

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Yule (1996) Pragmatics discusses how meaning is conveyed by the speaker and is interpreted. It plays a crucial role in understanding how language operates within different social contexts, particularly in political debates where meaning is shaped by the speaker's intention and the audience's perception (Cutting, 2002). Pragmatics does not only involve what is spoken directly but also includes what is intended and what is achieved through the use of language. In this context, speech act theory becomes relevant as it explores how utterances can function as actions in communication. This theoretical perspective is essential because speech acts reveal how meaning is not only expressed but also realized through language.

The concept of a speech act holds a central position in pragmatics because it views utterances as actions performed through language (Leech, 1983; Searle, 1969). Leech (1983) divides a speech act into three parts: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts, which can be used to analyze every utterance spoken by a speaker (Yule, 1996). An act that produces a literally meaningful linguistic utterance is called a locutionary act. Illocutionary acts indicate the speaker's intention or purpose when uttering something, such as commanding, suggesting, or stating. However, perlocutionary acts refer to how utterances affect the listener, such as convincing, frightening, or entertaining. These three types demonstrate that language operates not only to transmit

information but also to realize certain actions. Illocutionary acts are the primary focus of this study because they are considered a key component of communication, as they reflect the speaker's primary intention.

Illocutionary acts are actions performed through speech, where an utterance has a certain communicative power according to the speaker's intention. Searle (1976) divides these acts into five categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Meanwhile, as described by Yule (1996), each illocutionary act may serve a specific communicative function, such as stating, requesting, promising, and thanking. Illocutionary acts are not only found in everyday communication but also in politics, including the Vice-Presidential Debate. In debates, speakers like Kamala Harris and Mike Pence use illocutionary acts to convey opinions, build self-images, or influence the audience through their answers and expressions.

In political debates, political candidates talk about policies, respond to their opponents, and try to influence public opinion. According to Benoit et al. (2003), debates allow candidates to shape their public image and integrity because they serve as a means of information. As stated by Bilmes (2011), debates do not only share facts but also use strategic language to describe issues and shape the audience's views. The two 2020 US vice presidential candidates, Kamala Harris and Mike Pence, discuss important issues and interact directly. Political debates are an appropriate context to analyze illocutionary acts because speakers' utterances often have meanings that go beyond their literal meanings.

This study used the Kamala Harris and Mike Pence debate, available on the YouTube channel PBS NewsHour, as the data source. This debate provided direct interactions between Harris and Pence, making it a relevant source for analyzing illocutionary acts within political discourse. The utterances in this debate attracted particular interest because they were not only representative of an exchange of political ideas, but also showed how the speakers used language strategically to persuade, defend, and challenge in a high-stakes context. These illocutionary acts revealed the speakers' intentions, attitudes, and rhetorical strategies in establishing their self-image, responding to questions, and engaging the audience's attention. The dynamic nature of this debate made it a rich source for examining how illocutionary acts shaped political communication.

Additionally, this study examines illocutionary acts based on their types and functions. The results are expected to provide deeper insight into how language operates as an action in real-life communication. This study seeks to offer a clearer insight into how language functions in real discussions, since illocutionary acts are common in social interactions, particularly in media, such as Vice-Presidential Debates. Since the argument offers a wide range of illocutionary acts that are extremely pertinent to the study's topic, it is selected as the topic of the study.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Referring to the preceding discussion, this study raises two primary research questions. The formulation of the problems is outlined as follows:

1. What types of illocutionary acts are detected in the YouTube debate between Kamala Harris and Mike Pence for vice president?
2. What are the functions of the illocutionary acts that Kamala Harris and Mike Pence performed during their YouTube vice presidential debate?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The following are the study's aims, which are based on the issues raised by the investigation:

1. To describe the types of illocutionary acts that are presented in the YouTube vice presidential debate between Kamala Harris and Mike Pence.
2. To explain the functions of illocutionary acts that Kamala Harris and Mike Pence performed during their YouTube vice presidential debate.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

The primary focus of this study is the examination of illocutionary acts during the 2020 vice presidential debate. Assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative are the five categories into which Searle's (1976) theory divides illocutionary acts. Meanwhile, the functions of illocutionary acts are analyzed using Yule's (1996) theory, which provides practical explanations of how each type functions in communication.

