

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Politics is a social activity that can be defined, first and foremost, as a struggle for power, between those who are in power and those who are not, but would like to be, although it can be also defined as a set of cooperation strategies carried out by some social institutions with a view to solving some social conflicts (Chilton, 2004:3).

Nowadays, we are provided by so many political discourse, if it is in form of written language or spoken language. In form of spoken language, politicians deliver us a lot of political speeches and political debates to express their thought, idea, and feeling exactly to persuade the listeners and the audiences toward their attitudes and behaviors. In democracy country, presidential election has been an important agenda in their democracy party. The presidential election candidates will have argument battle to express their opinion, ideas, and thought in the topic being discussed, the debate is conducted to persuade the audiences to vote them on the election day.

In political setting, language has fundamental role in conveyance of political orators' staged-managed and pre-planned goals to the audience in order to provoke, prevail, and persuade the audience toward the intended goals and meanings (Woods, 2006). Beard (2008:18) states that language is a means of communication, a means of presenting and shaping beliefs. Language is not something, somehow different from the ideas it contains, but the way language is used says a great deal about how the ideas have been shaped.

Thus, language is used to uniquely convey personal ideas and intentions. Accordingly, in the political terrain, language is used to capture certain messages, convey promises, reflect beliefs and foreground political ideologies. The medium in conveying the messages, promises, beliefs, and ideas in political setting can be form of debate. Based on the researcher observation, the politicians in political debate usually use modality in expressing their behaviors, attitudes, and opinions..

Modality is a part of interpersonal elements that can be considered as comment or attitude (Fowler, 1991:85). Modality is a semantic concept that refers to the speaker's attitude or opinion towards the truth of a proposition, as well as the situation or event described in the sentence (Simpson, 1993: 47), and includes meanings such as ability, possibility, probability, necessity, permission, obligation and volition. Truth means that the speaker or writer indicates a commitment to the truth of any propositions uttered.

In order to convince the voters to vote them in election day, the candidates will deliver their promises and commitment related the program they are going to run when they will be elected in their political campaign and their political debate. But we don't know whether the promises and commitment they are delivered will be run or no after they are elected. As we have experienced so far, not all the promises and the commitment delivered by the candidates are conducted. By hedging, we are able to know which candidate who have full commitment. As stated by Fraser (2010), hedging is a rhetorical strategy which signals a lack of commitment either to the full category membership of a term or expression in the utterance (content mitigation) or to the intended illocutionary force of the utterance (force mitigation).

This study will be related to modality and hedging, as one of the hedging devices is modality. Thompson (1993:118) says that modality may be used as a hedging strategy to express degree of commitment or precision. As this study is about presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, the researcher tries to relate theory of Gender by Lakoff. Lakoff claimed that women use a large number of hedges compared to men, and that in doing so they signaled a greater propensity for uncertainty and tentativeness. Furthermore, he claimed that men didn't use hedging devices at all in their speech since they are taught at an early age to speak powerfully.

But from the preliminary data below, the researcher found that man also uses hedging.

Trump: We cannot let it happen. Under my plan, I'll be reducing taxes tremendously, from 35 percent to 15 percent for companies small and big businesses. That's going to be a job creator like we haven't seen since Ronald Reagan. It's going to be a beautiful thing to watch.

(Appendix 1, No.4)

Companies **will** come. They **will** build. They **will** expand. New companies **will** start. And I look very, very much forward to doing it. We have to renegotiate our trade deals, and we have to stop these countries from stealing our companies and our jobs.

(Appendix 1, No.5)

From the preliminary data above, It can be seen that Donald Trump used modal auxiliary **will** which belongs to epistemic modality as hedging device. It means that from the clauses which use modal auxiliary **Will**, it indicated that a lower degree of Trump's commitment to the factuality of what he has said . His attitude tends to show uncertainty, he shows medium possibility of what he has

said. The using of modal **Will** in clause “Under my plan, I’ll be reducing taxes tremendously, from 35 percent to 15 percent for companies small and big businesses” (Appendix 1, No. 4) showed that Trump himself is not so sure that he will be able to reduce the taxes from 35 to 15. The possibility of the reducing of the taxes to happen is still doubtful, it can happen or it cannot happen. And it is similar to other clauses which use modal **Will** in Appendix 1, No. 5. It can be concluded that Trump has low commitment about what he has said.

