# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Research

People evolved from time to time, ideas changed, and thoughts bent to the will of time. One of the marks that can be found throughout history is how they communicate. Communication is defined as the process of using messages to generate meaning. It is viewed as a process involving ongoing actions, exchanges, or behavior patterns rather than a static outcome (Pearson et al., 2011, p. 10). Language is the primary tool for communication that offers both information and context that can be used for effective interaction. Moreover, with millions of languages worldwide, the power of language often exceeds recognition, allowing users to convey meaning and connect. In communication, individuals frequently employ unconscious strategies to ensure the listener effectively understands their messages.

Communication strategies address how language is used and perceived in society, and this is the focus of pragmatics. Pragmatics studies the connection between language structures and their users and explores how language is used in interactions and the meanings it carries in different contexts (Yule, 1996, p. 4). Pragmatics is also shaped by assumptions, social settings, and communication purposes (Thomas, 1995, p. 22). Effective communication relies on the appropriate use of language to ensure messages are accurately conveyed. Speech act theory in pragmatics examines how speakers use language to carry out actions and how listeners understand these actions in context.

Speech acts can be identified as an essential aspect of human communication. Utterances made through speech acts serve not only to convey information but also to
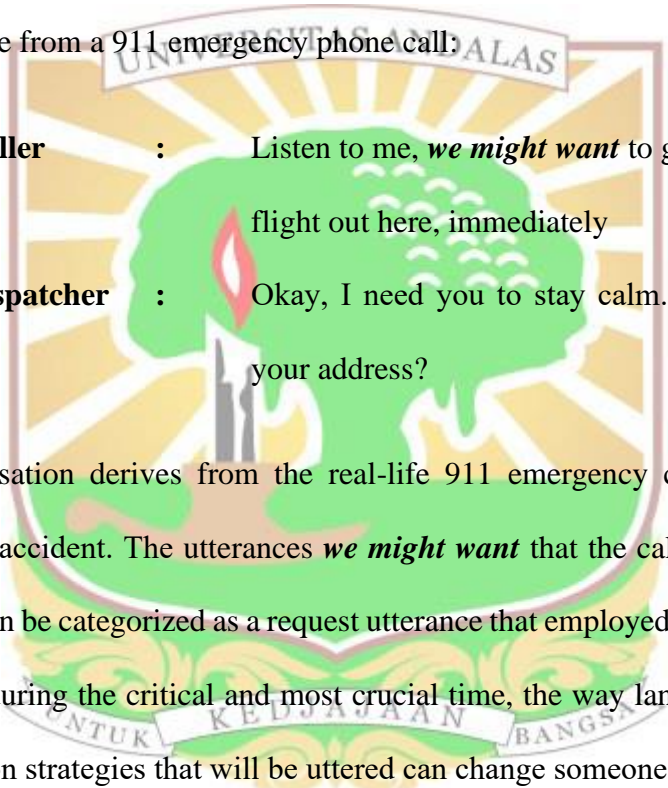
carry out actions. Various functions can be fulfilled by utterances, including making statements, giving directives, or offering promises, based on the speaker's intentions. Directives, consisting of advice, requests, and commands, are intended to affect the actions of the listener (Searle, 1969, p. 66). Requests that fall under the category of directives have been thoroughly examined regarding their significance in developing pragmatic competence. Such acts involve prompting an individual to perform a particular action, illustrating how language can influence behavior and affect interactions (Searle, 1969, p. 44).

Request strategies have been an important part of the communication process in human life without realizing it, with the advancement of technology, communication can be done in millions of different ways throughout different platforms. These various accesses help the process of communication to occur between people across the world at any time and on any occasion. This means that the urgent and emergency sectors are also receiving tremendous help from this feature.

