


# Expressive Speech Acts Used by Jude Bellingham in His Personal Brand Development on Youtube

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## ABSTRACT

Language plays a vital role in expressing human emotions, intentions, and identities across various social contexts. Within the framework of speech act theory, expressive speech acts serve as a medium through which speakers convey psychological states and attitudes toward particular situations. This study examines the types and functions of expressive speech acts used by Jude Bellingham in his personal brand development through his YouTube documentary. The research applies Searle's (1969) classification of expressive speech acts and Ronan's (2015) typology to analyze how Bellingham communicates emotions, attitudes, and social values in authentic, context-rich settings. A qualitative descriptive method is employed, using naturally occurring linguistic data from the documentary to identify and interpret expressions of gratitude, pride, humility, and empathy within Bellingham's discourse. The analysis indicates that expressions of gratitude and humility predominate, frequently employed to acknowledge collective effort and external support, whereas pride and empathy emerge as secondary yet significant markers of self-assurance and interpersonal sensitivity. These findings suggest that Bellingham's expressive repertoire strategically constructs a balanced persona that merges professionalism with emotional authenticity. The findings reveal that expressive speech acts play a crucial role in shaping his public persona, reinforcing his authenticity, maturity, and relatability as a global athlete. Furthermore, the study highlights the intersection of linguistic expression, cultural adaptation, and personal branding in the digital era. This research contributes to the field of pragmatics by expanding the analysis of expressive speech acts into the domain of sports communication and digital self-presentation.

**Keywords:** *Expressive Speech Acts, Pragmatics, Jude Bellingham, Personal Branding, Youtube*

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a global shift in how athletes construct and communicate their public identities. Beyond traditional press conferences and post-match interviews, many athletes now turn to YouTube and other social media platforms to share personal stories, emotions, and values directly with their audiences. This growing trend reflects the convergence of digital media, personal branding, and self-presentation, where athletes become curators of their own narratives. Through vlogs, documentaries, and behind-the-scenes content, figures such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Jude Bellingham employ language not merely as a communicative tool but as a means of crafting authenticity, relatability, and emotional connection with fans worldwide. This phenomenon marks a significant evolution in sports communication, underscoring the role of language and media in shaping an athlete's professional image and public persona.

The role of language in human life is of paramount importance. In a multitude of domains, including social, cultural, educational, political, economic, and scientific pursuits, language is an indispensable tool for communication. Language is a means of expression that enables individuals to convey their feelings and thoughts. It provides a platform for someone to express themselves freely. For instance, when an individual has reached a significant milestone in their life and wishes to share their emotions surrounding this event, language plays a crucial role in accurately conveying the speaker's feelings and ensuring that the

message is effectively communicated to the listener because every utterance, in any context, is imbued with a specific meaning. Yule (1996) stated, pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener.

In addition to its literal meaning, language also serves a variety of functions and impacts in communication. A speech act is defined as an action performed through an utterance. According to Austin (1962), people can act through language, do things through words and get others to do things for us through our words. Then, Austin divided speech act into three main aspects: the locutionary act, which refers to the act of saying something with a certain meaning; the illocutionary act, which is related to the function or intention of the utterance; and the perlocutionary act, which leads to the effect of the utterance on the listener.

Searle (1969) further developed the ideas put forth by Austin regarding speech acts. Searle further enhanced the comprehension of illocutionary acts by categorizing them into five additional, more precise categories. The first category is assertives, which are used to state the truth in the form of statements or reports. Secondly, directives aim to make the interlocutor do something, for example, through commands or requests. Thirdly, commissives bind the speaker to a future action, such as a promise or threat. Fourthly, expressives are used to express feelings or attitudes, such as expressions of gratitude or apologies. Lastly, declarations have the power to change reality according to what is said.

The category of expressive speech act was initially developed by Searle in his book *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969). This speech act serves to convey the speaker's psychological state with regard to a given situation, as implied by the illocution. As stated by Ronan (2015), expressive speech acts can be classified into various categories, including expressions of appreciation, which are typically conveyed through expressions of gratitude and praise; expressions of emotion, which comprise expressions of happiness and sadness, as well as expressions of regret and apology; and the expression of attitude, which consists of statements of acceptance and rejection.

