

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Sociolinguistics and Language Use in Social Context

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that examines the relationship between language and society, focusing on how social factors influence language use in communication (Holmes, 2013; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). It views language not merely as a structural system but as a social practice that reflects speakers' identities, relationships, and cultural norms. Through sociolinguistic perspectives, language is understood as a dynamic resource used to negotiate meaning within specific social contexts. Social variables such as gender, power, and setting play a crucial role in shaping how language is produced and interpreted (Trudgill, 1995). Therefore, sociolinguistics provides a foundational framework for understanding language use as socially situated, which leads to the discussion of context in communication.

Context is a central concept in sociolinguistics, as meaning cannot be fully understood without considering the situational and social background of an interaction (Cutting, 2002). Context includes factors such as participants, setting, social relationships, and communicative purposes that influence language choices. Speakers adjust their language based on whom they are talking to and the social expectations attached to the interaction. This adjustment demonstrates that language use is sensitive to social norms and interactional goals. As a result, context becomes essential in explaining why

speakers select particular linguistic strategies, including polite forms of expression.

Language functions as a tool for managing social relationships and maintaining social order within interaction (Holmes, 2013; Meyerhoff, 2018). Speakers often use language strategically to show respect, assert authority, or create solidarity with others. These strategies are shaped by social norms that govern appropriate behavior in different situations. Failure to align language use with these norms may lead to misunderstanding or social tension. Consequently, sociolinguistics highlights the importance of strategic language use, which directly connects to the concept of politeness in communication.

Politeness is one of the key social aspects of language use studied within sociolinguistics, as it reflects how speakers manage interpersonal relationships (Watts, 2003). Polite language choices help speakers minimize conflict and maintain harmonious interaction in socially sensitive situations. The use of politeness strategies is influenced by factors such as social distance, power relations, and communicative intent. These factors demonstrate that politeness is not universal but context-dependent. Thus, understanding politeness requires attention to both social context and speaker identity, which leads to the discussion of politeness theory.

In addition to context, sociolinguistics emphasizes the role of identity in shaping language use, including gender identity (Holmes, 2013). Speakers construct and perform their identities through linguistic choices during interaction. Gender, as a social construct, influences how individuals

communicate and how their language is interpreted by others. This perspective suggests that language reflects broader social ideologies, including those related to masculinity. Therefore, sociolinguistics provides a crucial foundation for examining how masculinity is represented through politeness strategies, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

B. Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is widely regarded as one of the most influential frameworks in the study of linguistic politeness within sociolinguistics ((Holmes, 2013). The theory is based on the concept of face, which refers to a speaker's public self-image that they want to maintain during interaction. According to this theory, communicative acts may threaten the face of the speaker or the hearer, particularly in socially sensitive situations. As a result, speakers tend to employ politeness strategies to reduce potential face threats. Therefore, politeness theory provides a systematic way to understand how language functions to maintain social harmony.

Brown and Levinson distinguish two types of face: positive face and negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Cutting, 2002). Positive face refers to an individual's desire to be liked, approved of, and appreciated by others, while negative face refers to the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Many speech acts, such as requests, commands, or criticisms, can threaten either or both types of face. Speakers must therefore carefully choose linguistic strategies to minimize these threats. This distinction highlights how

politeness is closely related to interpersonal relationships and social expectations.

To manage face-threatening acts, Brown and Levinson propose four main politeness strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Yule, 1996). Bald on record strategies are direct and efficient, often used when clarity is prioritized over face concerns. Positive politeness strategies emphasize solidarity and closeness between speakers, while negative politeness strategies show respect for the hearer's autonomy. Off-record strategies allow speakers to communicate indirectly, giving the hearer the option to interpret the message. These strategies demonstrate that politeness involves strategic linguistic choices rather than fixed expressions.

The choice of politeness strategies is influenced by several social factors, including power relations, social distance, and the degree of imposition involved in a speech act (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 2013). Speakers with higher power may use more direct strategies, while those with lower power often employ more polite or indirect forms. Social distance between participants also affects whether speakers choose solidarity-oriented or respectful strategies. These factors show that politeness is context-dependent and socially motivated. Consequently, politeness strategies reflect broader social structures and interpersonal dynamics.

Although Brown and Levinson's theory has been widely applied, it has also been discussed and adapted within different cultural and social contexts

(Watts, 2003). Critics argue that politeness is not universal and must be understood within specific social practices. However, the framework remains valuable for analyzing how speakers negotiate meaning, power, and relationships through language. In this study, the theory is used as an analytical tool to examine politeness strategies in film dialogue. This theoretical foundation enables further exploration of how politeness strategies interact with gender and masculinity in communication.

