CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the general explanation of the research. It outlines the research background, problem statement, objectives, significance, conceptual framework, and definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Problem

Language is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, enabling the conveyance of thoughts, emotions, and intentions. Beyond being a mere collection of symbols, it functions as a dynamic instrument for social connection and cultural expression. The utilization of language mirrors individual identities and the societal norms prevalent within a community. As Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) articulate, language and culture are interrelated and they go hand in hand. This perspective underscores the intricate relationship between linguistic practices and social structures, highlighting how language both influences and is influenced by cultural contexts. The primary purpose of language is to enable communication. As noted by Jones (2019), language acts as a medium through which individuals can convey intricate ideas, interpret meanings, and build social connections. It serves as a conduit for passing down knowledge, values, and cultural heritage from one generation to the next, thereby preserving societal frameworks. In addition, language is essential in defining both individual and collective identities. Bell (2018) explains that language transcends its role as a tool for interaction; it signifies social identity by representing the shared values and experiences within a community. This dual role of communication and identity demonstrates the importance of language as both a personal and societal resource. Language is an essential part of human life, serving as a tool for communication, a keeper of culture, and a way to express identity. Its adaptable nature enables it to grow and change alongside the communities that use it, highlighting its significance for both individuals and society.

In social life, language has a very effective role, because it can build good relationships with other humans.(Kuiper & Allan, 2017). However, to achieve this

goal, some things need to be aware of, when communicating, we need to be a good speaker in uttering something, and keep our words politely. This method is important because we don't know if what we say might offend or even hurt the person we are talking to. So by studying and using politeness, we could avoid misunderstanding, get aware of other's feeling and finally be able to establish good relationships with the people (Wahdani, 2023).

Human being exists in society they naturally have a face. Face is a term in linguistic that describes a self-image. What Brown & Levinson (1987) said that face can be divided into two types. The first is positive face which means that people want to be recognized, respected, valued, event is given praise. The second is negative face which means that people want a desire being free without any interruption, interference so that they can do whatever they want. Therefore, some speech may hurt someone's face. Thus, to prevent or reduce these threats, we should use the politeness strategy.

The politeness strategies aim to maintain respect and avoid misunderstanding of the hearer (Daulay et al., 2022). Meanwhile as explained by Holmes (2013), politeness serves as a method of managing others' emotions and promoting a sense of ease in communication. In addition (Culpeper, 2009), politeness is also considered as the way to create a harmonious communication. All of this definitions support what Brown and Levinson (1987) said about the existence of the face. People can aware of people's face by using politeness strategies.

In this case, politeness is not only find in direct conversations in everyday life, but we can also capture this phenomenon from various literature or other discourse media, such as in books, novels, short stories or drama scripts. The principle of politeness is commonly used in communication. Therefore, politeness can also be portrayed through a film. Barker (2004) states that film is one of the most widely enjoyed forms of media in society. Furthermore, Monaco (2009) argues that films serve as a platform for delivering messages through various elements such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, which shape the audience's perspective. According to Searle (1976), films often feature numerous dialogues that involve speech acts between characters, groups,

and communities. Moreover, Long, (2023) said that the messages through dialogues that occur in a film, the characters will give an idea of how language is displayed against a certain social cultural background. What points are given above show that in the film contains a communication that using language which means politeness can be found in the film itself.

After the description above, the author intends to analyze politeness strategies through a film entitled *The Last Airbender 2024 TV Series*. The film has seen impressive viewership, accumulating 154.4 million hours watched in its first week, with a total of 298.6 million hours after two weeks. This strong performance underscores its global appeal, topping the rankings in 76 out of 92 tracked regions. The Last Airbender is a cinematic work that not only presents an epic adventure but also portrays intricate social interactions through the dialogue between characters. A key aspect of these interactions is the application of politeness strategies by the characters to express their intentions while preserving their social connections.

