualistic cultures, more open and direct verbal expression is more accepted.

This study analyses how expressive speech acts such as praise, criticism, expressions of gratitude, and apologies are used in cross-cultural communication, focusing on the interaction between Bob and Charlotte in the film *Lost in Translation*. Using [Searle's \(1979\)](#) theory of expressive speech acts and [Brown and Levinson's \(1987\)](#) politeness theory and considering the collectivistic and individualistic cultural dimensions, this study will explore how these expressions function to strengthen or weaken interpersonal relationships in a cross-cultural communication context. This study provides a significant contribution to the field of Intercultural Pragmatics by deepening the understanding of how expressive speech acts function in Intercultural contexts. Unlike previous research that mainly focused on speech acts within a single cultural framework, this study explores how cultural orientations particularly individualism and collectivism shape the expression and interpretation of emotions in the film *Lost in Translation*. By combining [Searle's \(1979\)](#) theory of expressive speech acts, [Brown and Levinson's \(1987\)](#) politeness theory, and [Hofstede \(2001\)](#) cultural dimensions, this research offers an integrated analytical perspective to explain how cultural values influence emotional expression and interpersonal communication. The results of this study are expected to enhance theoretical discussion in pragmatics and politeness studies while offering practical implications for improving Intercultural communication competence, especially in recognizing and managing emotional nuances across cultures.

Method

A. Research Design

This study aims to describe the forms of expressive speech acts used by characters in the film *Lost in Translation* and analyze how praise, criticism, gratitude, and apologies are used in cross-cultural communication, particularly in the film *Lost in Translation*. This study will analyze the conversations between the main characters, Bob Harris and Charlotte, in Japanese (collectivistic) and American (individualistic) cultures. To achieve this objective, this study uses a descriptive qualitative method that focuses on reporting and describing phenomena as they are, without alteration.

Qualitative descriptive research allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of communicative behavior within its social and cultural contexts. According to [Waruwu \(2024\)](#), this method involves analyzing and synthesizing findings from previous studies to identify similarities, differences, and conceptual relationships. Meanwhile, [Ridwan et al. \(2021\)](#) explain that qualitative descriptive analysis helps summarize data obtained through observation and documentation to describe language use systematically. This approach is suitable for understanding expressive speech acts and the sociocultural norms that shape communication in *Lost in Translation*.

B. Data Collection

The data in this study obtained from the film *Lost in Translation (2003)*, which portrays interactions between two main characters Bob Harris and Charlotte from different cultural backgrounds. The film was selected because it presents rich examples of cross cultural communication and expressive language use. The data collection process was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher watched the entire film to understand the storyline and identify conversations containing expressive speech acts such as praise, criticism, gratitude, and apologies. Second, the relevant dialogues were manually transcribed from the film. Third, the utterances were classified based on the types of expressive speech acts according to [Searle's \(1979\)](#) framework.

In line with [Sudaryanto et al. \(2019\)](#), the study employed observation and documentation techniques to ensure that the collected data accurately represent authentic linguistic behavior. To enhance validity, data triangulation was applied by comparing the film data with relevant literature and recent studies related to expressive speech acts and cross-cultural pragmatics.

C. Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using a discourse analysis approach within a qualitative descriptive framework. Following [Sudaryanto \(2019\)](#), descriptive analysis

enables researchers to systematically describe linguistic and social phenomena without altering their natural form. Each expressive speech act was examined in terms of linguistic structure, pragmatic function, and cultural interpretation. The data were grouped into four main categories: praise, criticism, gratitude, and apology. Analyzed according to American and Japanese cultural orientations. The analysis was guided by [Searle's \(1979\)](#) speech act theory and [Brown Levinson's \(1987\)](#) politeness theory, which distinguish between positive and negative politeness strategies across cultures. To ensure the reliability of findings, data triangulation was carried out by comparing the results with relevant studies and recent discussions in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics and expressive communication.

Findings and Discussion

A. Findings

In this section, the author will present his findings on how these expressions function in cross-cultural communication between two cultures. The communication dynamics between Bob Harris, an American actor working in Japan, and Charlotte, a young American woman living in Japan, clearly illustrate how expressive speech acts are used in two different cultures. This film offers an intriguing opportunity to analyze how verbal expressions such as praise, criticism, gratitude, and apologies are used to navigate these cultural differences and expressions of confusion arising from the new culture they encounter.

