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Cracking the code of speech acts and translation quality in "A Space for the Unbound"

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ABSTRACT

As the global gaming market grows, localizing video games has become essential to reaching international audiences. It is not just about translating words; it is also about preserving the emotions behind them. This is especially true for expressive speech acts, which convey feelings like gratitude, apology, or sorrow. While Indonesian-made games are gaining worldwide popularity, little is known about how well their delivery and translations capture the emotional depth of the original story. This study explores expressive speech acts in *A Space for the Unbound*, a popular Indonesian game with a growing global fan base. It also examines whether the Indonesian translation effectively conveys the emotions found in the original English text. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research compares English expressive speech acts from the game's prologue and Chapter 1 to their Indonesian translations. The speech acts are categorized using a mix of expert models, and the translation is evaluated based on accuracy, readability, and acceptability. The findings reveal a high frequency of expressive speech acts, evenly distributed to elicit emotional responses in players. The translation quality is excellent, with all three dimensions exceeding 95%. Small adjustments to accuracy (around 5%) seem intended to enhance emotional engagement. This research demonstrates that a successful game translation necessitates a balance between accurate language and cultural and emotional meaning, providing practical insights for game developers and localization experts working across languages.

Keywords: expressive speech acts; Indonesian game; speech acts; translation; translation quality

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the gaming market and industry in Indonesia have grown in a significant way. According to Newzoo's 2023 data in a report by Allcorrect - Game Content Studio (2024), Indonesia's gaming market reached USD 1.79 billion in 2023 and is experiencing rapid growth that can be attributed to increased access to technology, entrepreneurial spirit, and government support for the creative sector. In the same report, it is also stated that the government plans to increase private funding through a gaming fund system, aiming to raise USD 40 million annually. Combining the rapid growth of gamers and support from the government, it is no surprise that quite a number of

Indonesian game developers were born in recent years. What is interesting is the games from Indonesian game developers that have become popular abroad. Some Indonesian games developed in English have attracted considerable attention overseas—titles such as *Coffee Talk* and *DreadOut*, for example, have captured the hearts of players around the globe and received praise for their captivating plotlines and immersive gameplay.

This situation makes Indonesia's rapid growth in the gaming industry interesting to study, especially in linguistics and translation, as a lot of Indonesian games use English rather than Indonesian. For example, the video game *DreadOut*, despite containing numerous Indonesian cultural references, does not offer an Indonesian language option (GOG.com, n.d.-a). Similarly, the digital distribution platform GOG does not provide Indonesian language support for *Infectonator 3: Apocalypse* (GOG.com, n.d.-b), even though the game was developed in Indonesia, suggesting that platform-specific strategies may influence localization decisions. A particularly clear example of this trend is *Valthirian Arc: Hero School Story*, a game developed by the Indonesian studio *Agate Games*. The developers only added Indonesian language support eight months after its release, as they initially believed most players would be from overseas, making English the priority language (Agate Games, 2019). These examples highlight how many Indonesian game developers choose English to target the international market and promote Indonesian culture globally. This is an exciting event and can be mutually beneficial as game enthusiasts around the world will be able to experience the entire culture of a nation just by playing a game. It is also a form of cultural acculturation that utilizes technological development as a medium. One of the latest Indonesian games that uses English and has recently been launched is *A Space for the Unbound* by Mojiken Studio and Toge Productions.

A Space for the Unbound beautifully captures Indonesian local culture, especially the 90s village atmosphere, through its storytelling and retro-style graphics. This nostalgic feel is one reason the game has received positive feedback from players. The game's emotional impact is closely tied to its use of expressive speech acts—language that conveys feelings like gratitude, apology, sorrow, etc. (Searle, 1976). These speech acts help bring the characters to life, allowing players to connect emotionally with the story and its themes.

The game's effectiveness is reflected in the awards and positive reception it has received worldwide. On Steam, a popular digital game platform, the game has over 4,500 reviews with a 97% positive rating as of this writing, earning the "overwhelmingly positive" label (Valve Corporation, 2023). It also won the Japan Future Award at the Tokyo Game Show 2022 (Mojiken & Toge Productions Team, 2022), an honor given to games expected to shape the future of the industry. In 2023, it was nominated for the "Games for Impact" category at The Game Awards, recognizing games that deliver powerful emotional or social experiences (Mojiken & Toge Productions Team, 2023). These achievements, combined with positive player responses, show that the game effectively uses expressive speech acts to engage players' emotions and deliver a memorable and immersive experience.

