

## SWEARWORDS USED IN *DETECTED* MOVIE VIEWED BY SPEECH ACT THEORY

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### Abstract

*This thesis examines the swearwords using the speech act theory in Accepted movie directed by Steve Pink. The objectives of this research are; (1) To find kinds of swearwords used by the characters. (2) To classify the speech act categories used by the characters when they uttered the swearwords. (3) To investigate the contexts of swearing. The dominant kind of speech act in the swearwords that the characters use is expressive because Americans get used to express their feelings spontaneously. The most dominant context that appeared is dysphemistic context that makes the movie more interesting with the creative metaphors.*

**Keywords:** Swearwords, Speech Act, Accepted

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Analyzing how people use language in different contexts provides impressive information about the way language works. Every language expresses how people think, feel, act and how they draw the connections between the statement and its meaning based on the situation. A major challenge that linguists face is the speakers completely show the expression or feeling of anger, disappointment, happiness, sadness, and loneliness through the language by

producing the swearwords. Andersson, L.G., & Trudgill, P. (2007, p. 195) gave an understandable definition, that swearwords are the words' choice from speakers that have negative meanings because they are rude and offensive. They also listed three different motives for swearing; psychological motives, social motives, and linguistic motives. Furthermore, Rullyanti (2014) in her research found out that the psychological motives occurred frequently behind saying the swearword. This motive mostly came from unpleasant or

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unexpected events that do not go well according to plans. Swearwords considered as bad languages, hence the name, which are restricted to be used in conversations because it could offend the addressee and the listeners, e.g. *shit, fuck, bitch, dick, damn*, etc.

On the contrary, Steven Pinker (2007, p. 68) mentioned that swearwords are a natural part of our language, and they are undoubtedly one of the most efficient ways to do away with extra frustration or anger in difficult situations. It can be one of the parts of spontaneous forms, kinds of jokes, and it depends on the contexts that occurred. As the result of Steven Pinker's study in *The Stuff of Thought: Language As a Window Into Human Nature* (2007, p. 68), people often have experience being misunderstood with the using of swearwords in conversations and the contexts in which the swearwords are used. So, when a speaker utters a swearword, he is attempting to accomplish something with it; specifically he intends to have some intentions to the listener, and wants the listener to recognize this intention. One way to investigate this uniqueness is through the perspective of speech act in pragmatics.

*Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or a writer) and interpreted by a listener (or a reader), George Yule (1996, p. 3).* This branch of linguistic explores how the interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning and how the languages are more communicated than is said. In an attempt to express them, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they also perform actions via those utterances, John Searle (1975) in George Yule (1996, p. 47). Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts. Searle's theory emphasized a psychological interpretation (based on beliefs, intentions, etc.). Swearwords as the highlight of this research can be analyzed through the characters in this movie who often state whatever they feel through the expressions in utterances. For example, take the word of '*the hell*' in this sentence, "What the hell is going on here?" stated by Schrader, (one of the characters in *Accepted*). The word is considered as a swearword and it is influenced by Schrader's curious feeling that is expressed when he entered a room full of the students and his close friends. It becomes the researcher's challenge to analyze the kinds of swearwords, the

actions performed via utterances which are swearwords based on the context of swearing when the characters uttered the swearwords. Therefore, the research could be an interesting and a worthwhile project to conduct. The data was selected using movie transcription developed by Mr. Sanju, which is the most compatible with the movie than another developer. The transcription will be analyzed in more details in the analysis section to investigate the swearwords through speech act theory. Supported by the theories from Andersson, L.G., & Trudgil, P., Steven Pinker, and John Searle, the title of this research is *An Analysis of Swearwords Detected in Accepted Movie (2006) Using Speech Act Theory*.

Andersson, L.G., & Trudgil, P. (2007, p. 195) stated that swearwords are the rude words that a person chooses to say while communicate with the others. They also explained that swearwords have negative meanings because they are offensive. They divided swearwords into 7 (seven) different kinds, they are (a) sexual organs, sexual relations, (b) religion, church, (c) excrement, (d) death, (e) the physically or mentally disabled, (f) prostitution, and (g) narcotics and crime. In contrast with Andersson, L.G., & Trudgil, P, Steven Pinker (2007, p.

