

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

Language plays an essential role in human interaction, as it allows individuals to exchange ideas, express emotions, and build social relationships. However, communication is not only concerned with what is said, but also with how it is expressed in different contexts. This perspective is central to pragmatics, which study how meaning is constructed through the interaction between speakers, hearers, and situational context (Yule, 2014). Pragmatics highlights that meaning is often implied rather than directly stated, and that successful communication depends on shared understanding between participants (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore, studying language use from a pragmatic perspective is important for understanding how people manage interaction in everyday life.

One of the key areas within pragmatics is politeness, which concerns about how speakers maintain harmonious relationships and avoid causing offense. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose that communication involves the concept of face, which refers to an individual's public self-image. In interaction, speakers often perform face-threatening acts that may potentially damage this image. To minimize such risks, speakers employ various politeness strategies, including bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. These strategies reflect different levels of directness and consideration, depending on the social context and the relationship between the speakers. As stated by Holmes (2013), politeness is not simply about being courteous, but about making appropriate linguistic choices that fit the social situation.

The use of politeness strategies is influenced by several social factors, such as power, social distance, and age. Among these, age is particularly significant because it is closely associated with experience, authority, and social expectations. In many societies, younger speakers are expected to show respect toward older

individuals through more careful and polite language use. This may involve the use of indirect expressions, hedging, or formal language. On the other hand, older speakers may use more direct or stable linguistic forms, reflecting their established social roles (Holmes, 2013; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). These patterns suggest that age is an important variable in shaping how politeness is expressed in interaction.

To better understand how age influences language use, sociolinguistic theories provide useful explanations. One relevant framework is Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) proposed by Giles (1973), which explains how speakers adjust their language in response to their interlocutors. According to this theory, speakers may engage in convergence, where they adapt their speech to become more similar to others, or divergence, where they maintain or emphasize differences (Giles & Powesland, 1975). In interactions involving age differences, younger speakers often show upward convergence by using more polite and indirect language when addressing older speakers. This behavior reflects broader social norms related to respect and hierarchy (Giles, 1991). Therefore, CAT provides a useful lens for understanding how age-related expectations influence communication.

In the context of modern communication, digital media has become an important space for observing natural language use. Among various forms of digital communication, podcasts have gained popularity as platforms for extended and relatively spontaneous conversations. Unlike traditional media, podcasts often feature unscripted discussions, allowing speakers to express their thoughts more freely (Tolson, 2010). This makes podcasts a valuable source of data for linguistic research, particularly in studying how language is used in real-life interaction. As stated by McHugh (2016), podcasts offer a unique form of spoken discourse that blends elements of casual conversation and public communication.

One of the most prominent examples of this medium is *The Joe Rogan Experience (JRE)*, hosted by Joe Rogan, an American comedian and famous social figure. The podcast began in 2009 as a relatively informal project, where Rogan engaged in a conversation with guests from various backgrounds. Over time, it

developed into one of the most successful and widely recognized podcasts globally. Its popularity is largely attributed to its long form format, minimal editing, and the various topics it brought, which range from science and politics to culture and everyday life (McHugh, 2016). Joe Rogan's conversational style, which often blends direct questioning with a relaxed tone, allows the researcher to further study the extended and in-depth discussions that are rarely found in traditional media formats.

In terms of achievement, *The Joe Rogan Experience* has consistently ranked among the most listened-to podcasts worldwide. It has attracted millions of listeners per episode and has featured high-profile guests, including politicians, scientists, and public figures. A major milestone in its development was its exclusive licensing deal with Spotify in 2020, reportedly worth over \$100 million, which significantly expanded its reach and solidified its position in the global podcast industry. Following this deal, the podcast became one of the platform's flagship programs and continued to dominate podcast rankings in multiple countries (Newman & Gallo, 2019). These achievements highlight its influence not only as a media platform but also as a space for public discourse.

The episode featuring Bernie Sanders in particular, is relevant to this study because it presents an interaction between two individuals with different backgrounds, communication styles, and age groups. Joe Rogan, as the host, tends to use a more informal and conversational style, while Bernie Sanders, as a senior political figure, often adopts a more structured and cautious approach to communication. Their interaction includes various communicative acts such as questioning, explaining, agreeing, and responding to criticism. These features make the podcast episode a suitable context for examining how politeness strategies are used and how age differences may influence language use in a natural and extended conversation.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between age and politeness in language use. These studies provide important insights into how social factors, particularly age, influence communication. However, they differ in terms

of focus, context, and methodological approach. The following section discusses three relevant studies in more detail to highlight their contributions and limitations in relation to the present research.

Bella (2009) investigates how politeness is realized in the context of invitations in Greek. The study focuses on how speakers of different age groups formulate invitations and how age influences the level of directness and the use of politeness markers. The findings show that younger and older speakers tend to adopt different strategies depending on their relationship with the hearer. For instance, younger speakers may use more informal and direct expressions when interacting with peers, while showing more politeness and indirectness when addressing older individuals. This indicates that age plays a significant role in shaping communicative behavior, particularly in relation to social expectations and norms.

