



Unscripted Emotions: Analyzing Expressive Speech Acts in the Korean Talk Show Titled *No Prepare*

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ABSTRACT

Most studies on expressive speech acts in Korean have primarily focused on theoretical frameworks, with limited attention to their use in informal and spontaneous contexts. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates expressive speech acts in the YouTube reality show *No Prepare* Season 2. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research centers on the host's utterances to examine the forms and functions of expressive speech acts. The findings indicate that most expressive acts are delivered indirectly, reflecting the host's preference for implicit emotional expression. Emotions such as happiness and surprise were the most frequently observed, reinforcing the show's lighthearted and positive tone. In contrast, expressions of anger and dislike were strategically employed as humor to

highlight the guests' appeal. This demonstrated that expressive speech in this context serves both emotional and entertainment purposes. Emotional openness was greater in close or equal relationships, while social distance led to more restrained expression. Nevertheless, the host's communicative style which marked by humor, politeness, and spontaneity enabled smooth and engaging interactions across different social dynamics.

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INTRODUCTION

Expressive speech acts are a type of language use that reflects the speaker's psychological or emotional state toward a particular situation. According to Searle (1967), this category includes expressions of gratitude, regret, apology, surprise, and admiration. Unlike representative speech acts, which focus on conveying propositional truth, expressive speech acts aim to directly communicate the speaker's feelings or attitudes.

In pragmatic studies, expressive speech acts play a crucial role not only in conveying meaning but also in fostering interpersonal relationships between speakers and listeners (Searle, 1976; 1979). Tribus (2017) emphasizes that one key feature of expressive acts is the use of interjections or emotionally motivated expressions. In Korean, such expressions often appear as interjections like *aigo*, *heol* and *daebak* which convey emotions such as surprise, sadness, admiration, or disbelief. These expressions reflect cultural norms and the Korean way of expressing emotions.

However, expressive speech acts can pose challenges in cross-cultural communication, particularly for non-native Korean learners. Differences in cultural norms, values, and linguistic habits may lead to misunderstandings in interpreting or producing emotional expressions. Inaccurate use of expressive acts can be perceived as impolite, insensitive, or disruptive to interpersonal harmony. As noted by Lee (2010), expressive speech acts often come with an expectation that the listener will emotionally resonate with the speaker's feelings, making emotional engagement a key component.

Key challenge in studying expressive speech acts lies in the limited understanding of how their forms, functions, and meanings shift across social and cultural contexts. Often idiomatic and highly context-dependent, these expressions are difficult to interpret uniformly, particularly in cross-cultural settings where variations in emotional expression may result in misunderstanding or communication breakdowns. Against this backdrop, the present study examines expressive speech acts in Korean by analyzing their linguistic forms, pragmatic functions, and links to Korean socio-cultural norms. The aim is to enhance our understanding of how emotions and attitudes are verbally conveyed across cultures, thereby contributing to broader insights into cross-cultural communication.

Previous studies have addressed expressive speech acts from various perspectives. Lee (2010) focused on the characteristics and usage patterns of expressive acts in Korean

social interactions. Through a literature review, Lee identified gaps in Searle's (1969) theory, proposing a more concrete definition and classification that includes the listener's role. Lee's framework categorizes expressive acts based on (1) their position in conversation (e.g., opening or responsive acts), (2) communicative goals (e.g., eliciting empathy vs. not), and (3) the speaker's and listener's attitudes (e.g., positive vs. negative tones). These acts can express a range of emotions, including admiration, anger, gratitude, and hatred.

Jeong & Shin (2013) took an interdisciplinary approach by combining linguistic theory with emotion psychology to classify expressive speech acts based on six basic human emotions: happiness, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, and fear. They also differentiated between direct expressions which often using interjections and indirect expressions conveyed through statements or questions. Meanwhile, Kim (2021) examined how expressive speech acts and their responses are represented in intermediate-level Korean textbooks. Using the basic emotion framework, Kim found that happiness was the most frequently expressed emotion, with limited variation in emotional responses. This suggests a lack of emphasis on emotional dimensions in Korean language education, despite their importance for interpersonal and intercultural communication.