68) had different opinion that swearwords are a natural way to state a language in human mind, and they are undoubtedly one of the most efficient ways to do away with extra frustration or anger in difficult situations.

In an attempt to express them, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they also perform actions via those utterances. Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts and in English are commonly given more specific labels, such as Directives, Commissive, Representatives, Declarations, and Expressives (Searle,1975 p. 70). Based on the pragmatic point of view, swearwords also concerns with the context when they are occurred. According to Steven Pinker (2007, p. 72) there are five contexts of swearing: dysphemistic, abusive, idiomatic cathartic, and emphatic.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research used a descriptive qualitative method which is used to analyze and to identify conversations containing swearwords in selected movie. The research is conducted by using descriptive qualitative approach because the results of the data analysis is in the descriptive phenomenon such as

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words, sentences and utterances, Creswell, (2003, p. 24). The techniques of the data analysis that were used to analyze the swearwords in a movie entitled *Accepted*; (1) watching the movie to understand the story line and the using of swearwords used by the characters, (2) cutting the scenes that contains swearword utterances in the movie, (3) selecting the utterances in the transcription which used the swearwords and coding them, (4) classifying the word in the dialogues in which the types of swearwords, (5) analyzing the speech act categories used by the characters when they uttered the swearwords, (6) analyzing the context of swearing in the dialogues and (7) concluding the results of swearwords analysis in speech act theory and the context of swearing. The utterances are existed as supporting ideas in strengthen the research especially about the use of swearwords. Reading related articles about swearwords from many books is another way besides reading journals and articles from internet.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the amount of swearwords in analysis instrument is 83. From the 83 swearwords that are found in the movie, the using of

excrement swearwords mostly appeared in the utterances. There is about 24 excrement swearwords that have been detected, the second swearword that commonly used is sexual organs that appeared 19 times, and then religion swearword that appeared 16 times. Physically and mentally disabled swearwords then come afterward with 9 times appearances, and then there are also narcotics and crimes with the amount of swearwords are 10, prostitution swearwords are 4, and the last kind that less appeared than the others is death swearword. In the movie, there is only 1 utterance that has death swearword. As the most commonly used by the characters, the excrement swearwords can be analyzed by the words such as “shit” and “snot”. Take a word of “shit” that is uttered by Bartleby in *Accepted*. “So, we’ll just pack everybody up and get out of here.” (Bartleby) “Okay, let’s go!” (Schrader) (The bell rang) “**Shit!**” (32-34 (Bartleby) 00:01:42,200 --> 00:01:47,5000). The word of “Shit!” as human or animal excrement has considered a dirty material. But when it is used in the utterance above, it also means something that is unwanted by the speaker who say it. So, based on the excrement swearword finding in the movie, the words such

“shit” and “snot” are considered as a swearword. Although the meaning of them does not always refer to the dirty materials – it can be a form of some kind of misfortune. Whenever people state it in every occasion, it is still a swearword, that is connected with the theory from Andersson, L.G., & Trudgill, P. (2007, p. 195). So, the reason why the characters used excrement swearwords is because they intended to express their feeling based on the misfortunes that they had in the movie. Sexual organs and sexual relations as the second kind of swearword that used in the movie, can be analyzed in a utterance spoken by Ben. “I'm going off the grid. No more, uh, franchises, no more Botox, no more "Eh, oh, let's clone another goat." And certainly no more sexual harassment suits. What's wrong with saying, "Hey! Nice *tits*." (495 - 499 (Ben) 00:21:35,235 --> 00:21:47,700). The word of “tits” actually means nipples on human breasts. It becomes swearword because talking about nipples in front of the people is inappropriate. It is related by the theory from Andersson, L.G., & Trudgill, P. (2007, p. 195) who stated that sexual organs can be considered in impolite statement even the situation is in Biology class or medical occasions.