C. Language and Gender: Masculinity in Communication

Language and gender is a field of study that examines how language use is shaped by gender as a social construct rather than a biological category (Holmes, 2013). This perspective views gender as something that is performed and negotiated through everyday interaction, including linguistic choices. Speakers use language to align with or resist socially expected gender roles within particular contexts. As a result, language becomes a key resource for constructing gendered identities. Therefore, the study of language and gender provides an essential foundation for understanding how masculinity is expressed through communication.

Masculinity is understood as a socially constructed set of practices, values, and behaviors associated with men rather than a fixed or universal trait (Connell, 2005). Different forms of masculinity may emerge depending on cultural, social, and situational contexts. These variations suggest that masculinity is dynamic and negotiable rather than stable. Language plays a

crucial role in this process by allowing speakers to display authority, confidence, or emotional control. Consequently, masculinity can be examined through the ways men strategically use language in interaction.

Research on male language use indicates that men often employ linguistic features associated with assertiveness, directness, and control in certain communicative contexts (Coates, 2013; Holmes, 2013). Such features may include giving commands, asking fewer questions, or using language to assert dominance. However, these patterns are not absolute and may change depending on the speaker's role and social goals. Men may also adopt more cooperative or polite language strategies when the situation requires it. This variability highlights that male language use is context-dependent and shaped by social expectations.

In many interactions, gender is constructed through the negotiation of power and solidarity, as reflected in speakers' choices of address forms and other linguistic resources (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Language becomes a means to balance authority with social acceptance, especially in professional or institutional settings. Male speakers may strategically shift their language style to achieve specific interactional goals. This indicates that masculinity is not only about dominance but also about managing relationships. Therefore, masculinity in communication involves complex linguistic strategies rather than a single style of speech.

Within sociolinguistic studies, masculinity is increasingly examined in relation to interactional strategies such as politeness and face management

(Coates, 2013; Holmes, 2013). Men do not necessarily avoid politeness; instead, they may use it strategically to maintain authority, build cooperation, or achieve institutional goals. This perspective challenges the assumption that politeness is incompatible with masculine identity. As a result, examining masculinity alongside politeness strategies provides a more nuanced understanding of male communication, which leads to the discussion of politeness strategies and masculinity in the following section.

D. Politeness Strategies and Masculinity

Politeness strategies and masculinity are often assumed to be opposing concepts, with masculinity linked to directness and authority and politeness linked to mitigation and consideration for others, though this pattern varies across cultures (Coates, 2013; Holmes, 2013). However, sociolinguistic studies suggest that masculinity is not defined solely by dominance but also by the ability to manage social relationships effectively. Men may use politeness strategies to achieve authority, cooperation, or control without overt confrontation. This indicates that politeness can function as a strategic resource rather than a sign of weakness. Therefore, masculinity and politeness can coexist within communicative practices.

From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's theory, politeness strategies allow speakers to manage face-threatening acts while maintaining their own and others' public self-image (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Watts, 2003). Male speakers may choose different politeness strategies depending on their

interactional goals and social roles. For example, positive politeness can be used to build solidarity, while negative politeness may be employed to show respect for autonomy. These choices demonstrate that politeness strategies are flexible and context-dependent. As a result, masculinity is expressed not through a single strategy but through strategic variation in language use.

Gender-related differences in power and authority are also linked to the use of politeness strategies in interaction, as women are often found to employ more facilitative and face-attentive speech acts than men (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Holmes, 2013). Men in positions of authority may use more direct or bald on-record strategies, particularly in institutional settings. However, authority does not eliminate the need for politeness, as maintaining cooperation remains essential. Politeness strategies may therefore reinforce masculine authority by making commands or questions socially acceptable. This shows that politeness supports rather than undermines masculine power in certain contexts.

In professional and institutional discourse, politeness strategies often function as tools for achieving efficiency and control (Coates, 2013). Male speakers may employ politeness to guide interaction, manage conflict, or elicit information from others. Such strategic use of politeness aligns with goal-oriented forms of masculinity. This challenges stereotypical views of male language as purely aggressive or confrontational. Consequently, masculinity in discourse should be understood as adaptable and interactionally driven.

Within media representations, masculinity and politeness can be seen as constructed through scripted dialogue that reflects certain social expectations. Film characters often display masculinity by balancing authority with strategic politeness in interaction. This balance allows characters to appear competent, intelligent, and socially skilled. As a result, analyzing politeness strategies in male characters provides insight into how masculinity is represented in media discourse. This perspective leads to the discussion of politeness in media and film discourse in the following section.

