

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section presents a literature review that serves as the theoretical basis for this study. The discussion in this chapter covers speech acts in Indonesian EFL learners' communication, speech acts of apology found in Indonesian EFL learners' communication, strategies of apology, social function of apology, power relations in speech acts, relevant research, and theoretical framework. Through this discussion, this chapter provides a conceptual basis that supports the analysis of research data.

A. Speech Act in Indonesian EFL University Students Communication

The study of speech acts is important for understanding how meaning is constructed and interpreted in communication. According to Yule (2006) the term of speech act is used to refer to actions such as requesting, commanding, questioning, or informing. Therefore, the study of speech act is essential for understanding how meaning is produced and interpreted in communication.

Speech acts also have specific goals and functions, and it can affect the listener or the person being spoken to (Sofyan et al., 2022). Yule (1996) states that the action performed through an utterance consists of three related acts, there are locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary

act associated to the basic act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression. Illocutionary act refers to the intended meaning or function that the speaker aims to convey through their response. The last is perlocutionary act that related to the effect or response that the speaker's expression has on the listener. In relation to illocutionary acts, Yule classifies the types of illocutionary acts into five categories based on the functions they have in communication.

1. Representatives

Representatives are speech acts in which the speaker expresses a belief about the truth or falsity of a certain situation. Representatives include statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions.

2. Directives

Directives are speech acts in which the speaker tries to get the listener to perform a specific action. This includes commands, requests, orders, and suggestions.

3. Commissives

Commissives are speech acts where the speaker commits to carrying out a certain action in the future. This category includes acts like making promises, issuing threats, refusing, and making pledges.

4. Expressive

Expressives are a speech acts that reflect the speaker's emotions, desires, or attitudes. Common forms of expressive acts include thanking, apologizing, congratulating, and giving praise.

5. Declaratives

Declaratives are speech acts that bring about a change in the external situation simply through the act of being spoken, such as declaring a couple as husband and wife or imposing a sentence in court.

One type of speech act that has significant interpersonal value is the apology. In many communicative situations, especially in educational settings, expressing an apology not only reflects the speaker's awareness of social norms but also shows sensitivity to relationship dynamics. Therefore, it is important to examine how Indonesian EFL students perform the speech act of apology in their discourse.

B. Power-Based Speech Act of Apology in Indonesian EFL University

Students Communication

Apology is a way for people to express regret for actions that may have caused harm or offense (Elasfar et al., 2023). According to Goffman, 1971 (in Alfghhe & Mohammadzadeh, 2021) an apology have a functions as an act intended to uphold social norms and reestablish harmony. It also contribute to restoring relationships by signaling that the apologizer is aware of the offense and is willing to take responsibility for their actions. Furthermore, apology is more than just words, it involves an attempt to repair the relationship between the apologizer and the recipient, as well as understanding the recipient's response. Every individual has a specific purpose when delivering an apology, be it for an intentional or unintentional mistake.

Apology speech act is not only determined by the speaker's intention, but also influenced by the surrounding social context. One social context that plays an important role in the realization of speech acts is the power relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Brown & Levinson (1987), believe that certain kind of acts have the potential to threaten the face of the speaker and/or the interlocutor. Apology is classified as one form of face-threatening act (FTA) because it indirectly shows that the speaker has violated the prevailing social norms. In this analysis, power relations are operationalized into three categories, lower–higher, higher–lower, and equal, all of which refer to the relative power (P) variable of Brown & Levinson (1987). Brown & Levinson (1987) only refer to P as power/social status in the abstract, without specific categories. The operationalization of these three categories follows Darweesh and Mehdi (2016).

1. Higher-Lower

In this situation, the speaker has a higher social position, such as lecturer to student. Due to their position of power, speakers tend to have greater linguistic freedom, and the apology strategies used are usually more direct, concise, and less formal.

2. Lower-Higher

In this situation, the speaker is in a lower social position than the interlocutor, for example, students to lecturers. Since this position is socially high-risk, speakers tend to use more polite, formal, and complex apology strategies.

3. Equal

In this situation, such as between peers, colleagues or classmates, there are no significant power differentials. Therefore, the apology strategies used tend to be flexible and informal, while still considering personal closeness and the context of the situation.

Therefore, power relations need to be understood not only as a theoretical concept, but also as an observable aspect in the context of interaction. In speech act studies, power relations are reflected through the social roles of the speaker and the addressee involved in a particular communication situation. In this study, power relations are operationalized through situational roles presented in the DCT scenarios, categorized as lower–higher, higher–lower, and equal interactions.

