

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Amberg and Vause (2009) language is foremost a means of communication, and communication almost always takes place within some sort of social context. This definition highlights that language is not merely a tool for transmitting information but also a fundamental aspect of human interaction that is shaped by the social environment in which it is used. Communication through language occurs within various social settings, whether in informal conversations, formal discourse, or written texts, and is influenced by cultural norms, relationships, and situational contexts. The meaning and interpretation of language are, therefore, not fixed but are negotiated based on the shared understanding between speakers within a particular social framework. Furthermore, Amberg and Vause (2009) emphasize that language is a rule-based system of signs. This means that language operates through structured principles that govern how words and symbols are formed, arranged, and interpreted. Without such systematic structures, language would lack coherence and mutual intelligibility. The rule-based nature of language also allows for creativity in expression while ensuring that communication remains comprehensible within a given linguistic community.

As a means of communication, language plays crucial role in every form of human interaction. In daily conversations, we do not just pay attention to what we say but also how we say it. Our choice of words, tone of voice, and sentence structure are all influenced by broader social and cultural factors. Yule (1996) explains that language goes beyond literal meaning, and its pragmatic use involves understanding the social context of communication. This includes factors like tone, politeness strategies, and speaker intent. Language always operates within a social context, where communication rules dictate how one speaks in accordance with the

norms and values prevailing in society. In this sense, language cannot be separated from its social context. Language does not just build meaning; it also strengthens or weakens social relationships. In formal situations like political debates, for example, language is not only a tool for presenting arguments but also an instrument for constructing a public image and maintaining good relationships with the audience. The right choice of words, a polite tone, and clear sentence structure are key to winning the sympathy and trust of the audience, showing that language is not just a static medium but also a highly strategic tool in social interaction.

Yule (1996) explains that pragmatics is the study of the meaning conveyed by speakers and how the meaning is understood by listeners in a particular context. According to Yule (1996) pragmatics focuses attention on how language interacts with its users, as well as how meaning is influenced by non-linguistic factors, such as social relationships and conversational situations. In other words, pragmatics addresses not only “what is said” but also “how” and “why” something is said in a given situation. From a pragmatics perspective, it is important to understand that the meaning of an expression is not always entirely clear from the words themselves. Context largely determines how a message is received, there are often implicit meanings that can only be understood if we pay attention to the social context in which the conversation takes place.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory centers on the concept of “face,” which refers to a person's public self-image. Politeness, in this framework, is defined as the strategies employed by individuals to mitigate Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) actions that inherently pose a threat to either the speaker's or the hearer's positive or negative face. This theory provided a structured approach to identify and categorize strategies the candidates used to manage their public image, enhance credibility, and minimize potential conflict. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) there are four main strategies that can be used in communication: bald on-record (direct without mitigation), positive politeness (showing attention to the hearer's positive face), negative politeness (showing respect for the negative face), and off record (implicitly hinting at a more implied meaning).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) here are some examples of politeness strategies:

Bald on Record

- (7) Listen, I've got an idea.
 - (8) Hear me out:
 - (9) Look, the point is this:
- (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 96)

Positive Politeness

- (4) Your blouse is very good.
- (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 104)

Negative Politeness

- (2) Why are you painting your house purple?
- (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 133)

Off Record

- (6) That window isn't open.
- (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 215)

According to Bassham et al. (2002) a debate is a structured method of argumentation in which participants use evidence-based reasoning to persuade an audience. In a debate, individuals or teams take opposing sides on a specific topic, each providing logical arguments to support their viewpoint. The process emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, where arguments are evaluated based on their coherence, evidence, and logical consistency. However, in debates, civility remains key. Candidates must construct strong arguments, but still pay attention to social norms and politeness so as not to damage their credibility before the public. Searle (1969) every language act, including debates, carries an illocutionary force, which is the social effect that speakers want to achieve when delivering an utterance. Meaning that utterances are not just words but actions with specific social effects. In a debate, candidates use assertive to state facts and establish credibility, directives to challenge opponents or persuade the audience, commissive to make promises and commitments, expressive to convey emotions and connect with voters, and declaratives to formally establish positions or decisions. These speech acts shape the debate's outcome by influencing public

perception, reinforcing authority, and persuading voters through both logical argumentation and emotional appeal.

