

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of The Research

As an important tool for socializing, language serves more than just facilitating communication. In communicating, speakers use language, either consciously or unconsciously, to express and illustrate their identity, their role in society, and their cultural norms. Like two sides of a coin, language cannot be separated from society (Sasqia Mei Liana et al., 2025). It is not just a way of sharing information, but also serves as a means for proper information flow, and can be distinguished according to formal and informal circumstances (Pangaribuan & Marpaung, 2024). This reflects a deeper relationship between language and social interaction occurring in different contexts and environments, and that communication does not depend solely on the lexical and grammatical elements of a language. In many social contexts, the language a person uses often indicates their status and position in a particular social setting. A study by Heller and Duchêne shows that language is a symbol of power and prestige (Efendi & Syarif Hidayat, 2024). Thus, using a language that

is mastered or spoken fluently is a symbol of status for a group or individual in the process of social interaction (Desky et al., 2017, as cited in (Alwi & Irwandi, 2022)). Therefore, it is important to examine how a person's use of language in an interaction can shape their status and position.

Based on this, it is clear that how language works and is applied in an interaction is usually influenced by the speaker's status. Status itself serves to describe a person's position or standing in a particular community or social group and is usually flexible and depends on how other people perceive someone. Numerous characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, wealth, and education, can influence a person's social status. This is because status can manifest itself in different ways, depending on the context and environment. In many cases, a person's status can also influence the formality, tone, and style of their speech in a dialogue exchange. When people recognize and understand their position in a social setting, they will adjust the style of language and tone they use to fulfill and carry out their position in that environment (Yousaf et al., 2023). The connection between language and status is usually evident in professional or official contexts, where a person's position and status play a major role in ensuring that communication and

interaction run smoothly and seamlessly. For instance, someone may hold a high position at their workplace due to their assigned role and advanced knowledge in a particular field, and often use more formal and structured language when speaking. However, in other situations with different environments, they may hold a different position and speak more casually and spontaneously, such as within their family or among friends. The shift in language style in different social contexts has an impact on how a person is perceived and the social relationships they engage in. This phenomenon shows that a person's ability to adjust their language style allows speakers to negotiate and maintain their social identity in different environments.

As seen previously, one key indicator of how status and social setting influence how a person communicates and is perceived is through their choice of words and style of language. In sociolinguistics, this study is called language style, or the various variations in speech style that result from the social factors of the speaker. Language styles enable people to communicate more effectively with others and provide various ways for the message to be conveyed to others based on the requirements and norms of the circumstances (Simamora & Sherina, 2022). By observing the word choices made by certain individuals when speaking in the context or

under a particular circumstance, one can determine the language style, which is a very essential element of human interaction (Para Pean Silta et al., 2023). In this study, Martin Joos provides a framework and foundation for understanding the styles of language used and heard in everyday life. Based on his theory, Martin Joos states that there are five styles of language used, namely frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. Each of these styles of language has its own purpose when used and is suitable for each context of communication that occurs.

To understand language style more deeply, Holmes (2013) provides an appropriate framework and tool called the social factor and social dimension. Social factors are the basic elements of an interaction, which include the participants, setting, topic, and function. These elements are what cause a person to speak in a certain style and make language flexible and context-dependent, depending on who they are talking to, the topic being discussed, the background of the conversation, or the purpose of the conversation. In addition, our interactions with the people around us can easily illustrate the prominent social dimension between the speaker and the other party. Coupland (2002:189, as cited in (Devitania et al., 2024) refers to social dimension as characteristics that are reflective of social (often status-

related) differentiation within groups. It is useful to understand the four aspects of the social dimension, which include the social distance scale, status scale, formality scale, and two functional scales.

Considering how social factors can influence the style of language used, it can be assumed that these social factors and dimensions also influence the politeness used. Politeness itself redirects the focus from only examining language forms to comprehending how those forms relate to more complex interpretations and meanings (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Simply put, politeness is not just about using appropriate and polite language, such as saying “*please*” or expressing appreciation with “*thank you.*” Politeness here also refers to choosing the suitable language and communication strategy for the interaction at hand, such as how well we know someone and the relationship between the speaker and the listener. All around, whether at home, school, or the workplace, there are unwritten norms that differ by nation; for this reason, in addition to language, we also utilize politeness (Asih Arisena & Idawati, 2021). According to Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, everyone has a “*face*,” which refers to their pride, self-esteem, and how they want to be perceived by others, and there are two types of “*face*”, namely positive face and negative face. Naturally, when speaking, we tend to

choose strategies that protect our face in front of others and, in a sense, also protect their face. When someone is aware of their own face and that of those around them, this can help them avoid unnecessary conflict and maintain, even strengthen, their relationships and social dimensions with others. Conversely, there are situations and occasions when face respect is disregarded, such as when there is an urgent issue, when both parties are dealing with particular issues, etc (Fitri, 2022).

In line with this, differences in language style and how it reflects their status can be seen in the interactions that occur in the film *Hidden Figures*, which illustrates the true story of three African-American women who worked as mathematicians and engineers at NASA in the 1960s, at a time when discrimination was still clearly visible in the United States, where facilities and services such as housing, health care, education, employment, and even transportation were often separated based on race. Such treatment was not only carried out through actions, but also implied through the choice of words and language style they used. There are several factors that indicate differences in language use between the characters in this film. First, the field of work they chose was one that no woman ever dreamed of making a career out of at the time, as it was a male-dominated field (Purasih, 2023), given that in those days, women were still often

belittled, underestimated, and indoctrinated to become housewives only. Second, at that time, the separation and unequal treatment of people of color were still very apparent and even widely accepted, given the number of facilities and communities that supported such actions. While not blatant, there were also differences in the use of language between white and black people. In addition, apart from having different social statuses, white people often held higher positions in the office and official circles than black people, who held lower positions and were often not recognized. In addition, because this movie is based on a true story, the use of language in the movie is clear, realistic, and authentic.

Thus, this study will focus on the analysis of the language style used by the characters in the movie *Hidden Figures* and how the language style, social factor, and politeness will reflect their social status. Although there are many social factors and social dimensions that can play a role in a conversation in this movie, because the researcher aims to prove that a person's status can influence the language style they choose, the researcher will focus on conversations that have dominant social factor participants. The reason for this is that a person's status can be clearly seen through who their conversation partners are, who is involved, and how they position

themselves in front of the other party, and what their relationship is. This is then connected to the social dimension that emerges from the social factor of the participant, namely the status scale and social distance scale, which can more clearly describe the relationship between speakers and listeners and whether the language style used is based on differences in status or the closeness of their relationship.

### **1.2. Limitations of The Problem**

The researcher will focus on the dialogue between characters, accompanied by subtitles provided by the film *Hidden Figures*. In this study, the researcher will only focus on the language style influenced by the social factors of the participants to see the differences in status, social distance, and power relations. Other social factors, such as topic, setting, and function, will not be the main focus of the researcher.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

1. What types of language style influenced by the participant factor are applied by the characters in the movie *Hidden Figures*?
2. How is the social dimension in the movie *Hidden Figures* portrayed in the language style found in the data?

3. What forms of politeness appear in the movie *Hidden Figures* that emerge from language styles influenced by participant social factors?

#### 1.4. Objective of The Research

1. To identify the types of language styles influenced by the participant factors applied by the characters in the movie *Hidden Figures*.
2. To analyze how social dimensions in the movie *Hidden Figures* are portrayed through the language styles found in the data.
3. To examine the forms of politeness that appear in the movie *Hidden Figures* that emerge from language styles influenced by the participant social factors.

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