One famous and revolutionary emergency system is 911 in the United States. The 911 emergency call system was established in 1968. This invention revolutionized how emergencies were reported in the United States. This system was developed after the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and AT&T chose the number 911 because it is simple and easy to remember. It marked a significant advancement from earlier systems where different emergency services had separate call numbers, which could be confusing and time-consuming during crises. The introduction of 911 provided a standardized immediate point of contact for all emergencies and offered an efficient way to help people get the assistance they need.

911 emergency calls are a high-pressure and crucial environment requiring precise and efficient communication. The development of 911 features aimed to equip dispatchers with vital information such as the caller's location and phone number. This innovation enhanced the efficiency of emergency service dispatching and increased the overall effectiveness of response systems. Different communication techniques are utilized by dispatchers to swiftly collect vital information while prioritizing the caller's safety until assistance arrives.

This is an example from a 911 emergency phone call:

**Caller** : Listen to me, *we might want* to get a life flight out here, immediately

**Dispatcher** : Okay, I need you to stay calm. What's your address?

The conversation derives from the real-life 911 emergency calls made during Jeremy Renner's accident. The utterances *we might want* that the caller to utter during this emergency can be categorized as a request utterance that employed request strategies. This shows that during the critical and most crucial time, the way language is used and the communication strategies that will be uttered can change someone's fate.

The writer notices that the calls initiate with the immediate stating of the emergency by the caller, and after that comes the greeting by the dispatcher. This kind of communication fits into this situation because the call requires urgency to get the information out and the help as soon as possible. The caller's immediate declaration of the emergency and the directness in communicating their urgent need for assistance. The

conversation above is an example of how 911 calls operate in a situation that requires a rapid response under high-pressure conditions.

911 emergency calls feature is accessible to anyone living in the United States. This is what makes 911 a prominent and staple feature that is useful for the citizens of the United States. No matter the caller's background, regular citizens to even public figures can access this feature to get the help they need. In this research, public figures are the focus of this study. The public figure represents a specific kind of public identity that ties closely to the ways a person's self extends beyond their primary role and explores the complex aspects of fame and publicity (Marshall, 2020, p. 89). A public figure is often recognized as someone who has achieved widespread fame, has become a subject of public interest and media attention. Public figures can also be defined as an individual who has an influence, such as celebrities, politicians, artists, and more.

Given its significance in crisis management, the system also becomes a platform where the actions and behaviors of public figures during emergencies are recorded and can be accessed by the masses. Public figures possessed societal influence and visibility, which leads to more media coverage and a unique population to be studied. This proves that the 911 emergency call system functions as an important public service that provides immediate access to emergency assistance to become a communication bridge between the public and first responders. The dispatchers can use linguistic cues to identify suspicious callers and gather additional details by keeping them on the line (Harpster et al., 2009, p. 73).

Examining how public figures communicate during emergencies through request strategies in 911 recordings offers a new perspective on the use of communication strategies by analysing the exchange that occurs during emergencies. This study aims to

explore the public figures conversations with emergency services, focusing on the categorization of request strategies within the 10 recordings consisting of 9 public figures 911 emergency calls, with the help of the request strategies framework that was introduced by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper in 1989 and the analysis will be conducted with qualitative approach and the result of analysis will be presented descriptively.

## 1.2 Research Questions

This research will analyze the request strategies employed in these selected 911 emergency phone calls involving public figures. Moreover, the writer will also examine the factors behind the use of the request strategies during emergency calls. Therefore, this research problem is formulated in the following research questions:

1. What are the most dominant request strategies in the utterances of public figures' during their 911 emergency calls?

2. What are the main factors that cause the usage of each request strategies that is uttered in public figures' 911 emergency calls?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Research

This research aims to appraise and analyze what request strategies are employed in public figures' emergency calls. It seeks to identify the categorization of each of the request strategies uttered in the emergency calls to draw conclusion on what is the most used request strategies. By doing this research, the writer can answer the two research questions above:

