

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter covers the outline of this research which includes the background of the research, the statement of problems, the research objectives, the research significance, and the definition of key terms used in this research.

#### **1.1 Background of Research**

Social media has become a significant platform for public discourse, particularly in the context of entertainment and pop culture. It is also considered a medium of communication that facilitates users to share information and receive quick feedback. According to (Kent, 2013), social media is the expression of two ways, such as interacting and giving feedback, which allows any form of interactive communication. There are so many kinds of social media platforms which popular these days, including TikTok. TikTok offers easy usability, engaging content, and direct interaction, making it one of the most popular platforms among people, mainly teenagers (Firdaus et al., 2023). This platform is used by people to share short-form videos. TikTok provides a comment section as a feature where users or people can give feedback or commentary on video posts that have been uploaded. The comments given by people or netizens (internet citizens) are usually varied and can be positive or negative feedback.

The freedom of speech without limits on social media allows users to use language freely, including criticizing or judging people, impolite, and hate speech (Bustan & Alakrash, 2020). TikTok, in particular, offers the opportunity to freely express their opinions, whether it is praise, support, or criticism toward public figures and performances. One of such performance that become discussion on social media and received various public reaction was the performance of the K-pop girl group Le Sserafim at Coachella, a biggest festival music in Western.

The fans of Le Sserafim admired the group's effort and stage presence, but some critics pointed out by netizen such as the aspect of vocal quality, live performance skills, and stage preparedness. The reaction from netizen was

particularly visible in the TikTok comment sections, which offer a real-time and unfiltered view of netizen's reaction. Criticism on social media is an element that cannot be avoided because, as users often turn to these platforms to share their opinions and comment on current trending topics." (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

Criticism is an element of an expressive illocutionary act, where the speaker conveys their psychological attitude towards a situation as a form of evaluation, which has a convivial function, for example, congratulating, praising, deploring, etc (Searle, 1969). Criticism is a face-threatening behavior that can preserve goodwill among people, save face, and accomplish communicative goals (Peng, 2020). According to Brown & Levinson (1987), criticism is known as a speech act that is prone to embarrassment. This is understandable since criticism is usually expressed by expressing disapproval or poor judgment regarding the actions of the person being criticized (Santoso et al., 2024). According to Nguyen (2005), there are types of criticism: direct and indirect. Direct criticism includes negative evaluation, rejection, disagreement, problems, difficulties, and consequences. Meanwhile, indirect criticism includes correction, indicating standards, demand for change, request for change, advice about change, suggestion for change, expression of uncertainty, and assessing or presupposing.

Criticism aims to expose someone's flaws or mistakes so that they are able to recognize their mistakes, correct them, and grow from them (Septiana & Haristiani, 2021). The criticism given by netizens often has a negative effect, especially an emotional one, such as feeling hurt or frustrated, on the person being criticized because the criticism conveyed is sometimes impolite or excessive. Someone like a public figure or celebrity often receives both positive and negative criticism from netizens because of their words, actions, or behavior. They usually criticize to show rejection or disagreement, provide unsupportive arguments, give feedback for improvement, or utter hate speech. On the other hand, criticism is also conveyed in polite and neutral language so that it aims to be a positive solution (Agustina et al., 2023).

Criticism is considered a sensitive act since it has a high potential to threaten others' faces and may become personal harassment of others. By using the proper

way and reducing the face-threat of criticizing it is important to employ a politeness strategy in order that the person who gets criticized can accept the criticism. Politeness theory was developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in the 1970s, are linguistic tools used to mitigate face-threatening acts, such as criticism, rejection or disagreement. In online interactions, where tone and intention can be easily misinterpreted, there strategies become crucial in shaping how criticism is delivered and perceived. The concept of politeness is divided into four types. It is bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald off-record.

Discussion about criticism and politeness becomes an interesting topic to be studied. Several studies can be fundamental references, one of which is conducted by Fachrurroji & Aryanto (2023) article entitled *Realization of Politeness to Criticize in Movie Review: One Piece Movie Red*. This research focuses on finding out the realization of politeness of criticism speech in film review sites using Brown and Levinson's politeness realization strategy. The research used a qualitative descriptive method. The data were taken from eiga.com movie review sites. There were 20 pieces of data found on the site. The research concluded that the most use of politeness strategies in this research is Bald on record because in online areas, anonymity guarantees people more easily voice criticism.

The second research was conducted by Haristiani et al. (2023) article entitled *The Politeness of Criticism Speech Acts in Japanese and Minangkabau Films*. This research compared the criticism and the use of politeness in the Japanese and Minangkabau languages in film series. They collected the data from eleven Japanese films and eight Minangkabau films. This research used a qualitative descriptive method. They used Nguyen's (2005) criticism speech act strategy and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. In their research, they found that the Japanese usually used the indirect criticism strategy and off-record strategy, while in Minangkabau they used the direct criticism strategy and bald on record strategy as reflecting their communication culture.

The third research was conducted by Septiana & Haristiani (2021a) article entitled *The Use of Politeness Strategy in Criticizing Speech Acts in Japanese*. This research examined how the Japanese criticism strategies and speech acts are

represented in the media, especially in movies. This research used a qualitative approach involving a note-taking method to analyze the dialogue containing criticism in *Boruto: Naruto Next Generation*. They used Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and Nguyen's criticism of speech acts theory. The data was collected by recording. The researcher found 113 data used by the characters. The most used data is the direct criticism sub-strategy 'negative evaluation' and indirect criticism, which is the sub-strategy 'correction. This research found that all politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson are used to analyze the criticism.

