

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research conducted into the use of politeness strategies in English textbooks. The chapter begins by outlining the background of this research, followed by research questions that guided the research. The chapter then explains the purpose of this study. In addition, the significance of this research is also emphasizing its relevance to English language education. Finally, the scope and limitations of the study are presented to limits of the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

As fundamental in establishing social relationships, the way we communicate and behave in social interactions plays an important role. In Indonesia, interactions are often regulated by a strong respect for hierarchy and social status. Indonesian culture often involves respect especially when speaking to superiors or people with higher social positions. It can be seen through everyday communication styles where speakers often use a lower and calmer tone to avoid aggressive or conflictual expressions. These cultural norms affect the way Indonesian people use other languages, including English. Along with the increasing importance of English in the global community, learning English is increasingly important for the younger generation, especially in understanding and mastering politeness for effective communication. For example, respect for age and social status. One important aspect of communication or language use is politeness.

Hafizah (2019) states that politeness is defined as rules that have been determined or agreed upon in community, so that it becomes a prerequisite for social behavior (as cited in Hidayanti, 2023). Politeness strategies, as described by Brown and Levinson (1987) is an important part of pragmatic which deals with the use of language in communication according to the context. In everyday communication, politeness is a mechanism used by individuals to show respect. Understanding this strategy requires an understanding of the concept of “face”, as maintaining a face is essential for effective communication and social interaction. The concept of face

introduced by Goffman (1967) and later developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) plays a role in understanding politeness. Face refers to the self-esteem or self-image in a person's public that they want to maintain during interaction (Leech, 2014).

Politeness strategies are used by speakers to protect their own face or the face of the interlocutor. They help reduce potential face-threatening acts (FTAs) such as requests, commands, or criticisms that may cause discomfort or conflict in interaction. For example, in most cultures, when asking for help, speakers tend to soften their requests through indirect requests, statements that reduce the pressure or provide excuses to minimize discomfort to the interlocutor. The ways in which individuals choose to express politeness can be influenced by several factors such as social status, age, familiarity, or cultural norms that apply in that society (Holmes, 2022).

In Pragmatics, context is very important to understand how meaning is created in communication. Cutting (2002) describes three main types of contexts, they are situational, social, and cultural. Situational context refers to the physical setting where the conversation takes place, like the location, time, and who is involved. Social context relates to the relationship between the speakers, such as their social roles, status, and the cultural rules that affect how they speak. The last is cultural context, which relates to the habits practiced in one place that cannot be equated with others. By understanding these contexts, we can better interpret the true meaning behind words and see how politeness strategies are used in conversations.

This fundamental role of politeness in a social interaction also highlights the importance of analyzing how it is taught in teaching materials such as English textbooks. The inclusion and presentation of politeness strategies in textbooks can influence the development of students' pragmatic understanding, thus preparing them for real-world communication in English-speaking environments.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and embedded into the national curriculum from primary to secondary school. English textbooks are the main materials used in the classroom, which not only serve to introduce vocabulary structures, but also to teach cultural and social aspects related to the use

of the language. Textbooks are the main source of teaching materials that are systematically designed to support the learning process in a particular subject or field of study (Nuha, 2020). Graves (2000) reveals, textbooks are important tools in education that provide a framework for learning and teaching, often serving as a structured and systematic guide for learners and educators. The concern is whether the textbooks that are published and distributed actually include appropriate readings, suitable illustrations for students, and polite dialogues (Nuha, 2020).