1. To describe the most dominantly used request strategies by classifying the request strategies used in public figures' 911 emergency phone calls.
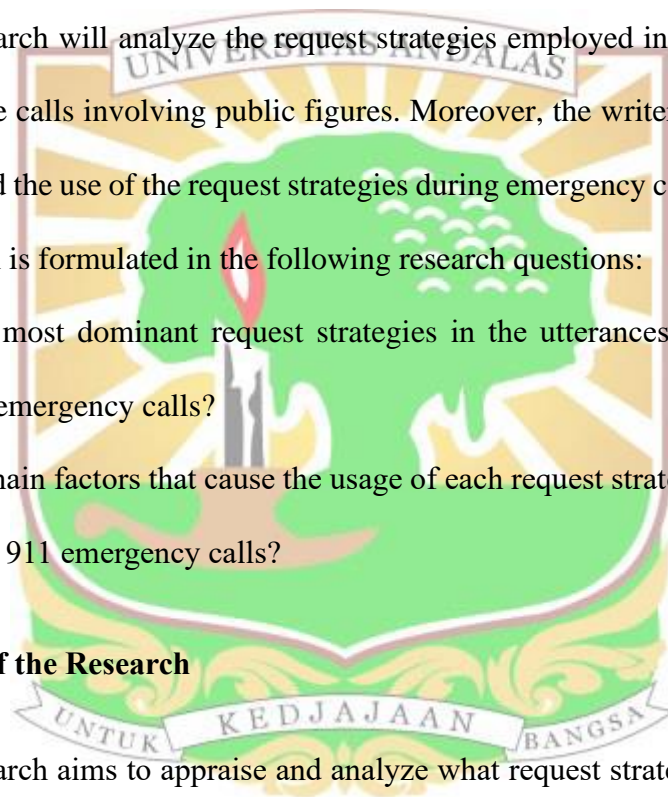
2. To identify the main factors behind the request strategies used between the caller and the dispatcher during their interaction.

## 1.4 Focus of the Research

This study will focus on identifying spoken request strategies during the natural conversation between the caller and the dispatcher in an emergency. In this research, the writer will focus on identifying types and factors of request strategies made during phone calls. The data source for this research is the publicly published recordings of 911 emergency calls involving these 9 public figures that can be found throughout all 10 recordings. The recordings of 911 emergency calls involving public figures are ranged from 1993 to 2023. The data is the utterances of the caller and the dispatcher involved in these selected 911 emergency call recordings that employ request strategies. The writer then analyzes the utterances between the caller and the dispatcher to understand the types of request strategies used with the help of the studies that Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper conducted in 1989 and theory derived from Brown and Levinson in 1987 to get a clearer view on factors that cause the strategies to be used in an utterance.

## 1.5 Method of the Research

The research that will be conducted is categorized as library research. Library research involves systematically collects, evaluating, and synthesizing information from books, journals, articles, and other documentary sources to address research questions or objectives (George, 2008). In conducting the library research in this study, the qualitative approach is used to understand how individuals or groups deal with social or human problems. Qualitative approach involves developing questions and methods during the study, collecting data directly from participants in their environment, analyzing the data

to identify themes from specific details, and interpreting the findings to uncover their meaning (Creswell, 2014). This research will collect and analyze the utterances that contain request strategies from 10 selected 911 emergency call recordings involving 9 public figures. The request strategies found later will be categorized using the framework by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper in 1989.

## 1.5.1 Data Collection

Data is a collection of proven, accurate facts processed for people to interpret. Data is the center of research that provides the real-life evidence needed to support or oppose hypotheses. Data includes text or images obtained from documents, observations, and interviews, offering comprehensive information to grasp the significance that individuals or groups attach to a social or human issue. (Creswell, 2014). From the explanation above. It can be concluded that data is an important thing to conduct research. Moreover, the data collected with various methods will be processed as the primary information during the research process. One crucial factor to consider when analyzing the data is the source. The data source must be obtained before data collection and analysis.