C. Strategies of Apology

Apology strategies are approaches individuals use to gain forgiveness for their actions. To offer an apology, the apologizer must use an appropriate strategy that suits the context of the offense. These strategies aim to lessen the impact of the wrongdoing on the offended party and help preserve the relationship between both sides. According to Blum-kulka & Olshtain (1984) there are several types of strategies.

1. Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)

This kind of strategy typically employs a conventional, formulaic expression of regret through performative verbs like ‘sorry,’ ‘apologize,’ ‘regret,’ or ‘excuse.’

2. Taking on Responsibility

It means the speaker explicitly acknowledges responsibility or fault for the violation committed. For example, “It was my mistake”.

3. Explanation or Account

The speaker describes the circumstances that led to the mistake, typically offering an indirect apology. This explanation is intended to clarify the situation and make amends. For example, “The traffic was terrible”.

4. Offer of Repair

This strategy is used in certain situations and is best applied when there is actual damage or impact. The speaker can offer remedial efforts to the hearer. For example, “I will pay for the damage”.

5. Promise of Forbearance

The speaker commits not to repeat the offense and promises to avoid making the same mistake in the future. For example, “I promise it won’t happen again”.

D. Social Function of Apology

The social function of an apology refers to the various communicative purposes that a speaker aims to fulfill when expressing an apology (Nabilah and Aliah, 2016). It goes beyond simply admitting fault, as it also involves maintaining social harmony, restoring interpersonal relationships, and acknowledging social norms. Norrick (1978) identifies five specific social functions that used in apology. Although Norrick (1978) introduced the classification of apology social functions, the operational descriptions of these functions adopted in this study are based on the explanations provided by Nabilah and Aliah (2016); Latifah (2024); Alwirido and Candra, (2023).

1. Implicating Contrition

It is one of the social functions of the speech act of apology that arises when the speaker realizes that he/she has made a mistake. In this case, the speaker shows guilt and sincere sadness for the actions that have hurt or harmed the listener. When apologizes, they are essentially acknowledging their mistake and expressing regret for their actions. For example, “That’s my fault”, “I feel bad”.

2. Asking to be Forgiven

It is one form of social function of an apology that arises when the speaker realizes that he has committed a certain mistake or offense. In this situation, the speaker directly requests that the listener be willing to apologize. For example, “I’m sorry”, “Please forgive me”.

3. Showing Good Manner

It is one of the social functions of an apology which aims to reflect polite and moral behavior when someone makes a mistake. In this case, the speaker tries to maintain his positive image in front of others so as not to be viewed negatively due to the offense committed. This comes from the understanding that someone who makes a mistake will generally be judged badly by society. For example, “I’m sorry, thank you for your understanding”.

4. Assuaging the Addressee’s Wrath

It is one of the social functions of an apology that aims to alleviate the anger or negative emotions of the other person due to a mistake. This function arises when the speaker realizes that their actions have caused emotional harm to the other person. Therefore, the speaker not only acknowledges the mistake and expresses regret but also demonstrates empathy and a willingness to remedy the situation in an effort to calm the other person's feelings and restore the interpersonal relationship. For example, “I understand you’re upset with me”.

5. Getting Off the Hook

It is one of the social functions of an apology used by speakers to reduce tension after realizing they have made a mistake in communication. This function aims to avoid uncomfortable situations, to free themselves from the consequences of the mistake that occurred, or reduce the

likelihood of facing social sanctions. For example, “I’m sorry, but it wasn’t entirely my fault”.

E. Relevant Research Studies

Relevant research studies examine previous studies related to the Power-Based Speech Act of Apology in EFL learning. Research conducted by Utami (2022) examined apology strategies used by EFL students at IAIN Batusangkar. This study aimed to identify the types of apology strategies and the strategies most frequently used by fifth-semester students. This study used a quantitative descriptive method with the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) instrument distributed to 67 students through a total sampling technique. The results showed that the most dominant strategy used was the Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), especially direct expressions such as "I'm sorry," which are often accompanied by explanations and are influenced by factors such as context, status, and speaker familiarity.

Al-Khazaleh (2018) examined the influence of social power on the perception of apology speech acts among EFL learners in Jordan. This study aimed to determine how differences in power levels influence the perception of apologies among Jordanian second language speakers, non-English speakers, and native English speakers. This study used a quantitative method with the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and Scaled Response Questionnaire (SRQ) instruments analyzed using one-way ANOVA. The results showed that social power significantly influenced the perception of

apologies, and Jordanian second language speakers still exhibited negative sociopragmatic transfer despite having a high level of English proficiency.

