CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

Digital transformation has revolutionized the way humans interact and communicate, making the virtual world an inseparable extension of social reality. In this regard, social media platforms have emerged as a major arena for individuals to interact, share information, and express opinions. Social media has become an integral part of daily life, influencing social interaction and access to information that has evolved into a digital public space that provides a platform for individuals to share views, participate in discussions, and access political information more quickly and widely (Gayatri & Satwika, 2022).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and especially X (formerly Twitter), have become commonly used media to express opinions, build social networks, expand horizons, exchange ideas, discuss, and even feuds and throw arguments against each other can also occur on various social media platforms. In this context, X is a global communication platform that allows for quick and extensive interaction between individuals, including public figures and netizens.

X stands out as a microblogging platform that allows for instant and extensive public communication. With features such as short posts (tweets), retweets, replies, and quotes, X has created a dynamic, often intense, and highly open conversational ecosystem, where opinions can form, debate, and spread at incredible speed. These characteristics make it a rich place to observe linguistic and social phenomena, especially in the context of interactions involving public figures. The speed of information dissemination and the ability to interact directly with influential figures, even without prior personal connections, make X an ideal social laboratory for understanding how language is used in shaping and responding to public discourse, as well as how identity and social relations are negotiated in the digital space.

Donald Trump, the former President of the United States, and Elon Musk, the CEO of various major tech companies such as Tesla and SpaceX, are two highly influential and often controversial figures in X. Both have millions of followers and are known for their straightforward and often provocative communication styles. Their interactions and disputes on the platform, which are often direct and open, have consistently attracted massive public attention, prompting a variety of responses from netizens around the world. The feud between these figures not only became a heated conversation that dominated the timeline, but also triggered various forms of linguistic expression from X users, ranging from fanatical support, scathing criticism, sarcastic humor, to mediation attempts. This phenomenon shows how inter-elite conflict can trigger the active participation of a broad audience, who then use language as a tool to express their position and identity.

Netizens' responses to Trump and Musk's tweets were very diverse—from praise, harsh criticism, subtle sarcasm, to explicit insults. These responses are a tangible form of speech acts that play an important role in shaping the dynamics of online communication. As Searle explains, "speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior" (Searle, 1969). This means that every words, including replies to tweets, not only conveys information, but also performs certain social actions such as commanding, satirizing or expressing emotions.

The study of speech acts is particularly relevant for understanding how language is used in social contexts. The theory of speech acts was first introduced by Austin through the concepts of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (Austin, 1975). Searle then refined the theory by classifying speech act into five main categories: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarations (Searle, 1969). In the context of social media, these five types of speech acts can be found in very diverse forms, including through the use of irony, metaphors, sarcasm, or even emojis. In a study that looked at online communication, Herring et al. noted that social media produces a different form of communication than face-to-face interaction, due

to the high implied context and limitations of non-verbal expression (Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013). This makes social media a fertile ground for pragmatic study, particularly in identifying implicit meanings in short speeches and quick responses. Furthermore, research by Kaplan shows that Elon Musk uses X not only as a medium of communication, but also as a tool to shape identity and influence public perception of strategic issues such as technology, economics, and even politics (Kaplan, 2023). Meanwhile, Trump's aggressive and hyperbolic communication style is often studied in the context of political rhetoric and digital populism (Lee, 2020).

This study focuses on the analysis of speech acts and politeness strategies used by netizens in response to the feud between Trump and Musk in X. By analyzing textual data from netizens' responses, this study aims to uncover communication patterns, hidden intentions, and how netizens manage their social relationships in the context of intense online discussions. The analysis of this textual data will involve the identification and categorization of various types of speech acts that arise, such as assertive (stating facts or beliefs), directive (asking or commanding), commissive (promising or offering), expressive (expressing feelings or attitudes), and declaration (changing status or reality). Additionally, the politeness strategies used, be they positive, negative, *off-record*, or *bald on-record*, will be identified and described in detail, including how these strategies might interact or complement each other. An understanding of how netizens use language to express support, criticism, or even humor, as well as the courtesy strategies they implement, will provide deeper insight into the dynamics of digital communication and its implications for social interactions in cyberspace. Although studies on speech act and politeness on social media have been widely conducted, research that specifically analyzes linguistic dynamics in the context of feuds between public figures of Trump's caliber and Musk's, with a focus on netizens' responses, is still limited. Therefore, this study is expected to highlight how norms of politeness adapt or even change in an online environment that is often less structured than face-to-face communication, as well as how netizens navigate

the complexities of self-expression and social interaction amid public controversies involving influential figures, providing new insights into linguistic behavior in the digital age.

As for previous studies related to the analysis of netizens' comments on various social media platforms, there are several important findings that can be used as a basis for this research. For example, Yusufa and Reshab (2025) conducted a study of netizens' comments on the President of Indonesia's Instagram account. They used Brown & Levinson's theory of decency and found many violations of the principle of negative decency, particularly on politically sensitive issues. These findings show how online communication is often filled with impoliteness that reflects socio-political tensions. Furthermore, Fatmawati and Ningsih (2024) conducted an analysis of expressive comments on @detikcom's Instagram account. Using Leech's maxim of politeness, they reveal many violations of the maxim of consent and discretion, which shows how social media users sometimes ignore the norm of politeness in conveying their emotional expressions.