The third kind of swearword that commonly used in the movie is religion

and church, which appeared in the utterance spoken by Schrader. “What **the hell** is going on here?” (39-41 (Schrader) 00:01:12,800 --> 00:01:14,500). The word of “the hell” that uttered by Schrader actually related to the religion worshippers who believe that there is a certain place for bad people afterlife. But when it is used as a swearword in an asking sentence, the meaning has changed into the emphasizing to the question sentence that is influenced by the curious feeling of the speaker. The following utterance below also contains a swearword about religion. It is connected by the theory from Andersson, L.G., & Trudgill, P. (2007, p. 195) who stated that the changing meaning from the religion worshippers who believe that there is a certain place for bad people afterlife to the emphasizing expression toward the intention of the speaker for asking sentence. The researcher also found the fourth swearword kind which is commonly used by the characters in the movie. The physically and mentally disabled is used in this utterance. “It's not my fault the kid's a crybaby! **Little dipshit**.” (507(Ben) 00:22:03,100 --> 00:22:06,000). The word of “dipshit” that uttered by Ben is considered as a swearword because the meaning belongs to the mentally disabled or someone that

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has a lack of intelligent mind and behaves stupid which is inappropriate to state in front of people and can annoy the people who hear it. It is related to the theory from Andersson, L.G., & Trudgill that the using of words about physically and mentally disadvantaged soon become offensive, which is match with the situation when Ben uttered the swearword to the little kid, the little kid and his mother became angry with Ben. So, the word of “little dipsit” is categorized as a swearword.

The same pattern of analysis also happened in the fifth, sixth, and seventh swearwords that are used in the movie. Narcotics and crimes as the fifth swearword that commonly used, can be seen in a utterance spoken by Mr. and Mrs. Gaines. “Are you **huffing**? Are you **high**? You're **huffing grass**?” (150-151(Mrs. Gaines and Mr. Gaines) 00:06:12 --> 00:06:14). The words of “huffing” and “huffing grass” actually refer to some kind of activities that related to sipping, using, or consuming drugs and marijuana. Meanwhile, the word of “high” here means a hallucinogenic from drugs, making the people who consumed it can not behave and think clearly. By understanding the meaning of the words, so the researcher categorized these words in narcotics

swearword. As the sixth swearword, the example of prostitution swearword that uttered by Ben, “Look, we throw a lot of fancy words in front of these kids, in order to attract them to going to school, in the belief that they're gonna have a better life. And we all know that all we're doing is breeding a whole new generation of buyers and sellers. Buyers and sellers! **Pimps and whores. Pimps and whores!**” (594-601(Ben) 00:25:14,900 --> 00:25:32,700). The word of “pimp” actually means a man who controls prostitutes, finds the customers from them and makes a profit for them. Meanwhile, the word of “whore” also has negative meaning, because it refers to women prostitutes. Both of them are rude and inappropriate to be said in the conversation, so we call them as swearwords. Death swearword as the last kind of swearword has a less usage than the others can be seen in the utterance that also spoken by Ben. “I'm glad **my mother's dead**.” (473 (Ben) 00:20:53,600 --> 00:20:55,200). The word of “my mother's dead” is inappropriate to be said in the conversation. So, it is considered as a swearword.

The last three swearwords above are also related by the theory from Andersson, L.G., & Trudgill, which

categorized the swearwords based on the meaning of the swearword when it is occurred. As an addition, the researcher also analyzed the characters who mostly used the swearwords are Bartleby and Ben. About 21 swearwords from the 79 amount of it are spoken by Bartleby, who acted as a main character who has an expressive personality and acted smart to find some excuses when he was involved in troubles. Meanwhile, Ben also utters about 20 swearwords. Steve Pink as the director of the movie seemed to want to give a color to the movie by the free expressions of the characters who state whatever they feel through the utterances that makes the movie becomes more interesting. The character of Ben is described as a desperate old man who was a former of a great lecturer in a famous university, was disappointed with the system of education in America. So, during his desperate time, he cursed whenever he felt the negative emotion even as an expression to state something. It is connected with the theory from Steven Pinker (2007, p. 68) who mentioned that swearwords are a natural part of our language, and they are undoubtedly one of the most efficient ways to do away with extra frustration or anger in difficult situations.

