

# **CHAPTER III**

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

Speech act studied in this research is apologizing. The data consists of speech act data obtained from non-native speakers by means of an elicitation method – Discourse Completion Test (DCT).

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), the well-collected qualitative data feature mainly on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that a strong handle on what “real life” is like can be obtained. Furthermore, Bodgan (1998, as cited in Riyani, 2010) explains that qualitative research is designed from designed from the process of finding social phenomena, discussing, analyzing which occurs naturally; it means the research is not done in laboratory and dealt with numbers or statistics as the tools in analyzing the data.

This study investigated the speech act of apologizing in a broader scope of pragmatic knowledge and it was unlikely to gather data in a natural and candid manner considering the large amount of time that had to be spent. Therefore, to collect the data, the DCT was used for this study, because it was considered as a “highly effective means of instrumentation”. Zuskin (1993) explains that a DCT is a data gathering device specifically designed in order to elicit responses to

problematic, contextually-specific prompts ( cited by Parvaresh & Tavakoli, 2009). Cited by Byon (2005), Lyuh (1992) describes that the use of DCT has more advantages than other interlanguage pragmatics research methodologies, such as natural observational data, and role play. The advantages are as follow:

(1) it allows for large amounts of data to be collected in a relatively short period of time; (2) it is capable of revealing the normative or stereo-typical expressions of a certain speech act in a given language; (3) it provides information regarding the kinds of strategies that learners use to perform speech acts; (4) it identifies social variables that are sensitive to given speech act situations; and (5) it offers standardization of situations across cultures.

Nevertheless, DCT has been reported to have some drawbacks:

(1) learners' DCT responses may differ from the naturally-occurring data in terms of the actual wording and the contents and frequency of the semantic formulae used; (2) DCT responses may not represent sophisticated interactional features, such as elaborated negotiation tokens and indirect exchanges, seen in everyday conversations (Rintell and Mitchell, 1989, cited in Byon, 2005); and (3) DCTs do not allow learners to remain silent, even in situations where they prefer to do so because in the DCT, learners are obliged to perform linguistically (Byon, 2005).

However, to counter the drawbacks, the DCT for this study is modified as it will be discussed in instrumentation subject.

DCT has been widely applied for studies concerning pragmatic knowledge. It was initially used by Blum-Kulka (1982, cited by Parvaresh & Tavakoli, 2009) to investigate speech acts. In regards of apology studies, Blum-

Kulka & Olshtain (1984) used a DCT in their study of Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP). After the CCSARP project, the subsequent studies regarding apologies applied DCT as an instrument to collect the data (Mir, 1992; Rizk, 1997; Byon, 2005; Hou, 2006, Todey, 2011)

### **3.2 Setting and Participants**

The participants of the study were Indonesian native speakers (I-NSs) Consisting of 3 participants (2 females and 1 male), aged between 27 to 34 years old. All of them were full-time English teachers at an English course in Tasikmalaya. They came from the same ethnicity background, i.e. Sundanese. They had same responsibilities in performing their job descriptions and spent the same amount of time in the work place. They had similar level of familiarity/distance (supposedly medium level) with their academic coordinator, among their peers, and one particular student, hence appointed as an informant. It was crucial to have this sort of similar level of distance to avoid any biases in analyzing the data, therefore, distance (D) was held constant as it was not part of a subject in the study.

The participants were faced with three informants. The first informant was a student who had been taught by all participants and she filled in as the hearer with low power (- power). The second informant was the participants' colleague and filled in as the hearer with equal power (= power). Another informant was an academic coordinator, thus filled as the hearer with higher power (+ power).

The research site took place in an English course that is well-known to the local people in Tasikmalaya. The teachers mainly use English, both written and oral, in formal and informal manner in the course environment. The course provides a training centre and held an English Proficiency Test (EPT) annually for the teachers to improve their skills and knowledge in teaching, and also to measure their proficiency in English, so that they would be aware of their level of proficiency. Nevertheless, the training centre and the EPT do not fully support the teachers in improving their English, particularly for their pragmatic knowledge. The course considers the policy of using English out of class sessions as a necessity for the teachers, because they deal with all English communication in almost every day of their work life. Therefore, it is a suitable research site for this study because of its well-rich English atmosphere.

### **3.3 Instrumentation**

The main instrumentation used for this study is a type of DCT, i.e. Discourse Role-Play Task (DRPT). According to Blum-Kulka (1982, cited by Parvaresh & Tavakoli, 2009), there are six types of DCT. They include:

(1) Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT), (2) Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Task (MDCT), (3) Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT), (4) Discourse Role-Play Task, (5) Discourse Self-Assessment Task, (6) Role-Play Self-Assessment (RPSA).

Discourse Role-Play Task (DRPT) provides a description of a situation

and asked the participants to play a particular role with another person in that situation. However, in this study the DRPT was somewhat “modified” in order to obtain more real-life data, so the results would be less artificial and the drawbacks of DCT, as mentioned previously, can be lessened. This study used participants and informants with real positions in their real jobs. For instance, the participant, as a real English teacher at the research site, was expected to apologize based on given situations to the hearer holding higher power who was a real academic coordinator, not playing a role as an academic coordinator. Thus, the utterance produced by informants, in particular, were quite different from one participant to another, however, they did not deviate from the provided situations. Observation was also applied as an additional instrumentation during the “role-play”. Afterwards, the collected data was triangulated by using field notes to fill the gaps during data collection.