The translation of expressive speech acts into Indonesian is challenging, particularly in capturing the nuances and cultural context inherent in the original English text. The quality of translation can significantly impact players' comprehension and emotional engagement with the game. For example, research by Devi et al. (2022) highlights the complexity of maintaining cultural relevance while translating emotional expressions in the Indonesian game *Pamali*, and obtained the result that the Sundanese language was even incorporated to enhance authenticity in the game translation, showing that cultural context plays a significant role in player immersion and comprehension. Heruela (2024) also noted that poor localization disrupts players' understanding and emotional connection to games. Awkward or inaccurate translations can lead to confusion, frustration, and diminished engagement. It is, then, important to check if the translation of *A Space of the Unbound* conveys the intended emotions and speech acts, ensuring Indonesian players feel the same way. Meanwhile, considering the success of *A Space of the Unbound* in touching the hearts of players from both abroad and Indonesia, it can be said that the translation has good quality. However, this study aims to identify specific aspects that must be prioritized when translating expressive speech acts accurately, and based on that result, we

can also see which aspects of translation quality may be violated in the process. Previous research highlights the importance of considering the context and function of speech acts to ensure that translations remain accurate and culturally appropriate (Searle, 1976). Additionally, Baker (1992) demonstrates that violations of these principles can lead to a loss of emotional meaning and misunderstandings among readers. In addition, a study by Nurhidayah (2013) on expressive speech acts in *Life of Pi* film, for the accuracy of the translation, out of 24 data points, 79.17% (19 data) were accurately translated, while 20.83% (5 data) were less accurately translated. In terms of acceptability, 87.5% (21 data) were acceptably translated, and 12.5% (3 data) were less acceptably translated. Regarding readability, 100% of the translations were readable, indicating that all translated texts were easy to understand. The research indicates that the film's translation quality is still considered good. Meanwhile, Waluyo et al.'s (2018) study showed 25% accurate translations and 75% less accurate translations. In terms of acceptability, 50% of the translations were acceptable, while 25% were less acceptable and 25% were unacceptable. For readability, 50% were readable, 25% were less readable, and 25% were not readable, leading to low translation quality.

Even so, it should be noted that the quality aspects that are violated do not always mean that it is a bad thing. It is even proven by one of the theories related to translation, Skopos theory, an approach that prioritizes the purpose of a translation (Wang & Hu, 2023). Sometimes, a translation needs to be modified to achieve its intended purpose. In this case, the translation quality can be sacrificed to make sure the text stirs the reader's emotions. In conclusion, studying how expressive speech acts and translation quality for *A Space of the Unbound* is a great research opportunity. By exploring these language and cultural details, we can understand what makes the game successful globally. This research aims to highlight the connection between language, emotion, and gameplay, enhancing our understanding of the gaming experience.

Studies about both speech acts and translation quality have been conducted a lot of times in the past. A number of research that is either closely related to or nearly identical to this subject have also been conducted repeatedly. This includes studies that specifically focus on the intersection of speech act theory and translation quality, exploring how these two areas influence and inform one another. Given that *A Space for the Unbound* is a relatively new game, having only been released in 2023, the academic research surrounding it remains quite limited at the time of this writing. Most researchers who have studied the game so far have primarily focused on examining its design elements, leaving other aspects of the game, such as its narrative and linguistic features, underexplored in the research field. One example of such case can be found in the study by Utomo, et al. (2022), who conclude that the success of *A Space of the Unbound* is caused by details and understanding of the culture used through aesthetic elements as one of the factors; or having the game as one of the cases of study in research of games designed in decolonial narrative as in Zambrano (2023). Both studies share a similar nature, as they are both inspired by the success of *A Space for the Unbound*, and they aim to examine how the game's design elements impact the level of immersion experienced by players. Specifically, these studies explore the ways in which various aspects of the game's design contribute to an immersive and engaging experience for the players, reflecting the game's ability to attract its audience.

There is also a study by Tanudjaja and Kusumohendrarto (2023) that analyzes the cultural identity in the game, and similar to the study above, Wiwoho et al. (2023) also analyzes the imagery in the video game using a visual culture perspective. Another visual design study in the game has also been conducted by Iqbal, et al. (2023), who got the conclusion that the gamers who play the game get a nostalgic feeling. Different from the above studies, there is a study by Lubis (2024) that analyzes mental illness represented in the game and comes to the conclusion that the narrative, visual, and audio elements of the game contribute to the representation of mental illness depiction in the game. While previous studies all agree that the game's story greatly impacts its emotional power and success, there is a gap in research from a language perspective. No one has explored the game linguistically until now. This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing the game's language and story, focusing on translation. This study could encourage both gamers and linguistics scholars to dive deeper into the

game's fascinating elements, appealing to both its gameplay and narrative lovers, and those interested in its language and storytelling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech act, which is a theory that assumes that the meaning of linguistic expressions can be explained by following the applicable rules, was coined by Searle (1969) in his book *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Searle (1969) determines five categories of speech acts, namely representative (assertive), directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. However, apart from the definition of each speech act category, there is no specific classification of the subcategories of each speech act. The types of subcategories of each speech act are still considered vague and not absolute. Therefore, in its development, some experts have their own classification, including in expressive speech acts.