### **The Analysis of Kinds of Speech Act Used as Swearwords Detected in *Accepted***

Swearwords detected in the movie are analyzed using the theory of speech act by John Searle (1975) about the classification of speech act, they are representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. The amount of speech act utterances in the movie is 83. There are 39 utterances that contain expressives, 21 utterances that contain directives, 17 utterances that contain representatives, 4 commissive utterances and 2 declaratives that are found in the movie. Based on the finding, most of speech act used as swearwords that are occurred in *Accepted* movie is expressives. Expressives can be recognized by the utterance that reflect the speaker's feeling, a psychological state and can be a statement of pleasure, pain, upset, disappointment, likes, dislikes, disbelief, joy, sorrow, and anxiety, thanking, congratulating, apologizing, even cursing to state the misfortune, according to John Searle (1975 in George Yule, 1996, p. 53). It will be understood by the example of utterance that contains that is uttered by Mr. Gaines. "I didn't get accepted anywhere." (Bartleby), "Oh, Bartleby." (Mrs. Gaines) 00:06:48 --> 00:06:52 ,

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“**Damn it.**” ( 162-164 (Mr. Gaines) 00:06:52 --> 00:06:53). Through the using of religion swearword of “Damn it!”, Mr. Gaines already stated an expressive speech act sample. He wanted to express his disappointment through the word so that Bartleby would know if he wasn’t happy at all with Bartleby’s failure. So, based on the utterance, there is a reason why expressives mostly used the movie. The characters in the movie which live in America that already get used to express everything they feel through the utterances spontaneously. Steven Pink seemed to make the plot of the movie more interesting with the variety of swearwords expressions every time the characters find troubles. The second speech act that mostly used in the movie is directives. Directives can be recognized by the utterance that attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something and to express what the speaker wants, such as requesting, asking, suggesting, commanding and ordering, according to John Searle (1975 in George Yule, 1996, p. 53). The researcher found the using of directives that is connected to the theory above. It can be seen in the utterance stated by Schrader. “Fine. Get off me, you **idiot**. But we need some sort of, like, mission statement or something.” (274-275

(Schrader) 00:11:57,135 --> 00:12:03,900). The speech act category for the utterance is Directives as an asking expression from Schrader to ask Bartleby to stop hugging him. He wanted Bartleby to get off his hugging so bad, so he called Bartleby as *idiot*, which is considered as a mentally disabled in swearword. So, through the swearword, Schrader actually did not want to be hugged Bartleby and ask him to stop hugged him.

The third speech act that mostly used in the movie is representatives, that can be recognized in the utterances that commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, such as statement of facts, assertion or description, according to John Searle (1975 in George Yule, 1996, p. 53). A utterance found by the researcher in the movie is connected with the theory. It can be understood in the utterance stated by Ben. “What were you expecting? A Renaissance of the human spirit? American education is in **the shitter**. You know why? Because people forget the most important rule.” (1005-1007 (Ben) 00:43:51,635 --> 00:44:01,000). The utterances contain a speech act when Ben uttered a swearword “the shitter”. Ben commits to the implied assertion to describe that the system of education in America is in a



mess. It is another way to state that the system of education in America now is not worth it to be applied to the students. The representative here more refers to the assertion of something which is being the case as the truth in Ben's point of view.

There is a lack of amount when it comes to the next kinds of speech act category. Commissive speech act can be analyzed when the speaker commits to some future course of action, such as promising, offering, praying, and threatening, as stated by John Searle (1975 in George Yule, 1996, p. 53). The utterance that connected with the theory is stated by Schrader. "I want lilac shirts! I want visors kind of tilted to the side, with hair gel coming out of it. I want to **have sex** with girls that look like this!" (1469-1471 (Schrader) 01:07:20,200 --> 01:07:28,100). The utterance has been considered as commissive speech act by researcher, because it commits Schrader to some future course of his hopes that he would do-especially when he used the swearword of "have sex" if he officially joined the brotherhood. Schrader's hope becomes the highlight in this utterance as the type in commissive. Meanwhile, declarations speech act can be recognized when the speakers effect immediate changes in the institutional state of

affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistics institutions, for instance: declaring war, firing from employment, christening, and giving a name based on the theory from John Searle (1975 in George Yule, 1996, p. 53). The utterance that is connected to the theory is stated by The shoe Store Manager. "You are an **asshole**, and you're fired." (509 (The Shoe Store Manager) 00:22:08,100 --> 00:22:10,20). The speech act category for the utterance which used the swearword is declaration as firing from employment and changing Ben's world to unemployment. Firing from unemployment becomes one of the features in declarations speech act. There is a reason why declarations usage is less than the other types of speech act in the movie. There are only a few plots that contain a scene when the speaker attempts to change the institutional state of affairs or to change someone's world because Steven Pink wants to keep the movie interesting without too many changes in the institutional state of affairs. So, that's why declaration speech act can only be found in less amount than the others.

### **The Analysis of Kinds of The Swearing Contexts Detected in *Accepted***

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There are five contexts of swearing that the researcher found in *Accepted* movie, they are, dysphemistic, abusive, idiomatic, emphatic, and cathartic. The amount of the context of swearing in the movie is 83. There are 22 utterances that contain dysphemistic context, 18 abusive contexts that are found in the movie, 17 utterances that contain cathartic, 14 utterances that contain emphatic, and 12 idiomatic contexts. As the most dominant context found by the researcher in the movie, dysphemistic context is influenced by the metaphor that the speakers used when they want to express something. The changing from one object to another becomes the uniqueness point in dysphemistic context. It can be seen in one of the utterances in the movie. "You know, a lot of people say that college is the time when young men and women expand the way that they look at their world, when they open their minds to new ideas and experiences and when they begin that long journey from the innocence of youth to the responsibilities of adulthood. Now isn't that a load of **horseshit**?" (582-590 (Ben) 00:24:37,500 --> 00:24:59,700). The utterances had been spoken by Ben. The context is Dysphemistic swearing as an expression to force listeners to think

about negative matter. So, Ben used metaphor to change the object (in this case the word "a load of horseshit" refers to all of his saying is a nonsense) and to force Bartleby's family to think about negative matter against the statement that he was saying. He used "horseshit" because he did not even believe that the statement he uttered before is right. It is connected to the theory from Steven Pinker (2007, p. 72) that dysphemistic context forces listener to think about negative matter. There is also a reason why the using of dysphemistic context takes the dominant position in the movie. The using of dysphemistic context makes the movie more interesting with the creative metaphors that the characters used as the reflection of their feeling towards a case from the speaker's point of view.

The second commonly used context while the characters in the movie uttered the swearwords is abusive. It can be recognized by the example that uttered by Rory, "College is for **pussies!**" (217 (Rory 00:08:52,535 --> 00:08:54,400). Rory had stated abusive context to insult people through a word of "pussies" which are meant people who have man and woman personality in one body, which known as sissy, that refer to rich kids who cheat during the selection

to Yale University. She actually did not care with the formal occasion when she uttered the swearword, because she was in a farewell party of graduate students where the parents and the teachers were also there too. It is connected with the theory from Steven Pinker (2007, p. 68) who mentioned that swearwords are a natural part of our language, and they are undoubtedly one of the most efficient ways to do away with extra frustration or anger in difficult situations. The third commonly used context while the characters in the movie uttered the swearwords is cathartic context. It can be recognized when the speakers uttered the swearwords as the reaction of something that is not favored. The researcher found some examples of it, but one of them can be checked in the utterance spoken by Glen. "Did you just say you got accepted here?" (Bartleby) 00:28:30,800 --> 00:28:32,900, "Well, yeah, yeah, yeah, we all did. Thank you so much!" (Abernathy) 00:28:53,300 --> 00:28:54,800), "**Holy balls.**" (663-66700Glen)(:29:00,100 --> 00:29:02,800). In America, ball has a special meaning if it used with the word of "holy". It means a man's *testicles* where sperm is produced. So, "holy balls" is a swearword with the sexual organs its type. The context for the

utterance that stated by Glen above is cathartic swearing through the sexual organ "holy balls" as a reaction of a misfortune because Glen had a disbelief feeling with the fact that there were many students – especially men, who got accepted in their fake college that was supposed to be a secret. The utterance also explains that the speaker who used the swearword towards the misfortune is under the negative emotions. So, it is connected to the theory from Steven Pinker (2007, p. 72) who said that cathartic context refers to the reaction of life's misfortunes or when something bad happens like coffee spilling, people curse.