Holmes (2013) demonstrates the implementation of expressive speech acts is subject to the influence of a wide range of social and cultural factors. The social distance between speakers and listeners, the status or relative position of speech participants, the level of formality of the situation, and the purpose of the interaction are significant factors that must be taken into consideration when selecting the most appropriate expressive form. Accordingly, a comprehensive examination of expressive speech acts is not only a valuable contribution to theoretical discourse, but also has significant practical implications.

The insights provided by these experts have significantly enhanced the comprehension of speech acts, rendering it more profound and comprehensive. These theories demonstrate that speech acts are not merely linguistic activities; rather, they are complex actions that entail a multitude of linguistic, social, and cultural elements. The interpretation and use of speech acts are strongly influenced by contextual factors, the relationship between speakers, and the prevailing social norms. Such an understanding is crucial for communication and social interaction, as it offers a solid theoretical basis for analyzing language use in diverse contexts.

In the contemporary era, the football industry has evolved beyond the conventional boundaries of a purely athletic pursuit, exhibiting notable advancements across a range of aspects. A lot of athletes currently utilize personal branding strategies to present themselves to the public through various media platforms. Jude Bellingham, a British footballer born on June 29, 2003, is currently the focus of attention for football fans worldwide. At his early age, he has showed remarkable performances and has won a lot of awards throughout his career as a professional football player.

Bellingham's professional career began at Birmingham City, the club with which he was most closely associated, where he made history as the youngest player to ever play for the club. His outstanding performances with Birmingham City were so noteworthy that the club elected to retire Jude's number 22 jersey in recognition of his contributions. This is a rare honor, particularly for a player of such a young age. His next big step was his joining of the German giants Borussia Dortmund. His mature and consistent performance led to his selection for the

Bundesliga's Best Team on two consecutive seasons. His accomplishments were further underscored by his triumph in the DFB-Pokal with the team.

His consistent performance and promising potential made him an attractive prospect to top clubs in Europe. Ultimately, Real Madrid secured his signature for €103M. During his days at Real Madrid, Jude showed remarkable consistency, which culminated in outstanding performances that are the pinnacle of achievement for any footballer. He was victorious in the LaLiga title and the Champions League, Europe's most esteemed football competition. Additionally, Jude was bestowed with the Golden Boy 2023 award, which further solidified his reputation as the most promising young talent in European football.

However, it is not merely his performance on the pitch that attracts such considerable attention. His manner of speaking in public or to the media is worthy of commendation. Despite his youth, he exhibits a maturity and authority that is uncommon for someone of his age. As one of the legends of football, Rio Ferdinand, said when he interviewed Jude after the 2023/2024 Champions League semi-final, "How's he answering these questions so eloquently at this age? Tell me how old you are". It can be argued that he is still relatively young when compared to other football athletes, which is an advantage in addition to his exceptional abilities on the pitch.

The selection of Jude Bellingham's video documentary on Youtube as the object of expressive speech act research is based on a number of compelling and relevant considerations. As explained by Searle (1979), expressive speech acts are speech acts that express the speaker's psychological state about a certain situation. This is very relevant considering that Bellingham, as one of the most prominent young soccer players today, often expresses his various psychological conditions through speech in the documentary. Yule (1996) also asserts that expressive speech acts reflect statements concerning the speakers' feelings and attitudes, which can be clearly observed in the way Bellingham communicates.

The documentary not only portrays the figure of a professional athlete but also offers significant insight into the personality and communicative style of a player who has attained an elite level at an exceptionally young age. Norrick (1978) identifies the fundamental characteristics of expressive speech acts. In accordance with his theory, expressive speech acts are in response to actions or circumstances involving the speakers or listeners. Bellingham's documentary video allows the researcher to analyse linguistic data about expressive speech acts in great detail, since he has gone through various situations in the course of his career, be it pleasant or sad. The researcher can observe how Bellingham expresses his emotions, thoughts and feelings through language in a variety of situations, which are recorded naturally and spontaneously.