The expressive speech act is a speech act that expresses the speaker's feelings about themselves (Searle, 1976). Norrick (1978) also stated that expressive speech acts express psychological conditions. Expressive speech acts play a pivotal role in shaping the player experience in games. They encompass various forms of communication, including dialogue, gestures, and expressions, which serve to evoke emotions and convey narrative depth. Due to the vague classification of speech act subcategories mentioned above, there are some differences in the subcategories of expressive speech acts based on various experts. Norrick (1978), for example, classifies expressive speech acts into thanking, congratulating, apologizing, condoling, deploring, lamenting, welcoming, forgiving, and boasting. Guiraud, et al. (2011) classified the types of speech acts based on emotions, which were then divided into two types of emotions, namely positive and negative, simple and complex, and concluded expressive speech acts subcategories totaling 12. Starting from there, Ronan (2015) examined the types of expressive speech acts on certain corpus data and found nine subcategories of expressive speech acts, one of which was a category containing expressive utterances that were not clearly classified or did not fit into any subcategory. This is very natural because, according to Kallen and Kirk (2012), the type and function of speech acts ultimately depend on the context. Saying "thank you", although at first glance it looks like it belongs to the subcategory of thanking, can fall into the subcategory of congratulating, depending on the context. From the definition and classification above as well as the supporting data, the researcher concludes that the categorization of expressive speech acts subcategories from one expert alone is not suitable for this research.

The classification of expressive speech acts from the data in this study is then categorized mostly by using the types of expressive speech acts based on Searle (1976), namely greeting, thanking, complimenting, wishing, congratulating, and apologizing, added with several categories from Norrick (1978), namely condoling, deploring, lamenting, welcoming, forgiving, and boasting; Guiraud (2011) namely rejoice, and Ronan (2015) namely sorrow, agreement, and exclamation. As mentioned above, combining the types of expressive speech acts from these three experts is necessary because the type and function of speech acts depend on the context (Kallen & Kirk, 2012), and if we examine the context of various speech acts, we can see that the context can vary depending on the situation in which the speech act occurs. In fact, given the richness of emotions that humans have, some of the contexts of speech acts situations may be reactions to several emotional contexts, making it insufficient to put them into just one expressive category. For example, Ronan (2015) describes the category of sorrow as a combination of deploring and lamenting if it is not clear to whom the sadness is directed. He also mentions that agreement can be considered as part of complimenting if the situation allows. In addition, expressive expressions are not always shown through words alone. Even exclamations like "Hey!" can basically be considered as expressive expressions because they have an emotional context. Thus, Ronan's (2015) exclamation category is also drawn upon in this study.

Furthermore, Guiraud's (2011) rejoice category is also quoted to complement emotional expressions especially those that are self-directed. In addition, the researcher also added some expressive speech acts categories outside the three experts' categories, namely surprise, boasting, praising, and fear because the data of this study has a number of expressions in these categories that

cannot be ignored. In addition, the mixture of various expressive expressions in the data was added as a "mixed" category.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, combining qualitative description but with the help of numbers and statistics for easier presentation. The descriptive qualitative approach helps in explaining how a text is categorized as a certain subcategory of speech acts, as well as its translation quality.

Data source

The data for this study comes from the prologue and Chapter 1 of the game *A Space for the Unbound* in both the English and Indonesian versions. These two chapters were chosen because, according to the researcher, they are significant and important parts in attracting the attention of players. The reason is that the prologue is the only chapter that can be played in the demo or free trial version. Therefore, this chapter is very important in forming the player's decision whether to buy the game or not to play. Meanwhile, Chapter 1 is the chapter that appears after the prologue. Unlike the free prologue, Chapter 1 is included in the full version, so players who play Chapter 1 most certainly have paid for this game in the full version. However, unlike the prologue, Chapter 1 is directly related to the overall game content and has a playing time that tends to be longer. In addition, unlike the prologue, Chapter 1 ends with a cliffhanger, attracting the player's curiosity to continue the game. In essence, Chapter 1 is an important chapter to build the game atmosphere and the reader's emotions that it triggers, so an expressive speech must have emerged and touched the player's heart in this chapter. For these reasons, the researcher believes that these two chapters are chapters that have a significant role in containing expressive speech acts that trigger the player's emotions.

There are several criteria for text in the game being studied. First, the text must be a dialogue. As a game in which we play as one character, namely Atma, many monologue texts describe the character's feelings. Monologue texts like this and narrative texts, if any, are excluded from the study because they are not speech acts. The second is because of the nature of the text. One of the characteristics of a game is its nature, which has a lot of text, even though it is not related to the story to show a more immersive and real playing experience, as the concept of narration and narrative in the game is also needed to prove that video games have storytelling concept (Saptanto, 2021). However, most of these texts will only appear if the player interacts with the trigger object and does not affect the progress of the plot, so not all players can get that experience and feel the impression it creates. Turley (2018) called it "player-generated narratives". Although *A Space for the Unbound*'s players who have left good reviews have reached thousands of people, of course, it does not mean that thousands of people read the text that must be interacted with. Despite that, this game still managed to arouse the emotions of thousands of people. In other words, this text is optional—reading it will add to the emotional aspect, but it is not mandatory to get the peak emotional impression. Therefore, the researcher decided not to include such text in the research population. The reason is that it is optional and does not become an absolute variable in being the reason why this game text arouses the player's emotions. On the other side, there is another type of text that appears only when interacting with an object, but its appearance cannot be missed or must be triggered so that the plot can progress, called a trigger. Triggers act as catalysts for various in-game behaviors, events, or actions that are initiated by the player's position, their interactions with objects, or the weather (Raja, 2023). These are essential for creating a sense of progression and engagement. This kind of text is still considered in the research.