1.5 Significances of the Study

It is anticipated that this study will help with language study and learning.

Overall, this study has the following two main advantages:

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

The theoretical aim of the study is to improve readers' comprehension of illocutionary acts and their functions. It is also expected that the results will help readers understand and analyze the many types of illocutionary acts used in communication. The significance of examining illocutionary acts in the political sphere, where language is employed not merely to transmit information but also to influence, convince, and challenge, is emphasized by this study. Furthermore, by showing how abstract ideas from speech act theory are applied to actual discourse, it advances the discipline of pragmatics. Lastly, in order to give a more thorough grasp of how communication functions in real-world situations, the study emphasizes the need to look at both the types and functions of illocutionary acts.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

This study serves as a valuable resource for future studies on illocutionary acts, particularly in media discourse. Additionally, it offers practical insights for students of linguistics and communication studies who are learning to analyze authentic language use. These findings help readers to understand how language can be used strategically in public debates to influence audiences. This study

encourages further studies that explore the role of pragmatics in various political contexts.



CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE, CONCEPTS, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Review of Related Literature

To establish the foundation for the current study, this study reviewed five relevant previous studies, including three articles and two theses. The first review was conducted by Olii et al. (2023) entitled “An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Taylor Swift’s Speech at NYU’s 2022 Commencement.” Olii et al. (2023) examined illocutionary acts found in Taylor Swift’s commencement address at New York University in 2022. Olii et al. (2023) identified 94 utterances that represented five categories of illocutionary acts: representatives (33), expressive (32), declarative (13), directive (9), and commissive (7). The findings revealed that representative acts occurred more frequently, indicating that Swift’s primary intention was to share personal reflections and insights drawn from her life experiences. Expressive acts conveyed emotions and gratitude, while directive acts were used to offer encouragement and advice to the graduates. Commissive acts reflected a sense of commitment and support, and declarative acts emphasized personal truths and humorous insights. Through this speech, Swift demonstrated how language could be a powerful tool to inspire, relate, and emotionally connect with the audience. The difference between Olii et al. (2023) and this study was the data source, as the former focused on a commencement speech, while this study examined a political debate. The similarity lay in the application of Searle’s (1976) theory to classify illocutionary acts.

The second review was conducted by Rifai (2024) entitled “Speech Act Analysis of Hary and Meghan’s Interview with Oprah Winfrey on CBS Morning News Show.” Rifai (2024) analyzed the types of illocutionary acts performed by Prince Harry, Meghan Markle, and Oprah Winfrey during their CBS Morning Television interview. From a total of 644 utterances, 319 were identified as containing illocutionary acts. The findings revealed that the assertive type dominated with 63% of the total, followed by directive (27%), expressive (7.3%), commissive (0.6%), and declarative (0.3%). The dominance of assertive acts, such as stating, affirming, and complaining, reflected the interviewees’ intention to present facts, express personal experiences, and clarify public narratives. This dominance indicated their focus on establishing credibility and sharing personal perspectives. Moreover, Rifai (2024) found that most of the speech acts were direct (92.5%), while indirect speech acts accounted for only 7.5%, suggesting that the speakers aimed for clarity and transparency throughout the interview. The difference between Rifai (2024) and this study was the focus, as Rifai (2024) examined an interview, with a focus on personal narratives. In contrast, this study focused on a political debate, specifically focusing on the types and functions of illocutionary acts. The similarity lay in the fact that both studies analyzed spoken discourse in the media.

