

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

It has long been taken for granted in philosophical logic that gaps in meaning arise, or seem to arise between the literal form of an utterance and what its speaker actually means (Cole & Morgan, 1975). Pragmatics therefore emerges in response to this gap. As Yule (1996) explains, pragmatics is concerned with how meaning is communicated by a speaker and reconstructed by a hearer, a focus that places the relationship between linguistic forms and their users at the centre of analysis. It is, in short, the study of speaker meaning (Yule, 1996). Another view from Levinson (1983) in his book *Pragmatics*, sharpens this orientation by characterizing pragmatics as a functional approach to language, one that accounts for features of linguistic structure by appealing to non-linguistic pressures and motivations. Taken together, these positions imply that what a speaker actually intends is carried not by the literal content of an utterance but by the manner in which that content is shaped to suit the moment.

One of the clearest places where this manner of speaking matters is in the way speakers guard their social image, an idea that pragmatics draws from Goffman's notion of face. Goffman (1955) defines face as the image of the self that a person shows in front of others, and he sees interaction as a kind of ritual that follows social rules of self-respect and consideration for others. Because that image

is emotionally invested and perpetually exposed, participants tacitly cooperate to preserve one another's face throughout an encounter. Brown and Levinson (1987) subsequently developed this insight into a systematic model, treating face as a universal want that every interactant recognizes in every other and dividing it into positive and negative orientations. Soon after, a repertoire of politeness strategies was derived. The repertoire consists of positive politeness, negative politeness, off record, and bald on record, through which speakers calibrate the force of what they say against the threat it poses to face.

Beyond managing individual exchanges, these politeness choices accumulate over time to shape who the speaker is. This connects to the study of language and identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), which argues that any adequate account of identity must attend simultaneously to the fine detail of language and to the broader workings of culture and society. In this context, identity therefore can be categorized as the product of linguistic practice, as it is assembled in and through discourse rather than expressed by a self that exists prior to speech (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Read in this light, a speaker's recurring patterns of politeness cease to be merely relational tactics and become acts of self-construction, gradually consolidating a recognizable social persona. Film dialogue is a useful place to observe this process, because films are purposely scripted so that the way characters speak reveals who they are (Kozloff, 2000).

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Django Unchained, written by Quentin Tarantino (2012), is an instructive case in point. As the transcript shows, the protagonist can be understood to move through three successive identities. Django begins as an enslaved man with little social standing, then becomes the freed partner of Dr. Schultz and takes on the role

of a bounty hunter, and after the absence of Schultz he stands as a free man who acts on his own to protect his life and his wife. This movement from one position to the next is performed through changes in his speech, which makes Django Unchained a fitting object for a study of politeness and identity. His dialogue gradually changes throughout the story according to his social position. Early interactions often show hesitation and rhetorical, especially when he speaks to Dr. Schultz, the white man who purchased and set him free. This directness later becomes more visible, not solely because of Django's change in social status, but also because his identity is continuously constructed and negotiated through social interactions. This line of inquiry is supported by a growing body of research that ties language choice to the construction of identity, as explained by Bucholtz and Hall.

Previous studies on language and identity conclude that identity is at once personal and social, and that it is negotiated through pragmatic and stylistic, so that speakers act as agents who use language to show who they are (Eslami et al., 2023). This relationship is further supported by Alenezi (2019), who found that speakers construct regional, tribal, religious, and gender identities through their linguistic choices, demonstrating that politeness strategies and identity construction are closely interconnected in interaction. Likewise, Ishfaq et al. (2025) argue that identity is dynamically negotiated through conversational practices, where speakers employ politeness strategies to construct and maintain their personal and professional identities according to the interactional context. If language choice is connected to identity in this way, it also matters that such choices are shaped by the setting in which they occur. Work on cross-cultural communication shows that

when interlocutors do not share the same norms for politeness and face management, interaction easily slips into sociopragmatic failure (Bespala et al., 2026) which highlights how deeply politeness is grounded in culture. A study of advice-giving in medical consultations finds that it works best when its strategies are, so that the threat to face is reduced first and cooperation is secured afterward.

Considered as a whole, most existing analyses observe speakers who can choose their strategies fairly freely, whether in classrooms, clinics, or ordinary cross-cultural encounters, and they rarely ask what happens to face-work when the relationship is one of extreme like racially defined domination, where the freedom to choose is precisely what is denied. What remains underexplored, then, is how politeness functions as a speaker passes from subordination to freedom and authority, and how shifts in their speech at once mirror and advance that passage. The way a changing self is constructed through politeness, especially in a setting marked by race, slavery, and power like that of *Django Unchained*, has therefore received little attention. This gap provides the basis for the present study, which examines Django's politeness strategies alongside the construction of his identity throughout the transcript.

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1.2 Research Question

Taking into account the context outlined in preceding section, this research will attempt to address the topic in a focused way by seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What types of politeness strategies are used by Django in Django Unchained?
2. How is Django's identity constructed through politeness strategies?

1.3 Purpose of Study

In line with the research questions, this study is intended to analyse politeness strategies and identity construction in the dialogue of Django in Django Unchained within the framework of pragmatic. The objectives of this study are:

1. To determine categories of politeness strategies used by Django based on the classification developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987).
2. To analyse how Django's identity is constructed through politeness strategies in his utterances according to the framework of identity principle proposed by Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (2005).

1.4 Scope of Study

This study is confined to Django's spoken dialogues as written in the transcript of Django Unchained (2012), since the analysis concerns language as verbal communication. The discussion is limited to Django's utterances as he transitions from slave to bounty hunter and later to a free Black man. The analysis

is grounded in pragmatic frame (Yule; Levinson). Within this frame, Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is used to analyse politeness strategies while Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework are applied to examine identity construction through interaction. Because the study works only with the transcript, elements outside verbal communication such as gesture, facial expression, camera movement, soundtrack, and cinematic technique are excluded from the discussion. This boundary keeps the study focused on the pragmatic interpretation of politeness and identity construction within Django's written dialogue.

1.5 Significance of Study

This study is expected to be beneficial to the researcher and readers by giving a concrete account of how language and identity are constructed through dialogue. Working from written lines of Django Unchained (2012), it shows how the pragmatic study of speaker meaning can be brought together with Brown and Levinson's concept of politeness, as well as Bucholtz and Hall's framework of identity construction. Close reading of spoken lines makes the theories easier to understand and apply. In addition, this study may serve as a useful reference for students and other researchers who are interested in pragmatics, particularly in politeness strategies and identity construction analysis. The study also points to practical directions for follow-up work, as the same approach can be extended to other transcripts, genres, or language communities in which speech and identity are closely intertwined.