The source of data can be defined as a subject in which the data is located to be obtained (Arikunto, 2010). The source of the data also refers to the origins in which researchers gather information necessary to conduct their study. In qualitative research, data sources are generally people, places, and documents. (Creswell, 2014).

The source of the data for this research is recordings of the caller and the dispatcher in these 10 selected emergency phone call recordings that consist of 9 public figures that will be presented in Table 1. On the other hand, the data for this research are utterances between the caller and the dispatcher that feature request strategies. Data will

be collected by observing 911 emergency calls, focusing on the request strategies used during the calls to analyze how requests are made. The source of data for this research will be presented in Table 1.

**Table 1  Source of Data**

| Recording Number | Public Figures | Duration | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jeremy Renner (call 1) | 45 seconds | Jeremy Renner (call 1) |
| 2 | Jeremy Renner (call 2) | 20 minutes | Jeremy Renner (call 2) |
| 3 | Sandra Bullock | 2 minutes | Sandra Bullock |
| 4 | Joaquin Phoenix | 4 minutes | Joaquin Phoenix |
| 5 | Demi Moore | 10 minutes | Demi Moore |
| 6 | Nicole Brown Simpson | 3 minutes | Nicole Brown Simpson |
| 7 | Lindsay Lohan | 3 minutes | Lindsay Lohan |
| 8 | Brittany Murphy | 8 minutes | Brittany Murphy |
| 9 | Justin Bieber | 2 minutes | Justin Bieber |
| 10 | Alec Baldwin | 20 minutes | Alec Baldwin |

The process of data collection involves systematically gathering information from pertinent sources to address research inquiries (Sudaryanto, 1993). This process represents the extent of the steps or processes the writer must endure to get precise and relevant utterances for the research. The data collection section must describe the process accordingly and in an informative manner to get the point across to the reader.

The data collection process for this research will be explained as follows:

1.  Search the internet for 911 recordings involving public figures on various websites and platforms.

2.  Cross-checked it with several online media and news outlets to ensure the validity of the recordings.

3. Identify the needed videos and download them to a personal computer.

4. Transcribe the 10 collected recordings that feature 9 public figures, consisting of Sandra Bullock, two of Jeremy Renner, Brittany Murphy, Joaquin Phoenix, Nicole Brown Simpson, Lindsay Lohan, Justin Bieber, Alec Baldwin, and Demi Moore, to capture the details of the conversations for analysis.

Through the process above, the data collection procedure of this research can be categorized as a non-participant observational method. Observational methods allow the writer to gather data directly from the source without interference or reliance on recall or perceptions. The technique applied to select the sample in this study was purposive sampling. In qualitative research, purposive sampling means that researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. (Creswell, 2014)

The writer then proceeds to observe the call to gather the relevant utterances that fall under request strategies. After the selected utterances have been selected and can be categorized as data for this research, the writer identified and classified the utterances based on the form and strategies of request. This directness of the observation can provide more accurate and immediate data about behaviors, interactions, and processes as they occur naturally. This approach is chosen because the research does not rely on direct human sources. Instead, the data helps navigate various forms, such as poetry, films, slogans, phone call recordings, and YouTube videos, excluding direct participants.

## 1.5.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be defined as a systematic process of examining the data collected during the study to draw meaningful insights and conclusions (Arikunto, 2010).

This process involves organizing, breaking down, and interpreting data to discover the classification of the utterances. While analyzing the data, the writer looks up to the concept of request strategies introduced by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper in 1989. The writer collects the data from the utterances that occurred in the selected public figures' 911 emergency phone calls and later will be interpreted using the request strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper in 1989.

Therefore, there are some steps in order to analyze the data. The first step would be to transcribe the videos and recordings of the call. The second step is to choose the relevant utterances by the caller and the dispatcher. The third step is to mark each utterance according to the strategies, and the fourth step is to classify the utterances based on each type of request strategies and the last step would be to conclude the dominantly used strategies in the data.

