

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This section serves as an introduction to understanding the direction and scope of the research conducted. The discussion in this chapter covers the background of the study, research focus, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, and definition of key terms. Through these components, this chapter provides an overview of the research framework.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

In pragmatic studies, any act of communication where it is not just about conveying information, but also conveying the speaker's intentions also attitudes through what is said is known as a speech act (Izar et al., 2021). Speech act is actions performed through language to communicate meaning and intention. In daily communication, speech act plays an important role in conveying message effectively. According to Yule (1996) speech act can be classified into several types, such as representatives (stating, etc), directives (order, command, suggestion, etc), commissives (promise, refusal, etc), expressives (congratulate, apologize, etc), and declaratives (declaring, pronouncing, etc). Among these types, one of the most interesting to be studied more deeply is expressive speech act, especially apology speech act.

Apology speech act is part of expressive speech act that reflect the speaker's attitude toward their actions and often used to acknowledge and

correct mistakes that have been made. Eslami et al., (2022) said that speech act of apology occur when the speaker violates social norms and realizes the violation, thus needing to apologize to maintain harmonious relationships. Apologies also play a significant social role, as they can help ease conflict, restore trust, maintain good relationships between individuals, etc. In Indonesia, a country rich in cultural and linguistic diversity, the strategies used to apologize vary depending on social factors, and the interpersonal relationship between the apologizer and the hearer, as these factors significantly influence the choice of apology expressions (Illahi and Hamzah, 2023). Among these factors, social factors play a significant role in determining apology strategies.

One of the most significant factors influencing apology strategies is the power relations between the speaker and the addressee. In this study, power refers specifically to hierarchical status relations between interlocutors rather than interpersonal closeness or social distance. The power relations between the speaker and the addressee are operationalized into higher-lower, lower-higher, and equal. Higher-lower refers to situations where the apologizer holds relatively greater authority/status than the hearer, lower-higher refers to situations where the apologizer occupies a lower status position than the addressee, while equal refers to situation where the apologizer and the addressee are in the same status. In a social environment, power relations affect the way a person apologizes, both in terms of choosing words and the level of politeness used (Kulsawang and Ambele, 2024). For example, when a

student makes a mistake to their lecturer, they tend to use more polite and cautious expressions of apology. This shows that in Indonesian culture, apologies are influenced by social relationships and power in daily interactions, including in the context of education.

One of the key reasons why the speech act of apology needs to be studied is to raise Indonesian EFL University students' awareness of the importance of effective communication in English. Based on preliminary observations within the EFL learning environment at Universitas PGRI Madiun, many students have not fully realized the importance of using apology speech acts appropriately in academic communication. For example, when a student makes a mistake in class discussion or submits an assignment late, they often just say "sorry" without considering the context of the power relations between lecturer and student or the polite way to speak. This condition shows that many students do not have sufficient pragmatic awareness, especially in understanding how to convey apologies by paying attention to social norms, culture, and academic context in English.

Several previous studies have investigated apology speech acts in various EFL and cultural contexts. Zulkhaeriyah et al., (2021) highlighted the use of apology strategies in the context of local culture and daily interaction, with an emphasis on social relations in Bugis language. Al-Quraishy (2011) examined apology strategies used by Iraqi EFL learners, but did not consider the role of power relations between speakers and interlocutors. Ardiati (2023) compared apology strategies in Indonesian and Japanese with a focus on

politeness principles and culture, without specifically examining EFL learners. Kulsawang and Ambele (2024) reviewed previous studies on apology and request strategies in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning and highlighted the role of factors such as social power and social distance. However, these studies did not empirically examine how power relations influence the realization of apology discourse acts by EFL learners, as they were conducted as systematic literature reviews. Although various aspects have been studied, research that directly examines the influence of power relations on EFL learners' apology strategies and social functions, especially in the Indonesian context is still limited.

