

Expressive Utterances in Online Guest Reviews in Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok Hotel: A Pragmatic Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines expressive utterances in guest reviews to identify their types and the linguistic markers that realize them. In the digital era, online guest reviews have become an influential form of electronic word-of-mouth that shapes public perceptions of hotel service quality. These reviews frequently contain expressive utterances that reveal guests' emotional evaluations of their experiences. This study aims to identify the types of expressive utterances and examine the linguistic markers and politeness strategies used in online guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok Hotel. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the data were drawn from 28 purposively selected TripAdvisor reviews and analyzed using document analysis procedures. The analysis was guided by Speech Act Theory and Politeness Strategy Theory, following the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal ten types of expressive utterances, namely praise, appreciation, compliment, gratitude, complaint, criticism, regret, blame, anxiety, and negative recommendation, with compliments, appreciation, and complaints occurring most frequently. Positive expressive utterances are primarily realized through evaluative adjectives and intensifiers, while negative utterances tend to employ negation, contrastive structures, hedging, and narrative framing to mitigate face-threatening acts. These results demonstrate that expressive utterances in online hotel reviews function not only as emotional expressions but also as pragmatic strategies shaped by politeness considerations in digital communication.

Keywords: Expressive Utterances; Hospitality Communication; Online Reviews; Politeness Strategy; Speech Act Theory.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, online reviews have become one of the most influential sources of information for travelers in making decisions about hotels and other hospitality services. As Sparks and Browning (2011) explain, online reviews act as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) that shapes consumer perceptions of trust and service quality. These reviews often contain expressions of the writer's emotions, such as satisfaction, appreciation, disappointment, or criticism, which in linguistic terms are known as expressive utterances (Sifianou,

1999; Silitonga, 2022). According to Searle (1969), expressive utterances are illocutionary acts that reveal the speaker's psychological states, including praise, gratitude, complaint, or regret.

Guest reviews posted online represent an interesting medium for studying these expressive acts because they reflect not only individual feelings but also cultural communication norms. Leech (2016) emphasizes that pragmatics focuses on meaning in context, and expressive speech acts are among the most context-dependent forms of communication. Through their choice of words, reviewers construct meaning that conveys emotional evaluation while maintaining politeness or social appropriateness (Austin, 1975).

Several previous studies have examined speech acts in digital communication. For instance, Carter (2019) analyzed expressive utterances in hotel guest reviews and found that reviewers often use emotional adjectives and intensifiers to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Reed (2020) explored the role of emotion in online reviews, showing how linguistic forms of expression contribute to readers' perception of credibility. Thompson (2021) focused on customer reviews in travel websites and identified expressive acts such as praise, gratitude, and complaint as the most dominant categories. These studies confirm that expressive utterances play a vital role in online interaction; however, they rarely focus on the linguistic strategies used to soften or intensify these expressions within a specific cultural or institutional context (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Sudarmawan et al., 2022).

Based on that gap, this study analyses expressive utterances found in guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok, one of Indonesia's well-known hotels. The focus is on identifying the types of expressive utterances and examining the linguistic markers that characterize them. In addition, this research applies Politeness Strategy Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to explain how guests deliver positive or negative evaluations while managing politeness and face-saving concerns.

The objectives of this study are therefore: 1) To classify the types of expressive utterances found in the guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok. 2) To analyze the linguistic markers and politeness strategies that signal these utterances. The findings of this research are expected to contribute theoretically to pragmatic studies, especially in understanding how expressive speech acts operate in digital discourse, and practically to the hospitality industry by helping managers interpret online feedback more effectively.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on identifying expressive utterances in online hotel guest reviews by explicitly linking their linguistic markers to politeness strategies within a specific Indonesian hospitality context. While previous studies have primarily described the types or functions of expressive speech acts in online reviews (Mohammad & Ahmed, 2021; Widayiswara et al., 2023), this research extends prior work by examining how positive and negative expressive utterances are pragmatically realized through evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, hedging, negation, and contrastive structures to manage face and politeness (Astuti, 2022; Supatmiwati et al., 2023). By analyzing guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok Hotel, this study offers a context-specific pragmatic insight into how emotional evaluations are strategically communicated in digital hospitality discourse.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method (Sugiyono, 2019) to explore expressive utterances in guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok. A total of 28 reviews were purposively selected from TripAdvisor, covering the period from January to December 2024. The reviews were chosen for their clear emotional language and expressive content.

