



THE REFLECTION OF EMBEDDED CULTURE THROUGH THE DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN *THE SOCIAL DILEMMA* DOCUMENTARY

Elsa Ariska¹, Yusrita Yanti*²

Affiliation: ^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang

Email: elsaariska17@gmail.com¹, yusrita.yanti@bunghatta.ac.id²

*Corresponding Author: yusrita.yanti@bunghatta.ac.id

Abstract

In daily life, humans as social beings interact with one another to fulfill their needs. In this case, they tend to use various forms of communication, depending on the purpose. These patterns indicate the culture embraced by the speaker. It is reflected in the values they profess. Related to these phenomena, this study is aimed to analyze the embedded values reflected through the directive speech acts in an American Netflix documentary entitled "The Social Dilemma." Revealing the negative side of social media, this documentary provides its viewers with the thoughts of technologists, researchers, and also activists with an interest in humanity. Through a descriptive qualitative method, it is found the direct and indirect types of directive speech acts of ordering, forbidding, advising, commanding, and suggesting reflect an embeddedness culture with security and self-discipline as the main values. The results of this study show that the value of the security is dominating. These values are indicating the purpose of avoiding children and society from social media addiction.

Subject Area: Socio-Pragmatics

Keywords: cultural values, directive speech acts, *the social dilemma* documentary

1 Introduction

Lots of platforms can be used to build awareness in social media. One of them is through documentaries, non-fiction film that aims to capture reality, related to the purpose of instruction, education, or preservation of a historical record, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2008). Providing viewers with related facts, plenty of information and ideas can be absorbed through watching it.

As with any other documentary, *The Social Dilemma* is also content with purpose. This American documentary features tech professionals from the world's biggest start-up companies and big technological corporations in discussing the dark consequences of using social media. In fact, not only for social networking, some parties use social media as a tool for manipulating and influencing people through commercial ways.

It is found that the speakers in this documentary use various types of directive speech acts in guiding people through ideas conveyed, commonly through the type of order, forbidding, advising, commanding, and suggesting. In this case, each of them has its style. This is in correlation with the idea proposed by Gass and Neu (2006), that speech acts of one culture are different from one another. It

means that the way people speak, the strategy they use, or their choice of words reflects the values they hold in living life, including performing order.

Theoretically, based on Searle (1976) via Cutting (2002), the speakers use the directive speech act to urge listeners to do a certain action, such as to order. In another case, it can be explained in the sentence “*Could you open the door, please?*” which can be interpreted as a question and request at the same time. Simply, the listener can only answer it with a “yes” or “no,” but implicitly it can be more than that, to conduct an act of opening the door.

Since this study is aimed to analyze the embedded value reflected by the directive speech acts in the documentary, a cultural values theory is included. Schwartz (2013) classified cultural values orientations into seven types, including mastery, embeddedness, hierarchy, harmony, egalitarianism, affective autonomy, and intellectual autonomy based on the mapping of eight transnational cultural zones of the world, such as Muslim Middle East & Sub-Saharan Africa, South & South East Asia, Confucian-influenced countries, East Europe, East-Central & Baltic Europe, Latin America, and English Speaking country, and also West Europe.

After all, the writer considers conducting this study to figure out the cultural values-oriented by the speakers in *The Social Dilemma* documentary through the directive speech acts found. Furthermore, it will increase our ability to comprehend the directive speech acts and broaden our perspective toward American culture.

2 Literature Review

Analyzing the embedded cultural value reflected through the directive speech acts used by the speaker in *The Social Dilemma*, we should go deeper in figuring out the sense of the spoken words. It is under the study of pragmatics. Griffiths (2006) explained Pragmatics as the way speakers and listeners communicate based on context. This is in line with what is proposed by Yule (1969) that the meaning intended by a speaker is sometimes bigger than their saying. Thus, they involve context to get them to the real meaning.

Furthermore, Crabtree et al. (1991) divided the contexts that influence words` meaning into four types. They are physical context, epistemic context, linguistic context, and social context. The physical context explains the place, the objects, the actions, and also the event that happens in the conversation, while the epistemic context focuses on the background knowledge shared by both speaker and the listener. On the other hand, the linguistic context is the correlation between the previous sentence and the current one which leads to a topic. Different from the others, a social context is related to the speaker and hearer`s relationship.