Based on previous studies, most of them have emphasized quantitative approaches or frequency based analysis, so not much has been explained about how the apology strategy functions pragmatically in certain contexts. Among Indonesian EFL University students in Indonesia, discussions about apology strategies in academic interactions with various power relationships have not been studied in much detail, also research that specifically highlighting the social function of apology speech acts is still relatively limited. Furthermore, studies that combine strategy and social function analysis generally use data from film or fictional characters, rather than from Indonesian EFL University students direct responses (Latifah, 2024; Nabilah et al., 2015; Alwirido & Candra, 2023). Furthermore, there is still a lack of research that simultaneously examines how power relations influence apology strategies and the social functions that appear in students' responses. This indicates that

this study differs from previous studies in that it integrates power relations with both apology strategies and their social functions within Indonesian EFL University students' context. This study contributes to the study of the realization of apology speech act by Indonesian EFL University students through data analysis from written DCT responses and interview responses, focusing on apology strategies and social functions within various power relations. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more contextual understanding of how Indonesian EFL University students realize apologies in different social situations.

## **B. Research Focus**

The research focus of this study is to identify the strategies and social functions across power relations (higher–lower, lower–higher, equal) used by sixth-semester students of Department of English Education at Universitas PGRI Madiun as Indonesian EFL University students.

## **C. Research Questions**

The research questions of this study are:

1. What apology strategies are used by sixth-semester students of English Education of Universitas PGRI Madiun across different power relations?
2. How do power relations influence the social functions of apology speech acts produced by sixth-semester students of English Education of Universitas PGRI Madiun?

#### **D. Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of this study are:

1. To identify apology strategies expressed by sixth-semester students of English Education at Universitas PGRI Madiun based on power relations.
2. To analyze the social functions of apologies in relation to power dynamics expressed by sixth-semester students of English Education at Universitas PGRI Madiun.

#### **E. Significance of the Study**

This study contributes theoretically to the study of cross-linguistic pragmatics and speech act theory by expanding our understanding of how Indonesian EFL University students express apologies, particularly in situations involving power differences. In addition, through an analysis of the social function of apologies, this study also reveals the cultural values and social rules that influence language use in social contexts.

Practically, the results of this study provide pedagogical contributions to the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as they can serve as a reference for lecturers to increase students' pragmatic awareness. This helps students communicate more appropriately and sensitively in various social situations. Furthermore, the findings of this study can serve as a basis for lecturers to develop pragmatic teaching materials, DCT-based practice modules, or pragmatic awareness rubrics that can be used in teaching the

speech act of apology. By understanding how the context of power influences apologetic behavior, this study is expected to enrich lecturers' and students' knowledge of the pragmatic use of language.

## **F. Definition of Key Terms**

This section provides definitions of several key terms used in this study. The definitions are provided to avoid misunderstandings in interpreting terms related to the research topic. Definitions of several key terms used in the study are as follows:

### **1. Speech Act**

Speech act is an action that a person does through speech or utterance. This means that when someone speaks, he or she does not only convey information, but also performs a social action, such as asking, pleading, greeting, commanding, or apologizing.

### **2. Speech Act of Apology**

Speech act of apology is an utterance or action done by someone to apologize for a mistake or something that makes the other person uncomfortable. The purpose is to acknowledge the mistake, repair the relationship, and show remorse.

### **3. Power-Based Speech Act of Apology**

Power-Based Speech Act of Apology refers to an apology speech act produced by considering the power relations between the speaker and

the addressee. These power relations influence the choice of strategy, language form, and level of politeness used in conveying the apology.

#### 4. EFL Students

EFL students (English as a Foreign Language Students) are English language learners who study the language not as a primary or second language, but rather as a foreign language used in a limited context, such as education or international communication.

#### 5. Apology Strategy

Apology strategies are linguistic categories that speakers use to convey an apology for a violation or mistake. In this study, apology strategies were identified and coded based on the framework used in the study, namely IFID, TOR, EXPL, REP, and FOB. Each category represents a different way of conveying an apology in response to a specific situation.

#### 6. Social Function of Apology

Social function of apology refers to the communicative and interpersonal purpose achieved through an apology utterance in relation to the interlocutor and the situation. In this study, social functions are coded based on the categories used in the framework, IC, ASF, SGM, AAW, and GOTH. These categories indicate the social intent underlying the apology.