Previous studies have examined expressive speech acts in Korean from perspectives such as emotional psychology (Jeong & Shin, 2013), interactional features (Lee, 2010), and language education (Kim, 2021). However, these works remain largely theoretical and overlook spontaneous conversation. This study addresses that gap by analyzing expressive speech acts in informal and unscripted interactions from the Korean YouTube show *No Prepare* season 2 which offering insight into their use in natural discourse.

This study seeks to answer the following research question: How are expressive speech acts realized in the Korean YouTube program *No Prepare* season 2? The aim is to identify and analyze the forms and functions of expressive speech acts based on their contextual use. Theoretically, this study contributes to Korean pragmatics by enhancing our understanding of emotional expression in informal communication. Practically, it offers insights for Korean language learners seeking to express emotions more naturally in daily conversations. Additionally, it sheds light on the role of expressive speech acts in building social bonds and interpersonal relationships within Korean culture.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods to analyze the forms of expressive speech acts in spoken Korean discourse. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth understanding of meaning in communicative practices, particularly within naturally occurring social contexts (Nartin et al., 2024). Specifically, this approach is used to examine how emotions are expressed through language in spontaneous interactions featured in the second season of the *No Prepare* program. The descriptive method is applied to identify, classify, and explain patterns of expressive speech acts based on their social and linguistic contexts (Ramdhan, 2021). This method allows for a systematic and detailed presentation of the linguistic phenomena under investigation.

The data for this study are drawn from transcripts of episodes 14 to 24 of the second season of *No Prepare*, totaling 11 episodes. The analysis focuses on the speech of the host, due to their role as an active listener and emotional respondent to the stories or statements shared by the guests. In contrast, the speech of the guests is not the primary focus, as it tends to be more declarative and informative in nature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings on Expressive Acts

The analysis of *No Prepare* Season 2 identified 203 data of expressive speech acts used by the host, Lee Young Ji. These data were categorized based on the classifications proposed by Jeong & Shin (2013) and Lee (2010), as summarized in the table below. This study adopts Jeong and Shin's framework, which distinguishes between direct speech acts, typically expressed through interjection, and indirect speech acts which are conveyed through statements or questions.

Table 1. Expressive Speech Acts from *No Prepare* Season 2

No	Expressive Speech Act	Direct Speech Act	Indirect Speech Act
1	Happiness Speech Acts		
	- Expression of gratitude	2	8
	- Expression of admiration	22	27
	- Expression of praise	2	2
	- Expression of welcome	1	7

	- Expression of confidence	1	5
	- Expression of hope	0	7
	- Expression of mild complaint	0	1
	- Expression of positive impression	0	6
	subtotal	28	63
2	Sadness Speech Acts		
	- Expression of complaint	0	3
	subtotal	0	3
3	Surprise Speech Acts		
	- Expression of admiration	33	30
	- Expression of concern	4	1
	- Expression of confidence	3	0
	- Expression of complaint	1	1
	subtotal	41	32
4	Anger Speech Acts		
	- Expression of complaint	1	2
	- Outburst	0	6
	- Expression of anger	0	3
	subtotal	1	11
5	Dislike/Hatred Speech Acts		
	- Expressions of complaint	1	1
	- Expressions of disappointment	0	1
	- Expressions of jealousy	0	9
	- Expressions of hatred	1	1
	subtotal	2	12
6	Fear Speech Acts		
	- Expressions of complaint	1	0
	- Expressions of worry	4	4
	- Expressions of apology	0	1
	subtotal	5	5
	TOTAL	77	126

The analysis of *No Prepare* Season 2 reveals two main types of expressive speech acts: 38% direct and 62% indirect. This indicates the host's preference for indirect emotional expression in informal yet public interactions. Happiness and surprise are the most frequently occurring categories in both forms. Happiness is mostly expressed indirectly (69%) due to limited interjections in Korean, while indirect forms allow for a wider range of emotions such as hope, confidence, and positive impressions. In contrast, surprise tends to be expressed directly (56%) because of its spontaneous nature.