The third review was written by Hutajulu & Herman (2019) entitled “Analysis of Illocutionary Act in The Movie You Are My Home English Subtitle.” Hutajulu & Herman (2019) aimed to identify and categorize the different types of illocutionary acts in the English subtitles of the movie “You Are

My Home” and to determine which illocutionary acts were used most frequently. Hutajulu & Herman (2019) found that the movie contained four types of illocutionary acts, but no declarative acts. It analyzed 216 utterances made by the characters throughout the movie. The analysis revealed 78 representative acts, 90 directive acts, 40 expressive acts, and 8 commissive acts. The difference between Hutajulu & Herman (2019) and this study was in the data source, as the former analyzed written subtitles, while this study analyzed spoken utterances in a debate. The similarity lay in that both studies applied Searle’s (1976) classification of illocutionary acts.

The fourth related study was a thesis written by Lestari (2024) entitled “The Analysis of Types Illocutionary Acts Spoken by the Main Characters Found in The Trolls 2016.” Lestari (2024) aimed to identify and analyze the types and meanings of illocutionary acts expressed by the main characters in the animated movie “The Trolls (2016).” Using Yule (1996) classification of illocutionary acts and Leech (1981) theory of meaning, this study found 70 instances of illocutionary acts across five categories. Directive acts appeared most frequently (37%), followed by representative and commissive acts (each 21%), expressive acts (17%), and declarative acts (4%). The dominance of directive acts reflected the characters’ frequent use of commands and instructions to influence one another’s actions during the storyline. Lestari (2024) also examined seven types of meaning associated with these utterances, with affective meaning being the most prominent (49%). This suggested that the characters’ language often conveyed strong emotions and interpersonal connections. The difference between Lestari

(2024) and this study was in the theory, which applied a combination of Yule's (1996) and Leech's (1983) frameworks, whereas this study focused on Searle's (1976) and Yule's (1996) frameworks. The similarity lay in the fact that both applied pragmatic theories to analyze illocutionary acts.

The last thesis was written by Mustopa (2021) entitled "Illocutionary Act in Louis Letterier's on Now You See Me Movie." Mustopa (2021) explored the use of illocutionary acts in the movie "Now You See Me," directed by Louis Leterrier, guided by Searle (1979) theory. The previous study examined how the movie characters utilized speech to express intentions and influence others. In total, 130 utterances were found and classified into five types of illocutionary acts: directive (49.2%), expressive (23.1%), representative (15.4%), commissive (10.8%), and declarative (1.5%). The dominance of directive acts reflected the movie's fast-paced, action-oriented narrative, where characters frequently issued commands, requests, or instructions. Mustopa (2021) revealed how language was used not only to drive the plot forward but also to reflect power dynamics and reveal character intentions throughout the movie. The difference between Mustopa (2021) and this study was in the data source, as the former analyzed a movie, while this study analyzed a political debate. The similarity lay in the fact that both apply Searle's (1976) theory.

All of these previous studies contributed valuable insights into the use of illocutionary acts across different contexts. While there were similarities in the focus on the types of illocutionary acts, this study distinguished itself by focusing specifically on a political debate context, namely the Vice-Presidential Debate

between Kamala Harris and Mike Pence. Unlike previous studies that analyzed public speeches or interviews, this study examined the types of illocutionary acts and functions in real-time political discourse. Furthermore, this study expanded Searle's (1976) theory by classifying the types of illocutionary acts found in the debate. In addition, the specific communicative functions of each utterance, such as stating, requesting, promising, and thanking, were identified based on the theory of Yule (1996). The analysis of these two theories enhanced the understanding of how illocutionary acts contributed to political communication.

2.2 Concepts

Concepts in this study refer to general ideas related to the main topic of the study. It serves as a symbol of the title of the study. Two distinct ideas are used in the analysis of this study.

2.2.1 Speech Act

Austin (1962) states that speech acts represent actions conducted through speech in which the speaker uses their words to both accomplish an activity and transmit information. Searle (1979) emphasizes that every utterance has an illocutionary force, which forms the basis of communication, while Yule (1996) considers speech acts as a component of communication with a specific purpose. Speech acts are significant in political debates, as they are used to provide information, attack, persuade, or defend positions. Therefore, understanding the

concept of speech acts was crucial for analyzing how Kamala Harris and Mike Pence interacted during the 2020 U.S. vice presidential debate.