Furthermore, the types and factors of request strategies used in the selected public figures' 911 emergency phone calls are explained using words or phrases. Moreover, a table displays the frequency and percentage of the caller and the dispatcher's strategies in making the request. The following is the formula for calculating the percentage of strategies in requesting the call:

$$Result = \frac{Number\ of\ the\ utterances}{All\ data}\ x\ 100\%$$

As presented in the formula above, genuine data will be gathered after the discovered data is successfully obtained from all the relevant utterances during the calls. The overall findings will be counted based on the occurrences and then can be concluded what is the most dominant strategies and factor present in this research.

**1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

**911:**    A universal United States and Canadian number that lets callers reach the police for emergencies, fire, or medical assistance. When 911 is called by an individual, the call is directed to a public safety answering point (PSAP). There, trained professionals evaluate the situation and coordinate the necessary emergency services to respond effectively. (Federal Communications Commission, 2024)

**Pragmatics:**    Pragmatics focuses on how a speaker (or writer) communicates meaning and how that meaning is interpreted by a listener (Yule, 1996, p. 3). An alternative interpretation of speech acts characterizes them as a means of communication in which speakers convey their intentions through their utterances. Pragmatics can also be interpreted as how utterances have meanings in situations. (Leech, 1983, p. 6)

**Speech Acts:**    It can be defined as the basic units of linguistic communication (Searle, 1969, p. 16). A different interpretation of speech acts describes them as a method of communication where speakers express
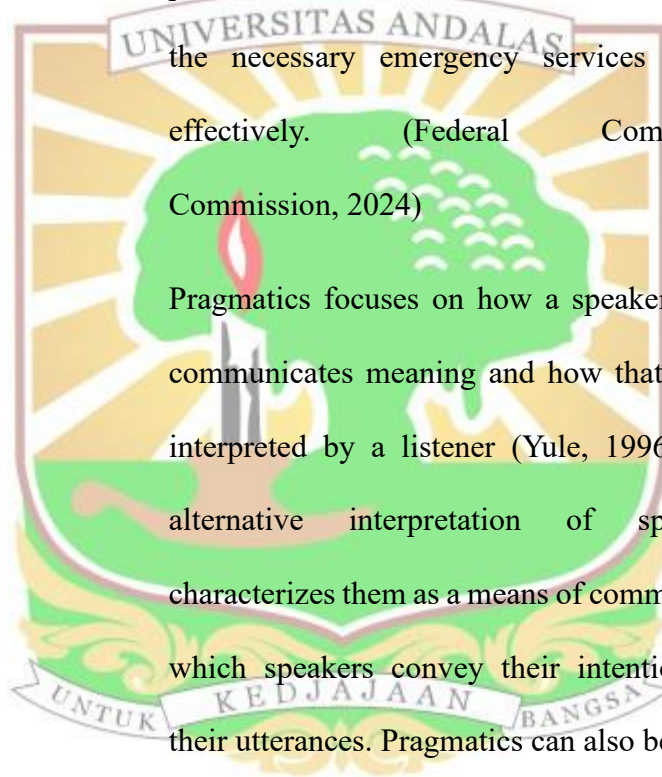
their intentions through their utterances, and these utterances achieve a function in interaction. (Leech, 1983, p. 13)

**Public Figures:**   Public figures can be defined as an individual whose actions, statements, and images are subject to public attention, often mediated by the press and other forms of media. Public figures typically include politicians, celebrities, and others who occupy a prominent position in public life. (Hartley, 2002, p. 174)

**Dispatcher:**   A dispatcher in emergency contexts can be defined as the first point of contact in an emergency response system, tasked with gathering critical information, providing pre-arrival instructions, and deploying the most appropriate resources based on the nature and severity of the situation. (Clawson & Dernocoeur, 2012, p. 5)