Negative emotions like dislike (86%) and anger (92%) are predominantly conveyed indirectly, reflecting politeness norms and the need to maintain social harmony. Sadness appears only in indirect forms, while fear shows a balanced distribution between direct

and indirect expressions. Notably, admiration is the most common subcategory in both happiness and surprise, though used in different contexts: admiration of traits in happiness, and of novelty in surprise. In some cases, expressions of happiness are paired with complaints for humorous effect. Overall, the data highlight the strategic use of indirectness in expressing emotion, particularly for managing face and maintaining rapport in Korean discourse. Following the overview of distribution patterns, this study highlights representative examples to illustrate the characteristics of each type of expressive speech act in greater detail.

1. Happiness Speech Acts

According to Jeong & Shin (2013), expressions of admiration are classified as a type of happiness speech act, which can be conveyed using interjections such as *ah*, *aa*, and *oh*. The following is an example of an expression of admiration delivered through direct speech act.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| (1) | a. <i>Oh! neomu yeppeuda.</i> | 'Oh! So beautiful.' |
| | b. <i>Oh! gwiyeowo.</i> | 'Oh! Cute.' |
| | c. <i>Ua! 'Jang Ki Ha'da. Annyeonghaseyo.</i> | 'Ua! That's Jang Ki Ha. Hello' |
| | d. <i>Heo! Neomu yeppeo, neomu yeppeuda.</i> | 'Heo! Very beautiful, very beautiful.' |

Data (1a) and (1b) show utterances that occurred when the interlocutor (guest) showed a photo of their pet dog to the host. The interjection *oh* was used not only as a reaction to the photo but also as a way for the host to express interest in the interlocutor. Additionally, this conversation took place between participants who were not yet familiar with each other. Therefore, such utterances can also serve to ease the atmosphere and build rapport in social interactions, facilitating smoother communication.

Meanwhile, in data (1c) and (1d), admiration is expressed using the interjections *ua* and *heo*. Although these interjections are not included in Jeong & Shin's (2013) classification of interjections for happiness-related expressive acts, both *ua* and *heo* are listed in the Standard Korean Language Dictionary. According to the dictionary, *ua* is used when something unexpectedly good happens which aligns with the context of data (1c), where the interjection is used when the host expresses joy or admiration upon meeting

someone they idolize. On the other hand, *heo* can be used in various emotional contexts such as happiness, sadness, anger, or worry. In the case of data (1d), *heo* is used to express delight and admiration toward the interlocutor's appearance. Furthermore, this utterance occurs at the beginning of the conversation, suggesting that this type of interjection also carries a pragmatic function as a conversational opener in social interaction.

Admiration can also be expressed indirectly, as seen in data (2) where the host shows appreciation for the interlocutor's drawing. The utterance not only conveys praise but also helps create a warm and friendly atmosphere. Although no interjection is used, admiration is expressed through positive statements. Furthermore, happiness is sometimes communicated indirectly and, in certain cases like data (3), is uniquely expressed through utterances that take the form of a complaint.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| (2) | a. <i>Jinjja jal geurinda.</i> | 'You draw very well.' |
| | b. <i>Eonnineun jinjja yesulinida. Chamyesulin.</i> | 'You are a true artist. A true artist.' |
| (3) | <i>Geuman nawasseumyeon jogetneun geurubi hana isseoyo.</i> | 'There's one group that I hope won't appear on this show again.' |

Utterance (3) literally expresses a wish for a particular group not to appear on the show again. It explicitly conveys a complaint, as the host seems tired of the group's frequent appearances. However, the utterance is delivered jokingly. The implicature suggests that the host is actually pleased but pretends to be bored by the group's return. This aligns with Zuo's (2023) concept of humblebrag, a speech strategy marked by a mismatch between a positive intent (praise or satisfaction) and a negative form (complaint or self-deprecation). In entertainment contexts, such strategies are not only accepted but also perceived as humorous and engaging. Thus, the main purpose of the utterance is to create a lighthearted atmosphere and entertain the audience through unexpected humor.