The four contexts in the previous paragraph are involved in conducting this study. But before it goes further, the conception of speech acts should be clarified. Based on Austin (1962), a speech act is divided into locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. People use locutionary acts when they say what they meant through explicit words. On contrary, to say what they meant implicitly they use the illocutionary instead, while the perlocutionary is used to attain some aims, such as convincing and deterring. Based on these major divisions, Searle (1976) in Cutting (2002) divided the illocutionary acts into representatives, directives, expressive, commissives, and declarations.

Directive speech acts, are particularly used by a speaker to get the listener to take action, including the action of ordering, commanding, requesting, advising, inviting, suggesting, and forbidding. Since this study is focused on directives, they casually tend to direct or instruct the listener to do something. One of the examples of it is “*Say hello to your uncle Patrick*” (Searle, 1976).

Additionally, related to the theory of cultural values orientation, Schwartz (2013) defined it as principal attitudes people expose depending on a specific social system in society. There are seven main cultural values based on cultural mapping, including embeddedness, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, egalitarianism, hierarchy, harmony, and mastery, as we can see in Table 1.

Table 1 Theoretical Structure of Cultural Value Orientations (Schwartz, 2013)

Cultural Orientations	Main Values	
Harmony	a. <i>Protect environment</i> b. <i>Unity with nature</i> c. <i>World of Beauty</i>	d. <i>World at peace</i> e. <i>Accept my portion in life</i>
Mastery	a. <i>Capable</i> b. <i>Daring</i> c. <i>Successful</i> d. <i>Ambitious</i>	e. <i>Influential</i> f. <i>Independent</i> g. <i>Social Recognition</i> h. <i>Choosing own goals</i>
Hierarchy	a. <i>Humble</i> b. <i>Authority</i>	c. <i>Wealth</i> d. <i>Social Power</i>
Embeddedness	a. <i>Respect tradition</i> b. <i>Forgiving</i> c. <i>Social order</i> d. <i>Moderate</i> e. <i>Obedient</i> f. <i>Politeness</i> g. <i>Clean</i>	h. <i>Security</i> i. <i>Self-discipline</i> j. <i>Protect my public image</i> k. <i>Honor elders</i> l. <i>Reciprocations of favor</i>
Egalitarianism	a. <i>Helpful</i> b. <i>Honest</i> c. <i>Social Justice</i>	d. <i>Responsible</i> e. <i>Equality</i> f. <i>Loyal</i>
Intellectual Autonomy	a. <i>Broadmindedness</i> b. <i>Freedom</i>	c. <i>Creativity</i> d. <i>Curious</i>
Affective Autonomy	a. <i>Exciting life</i> b. <i>Varied life</i> c. <i>Pleasure</i>	d. <i>Enjoying life</i> e. <i>Self Indulgent</i>

But, in this case, particularly, focusing on the value of embeddedness, it prioritizes the act of avoiding conflict in the group. Its virtues are the main values that include respecting tradition, moderation, obedience, security, politeness, devoutness, wisdom, and reciprocation of favors.

Many studies have been conducted related to speech acts (Utami, 2021; Yanti, 2020). One of them is the research done by Ariska & Yanti (2022). It is focused on the analysis of the expressive speech acts found in Kamala Harris' victory speech and the multicultural values reflected through them. The writer uses the speech acts theory by Searle (1969) in conducting this research, while the theory of cultural values is referred to by Shalom Schwartz (2013). A descriptive qualitative method is applied in this research. Based on this research, the data of expressive speech acts are found in form of greeting, gratitude, sadness, praising, happiness, and thoughtfulness. Additionally, the multicultural values reflected show that Harris is proud of her roots, elevates unity, respects diversity, and also celebrates the revolution in the Black community.

After compounding all these materials, the writer positives that the embedded value reflected by the directive speech acts as found in the *Netflix* documentary entitled *The Social Dilemma* can be analyzed.