In formal settings like political debates, candidates must balance assertiveness with respect as they present their viewpoints. According to Fairclough (1989) political discourse is inherently strategic, as politicians carefully construct their language to persuade, establish authority, and challenge opponents. This is particularly relevant in debates, where candidates must not only exchange ideas but also demonstrate leadership qualities and communication skills. As Chilton (2004) highlights, political language is a tool for power negotiation, where candidates use rhetorical strategies to gain public support, enhance their credibility, or weaken their opponents. For example, when a candidate accuses their rival of failing to fulfill promises, the illocutionary force of such an utterance, as explained in Searle's (1969) *Speech Act Theory*, is to damage the opponent's reputation and diminish their perceived competence. By analyzing these illocutionary forces in political discourse, we gain insight into how language functions beyond mere information exchange—it actively shapes public perception and influences voter behavior.

The 2024 Indonesian presidential election was one of the most anticipated political events in recent history, drawing significant public interest in how candidates presented themselves and appealed to voters. The election saw a high voter turnout of 81.78%, though slightly lower than the 2019 election (Statista, 2024). Among the many linguistic strategies employed, politeness played a critical role in shaping candidates' public personas and influencing voters' perceptions of their credibility and trustworthiness. Each presidential candidate may have employed different speech strategies shaped by their backgrounds, political experience, and audience appeal. For example, a candidate with a military background might favor direct and assertive speech to project authority, while a candidate with a bureaucratic or academic background might employ structured and data-driven arguments to emphasize policy expertise, and a candidate with extensive regional leadership experience might adopt a more conversational and relatable approach to connect with the public. One politeness strategy the candidate

used in the debate was positive politeness, their desire to be liked, appreciated, and accepted. This strategy helps reduce social distance and create a sense of closeness by expressing approval, support, and shared enthusiasm. In this case, the speaker used exaggerated expressions of admiration and encouragement, showing strong emotional alignment to build relationship and strengthen solidarity with the hearer. For example:

“Jadi, saya menyambut baik dinamika perkembangan apa itu, bisnis seperti itu. Ini luar biasa pesatnya dan ini memungkinkan membuka peluang-peluang luar biasa. Jadi, saya sangat mendukung hal-hal seperti itu, terima kasih.”

(So, I warmly welcome the dynamic developments in that kind of business. The growth has been incredibly rapid, and it opens up extraordinary opportunities. Therefore, I strongly support initiatives like this. Thank you.)

This utterance is categorized as a positive politeness strategy, specifically under the sub-strategy of Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy H). The speaker repeatedly uses emphatic and enthusiastic expressions such as “luar biasa pesatnya” and “peluang-peluang luar biasa,” which serve to strengthen support and admiration toward the hearer’s contributions or ideas. Furthermore, the speaker explicitly states “saya sangat mendukung,” reinforcing a sense of solidarity and create a friendly atmosphere to reduce social distance. Through such exaggeration, the speaker positions themselves as an ally, thus fostering a more cooperative and harmonious interaction.

Politeness Strategies are crucial in elections because they allow candidates to directly communicate their strategies, respond to criticism, and persuade undecided voters. The first presidential debate is particularly significant because it serves as the voters’ first major opportunity to assess the candidates side by side, influencing early public opinion and setting the stage for the campaign narrative. In the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, the debate was especially important due to the diverse backgrounds of the candidates, each bringing different communication styles and rhetorical strategies to the stage. These differences in communication create a need to analyze how candidates manage political discourse,

particularly through politeness strategies. In a high-stakes debate, candidates must assert their stance while maintaining a public image. Understanding these strategies is important because they shape how candidates are perceived in terms of credibility, leadership, and electability, ultimately influencing voter behavior. This study investigated how these linguistic phenomena are employed in the first presidential debate, providing insights into the role of language as a tool for political influence and voter persuasion.

1.2 Research Questions

Considering the background of this study, this study will address the following two questions:

1. What types of politeness strategies are used in the first 2024 Indonesian presidential debate?
2. What factors influence the use of politeness strategies in the first 2024 Indonesian presidential debate?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Aligned with the research questions mentioned earlier, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the types of politeness strategies used in the first 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates.
2. To examine the factors that influence the use of politeness strategies in the first 2024 Indonesian presidential debate.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of politeness strategies in political discourse by applying Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, offering insights into how politeness strategies are employed by presidential candidates in a public debate. Practically, the findings of this study can help researcher, politicians, campaign teams, and public speakers improve their communication strategies by understanding how politeness can influence public perception, credibility, and trustworthiness during debates or other political interactions.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is politeness strategies, within the linguistic field of pragmatics. The limitation of this study lies in the utterances of Anies Baswedan, Prabowo Subianto, and Ganjar Pranowo that contain or relate to the use of politeness strategies in the 2024 Indonesian First Presidential Debate. In analyzing the data, this study employs two theoretical frameworks Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) as described in *Politeness: Some Universals in Language*, to identify and classify the types of politeness strategies used and George Yule's *Pragmatics* (1996) to explore the factors that influence the candidates' use of those strategies within the debate context.