

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents several sub-chapters, including the background of the study, statement of the research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitation.

1.1. Background of the Study

Humans are social beings; they are unable to live alone. They need communication to socialize. Communication is a form of conveying information or opinions by two or more people. According to Keyton in Lunenburg (2010), “Communication is a process of transmitting information from one person to another”. Communication can help people exchange ideas or information, express themselves, influence, or entertain others. Communication is the most crucial part of human life. However, communication does not always run smoothly. Sometimes speakers or hearers feel uncomfortable with the communication that happens. It is because of several things, one of which is a face-threatening act or FTA. Face-threatening acts happen when someone threatens the face of other people. Therefore, when the speaker wants to express his desire but avoids FTA against negative or positive acts, he can lessen the threat by using a face-saving act. A way to minimize the occurrence of FTA is using a politeness strategy.

In Pragmatics, politeness does not talk about social behavior. However, it is about the language choice of the speaker to show goodwill to other people.

When we talk about ‘politeness’, we do not refer to the social rules of behavior such as letting people go first through a door... we refer to the choices that are in language, the Linguistic expression that gives people space and shows a friendly attitude to them (Cutting, 2002, p. 44-45).

Politeness is an action to show awareness of another person’s face. The speaker must respect the other person’s face. They can use politeness strategies to less disrespect, demean, or threaten the hearer. Politeness is one of the crucial things in communication. Holmes (2013) states that politeness in speaking makes

a social harmony. Politeness can keep the relationship harmonious and avoid problems. By applying politeness strategies in daily communication, people can respect each other and avoid unpleasant behavior.

Yule (1996) states that external and internal factors related to social distance and closeness influence interaction. Sociological variables such as proximity or distance between speaker and hearer affect their language choice. It influences the use of politeness. In 2013, Holmes states that politeness strategies are influenced by social factors, such as the closeness between speakers and hearers, their social roles, and the type of social context in which they interact. For example, if the speaker is an employee and the hearer is the boss, the speaker must be a subordinate. Due to the gap in role status between them, the speaker then uses one of the appropriate politeness strategies when expressing his wants. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the sociological variables that influence the use of politeness strategies are the 'social distance' (D), the 'power' (P), and the absolute ranking (R) of impositions.

Most daily activities use communication, and therefore politeness strategies are necessary. One of the activities that need understanding about politeness strategies is debate. A debate is an activity carried out by a person or group to discuss an issue with factual arguments. "Debating is an interactive and representational argument to persuade judges and audiences" (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013, p. 147). In the dictionary, "Debate is a formal discussion, for example, in a parliament or institution, in which people express different opinions about a particular subject and then vote on it". (www.collinsdictionary.com). Even though it seems harsh, the debate must remain polite. Debate contains structure and ethics that must be adhered to, so the debate runs according to the topic of discussion (www.detik.com). There are different kinds of debates. However, the presidential debate is the most popular one.

The presidential debate aims to define the vision and mission of the presidential candidates to the public. It also helps to know the candidates' responses to the issues previously in the country. In the presidential debate, there are two performances: the moderator and the candidates. The moderator will ask

questions in several sessions, and then each candidate will respond to it. The candidates must provide correct and factual answers to the audience in answering the questions. Benoit (2000) states, “Unlike speeches or TV spots with scripts, candidates are not usually permitted to bring notes to debates. Thus, voters may obtain a somewhat more spontaneous and accurate view of the candidates in debates” (p. 1). In presidential debate does not use scripts such as movies or novels, so the concern is based on fact. The writer chooses to use presidential debate rather than movies and novels.

The presidential debate becomes a place for the candidates to argue and influence voters to vote for them. The presidential debate greatly influences the audience’s decisions. Benoit (2000) finds that several studies state that presidential debates influence many voters. Therefore, the candidates must be competent in processing language to lure the voters. The presidential debate also portrays the real faces of the candidates. According to Dailey et al. (2005), the candidates’ interaction affects the impression of the candidate’s face on the audience. When debating, the candidates show their image to the public. To reduce the threat to the opponents and maintain their image, they must show their good image. Therefore, candidates must be more mindful in voicing their thoughts to avoid hurting their self-image. Therefore, voters can choose them. According to A. Hink and S. Hink (2002), “The use of politeness strategies is one way to see the image of candidates, opponents, and values to be conveyed to the public” (p. 236). It is because politeness strategies will show the way the speaker talks. Using the politeness strategy means that the speaker respects other people. They also care about what their hearers think of them. Sometimes, some of the FTA's actions can be harsh when they do not use a politeness strategy. Therefore, when someone uses the politeness strategy, the hearer can know the speaker's attitude. The use of politeness strategies in a presidential debate is very interesting.

As one of the most influential countries globally, America also conducts presidential debates. This debate has always been the centre of the world’s attention, including Indonesians. This debate is fascinating. Many things can be good research in Linguistics in this debate, including how the candidates speak.

The majority of Americans use English to communicate. English is the world language. Many Indonesians are second language learners and are interested in using an American accent. Therefore, the American presidential debate can use to learn about English America. They can learn to use language in context through this debate. Besides that, there are differences in communication styles for the two countries. It may be due to cultural differences. Indonesia and America have contrasting cultural differences. Indonesia is Asia with eastern culture, while America is with western culture. Americans place a high value on honesty. It causes Americans to be more to the point in saying something. Indonesians often use indirect when speaking. Therefore, the author considered the presidential election debate in America interesting.

From the above rationale, it is worth conducting the study entitled *Politeness Strategies Used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate*.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study above, there are two questions to be discussed as follows:

1. What kind of politeness strategies are used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate?
2. What kind of sociological variables do influence the candidates to use the politeness strategies?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

In line with the research questions above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To elaborate the politeness strategies used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the U.S. 2020 Final Presidential Debate.
2. To elaborate the sociological variables that influences the candidates to use the politeness strategies.

1.4. Significance of the Study

By analyzing the video of the 2020 U.S. final presidential debate, the significance of this study are based on two parts, theoretically and practically. First, theoretically, this study is expected to provide a clear understanding of politeness strategies when communicating. This study is also expected to be a reference for further studies, which analyze the same data or same theory in the future. Second, practically, this study is expected to increase the reader's knowledge about the use of politeness strategies and can apply them in daily life.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is politeness strategy. The limitation of this study is the utterances of Donald Trump and Joe Biden that contain and relate to the use of politeness strategy in communication in the 2020 United States final presidential debate. In analyzing the data, this study will use the theory of politeness, described in *Politeness Some Universals in Language* by Brown and Levinson (1987).