3 Methodology

This study is conducted through a qualitative descriptive method. Cresswell (1994) stated that a qualitative method is an inquiry process in comprehending a social problem that focused on constructing a comprehensive image through words, and comprehensive opinions of informants' representation, and conducting it in a natural situation. Furthermore, related to the descriptive

approach, Maxwell in Seixas, et al. (2017) defined it as an accurate, correct, and real application of data's factual features.

In conducting this study, the writer uses a documentary titled "*The Social Dilemma*" which was released by Netflix as the source of the data. On the other hand, the data of this study are all of the utterances in form of directive speech acts performed by the cast in the documentary.

The technique of collecting the data follows several steps. They are including watching the documentary carefully and repeatedly, observing the suitability of the script and the documentary itself, identifying every utterance spoken by the cast in the movie, and underlining all the directive speech acts used in the script based on Searle's theory, and lastly, compiling it into a data sheet.

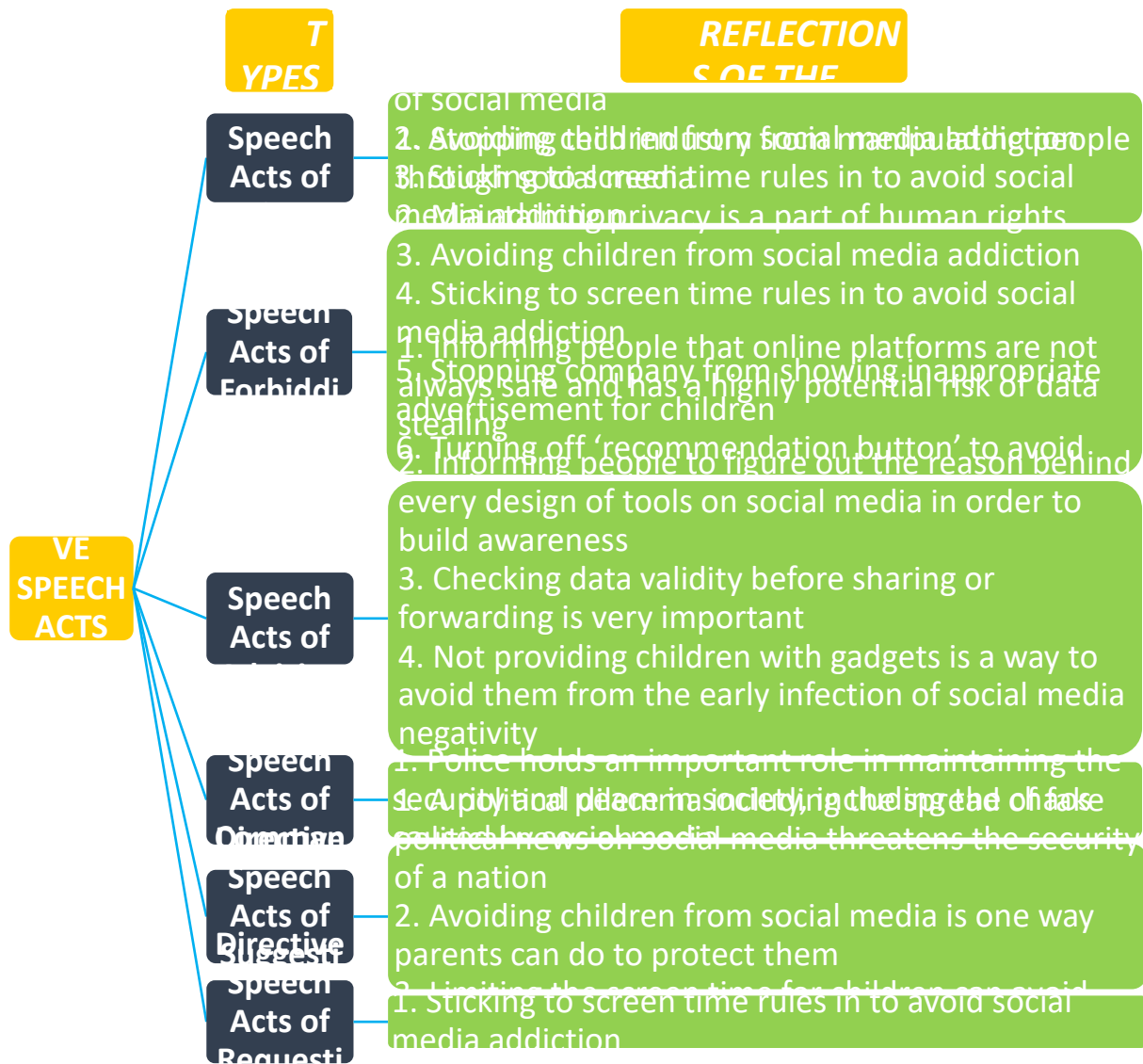
On the other hand, the data are analyzed by watching and observing the documentary repeatedly, observing all the directive utterances found, collecting the data by noting all the directive utterances, doing classification based on Searle's theory, analyzing the classified data based on contexts-influence, identifying the strategy of delivering the directive speech acts, figuring out the cultural values reflected based on Schwartz's theory, interpreting the result of the data analysis, and drawing the conclusion based on the results.