Irhami & Yuliasri (2025) examined the realization of apology speech acts by English Department students at Universitas Negeri Semarang and the influence of social factors on their use. This study aimed to identify the apology strategies used by students and how power, social distance, and rank of imposition influenced the choice of these strategies. This study used a qualitative case study method with the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) instrument involving 20 second-semester students. The results showed that Explicit Expression of Apology (IFID) was the most dominant strategy, while promise for forbearance was the least used, and students tended to combine several strategies and adapt them to the social context.

Previous studies have shown that apology strategies in the EFL context have been widely studied, but most still focus on the form of the strategy alone without simultaneously linking it to the social function of apology in the context of power relations. Furthermore, studies that specifically place power relations as the variable especially in the context of Indonesian EFL students at the university level are still limited. In fact, the difference in status between the speaker and the addressee can influence the choice of apology strategy as well as the social function to be achieved. Therefore, this study focuses on power relations as the variable with two analytical outputs, namely apology strategies and social functions of apology, in the context of Indonesian EFL university students. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more

comprehensive understanding of the realization of the speech act of apology in academic communication.

F. Theoretical Framework

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability of language learners to use language appropriately in social contexts, including understanding interpersonal relationships, norms of politeness, and cultural expectations. In the context of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, limited exposure to the use of English in real communication situations often causes difficulties in realizing appropriate speech acts, especially the speech act of apologizing. Speech acts are functions of language used to perform an action, and apologies are categorized as expressive speech acts that convey the speaker's psychological state, such as regret (Yule, 1996; Yule, 2006).

In realizing the speech act of apologizing, EFL learners use various apology strategies. Blum-kulka & Olshtain (1984) propose a number of strategies, including illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), taking on responsibility, explanation or account, offering repair, and promising forbearance. The choice of these strategies reflects the speaker's ability to assess the social situation and select the appropriate form of language for the communication context.

One of the main social factors that influence the realization of apology speech acts is power relations. Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory explains that the power relations between speaker and listener is one of the

variables that determine the level of threat of a Face Threatening Act (FTA), in addition to social distance and the absolute ranking. Power relationships are generally classified into three categories, lower-higher, higher-lower, and equal relationships. These differences in power relations not only influence the choice of apology strategy, but also shape the social function of the apology, such as implicating contrition, asking to be forgiven, showing good manner, assuaging the addressee's wrath, getting off the hook Norrick (1978). Thus, this study considers that pragmatic competence enables EFL learners to understand power relations, which in turn simultaneously influence apology strategies and their social functions in various communication contexts.

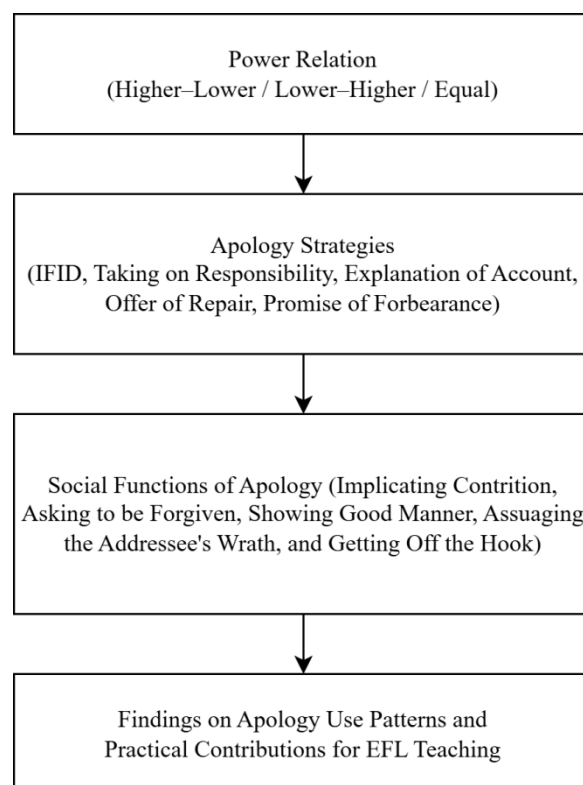


Figure 2.1 Research Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework of this study, which places power relations as the variable in analyzing the speech act of apology. Power relations, including higher-lower, lower-higher, and equal, influence how Indonesian EFL University students choose apology strategies and realize the social functions of apology. Differences in power relations can influence the strategies used and the social functions sought to be achieved in apologizing. Through these relationships, this study attempts to analyze the strategy and social functions of apologies among Indonesian EFL University students in various communication contexts. Therefore this study adopts Blum-Kulka & Olshtain also Norrick for apology strategies and the selected social function framework because both directly operationalize analysis of apology realization under power relations.