2. Surprise Speech Acts

Jeong & Shin (2013) note that direct expressions of surprise are commonly conveyed through interjections such as *kkamjjagiya*, *eomeo*, *a*, *aa*, *aya*, *aigo*, *at*, *ya*, *eog*, *geurae*, *mwo*, *eomeona*, and *eomeomeo*. In addition to these, this study also identifies *ua* as newly observed interjection expressing surprise. The following is an example illustrating the use of *ua* in this context.

- (4) a. *Ua! doege joheun sulida.* 'Ua! This drink is really delicious.'
 b. *Ua! igeo naemsae bwa. Ua! igeo michinnomida.* 'Ua! Smell this. Ua! This is absolutely insane.'

Based on data (4), this study finds that the interjection *ua* can express not only happiness but also direct surprise, particularly as a form of admiration. In this case, the interjection reflects a spontaneous response, as the host is both surprised and impressed by the appearance of an alcoholic drink they are seeing for the first time. The expression conveys not only amazement but also appreciation and gratitude toward the guest's gift.

Beyond admiration, complaints can also be part of direct expressions of surprise. An example can be seen in data (5), which captures a conversation between the host and a well-known football player. During the interaction, the guest is signing a soccer ball provided by the host. The interjection *eog*, classified by Jeong & Shin (2013) as a marker of surprise, is used here to express both the host's astonishment and complaint about the guest's habit of changing his autograph every year. The host comments that this practice could damage the guest's public image. Although framed as a complaint, the utterance is made in a playful, joking manner and is understood positively by the guest, as it ultimately shows the host's concern. The intent is to build rapport and foster a sense of closeness in the social interaction.

- (5) *Eog! geureomyeon an doegi gichiga tteoreojjanha yangbana.*
 'Eog! You shouldn't do that, it hurts your dignity, you know, gentleman!'

In contrast to direct expressions, surprise can also be conveyed indirectly, as shown in the following example. The conversation takes place between the host and a guest who is a well-known actress. In this scene, the host is both surprised and impressed to learn that the actress personally sold her used books to buyers.

- (6) Guest: *Da ilgeun geoneun ije danggeun makete doege ssage junggo geogiedaga haegajigo jugo dasi chaewonohneun geoe dasi gippeumeul neukkigo.*
 'The books I've finished reading, I list them on Danggeun Market at a really

- low price as used items, and then I feel joy again when I refill the shelf.’
- Host : *Jinjja? eonniga danggeune jigjeob nagayo hogsi?*
 ‘Really? Do you actually go on Danggeun yourself?’
 (Guest nods in response)
- Host : *Jinjja? Moja sseugo maseukeu sseugo?*
 ‘Really? You go in disguise with a hat and a mask?’
 (Guest nods in response)
- Host : *Jinjja?*
 ‘Really?’

Data (6) demonstrates that indirect expressions of surprise can take the form of admiration. The repeated use of *jinjja* (really) emphasizes the host’s emotional reaction, combining astonishment with respect. While the utterance functions to confirm what was heard, it also signals genuine emotional engagement. This type of response helps create a more relaxed atmosphere and strengthens rapport between the host and interlocutor.

3. Hatred Speech Acts

Expressions of dislike can be conveyed both directly and indirectly. Direct expressions are typically used to voice complaints or displeasure. For example, in data (7), the host complains when their production staff members fails to respond to a joke. Such casual interactions between cast members and production staff are typical in Korean reality shows, where unscripted, behind-the-scenes moments are part of the entertainment. In contrast, data (8) illustrates a more indirect expression of dislike, specifically through a statement of jealousy, as it is considered a form of a hatred speech act.