The fourth research was conducted by Santoso et al. (2024) article entitled *Politeness Strategies for Criticising in The Japanese Workplace: A Pragmatic Study*. This research examines politeness strategies in delivering criticism in Japanese workplaces using Nguyen's (2005) criticism strategy theory. This research focuses on the use of criticism by Japanese workers in the workplace, then aligns the criticism theory with politeness as a cultural context in pragmalinguistics or sociopragmatic aspects, proposed by Mizuutani (1991). This research used the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) method and involved 25 students from the Japanese Literature Program at Ngudi Waluyo University who work in Japan. The research concludes that direct criticism is rarely used in Japanese workplaces, conversely, indirect criticism is commonly used.

The fifth research was conducted by Manurung (2020) article entitled *Criticism Strategy by Mahfud MD in Indonesia Lawyers Club*. This research examined the criticism strategy used by Mahmud MD in delivering his criticism. This research used a descriptive qualitative analysis. The researcher used Nguyen's theory about criticism strategy, which includes direct criticism and indirect criticism.

The sixth research was conducted by Rahmadani & Agustina (2020) article entitled *The Criticizing Strategies by the National Campaign Team (TKN) and the National Winning Agency (BPN) in the 2019 Presidential Election Debate*. This research examined the types of criticism strategies used by TKN and BPN and explained the meaning behind the utterances. This research used a qualitative approach involving a note-taking method to analyze the dialogue in the video on YouTube. The researcher found 182 data, there were 107 data for direct criticism,

64 data for indirect criticism, and 11 data for mixed criticism. The often-used strategy is the direct strategy, with sub-strategies negative evaluation, statement of the problem, and rejection.

In this research, the writer investigates how criticism is formulated in online space which influenced by the growing of K-pop and the global attention it receives. Therefore, this research aims to identify the types of criticism and analyze the criticism through politeness strategies employed in the TikTok comment section regarding Le Sserafim's performance, with the goal of understanding how language functions in shaping public discussion in online entertainment communities. The writer uses Nguyen's (2005) criticism strategy theory to find out the type of criticism strategy used by netizens and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategy theory to analyze how netizens expressed their criticism while trying to remain polite. This research takes place on the social media platform TikTok, which is one of the most widely used social media platforms by all age groups and is very easily accessible. Because there hasn't been any research on this topic on TikTok, the writer decided to conduct this study in the hopes of providing new insight to future research about online communication, the fan culture in delivering opinion in free spaces, and the correlation of criticism and politeness strategies.

## **1.2 Statement of Problems**

From the background of the research above, the writer concludes that three questions will be the main focus of this research, they are:

1. What type of criticism strategies are expressed in TikTok's comments on Le Sserafim's video performance at Coachella?
2. How is criticism expressed through politeness strategies on Le Sserafim's video performance at Coachella in the TikTok comments?

## **1.3 Research Purposes**

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the writer intended:

1. To identify the types of criticism contained in Le Sserafim's video performance at Coachella on TikTok comments.

2. To analyze how criticism is expressed through politeness strategies as used by netizens to criticize Le Sserafim's video performance at Coachella on TikTok comments.

#### **1.4 Research Significance**

This research holds significance both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research contributes to the field of pragmatics by applying Nguyen's theory of criticism and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to real-world data from social media. By analyzing how users construct criticism in social media such as TikTok then the research provides insight into how language users manage face-threatening acts through the use of politeness strategies in digital contexts.

Practically, this research can help social media users, digital content creators, and online community moderators better understand how critical feedback is shaped and interpreted in public online spaces. Additionally, the findings could provide as a reference for educators and students of linguistics, communication studies, or digital discourse analysis who seek to explore language use in online environments.

#### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

There are several key terms used in this research. These terms are pragmatics, speech act, politeness, criticism, and TikTok. The definition is provided to help the readers understand related to the context of each key term and therefore to avoid any possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Some of the key terms defined are as follows:

1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a field of linguistics dedicated to the study of the connection between linguistic forms and the context of their use. Through pragmatics, it can be observed how meaning is produced, understood, and co-constructed among



speakers in and across social contexts to achieve specific communicative purposes (Taguchi, 2015).

## 2. Speech Act

According to Austin (1995), a speech act is an action performed by saying something. In simpler terms, it means when we speak, we are not just conveying information or describing something. Instead by uttering words we actually do something.

## 3. Criticism

Criticism is usually used to judge the negative or positive qualities of someone or something.. Criticism involves a detailed examination of a subject or theme, including interpretation, evaluation, analysis, judgment of value, and the expression of opposing views. It also allows for the establishment of context (Rao, 2020).

## 4. Politeness

Politeness refers to the practice of showing respect through proper manners and etiquette, aiming to prevent conflict and put others at ease. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), politeness refers to the linguistic and social strategies used to minimize threats to another person's face or their self-image and social standing.

## 5. TikTok

TikTok uses a strong algorithm to personalize content for users. Beyond entertainment, it has become a platform for activism, marketing, and talent discovery. Users create and share short videos (15–60 seconds) with music, filters, and effects, while viewers interact through likes and comments.