The data were collected using a document analysis technique (Mahsun, 2017), where each review was closely read and filtered to identify segments containing expressive speech acts. The expressive utterances were classified into two main categories: positive (e.g., praise, appreciation, compliments, gratitude) and negative (e.g., complaints, criticisms, regrets, blame, negative suggestions). Each utterance was further analyzed to identify its linguistic markers, including evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, hedging devices, negation, and comparative structures (Djamba & Neuman, 2002).

The analysis followed the three-step model of Miles et al. (2014): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Politeness Strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987) was used as a supporting lens to explain how negative expressions were softened or indirectly delivered. Triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing existing theories, comparing with findings from prior studies, and reviewing the analysis with peer discussion (Creswell, 2013).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes expressive illocutionary acts found in guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok, posted on TripAdvisor. A total of 28 expressive utterances were identified, categorized into 10 types. These utterances reflect the guests' emotional and evaluative responses to their hotel experience.

Table 1. Types of Expressive Utterances in Guest Reviews

No	Expressive-Act	Frequency
1	Praise	2 Data (7.1%)
2	Appreciation	5 Data (17.9%)
3	Compliment	7 Data (25.0%)
4	Gratitude	2 Data (7.1%)
5	Criticism	2 Data (7.1%)
6	Regret	2 Data (7.1%)
7	Complaint	3 Data (10.7%)
8	Anxiety	1 Data (3.6%)
9	Negative Recommendation	2 Data (7.1%)
10	Blame	2 Data (7.1%)
Total		28 (100%)

As shown in Table 1, the most common expressive utterance is compliment (25.0%), followed by appreciation (17.9%) and complaint (10.7%). These three categories account for more than half of the total data, suggesting that many guests focus on acknowledging the positive aspects of their stay, while a smaller proportion expresses dissatisfaction.

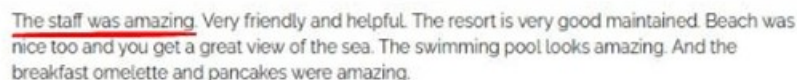
Other types, such as praise, gratitude, criticism, regret, negative recommendation, and blame, each occur with equal frequency (7.1%). Anxiety is the least frequent (3.6%), showing that emotionally charged or worried expressions are less common in the dataset.

3.1. Positive Expressive Utterances

A. Praise

Data 1

"The staff was amazing." — AmritK120 (2 January 2024)



The staff was amazing. Very friendly and helpful. The resort is very good maintained. Beach was nice too and you get a great view of the sea. The swimming pool looks amazing. And the breakfast omelette and pancakes were amazing.

Figure 1. Data 1

Figure 1 illustrates a praise expressive utterance, in which the reviewer uses an intensified evaluative adjective to express strong positive emotion toward the hotel staff's service quality. This utterance is categorized as a praise speech act, in which the reviewer expresses a strong, emotionally charged positive judgment about the hotel's staff. The sentence uses the adjective "amazing", which the Cambridge Dictionary defines as "extremely surprising and good." This word functions as an intensified evaluative marker, conveying that the speaker's expectations were not

merely met, but exceeded. It is important to note that “amazing” is often used in contexts where the experience is considered unusually positive or exceptional, giving it a strong emotional tone of approval.

In addition to the linguistic marker, the sentence’s subject, “the staff”, also reinforces the classification as praise. Praise often targets specific individuals or personalized service, rather than inanimate aspects like rooms or food. By focusing the utterance on staff performance, the reviewer highlights human interaction and service quality, which is central to the nature of praise. The short, declarative structure of the sentence makes the emotional evaluation direct and unambiguous, leaving no doubt about the speaker’s approval.

This utterance differs from compliment or appreciation in several ways. While a compliment may describe something as “nice” or “pleasant” and appreciation may acknowledge something as “good” or “clean,” praise carries an unmistakable tone of high regard and admiration. The use of a superlative-style adjective like “amazing” without hedging, combined with the emphasis on personalized service, elevates the strength of this utterance. In the context of online hospitality reviews, this kind of positive speech act contributes directly to the hotel’s public image by portraying its staff as exceptional.