In The Last Airbender 2024, Aang embarks on a transformative journey as the Avatar, the sole individual capable of mastering all four elemental bending arts—air, water, earth, and fire. Tasked with the monumental responsibility of restoring balance to a war-torn world, Aang's story unfolds as a quest for harmony and reconciliation. Throughout his journey, Aang exemplifies positive politeness strategies, particularly in his interactions with characters across diverse cultures. His approach is driven by a vision to unite the four nations and foster mutual understanding. Rather than imposing his authority as the Avatar, Aang prioritizes building trust and fostering camaraderie. For instance, he consistently acknowledges the strengths and contributions of his companions, like Katara's determination, Sokka's ingenuity, and Toph's resilience, which reinforces their collective efforts and deepens their interpersonal bonds.

Aang's character is marked by his unwavering optimism and respect for individual dignity, even when confronting adversaries. In his encounters with Fire Lord Zuko, Aang seeks to understand Zuko's motivations and extends empathy, reframing their dynamic from confrontation to eventual friendship. This transformation highlights

Aang's use of positive politeness strategies, such as offering understanding and emphasizing common ground, to navigate complex relationships.

The narrative also reflects sociological factors influencing Aang's use of positive politeness. His upbringing as a monk in the Air Nomad culture instills a profound respect for harmony and compassion. Additionally, his youthful nature allows him to connect with others through humor, compliments, and shared goals, making his interactions both relatable and impactful. By the series' conclusion, Aang's journey demonstrates the power of positive politeness in achieving unity and healing. His commitment to addressing both the immediate and long-term needs of the world reinforces his role not just as a mediator of elements but as a unifier of hearts and minds.

In the field of sociolinguistics, politeness strategies are fundamental in managing social exchanges and maintaining positive relationships between individuals. Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish between two types of politeness strategies: positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness strategies are designed to protect and enhance the listener's positive face, which involves their desire to be respected, liked, and valued. These strategies can include actions like complimenting, showing interest in others' well-being, and establishing common ground. In the animated series The Last Airbender, the protagonist, Aang, utilizes positive politeness strategies to promote collaboration and strengthen bonds with other characters. His communication is a key aspect of his journey to bring peace to the four nations, emphasizing how language plays a vital role in building relationships within a narrative.

The application of positive politeness strategies is influenced not only by the speaker's objectives but also by specific sociolinguistic factors. Brown and Levinson (1987) identify two significant elements that shape the choice of politeness strategies: "The Payoffs: A Priori Considerations" and "The Circumstances: Sociological Variables." The first, payoffs, refers to the anticipated benefits that a speaker expects from using a particular politeness strategy. For Aang, applying positive politeness is a strategic decision aimed at nurturing trust and encouraging cooperation, especially with

individuals from opposing nations. Aang's broader mission to unite the nations and bring an end to the war provides strong motivation for using positive politeness, as it reduces the risk of conflicts and facilitates productive communication. The payoffs, in this case, include both immediate and long-term rewards, such as fostering unity and securing alliances.

The second factor, circumstances or sociological variables, pertains to the social dynamics that impact the choice of politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that variables such as social distance, relative power, and the level of imposition influence the selection of politeness strategies. In The Last Airbender, these factors significantly shape Aang's interactions with other characters. For instance, when interacting with close companions like Katara and Sokka, Aang's positive politeness reflects their strong friendship and shared experiences, leading to a minimal social distance. However, his interactions with figures like Fire Lord Ozai involve a greater power imbalance, requiring more careful application of politeness to prevent escalation and preserve peace. Thus, Aang's use of positive politeness strategies is adaptive, depending on the potential rewards of cooperation and the specific social dynamics at play in each situation.

By investigating Aang's use of positive politeness strategies in relation to these two factors, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how communication shapes character interactions and aids in conflict resolution. Analyzing these factors provides valuable insights into the role of language in narrative development and character evolution.

Politeness strategy is very extensive and complex to study and analyse, therefore several authors have done it, that is related to politeness strategy especially film media, they are: The first research is "Politeness Strategies Analysis Reflected in Little Women Movie by Greta Gerwig" conducted by Fridolini, et. al. (2021). The aim of this research is to identify politeness strategies and the most frequently used strategies in the film Little Women. Based on the theory of Brown and Levinson (1978), there are four types of politeness strategies, they are bald on record, positive politeness, negative

politeness, and off record. The result of the research shown that all the characters perform all the politeness strategies from Brown and Levinson (1987) and the most frequent strategy that is used by the characters is positive politeness (Arisena & Idawati, 2021).