1. Compliments

Compliments are a form of speech used to express admiration or appreciation for others. They are the most dominant form of expression in social communication because they serve as emotional support that strengthens interpersonal relationships. In more individualistic American culture, praise tends to be more explicit and direct. In contrast, praise is often conveyed subtly and indirectly in more collectivist Japanese culture to maintain social harmony and avoid confrontation. ([Nugroho et al., 2025](#))

- a. *You are amazing, man. Sunset odds, we loved it.* (04:35)

This compliment was given by a fan who recognized Bob at a bar one night. This compliment is well received in American culture because the open expression explicitly shows admiration. This direct compliment reflects the individualistic cultural characteristic that values free self-expression. However, such compliments can be considered excessive or face-threatening in Japanese culture. Japanese culture emphasizes negative politeness, which aims to avoid excessive attention to individuals and maintain social harmony.

b. *You are a great person. (32:18)*

Bob complimented Charlotte, expressing his admiration and appreciation for her personality. In American culture, this compliment is accepted as a positive expression that strengthens interpersonal relationships. However, in Japanese culture, direct compliments like this can be considered threatening to the face of the person being complimented. In Japanese culture, compliments are more often expressed indirectly and subtly to avoid having too much influence on a person's self-face.

c. *This is incredible (16:00)*

Bob expressed his admiration for the view in Tokyo. This is a well-received form of praise in American culture because of its direct and free expression. However, in Japanese culture, which places more importance on social politeness, such praise can be considered too open and risk disrupting social harmony. More subtle and indirect praise aligns with Japan's more collective cultural norms.

d. *I have heard a lot about you. (04:00)*

A hotel staff member complimented Bob on this. It is an example of a more formal and cautious compliment, which is more in line with the norms of politeness in Japanese culture. Compliments given in this way avoid face-threatening and are more respectful of the individual. This expression might be considered more formal and less spontaneous in American culture, as American culture tends to be more open and direct.

e. *You really are (12:55)*

Charlotte compliments Bob in a more private conversation. This compliment is very explicit and direct, reflecting the positive politeness of American culture, which tends to be more open and honest in self-expression. However, in Japanese culture, compliments like this can be perceived as threatening to the other person's face and are better conveyed more subtly and indirectly.

2. Criticism

Criticism is a verbal expression that conveys dissatisfaction or disagreement with something or someone. If not communicated appropriately, criticism can be a source of misunderstanding. Collectivist cultures with a vertical orientation emphasize obedience and conformity, which limits open criticism, unlike individualistic cultures that tend to be more direct and explicit in expressing criticism (Guo et al., 2023)

a. *This is ridiculous (19:41)*

Bob expressed this criticism of a situation he considered unreasonable. In American culture, criticism like this is more acceptable because the culture values honest and open self-expression. However, in Japanese culture, direct criticism like this would be

considered face-threatening and damaging social harmony. Japanese culture emphasizes negative politeness, maintaining social relationships and avoiding open confrontation.

b. I do not think that was a good idea (21:10)

Bob expressed this criticism more diplomatically, showing his disagreement with a particular decision. In American culture, this criticism would be accepted as constructive feedback. However, in Japanese culture, this kind of criticism can still be seen as threatening to one's face and can damage social relationships. Criticism in Japanese culture is usually more indirect and careful to maintain social politeness.

c. I do not like this place (20:30)

This criticism is very explicit and reveals Bob's discomfort with the place he is visiting. In American culture, criticism like this is considered an individual's right to voice disagreement, but in Japanese culture, it can be considered rude and threatening to one's face. Criticism in Japanese culture is often expressed subtly and privately to avoid social tension.

d. That is a terrible decision. (30:20)

Bob criticized the decisions straightforwardly made by others. In American culture, this criticism is accepted as free expression, but in Japanese culture, this kind of criticism is considered very face-threatening and can damage social relationships. In Japan, criticism is usually accompanied by downplaying one's mistakes to maintain harmony.

e. Why does this keep happening? (20:50)

Bob expresses his confusion and frustration about a recurring situation. Although this criticism is somewhat subtle, it still conveys dissatisfaction. In American culture, this is accepted as part of open self-expression. However, criticism like this in Japan is better delivered subtly and thoughtfully to avoid social tension.