Emphatic as the fourth context that commonly used by the characters in the movie can be recognized in the utterance stated by Schrader. "Schrader, where have you been? I've been calling you for half an hour." (Bartleby) 00:32:51,100 --> 00:32:53,100, "**the hell**, man? I'm in the middle of rush." (756-757 (Schrader 00:32:53,200 --> 00:32:55,100). The context is Emphatic swearing as an expression to emphasize Schrader's asking sentence spontaneously because he is totally curious why Bartleby could come to B.K.E party while he's not invited. It is also connected with the theory from

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Steven Pinker (2007, p. 72) who stated that emphatic swearing is to emphasize something with swearing.

The last context that less appeared than the others contexts is idiomatic that spoken by Bartleby. "Oh, man, I heard about the scholarship. That's **insane**. You're one of the best receivers in the state." (192-193 (Bartleby)" 00:07:58 --> 00:08:02,500). When Bartleby stated the swearword, it is to arouse interest through a word of "insane" which meant a nonsense condition that is unbelievable as an expression from Bartleby to Hands and it showed that the setting is informal. Bartleby also wanted to show his empathy feeling. The utterance is related to the theory from Steven pinker (2007, p. 68) that swearwords as a natural part of our language that has different purpose based on the context when it is occurred. In this context, the purpose of swearword is to show the empathy feeling between two close friends that can tighten the friendship.

Meanwhile, different context is spoken by Ben as a fake dean of South Harmon Institute of Technology when he was in a formal meeting with Bartleby's family. "It is so refreshing to have somebody approach education so rationally." (Mrs. Gaines) 00:26:26,300

--> 00:26:31,600, "**Fuckin' A!**" (613-615(Ben) 00:26:32,100 --> 00:26:33,200). The context for the first utterance is Idiomatic swearing, when Ben used it without really referring to the matter to show that he's agree with Mrs. Gaines compliment. The theory from Steven Pinker (2007, p. 72) about idiomatic that is uttered without really referring to the matter - just using the words to arouse interest is proven based on the example.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The researcher would like to conclude that there are seven kinds of swearwords found in *Accepted* movie, they are; sexual organs, sexualrelations, religion, excrement, death, physically or mentally disabled, prostitution, and narcotics and crime. The amount of swearwords in the movie is 83. There are about 24 excrement swearwords, 19 sexual swearwords, 16 religion swearwords, 9 Physically and mentally disabled swearwords, 4 prostitution swearwords, 10 narcotics and crimes swearwords, and 1 death swearword. It can be seen that the characters used excrement swearwords is because they intended to express their feeling based on the misfortunes that they had in the movie. The swearwords utterances are

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analyzed using the theory of speech act. As the result, the amount of speech act utterances in the movie is 83. There are 39 utterances that contain expressives, 21 directives, 17 representatives, 4 commissive and 2 declaratives. From the dominantly kind of speech act, it can be seen that the characters used expressive in the swearwords because the characters in the movie which live in America already get used to express everything they feel through the utterances spontaneously. All swearwords in the speech act analysis have their own context when they are occurred in the movie. The amount of the context of swearing in the movie is 83. There are 22 dysphemistic contexts, 18 abusive contexts, 17 cathartic, 14 emphatic, and 12 idiomatic and that are found in the movie. The most dominantly using of dysphemistic context which makes the movie more interesting with the creative metaphors that the characters used as the reflection of their feeling towards a case from the speaker's point of view. From the analysis above, the research has come to primary conclusion. The way the characters as the Americans behaving and stating their feelings through a variety of expressions are related to their identity as free expression speakers, which makes them state whatever they

feel through the expressions in utterances spontaneously.

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