Bellingham's distinctiveness as a case study is further evidenced by his status as an English football player who has pursued a career in Real Madrid, Spain. Wardhaugh (2006) argues that social and cultural contexts play a significant role in shaping the ways in which individuals express themselves through language. This is an intriguing aspect, particularly in view of the relationship between Bellingham's English cultural background and the Spanish football environment. Leech (1983) states that expressive speech acts are closely associated with politeness and social norms, which can be observed in the manner in which Bellingham adapts to his new environment.

From a practical point of view, this video documentary offers excellent data accessibility for academic research. Wolfson (1989) emphasizes the importance of natural data in speech act research, and this documentary presents data that is authentic and not fabricated. Vanderveken (1990) also highlights that speech act analysis must consider context and felicity conditions, which can be clearly observed in this documentary. The results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to the development of linguistic studies, especially in the context of expressive speech act analysis in the world of sports.

A review of several previous studies is required in order to provide a basis for comparison and to inform the current research project. One of the most pertinent studies is Rahman (2021) *Expressive Speech Acts in Press Conference: A Case Study of Jürgen Klopp*. While both studies focus on expressive speech acts in the context of football, Rahman's

research is limited to formal press conferences. Conversely, this research offers a more comprehensive perspective by examining the diverse situations and contexts in which Bellingham exhibited and articulated his emotions through his documentary video. Silva (2019) conducted a study, which he entitled *A Pragmatic Analysis of Expressive Speech Acts in Social Media Interviews: Emma Watson's HeForShe Campaign*, shares similarities with this research that examine the speech of young public figures and their social impact. Another example is *The Performance of Expressive Speech Acts on Wayne Rooney's Facebook* (Tauchid & Rukmini, 2016), which identified boasting, congratulating, complimenting, and thanking among the expressive types, with boasting being the most frequent (46%) of the expressive acts. However, the context of social activism and the use of social media platforms give rise to different dynamics than those observed in the professional sports context in this research.

This research is distinctive for a number of significant reasons. Firstly, the selection of Jude Bellingham as a research object provides a novel perspective on a generation of contemporary soccer players, particularly in the context of the cultural transition from England to Spain. Secondly, the utilisation of documentaries as a data source enables a more profound and comprehensive analysis, encompassing variety of situations and emotional states that may not be happened in a conventional interview or press conference. Third, the research has strong contemporary relevance, capturing the dynamics of athlete communication in the digital and social media age. For further development, the research could consider additional aspects such as multimodal analysis and a more in-depth investigation of the influence of cultural background in language use. These aspects could enrich the research findings and make a more significant contribution to the field of speech act analysis, especially in the context of modern professional sports.

## METHOD

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines the meaning of utterances not only from the words or sentence structure alone, but also from the context of use, the speaker's intention, and how the listener interprets the utterance in a real situation. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics focuses on what people mean by their utterances rather than what the words in those utterances might mean by themselves, so that contextual elements such as who is speaking, to whom, when and where play an important role in shaping meaning.

From the pragmatic framework emerged speech act theory, introduced by Austin and later developed by Searle. Austin divided utterances into three levels of action: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Searle then refined the classification of illocutionary acts into five main categories: representatives, directives, commissives, declarations, and expressives, each of which reflects a different function in communication.

Of the five types, expressive speech acts are a type of speech act specifically used by speakers to express psychological or emotional attitudes towards a situation. Expressive speech acts do not aim to ask the listener to do something, or to bind the speaker to future actions, but rather to express feelings, values, reactions to experiences or situations such as gratitude, apologies, praise, criticism, joy or sadness. Yule (1996) states that expressive speech acts encompass psychological states such as pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, and sorrow, which are conveyed by the speaker as part of the sincerity condition.

In this research, the researchers employed a descriptive qualitative methodology. The object of this study is the speech delivered by Jude Bellingham in his documentary videos. The initial video was released on YouTube on September 12, 2024. The speech served as the primary source of data for the research. The data for this research are derived from the utterances made by Jude Bellingham in the context of his documentary videos. Subsequently, the writer conducted an analysis of the expressive devices utilized by Bellingham based on his utterances.