Research instrument

The research instrument included mapping and classification of types of expressive speech acts based on categories from Ronan (2015) and evaluation of translation quality based on criteria that have been set according to Nababan et al. (2012). For the category of expressive speech acts, although some

experts have classified them into several categories, several categories of expression are not included in people's research and vice versa. They are in the people's research but are not in the expert classification. Furthermore, Kallen and Kirk (2012) argue that the type of speech act must look at the context so that the classification of expressive speech acts is often inappropriate because the utterances are not directly meaningful in context, such as ambiguity or sarcasm. Therefore, although researchers take the types of speech act categories from (Ronan, 2015), researchers also add several categories from (Searle, 1976) and their own opinions based on Norrick's (1978) expressive speech acts category.

Data collection procedure

The data collection process in this study involved several steps. First, the researcher extracted all dialogue texts from the prologue and Chapter 1 of *A Space for the Unbound* in both the English and Indonesian versions. Only dialogue that met the criteria for speech acts was included, while monologues and optional texts were excluded. Next, the speech acts were categorized using a hybrid framework combining classifications from Ronan (2015), Searle (1976), and Norrick (1978). Special attention was given to ambiguous or context-dependent speech acts, following Kallen and Kirk's (2012) argument that the meaning of speech acts often depends on the context in which they occur. Finally, the translation quality of each speech act was assessed using Nababan et al.'s (2012) criteria. The evaluation focused on three key aspects: accuracy (how faithfully the translation conveys the original meaning), acceptability (how natural the translation sounds in the target language), and readability (how easy the translation is to understand).

Data analysis procedure

The data analysis in this study was carried out in two main stages: descriptive qualitative analysis, and presenting the data into numbers. The descriptive qualitative analysis focused on categorizing each part into certain subcategories of speech acts and also evaluating the translation quality. Each speech act was categorized into certain categories based on the context and tone of the dialogue, and then the translation was assessed for accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The researcher also identified areas where the translation effectively conveyed emotional meaning and where pragmatic loss occurred, or when the emotional or contextual nuance from the original text was lost in translation. In presenting the data into numbers, the researcher classified the speech acts and translation into their respective categories and interpreted how each category answered the questions of the research based on the numbers.

FINDINGS

The results of this study are divided into two: the types of expressive speech acts that appear in the game and the quality of the translation of these speech acts. Ultimately, these two results can be concluded into one bigger scope of result, namely to what extent the quality of the translation of expressive speech acts must be maintained to achieve a translated game that is touching and famous on an international scale. The following are two tables that briefly describe the findings.

Table 1

Expressive speech acts in A Space for the Unbound game in the prologue and Chapter 1

No.	Expressive speech act type	Frequency	Percentage (in %)
1.	Thanking	15	9,26
2.	Deploring	15	9,26
3.	Agreeing	15	9,26
4.	Surprise	14	8,64
5.	Apologizing	12	7,41
6.	Lamenting	11	6,79
7.	Wishing	11	6,79
8.	Boasting	10	6,17
9.	Congratulating	10	6,17

10.	Sorrow	9	5,56
11.	Rejoice	8	4,94
12.	Condoling	6	3,70
13.	Praising	5	3,09
14.	Exclamation	5	3,09
15.	Greeting	5	3,09
16.	Mixed	5	3,09
17.	Forgiving	4	2,47
18.	Fear	1	0,62
19.	Complimenting	1	0,62
	Total	162	

Table 1 illustrates the diversity of expressive speech acts in 'A Space for the Unbound'. The even distribution of speech acts describes a dynamic storyline and emotionally rich character interactions. Notably, the balance between positive (e.g., 'Thanking') and negative (e.g., 'Deploring') acts reflect the game's narrative complexity and ability to engage players emotionally.

Speech act

One of the most frequently occurring expressive speech acts is "Thanking" with a frequency of 15. This shows that characters in the game tend to express gratitude, reflecting positive interactions between characters or appreciation for the help of other characters, as it can be an indicator of cooperation and relationships between characters in the story. Here are some data that contain expressive speech act thanking in the data:

(1) *SL : Thank you... for being my friend...*
TL : Terima kasih... sudah menjadi temanku...
(data 3)

(2) *SL : Thanks, man.*
TL : Makasih, ya.
(data 78)

(3) *SL : I'm glad you're telling me all this.*
TL : Aku senang kamu memberitahuku semua ini.
(data 151)

