

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

As social creatures and human beings, people need a tool to conduct interactions, to communicate and engage, and the thing is called language. Language is not merely a means of conveying or directing information, but it also plays a crucial role in shaping power dynamics, emotional boundaries, and interpersonal interactions. Interpersonal interaction focuses on the subfield of pragmatics, which emphasizes how individuals use language to manage social interactions, express emotions, and maintain face (Locher & Watts, 2005, p. 10; Culper, 2011, p. 3).

Pragmatics is one of the branches of linguistics concerned with how meaning is interpreted through context, speaker intention, and social interaction. Yule (1996) explains that pragmatics focuses on how listeners interpret meaning based on what speakers imply rather than only the literal meaning of an utterance. In relation to interpersonal communication, Goffman (1967) introduced the concept of face, referring to an individual's positive social value or self-image that a person presents in social interactions. This concept was further developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) through their politeness theory, which explains that speakers use language to manage relationships, maintain their own face, and protect others' face from face-threatening acts.

Therefore, meaning in communication is not only influenced by linguistic forms but also by how speakers negotiate social relationships through language. Pragmatics has developed into an interdisciplinary field with contributions from philosophy of language, linguistics, sociology, and the study of language use in various situations. Furthermore, Leech (1983) introduced the Principles of Politeness,

which complement this perspective by emphasizing how speakers use language to maintain harmony and cooperation in social interactions.

Many things could be analyzed, especially in pragmatics analysis, and one of the interesting things to be analyzed is a novel. The most influential theories in this field are the Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). In this case, the author wants to analyze the study of politeness because the politeness strategies are connected with how people communicate with each other. This study categorizes politeness strategies into four types: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 68-70). Politeness is not purely superficial. It reflects deeper emotional and psychological dynamics, especially when the characters are placed in emotionally intense situations that are analyzed with interpersonal pragmatics and emotional resilience studies to understand relational work performed through language and emotional effect. Then, Leech (1983) proposed several principles of politeness, including the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim, which guide speakers to minimize expressions that might be considered impolite and maximize those that foster respect and consideration for others.

In general, Saussure (1916) argues that the relation between a signifier and a signified in the linguistic system is arbitrary. However, Short (1996) states that linguistic choices in literature are not arbitrary because literary language demonstrates that language choice is motivated, where writers choose forms to convey emotion, implied meaning, and interpretation. Thus, the author also uses literary pragmatics, where the complex situations through narrative texts are emphasized. They reflect psychological depth, social positioning, and thematic

function in the novel (Short, 1996; Simpson, 2004).

This research centers on the character ‘Kya Clark’ from the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018), set in the American South during the 1950s – 1960s, which presents an interesting case study to examine the intersection of language use, emotional resilience, and interpersonal engagement. The novel portrays Kya as an emotionally and physically isolated youngster who has been shunned and abandoned, and learns to survive. She makes practical decisions while engaging with others because of her limited social exposure and frequent experiences of abandonment, emotional trauma, and social isolation. Because of this, Kya’s journey provides a wealth of material for examining how language may be used as a tentative connecting tool, a psychological shield, and a sort of silent resistance. Murliati, (2013) claims that acting in a way that considers the feelings of others is the meaning of politeness. It can be significantly analyzed how politeness strategies show up in their interactions in the selected dialogues and lines.

What inspires this topic is the way Kya, despite social isolation and emotional difficulties, uses language in subtle yet powerful ways to express vulnerability, build trust, and protect herself. This research intends to explore how language functions not only as a communication tool but also as a psychological and emotional shield, reflecting the interpersonal pragmatics and emotional resilience manifested in her interactions, especially in the context of emotional trauma and social isolation. This study aims to contribute to the growing interest in pragmatics, offering insight into how fictional characters mirror real-life language behavior in socially complex and emotionally intense environments.

Moreover, the emotional appeal of *Where the Crawdads Sing* has resonated widely among readers and critics, becoming a bestseller and receiving praise for its

lyrical prose and psychological depth. The themes of isolation, trauma, resilience, and healing are many and often explored through narrative events in literature, but deeper analysis through linguistics is lacking. This makes the researcher challenged to analyze the novel through a linguistic field, particularly a pragmatic lens. Here, clearly that allows readers to understand how fictional language can reflect real-life interpersonal behavior, especially in social fields and emotionally charged environments. By examining the interpersonal and emotional dimensions of politeness in Kya's journey, this research aims to shape a broader understanding of how language is used not just to speak, but to survive.