2.2.2 Illocutionary Acts

Austin (1962) defines illocutionary acts as actions performed when speaking that emphasize the communicator's purpose in a particular task. Locutionary acts (the production of an utterance), illocutionary acts (the act achieved through speaking), and perlocutionary acts (the impact produced on the hearer) are the three classifications proposed by Austin's (1962). This concept is later expanded by Searle (1976), who categorizes illocutionary acts into five categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

2.2.3 Political Debate

Political debates are formal, structured meetings between political candidates who seek to present their policies, respond to their opponents' criticisms, and engage the public (Jamieson et al., 1988). Debates have a specific structure, similar to informal conversations, with time limits, questions from moderators, and the live audience, or media broadcasts (Kraus, 2000). Political debates are particularly important in pragmatic studies because they showcase a variety of ways of speaking, especially illocutionary acts, in high-stakes situations. Harris (1991) emphasizes that utterances in debates often serve multiple purposes simultaneously. These can include informing, attacking, or defending a position. The concept of political debate is used in this study to

examine how Kamala Harris and Mike Pence use language to achieve their communicative goals.

2.3 Theories

This study addresses two primary issues and analyzes them using two theories proposed by Searle (1976) and Yule (1996). During the 2020 Vice-Presidential Debate involving Kamala Harris and Mike Pence, the categories of illocutionary acts are identified using the first theory, which was put forward by Searle (1976). Five categories are included in this classification: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. The second theory, based on Yule (1996), examines the functional features of illocutionary acts, including stating, requesting, promising, and thanking. These two theories provide a comprehensive framework for discussing the types and functions of illocutionary acts in political speech.

2.3.1 Speech Act

Speech acts are utterances that not only deliver a message but also function as actions that shape communication. According to Austin (1962), there are three categories of speech acts, namely locutionary (uttering words with their literal meaning), illocutionary (actions that have an intended meaning), and perlocutionary (how utterances influence listeners). Searle (1979) further developed this structure and emphasizes that the illocutionary dimension, the speaker's intention in speech, is the core of speech acts. People often perform

speech acts such as apologizing, refusing, or congratulating in everyday life without realizing it. Listeners might experience misunderstandings that affect their communicative responses if they do not understand the illocutionary intent.

According to Searle (1979), speech acts can be classified into direct and indirect speech acts. A direct speech act occurs when the structure or grammatical form of an utterance matches its communicative function. Direct speech acts are often used to express the speaker's intention clearly, such as giving orders, making statements, or providing information without ambiguity. For instance, the imperative sentence "Close the door, please" directly functions as a command. Meanwhile, an indirect speech act occurs when the form of an utterance differs from its intended function. For example, the question "Could you close the door?" appears to be a question, but is actually a polite request. Indirect speech acts are often used to express politeness, avoid confrontation, or communicate intentions more subtly. Consequently, this study focuses on illocutionary acts because this category is the most relevant for analyzing the intentions behind the utterances of Kamala Harris and Mike Pence in the 2020 US vice presidential debate.

2.3.2 Illocutionary Act

According to Searle (1979), illocutionary acts are actions performed via utterances that carry a particular communicative force. These acts reflect the speaker's intention, such as asserting, directing, committing, expressing emotions, or declaring a change in status. Illocutionary acts are distinguished from locutionary acts, which deal with the utterance's literal meaning, and

perlocutionary acts, which deal with the impact the utterance makes on the listener.

2.3.3 Types of Illocutionary Acts

Searle (1976) proposes several dimensions to categorize speech acts based on the fundamental functions' language can perform. These dimensions focus on the intended illocutionary purpose behind each utterance. He distinguishes five primary categories of illocutionary acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative (Searle, 1976).