B. Appreciation

Data 2

“Clean room and have good food.” — roni a (6 January 2024)

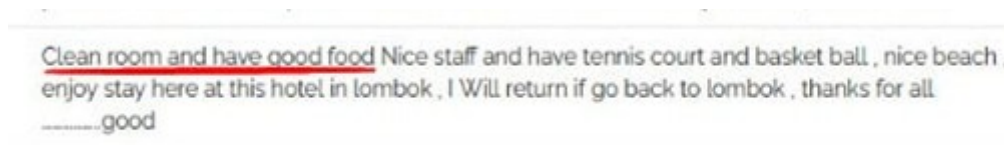


Figure 2. Data 2

Figure 2 presents an appreciation utterance that reflects the reviewer’s satisfaction with basic service attributes, expressed through neutral evaluative adjectives without emotional intensification. This sentence performs the expressive speech act of appreciation, conveying satisfaction with specific aspects of the hotel experience in a factual, emotionally neutral tone. The linguistic markers here are the adjectives “clean” and “good”, which the Cambridge Dictionary defines as “free from dirt or unwanted marks” and “of a high standard or quality,” respectively. These are denotative adjectives that describe basic qualities rather than evoke strong emotions. Their tone suggests that the reviewer found the service acceptable and in line with expectations, rather than exceptional.

Unlike praise, which typically involves emotional intensity and exaggerated terms such as “amazing” or “wonderful,” appreciation reflects a measured acknowledgment of quality. In this utterance, there are no intensifiers like “very” or “really,” no narrative elaboration, and no exclamation marks, all indicators that the speaker is not emotionally overwhelmed but simply noting positive attributes.

Furthermore, the structure of the utterance is simple and compact, offering a list-like evaluation (“clean room” and “good food”) without adjectives modifying the entire experience. This reinforces the impression that the speaker is offering honest, restrained approval based on expected service standards. In the context of hospitality discourse, appreciation functions as a polite endorsement, often culturally influenced by modesty norms, especially in collectivist cultures like Indonesia’s, where exaggerated praise may be seen as inappropriate or boastful. Thus, the utterance expresses approval without enthusiasm, aligning it with the appreciation category.

C. Compliment

Data 3

“Nice hotel on a wonderful beach.” — kevinI1428ME (18 June 2024)

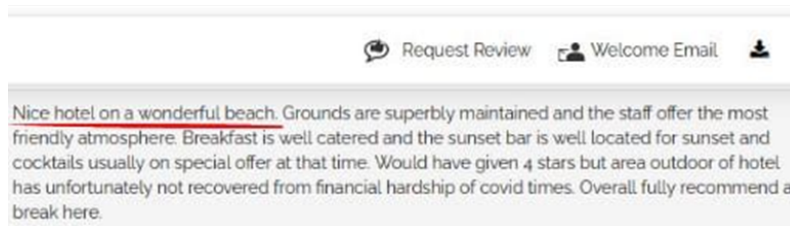


Figure 3. Data 3

Figure 3 shows a compliment-expressive utterance, in which mild positive adjectives are used to politely acknowledge the hotel’s physical environment and surrounding scenery. This utterance is identified as a compliment, a polite expression of admiration, often directed toward external features rather than personal service. The key linguistic markers are the adjectives “nice” and “wonderful.” According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “nice” means “pleasant, enjoyable or attractive,” and “wonderful” is defined as “extremely good.” Both terms express approval, but the tone is milder than praise and more generalized than appreciation.

Compliments typically focus on aesthetic or general experiential elements, such as the hotel’s environment or atmosphere, as is the case here with the emphasis on “hotel” and “beach.” Unlike praise, which often targets personalized service (e.g., “the staff was amazing”), and appreciation, which conveys measured acknowledgment of service features, a compliment is often surface-level and socially polite rather than emotionally deep.

The use of “wonderful” adds a slight degree of intensity to the compliment, but the word “nice,” which is frequently used in everyday interaction, keeps the tone casual and culturally neutral. Compliments may serve a social function in reviews, providing readers with a positive impression without committing the reviewer to strong emotional statements. This aligns with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) idea of positive politeness, where compliments can be used to build rapport or align socially with other readers. Therefore, this utterance is best classified as a compliment due to its balanced tone, focus on setting, and polite expression of approval.