Delia Owens' novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* tells the story of Kya Clark, a young girl who grew up alone in the marshes of North Carolina after being abandoned by her family. Her mother, Ma, left the family when Kya was still a child, while her father, Pa, grew increasingly distant and eventually disappeared. Her siblings, including Jodie, also left the marshes, leaving Kya to fend for herself. Kya later forms supportive relationships with Jumpin' and Mabel, who treat her kindly and offer help when she faces difficulties. Tate Walker becomes Kya's close friend and teaches her to read, while Chase Andrews enters her life as a romantic interest, a relationship that later leads to conflict. Through these relationships, Kya experiences neglect, support, love, and hardship, which shape her emotional resilience and personal growth.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What types of politeness are employed in Kya's interpersonal dialogues and her emotional resilience situations?
2. What are the principles of politeness in Kya's dialogues and lines of the poem that are embedded through literary pragmatics?

1.3 Objective of the Research

This study aims to identify the politeness strategies and types of maxims that are used by characters in the dialogues and lines of the poem written by Kya in the novel. Furthermore, the writer finds out the data with literary pragmatics theory, such as the politeness principles, which construct broader themes of isolation, vulnerability, and trust. By conducting this study, the author can answer the two research questions above:

1. To identify and categorize four kinds of types of politeness used by Kya in her interactions that also reflect her emotional resilience.
2. To examine Kya's diction in politeness principles reflects her emotional resilience within the framework of literary pragmatics.

1.4 Focus of the Research

This study focuses on the pragmatic elements within selected contexts involving Kya Clark in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018). In this research, the researcher focuses on identifying the types of politeness and examining the choice of words used by characters in certain situations as she navigates social interaction and emotional survival, concentrating on how powerful language is as a linguistic field used in literary work through literary pragmatics in politeness that focuses on politeness principles named six maxims of politeness.

The analysis is limited to Kya's utterance and lines of the poem in the novel that contain significant interpersonal expressions involving key relationships (e.g., with Tate, Jumpin', Mabel, Chase, and courtroom interactions) to uncover language use as a tool for managing relationships and expressing vulnerability. The study focuses on the following elements:

1. The focus is categorization of four kinds of politeness strategies that

reflect the relationship between emotional resilience and linguistic choice, especially in interpersonal language.

2. The focus on literary pragmatics theory is reflected through the principle of politeness in Kya's choice of words, with an emphasis on the six maxims of politeness.

1.5 Method of the Research

In conducting the library research, the researcher uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach with related theory in the scope of a pragmatic framework. The approach is grounded in interpersonal pragmatics (Locher & Watts, 2005; Culpeper, 2011) and emotional resilience (Rachmad, 2022) performed by using politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and the politeness principles by (Leech, 1983) that also considered by literary pragmatics theory by (Sell, 2014) that emphasizing how language take crucial role in literary field, and constructs relational work in literary language. The source is the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018), which is analyzed to identify and interpret linguistic expressions of politeness strategies as enacted by the protagonist, Kya.

The strategies are contextualized within her psychological development and social position, particularly regarding emotional resilience amidst neglect, marginalization, and trauma. This analysis focuses on dialogues and lines of the poem that reveal Kya's interactions with other characters. Thus, analyze the situations in which politeness strategies and politeness principles are employed to maintain interaction, solidarity, and emotional vulnerability.

Moreover, a contextual interpretation of language in light of interpersonal relationships, social norms, and emotional survival strategies. This analytical procedure includes careful readings of selected dialogues, identification of

politeness strategies using Brown and Levinson's taxonomy (positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on-record, off-record), and classification of politeness principles using Leech's theory focused on six politeness maxims (tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy proposed to assess what is reflection of Kya's emotional coping and construction of her social identity through literary language.

1.5.1 Data & Source of Data

Data is the linguistic material that contains the phenomena analyzed using the chosen theories. Data is a collection of proven information and is also the center of research. Silverman (2013) stated that data is any set of materials that provides evidence for language patterns, meanings, and interactional behaviors. The data for this research was collected from the dialogues and lines of the poem in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018).

The source of data refers to the origin from which the research data is collected, and researcher gather information to conduct their research. In qualitative research, it may include media transcripts, conversations, literary works, and recordings, depending on the focus of the research (Creswell, 2013, p. 45)

The source of data for this research is the choice of words of Kya's dialogues with other characters and the poems that were written by the main character along her journey in the novel, *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018)

1.5.2 Data Collection

To conduct the research, the author needs all the information from the data. The author found 212 data points containing the politeness field. From the 212 data points, 20% of them were presented in the analysis section, but all of the data were

also shown and categorized in the results and findings section.

In the process of collecting the data, the researcher needs to re-read, then collect the selected dialogues and lines of the poem from the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia, which involve significant interpersonal pragmatics and emotional resilience that occur in this research. And so, the source of the data is an essential element in the lines that contain markers of the study of politeness. In every step of collecting the data, use methods and theoretical frameworks to code and categorize the data.