2.3.3.1 Assertive Acts

According to Searle (1976) assertive acts are a type of illocutionary act in which the speaker transmits information or expresses a belief that they believe to be true. These utterances reflect how the speaker perceives reality, aiming to align their words with the actual state of the world. Typical examples include statements of fact, descriptions, assertions, and conclusions.

Example: "I state that it is raining." (Searle, 1976:17)

The speaker's opinion on the current weather is expressed in the statement above. It conveys a message that the communicator believes to be true, and it is categorized as an assertive act.

2.3.3.2 Directive Acts

Searle (1976) explains that directive acts are a form of illocutionary act where the communicator attempts to get the hearer to perform an action. By issuing orders, requesting things, making suggestions, asking questions, or offering advice, these statements aim to affect the hearer's behavior. By encouraging the audience to behave appropriately, the speaker hopes to make the world suit their word.

Example: "I order you to leave." (Searle, 1976:17)

The speaker gives the audience instructions in the statement above, which makes it a directive act. This type of illocutionary act is classified as directive since it shows the speaker's aim to affect the listener's behavior.

2.3.3.3 Commissive Acts

Commissive acts, as defined by Searle (1976), are acts in which the speaker makes a commitment to a specific future course of conduct. These acts convey intentions, such as making promises, threats, offers, and guarantees. The speaker wants to create an obligation for themselves by bringing their statements into line with future reality.

Example: "I promise to pay you the money." (Searle, 1976:17)

The speaker commits to carrying out an action in the line above, which makes it a commissive act. This type of illocutionary act is classified as commissive since it expresses the speaker's desire to act in the future.

2.3.3.4 Expressive Acts

Searle (1976) states that expressive acts are forms of illocutionary acts where the communicator conveys an emotional reaction to a specific situation or psychological state. These acts express feelings such as gratitude, apology, congratulations, sympathy, or admiration.

Example: “I apologize for stepping on your toe.” (Searle, 1976:18)

The speaker’s remorse for their act is expressed in the statement above. Since it reveals the speaker’s emotional response, it is categorized as an expressive speech act.

2.3.3.5 Declarative Acts

According to Searle (1976) declarative acts are utterances that result in a change of status or reality simply through being spoken, provided the speaker holds an appropriate institutional role and the context supports it. These acts include actions such as announcing a verdict, declaring war, or officiating a ceremony.

Example: “I now pronounce you man and wife.” (Searle, 1976:20)

Two people’s marital statuses are altered by the previously mentioned statement. The utterance performs the action it describes; provided someone speaks it with the authority to do so, it is classified as a declarative speech act.

2.3.4 The Functions of Illocutionary Acts

While there are five categories of illocutionary acts that have been explained earlier based on Searle's (1976) classification, this section emphasizes their communicative functions explicitly in discourse. According to Yule's (1996), language serves as a tool not only to deliver information but also to perform actions with specific communicative purposes. Every utterance carries an intention, reflecting what the speaker aims to achieve in the interaction. The functions of illocutionary acts focus on why speakers produce certain utterances and what communicative effects they expect from the listener. Based on Yule's (1996) classification, there are five primary functions of illocutionary acts, such as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative, each containing specific subtypes of communicative functions.

2.3.4.1 Assertive Function

The assertive function allows speakers to express their beliefs or statements about the truth of a proposition. This function includes stating, claiming, describing, reporting, informing, and asserting. Through assertive utterances, speakers attempt to convince the listener or present facts that align with their perspective. The example is the claiming function, which occurs when the speaker presents a statement to gain the audience's trust or establish credibility. For instance, "Our economic policy has successfully reduced poverty levels" performs a claiming function because the speaker asserts a belief intended to influence public perception. The communicative purpose of this function is to

convince the listener and strengthen the speaker's authority by presenting their view as a fact.

