



**FACE THREATENING ACTS IN *THE GLASS CASTLE*: A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF
DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY COMMUNICATION**

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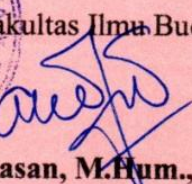
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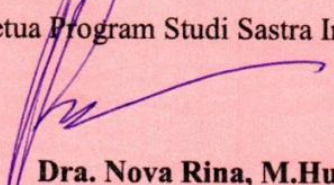
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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify the originality of this thesis which I now submit to fulfill a requirement for an S1 in the English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. The content of this thesis is entirely my work. All assistance received in writing this thesis and the sources cited have been acknowledged within the text of my work.

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FACE THREATENING ACTS IN *THE GLASS CASTLE*: A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Face-threatening acts (FTAs) are verbal actions that can damage a person's self-image, usually occurring in situations of conflict, disagreement, or tension. The research aims to identify the types and strategies of Face Threatening Acts and to examine how these acts reflect dysfunctional communication patterns within the family. The analysis applies Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to classify Face Threatening Acts, Olson's (Circumplex Model) to identify dysfunctional communication dimensions, and Cutting and Fordyce's context theory to interpret the communicative situations. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. The data were taken from selected dialogues in the movie that contain Face Threatening Acts, collected through purposive sampling. The analysis involved classifying the data into types of Face Threatening Acts, which are divided into threats to positive face and threats to negative face. Next, this analysis identifies the strategies used, which are divided into bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. And relating the findings to dysfunctional family communication dimensions, which are divided into dimensions of cohesion, flexibility, and communication. The results show that out of 70 data points, containing FTAs. Whereas, bald on record is the most dominant communication strategy used in the Walls family's communication in the movie. These findings indicate that FTAs are not only a matter of linguistic choice but also a reflection of deeper relationship problems in the family. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of FTA pragmatic analysis with the dysfunctional family communication model.

Keywords: *pragmatics, face-threatening acts, dysfunctional family communication, The Glass Castle*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

The Glass Castle is a memoir by Jeannette Walls published in 2005, then adapted into a movie in 2017. This work tells the story of Walls' challenging childhood and adolescence, growing up in a highly dysfunctional family but full of complex dynamics. This memoir explores the unconventional relationship of the Walls family, led by Rex Walls (father) and Rose Mary Walls (mother) who have a very different outlook on life from the norms of society in general. Rex is an alcoholic with big dreams but often fails to fulfill his responsibilities as the head of the family, while Rose Mary is an artist who prioritizes her artistic freedom over the basic needs of her children.

According to Mottram (2017), *The Glass Castle* is described as a “dysfunctional family drama” based on Jeannette Walls' memoir. This dysfunctional family dynamic is reflected through various aspects, such as housing instability (the family often moves), the signing of parents to provide basic needs such as food and decent shelter, and inconsistent parenting patterns. However, this work also shows other sides of the family, including the creativity, imagination, and adventurous spirit that parents instill in their children. These contrasting elements of dysfunction and warmth are closely intertwined with how family members communicate with each other, making their interactions a rich subject for pragmatic analysis. This study examines the pragmatic aspects of communication, specifically Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs), within the dysfunctional family portrayed in the film *The Glass Castle*.

Pragmatics, as a field of linguistics, concerns itself with how context influences meaning in communication. Pragmatic is a branch of linguistics that studies how people comprehend language in everyday contexts and how speakers convey intent (Yule, 1996). Within pragmatic

studies, politeness theory occupies a central position, particularly through Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory on face and politeness strategies. Their theory posits that all competent adult members of society have "face," the public self-image that every person wishes to claim for themselves, which is emotionally invested and can be lost, maintained, or enhanced during interactions.

Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize "face" into two distinct aspects: positive face, which represents the desire to be appreciated and approved of by others, and negative face, which embodies the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition. When speech acts potentially threaten either aspect of face, they are classified as face-threatening acts (FTAs). These acts can damage either the speaker's or the hearer's face and can target either positive or negative face aspects (Brown, 1987). Given this framework, it becomes evident that the context in which communication occurs plays a significant role in shaping how FTAs manifest and are managed.

This study aims to analyze the communication patterns in *The Glass Castle* movie through the theoretical framework of Face Threatening Acts (FTA) developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). This research specifically focuses on examining how Face Threatening Acts manifest in the Walls' family relationships and how these communicative acts contribute to the overall pattern of dysfunction that can be observed throughout the film.

The analysis of Face-Threatening Acts in dysfunctional family dynamics serves several important purposes for both academic understanding. Examining Face-Threatening Acts in the context of *The Glass Castle* contributes to the understanding of how communication patterns in troubled families reflect and perpetuate cycles of dysfunction, trauma, and resilience.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background research, this research is addressed for the following research questions:

- 1) What are the types of Face Threatening Acts performed in the dialogue *The Glass Castle* movie?
- 2) What strategies are used to perform those FTAs?
- 3) How do these FTAs reflect dysfunctional communication patterns within the family?

1.3 Purpose of The Research

Based on the research questions explained before, the purpose are:

- 1) To identify and categorize the types of Face Threatening Acts performed in the dialogue *The Glass Castle* movie
- 2) To find out the strategies used to perform FTAs
- 3) To describe how these FTAs reflect dysfunctional communication patterns within the family

1.4 Limitation of The Problem

This research is primarily focused on analyzing Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) of the dysfunctional family depicted in *The Glass Castle* movie. The research is restricted to examining the verbal communication among the members of the Walls family, as these relationships form the core narrative of the movie. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, the research concentrates on the communication that exhibit significant FTAs reflecting dysfunctional family dynamics.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The writer hopes that after conducting this research, it can be useful for further researchers who study Face Threatening Acts. Practically speaking, research findings can be used as a guide by educators, therapists, and families to better understand the significance of building healthy connections and the effects of poor communication.