- (7) *Eoh-oh! Neomu sujan tteoreojineun yumeora amudo otji mothandaneun jeom.*
 ‘Eoh-oh! The humor is so low-level that no one can laugh at it.’
- (8) *Neomu jiltuna michingeo aniya?*
 ‘I’m so jealous. Isn’t this insane?’

According to the Standard Korean Language Dictionary, the interjection *eoh-oh* is used when the speaker feels that something is not going as planned. This aligns with data (7) in which the host fails to make those around them laugh with a joke. Nevertheless, the use of the interjection helps the host express dissatisfaction and a mild complaint in a humorous

and non-serious way. Thus, such interjections can serve as a subtle means of expressing discontent.

In contrast, data (8) captures a moment when the host expresses jealousy toward the guest, as the staff enthusiastically praise the guest's beauty after she wears a horned helmet, an item the host had also worn earlier but did not receive the same reaction. This utterance reveals the host's feelings of jealousy over the attention given to the guest. In doing so, the host downplays herself while expressing envy. However, rather than being confrontational, the utterance serves to compliment the guest, foster a sense of closeness, and add humor to the interaction through an unconventional style of joking. This kind of expression is categorized as humblebragging, a term defined by Zuo (2023) as a speech strategy where self-deprecation or complaint is used to subtly express pride or admiration. In specific contexts, such as celebrity interviews on television, this style of communication is not only acceptable but often appreciated. As such, the host's ultimate goal is to leave a positive impression of the guest on the audience.

4. Anger Speech Acts

The data show that anger speech acts are generally expressed indirectly, although some are conveyed directly using the interjection *aigo*. In data (9), the host delivers a complaint in a dramatic and raised tone toward a colleague who, despite being married, shows interest in the guest star, An Yu Jin. The use of *aigo* adds a dramatic and humorous effect, allowing the expression of anger to be informal, helping to ease the atmosphere and build closeness in social interactions.

(9) *Aigo aigo! Dabdabhaera. Aigo! Dabdabhae, dabdabhae. Ahyu, gamdognim.*
'Aigo, aigo! This is so frustrating. Aigo! It's really frustrating. Oh dear, director.'

Meanwhile, in indirect speech, expressions of anger are often conveyed through raised tones or shouting. In data (10), the host appears to scold a production staff member who reacts unexpectedly after trying on the host's glasses out of curiosity. The host's response takes the form of a question, used as a strategy to express irritation. However, despite the seemingly angry tone, the utterance is delivered jokingly, adding spontaneity and a relaxed tone to the overall atmosphere.

- (10) Staff : *Ua!*
 ‘Wow’ (while feeling amazed by the guest's beauty after putting on the glasses.)
 Host : *‘Ua’raniyo? Jeogiyo! Jigeum mwo hasineun geoyeyo?*
 ‘Did you just say ‘Wow’? Excuse me! What do you think you're doing right now?’
 Staff : *angyeonggi gabjagi keojyeosse.*
 ‘The glasses suddenly got bigger.’
 Host : *angyeonggi gabjagi keojyeossdago?*
 ‘The glasses got bigger all of a sudden?’

Based on data (10), the host raises their voice in a mock-angry tone, appearing annoyed after production staff teased them for having a large face, making the glasses look oversized. Meanwhile, the same staff praised the guest for looking good in those glasses. This perceived irritation stems from the unequal attention given to the guest, and the host expresses mild frustration in response. However, it is important to note that in the context of Korean reality shows, especially during filming in casual, improvised settings, expressions of anger are rarely sincere or emotionally charged. Hosts are primarily expected to entertain, and as such, speech acts of anger are often stylized and humorous rather than genuine. In this case, the host’s “anger” functions more as a rhetorical device to liven up the conversation, add humor, and build rapport with both the guest and the production staff. The raised tone and mock irritation are performative elements, commonly used in entertainment settings to maintain a dynamic and engaging atmosphere.

5. Fear Speech Acts

In the second season of *No Prepare*, fear speech acts are often used to express concern or anxiety, as illustrated in data (11). In data (11a), the host directly expressed fear during a game that involved answering questions truthfully with the guest. Her anxiety stemmed from a suspicion that the questions might be intended as traps.

