

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is organized into five sub-chapters, namely the background of the study, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the scope and limitation. Each of these sub-chapters serves an important role in laying the foundation of the research. They explain the context of the study, formulate the research problems, outline the aims, highlight the contributions, and establish the boundaries within which the study is conducted.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language plays an essential role in human life as it allows people to communicate, express ideas, and build social relationships. Halliday (1978) defines language as a social semiotic system through which people exchange meaning, express emotions, and negotiate social positions. Similarly, Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) state that language not only functions as a means of communication but also reflects the identity, attitudes, and ideologies of its users. The way language is used can reveal power relations, social positioning, and emotional stances. Therefore, language becomes an important tool for understanding how individuals interact and construct meaning in society.

The rapid growth of technology has significantly transformed patterns of language use in everyday communication. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook have become public spaces where individuals can express opinions, disagreement, and emotional reactions instantly. Crystal (2011) explains that digital communication creates new forms of interaction that blur the boundary between spoken and written language. This environment allows users to communicate with fewer social constraints than face-to-face interaction. However, such openness also increases the potential for negative communication, including verbal aggression, insults, and hate speech. Androutsopoulos (2015) observes that language use in digital spaces often reflects users' identities, emotions, and ideological positions, making social media a crucial site for linguistic analysis.

Among various social media platforms, Instagram has become one of the most influential in Indonesia. Based on Statista (2025), Indonesia is among the

countries with the largest number of Instagram users worldwide. Instagram encourages high levels of engagement through visual content, captions, and comment sections that allow direct interaction between users and public figures. Zappavigna (2012) explains that comment sections function as evaluative spaces where users express opinions, judgments, and emotional responses. This interactive structure makes Instagram a particularly rich source of linguistic data, especially for analyzing spontaneous reactions toward political figures and public policies.

One of the most concerning linguistic phenomena emerging from social media interaction is hate speech. Brown (2017) defines hate speech as expressions that attack or demean individuals or groups based on identity, belief, or social position. From a linguistic perspective, hate speech is not limited to direct insults or explicit threats, but may also appear implicitly through sarcasm, ridicule, negative evaluation, or accusatory language (Croom, 2011). Guillén-Nieto (2023) further emphasizes that hate speech operates as a communicative act that constructs hostility through identifiable linguistic patterns, such as denigration, accusation, and verbal aggression, which can be applied across different cultural and national contexts.

In addition to its social and legal implications, hate speech presents an important object of analysis from a linguistic perspective. As a form of communication, hate speech involves systematic language choices that encode hostility, evaluation, and ideological stance. These expressions are not always realized explicitly, but are often conveyed through implicit meanings, contextual assumptions, and culturally embedded references. Therefore, examining hate speech enables researchers to analyze how meaning, intention, and social positioning are constructed through language. In particular, the study of hate speech is relevant within forensic linguistics, where language is treated as evidence of communicative intention, including how speakers strategically express hostility both explicitly and implicitly.

In Indonesia, hate speech is formally addressed through the Circular Letter of the Chief of Police Number SE/06/X/2015, which outlines several forms of hate expressions, including insults, denigration, defamation, unpleasant acts, provocation, incitement, and the dissemination of false information or hoaxes.

Although the circular does not function as a linguistic theory, it provides an authoritative legal framework that defines the boundaries of hate speech in the Indonesian context. Therefore, international classifications of hate speech, such as those discussed by Guillén-Nieto (2023), need to be contextualized using national legal references to ensure analytical relevance.

Forensic linguistics provides an appropriate framework for examining hate speech in digital communication. Coulthard and Johnson (2007) define forensic linguistics as the application of linguistic knowledge to legal and investigative contexts, where language functions as evidence of intention, stance, and communicative behavior. This field is not limited to courtroom discourse but also extends to written and online texts, including social media interactions. Olsson (2008) notes that forensic linguistic analysis focuses on how linguistic choices reveal intention, aggression, or manipulation, making it suitable for analyzing hostile discourse in online environments.

This study focuses on a prominent case involving Sudewo, the Regent of Pati, whose official Instagram account became the center of public controversy in 2025. The issue emerged after the local government announced a policy increasing the Land and Building Tax (PBB-P2) by approximately 250 percent. Public dissatisfaction intensified when Sudewo stated in an interview that he was not afraid of protests and even challenged citizens to mobilize up to fifty thousand demonstrators (CNN Indonesia, 2025). This statement was perceived as provocative and triggered strong public reactions. As a result, Sudewo's Instagram posts were flooded with negative comments, criticism, and mockery, including comments unrelated to the tax policy itself.

In early August 2025, public attention toward this issue increased sharply following the official announcement of the tax increase. Reports from CNN Indonesia (2025) and Kompas (2025) show that the policy sparked widespread debate and online criticism. Five Instagram posts uploaded between August 5 and August 10, 2025, received exceptionally high engagement and became focal points of public reaction. These posts were selected for this study because they represent the peak period of online response, reflecting intense emotional expressions, protest, and hostility toward local government authority.