D. Gratitude

Data 4

“Air-conditioner wasn’t working at first, but they arranged the repair team in five minutes and got all things done quickly.” — William W (5 April 2024)



Figure 4. Data 4

Figure 4 depicts a gratitude expressive utterance, highlighting how a problem–solution narrative is used to express thankfulness for the staff’s prompt response and efficient service. This utterance is a clear example of gratitude, expressing thankfulness for a specific action or benefit received. Although the sentence begins with a complaint-like observation, the emphasis quickly shifts to highlight the staff’s responsive action. The primary linguistic markers are “in five minutes” and “quickly,” which function as temporal intensifiers. The Cambridge Dictionary defines “quickly” as “at a fast speed,” emphasizing efficiency, while the phrase “in five minutes” conveys immediacy and attentiveness.

Unlike appreciation, which may praise cleanliness or food without emotional context, gratitude often includes a problem-solution narrative, as seen here. The speaker’s emotional state shifts from dissatisfaction to relief and thankfulness. Though the word “thank you” is not explicitly present, the narrative structure itself functions as an expression of gratitude. This is consistent with Searle’s (1969) view that illocutionary force can be

achieved through context and implication, not just formulaic expressions.

Moreover, the specificity of the time (“five minutes”) highlights a perceived above-and-beyond effort, which distinguishes gratitude from general approval. This utterance reflects a positive shift in emotional state, which serves a pragmatic purpose by reinforcing the hotel’s image. In cultures where indirectness is a common communication strategy, as in Indonesia, such a story-based act of gratitude may feel more natural than simply stating “thank you.” Thus, the linguistic choices and structure of this utterance clearly signal a strong act of gratitude rooted in timely, competent service.

3.2. Negative Expressive Utterances

A. Criticism

Data 5

“It’s not a 5-star resort – more like 3.” — Paul H (26 April 2024)

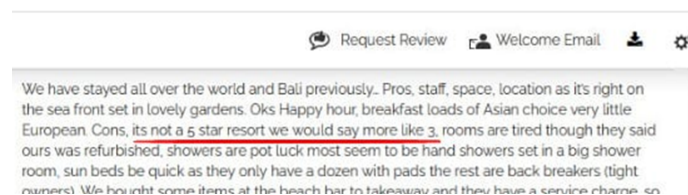


Figure 5. Data 5

Figure 5 illustrates a criticism expressive utterance, marked by negation and comparative evaluation to express dissatisfaction with the hotel’s overall service standard. This utterance is best identified as criticism, where the reviewer delivers a strong evaluative judgment of the hotel’s overall quality. The linguistic markers include the negation “not” and the comparative phrase “more like 3.” According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “not” is used to express denial or contradiction, while “more like” implies a corrected evaluation or downgrade. The phrase “more like 3” redefines the property’s rating, suggesting that the speaker disagrees with its advertised standard.

Unlike a complaint, which is usually limited to one or two service features (e.g., pool, food, checkout), criticism targets the hotel as a whole. The sentence is short, direct, and contains no hedging, which strengthens the illocutionary force of the judgment. It functions as an authoritative reassessment that challenges the hotel’s reputation.

This utterance also differs from suggestion or blame, because it does not offer solutions or assign fault; it simply delivers a harsh reclassification. By using the rating system (5-star vs. 3-star), the speaker appeals to an objective benchmark, making the criticism appear more legitimate and rational rather than emotionally driven. This type of direct comparison is particularly effective in digital reviews, where prospective guests often make decisions based on such numerical cues.

B. Regret

Data 6

“I would not consider staying here again.” — DataQueen062 (7 January 2024)

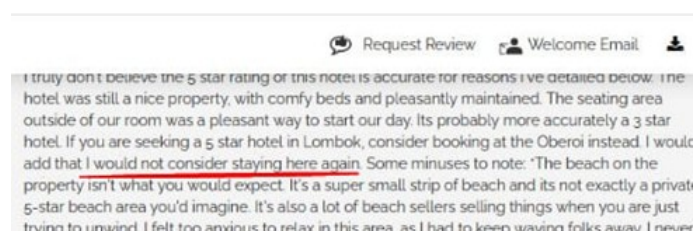


Figure 6. Data 6

Figure 6 presents a regret expressive utterance, indicating the reviewer's negative emotional evaluation through a firm decision not to return to the hotel. This utterance clearly performs the expressive speech act of regret, signaling that the speaker has emotionally processed a negative experience and decided not to repeat it. The linguistic marker here is the modal construction "would not consider," which expresses a hypothetical negated future intention. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "consider" means "to think about something carefully," so "would not consider" implies that the possibility of returning has been deliberately ruled out.