The second research was conducted by Mujiono and Ula (2020). It was about the Socio pragmatics Analysis of the Politeness Strategy of the Main Character's Dialogues of Tinker Bell in Secret of the Wings Movie. The study analyzed the types and functions of politeness strategy used by the main character of Thinker Bell by using a qualitative descriptive approach. To get the data, the writer performed four interactional procedures. The findings showed that there are 39 data found in the conversation. Each politeness strategy's frequency is positive politeness in the first grade, with 51.3%, followed by a bald-on record with 33.3%. Negative politeness and 'off record' are the same positions with 7.7 %, %. Second, the authors reported two politeness strategy functions indicated by the transactional view with 74.4 % and the interactional view with 25.6%, then the reason main characters applied the politeness strategy was to get close relationships, know each other, and avoid the addressee's imposition (Mujiono & Ula, 2020).

The next research was conducted by Ernovilinda (2020) about "Politeness Strategies in Shanghai Knights Film" this research took a film of Shanghai Knights. The author focused to analyze the politeness strategy was performed by two main characters of the film. The two characters in the film use bald on record more often, and use off record less often, this is due to the influence of cultural background (Ernovilinda, 2020).

The last research is from "An Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Movie: Flipped" this is the research conducted by Fadhila and Sari (2022). They analized the politeness strategy in the film media titled "Flipped" this film tells us about romantic comedy. The authors identified four types of politeness strategies (Bald-On Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off-Record) in the movie Flipped and also explored social factors like as social distance and power in influencing the use of these strategies (Fadhillah & Sari, 2022).

Building on insights from these previous studies, this research is inspired to explore the application of positive politeness strategies in a similar vein. However, it distinguishes itself by narrowing its focus to a specific context: analyzing how these strategies are employed by Aang, the protagonist of *The Last Airbender 2024 TV Series*. Unlike prior works that often investigate a broad range of characters or narratives, this study zeroes in on Aang's interactions within episodes 1 to 5 of the series, offering a detailed examination of his communication approach.

This research further emphasizes the interplay between politeness strategies and narrative dynamics, delving into how Aang's use of positive politeness reflects his role as a unifier and mediator across diverse cultures and nations. By considering theoretical dimensions such as The Payoffs: A Priori Considerations and The Circumstances: Sociological Variables, the study uniquely integrates sociological analysis to uncover deeper motivations and influences shaping Aang's behavior.

Through this focused lens, the study aims to provide fresh perspectives on the strategic use of politeness in fictional narratives, enriching the understanding of character development and cross-cultural communication themes. The scope of this research is limited to the character Aang and his interactions within the first five episodes of the series. This limitation ensures a focused and detailed analysis of the selected dialogues and their contextual relevance to the research objectives.

It is important to note that this research does not aim to provide an exhaustive analysis of all dialogues or interactions within the series. Instead, it selectively examines key moments that illustrate Aang's application of politeness strategies and the factors shaping them. The findings are based on qualitative analysis and are interpreted within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory.

While the analysis seeks to provide original insights, it is influenced by the subjective nature of textual interpretation and the narrative context of the series. Thus, the conclusions drawn from this study may be shaped by the author's perspective and the specific scope of analysis.

This research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on politeness strategies by offering a nuanced examination of their role within a fictional narrative, with implications for understanding communication strategies in both fictional and real-world contexts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background above, the statement of problem will be formulated as follows:

1. How does Aang's use of positive politeness reflect his goal of uniting people and maintaining harmony in *The Last Airbender (2024) TV Series?*

2. What factors influence Aang's choice of positive politeness strategies in *The Last Airbender 2024 TV Series*?

1.3 Research Objective

According to a quest of problems above, this research has two goals to be attained by the author as follows:

1. To analyze Aang's use of positive politeness strategies in *The Last Airbender (2024) TV Series* and explore how these strategies facilitate unity and harmony among different characters.

2. To identify and examine the factors influencing Aang's choice of positive politeness strategies with a focus on The Payoffs: A Priori Considerations and The Circumstances: Sociological Variables.