E. Politeness in Media and Film Discourse

Media discourse, particularly film dialogue, can be seen as reflecting social interaction shaped by cultural norms and communicative expectations. Film dialogue is not a spontaneous form of communication but a carefully constructed representation of how people are expected to speak in specific social roles, one that involves the reflection and construal of social values and ideologies within the fictional narrative (Bednarek, 2010). Through scripted interactions, films portray patterns of power, identity, and relationships. Language in films therefore functions as a social representation rather than mere entertainment. As a result, film discourse provides valuable data for sociolinguistic analysis.

Politeness plays a significant role in film discourse, as characters use language strategically to manage relationships within interactions. Politeness strategies help characters negotiate conflict, express authority, or create

solidarity with other characters. The choice of polite or impolite expressions often reflects the character's social position and personality. These choices are meaningful because they influence how audiences perceive characters and their relationships. Therefore, politeness in film dialogue serves an important interpersonal function in shaping character portrayal.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, film dialogue reflects real-world communication while simultaneously shaping audience expectations about appropriate language use (Dynel, 2011). Although scripted, film dialogue draws on recognizable social conventions, including norms of politeness. This makes film an effective medium for examining how politeness strategies operate within socially meaningful contexts. Characters' language use often mirrors societal beliefs about power, gender, and authority. Consequently, analyzing politeness in film discourse allows researchers to explore how social meanings are constructed and represented.

In film and television discourse, politeness strategies often interact with face-work, characterization, and identity construction (Bednarek, 2010). Characters may use polite language to appear intelligent, authoritative, or socially skilled. In contrast, the absence of politeness may signal conflict, dominance, or moral ambiguity. These linguistic choices contribute to character development and audience interpretation. Thus, politeness functions as a key element in shaping character portrayal in film discourse.

In genres such as detective or crime fiction, politeness strategies often interact with power, investigation, and persuasion. Characters strategically

adjust their language to elicit information, assert control, or maintain cooperation during interrogations and confrontations. This suggests that politeness is not incidental but serves specific communicative goals within the narrative. Examining politeness in film discourse is therefore essential for understanding how language operates in investigative contexts, which leads to the discussion of detective fiction and investigative dialogue in the next section.

F. Detective Fiction and Investigative Dialogue

Detective fiction is a genre that centers on the investigation of crime and the pursuit of truth, often structured around a dual narrative of the crime itself and its investigation (Scaggs, 2005). Language plays a crucial role in this genre, as information is revealed, concealed, or negotiated through verbal exchanges. Characters often rely on questioning, inference, and persuasion to advance the investigation. As a result, dialogue becomes a primary narrative device rather than a secondary element. Therefore, detective fiction provides a rich context for analyzing strategic language use.

Interrogative dialogue in institutional encounters is characterized by goal-oriented communication, where the officer aims to establish facts, question the suspect's honesty, and assert control over the interaction (Culpeper, 2011). Questions, directives, and indirect speech acts are commonly used to manage the flow of information. These linguistic choices reflect the power relations between investigators and suspects. The effectiveness of an investigation often depends on how language is strategically employed. Consequently,

investigative dialogue highlights the functional role of language in institutional interaction.

Existing literature suggests that power and authority are central to institutional discourse in general, shaping how speakers are addressed and how they respond to others (Fairclough, 1995; Holmes, 2013). However, the specific role of power and authority in shaping detective discourse in film, including how detective characters speak and respond to others, remains underexplored, and is the focus of the present study. Investigators often occupy positions of institutional authority, which allows them to use more direct or controlling language. However, excessive directness may provoke resistance, requiring investigators to employ politeness strategies to maintain cooperation. This balance demonstrates that authority and politeness frequently operate together in investigative contexts. Thus, detective dialogue reflects complex negotiations between power and social interaction.

Detective characters analyzed in this study are frequently portrayed as intellectually dominant and linguistically skilled, using language to manage situations and guide interactions. Their speech often combines confidence, strategic questioning, and controlled politeness. These linguistic traits contribute to the construction of a competent and authoritative masculine identity. As a result, language becomes a key tool in shaping the character's masculinity within the narrative. This shows that masculinity in detective fiction is closely linked to communicative competence.

In contemporary detective films, investigative dialogue reflects modern social values, including expectations about professionalism, gender roles, and interpersonal conduct (Scaggs, 2005). Characters are depicted as adapting their language to different interlocutors and situations. This adaptability demonstrates that effective investigation relies on linguistic flexibility rather than rigid dominance. Therefore, detective fiction offers an ideal site for examining how politeness strategies and masculinity interact in film dialogue, which leads to the review of previous studies in the next section.