- (11) a. *Ha! museowo. jyaee nun museowo. angwangi eobseo ijeneun.*
 ‘Ha! It’s scary. Her eyes are scary. There's no glint in them anymore.’

b. *Museowo. na beolsseo yaggan jom gi ppallyeosseo. a igeo gi ppalli an doeneunde giga nullimyeon an dwae, naega deo sse.*

'I'm scared. I already feel a bit drained. No, I can't lose my energy like this. I can't be overwhelmed, I'm stronger.'

Meanwhile, from data (11b), the host appears worried and slightly intimidated after hearing the loud and powerful voice of the upcoming guest. Speaking to herself, the host spontaneously articulates her fear and apprehension. While this utterance reflects a moment of vulnerability, it also serves an entertainment function. By exaggerating her emotional response in a relatable and humorous way, the host creates a lighthearted atmosphere and reveals a more human side of herself. This strategy is particularly effective in reality shows, where spontaneous reactions help foster emotional connection with the audience and sustain the show's engaging and dynamic tone.

6. Sadness Speech Acts

As noted earlier, this study did not identify any direct expressions of sadness speech acts. Instead, a representative example of indirect sadness is found in the following utterance, where the host expresses feelings of emotional discomfort and disappointment due to perceived unequal treatment by the addressee. This sense of exclusion is conveyed through a subtle, lighthearted complaint, functioning as an indirect sadness speech act.

(12) *Jeo gunggeumhange itneundeyo. Jaebeom-nim wae jeohante maleul an noheuseyo? Jinjja seounhan ge jeohui tim oppadeulhanten da maleul noheuseyo. Jeorang han 2~3 sal chai naneun oppadeulhante da mareul nohaeumyeonseo jeohanteneun 'Yeongji ssi, Yeongji-nim.*

'I have something I'm curious about. Jaebeom-nim, why don't you speak casually with me? Honestly, it kind of hurts my feelings because you speak informally with all the guys on my team. They're only about 2-3 years older than me, and you speak casually with them, but with me, it's always 'Youngji-ssi' or 'Youngji-nim.'"

In data (12), the host's utterance reveals a desire for recognition and equal treatment, which serves to foster interpersonal closeness and solidarity. Although the host

communicates emotional discomfort, the utterance remains within the bounds of politeness, avoiding confrontation and preserving the flow of interaction. Rather than directly voicing dissatisfaction, the host employs a strategic and emotionally nuanced comment that hints at sadness. This face-saving and indirect approach is particularly effective in the context of Korean entertainment shows, where maintaining harmony and social decorum is crucial.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the diverse use of expressive speech acts in the Korean reality show *No Prepare Season 2*. The analysis demonstrates that indirect expressions are more prevalent than direct ones, with emotional expressions such as happiness and surprise appearing most frequently. These findings reflect the overall lighthearted and positive nature of the show's interactions. Expressions of admiration were particularly common and often overlapping with emotions like joy and astonishment. This suggests that admiration functions as a key strategy for expressing positive affect in Korean speech. The use of interjections also plays an important role; forms like *oh*, *iya*, *eomeo* and others serve not only to convey emotion but also to build atmosphere and rhythm in conversation. Some interjections observed, such as *ua* and *aigo*, extend beyond their traditional roles, showing flexibility depending on context and pragmatic function.

The relationship between the host and guests was also found to shape how emotions are expressed. When the speaker and listener shared closer familiarity or smaller age gaps, speech acts tended to be more spontaneous and emotionally rich. In contrast, less familiarity or wider age differences often led to more cautious or restrained emotional displays. However, the host's communicative style which characterized by a balance of humor, openness, and politeness helped facilitate comfortable interactions regardless of social distance. While the findings offer insight into expressive strategies in informal Korean discourse, the scope is limited to one speaker in a single entertainment program. Future studies may benefit from examining a wider range of contexts and participants to better understand the sociopragmatic patterns of expressive speech in Korean.

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