The second most frequent expressive speech act is deploring. Deploring is applied to express outraged, sorrow, disappointment, or strong regret feeling by bewailing or bemoaning (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). Deploring is similar to condoling, but it is applied when the speaker agrees that someone needs to be responsible for their feelings with "I miss you" as an example (Wijayanti & Yulianti, 2020). In deploring, the addressee is criticized for an event that has a negative impact on the speaker or a third person (Norrick, 1978). Basically, deploring tends to be a speech act with a negative impression. This is very interesting because the number of occurrences is the same as thanking, which has the opposite impression of deploring. After all, it is synonymous with appreciation and hospitality between people, showing the dynamic and changing storyline and atmosphere of this game. The following are some examples of deploring data found in the research:

(4) *SL : Oh, you...*
TL : Oh...
(data 20)

(5) *SL : It's still rather rude...*
TL : Walaupun agak tidak sopan...
(data 74)

(6) *SL : You took way too long!*
TL : Lama sekali!
(data 79)

In addition, the category that also needs to be discussed further is mixed expression, which appeared five times. As the name implies, this category contains a mixture of at least two expressive speech acts. In other words, expressive speech acts cannot be classified into just one category. There are five occurrences of mixed expressive speech acts in this study, namely thanking and complimenting; thanking, complimenting, and exclamation; thanking and rejoice; thanking and congratulating; and surprise and disagreement. Here are two data on mixed expressive speech acts and their explanations:

(7) *SL : Mister co-writer's insight is, as always, extremely helpful!*
TL : Masukan dari Tuan Asisten, seperti biasa, sangat membantu!
(data 29)

(8) *SL : Thank you and congratulations, you two!*
TL : Terima kasih, dan selamat, ya, kalian berdua!
(data 126)

Translation quality

In this part, researcher tries to assess the translation quality of each and all expressive speech acts that appear as data. Due to the large number of data, this part only describes some data that are representative of their parts. To facilitate the conclusion of the analysis, Table 2 contains data on accuracy, readability, and acceptability.

Table 2
The distribution of translation quality

No	Translation Quality		Amount	Percentage (in %)
1	Accuracy	Accurate	154	95
		Less accurate	8	5
2	Readability	Readable	159	98
		Less readable	3	2
3	Acceptability	Acceptable	160	99
		Less acceptable	2	1

From Table 2, it can be seen that accuracy, readability, and acceptability have very good percentages because all three have percentages above or equal to 95%. From this, we can conclude that, in order to create a translation that moves the player, the translation must have above-average quality in terms of accuracy, readability, and acceptability.

Accuracy

Accuracy is a vital aspect of translation. Accuracy defines whether the source language and target language text are equivalent or not (Nababan, 2012). This research finds that, out of 168 data, 162 data are accurate while the leftover 6 are less accurate. One of the accurate data is datum 36 as follows:

(9) *SL : You cross the river by yourself? That's too dangerous!*
TL : Kamu menyebrangi sungai sendirian? Itu berbahaya!
(datum 36)

In contrast, an example of a less accurate translation is on datum 131, with details as follows.

(10) *SL : Well, it is definitely a good deal.*
TL : Yah, boleh juga, sih.
(datum 131)

Readability

Readability defines the ease of understanding or comprehension due to the style of writing (DuBay, 2004). This research finds that, out of 168 data, 165 data are readable while the leftover 3 are less readable. One of the readable data is datum 84. The text is as follows:

(11) *SL* *: Thanks, man.*
TL *: Makasih, ya.*
(datum 84)

Meanwhile, the less readable translation is in datum 28.

(12) *SL* *: Oh, wow! That sounds like it'll be an exciting adventure to draw and write!*
TL *: Oh, wow! Terdengar seperti kisah petualangan yang seru untuk digambar dan ditulis!*
(datum 28)

Acceptability

Acceptability is whether a translation has been expressed in accordance with the rules, norms, and culture that apply in the target language or not (Nababan, 2012). This research finds that, out of 162 data, 160 data are acceptable while the leftover 2 are less acceptable. One of the acceptable data is datum 108. The text is as follows:

(13) *SL* *: Good idea, Bro! Let's go!*
TL *: Ide bagus, Sob! Ayo!*
(datum 108)

Meanwhile, the less acceptable translation is in datum 93 with the following sentence.

(14) *SL* *: I wouldn't ask, but you just offered like the good puppy you are! there, there!*
TL *: Aku tidak minta, tapi kamu sendiri yang menawarkan diri seperti anjing baik! Good boy!*
(datum 93)

DISCUSSION

From the considerations about subcategories of expressive speech acts mentioned previously in the literature review, this study finally recorded 19 types of expressive speech acts, including agreeing, boasting, apologizing, complimenting, condoling, congratulating, deploring, exclamation, fear, forgiving, greeting, lamenting, praising, rejoice, sorrow, surprise, thanking, wishing, and mixed. It can be seen that the distribution of the data is quite even; almost no expressive speech act dominates. In fact, out of 162 data, 3 types of expressive speech acts have the same number of appearances, namely thanking, deploring, and agreeing with a frequency of 15, or only 9.26% each out of a total of 100% data. This phenomenon can be considered as a positive indication of the complexity and diversity of interactions in the game to create a richer and less monotonous experience for players. This spread also reflects the dynamic storyline, with various twists and turns that trigger various emotional reactions from the characters, and indicates that the characters have deep and complex personalities. They are able to show a variety of emotional responses, not limited to one or two types of expressions. The types of speech acts that appear, such as "Sorrow," "Rejoice," and "Condoling," show the expression of emotions between the characters. This creates a depth of relationship between the characters in the narrative.