G. Previous Study

Previous studies related to politeness strategies and language use in film have primarily focused on identifying and analyzing the types of politeness strategies employed by characters in various cinematic contexts, such as in *The Social Network* and *Green Book* (Aziz & Hashim, 2025; Mustofa et al., 2024). One recent study examines politeness strategies in *Green Book*, showing how different characters use strategies such as positive and negative politeness to manage interaction (Mustofa et al., 2024). Another film analysis of *The Social Network* investigates how politeness strategies are realized in cinematic dialogue using Brown and Levinson's framework (Aziz & Hashim, 2025). These studies demonstrate that film discourse is a useful site for exploring politeness, yet they do not specifically examine how masculinity is reflected in the use of these strategies.

Research focusing on gender and politeness in film has also been conducted, with some undergraduate theses comparing male and female politeness strategies in movies. For example, a socio-pragmatic study on *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* highlights differences in strategy use between male and female characters (Muhammad & Diannurdianti, 2023). Similarly, an undergraduate thesis on *Synecdoche, New York* analyzes politeness strategies used by male and female characters in the film, revealing patterns in male directness and female sensitivity (Firmansyah, 2021). A recent study on *Kingsman: The Secret Service* also reflects on gender differences in politeness strategies, showing that male characters tend to use more direct language (Fergustyan, 2025). These gender-focused studies contribute to understanding politeness in film but still do not specifically address masculinity as a social identity constructed through politeness.

While several theses investigate politeness strategies in different films using Brown and Levinson's theory, most remain primarily descriptive, focusing on identifying and classifying the strategies without linking them to broader sociocultural themes such as gender or identity (Fridolini et al., 2021). For instance, although both studies analyze the utterances of male characters such as Friedrich, John Brooke, and Jo's father in *Little Women*, and Landon and Eric in *A Walk to Remember*, they classify these utterances solely by politeness strategy type, without examining how such strategies reflect or construct gendered performances of masculinity (Fridolini et al., 2021; Kasim & Satria, 2024). Likewise, some comparative studies on male and female

characters in *Pieces of a Woman* discuss strategy differences in relation to gender and power but stop short of analyzing how masculinity itself is constructed (Yustikarani & Pradipta, 2025). Therefore, despite a growing body of work on politeness in film and gendered language use, there is still a notable gap in studies that explicitly examine how masculinity is expressed through politeness strategies in film discourse. This gap highlights the need for the current study, which focuses on masculinity and politeness strategies in the speech of a male detective character.

H. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a sociolinguistic perspective that views language as a social practice shaped by interaction, context, and identity. Language is not merely a system of rules but a resource that speakers use to perform social roles and manage relationships. Meaning in communication emerges through the interaction between speakers and their social environment. Therefore, language use in this study is understood as context-dependent and socially meaningful. This perspective provides the foundational lens for examining spoken interaction in film dialogue.

Building on this sociolinguistic foundation, the study applies politeness theory as the primary analytical tool for examining interactional meaning. Politeness strategies are understood as purposeful linguistic choices used to manage face and maintain cooperation during communication. These strategies allow speakers to reduce potential conflict while still achieving their

communicative goals. By identifying the types of politeness strategies used in dialogue, the study systematically analyzes how interaction is structured. Thus, politeness theory offers a clear framework for categorizing and interpreting linguistic behavior.

Beyond interactional structure, this study considers masculinity as an essential dimension of language use. Masculinity is treated as a socially constructed identity that is performed and negotiated through communication rather than as a fixed personal trait. Speakers express masculinity through their linguistic choices, particularly in how they assert authority, show control, or build rapport. In this sense, politeness strategies are not separate from masculinity but form part of how masculine identity is enacted. Therefore, masculinity provides an interpretive lens for understanding why certain politeness strategies are selected in specific interactions.

To examine these interactions, film dialogue is positioned as the primary source of data within the framework. Although scripted, film dialogue represents socially recognizable patterns of communication and reflects real-world interactional norms. Characters' utterances are designed to convey power relations, identities, and social intentions through language. This makes film dialogue a suitable medium for analyzing the intersection of politeness and masculinity. Consequently, film discourse serves as the contextual space where sociolinguistics, politeness strategies, and masculinity converge.

By integrating sociolinguistics, politeness theory, and masculinity, this theoretical framework guides the analysis of the main character's utterances in

a coherent and systematic manner. Each utterance is analyzed by identifying the politeness strategy employed and interpreting its function in relation to masculine identity and interactional goals. This integrated approach ensures consistency between the research questions, data analysis, and interpretation. As a result, the framework enables a comprehensive understanding of how politeness strategies contribute to the representation of masculinity in film dialogue.