1.4 Research Significance

Through this research, the significance of this research is anticipated to be beneficial both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research is able to provide a benefit for people, especially in the academic field. This research can help the students and teacher enhance their knowledge concerning literary research in the sociolinguistic field. It can be a source for further research. Apart from that, this research can help the linguistic field to enhance the understanding about the theory politeness strategy of Brown and Levinson (1987) in visual media. Following this,

Practically, we learn and understand well how the politeness strategy is, we know how to distinguish among four types and all factors influenced. Practically, all people, especially in context education: particularly in the relationship between teachers and students. The use of effective politeness strategies can create a more positive and harmonious atmosphere in the classroom, thus improving the relationship between teachers and students. With respectful communication, students feel valued, which increases their motivation and engagement in learning.

In addition, politeness strategies help teachers manage conflict in a more effective way. Using softer, less direct language can reduce tension and help resolve disturbances between students without dampening the atmosphere. It also plays a role in supporting cooperative learning, where students feel safer to share opinions or ask for clarification. Furthermore, the application of politeness strategies also supports the development of students' social skills. By modeling polite and respectful speech, teachers provide students with communication models that they can apply in everyday interactions, thereby developing their emotional intelligence and social skills. Overall, politeness strategies are not only important in linguistic theory, but also in creating a more effective learning environment, supporting learning, and enhancing respectful social relationships between teachers and students.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are provided to help readers understand the terms used in this study.

1. **Navigating Interpersonal Relationships**

This term refers to the process of managing and maintaining interactions and connections between individuals. The word "*navigating*" implies an active effort to understand, adapt, and respond to various social dynamics and challenges that arise during interpersonal interactions. It involves applying strategies to foster understanding, resolve conflicts, and build meaningful and respectful relationships. In the context of this research, "*navigating interpersonal relationships*" specifically highlights the actions and communication styles used by the main character, Aang, in

The Last Airbender 2024 TV Series. Through his use of positive politeness strategies, Aang demonstrates his ability to manage relationships effectively, bridging differences and promoting harmony among diverse groups.

   2. **Pragmatics**

   Yule (1996:3) defines pragmatics as the study of speaker meaning. It focuses on analyzing the meaning conveyed by the speaker (or writer) and interpreted by the listener (or reader) to uncover the speaker's intended message, rather than merely examining the words or phrases in the utterance.

   3. **Politeness**

   Cruse (2006:131) describes politeness as an effort to minimize the negative impact of one's words on others' feelings while enhancing positive effects. This concept is further categorized into "negative politeness" and "positive politeness." rown and Levinson (1987) explain that politeness strategies aim to prevent discomfort for the listener during communication.

   4. **Politeness Strategies**

   Brown and Levinson (1987) define politeness strategies as techniques used in social interactions to preserve a positive self-image or "*face*" for both the speaker and the listener.

   5. **Positive politeness Strategies**

   According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness strategies aim to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) by safeguarding the listener's positive face and maintaining mutual respect

   6. **Film**

   Films serve as a powerful medium for storytelling, combining visual artistry and narrative elements to communicate ideas, emotions, and cultural values. Bordwell and Thompson (2010:2) describe film as an audiovisual medium that integrates visuals, sound, and narrative structure to create meaningful experiences for its viewers.

   Each film belongs to a specific genre, characterized by unique conventions and styles that influence how its story is presented and understood. In the context of this

study, films provide a structured setting for analyzing social interactions, offering a platform to examine communication strategies like positive politeness within character dynamics.

Furthermore, as a cultural artifact, films often mirror the social norms and values of the society in which they are created (Monaco, 2000). Analyzing character interactions and dialogues in films can thus reveal deeper insights into the societal and cultural frameworks they represent.

7. *The Last Airbender 2024 TV Series*

This refers to the live-action adaptation of Avatar: The Last Airbender, a critically acclaimed animated series originally aired on Nickelodeon. The 2024 TV series recreates the original story with a modern approach, featuring updated visual effects and live-action performances while retaining the core narrative of Aang, a young Avatar destined to bring balance to the world by uniting the four elements: water, earth, fire, and air. This version focuses on the characters' interpersonal relationships and the challenges they face in a world divided by elemental conflicts. The research examines Aang's use of positive politeness strategies within this adaptation, particularly in the first five episodes.