In addition, the presence of "Apologizing" and "Forgiving" indicates the presence of conflict and resolution in the story. With these types of speech acts, it can be seen that the characters face challenges or situations that require a social response. In addition, most of the positive speech acts, such as thanking, agreeing, wishing, and so forth, are not far from the negative speech acts, such as deploring, apologizing, and lament. This further strengthens the evidence that the storyline in this game has a twist, creates varied character responses, and certainly mixes up the player's emotions. This

is consistent with the hypothesis that expressive speech acts are one of the elements that support the game *A Space for the Unbound* in the realm of psychology with its wordplay.

Kallen and Kirk (2012) discuss pragmatic variation; how speech acts change depending on context and culture. This study reflects their idea by identifying mixed speech acts, where multiple emotions are expressed at once. For example, in datum 126 ("*Thank you and congratulations, you two*!"), the dialogue blends thanking and congratulating, a combination not fully accounted for in Searle's (1976) classic speech act theory. This suggests that interactive media like video games require a more flexible way to understand how speech acts work in emotionally charged settings.

Some representative categories and data are described for a brief look at the data analysis. In data (1) and data (2), the expression of gratitude can be clearly seen because the words "thank you" or "thanks" explicitly appear there. However, in the third data, a little context needs to be taken into consideration here. This dialog appears when the two main characters, Atma and Raya, are talking. It is spoken by Atma when Raya tells him that she has a special power. Prior to this scene, Atma was often confronted with supernatural situations that he did not understand where they came from. Therefore, Atma's response is clearly an expression of gratitude because Raya has indirectly told him that these strange situations come from him. According to Searle's (1976) and Norrick (1978), thanking is a fundamental expressive speech act that conveys the speaker's sense of gratitude. The frequent appearance of thanking in this study reflects how the game emphasizes positive social interactions and the importance of recognizing support between characters. This pattern suggests that the game's narrative is designed to foster emotional connections through the characters' appreciative responses. Waluyo et al. (2018) also highlight that literal accuracy is crucial in preserving the emotional depth of expressive speech acts like thanking. This study supports their claim, as seen in datum 78 ("Thanks, man."), which was translated accurately into "*Makasih, ya.*". However, the casual tone in the Indonesian version reflects the translator's attempt to balance accuracy and cultural acceptability, which is a necessary adaptation to ensure that the emotional nuance resonates with Indonesian audiences.

In data (4), a little context also needs to be considered here. In this scene, the character Nirmala says that she needs a certain book, but she left it at home. Therefore, Atma responds with the above utterance as if she regrets the incident committed by Nirmala. In data (5), the utterance was said by a girl whom Atma had just hit, and then Atma even asked her name even though they both should have known because they were classmates. Data (6), looking at the accompanying exclamation mark, it can be clearly seen that there is annoyance there, where the character Raya expresses her annoyance by insinuating Atma, stating that she has been waiting for Atma for too long. The three dialogs show speech that is expressed negatively due to the influence of others.

Deploring, like thanking, is also prominent in the game's dialogue. This aligns with Norrick's (1978) argument that both positive and negative emotions coexist in natural conversation. The balance between thanking and deploring in this study suggests that the narrative is not one-dimensional; instead, adding complexity to character relationships. However, translating deploring speech acts can be challenging. Waluyo et al. (2018) argue that emotional nuances are often lost when cultural specifics are omitted.

The next most frequent category is agreeing. This category is quite clear and self-explanatory, involving characters who agree with what the others are saying. Some examples are "*Yeah, me neither*" (data 65) and "*Well, it is definitely a good deal*" (data 131). Just like thanking and agreeing above, the amount of data that appears in the agreeing category proves that the plot of this game is full of intrigue and interactions between characters that have their own twist. Searle (1976) suggests that agreeing helps maintain social harmony, and this study confirms that it plays a significant role in establishing cooperative dialogue among characters. While Nurhidayah (2013) argues that translators often prioritize readability over accuracy, this study finds that agreeing speech acts maintain both. For example, datum 131 ("*Well, it is definitely a good deal.*") maintains the conversational tone while accurately conveying affirmation, despite being mild, in the target language.

The next interesting type of expressive speech act is lamenting, which amounts to 11. According to Norrick (1978), lamenting means the speaker expresses their own misfortune. Simply put, lamenting can mean regretting or blaming oneself or also regretting something. One example that appears in the data is the utterances "*I was kinda worried, and not really confident about it at all*" and "*And I made it worse...*", spoken by Nirmala and Raya respectively. These types of speech acts, along with the speech acts wishing and apologizing that appear in equal numbers, show that complex emotions also play a role in the players' interactions. All three speech acts reflect social awareness and empathy between characters, where they feel the need to apologize or express sadness for certain events, along with evidence of story elements that contain sadness or regret and a strong desire to achieve something, which may reflect challenges or obstacles that characters have to face.