Many of the comments posted under these uploads contain explicit and implicit hate expressions, including insults, accusations, provocation, and threats. Some comments are written in Javanese, indicating the local linguistic identity of Pati residents. This linguistic diversity and emotional intensity make the data particularly valuable for forensic linguistic analysis, as they allow examination of how hate speech is constructed through lexical choices, evaluative expressions, and implied meanings.

This study employs Coulthard and Johnson's (2007) forensic linguistic framework as the grand theory to analyze language as evidence of communicative intention. To answer the first research question concerning the types of hate speech, the study adopts Wiana's (2019) classification, which interprets hate speech categories based on the Circular Letter of the Chief of Police Number SE/06/X/2015 within the Indonesian context. In this study, the Circular Letter is not treated as a linguistic theory, but as a legal reference that is analytically applied through Wiana's framework. Meanwhile, Guillén-Nieto's (2023) perspective is used to provide a general understanding of hate speech as a global linguistic phenomenon.

To answer the second research question, the study applies Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature to analyze implied meaning in hate speech comments. In this study, implied meaning is understood as meaning that is not explicitly stated but inferred by the hearer, and it is analytically approached through conversational implicature. The analysis focuses on generalized and particularized implicatures to uncover how implicit meanings are constructed in online discourse. Through these frameworks, the study aims to explain how hostility toward Sudewo is linguistically constructed and how explicit and implicit meanings function in Instagram comment discourse related to local political issues.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research is designed to answer the following questions:

1. What types of hate speech are found in Instagram comments on Sudewo, Regent of Pati's official account?

2. What implied meanings are found in the hate speech comments on Sudewo's Instagram posts based on conversational implicature?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are formulated to provide a clear direction for the research. They are closely aligned with the research questions and aim to specify what this study intends to achieve. The objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the types of hate speech found in Instagram comments on Sudewo, the Regent of Pati's official account.
2. To explain the implied meanings contained in the hate speech comments on Sudewo's Instagram posts through conversational implicature.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance as follows:

a. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of forensic linguistics, especially in analyzing how hate speech is expressed and interpreted through linguistic features. Although conducted in the Indonesian context, the study uses English linguistics theories to examine how language functions as evidence of hostility. This approach enriches the application of forensic linguistic concepts across different cultural and linguistic settings. Furthermore, the study offers a clearer understanding of how linguistic evidence can reveal communicative intention and emotional stance among social media users by examining their lexical choices, sentence structures, and pragmatic cues.

b. Practical Significance

Practically, this research helps raise awareness of ethical communication and responsible language use in digital spaces. The findings may assist educators in integrating discussions on digital literacy into language and communication courses. Policymakers may also use the insights to design more effective regulations against hate speech in online environments. For social media users, the study illustrates how certain linguistic patterns or word choices can lead to misinterpretation and conflict, encouraging them to communicate more thoughtfully and respectfully online.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of The Study

Every research requires clear boundaries to ensure that the discussion remains focused and academically manageable. This study is situated within the field of forensic linguistics and focuses on the analysis of hate speech found in the comment sections of Sudewo's official Instagram account as the Regent of Pati. The study examines how hate speech is linguistically constructed and how its meanings are interpreted in the context of online political communication.

The scope of this study is limited to the linguistic and pragmatic analysis of hate speech expressions contained in Instagram comments. The research concentrates on identifying the types of hate speech and interpreting the implied meanings conveyed by commenters. This study does not address non-linguistic aspects such as psychological motives, legal verdicts, or the broader political impact of the comments, as these fall outside the scope of linguistic analysis.

To answer the research questions, this study employs a forensic linguistic framework proposed by Coulthard and Johnson (2007), which treats language as evidence of communicative intention. The first research question (RQ1), which aims to identify and classify the types of hate speech in Instagram comments directed at Sudewo, is supported by Guillén-Nieto's (2023) linguistic perspective on hate speech as a global and communicative phenomenon. This classification is then contextualized within the Indonesian setting using the Circular Letter of the Chief of Police Number SE/06/X/2015, which outlines seven types of hate speech: insult, denigration, defamation, unpleasant act, provocation, inciting, and hoax. This combination allows the study to ground its analysis in both international linguistic theory and nationally recognized legal guidelines.

The second research question (RQ2), which focuses on the implied meanings in hate speech comments, is analyzed using Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature. In this study, implicature is examined through the distinction between generalized and particularized implicature, without discussing conversational maxims explicitly. This approach enables the researcher to uncover meanings that are not stated directly but implied through context and shared knowledge. With these limitations, the study remains focused, coherent, and feasible within the scope of an undergraduate thesis.