The reason this data selection will be collected is based on the consideration that the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* contains rich pragmatic interactions between characters, especially those related to the pragmatics framework, such as the study of politeness in interpersonal relationships and emotional management. The conversations in this novel reflect social dynamics, emotional tension, and character adaptation in the face of threatening actions. By analyzing data that meets the above criteria, researchers can reveal how politeness strategies contribute to the formation of character emotional resilience and pragmatics in the literary field, while providing relevant empirical evidence to answer research questions.

1.5.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be defined as a process of systematically searching and organizing data to uncover patterns, themes, and relationships (Creswell, 2013). The data analysis in this study involves the systematic identification, categorization, and interpretation of linguistic features, particularly interpersonal pragmatics and emotional resilience, within the politeness field evident in Kya's dialogues and lines in *Where the Crawdads Sing*.

To analyze each of the dialogues and lines of the poem, the first section

showed the politeness strategy grounded in the grounded theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987), which focuses on the categorization of politeness strategies, where following Brown and Levinson's taxonomy: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on- record, and off- record. In the second section, all of the data analyzed using Leech's politeness principle focuses on six politeness maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Thus, all of the data is treated equally.

Moreover, while politeness strategies and politeness maxims are analyzed in both dialogues and poems, Literary Pragmatics is employed only in the analysis of Kya's poems. This additional framework is used to uncover implied meanings and emotional representations embedded in the literary texts.

To be clearer, all the data collected considers contextual factors such as interpersonal relations, emotional resilience, and social distance that influence Kya's linguistic choices, which contribute to broader narrative themes such as emotion, isolation, trust, and survival that are considered by literary pragmatics theory, where the dialogue and lines performed in the literary field analyzed through a linguistic lens.

In addition to identifying, classifying politeness strategies, and categorizing the politeness principles, this analytical approach ensures that the study also examines their deeper interpersonal and psychological roles within the literary context.

1.5.4 Presenting the Result of Analysis

The results of the analysis are presented in a descriptive interpretation and a structured categorization theory of politeness, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987), which examines the politeness principles based on Leech (1983) of Kya's

diction from dialogues and the poems that contain the politeness field through the lens of literary pragmatics (Sell, 1991).

This study is divided into two main sections. The first one is an analysis of the data collected from Kya's utterances in dialogue with other characters. Thus, the second section is the analysis of the data collected from Kya's lines of the poem written in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*.

Foremost, all the data in this research were analyzed by the politeness field, which includes politeness strategies to answer the first research question and politeness principles to answer the second research question. In this analysis, there are Kya's utterances and lines of the poem from the novel that are analyzed to determine the use of four categories of politeness strategies and classification of six maxims of politeness principles. The data of the examples discussed in a narrative context highlight how the linguistic choices reflect emotional tension or attempts at interpersonal connection, which communicate with broader themes such as isolation, trust, and vulnerability.

To enhance and support the understanding and make this research clear, a table of categorization was constructed to display key components of each analysis. The table includes:

- a. The discussion from dialogue and lines of the poem from the novel,
- b. The types of politeness strategy applied,
- c. Politeness principles
- d. Emotional resilience situation

From this table, it is evident that Kya's linguistic choices and study of politeness are shown clearly. Her politeness aspect depends on her interpersonal relationship with the interlocutor and her emotional state. It also becomes clear that

Kya's diction allows the literary language to reflect linguistic features from Kya's language choice.

In addition, the two tables display the frequency and percentage of each of the politeness strategies and politeness principles. Here is the formula for calculating the percentages found in the dialogue and lines of the poem from the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*.

$$Result = \frac{\text{Number of discussion}}{\text{All data}} \times 100\%$$

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

A few essential terms are used throughout this research to guide the analysis:

- Interpersonal Pragmatics:** The subfield of pragmatics that focuses on how language is used in social interaction and how human relationships are accomplished and perform relational work in interactions, including the management of politeness, identity, and emotional expression (Locher & Watts, 2005).
- Emotional Resilience:** The ability to recover from emotional struggles, which is reflected in language and behavior. Emotional resilience refers to an individual's capacity to adapt and maintain psychological stability in the face of emotional challenges (American Psychological Association, 2020).
- Literary Pragmatics:** The application of pragmatic theories to literary texts, focusing on how language use in fiction influences the character's intentions (Sell, R. D., 2014).
- Contextual Meaning:** This term describes how an utterance's meaning is contingent upon the particular context in which it is used, particularly the social context between the speaker and the listener. In pragmatics, meaning is always interpreted within a context (Levinson, S. C, 1983).