While Clinton uttered in the debate as presented below :

Clinton: We **can** have enough clean energy to power every home.

(Appendix 2, No.19)

We **can** build a new modern electric grid. That's a lot of jobs; that's a lot of new economic activity

(Appendix 2, No.20)

From the utterances above, it can be seen that Clinton used modal auxiliary **can**. Modal auxiliary verb *can* is usually express deontic and dynamic modality. Pullum and Huddleston said that as hedging device, *can* is usually in form of negative and interrogative. But *can* in this preliminary data above was found in form of affirmative (positive), it was against the theory stated by Pullum and Huddleston. *Can* in the preliminary data above was considered as hedging device as it showed probability. It means that it shows the lower degree probability of what Clinton has said. In other words, Clinton is not sure about what she has said.

From the preliminary data above (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), it showed that both of the candidates use hedging to show their uncertainty and lack of

commitment in the debate. Hedging frequently occurs in academic discourse (Martin-Martin, 2008), which has been traditionally characterized by its rationality and neutrality, points to the fact that scientific texts are not merely a collection of conventions that can be explained in terms of the norms for conveying scientific information, that is, scientific texts are not only content-oriented and informative but also seek to convince and influence their audience. But hedging can also be found in political discourse.

Some studies have been conducted related to this study, Al-Rashady analyzed the three presidential debates between Barack Obama and John McCain during the 2008 US election cycle in order to identify the most frequently used hedging devices and the functions that these devices serve. The researcher concluded that “modal auxiliary verbs; modal lexical verbs; adjectival, adverbial, nominal modal phrases and approximators” are the most dominant hedging devices.

Abdul Majeed focused on identifying hedging items in terms of their functions and their grammatical categories, such as adverbials, epistemic verbs, modal verbs, etc. He analyzed the first presidential debate between Senator Barak Obama and Senator John McCain on the campus of the University of Mississippi in order to specify and classify the linguistic items that act as hedging devices along with identifying their semantic functions. The study concluded that politicians used hedges in order to show “uncertainty and non commitment to an utterance”.

From the two previous studies above (Rashady and Abdul Majeed), it can be seen that modality was the most dominantly used as hedging devices. This

study was different from the previous study. Besides, the debate in this study involved two different genders which were different from debate in the previous study. That's why this study was conducted to know whether the modality is still found in the debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, and whether Hillary Clinton still showed hedging more than Donald Trump.

Moreover, hedging was usually studied in academic writing and it was still studied in small number in political discourse. As political discourse is non-scientific genre which is usually characterized by expressing probability, lack of certainty and commitment on part of the speaker. That's why, the researcher is interested in conducting this study.

## **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

In relation to the background, the problems of the study are formulated as the following:

1. What modalities as hedging devices are found in the US presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton?
2. How are the modalities as hedging devices realized in the US presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton?
3. Why are the modalities as hedging devices realized in the US presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the way they do?

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

In line with the problems, the objectives of the study are:

1. to investigate the modalities as hedging devices used the US presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton,
2. to describe how the modalities realized as hedging devices realized in the US presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, and
3. to explain the reason why the modalities as hedging devices realized in the US presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

#### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to modality used as hedging devices found in the US presidential election debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The modalities which will be focused on are Epistemic Modality, Deontic Modality, and Dynamic Modality. Epistemic Modality related to probability and predictability, Deontic Modality related to obligation and permission, and Dynamic Modality related to ability and willingness.

#### **1.5 The Significances of the Study**

The findings of the study will be expected to be useful theoretically and practically

1. Theoretically, the findings are expected to be useful for those who interested in modality and hedging in political discourse
2. Practically, the findings clarify and highlight understanding about modality and hedging. It is expected that the lecturers and the students use

the findings of this study as a reference in teaching modality. And especially for another researcher who are interested in modality, the findings of this study can also be the reference in conducting another similar studies.



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