

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Language in social interactions is not only used to convey information, but also as a means of building good social relationships with others. In this context, politeness strategies play a significant role in minimizing the possibility of face-threatening acts and helping to maintain harmony in interactions. This is in line with Isabella et al (2022: 148) that in creating good social relationships and interactions with others, politeness is needed. Through the use of politeness strategies, speakers attempt to build good communication. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), speakers employ politeness strategies to protect both their own face and that of their interlocutor, particularly in situations involving unequal power relations. Moreover, they stated that everyone has a self-image that they want to maintain called “face”. It consists of positive face, the desire to be respected, and negative face, the desire to be free from coercion.

The movie *Darkest Hour* is interesting to analyze from a politeness strategy perspective because it features many interactions and various communication situations experienced by the main character. *Darkest Hour* is a British biographical war drama movie released in 2017 and directed by Joe Wright. This movie tells the story of the main character, Winston Churchill, who was appointed Prime Minister of Britain in May 1940 amidst the crisis of World War II. Once in charge, Winston was immediately faced with a difficult choice: whether Britain should continue

fighting against the increasingly powerful Nazis, despite the British Army being pressed at Dunkirk, or decide to surrender in order to save many lives.

The character of Winston Churchill is chosen for analysis because he is the main character in the movie and he is involved in various interactions with complex power relations, so his communication in this movie varies depending on his interlocutor, ranging from his subordinates, family, the king, and the people, showing how he adjusts his strategy based on the existing power relations. According to Foucault (2019: 324), power is not a substance or a mysterious attribute whose origin must be understood. Power is a relational phenomenon that emerges through interaction, not a fixed attribute. In interactions, power relations can be seen through the way speakers control interactions and actions, manage interpersonal relationships, including through politeness strategies. Through Winston's utterances, it is evident how politeness is used to illustrate power relations in interactions, not just as a communication strategy. Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of politeness strategies used by Winston Churchill, describe how the politeness strategies he used illustrate power relations, and explain the factors influencing his use of politeness strategies.

1.2. Research Problems

Based on the problems discussed in this study, the writer formulates three research problems as follows.

1. What are the types of politeness strategies used by Winston Churchill in the movie *Darkest Hour*?

2. How are the politeness strategies used by Winston Churchill illustrate power relations between him and other characters in the movie *Darkest Hour*?
3. What factors influence Winston Churchill's choice of politeness strategies?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

There are three objectives to be answered in this study. The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the types of politeness strategies used by Winston Churchill in the movie *Darkest Hour*.
2. Describe the use of politeness strategies by Winston Churchill in illustrating power relations between him and other characters.
3. Explain the sociological factors influencing Winston Churchill's choice of politeness strategies, including social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition.

1.4. Previous Studies

This section discusses previous studies, which are divided into three categories: studies focusing on the analysis of politeness strategies in movies, studies examining the relationship between politeness strategies and power relations, and studies analyzing the movie *Darkest Hour*.

Six studies focusing on the use of politeness strategies in movies were identified. First, there is a study analyzing the movie *Bridge to Terabithia* conducted by Fitria, Ningrum, and Suhandoko (2020). Based on the findings, the main character in this movie uses four types of politeness strategies, with the most dominant being bald on record and positive politeness. Fridolini, Arisena, and

Idawati (2021) discussed the use of politeness strategies in the movie *Little Woman* and found that the characters in this movie most frequently used bald on record compared to the other three strategies. Basyar (2022) analyzed the movie *A Star Is Born* and found that four types of politeness strategies were used by the characters in this movie, with off record being the most dominant strategy, while positive politeness was the least used. In these three studies, the use of politeness strategies is also influenced by factors such as social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition.

Probosini (2020) discovered the dominant use of positive politeness in the movie *The Devil Wears Prada* by the main characters, which is used to show respect and signal harmonious relationships in the workplace. Julianti and Rahmani (2024) analyzed the movie *Wonder* and found that positive politeness aimed at asking for reasons is the dominant strategy used by the main characters in this movie. Last, Himawati, Talenta, and Lamik (2024) identified four types of politeness strategies used for different purposes by the characters in the movie *The Princess Diaries*. These studies indicate that politeness strategies can be applied in the analysis of character interactions within movies. However, these six studies focus only on identifying the use of strategies and influencing factors, without further exploring the relationship between politeness strategies and power relations.

Two studies discussing the relationship between politeness strategies and power relations among characters in movies were identified. Aziz and Hasyim (2025) explored the role of language in managing interpersonal relationships, conflicts, and power relations in the movie *The Social Network*. The study found

that the main characters in this movie employ four types of politeness strategies influenced by power relations, and awareness of these power relations is also seen through the depiction of social hierarchy within the movie. Amalia, Indah, and Bahtiar (2023) analyzed *Bridgerton Season 1* and identified the use of four types of politeness strategies, where the royal family in the series serves as a symbol of power that also influences the use of politeness strategies. Both studies demonstrate that politeness strategies are not merely linguistic tools for managing social relationships but can also illustrate power relations through character interactions.

Last, two studies were discovered that discuss the movie *Darkest Hour*. Siwi (2022) examined the use of positive and negative politeness, and the factors that influence them, in the characters' dialogues in the movie *Darkest Hour*. The study found 90 instances of positive politeness and 30 instances of negative politeness used by the characters in this movie, which were influenced by factors such as payoffs, social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition. This study is different from Siwi's study because this study focuses on analyzing the use of politeness strategies, their relationship with power relations, and the influencing factors only in the utterances of the main character, Winston Churchill. Cahyadi, Sosiowati, and Soethama (2023) analyzed face-threatening acts (FTA) performed by characters in this movie and whether these characters attempted to mitigate such FTA. Based on the results, the characters in this movie more often perform FTA against positive face than against negative face, and these FTA tend to be performed without any mitigation efforts. However, these studies do not discuss further the use of politeness strategies by the main character. Thus, neither of these studies has yet

discussed the use of politeness strategies and their relationship to power relations, particularly in the interactions of the main character in the movie *Darkest Hour*.

The majority of previous studies have focused primarily on identifying strategies and the factors that influence them. Only a few studies have examined politeness strategies as linguistic tools for reflecting and negotiating power relations in interaction. Regarding the movie *Darkest Hour*, no study has yet explored the pragmatic relationship between the use of politeness strategies and power relations, particularly as depicted through the main character's utterances in the movie. This leaves a gap to be filled, as the way Winston Churchill communicates throughout the movie provides rich opportunities to be explored through the perspective of politeness strategies. Therefore, the main objectives of this study are to identify the types of politeness strategies used by Winston Churchill, describe how the politeness strategies that Winston Churchill used illustrate power relations, and explain the influencing factors of Winston's choice of politeness strategies.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study examines Winston Churchill's use of politeness strategies in the movie *Darkest Hour* (2017), applying Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness strategies. The unit of analysis in this study is the utterances delivered by Winston Churchill that are classified as politeness strategies and can illustrate power relations. Focus of this study lies in the analysis of Winston Churchill's use of politeness strategies, how these strategies illustrate power relations, and the factors that influence his use of politeness strategies.

1.6. Writing Organization

This study is written in the following order.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This section includes the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous studies, scope of the study, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHOD

This section provides the theoretical framework and research method.

CHAPTER III: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study along with a discussion based on the data.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This section contains the summary of the results and the analysis conducted.