What makes this utterance a strong expression of regret is its tone of finality; there is no elaboration, no anger, and no attempt at justification. The sentence is emotionally restrained, yet conclusive, indicating that the reviewer has moved beyond disappointment to a firm decision. Unlike complaints, which focus on specific problems, or criticism, which often evaluates the overall service, regret expresses an affective decision, often based on accumulated experiences.

This type of speech act is powerful in online reviews because it serves as an indirect warning to other potential guests. It suggests that the negative experiences were strong enough to close the possibility of a return visit. While polite in tone, it still carries a strong negative emotional implication, making it a subtle but effective expressive act in shaping public perception.

C. Complaint

Data 7

"The website advertises with a picture of a pretty cool pool, but it's only for villa guests; the other pool area is worn and not very nice looking." — andreasr709 (2 July 2024)



This place has a «falling apart» feel to it. The hotel, including rooms and pool area, is worn and poorly maintained. The bar serves pizza from the freezer, and try to present it as premium pizza. The website advertises with a picture of a pretty cool pool, but it's only available for villa guests. The other pool area is worn and not very nice looking. The service is awkward, with a lot of fumbling, and the food prices are higher than hotels serving far better food. I genuinely recommend avoiding this hotel.

Figure 7. Data 7

Figure 7 shows a complaint-expressive utterance, where contrastive structures highlight the discrepancy between advertised expectations and the actual guest experience. This utterance exemplifies a complaint, a type of expressive act in which the speaker voices dissatisfaction about a specific mismatch between expectation and reality. The sentence contains the contrastive structure, "but it's only for villa guests," which introduces disappointment after initial optimism. The key linguistic markers are "only," "worn," and "not very nice looking." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "only" can express restriction or exclusion, while "worn" is defined as "damaged because of continuous use," and "not very nice looking" is an understated negative judgment about appearance.

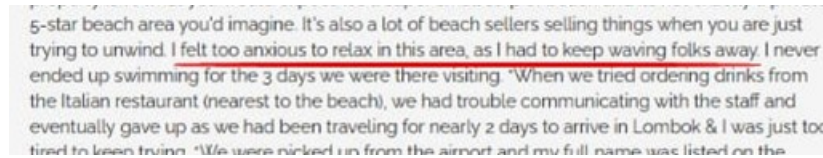
The structure of the utterance follows a typical complaint pattern: an initial positive remark ("pretty cool pool") is quickly reversed with a conjunction that leads to a negative evaluation. This switch highlights the guest's unmet expectations. Importantly, the complaint is not vague; it identifies specific conditions (limited pool access and poor physical condition of facilities). This kind of direct yet mildly hedged expression is characteristic of complaints in public reviews, where speakers aim to inform future guests without sounding overly aggressive.

Unlike criticism, which tends to assess the overall quality or value of the entire hotel or experience, a complaint targets a particular aspect, in this case, the pool area. And unlike regret, which expresses an emotional decision (e.g., not returning), a complaint still suggests a potential for improvement. The pragmatic function of this complaint is therefore both expressive and informative, warning readers about misleading marketing while still staying within polite review convention.

D. Anxiety

Data 8

"I felt too anxious to relax in this area, as I had to keep waving folks away." — DataQueen062 (7 January 2024)



5-star beach area you'd imagine. It's also a lot of beach sellers selling things when you are just trying to unwind. I felt too anxious to relax in this area, as I had to keep waving folks away. I never ended up swimming for the 3 days we were there visiting. When we tried ordering drinks from the Italian restaurant (nearest to the beach), we had trouble communicating with the staff and eventually gave up as we had been traveling for nearly 2 days to arrive in Lombok & I was just too tired to keep trying. We were nicked up from the airport and my full name was listed on the

Figure 8. Data 8

Figure 8 illustrates an anxiety-expressive utterance, emphasizing the reviewer's emotional discomfort and inability to relax due to repeated environmental disturbances. This utterance expresses anxiety, marked by the phrase "too anxious to relax," which highlights a strong emotional disturbance. The use of "anxious" signals internal discomfort, while the cause—"had to keep waving folks away"—points to repeated intrusions that disrupted the guest's peace. Together, the sentence reflects an experience that goes beyond dissatisfaction with service and enters the realm of emotional strain.