In the context of language teaching in secondary schools, textbooks play an important role as the main tool or guide for students in mastering various language skills. Textbooks not only teach structural aspects such as grammar and vocabulary but also prepare students to face real or direct communication situations, both formally and informally. Examining politeness strategies in English textbooks is crucial because these strategies are a form of pragmatic competence and the ability to use language effectively in various social contexts. Brown and Levinson (1987) emphasize that politeness strategies help individuals navigate social interactions by maintaining “face”, which is needed for effective communication. In a textbook context, politeness strategies not only teach linguistic knowledge but also prepare students for real-world communication by equipping them with the skills to adjust their language use based on social status, relationships, and context (Leech, 2014). Most textbooks often focus more on linguistic aspects such as grammar rules, sentence construction, new vocabulary, or how to convey ideas correctly and less on pragmatic competence (Erlinda et al., 2023). A sentence in a textbook often mirrors real-world communication by embedding politeness strategies, cultural norms, and contextual appropriateness. For example, a sentence like “*Could you please...*” other than “*Give me...*” shows how politeness and formality can be communicated in a polite request. In addition, sentences in textbooks often simulate scenarios that students might encounter, such as asking for help, apologizing, or making small talk. These examples help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life situations, where students have to adjust to different levels of formality and social expectations.

In Indonesia, the curriculum for English language teaching in Senior High Schools (SMA) is organized into three grade levels, each accompanied by its own textbooks. These textbooks, which are aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, serve as basic sources to support students' language development. For Grade 10, the textbooks entitled “Work in Progress” focuses on basic language skills and prepare students for more complex tasks in later years. For Grade 11, entitled “Life for Change” introduces students to more advanced topics, emphasizing social and personal issues, while strengthening communicative competence in spoken and written English. Finally, “Life Today”, the textbooks for Grade 12, aims to provide students with real-world communication skills. These textbooks were chosen because they are aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum which focus on developing students' communicative competence through a flexible and conceptual approach (Lestari., et al 2024). The dialogues from each book were analyzed to identify and evaluate politeness strategies. Selection was based on their relevance to pragmatic contexts, such as requests, refusals, and suggestions, which often involve strategies to minimize face-threatening actions. Special attention is paid to interactions that reflect differences in social status, such as interactions between teachers and students, older and younger people, or peers in formal and informal settings. This ensures analysis of how politeness strategies are contextualized in textbooks and how they prepare students to communicate in the real world, textbooks that include politeness strategies can help students understand how to express respect in a variety of situations, from informal to more formal peer interactions.

The textbook provides conversations that are appropriate to the material provided. Within these conversations, various politeness strategies are present although some may not be easily understood. This analysis can serve as a tool to enhance readers' pragmatic understanding, particularly in the area of politeness strategies. Based on these reasons, the researcher conducts this study entitled **“An Analysis of Politeness Strategies in English Textbooks for Senior High School”**

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, the problems of the research are:

1. What are the types of politeness strategies reflected in English textbooks for Senior High School?
2. What are the contexts that influence the politeness strategies in English textbooks for Senior High School?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To answer the research question above, the objectives of the research are as the follow:

1. To explain the types of politeness strategies reflected in English textbooks for Senior High School.
2. To explain the contexts that influence the politeness strategies in English textbooks for Senior High School.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study explores politeness strategies in English textbooks in Senior High School published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of Indonesia. Theoretically, the researcher hopes that this study can contribute by analyzing how politeness strategies are reflected in English textbooks for Senior High School, this study can be a reference for future researchers who are interested in researching politeness strategies. Practically, this research will benefit the readers to gain a better understanding of the types of politeness strategies presented in English textbooks. Also, this research can serve as an evaluation tool for publishers or writers to create more effective future textbooks.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research is a pragmatic field especially in politeness strategies. The researcher focuses to find the types of politeness strategies in English Textbooks for Senior High School based on Brown and Levinson (1987) theory. In addition, the researcher be concerned in the contexts that influence the politeness strategies in English textbooks for Senior High School based on Cutting (2002) theory.

The analysis conducted on the conversational data in material of the textbooks. Therefore, the researcher limits the research to the politeness strategies on the dialogues in English textbooks for Senior High School. There are three books that analyzed, entitled “Work in Progress” for Grade 10, “Life for Change” for grade 11. Finally, “Life Today” for grade 12. All books were published in 2022 by Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology and it is based on the Merdeka Curriculum.