The primary data source in this study is derived from Jude Bellingham's spoken language featured in his personal documentary video uploaded on YouTube, one of the most



widely used digital media platforms. The documentary provides naturally occurring linguistic data that captures authentic moments of self-expression, making it highly suitable for pragmatic and discourse analysis. These utterances reflect Bellingham's spontaneous emotional responses, personal reflections, and attitudes, which are central to the study of expressive speech acts. In addition to the primary data, secondary sources are also utilized, including scholarly articles, previous studies on expressive speech acts, and relevant literature concerning language use in sports communication and personal branding. By integrating both primary and secondary data, the research aims to establish a strong theoretical and empirical foundation that enriches the understanding of expressive language in diverse communicative settings.

The data collection process begins with a systematic observation of Bellingham's documentary video. The researcher carefully watches and listens to each segment multiple times to ensure accurate transcription of all relevant utterances. Every expression that potentially represents an expressive speech act such as those showing gratitude, humility, pride, or empathy is noted and transcribed verbatim. These utterances are then organized chronologically to preserve their contextual meaning within the flow of the documentary. The researcher also takes notes on situational and visual cues, including tone, facial expressions, and body language, to better interpret the pragmatic intent behind each speech act. To deepen contextual understanding, the researcher refers to existing literature on linguistic behavior in professional sports, particularly focusing on how athletes communicate identity, emotion, and interpersonal relationships through language.

The analytical process focuses on identifying and classifying the expressive speech acts that appear in Bellingham's utterances, guided primarily by Searle's (1969, 1979) classification of illocutionary acts. Each utterance is examined to determine whether it expresses a psychological or emotional attitude consistent with the expressive category. The analysis further incorporates Ronan's (2015) typology, which divides expressive speech acts into subtypes such as appreciation, emotion, and attitude. A discourse analysis approach is applied to interpret how context such as the communicative setting, audience, and cultural background influences Bellingham's linguistic choices. The researcher then explores how these expressive acts contribute to the construction of Bellingham's personal brand, examining the balance between sincerity, professionalism, and emotional intelligence. Finally, the results are cross validated through peer review to ensure interpretive reliability and methodological rigor.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Types of expressive speech acts found in Jude Bellingham's speech through his documentary video

Table 1

Types of Expressive Speech Act	Subtypes Identified	Pragmatic Function	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Expression of Appreciation	Gratitude, humility, acknowledgment	To express gratitude and reinforce humility, enhancing authenticity and interpersonal warmth	6	22.5%
Expression of Emotion	Happiness, relief, frustration, vulnerability, pride	To externalize internal affect, humanize public image, and establish emotional connection with audience	15	55%
Expression of Attitude	Evaluation, judgment, empathy, discipline, self-awareness	To express evaluative stance and personal philosophy, reflecting identity and moral integrity	6	22.5%

Total	---	---	27	100%
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Based on Ronan's (2015) typology, the expressive speech acts found in Jude Bellingham's documentary reveal a broad range of emotions and attitudes that reflect his inner state and identity as a professional football player. Each utterance demonstrates not only the speaker's feelings but also how language becomes a tool for shaping self-image, authenticity, and emotional intelligence. Following Searle's (1969) and Yule's (1996) frameworks, expressive acts are considered meaningful when they accurately represent a speaker's psychological condition. In Bellingham's case, his language shows determination, gratitude, vulnerability, and emotional awareness qualities that contribute to building a strong and genuine personal brand.

#### *Expression of Appreciation*

This category consists of expressive speech acts that convey gratitude, humility, and acknowledgment. According to Ronan (2015), appreciation expressives function to recognize the value of people, events, or experiences.

*Excerpt 1: "Everything that comes with the game I enjoy and I'm very fortunate to have it because if it stopped tomorrow I'm sure I'd miss it."*

The utterance belongs to the expression of appreciation, particularly gratitude and humility. The phrase "very fortunate" suggests an acknowledgment of privilege, while "I'd miss it" shows emotional attachment to football beyond the professional dimension. Ronan (2015) categorizes these kinds of expressives as appreciation acts that emphasize acknowledgment and emotional recognition. This utterance contributes to the image of Bellingham as a humble athlete who understands the transient nature of fame and success.