The following is a couple of samples of the DRPT used for this study:

**Situation 7**

To the informant: *The teacher is late coming to the meeting.*

To the participant: *You are late coming to the meeting.*

**Situation 5**

To the informant: *Your friend is teaching a class next door, but the class is too noisy because of doing an activity and your class is disturbed by the noise.*

To the participant: *You are teaching a class, but the class is too noisy because of doing an activity and your friend's class next door is disturbed by the noise.*

### 3.4 Data Collection

To gather the data, each participant was given some situations and played a role as a speaker who was expected to apologize to the interlocutors.

Each participant was accompanied by three interlocutors who held different powers: 1) low power (- power), i.e. student; 2) equal power (= power), i.e. peer; 3) high power (+ power), i.e. academic coordinator.

A controlled elicitation procedure was employed in order to obtain relevant data and avoid further bias. More importantly, the elicitation was also intended to find out the effect of the severity of offense in the apology utterance. The elicitation was used in forms of situations that were divided into three categories: (1) low severity of offense, e.g. coming late to the class, (2) medium severity of offense, e.g. forgetting to put important files in the appropriate place, (3) high severity of offense, e.g. damaged the speakers. For each interlocutor who held different power, the scenarios of the situations were adjusted accordingly, but still with similar levels of severity.

The situations were taken in the context of working or at working place, so both the participant and the interlocutor could be easily familiar with the situations as it may have (or already had) happened in their routines. The

situations were firstly consulted in an informal interview with the academic coordinator in order to get assistance in setting the levels of severity of offense.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis went through some stages. First, the strategies of apologizing were identified according to Olshtain and Cohen's basic classification, i.e.:

- a. Expression of apology, in which the speaker uses a word, expression, or sentence which contains a performative verb such as: "apologize," "forgive," "excuse," "be sorry." The strategy are divided into three sub-strategies: 1) expression of regret ("I'm sorry"), 2) an offer of apology ("I apologize"), 3) a request of forgiveness ("Forgive me").
- b. An explanation or account of the situation which indirectly caused the apologizer to commit the offense and which is used by the speaker as an indirect speech act of apologizing ("The bus was late").
- c. Acknowledgement of responsibility, in which the offender recognizes his/her fault in causing the infraction. There are three scales of degree of such recognition. The highest level of intensity is an acceptance of the blame ("It's my fault"). At a somewhat lower level is an expression of self-deficiency ("I was confused"), and lower than this strategy is recognizing the other person as deserving apology ("You are right"), and considered to be the lowest level is the expression of lack of intent ("I didn't mean to").

- d. An offer of repair, in which the apologizer makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage which caused by his/her infraction (“I’ll pay for the broken vase”).
- e. A promise of forbearance, in which the apologizer commits him/herself to not having the offense happen again (“I won’t do that again”).

Then, the data was calculated for each strategy to gain the sum total of apologizing strategies used by the participants. This number was a necessity to find out the most and the least frequently used strategy.

Afterwards, each strategy occurred from each situation was re-calculated and coded based on the apologizing strategy proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). The sample of the strategy is as follow:

**Situation 4:**

- *(This elicitation was given to the informant)* Your friend is late coming to brainstorming session. It is your time to present the material.  
You: .....  
Your friend: (Response)
- *(This elicitation was given to the participant)* You are late coming to brainstorming session. It is your friend’s time to present the material.  
Your friend: (Initial expression/statement)  
You: .....

The apologizing strategies produced from the situation were then coded like the following sample:

Informant (I): “..... *Where have you been, Mrs.Hesti? You’re quite late. Now, I’ve been presenting for 15 minutes.*”

Participant (P): “*Sorry, Mr.Ciptadi, I got a stomachache*”  
(1a) (2)



From the sample, the code (1a) which meant the strategy of expression of regret and the code (2) which meant the strategy of explanation or account of the situation were both applied. The code (1a) was the expression of regret taken from a wider strategy of *expression of an apology*.

This analysis helped to identify the differences of apology strategies that applied on each situation and to the hearer holding different powers.

The following table describes further distribution of the contextual factors concerned in this study.

**Table 3.1 The Distribution of Contextual Factors**

Situation	Brief Description	Contextual Factors Concerned	
		Severity of	Power
1	Coming late to the class	-	-
2	Misspelling the word	=	-
3	Ignoring the question	+	-
4	Coming late to the presentation	-	=
5	Having a noisy class next door	=	=
6	Damaging speakers	+	=
7	Coming late to the meeting	-	+
8	Not re-ordering the test booklets	=	+
9	Not returning the test booklets	+	+

Note: Severity: - low/= medium/+ high

(Adapted from: Shih,2006)

Power : - low/= equal/+ high

Lastly, the data was further identified, analysed and interpreted to find out how the participants applied the apologizing strategy and to find out the difference(s) of the applied strategies regarding the power that the hearer held.