Jegede (2025) conducted research on speech acts on three popular platforms, namely Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. He classified different types of speech act and found that expressive and directive types dominated the use of language on social media. These findings add to our understanding of how language functions are exercised in digital social interactions. Another study by Darmawan et al. (2025) that examined comments on President Joe Biden's Twitter posts showed that netizens tend to use literal expressiveness and irony as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction. This shows the variety of language styles used to convey implicit messages in the digital space.

Prayitno et al. (2021) focused their research on politeness in directive speech act in #sahkanRUUPKS campaigns on Twitter. They found that positive politeness strategies were used more often compared to negative strategies, providing an idea of how politeness plays a role in the context of social advocacy through digital platforms. Based on this series of studies, it can be concluded that most of the previous research only used one theory, both speech

act theory and politeness strategies separately. In addition, no research has been found that explicitly combines the two theories in analyzing netizens' comments, especially in the context of conflicts between public figures on social media, especially on platform X (formerly known as Twitter). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by thoroughly analyzing the speech act and politeness strategies in the comments of netizens who responded to the conflict between Donald Trump and Elon Musk on platform X. This approach will provide a more comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of digital communication in the controversial public realm.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Based on the above background, this study formulates the following problems:

1. What types of speech act are used by netizens in response to the feud between Trump and Musk on X?
2. How did netizens apply the politeness strategy in their response to the feud between Trump and Musk on X?

1.3 Research Objectives

In line with the formulation of the problem above, this study has the following objectives:

1. To find out the types of speech act used by netizens in response to the feud between Trump and Musk on X.
2. To explore the application of politeness strategies by netizens in their responses to the feud between Trump and Musk on X.

1.4 Research Significances

This research is expected to contribute, both theoretically and practically:

Theoretically, this research has a very important role in enriching the treasures of linguistic science, especially in the pragmatic field. Through

this study, it is hoped that it can contribute in the form of concrete empirical examples of how speech act theory and politeness strategies are applied in the context of today's digital communication. Digital communication that is very dynamic and constantly evolving, as happens with social media, presents new challenges and language phenomena that have not been widely revealed scientifically. Thus, the results of this study not only deepen theoretical understanding, but also open the horizon for further research focusing on the communication patterns that occur on social media and language implications that arise from these digital interactions.

Meanwhile, practically, this research provides very real benefits for various levels of society, especially for social media users who are the main actors in online communication. This research can increase their awareness and understanding of the complexities of communication in the digital world, including the importance of instilling the value of politeness when interacting. This is especially relevant considering the high risk of miscommunication and conflicts that often occur due to careless interactions in cyberspace. In addition, for other researchers in the field of linguistics and communication, this research can be used as a reference and source of inspiration to conduct similar studies with different perspectives, focuses, or contexts, expanding the scope of social science and language studies.

Furthermore, the results of this study also have practical value for managers or developers of social media platforms. By understanding users' communication behavior more deeply, they can use these findings to develop new features or design more effective content moderation policies, which can ultimately create a healthier and more harmonious digital space.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

This section contains a short explanation of X, netizen, feud, speech act, politeness strategies as the key material of this research.

1. **X (formerly Twitter):** A global microblogging social media platform that allows users to publish short messages (called "posts" or "tweets") up to 280 characters (or longer with certain features), interact with other users through replies, retweets, quotes, and direct messages, and follow specific accounts to get information and updates. The platform serves as a virtual public space where news, opinions, and social interactions take place in *real-time*.

2. **Netizens:** Refers to active users of the internet, specifically users of platform X, who actively participate in public discussions, share content, or respond to various information that is published. This term emphasizes their role as digital citizens involved in the online ecosystem.

3. **Feud:** In the context of this study, it refers to a series of conflicts, disagreements, or exchanges of arguments of a public and ongoing nature between Donald Trump and Elon Musk on platform X. These feuds are characterized by the presence of mutual criticism, provocative comments, or differences of opinion expressed openly on social media.

4. **Speech Act:** A concept in pragmatics that refers to actions carried out through utterance or speech. Based on the theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), speech act has three dimensions:

   - **Locutionary:** The act of saying something, which is the literal meaning of the words spoken.

   - **Ilocusionist:** The intention or intention behind speech, i.e. what the speaker wants to achieve by saying something (e.g., declaring, asking, commanding, promised, complaining). This is the main focus of the analysis in this study.

   - **Perlocutionary:** The effect or consequences produced by speech on the listener or situation (e.g., convincing, frightening, angering, entertaining).

5. **Politeness Strategies:** Communication mechanisms used by individuals to reduce potential threats to the "face" (self-image) of both the speaker and the opponent, as categorized by Brown and Levinson (1987). The "Face" is divided into:

- Positive Face: An individual's desire to be accepted, appreciated, approved, and recognized as a member of the group.
- Negative Face: An individual's desire to have freedom of action, not to be harassed, not coerced and not to be restricted. Politeness strategies include:
- Positive Politeness: Using strategies to get closer to the other person, show similarities, or seek approval (e.g., using jokes, showing interest, offering help).

- Negative Politeness: Using strategies to show respect, avoid coercion, or give the opponent a choice (e.g., using indirect expressions, apologizing, showing respect).
- Off-Record: Conveying the intention indirectly or ambiguously, so that the opponent can interpret the meaning themselves without having to respond directly (e.g., sarcasm, metaphor).
- Bald On-Record: Conveys intent directly and explicitly without mitigation, often used in urgent situations or when the relationship is already very close and there is no need to over-guard "face".