4 Results and Findings

Based on the data analysis, the results show there are thirty-three directive utterances that reflect the cultural value of embeddedness in the documentary *The Social Dilemma*. In detail, they are listed as five data of order, ten data of forbidding, seven data of advising, eight data of commanding, and three data of suggesting. It includes the direct and indirect strategies in the process of delivering the utterances.

Through the reflection on the embeddedness of cultural value, the directive utterances found are commonly indicating the importance of maintaining security in using social media. Not only about the social function itself, but also emphasizing the tools it brings. It includes several key terms such as engine manipulation, clickbait, data stealing, addiction, and dilemmas. In this case, what is trying to be asserted by the speaker is the point that all social media users should be aware of the reasons behind each tool. These things are emphasized by two main values, security, and self-discipline. To be precise, the points of embeddedness value in the documentary will be explained in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The Embeddedness Values Reflected Through the Directive Speech Acts in "The Social Dilemma" Documentary



As we can see in Figure 1, most of the values are focused on the purpose of building awareness in children related to the use of social media at an early age. It is to avoid social media negativities that can affect their mental health badly, for example, insecurity by comparing themselves to others. This is a result of the perfection people post virtually. Sometimes, it is even the opposite of the facts in their reality.

In more detail, this reflection of embedded culture will be explained based on the findings of values in each type of expressive speech act, as follows.

4.1 The Value of Security

In terms of security, the values that are reflected through the directive utterances in the social dilemma are related to actions that can be taken to avoid the negative impacts of social media, especially on children. These security values are included in the directive speech acts of ordering, forbidding, advising, commanding, and suggesting in the documentary. We can see it in the following data.

- (1) *So, I decided that we're not gonna have any cell phones at the table tonight. So, turn 'em in.*
- (2) *You can't advertise to these age children in these ways.*

- (3) *I've worked out what I think are three simple rules, um, that make life a lot easier for families and that are justified by the research. So, the first rule is all devices are out of the bedroom at a fixed time every night.*
- (4) *Hey! Hands up!*
- (5) *I think we have to have the platforms be responsible for when they take over election advertising, they're responsible for protecting elections.*

The five data above are directive utterances delivered by speakers in *The Social Dilemma* regarding the importance of awareness in virtual connection. Speakers who have backgrounds as technologists, activists, and also researchers are well aware that the impacts of the widespread use of social media are not entirely positive, but also accompanied by the dark sides. They realize that some aspects related to social media tools are very contrary to humanity. As a result, through this documentary, they convey their thoughts regarding the prevention of these unwanted effects.

Datum (1) is delivered by a mother to the daughter. Based on the physical context, since the kids are so addicted to social media, she feels annoyed, even at dinner all of them are distracted by phones. Therefore, she decides a new rule "*I decided that we're not gonna have any cell phones at the table tonight.*" She does it directly as a firm that the family should focus on having quality time at the table. As a consequence, all of them were obligated to put the phones in a lockable jar, during dinner time. By this, she orders them through the sentence "*turn 'em in*". The term "*em*" is referred to the phones, while "*in*" means into the lockable jar. Reviewing the value behind this order, the writer realizes that this order has functioned as an emphasis of the security guide, a screen time rule by the mother to avoid the children from social media addiction, yet to establish good communication among family members when they are getting along.

