

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Politeness strategy is a set of strategies that show awareness and lessen the threat to others' faces. Implementing politeness strategies does not only occur in real life but also in literary works such as novels. In the novel, the implementation of politeness strategies is portrayed in the characters' conversations. Moreover, the dialogues between characters in the novel are developed by considering the politeness strategy and several factors that influence its usage.

This study focuses on analyzing the use of the politeness strategy practiced by Rachel Chu in the novel by Kwan (2015) entitled *China Rich Girlfriend*. This novel talks about the relationship of 2 young people who come from different social statuses and cultural backgrounds. Rachel is a middle-class woman of Chinese descent who spent most of her life in the United States working as an economics professor at New York University. Meanwhile, her lover, Nicholas Young, is a Singaporean elite who is expected to inherit a property worth for million dollars, but he hides his identity by working as a history professor at New York University.

Their love story becomes trouble because Nicholas' family does not like Rachel due to her background as an American-Chinese, not a native Chinese. In addition,

Rachel is raised by a single mom and they were living in a poor. The different economic status makes it difficult for them to get married. However, after finding the truth that Rachel is the daughter of a billionaire in China, Nicholas' family is so kind and gives Nicholas a blessing to marry her. Rachel's life changed in one night, she was poor, but now she is a billionaire. Rachel now is surrounded by crazy rich people and she is trying to know their lifestyle, and getting closer with them.

However, I noticed that Rachel used different communication styles regarding her interlocutors. She switched her language according to her interlocutors; thus, it makes her apply certain politeness strategies. According to the story's background, I noticed that the sociological variables influence Rachel in practicing certain politeness strategies in her conversation. Thus, it leads me to conduct this research to find out the most dominant politeness strategies practiced by Rachel, and Rachel's reasons for applying certain politeness strategies.

1.2 Research problems

Based on the research background, this research has 3 research questions to answer the research problems:

1. What kind of politeness strategies dominantly used by Rachel in her utterances?
2. Why does Rachel employ several politeness strategies in her conversation?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The goals of this study are as follows in light of the previous research problems:

1. To determine the type of politeness strategies Rachel uses most frequently.
2. To identify and find out Rachel's reasons for applying certain politeness strategy in her conversation with others as well as the influencing factors.

1.4 Previous studies

Several previous studies have examined politeness strategies, which certain researchers have studied. I classified the previous studies into several categories: those that have the same love storyline, those that revealed the relation between politeness strategies and social distance, and those that analyzed the implementation of politeness strategies in everyday life.

I found 2 previous studies that have analyzed the novel *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015) through linguistic aspects. These studies were conducted by Budi, Sili, and Asanti (2021), and Djingga, Loebis, and Perangin-angin (2021). Their studies analyzed *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015) novel using the sociolinguistics theory of code-switching and code-mixing. However, these 2 studies showed different results in determining the most used type of code-switching practiced in *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015). This is due to the different theories used in analyzing the types of code-switching and code-mixing; Budi, Sili, and Asanti (2021) employed Poplack's (1980) theory of code-switching, and Musyken's (2003) theory of code-mixing. The result showed that the

most dominant code switching appeared in *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015) is tag switching with 60 data, while the most dominant code mixing appeared in *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015) is insertion with 46 data. Furthermore, Djingga, Loebis, and Perangin-angin (2021) applied Poplack's (1980) theory of code-switching, and Gumperz's (1982) theory to analyze the functions of code-switching used. The result indicated that the most dominant code switching applied in *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015) is intra-sentential switching with 54 data, and the dominant function of code switching is of interjections.

Furthermore, 2 previous studies analyzed the practice of politeness strategy in several movies that have a similar love story of the main characters, a poor woman and a rich man. Musyafaah, Yuliasri, and Pratama (2022) analyzed the politeness strategies practiced by the *Pride and Prejudice* movie's main characters, while Tagugurad and Rosita (2023) investigated the politeness strategies and the situational context that affects the directive speech act in *The Greatest Showman* movie. These 2 studies employed the theory of Politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987), and the results are similar; these 2 studies found that the main characters of these 2 literary works came from a lower society, and the most dominant politeness strategy used is the positive politeness strategy.

Three previous studies revealed the relation between politeness strategy and social distance, which were conducted by Haryoto, Mansyur, and Listiani (2019); Dewanti (2022); and Karina, and Arifin (2023). These 3 studies employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness in analyzing the data. However, the results are

varied due to different objects analyzed. Haryoto, Mansyur, and Listiani (2019) found that society in 19th century in *The Greatest Showman* movie showed that most people noticed to the social class and respected for abnormal people, thus they tended to implied the positive politeness more. Dewanti (2022) noticed that the sense of mutual friendship encouraged the main characters of *The Fault in Our Stars* novel to apply the positive politeness strategy. Karina, and Arifin (2023) revealed the dominant politeness strategy practiced by Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* novel is the positive politeness strategy, due to the different social status between them, she wants to respect her interlocutors and minimize threaten to the H's face.

Moreover, I found 3 studies which analyzed the use of politeness strategies in our everyday life. Alsulami (2015) investigated the effectiveness of social distance on requests; Hilal (2023) elaborated the use of politeness strategies in academic conversations; and Sari, Raja, and Sudirman analyzed the politeness and request strategies in act of request by EFL students. However, the results of these 3 studies are varied, this is due to the different theory used in analyzing. Alsulami (2015) employed the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) in his study and found out that someone who share the same specialization and someone who has little knowledge about a branch of knowledge tend to use the positive politeness strategy. Hilal (2023) revealed that the social distance affects the strategy used by the S, the higher the social distance the more polite and off-record strategy used. Sari, Raja, and Sudirman applied the theory of request by Anna Trosborg and the theory of politeness by Brown and

Levinson concluded that the different levels in a group of people influenced the application of negative politeness strategy.

Based on the previous studies above, there are many studies which had analyzed and identified the types of politeness strategies in literary works, such as novels and films. Further research also has been conducted to investigate the factors that encourage the use of politeness strategies. However, none of those previous studies have analyzed the usage of the politeness strategy in the *China Rich Girlfriend* (CRG) novel. Different from the previous studies, this current study tends to analyze politeness strategies practiced by the main character of CRG, and how sociological variables greatly affected the practice of politeness strategy.

1.5 Scope of the study

Employing the theory of politeness proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), and George Yule (1996), this study is limited to analyzing Rachel's utterances contained politeness strategy in *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015) novel. Furthermore, this study also analyzes on how sociological variables influenced Rachel in practicing certain politeness strategies. In analyzing the data, I also pay attention to the situational context of the conversation to find out the dominant factor influencing the use of politeness strategy by Rachel.