

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach in order to analyze the realization of apology speech acts produced by English Education students. Qualitative research was considered appropriate for this study because it focused on understanding language use in context and interpreting the meaning behind participants' responses rather than measuring them numerically. As explained by (Creswell & Creswell, 2014), qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In this case, the study aimed to explore how students construct apology expressions in different situations.

The descriptive nature of this study allowed the researcher to provide a detailed account of the types and strategies of apology speech acts used by the participants. Instead of testing hypotheses, the study focused on describing patterns, identifying strategies, and interpreting how these strategies were used in various contexts. This approach is particularly suitable for pragmatics research, where the emphasis lies on analyzing language use and its relation to context.

In addition, this study adopted a speech act analysis framework, as it examined apology as a form of expressive speech act. The analysis was based on the classification of apology strategies proposed by (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983), which provides a systematic way to categorize the participants' responses. Through this framework, the study identified the types of strategies

used, how they were combined, and which strategies were most dominant in the data.

The data for this study were collected using a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT), which presented participants with a series of situational prompts that required them to produce appropriate apology expressions. The use of WDCT was suitable for this research because it allowed for the controlled elicitation of speech acts in specific contexts, making it easier to compare responses across participants. The responses were then analyzed qualitatively to uncover patterns and variations in the use of apology strategies.

Overall, this research design was intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of how English Education students produce apology speech acts. By using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study was able to capture the richness of language use and reveal insights into students' pragmatic competence in expressing apologies in different communicative situations.

Although the DCT instrument administered in this study consisted of six situational scenarios constructed to represent a spectrum of Face-Threatening Act (FTA) weights ranging from light to heavy (see Table 3.2), the analysis and discussion presented in Chapter IV of this study focus specifically on two contrasting scenarios drawn from that instrument: Situation 1, in which a student apologizes to a lecturer (P–, Rx+, Heavy FTA weight), and Situation 6, in which a student apologizes to a classmate acting as group leader (P–, Rx–, Light FTA weight). These two situations were purposively selected because

they represent the heaviest and the lightest FTA weight among the six scenarios administered, allowing the study to provide an in-depth, contrastive analysis of how the same group of students adjusted their apology strategies when the power relation, social distance, and severity of the offense shifted from one extreme to the other, rather than a more superficial overview of all six scenarios at once.

B. Population and Sample

The population in this study was all sixth-semester students of the English Education Department (Tadris Bahasa Inggris) at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang in the academic year 2025/2026. Sixth-semester students were selected as the population because they have completed foundational courses in linguistics and pragmatics, making them particularly relevant participants for a study on apology speech act production. The total population consisted of all sixth-semester students enrolled in the English Education Department, distributed across four classes: Class A, Class B, Class C, and Class D.

Regarding the sampling technique, this study employed a *total purposive sampling* technique, also known as saturated sampling or census sampling. Total sampling is a technique in which all members of the population are used as the sample of the study. This technique is typically applied when the total number of the population is relatively manageable and when the researcher intends to obtain comprehensive and representative data from the entire population (Sugiyono, 2018). Since the population of this study consisted exclusively of sixth-semester students enrolled in four classes of the English

Education Department, total sampling was considered the most appropriate approach to ensure that all students had an equal opportunity to participate and that the data collected would accurately reflect the pragmatic competence of the entire group.

Based on the official student list report (*Laporan Daftar Mahasiswa*) issued by the Academic Information System (SIKAD) of UIN Imam Bonjol Padang on April 20, 2026, the total number of sixth-semester students registered in the English Education Department for the 2023 intake period was 102 students across four classes. However, after reviewing the data, 23 students were identified as inactive (non-active) and are therefore excluded from the sample of this study. Consequently, the total number of active students who qualify as the sample is 79 students, distributed across four classes as follows: Class A consists of 18 active students, Class B consists of 21 active students, Class C consists of 15 active students, and Class D consists of 25 active students. All 79 active students were included as participants in this study in accordance with the total sampling technique applied.

C. Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), specifically a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT). The DCT was designed to elicit participants' written responses to a set of situational prompts that required them to produce appropriate apology expressions in different contexts. These situations were constructed to reflect variations in social distance, power relations, and the severity of the offense.

The WDCT format was chosen over an oral or role-play DCT because it allows respondents to read each situation at their own pace and produce a written apology under the same time constraint, which yields standardized and directly comparable data across a large number of participants. This choice is consistent with (Cohen, 1996) definition of the DCT as a written questionnaire that presents situational prompts and asks respondents to write what they would say, and it follows the written DCT design commonly adopted in prior apology speech act research, such as (Irhami & Yuliasri, 2025). The complete DCT instrument administered to the participants including the instructions for respondents, the respondent profile sheet, and the six situational scenarios is presented in full in Appendix 1.

The use of DCT is widely recognized in pragmatics research as an effective tool for collecting data on speech acts. (Cohen, 1996) explains that DCT allows researchers to systematically examine how participants perform specific speech acts in controlled situations. Through this instrument, participants were able to express their intended responses, which can then be analyzed to identify patterns and strategies of apology.

In this study, the DCT consisted of six scenarios that prompted students to respond in written form. The responses were used as the primary data to analyze the types and strategies of apology speech acts produced by the participants.

In terms of its structure, the DCT instrument administered to the participants consisted of three main components. The first component was a set

of instructions for respondents, which explained the purpose of the task, required participants to write all responses in English, reminded them that there were no right or wrong answers, prohibited the use of mobile phones, dictionaries, translation applications, or artificial intelligence tools while completing the task, and allocated 60 minutes for the completion of all six scenarios. The second component was a respondent profile sheet, in which participants recorded their participant number, gender, semester or year of study, and contact information before responding to the situational prompts. The third component consisted of the six situational scenarios themselves, each accompanied by a brief description of the situation, a task prompt indicating the expected form of response a spoken apology, a written email, or a chat message, depending on the context and a blank space for the participant's written response.