Meanwhile, although expressions of sadness can fall into the lamenting and condoling categories, according to Ronan (2015), sadness is expressed without clarity on who the object of the expression of sadness can fall into the sorrow category. Sorrow is an expressive speech act that is a combination of lamenting and condoling. In this study, 9 sorrow utterances were found, more than lamenting (11 appearances) and condoling (6 appearances). This shows an interesting phenomenon that suggests that the plot in this game has more expressions of sorrow than sympathy for the sorrows of others. This finding also reflects Guiraud et al.'s (2011) argument that speech acts are based on emotions, which are then divided into two: simple emotion and complex emotion. The use of sorrow in this game suggests that the story has complex emotions—it emphasizes personal sadness more than sympathy toward others, creating a deeper emotional connection with players. One example of speech in the sorrow category that appears in this study is "*Oh, no...*" (data 1) with the context that Atma reads a story about a princess who eventually has to leave and part with her friend. In the subsequent narration, it is seen that Atma regrets the end of the story until sobbing, showing that she feels sympathy for the princess character, but also feels the same sadness.

Perhaps the most unique contribution of this study is the identification of mixed expressive speech acts, a phenomenon that Searle's (1976) framework does not explicitly account for. In interactive media, emotional responses often blend categories, reflecting the dynamic storytelling in video games. This study highlights how characters convey layered emotions, as seen in Datum 126, where thanking and congratulating are seamlessly combined. The challenge lies in ensuring that both emotional tones are preserved without prioritizing one over the other, which is crucial for maintaining the emotional authenticity of the narrative. Data (7), for example, is a mix between thanking and complimenting. The complimenting part is quite clear from the sentence which praises that Mister Co-writer (Atma) is always helpful.

Additionally, in context, in this scene, Nirmala is experiencing writer's block and does not know how to end her story, so Atma gives her an idea for her storyline. Nirmala agreed to hear Atma's idea, making the expression in this sentence contain the context of thanking. Meanwhile, in data (8), the utterance can be easily classified as a mixture of thanking and congratulating because it is clearly written in the utterance. In this scene, the context is that a ticketing cashier speaks this dialogue in a movie theater, thanks Atma and Raya for buying two movie tickets, and congratulates them because there is a special screening promotion for the movie so they can watch the movie with a buy 1 get 1 free promotion.

From the results and some explanations above, several research questions underlying this study were answered, namely the types of expressive speech acts that appear in the game (19 in total, 1 of which is a mixture of several speech acts), the role of expressive speech acts in evoking the player's heart, namely describing a narrative full of twists and characterization rich in interaction, and what the most frequent expressive speech acts are so that players can be moved emotionally because the characters can show a variety of emotional responses, not limited to one or two types of expressions.

This study only analyzes speech acts from the prologue and Chapter 1 of *A Space for the Unbound*, which may not fully represent how expressive speech acts are used throughout the entire game. Future research could examine more chapters to provide a fuller picture of how speech acts develop across the whole narrative. Additionally, this study focuses on classifying speech acts without considering

player interpretation. Future studies could explore how players perceive and respond to different speech acts, providing a deeper understanding of their emotional impact.

Translation quality

In this part, researcher tries to assess the translation quality of each expressive speech act that appears as data. Due to the large number of data, this part only describes some data which are representative of their parts.

The first one is accuracy. In datum (9), the translation into Indonesian is quite literal. However, the literal translation still succeeds in maintaining the text's real meaning as well as impression. Both the English and Indonesian texts have the same vibe of the feeling of surprise and worry. Thus, this is a good example of an accurate translation of expressive speech acts. However, in datum (10), while the word "*well*" is accurately translated as "*yah*", giving the same laidback expression, the word "*definitely*" is ironically omitted and replaced with "*sih*", despite the two-word having a totally different meaning. The word "definitely" has a meaning that something is absolute and unquestionable, while the word "*sih*" gives the impression that the speaker has some objection about what they are talking about and still questioning that thing. This datum is considered less accurate. However, while the Indonesian translation gives a different vibe, it sounds familiar and relates to Indonesian. Thus, it looks like the translation in this part focused on acceptability rather than accuracy. This study not only supports Nababan et al.'s (2012) claim that accuracy is the most important factor in maintaining the original meaning but also suggests that minor sacrifices in accuracy (as seen in datum 10) can make dialogue feel more relatable to the target audience. This is particularly important in video games, where player immersion is often prioritized over strict linguistic precision.