3. Expression of gratitude

Expressions of gratitude in collectivist cultures are not merely a form of politeness but also an important tool in social regulation to strengthen relationships between group members and maintain social harmony. In this context, controlling emotional expressions, including gratitude, becomes a strategy to maintain social cohesion and avoid interpersonal conflict. Conversely, in individualistic cultures, expressions of gratitude tend to be more explicit and direct as authentic expressions of personal feelings, affirming individual identity and autonomy. ([Tamir et al., 2023](#))

a. Thank you for everything. (32:18)

Bob thanked Charlotte after receiving emotional support from her. In American culture, this expression of gratitude is well received because it is direct and explicit. In contrast, in Japanese culture, expressions of gratitude are more often accompanied by concrete actions, such as giving gifts, to show deeper appreciation.

b. Thank you for your help. (31:00)

This expression of gratitude is more profound and emotional, showing greater appreciation. This expression is more directly accepted in American culture, but in Japan, gratitude is often expressed through concrete actions as a symbol of deeper appreciation.

c. I really appreciate your help (31:40)

This expression of gratitude is more profound and emotional, showing greater appreciation. This expression is more directly accepted in American culture, but in Japan, gratitude is often expressed through concrete actions as a symbol of deeper appreciation.

d. Thanks for making me feel better (32:18)

Bob expresses his gratitude to Charlotte for helping him calm down. In American culture, expressing gratitude is very common and explicitly accepted. In Japanese culture, such expressions are more formal and accompanied by tangible sacrifices, such as actions to show deeper appreciation.

e. I cannot thank you enough. (31:10)

Bob expressed his deep gratitude more emotionally. This expression is well-accepted in American culture because of its direct and expressive nature. However, in Japanese culture, this kind of expression of gratitude can be considered too open and may be accompanied by more concrete gestures of appreciation as a sign of respect.

4. Apology

Apologies are used to express regret or ask for forgiveness for mistakes made. In American culture, apologies are often expressed directly, while in Japanese culture, apologies are more formal and accompanied by concrete actions to show more profound regret. Apologies play an important role in repairing damaged social relationships and are more commonly used in collectivist cultures as a strategy to ease tension and maintain group harmony. ([Du et al., 2024](#))

a. I am sorry for being late. (31:40)

Bob conveyed his apology directly, which aligns with the American culture of being more open in expressing regret. In Japan, this kind of apology might be insufficient

without further action, such as bowing or giving something as a sign of more profound regret.

b. I am sorry that was a mistake. (32:18)

In this scene, Bob admits his mistake directly and honestly. This apology is very acceptable in American culture because it is transparent and open. However, in Japanese culture, this type of apology may be considered inappropriate because, in Japan, apologies must be accompanied by physical actions as a sign of more profound remorse.

c. I did not mean to offend you. (24:15)

Bob apologized after realizing that his statement might have offended Charlotte. In American culture, apologies are direct and focus on explaining one's intentions, reflecting an individualistic culture that values clarification and personal expression. However, in Japanese culture, apologies must be more formal and accompanied by physical gestures as a symbol of remorse in order to maintain social harmony.

d. I apologize for my behaviour (28:30)

Bob apologized for his inappropriate behavior. In American culture, this apology is more common and accepted as an expression of responsibility for one's actions. However, in Japanese culture, this type of apology may be considered insufficient without some form of sacrifice or action to make amends, such as giving something as a token of respect or more profound remorse.

e. I am really sorry about that. (34:50)

Bob expressed his apology more emotionally. This is a more personal and honest way to show remorse in American culture. Although this type of apology is accepted in Japanese culture, it is usually accompanied by physical gestures, such as bowing or offering a gift, to show more profound remorse. This reflects how apologies are expressed and received in both cultures.