*Excerpt 2: "I couldn't thank them enough for what they've done to help me, but at the same time I want to beat them cause I want to be a European champion."*

This statement presents a mixed form of appreciation and attitude. The first part expresses deep gratitude through the hyperbolic phrase "couldn't thank them enough," while the second part transitions into competitive determination. According to Ronan (2015), such hybrid expressives demonstrate emotional complexity by combining positive and self-driven sentiments. This utterance reflects Bellingham's maturity in maintaining respect for others while still affirming his ambition. The balance between appreciation and competitiveness mirrors the dual nature of sportsmanship, where empathy coexists with the desire to win.

*Excerpt 3: "Mentally, physically I felt great ended up winning my first title as a Real Madrid player which will always be special"*

In this utterance, Bellingham delivers an expression of appreciation marked by gratitude and pride. The expression "will always be special" reflects the lasting emotional value he attaches to this achievement. As Searle (1979) points out, the sincerity condition of expressives requires that the speaker's words correspond to genuine feelings. Bellingham's tone here is reflective rather than boastful, implying that success is meaningful because it validates his personal growth. Such expressions not only celebrate achievement but also highlight self-awareness and humility, traits often associated with authentic and grounded personalities.

*Excerpt 4: "Nothing makes me as comfortable as being around the people who I love the most and who moulded me into the person I am today"*

The utterance reveals a deeply emotive expression of appreciation. It connects emotional comfort to personal roots, suggesting humility and gratitude toward family. Searle (1979) characterizes expressives as linguistic manifestations of internal psychological states, and here, the sincerity is evident through affective vocabulary such as "comfortable" and "love." This utterance aligns with the emotional authenticity that strengthens personal brands by showing relational depth and groundedness beyond professional identity.

#### *Expression of Emotion*

Expressive speech acts of emotion are those that reveal psychological or affective states such as happiness, sadness, frustration, pride, or relief (Searle, 1969; Yule, 1996). These utterances highlight Bellingham's emotional depth and authenticity, allowing the audience to

connect with him on a personal level. Emotional expressives are particularly significant in sports communication, where sincerity and vulnerability enhance relatability and fan loyalty.

*Excerpt 1: "I still can't really process how well the day is gone and how much I enjoyed it. I'd live it over a hundred times if I could,"*

This line belongs to the expression of emotion, particularly happiness and gratitude. The phrase "can't really process" indicates that the emotion is too strong to articulate clearly, a sign of sincerity that Searle (1979) associates with genuine expressive acts. His wish to "live it over" adds an element of deep emotional engagement, showing that his joy is both personal and authentic. Yule (1996) emphasizes that such speech acts express affective meaning rather than objective information. In this context, Bellingham's words allow the audience to feel the intensity of his satisfaction and appreciation toward a meaningful achievement.

*Excerpt 2: "The relief when you win is huge, it's not even a happiness when the final whistle blows, it's a relief knowing that close to being in a really bad situation."*

A complexity appears in this utterance, this is an expression of emotion dominated by a sense of relief and tension. Instead of equating victory with joy, Bellingham associates it with the release of psychological pressure. According to Vanderveken (1990), expressive speech acts often reveal the emotional evaluation of an event rather than its factual description. The repeated use of the term "relief" conveys the heavy mental burden that competition imposes, illustrating that triumph in elite sport is often experienced as survival rather than celebration.

*Excerpt 3: "Off the pitch sometimes I feel quite vulnerable, it's like you're on show when you're out in public."*

Moving forward, Bellingham's expressive speech acts continue to reveal a mixture of emotional depth and personal reflection. His utterance represents an expression of emotion that communicates vulnerability and social anxiety. The use of the term "vulnerable" indicates openness and emotional honesty, which contrasts with the usual perception of professional athletes as emotionally stoic. According to Holmes (2013), social distance and power dynamics influence expressive choices, and Bellingham's admission of vulnerability helps reduce the perceived distance between himself and his audience. The metaphor "on show" also captures the sense of constant exposure that comes with fame, reflecting his awareness of how public attention shapes emotional experience. This expression not only humanizes him but also adds a layer of authenticity to his personal brand.