The next one is readability. This research finds that, out of 168 data, 165 data are readable while the leftover 3 are less readable. One of the readable data is datum (11). In this datum, the translator translated the text with non-standard language, which can be seen from the translation of "*makasih*" which is a non-standard form of "*thank you*". The word "*ya*" is also added there to replace the complement "*man*" which is a word of greeting, making the Indonesian sentence sound more fluid and understandable. An example of a less readable translation is datum (12). The text in this datum tends to be difficult to translate because it is a long sentence, even from the source text itself. Readers may find it difficult to catch the meaning of this sentence in one reading because of the long text. In addition, words that tend to be difficult to read, such as "*terdengar seperti*" and the long word "*petualangan*" are used, making the reader's reading experience somewhat disrupted. However, it should be noted that the target age range of A Space for the Unbound is teenagers, so long and complex sentences are acceptable within certain limits as long as the length and complexity are still reasonable for teenage players. Both Nababan et al. (2012) and Nurhidayah (2013) agree that readability is essential for a successful translation, particularly in entertainment media. Similar to Nurhidayah's (2013) findings in film translations, this study shows that casual language in translations (e.g., datum 84) prioritizes familiarity and ease of understanding. However, unlike Nurhidayah's (2013) study, which links readability issues to cultural differences, this research identifies syntactic complexity (datum 28) as a major factor affecting readability. This difference may be due to the media format; films follow a linear narrative, while video games have interactive dialogue that requires active player engagement.

The last aspect of quality assessment to be considered is acceptability. This research finds that, out of 162 data, 160 data are acceptable while the leftover 2 are less acceptable. One of the acceptable data is datum (13). The context in this datum occurs when Atma advises the three high school thugs to buy a bowl of meatballs. Therefore, the phrase "*let's go*" which is translated as "*ayo*" really fits the context since they aim to go somewhere. In addition, what is interesting about this sentence and an acceptable element is the word "*Bro*" which is translated as "*Sob*". Although it stands for "*brother*", the use of "*bro*" in social settings is a substitute for the word friend. Therefore, given the translation's emphasis on youth and also the context of the situation in which a gang spoke the dialog of high school kids, the word "*sob*" which stands for the word *sobat* ("*buddy*"), is acceptable in terms of

Indonesian cultural context. The less acceptable part is on datum (14). The problem of acceptability in this datum is at the end, where the phrase "*good boy*" appears. In Indonesian-language video game dialog, this sudden appearance of English may be difficult for players to accept. Moreover, there is no correlation between the use of English and the character who utters it. Thus, the translation of "*there, there*" in this dialog, which is translated into "*good boy*", can be said to be not in accordance with the norms and rules of Indonesian. Nababan et al. (2012) emphasize that acceptability depends on cultural alignment. Our findings confirm this: translations that reflect Indonesian social norms (like using "*Sob*") are well-received. However, when translations break cultural expectations, such as using English in datum (14), the acceptability decreases. This suggests that cultural consistency is as important as linguistic accuracy in creating a natural player experience.

The translation quality analysis is limited to English-to-Indonesian translations. This focus does not consider how expressive speech acts are translated into other languages. Future research could compare multiple language pairs to explore how cultural and linguistic differences influence translation accuracy, readability, and acceptability. Additionally, this study relies on linguistic analysis to assess translation quality but does not include player feedback. Future studies could gather direct responses from players to better understand how translation choices affect comprehension and emotional engagement.

CONCLUSION

This research succeeds in finding out the research questions, which are the expressive speech acts that appear in the prologue and Chapter 1 of *A Space of the Unbound*, which speech acts appear the most to establish the story's plot and tease the player's emotion, and whether the translation quality into Indonesian is good enough to attract Indonesian gamers' attention as much as it does English speaker gamers.

This study shows that *A Space for the Unbound* uses a wide range of expressive speech acts to bring its story to life and create a deep emotional connection with players. With 19 different types of expressive speech acts, especially thanking, deploring, and agreeing, which appear most frequently, the game reflects the complex emotions and dynamic relationships between its characters. Given the complexity of human emotions, some of these speech acts may come from multiple emotional contexts, making it hard to fit them into just one category. It can be said that the intentional use of varied expressive speech acts is designed to stir players' emotions—and the developer has successfully achieved this. In addition, there are no expressive speech acts that are the most dominant. Combining the fact that a lot of expressive speech act categories appear in this research, this might mean that A Space for the Unbound has already prepared its twisted narrative and emotional aspect from the prologue and Chapter 1. Even from the start, the players are already exposed to multiple characters with their various relationships with each other and a vast narrative that is full of twists and turns, resulting in the players being tempted and immersed in the story. This variety suggests that the developers deliberately crafted the dialogue to draw players into the story and evoke a range of emotions right from the beginning. The Indonesian translation of these expressive speech acts is also highly effective, with accuracy, readability, and acceptability, all scoring above 95%. While some minor adjustments to accuracy were made, these changes seem intentional to ensure the translation feels natural and emotionally engaging for Indonesian players.

Overall, the game successfully combines rich dialogue and high-quality translation to create a narrative that pulls players in and moves them emotionally. Future research could explore how language and translation affect players' feelings and perceptions, offering even deeper insights into how interactive storytelling shapes the player experience and contributes to Indonesia's growing gaming industry.

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