5. Expression of confusion

Expressions of confusion describe ignorance or surprise at information or situations that individuals do not fully understand. In a cross-cultural context, expressions of confusion often reflect a gap between cultural expectations and the reality experienced by individuals. ([Papantoniou et al., 2021](#))

a. What do you mean by that? (09:00)

Bob was confused by the director's instructions. In American culture, expressing confusion in this way is a common way to ask for clarification directly. However, in Japanese culture, this kind of expression may be considered impolite because it emphasizes negative politeness and avoids confrontation.

b. Looger Moore? (23:01)

Bob asks confusedly about a term he does not understand. This expression of confusion shows a gap between Bob's understanding and the information provided. In American culture, expressing confusion directly is well accepted, but in Japanese culture, expressing confusion directly can damage the face and is better conveyed more subtly.

c. What is going on here? (21:50)

Bob expressed his confusion about a situation he did not understand. In American culture, this kind of expression is part of open self-expression. However, in Japanese culture, expressing confusion in this way can be considered too explicit because Japanese culture emphasizes avoiding open confrontation.

d. I do not understand what you mean. (15:00)

Bob expressed his confusion about the explanation he was given. In American culture, this is an open way of asking for clarification, but in Japanese culture, expressing confusion in this way can be seen as a face-threatening act. In Japan, using more indirect and polite expressions is more advisable.

e. What is the deal with this place? (9:10)

Bob shows his confusion about the place he visited. This expression is more informal and fits the more open communication style in the US. Although expressions of confusion are acceptable in Japan, they should be conveyed more subtly to avoid disrupting social relationships.

B. Discussion

The results of this study show that verbal expression in cross-cultural communication is influenced by situational context and the social and cultural norms of each background. A local study by [Muslihatin \(2025\)](#) on Santri interactions shows that even in homogeneous communities such as Islamic boarding schools, expressive speech acts are regulated by strong social norms and tend to maintain politeness and harmony. In individualistic cultures like the United States, emotional expressions are conveyed directly and explicitly. Conversely, in collectivist cultures like Japan, expressions are often communicated indirectly and with careful consideration to maintain social harmony. These differences align with Searle's theory [\(1979\)](#), Brown and Levinson's work [\(1987\)](#), and Hofstede's cultural dimensions [\(2001\)](#).

Praise in American culture is expressed explicitly as a form of self-affirmation and personal appreciation. In contrast, in Japanese culture, praise is more implicit and cautious

not to hurt the other person's self-esteem or cause awkwardness. This is in line with a study by [Jaya & Ramdhani \(2023\)](#), which shows that praise is used to build positive relationships with the audience in the context of humour. Praise in cross-cultural communication in stand-up comedy, where expressions of appreciation are often conveyed more humorously and openly in Indonesia, still maintains elements of politeness by Indonesian cultural norms, similar to those of Japan's collectivist culture. Additionally, [Falakhiya & Haristiani \(2024\)](#) found that in Japanese drama, praise is more directed toward abilities or personality rather than physical aspects, indicating cultural sensitivity toward expressions of appreciation.

Criticism is an expressive speech act that threatens the face of the interlocutor. In Japanese culture, criticism tends to be indirect and subtle. According to [Haristiani, Septiana, et al. \(2023\)](#), criticism in Japanese culture is conveyed using the techniques of 'asking', 'correction', or 'advice', whereas, in more open cultures, such as Minangkabau, criticism is more direct, with 'negative evaluation' being more commonly used.

Expressions of gratitude in Japanese culture are not sufficient when conveyed verbally; they must also be accompanied by nonverbal actions such as bowing or polite language. Research by [Kusumarini & Dyah \(2024\)](#) on hospitality interactions found that expressions of gratitude to Japanese guests require polite language (*teineigo*) and body gestures as a form of cultural politeness.

Apologies in Japanese culture serve not only as an acknowledgement of mistakes but also as an effort to maintain social harmony and hierarchical relationships. In collectivist cultures, apologies are often conveyed with a high degree of politeness and consideration for the social status of the listener. Research by [Haristiani, Christinawati, et al. \(2023\)](#) found that intermediate Japanese learners tend to transfer pragmatic strategies from their first language when expressing apologies in Japanese. This suggests a deep understanding of apology strategies that align with Japanese cultural norms is crucial to avoid misunderstandings and maintain harmonious social relationships.

