CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The United States of America’s 2008 election was the 56th quadrennial presidential election. This election turned out as a very exciting election, because for the first time in history an African American, Barrack Obama, won becoming the president of the United States. Barrack Obama and his running mate, Joe Biden, defeated John McCain and his partner, Sarah Palin. This election was also the first US presidential election since 1952 in which neither major party nominee was the incumbent President, nor the incumbent Vice-President.

The absence of any incumbent nominee in 2008 election encouraged a large number of candidates from both major parties to run. On the Democratic side, there was early assumption that Senator Hillary Clinton, wife of the former President Bill Clinton, was the favourite to garner her party’s nomination to be the first female President of the United States. A large number of other Democrat also announced their intention to run, most were Senators. One of the Senators was Barrack Obama, a young Senator from Illinois. Soon, Clinton and Obama became rivals in their party to be a President nominee for the 2008 Presidential election.

Clinton and Obama battled in repeated primary states. In June 2008 after the last of the primaries had taken place, Obama clinched their party’s nomination and run as a nominee for the President of the United States. He was the first African American to win the nomination of a major political party in the United States. Obama selected
Joe Biden as his partner, while Republican nominee, John McCain, selected Sarah Palin as his running mate.

Clinton refused to concede the race for several days after Obama’s victory. She finally conceded the nomination to Obama on June 7 and pledged her full support to help him get elected. She participated in Obama’s campaign. Clinton gave speech at the Democrat National Convention in Denver on 26 August 2008, two days before Obama’s acceptance speech in DNC, to summon the millions of voters who supported her in the primaries to vote for Obama.

Clinton and Obama, both are really good in giving speeches. They both came from a different background. Clinton, as a White American and a woman, rivaled with Obama, an African American and a man, to be a nominee for the President of the United States from Democrat Party. Although Clinton defeated by Obama in their party’s nomination, she supported Obama to be the President of the United States. In her speech, Clinton praised and supported Obama. She called herself a “proud supporter of Barrack Obama”. Obama himself gave his gratitude to Clinton’s husband in his speech.

Even though, both Clinton’s and Obama’s speeches have the same main ideas, the writer observes that their style of language usage is quite different. As shown in their speeches, both of them have a different style of language usage and these speeches also showed politeness phenomena that different from each other, especially viewed from gender and politeness context. For example, Obama in his speech said, “On November 4th, we must stand up and say: Eight is enough”. This utterance use a forward and direct sentence to control the actions of others. While Clinton in her speech said, “And I know what that can mean for every man, woman
and child in America.” This sentence uttered by Clinton and using hedges (linguistic forms) -I know- to express the certainty which according to Robin Lakoff (in Coates 1993: 116), women use more hedges than men.

Based on Clinton’s and Obama’s speeches that showed a different style of language usage and politeness phenomena happened in our society, the writer wants to analyze the relationship between gender and politeness of two people with different sex gender. This study will take pragmatics approach as the reference theory that will explain and describe the politeness that found in the speeches of those two public figures. This analysis will take two speeches from two public figures/ politicians, Hillary Clinton and Barrack Obama, to be compared.

So, the writer determines to analyze these speech texts consist of sentences refer to the lexical in gender and politeness. The comparison of politeness between these two people will focus on the textual or written utterances. The writer will takes two speech texts, one speech text for each person from the same event for the same purpose. Clinton and Obama gave their speeches for Democrat National Convention in purpose to gather their supporter’s votes for Obama in USA’s 2008 Presidential election. The writer will use Brown & Levison’s Politeness theory to analyze these speech texts. Through this thesis, the writer hopes to find the answer about the differences of the language usage between men and women viewed from gender and politeness theory, and that this differences have nothing to do with the competence or performance quality on the language forms between men and women.
1.2. Problems of the Study

The different style of language usage that showed in Hillary Clinton’s and Barrack Obama’s speech texts, especially viewed from gender and politeness context drives the study to the following questions:

1) How do Clinton and Obama construct their speech texts viewed from gender and politeness theory?

2) What is the dominant linguistic form found in Clinton’s and Obama’s speech texts viewed from gender and politeness theory?

1.3. Objective of the Study

In line with the problem of the study above, the aims of writing this thesis are listed as below:

1) To describe how Clinton and Obama construct their speech texts viewed from gender and politeness theory.

2) To describe the dominant linguistic form found in Clinton’s and Obama’s speech texts viewed from gender and politeness theory.

1.4. Scope of the Study

As has been explained before in the background of this study, in this thesis the writer focuses to analyze the relationship between gender and politeness of two people with different gender through the speech texts. The writer does not analyze the gesture, intonations, or facial expressions of the speakers while give the speeches
into this thesis. But, the writer would like to emphasize that her thesis is focused on the politeness dealing with language usage in Hillary Clinton’s and Barrack Obama’s speech texts. The language usage in this thesis is limited only to the language expressed by the use of words, i.e. the linguistic utterances of speakers in the written speech.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Through the writing of this thesis, the writer believes that this thesis would give significant advantages either for theoretical or practical use. Theoretically this thesis is not the first reference for students of Department of English of University of Sumatera Utara that analyzing gender or the politeness phenomena, but this is the first thesis analyzing both gender and politeness in one thesis. From the theory used in this thesis, readers will get a new understanding how gender and politeness can be related to each other.

And practically, with a better knowledge about the very basic principles of politeness and the better awareness of gender characteristics in language usage, the writer hopes that the reader would be able to maintain better social community with a more agreeable communication and without gender discrimination.