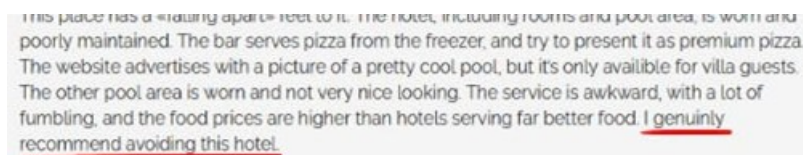
Unlike a complaint that focuses on the problem itself, this utterance emphasizes the psychological impact of the situation. The reviewer does not just describe an inconvenience, but a state of mental unease that prevented them from enjoying their stay. The emotional intensity is heightened by the modifier "too," showing that the anxiety was significant enough to override the expectation of relaxation.

This kind of expressive act serves to warn future guests and alert management about a potentially distressing aspect of the environment. By articulating emotional discomfort directly, the reviewer draws attention to how the surrounding conditions—likely involving persistent or unwanted interaction—can undermine guest comfort even if basic services are adequate.

E. Negative Recommendation

Data 9

"I genuinely recommend avoiding this hotel." — Paul H (2 July 2024)



This place has a "staying apart" feel to it. The hotel, including rooms and pool area, is worn and poorly maintained. The bar serves pizza from the freezer, and try to present it as premium pizza. The website advertises with a picture of a pretty cool pool, but it's only available for villa guests. The other pool area is worn and not very nice looking. The service is awkward, with a lot of fumbling, and the food prices are higher than hotels serving far better food. I genuinely recommend avoiding this hotel.

Figure 9. Data 9

Figure 9 presents a negative recommendation utterance that uses advisory language to discourage future guests from staying at the hotel. This utterance is best categorized as a negative recommendation, where the reviewer not only expresses dissatisfaction but also actively advises others against staying at the hotel. The key linguistic marker is the verb phrase "recommend avoiding," which frames the statement as advice rather than just a personal opinion. The adverb "genuinely" strengthens the sincerity and emotional conviction behind the message.

Unlike a complaint, which typically highlights specific problems, or criticism, which evaluates overall quality, this utterance takes a more proactive stance. It aims to influence future guests by framing the hotel as a place to avoid. The language is clear, firm, and directive, signaling that the reviewer's experience was negative enough to warrant a strong warning.

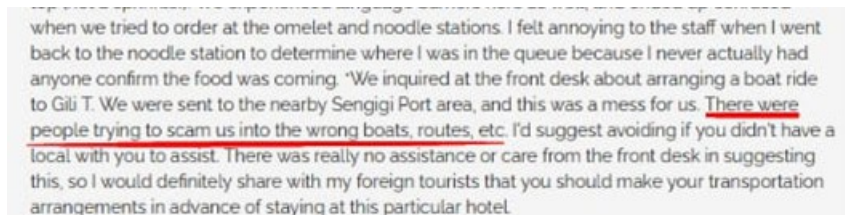
This kind of expression carries significant weight in online reviews, as it moves beyond merely reporting

dissatisfaction to protecting others from similar outcomes. It reflects not only frustration but also the speaker's intention to discourage bookings, which can directly affect the hotel's public perception.

F. Blame

Data 10

"There were people trying to scam us into the wrong boats and routes." — DataQueen062 (7 January 2024)



when we tried to order at the omelet and noodle stations. I felt annoying to the staff when I went back to the noodle station to determine where I was in the queue because I never actually had anyone confirm the food was coming. We inquired at the front desk about arranging a boat ride to Gili T. We were sent to the nearby Senggigi Port area, and this was a mess for us. There were people trying to scam us into the wrong boats, routes, etc. I'd suggest avoiding if you didn't have a local with you to assist. There was really no assistance or care from the front desk in suggesting this, so I would definitely share with my foreign tourists that you should make your transportation arrangements in advance of staying at this particular hotel.

Figure 10. Data 10

Figure 10 depicts a blame-expressive utterance, in which responsibility for a negative experience is assigned through accusatory language related to perceived misconduct. This utterance performs the expressive act of blame, where the speaker assigns responsibility or fault for a negative experience. The central linguistic marker is the verb "scam," defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as "to deceive someone in order to get money or something else of value." This verb implies intentional wrongdoing and introduces an accusatory tone into the review, elevating it beyond general criticism.

Unlike a complaint, which might describe a problem or inconvenience, blame involves an agent responsible for causing the issue. Here, "people trying to scam us" makes the accusation clear, although the statement does not directly specify whether these people are part of the hotel staff, affiliated vendors, or unrelated parties. Still, the tone and context frame this as an issue tied to the hotel experience.