Expressions of confusion in individualistic cultures can be conveyed directly, but in collectivist cultures, these expressions are more subtle or use indirect strategies. A study by [Saito et al. \(2023\)](#) shows that in customer service communication in Japan, expressions of confusion or uncertainty are more often conveyed using empathetic techniques, such as active listening and giving space to the other person, as a way of saving face and maintaining social relationships.

The findings of this study have several important implications for both linguistic theories and language learning. The main contribution of this study is the empirical

evidence that cross-cultural understanding of the meaning and form of expressive speech acts is crucial in multicultural interactions. This is relevant not only in the context of film as a representative medium but also in real life, such as diplomacy between countries, foreign language education, and global business communication. The film *Lost in Translation* serves as an effective medium for reflecting the complex, ambiguous, and meaning-laden nature of intercultural communication.

From a theoretical perspective, the result reinforces and extends [Searle's \(1979\)](#) framework of expressive speech acts by showing how cultural values influence the realization of emotions in verbal communication. They also support Brown and Levinson's [\(1987\)](#) politeness theory and Hofstede's [\(2001\)](#) cultural dimensions, demonstrating that the use of expressive acts is not only a matter of linguistic form but also of cultural cognition and social orientation. This indicates that pragmatic competence must be understood as culturally embedded, highlighting the interplay between language, emotion, and social hierarchy in Intercultural Communication. From a pedagogical perspective, the study offers valuable insights for language teaching and learning, particularly in developing Intercultural Communicative competence. Language learners should be exposed not only to linguistic structures but also to the pragmatic and cultural conventions that govern expressive acts such as praise, criticism, gratitude, and apologies. Integrating pragmatic awareness into language curricula can help learners use language more appropriately and effectively across cultural boundaries. For teachers, this research suggests the importance of incorporating authentic Intercultural materials such as films, real-life dialogues, or role play activities to help students interpret and express emotions in culturally sensitive ways.

Conclusion

This study examines expressive speech acts in cross-cultural communication between American and Japanese characters in *Lost in Translation*, focusing on expressions of praise, criticism, gratitude, apology, and confusion. The findings indicate that cultural differences not only influence the form and strategies of verbal communication but also determine how meaning is interpreted and received in an interaction. The use of politeness strategies and emotional expressions is found to be significantly influenced by collectivist or individualistic cultural orientations, as explained in the theoretical frameworks of [Searle \(1979\)](#), [Brown & Levinson \(1987\)](#), and [Hofstede \(2001\)](#).

Critically, this study confirms that expressive speech acts are not neutral linguistic actions but rather complex reflections of values, norms, and cultural sensitivities. On the one hand, American culture encourages open and explicit expression as a form of individual

identity affirmation. On the other hand, Japanese culture emphasizes the importance of emotional control, social harmony, and avoidance of confrontation as key communication strategies. The pragmatic mismatch between these cultures often leads to failure, mainly when speakers from individualistic cultures apply direct communication norms in collectivistic contexts.

This study also comprehensively shows how each type of expressive speech act plays a different role in building or breaking interpersonal relationships. For example, praise considered pleasant in an individualistic culture can be perceived as excessive in a collectivistic culture. Similarly, an apology that seems sufficient in one culture may be considered insincere in another if appropriate nonverbal or symbolic gestures do not accompany it.

However, this study's limitations lie in its limited data sources, which are restricted to one film and two central cultural poles (the United States and Japan). Future studies need to expand the data corpus to various film genres and other cultural contexts and involve native speakers as subjects to explore direct perceptions of cross-cultural expressive speech acts.

Thus, this study's findings highlight the importance of strengthening cross-cultural pragmatic awareness, particularly in language and international communication education. As global communication becomes inevitable, recognizing, adapting to, and respecting how others express their feelings is not merely a linguistic skill but an essential cultural competence. However, this study also acknowledges several limitations that open for opportunities for future research. The analysis focused only on one film, *Lost in Translation*, which represents a limited scope of Intercultural interaction. Future studies are recommended to examine broader range of data sources such as multiple films, real-life Intercultural conversations, or classroom interactions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of expressive speech acts in diverse contexts. Further research may also explore additional pragmatic dimensions, such as directive or commissive speech acts, and investigate how technological mediation or online communication influences emotional expression across cultures. Such studies would enrich the theoretical framework of Intercultural pragmatics and provide deeper insights into culturally sensitive language learning and teaching practices.

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