Furthermore, Bella's study emphasizes that politeness is not only determined by linguistic competence but also by sociocultural factors. Age interacts with other variables such as familiarity and social distance in influencing language use. Although the study provides valuable insights into the role of age in politeness, it is limited to a specific speech act, namely invitations, and focuses on a particular cultural context. As a result, it does not fully capture how politeness strategies operate in extended and more dynamic interactions, such as those found in conversational discourse or media settings.

Masruddin et al., (2023) explore the concept of linguistic politeness by focusing on how age influences communicative behavior from a broader theoretical perspective. Their study highlights that age is an important social factor that affects how individuals perceive and perform politeness in interaction. The authors argue that speakers tend to adjust their language based on the age of their interlocutor, reflecting social expectations related to respect, hierarchy, and appropriateness. This adjustment is often seen in the use of more formal or indirect language when addressing older individuals.

In addition, Masruddin et al. (2023) emphasize that politeness should be understood as a dynamic and phenomenon that is context dependent. They suggest that age does not operate in isolation but interacts with other social variables such as culture, status, and setting. While their study provides a useful conceptual understanding of the relationship between age and politeness, it does not include detailed empirical analysis of naturally occurring data. Therefore, there is still a need for studies that apply these theoretical insights to real-life interactions, particularly in contemporary communication contexts such as podcasts.

Al-Abbas (2023) examines politeness strategies used by children in making requests, with a focus on the influence of age and gender. The study analyzes how children from different age groups use varying levels of directness and politeness when expressing their requests. The findings show that younger children tend to use more direct forms, while older children begin to adopt more polite and indirect strategies. This suggests that the use of politeness strategies develops over time and is influenced by socialization and linguistic experience.

Moreover Al-Abbas (2023) also shows that age-related differences in politeness are closely linked to cognitive and social development. As children grow older, they become more aware of social norms and expectations, which influences their language use. Although this study provides important insights into how politeness develops with age, its focus on children limits its applicability to adult communication. In addition, the study does not explore how age differences operate in interactions between adults, particularly in natural conversational settings.

Overall, these previous studies demonstrate that age is an important factor in shaping politeness strategies. However, they tend to focus on specific contexts, such as invitations or children's speech, and do not examine extended interactions between adults. Furthermore, they do not integrate Communication Accommodation Theory to explain how speakers adjust their language in response to age differences.

Based on the explanation above, the present study aims to analyze the politeness strategies used in the interaction between Joe Rogan and Bernie Sanders and to examine how age differences influence those strategies. By applying both Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory and Giles (1973) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language is used to manage social relationships in cross generational communication.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Based on the background earlier, the problems of this research can be identified as follows:

1. What types of politeness strategies are used by Joe Rogan and Bernie Sanders in the “Joe Rogan Experience #2341- Bernie Sanders” podcast episode based on Brown Levinson’s (1987) theory?
2. How does age influence the use of the politeness strategies by Joe Rogan and Bernie Sanders in the “Joe Rogan Experience #2341- Bernie Sanders” podcast episode as explained through Communication Accommodation Theory?

1.3 Research Purposes

This study aims to:

1. Identify the politeness strategies used by Joe Rogan and Bernie Sanders in the “Joe Rogan Experience #2341- Bernie Sanders” podcast episode.
2. Analyze how age differences between the speakers influence their choice of politeness strategies in Joe Rogan and Bernie Sanders interview shown in the “Joe Rogan Experience #2341- Bernie Sanders” through Communication Accommodation Theory.

1.4 Research Significances

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this research contributes to the broader discussion on politeness and age within sociolinguistics and pragmatics. By integrating Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory with age-related frameworks proposed by Labov, Trudgill, Eckert, Giles, Holmes, and CAT proposed by Howard Giles, the study offers a detailed account of how generational differences influence pragmatic choices in real interaction. It extends existing knowledge by demonstrating how politeness strategies operate in contemporary digital media, which differs significantly from traditional face to face communication examined in previous studies. The findings are expected to enrich the academic understanding of how politeness functions within cross-generational discourse and provide a reference model for future studies using media-based data.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the study provides insights into how interviewers and public figures may adjust their language when communicating with individuals from different age groups. The results may be useful for communication practitioners, podcast hosts, journalists, and media students who aim to maintain respectful and effective interactions with guests of diverse backgrounds. Additionally, English learners and educators may benefit from a clearer understanding of pragmatics in authentic conversational formats. By examining a popular podcast episode, the study also demonstrates how politeness strategies appear in natural, unscripted media interactions, offering practical examples that can be incorporated into teaching materials or training programs

1.5 Clarification of Key Terms

This study uses some terms to help explain and analyses the object studied. To avoid misunderstanding, the following key terms are defined:

Politeness Strategies: Politeness strategies refer to the linguistic choices used by speakers to reduce the impact of face-threatening acts and maintain social harmony. In this study, they are classified into four types based on Brown & Levinson (1987): bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record.

Face: Face is an individual's public self-image in interaction. It includes positive face, the desire to be liked, and negative face, the desire to have freedom from imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Age Difference: Age difference refers to the gap in age between speakers, which may influence their communication style and level of politeness in interaction.

Communication Accommodation: Communication accommodation is the process by which speakers adjust their language to their interlocutor. This includes convergence, where speakers adapt their speech, and divergence, where they maintain differences (Giles & Powesland, 1975)

Podcast Discourse: Podcast discourse refers to spoken interaction in a podcast setting, which is typically informal, conversational, and relatively spontaneous.