Blame utterances often carry stronger emotional force because they suggest harm or threat, rather than mere discomfort. This kind of utterance may also carry legal or reputational implications, which is why it's less common in public-facing review platforms. The intent behind blame is not just to express dissatisfaction but to expose wrongdoing, warn others, and pressure the service provider into accountability.

3.3. Discussion

This study identified and analyzed expressive utterances in guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi-Lombok using Searle's (1969) Illocutionary Act Theory. The analysis revealed a variety of emotional expressions, both positive and negative, marked by distinctive linguistic features. Positive expressive acts such as praise, appreciation, compliments, and gratitude accounted for approximately 60% of the total data. These acts illustrate the tendency of guests to share satisfaction and recognition of service quality in online contexts.

Positive utterances were characterized by evaluative adjectives and intensifiers, such as amazing, wonderful, and superbly, which served as linguistic markers that strengthened the speaker's emotional stance. These findings support Searle's claim that expressive acts reveal the psychological condition of the speaker and demonstrate how language choices express feelings toward external events. Moreover, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Strategy Theory helps explain why guests choose indirect or softened forms even in praise; through politeness, reviewers maintain harmonious social relations and avoid appearing exaggerated or boastful.

Negative expressive acts, including complaints, criticisms, regret, blame, and negative recommendations, made up around 40% of the total. Linguistic devices such as negation, contrastive conjunctions, and hedging expressions were common in these utterances. These markers show how guests attempt to express dissatisfaction while still maintaining politeness. For example, statements like "It's not a 5-star resort – more like 3" and "The website advertises... but it's only for villa guests" reveal attempts to express criticism indirectly, reducing face threat. This supports Brown and Levinson's view that speakers adopt negative politeness to soften disapproval and

minimize offense.

The distribution between positive and negative acts also shows that online reviews function as emotionally balanced communication rather than purely complaint-driven discourse. Guests express both appreciation and frustration, suggesting that online feedback serves dual functions: to inform potential visitors and to communicate emotional experiences. As Leech (2016) notes, pragmatic meaning depends heavily on context, and these reviews exemplify how context, such as digital platforms and cultural norms, shapes the form of expressive acts.

In addition, the interplay between illocutionary force and politeness demonstrates that emotional expression online remains guided by social conventions. Even negative acts, such as complaints, are mitigated through hedging or narrative framing, while positive acts reinforce community norms of respect and gratitude. This finding reinforces the idea that online guest reviews are not only evaluations of service quality but also manifestations of culturally conditioned communication behavior.

Overall, these findings are consistent with previous research on expressive utterances in online hospitality reviews. For instance, Carter (2019) and Thompson (2021) similarly found that compliments, appreciation, and complaints are the most dominant expressive speech acts in hotel and travel website reviews. This confirms that online guest reviews function as a primary space for expressing emotional evaluations of service experiences through language. The frequent use of evaluative adjectives and intensifiers in positive expressive acts observed in this study also supports Reed's (2020) argument that emotional language plays a central role in shaping readers' perceptions of credibility and trust in online reviews.

However, this study extends Reed's (2020) research by highlighting the pragmatic strategies used to mitigate negative expressive utterances. While previous studies, Sudarmawan et al. (2022) and Silitonga (2022), mainly categorized expressive acts based on function, the present findings demonstrate that negative expressions such as complaints, criticism, and regret are often softened through hedging, contrastive conjunctions, and narrative framing. This finding aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, showing that reviewers consciously manage face-threatening acts even in anonymous digital environments. In contrast to studies that portray online reviews as highly direct or confrontational, this research reveals that politeness norms continue to influence how dissatisfaction is linguistically expressed.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated expressive utterances in online guest reviews of Merumatta Senggigi–Lombok Hotel using a qualitative pragmatic approach. The findings revealed ten types of expressive utterances, with compliments, appreciation, and complaints appearing most frequently. Positive expressive utterances were commonly conveyed through evaluative adjectives and intensifiers, while negative expressive utterances were conveyed through hedging, negation, and contrastive structures to reduce face-threatening effects. These findings indicate that online guest reviews function not only as emotional responses but also as strategically constructed evaluations shaped by politeness considerations.

Future research is recommended to employ larger datasets or corpus-based approaches to further examine expressive utterances in online reviews across different hospitality settings. Comparative studies involving different cultural or linguistic contexts may also provide deeper insights into how politeness strategies and expressive speech acts vary in digital communication.

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