*Excerpt 4: "By the time the game rolls around, I felt the magnitude of it and I felt a bit like jelly legged."*

Another significant example, this utterance conveys emotion related to nervousness and anticipation. The metaphor "jelly legged" transforms a physiological reaction into a linguistic symbol of anxiety. As Yule (1996) states, expressives reveal the speaker's emotional condition within a given context, and Bellingham's phrasing captures the tension between excitement and fear. This type of self-disclosure gives the audience insight into the emotional intensity that precedes performance, emphasizing that vulnerability is a natural part of success. His candidness turns a potentially weak moment into an expression of authenticity and humanity.

*Excerpt 5: "I always feel like I hate losing more than I enjoy winning."*

In the utterance, Bellingham presents a unique emotional contrast that falls under expression of emotion, specifically frustration and dislike. The use of the verb "hate" emphasizes the intensity of his negative feeling, while the comparative structure highlights how emotional loss outweighs pleasure. Holmes (2013) explains that expressives are influenced by the speaker's social and psychological background, and here Bellingham's statement mirrors the competitive nature of professional athletes. It shows that his emotions are not superficial but rooted in the high-stakes reality of his career. This duality between emotional vulnerability and professional strength helps reinforce his authenticity as both an athlete and an individual.

*Excerpt 6: "There's a sense of anger, I really want to kick some water bottles over. I get frustrated because I want to win, I don't like losing"*

The statement represents a clear expression of emotion, anger and frustration. The physical imagery “kick some water bottles over” intensifies the immediacy of the feeling, transforming internal tension into an imagined action. Ronan (2015) refers to this type of expressive as performative because it translates emotion into behavior. By openly admitting his frustration, Bellingham exposes the emotional costs of competitiveness while maintaining sincerity. The direct statement “I don’t like losing” encapsulates his straightforward personality and emotional honesty, further enhancing the authenticity of his public image.

*Excerpt 7: “When I hear that whistle it’s just the biggest feeling of joy. I’m just full of joy, I don’t really know what to do with myself. The adrenaline gets there, I’m full of emotions”*

The utterances represent pure expressions of emotion, specifically happiness, euphoria, and excitement. These lines showcase spontaneous emotional release after intense competition. The repetition of words such as “joy” and “full of emotions” reflects genuine enthusiasm and emotional transparency. According to Searle (1979), the sincerity of an expressive act lies in its alignment between language and emotion. Bellingham’s inability to articulate his joy “I don’t really know what to do with myself” serves as evidence of authentic affect. These moments display the raw humanity behind his professional persona, bridging the emotional gap between the athlete and his audience.

#### *Expression of Attitude*

Expressive speech acts of attitude involve evaluations, judgments, or personal stances toward events or people. Ronan (2015) explains that these acts express the speaker’s viewpoint or values, often reflecting deeper aspects of identity. In Bellingham’s case, these utterances highlight his self-discipline, empathy, confidence, and reflective mindset, which are central to his personal and professional identity.

*Excerpt 1: “I’ll never be satisfied, I’ve got to do what it takes to win”*

This statement exemplifies an expression of attitude that reflects determination and mental discipline. This utterance communicates a persistent drive for improvement and a refusal to become complacent. As Searle (1969) explains, expressive acts function to reveal the speaker’s evaluative stance toward a situation. The use of “never be satisfied” suggests a commitment to self-betterment that goes beyond simple ambition; it represents a personal philosophy rooted in hard work and perseverance. Pragmatically, this speech act highlights Bellingham’s competitive identity and aligns with Gorbato, Khapova, and Lysova’s (2018) idea that consistent expression of authentic values strengthens personal branding.

*Excerpt 2: “When I’ve got the ball I’m thinking there’s a hundred million people watching this game and no one else has got their foot on the ball except me”*

The line belongs to the expression of attitude, emphasizing confidence and self-awareness. Here, Bellingham conveys a sense of pride and control over his performance, acknowledging the magnitude of the moment. Leech (1983) suggests that expressive acts often reflect social stance and self-presentation; thus, this utterance projects composure and leadership without arrogance. The specific mention of “a hundred million people watching” and “no one else has got their foot on the ball except me” amplifies the pressure of the situation but simultaneously reinforces his ability to stay calm and focused. Pragmatically, this demonstrates how Bellingham balances ego and responsibility, which strengthens his credibility as a composed and mature athlete.