2.3.4.2 Directive Function

The directive function aims to make the listener perform an action or respond to advice or a suggestion. It includes requesting, advising, and suggesting. Directive utterances are designed to influence others' behavior communicatively. The example was the advising function, in which the speaker offers guidance or recommendations for the listener's benefit. For instance, "You should consider implementing this program to improve education quality" performs an advising function, guiding the audience toward a desired action. The communicative goal of directive acts was to persuade, guide, or motivate the listener through language.

2.3.4.3 Commissive Function

The commissive function expresses the speaker's commitment to carry out a future action. It includes promising, vowing, and refusing, which reflect the speaker's intention and responsibility toward a future event. The promising function is a common subtype where the speaker assures the audience of their future action. For example, "We will provide equal access to healthcare for all citizens" serves a promising purpose because it conveys determination and reliability. The communicative aim of commissive functions is to build trust and establish a sense of commitment between the speaker and the listener.

2.3.4.4 Expressive Function

The expressive function allows speakers to express emotions, attitudes, or feelings toward a situation. This function includes thanking, praising, and condoling. Among these, the thanking function expresses gratitude and appreciation, often to build a positive relationship with the audience. For instance, “I sincerely thank everyone who supported this campaign” serves a thanking function, conveying the speaker’s acknowledgement and respect. The communicative purposes of expressive functions are to create emotional connection and express sincerity in interaction.

2.3.4.5 Declarative Function

The declarative function is performed when the speaker’s utterance causes a change in a social or institutional situation. This function includes declaring and announcing. The declaring function occurs when a statement officially alters the status of an event or condition. For example, “I hereby declare this meeting officially open” performs a declaring function because the utterance itself changes the situation from informal to official. The communicative aim of declarative functions was to exercise authority and establish a new social reality through language.

2.3.5 Context of Situation

Halliday & Hasan (1985) state that the context of the situation was an essential foundation for understanding how language is used in a communication

event. This context includes the social and environmental conditions that underlie an utterance so that its meaning can be understood correctly. Without considering the situational context, an utterance can be misinterpreted or lose its communicative purpose. In pragmatic studies, situational context helps explain why speakers choose specific linguistic forms and how listeners interpret the meaning of an utterance. To describe this context, Halliday & Hasan (1985) divide it into three main components, namely Field, Tenor, and Mode, each of which provides a different perspective on how language functions in social interactions. These three elements work in complementary ways to show what is being discussed, who is involved, and how the message is conveyed in a speech event.

2.3.5.1 Field

Halliday & Hasan (1985) explain that the field relates to the domain or subject matter that forms the background of an interaction. This element indicates what the participants are doing or are talking about, including the type of social activity. In the field, one can see the context of experience that underlies the conversation, whether it relates to education, work, daily life, or other issues. By understanding the field, researchers can determine the direction of a discussion, enabling more accurate interpretation of the language used. For example, in a political debate, when candidates discuss national issues such as economic recovery, public health policies, or foreign relations, the field refers to these political topics that frame the entire interaction.

2.3.5.2 Tenor

Tenor refers to the social relationship between communication participants, including status, role, level of closeness, and attitudes involved in the interaction (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Tenor describes whether the relationship between speakers was formal or informal, balanced or hierarchical, and how each participant positions themselves in the conversation. In the context of a political debate, the tenor is evident in the formal, competitive relationship between candidates representing opposing political parties, such as Kamala Harris and Mike Pence, who strategically present their stances to influence the public. Therefore, tenor helps explain how social relationship dynamics influence language choices and communication styles.

2.3.5.3 Mode

Mode was an aspect related to the way language is conveyed and the media are used in communication, whether oral, written, or through other media (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Mode is also related to the function of language in that situation, for example, whether language is used to provide information, explain something, give instructions, or persuade. Mode shows how language shapes interaction patterns, whether they are more dialogic or monologic, and the delivery is spontaneous or planned. Therefore, the mode helps explain how the form and means of communication influence the delivery of a message. For example, in a political debate broadcast on television, the mode is oral, formal,

and public, requiring candidates to present their arguments clearly, concisely, and persuasively so that the audience can follow the discussion effectively.