Not only a screen time rule but the value of the security is also reflected by the awareness toward an age-appropriate advertisement. It can be seen in the directive speech acts of forbidding in datum (2). This prohibition is contextually delivered by Tristan Harris, a technologist who cares about the monetization of social media. The fact that lots of inappropriate advertisements for minors can be posted freely is so dangerous. This prohibition is made for companies that gain profit through inappropriate advertising. The words "*you can't advertise to these age children in these ways*" indicate that those companies should stop their actions. Looking at this phenomenon, this utterance is purposed for the security of the minors since those kinds of inappropriate advertisements can affect their mental health negatively.

In line with the previous data, the directive speech act of advising in datum (3) is also containing a security value. This advice is given by an expert named Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist at New York University. Based on the context influence, he is asked by the interviewer to advise about creating an easier life for the family. Responding to this, he advises that "*the first rule is all devices out of the bedroom at a fixed time every night.*" This direct advice, from the security side, is viewed as a step to make families have optimal rest at night. So, social media distractions should be avoided by taking all devices out at night. We cannot deny that having optimal sleep at night brings a clearer mind in the morning. As a result, the day will be well spent or more productive.

Moving to a datum (4), based on physical context, this command "*Hey! Hands up!*" is given by a police officer to someone who was accidentally caught up in a demonstration. Functionally, this command is given to make her raise her hands as a sign of giving up. From a point of view of an embedded culture, it emphasizes the police officers' role which is authorized to maintain security and peace in society, including ceasing a demonstration so conflict in society could be avoided.

Lastly, datum (5) shows a directive speech act of suggesting. It is indicated by the words "*I think*" which means that the speaker proposes his opinion on the idea of creating better social media platforms. The suggestion "*I think we have to have the platforms be responsible for when they take over election advertising, they're responsible for protecting elections*" is delivered by Tristan Harris in a briefing with US senators. It is related to the political dilemma caused by the dissemination of

fake information during the election. That is why he suggests the listeners, in this case, the senators build a responsible platform to advertise and protect elections simultaneously. It reveals that one of the biggest issues on social media is something called a “political dilemma” such as the spread of fake political news that can threaten the security of a nation.

Based on the explanations above, the writer can recap that the main security values as a virtue of embedded culture contained in *The Social Dilemma* include the importance of preventing society, especially children from the danger of social media such as addiction, engine manipulation, inappropriate advertisement, data stealing, and fake news. We can avoid these by making screen time rules for children, turning off the recommendation button on the platforms, doing fact-checking before sharing, and also reinventing the better platforms. Therefore, our lives could be balanced, communication becomes well-established, and peace in society could be maintained.

4.2 The value of Self Discipline

An embeddedness culture is dealing with maintaining the status quo and also behaviors that may annoy in-group unity or any traditional orders. Self-discipline is a criterion of this culture. The following datum will explain how the use of social media related to discipline matters.

(6) *If you are scrolling through your social media feed while you`re watchin` us, you need to put the damn phone down and listen up.*

(7) *Honey, you can` t open that.*

Relying on the context, the utterance “... *you need to put the damn phone down and listen up*” in datum (6) is delivered by Whoopi Goldberg as the host of the American talk show *The View*, starting the show, tried to introduce the guest of the day, Jaron Lanier the author of a book titled *The Arguments For Deleting Your Social Media Account Right Now*, so related to the title of the book, she asks the viewers of the show to put their phones down and listen up. Since the topic of the show she hosted regarding the deletion of social media, the speaker asks the listeners to pay full attention by leaving the phone so they would not miss information that will be delivered. This order is given by the speaker to make the listeners focus, and this value is a part of discipline.

