

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study and presents some subchapters, including the background of the study, research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitations.

1.1 Background of the study

Language plays a central role in human interaction, not only as a medium of conveying information but also as a tool to build relationships, maintain social harmony, and negotiate power. In political contexts, language becomes even more strategic because it is used to persuade, influence, and mobilize people. Political speeches are designed not merely to inform but also to shape perceptions, create solidarity, and strengthen a leader's image in the public sphere. In this way, language is both communicative and performative.

Language has a significant role in the communication process. Without language, a person cannot convey ideas, thoughts, or feelings to others. Language is the main element in social interaction, both in daily and social life, such as in political situations. According to Yule (2010), language is a system of symbols used to communicate. In line with this, Wardhaugh (2006) defines language as a system of vocal symbols employed for human communication. In practice, language cannot be separated from communication because communication needs a medium of delivery, namely language itself. Therefore, effective and meaningful communication greatly depends on how language is used appropriately in various contexts.

Wood (2015) stated that communication is a systemic process that involves individuals interacting through symbols to create and interpret a meaning. In a more specific context, political speech is one of the most strategic forms of public communication because it is used to convey messages, shape public opinion, and build a political image. Modebadze (2010) states that politics is closely related to how decisions are made and influenced. In this case, communication is important in convincing the public through strategic and persuasive language. This means that

language in politics is not just a medium of communication, but also an instrument of power.

Political speeches are usually designed with strategies to create a certain impression in the minds of the audience. The choice of words, tone of speech, and the way of delivery are the key factors to success in gathering public sympathy. When delivering political messages, a politician must also consider how the message is conveyed well and how to maintain their relationship with the audience, especially in formal and public situations. This is where a politeness strategy becomes important. This strategy helps the speaker deliver the message effectively and avoid potential threats to the audience's face. Politeness strategies not only aim to maintain ethical communication but also serve to build a harmonious relationship between the speaker and the listener.

In linguistics, such aspects are discussed in pragmatics. Mey (2001) defines pragmatics as the study of language use in real social contexts. Through a pragmatic approach, we can understand that the meaning of speech depends not only on the structure of language but also on who is speaking, to whom, in what situations, and for what purpose. One of the relevant pragmatics studies to be analyzed in political speech is the theory of politeness strategy by Brown and Levinson (1987), which highlights how the speaker considers the social position of the audience and the context of communication so that the message conveyed is well received.

This study specifically observed politeness strategies in Kamala Harris's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention (DNC). Kamala Harris is chosen as the object of research because of her strategic position as vice president of the United States and presidential candidate. Therefore, her role as one of the prominent political leaders makes her speech a significant and relevant subject for analysis, especially to see how the language strategies she uses create her leadership image and strengthen and build closeness with the audience.

The 2024 DNC is an event that is potentially useful in the context of research because it is a crucial moment in the national political campaign that receives attention from the media and the public. As one of the significant political platforms in the United States, it is a place for Democratic Party leaders to convey their

visions, policies, and leadership strategies. Because this is an important moment, certainly the speech in this forum is well prepared and has a strategy to get the attention and support of supporters and the public. In Kamala Harris's speech at the DNC forum, she conveys political information and shows how she uses a strategy to get audiences's attention from diverse backgrounds, making it an interesting topic for analysis.

In addition, studies on female political leaders in major national events are still limited, which makes Kamala Harris's speech at the 2024 DNC a significant object of study. Based on this gap, this study aims to identify the types of politeness strategies used by Kamala Harris using Brown and Levinson (1987) and identify how the factors of the SPEAKING model are reflected in the use of strategies at major political events by applying the theory by Hymes (1974).

The novelty of this research lies in combining Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategies with Hymes's SPEAKING model in the context of an American political campaign speech. While many studies have analyzed politeness strategies in political discourse, few have connected them explicitly with SPEAKING elements to show the contextual background of their use. Furthermore, the study of Kamala Harris's DNC 2024 speech is particularly relevant, as it represents not only a major political event but also a rich site for examining how a female political leader constructs her identity and persuasive power through language.

The motivation for this study comes from the importance of understanding political communication in shaping democracy. By examining Harris's speech, this study aims to contribute to the field of linguistics and political discourse analysis by showing how politeness is strategically managed in high-stakes communication. In particular, it highlights how political figures maintain solidarity with supporters, address opponents, and reinforce democratic values through careful linguistic choices.

This study is expected to contribute to pragmatics studies in political communication and offer new insight into the strategic use of language by prominent political figures in national events. Based on the above background, the

writer is interested in analyzing this topic with the research title "*An Analysis of Politeness Strategies Used by Kamala Harris in the Democratic National Convention (DNC).*"

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, this research focuses on the following issue.

- 1) What types of politeness strategies are used by Kamala Harris in her speech?
- 2) What contextual elements of the SPEAKING model influence the use of politeness strategies in Kamala Harris's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention (DNC)?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions stated above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To identify the types of politeness strategies used by Kamala Harris in her speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention.
- 2) To describe contextual elements of the SPEAKING model that influence the use of politeness strategies in Kamala Harris's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention (DNC).

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research hopes to contribute to theoretical and practical significance: Theoretically, this research is expected to give insight and enrich knowledge about the study of pragmatics, especially in understanding politeness strategies and the factors reflected in their use in communication. Practically, the results of this research are expected to be useful references to others who are interested in this topic. Also, this research can be used as guidance for future researchers when conducting studies of politeness strategies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

In this research, the writer focuses on the pragmatics field, especially in the types of politeness strategies and contextual elements that influence the use of politeness strategies in Kamala Harris's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention (DNC) 2024. The data in this research from speech Kamala Harris at the 2024 DNC on PBS News Channel has a duration of around 58:31 minutes. This study is limited to the utterances that contain politeness strategies and factors used by Kamala Harris in her speech at the 2024 DNC. This study uses the theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) to analyze the types of politeness strategies and the theory of Hymes (1974) to analyze the contextual elements of politeness strategies.