*Excerpt 3: “There’s two sides of every story and my side looks great on the day, but also for them I can imagine the heartbreak”*

Bellingham’s statement exemplifies an expression of attitude centered on empathy and compassion. By acknowledging the opponent’s pain, Bellingham positions himself as emotionally intelligent and respectful. Holmes (2013) argues that expressives serve relational purposes, helping maintain social harmony and politeness. In this case, empathy functions as a communicative strategy that enhances Bellingham’s moral credibility. Rather than celebrating victory alone, he shows awareness of others’ feelings, which supports his image as a grounded and ethical athlete.



*Excerpt 4: "Until the end of the season when hopefully I've won some trophies I can't enjoy it too much. Of course, I'm proud of what I've done so far but I just take the trophy back home and then back to business tomorrow."*

In this utterance, Bellingham combines expression of attitude (discipline and focus) with emotion (pride). His language embodies professional humility, showing that pride is balanced with commitment. This reflects Searle's (1979) concept of expressives as indicators of sincerity conditions, his pride feels genuine because it is moderated by self-discipline. Pragmatically, this utterance strengthens his image as a hardworking athlete who values consistency over complacency, reinforcing his brand as authentic and purpose-driven.

### **The relationship between expressive speech acts and Bellingham's personal brand development**

The data reveal that Jude Bellingham's expressive speech acts function not only as reflections of his emotions but also as strategic tools in shaping his personal brand. Expressive language enables him to balance between confidence and humility, public image and private identity, as well as fame and authenticity. Through his words, Bellingham constructs a coherent persona that resonates with the qualities of credibility, emotional intelligence, and relatability traits essential for sustaining a strong personal brand in the modern sports industry (Gorbatov, Khapova, & Lysova, 2018).

*Excerpt 1: "I get called arrogant a lot. There's too much negativity anyway, I need to be confident cause someone has to believe in me. But off the pitch I feel like a really normal guy."*

In this statement Bellingham uses expressive speech acts to negotiate his public identity. His acknowledgment of the "arrogant" label demonstrates self-awareness, while his justification "someone has to believe in me" transforms potential criticism into an expression of confidence grounded in purpose. According to Ronan (2015), expressives can perform evaluative and identity functions, allowing speakers to align emotional expression with social positioning. Bellingham's words communicate an equality between assertiveness and modesty, illustrating what Gorbatov et al. (2019) describe as authentic self-expression, the

ability to remain confident without detaching from one's humanity. By explicitly contrasting his public persona "confident" with his private self "a really normal guy", he constructs an image of balance between excellence and humility, strengthening his authenticity as both athlete and individual.

*Excerpt 2: "Of course you have to listen to the media and all the people talk about how poor and bad I was."*

The utterance reflects an expression of emotion, specifically disappointment and self-restraint. This reveals an understanding of public scrutiny as part of his professional reality. According to Shepherd (2005), managing public discourse through controlled expressiveness is central to reputation management in celebrity branding. By acknowledging criticism without defensiveness, Bellingham positions himself as emotionally mature and resilient, qualities that contribute to the trustworthiness dimension of personal branding (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

*Excerpt 3: "Losing is such a big factor in picking yourself up, not only because you make tweaks tactically in terms of football side but the mental side as well"*

Bellingham's words demonstrate how expressive reflection turns emotion into self-improvement. The statement links failure with personal growth, turning negative emotion into constructive learning. As Yule (1996) explains, expressives can function to evaluate experience and reveal underlying attitudes. Here, Bellingham's reflective tone presents him as emotionally self-aware, someone who processes setbacks productively. This aligns with the growth-oriented mindset central to authentic branding, where vulnerability is reframed as a source of strength (Khedher, 2014).

*Excerpt 4: "Since the World Cup my profile kind of just went to a new level. After that, I always felt I'd have the ability to be one of the leading faces in a brand"*

The utterance signals an expression of self-recognition and ambition, bridging emotion and strategic identity. Through his reflective tone, Bellingham recognizes fame as both a privilege and a responsibility. His awareness of his evolving “profile” indicates brand consciousness, which resonates with Goffman’s (1959) concept of self-presentation, the idea that identity is performed according to audience expectations. By expressing both surprise “out of nowhere” and confidence in his branding potential, Bellingham projects humility while acknowledging his growing influence, a key element in maintaining perceived authenticity.