Other than that, there is datum (7) which categorized a directive speech act as forbidding. The prohibition is firmed by the words “*you can` t open that*” which indicated that the listener should stop the action of opening something. Contextually, this utterance is delivered by a mother when the daughter is trying to open “*that*” which means the lockable jar, to take the phone out. By this, the mother prohibits the daughter from taking the phone out from the lockable jar and she should stick to the rule of dinner without a phone that has been made.

From these data, we can get that what is trying to be asserted by the documentary through the data (6) and (7) related to self-discipline is that staying away from social media can increase someone`s level of focus. In addition, sticking to the screen time rules is considered effective to avoid social media addiction. All of these values depend on the personality of a person because discipline means that you should commit to yourself.

Finally, both values of security and self-discipline are indicating the embedded culture reflected in *The Social Dilemma* documentary. The values are closely related to the prevention of a chaotic society`s appearance. Since an embedded culture prioritizes avoiding conflict in society, the values of security and self-discipline which are reflected through the directive speech acts can be applied in using social media these days.

5 Conclusion

After picturing the results and the findings of this study, it can be portrayed that the value of embeddedness is reflected through the directive speech acts of ordering, forbidding, advising, commanding, and suggesting. They are frequently delivered by the speaker in a direct strategy.

Through all of the directive, speech acts found, the embedded culture is dominated by the value of security and self-discipline. Through the point of security, it is emphasized that children and society should be avoided social media addiction, screen time rules for children is substantial, engine

manipulation through social media should be banned, age-appropriate advertisement serving rules must be enforced, and checking data validity before sharing or forwarding is very important. Besides that, in the term of self-discipline, it is proposed the facts that staying away from social media increases one's level of focus, sticking to the screen time rules is considered effective for avoiding social media addiction, and also the absolute truth that being on time is vital in living life in the world that keeps moving.

Finally, it can be concluded that through the value of embeddedness which is reflected through the directive speech acts in *The Social Dilemma* documentary, the goal of encouraging parents to limit the use of social media in children from an early age is very crucial. There are so many aspects that must be instilled concerning social media awareness in order to avoid the bad effects it brings. And the fact is that the youth is the determination for the future, so it is important to build their self-esteem by limiting the use of social media, so they can avoid negativity. This is why a speech act is always more than words. There are so many valuable messages we can capture as we can see how a cultural value can be reflected in it. And hopefully, the lessons can be applied in real life. In this case, related to social media utilization.

6. References

- Ariska, E., Yanti, Y. (2022). The Expressive Speech Acts In Kamala Harris` Victory Speech: A Study of Multicultural Values. *Journal of Cultura and Culingua*, 3(1), 31-38. doi:10.37301/culingua.v3i1.105.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with World*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Crabtree, M., & Powers, J. (1991). *Language Files: Materials for an Introduction to Language and Linguistics* (5th ed.). Colombus: The Ohio State University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research Design: A Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches*. California: Sage Publications.
- Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gass, S. M., & Neu, J. (2006). *Speech Acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Griffiths, P. (2006). *An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Express Ltd.
- Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary*. (2008). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schwartz, S. H. (2013). National Culture as Value Orientations: Consequences of Value Differences and Cultural Distance. *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, 547-586. doi:10.1016/B978-0-444-53776-8.00020-9.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1976). A Classifications of Illocutionary Acts. *Language in Society*, 5(1), 1-23. doi:10.1017/s0047404500006837
- Seixas, etal. (2017). The Qualitative Descriptive Approach in International Comparative Studies: Using Online Qualitative Surveys. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 7(9), 778-781. doi:10.15171/ijhpm.2017.142.
- Utami, S. T. (2021). *An Analysis of the Expressive Speech Acts On World Health Organization Instagram Comments about Covid-19*. Unpublished Thesis. Padang: Universitas Bung Hatta.

Utami, S., & Yanti, Y. (2022). Speech Acts of Protest Expressed by Followers of the World Health Organization Instagram Account. *KnE Social Sciences*, 7(6), 196–206. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i6.10622>

Yanti, Y. (2020). *Fungsi Bahasa dalam Tindak Tutur Ekspresif. Iktiar dalam Bahasa Festschrift untuk Prof. Dr. Mukhaiyar, M. Pd.* Padang: UNP Press.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press.