*Excerpt 5: “Who else? It’s a rush of adrenaline but also that’s a bit of my character in terms of the confidence.”*

Bellingham exhibits expressive confidence that remains self-reflective. The rhetorical question “Who else?” functions as a light-hearted assertion of self-belief. Ronan (2015) notes that expressives may simultaneously express emotion and assert identity, which is precisely what occurs here. The statement combines excitement “rush of adrenaline” with personality commentary “bit of my character”, demonstrating awareness of his own branding narrative as confident yet genuine.

*Excerpt 6: “You think that the negativity pause on you but then you forget how much positive stuff there is as well. And all the people that are slagging you off and saying stuff, you’re not playing for them anyway. You’re playing for yourself, your family, your team, so don’t worry what they say”*

His reflective comment expresses resilience and emotional independence. Through this expressive act, Bellingham reclaims agency over his public image, reframing external negativity as irrelevant. This aligns with Goffman’s (1959) theory of facework, where individuals actively manage their social “face” through discourse. His pragmatic reorientation from external judgment to internal motivation reinforces his identity as self-assured and emotionally grounded a vital component of authenticity and leadership in sports communication.

*Excerpt 7: “I think now it’s important that I use this as a motivation to succeed again. That’s just a little bit more fuel for the fire”*

This utterance by Bellingham transforms frustration into expressive determination. This form of emotional regulation aligns with Vanderveken’s (1990) idea that expressives may function as emotion management tools. By reinterpreting setbacks as “fuel,” Bellingham performs emotional resilience while projecting confidence. This rhetorical transformation of negativity into motivation strengthens his identity as a disciplined and psychologically mature athlete.

Overall, the analysis shows that Jude Bellingham’s expressive speech acts play a crucial role in shaping his personal brand as both an athlete and an individual. His use of expressive language ranging from confidence and gratitude to empathy and reflection transforms emotional experiences into strategic acts of identity-building. These utterances not only mirror his inner psychological states but also construct a public image that is confident yet humble, passionate yet grounded. By articulating his emotions sincerely and contextually, Bellingham demonstrates what Gorbato, Khapova, and Lysova (2018) describe as authentic personal branding, where credibility stems from emotional honesty and self-awareness. Thus, expressive speech acts function not merely as linguistic reflections of feeling but as deliberate instruments for establishing trust, relatability, and authenticity within his ongoing brand narrative.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study has explored the role of expressive speech acts in Jude Bellingham’s YouTube documentary as part of his personal brand construction. Drawing on Searle’s (1969, 1979) and Ronan’s (2015) frameworks, the analysis reveals that expressions of gratitude, humility, pride, and empathy serve as both reflections of internal states and deliberate acts of self-representation. These expressive forms enable Bellingham to project an image of authenticity, emotional intelligence, and maturity while maintaining a balance between

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confidence and humility. His linguistic behavior illustrates how emotional expression functions as a communicative strategy to foster relatability and sustain credibility within the high-performance culture of professional sport. The findings indicate that expressive speech acts operate as pragmatic tools for managing emotion, identity, and social relations in multimodal athlete discourse. By articulating emotions such as joy, frustration, and vulnerability, Bellingham transforms affect into meaningful interaction that reinforces moral integrity and interpersonal connection. Such expressives demonstrate how athletes employ language not only to communicate personal experience but also to negotiate public expectations, thus bridging private sentiment and social performance. Theoretically, this research expands the application of speech act theory to multimodal sports discourse, emphasizing its analytical relevance for understanding how linguistic, visual, and performative elements intersect in identity construction. By integrating pragmatic theory with digital self-presentation, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how expressive language functions as a performative resource for managing authenticity, emotion, and reputation. Ultimately, expressive speech acts emerge as a central communicative mechanism through which athletes construct professional image and personal authenticity, underscoring the interdependence of discourse, identity, and branding in contemporary sports culture.

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