Each of the six scenarios was deliberately constructed with reference to three social variables identified by (Brown & Levinson, 1987) as jointly determining the weightiness of a face-threatening act, namely Power (P), Distance (D), and Rank of Imposition (Rx). The definition of each variable, together with an example relevant to the context of this study, is presented in *Table 3.1*.

Table 3. 1
Social Variables Underlying the Construction of the DCT Scenarios

Symbol	Variable	Definition	Example
P	Power	The degree to which the hearer (H) has power or authority over the speaker (S); a non-reciprocal variable.	A student apologizing to a lecturer (P-) versus to a friend (P=).

D	Distance	The social distance between speaker and hearer, reflecting familiarity, solidarity, and frequency of contact; a reciprocal variable.	An apology to a close friend (D-) versus to a lecturer (D+).
Rx	Imposition	The rank of the offense, i.e., the severity of the face-threatening act and the cost or inconvenience caused to the hearer.	Being late (Rx-) versus plagiarism or missing an exam (Rx+).

The six scenarios were systematically constructed based on (Brown & Levinson, 1987) three social variables Power (P), Distance (D), and Rank of Imposition (Rx) so that the set as a whole covered a range of Face-Threatening Act (FTA) weights from light to heavy. The complete blueprint (kisi-kisi) mapping each scenario to these variables is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3. 2
DCT Blueprint (Kisi-Kisi): Mapping of Scenarios to Social Variables and FTA Weight

No.	Scenario	Power (P)	Distance (D)	Imposition (Rx)	FTA Weight	Situation Summary
1	Student → Lecturer	P-	D±	Rx+	Heavy	Being late to a class presentation
2	Student → Close Friend	P=	D-	Rx+	Moderate	Missing a study group without notice
3	Student → Thesis Supervisor	P-	D+	Rx+	Heavy	Submitting a plagiarized draft
4	Student → Course Acquaintance	P=	D±	Rx±	Moderate	Accidentally sharing wrong group files
5	Student → Department Secretary	P-	D+	Rx±	Moderate	Disrupting an administrative process

6	Student Classmate (Group Leader)	→ P–	D+	Rx–	Light	Missing a group exam without informing
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Note: P– = low power (H has power over S); P= = equal power; D– = socially close; D+ = socially distant; D± = moderate; Rx– = low imposition; Rx± = moderate; Rx+ = high imposition.

As shown in Table 3.2, Scenarios 1 and 3 (student–lecturer and student–thesis supervisor) represent the heaviest FTA weight, combining low power and high imposition, whereas Scenario 6 (student–group leader) represents the lightest FTA weight due to its lower degree of imposition. This deliberate variation in P, D, and Rx across the six scenarios allowed the researcher to examine whether and how students adjusted their apology strategies according to differences in social context.

Of these six scenarios, Situation 1 and Situation 6 were purposively selected as the focus of the detailed strategy analysis presented in Chapter IV of this study. Situation 1 (student → lecturer) was selected to represent the heaviest FTA weight in the instrument, combining low power distance (P–) with a high rank of imposition (Rx+), while Situation 6 (student → classmate/group leader) was selected to represent the lightest FTA weight, combining the same low power distance (P–) with a low rank of imposition (Rx–). Because the two situations share a similarly asymmetrical power relation but differ sharply in the severity of the offense and its social consequence, comparing them makes it possible to isolate the effect of offense severity on the students' choice of apology strategy while holding the power

variable relatively constant. Situations 2 through 5, which represent moderate FTA weights, remained part of the full DCT instrument administered to the participants and contributed to the overall content validity of the instrument as reported in Table 3.3, but responses to these four scenarios are not included in the detailed strategy analysis reported in Chapter IV of this study.

To provide a complete picture of the instrument used for data collection, the full text of the six DCT situational scenarios each consisting of a situation description and a task prompt is presented below.

Scenario 1. Student → Lecturer: Being Late to a Presentation

SITUATION	You are a sixth-semester ELE student. Today, your Sociolinguistics class has scheduled student presentations. Your group is presenting third. Due to a traffic jam, you arrive 15 minutes late just as your group is about to start. Your lecturer notices and gives you a stern look as you enter.
TASK	What will you say to your lecturer to apologize for arriving late? Write your spoken apology as you would say it in the classroom.

Scenario 2. Student → Close Friend: Missing a Study Group Without

Notice

SITUATION	You and three close friends in your ELE program agreed to meet every evening this week to prepare for the Applied Linguistics final exam. Last night, you completely forgot — you fell asleep and did not respond to any messages. Your friends waited for two hours. You meet one of them in the corridor before class.
TASK	What will you say to your close friend to apologize? Write your spoken apology as you would say it naturally.

Scenario 3. Student → Thesis Supervisor: Submitting a Plagiarized Draft

SITUATION	Your thesis supervisor has just sent you a stern email stating that the draft chapter you submitted last week contains substantial unattributed content, which constitutes academic dishonesty. This was unintentional — you were confused about proper citation conventions. You must reply to the email immediately.
TASK	What will you write in your email reply to your thesis supervisor? Write the full email,

	including the subject line, opening, body, and closing.
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Scenario 4. Student → Course Acquaintance: Sharing Wrong Files

SITUATION	You are working on a group assignment with a classmate you do not know very well — you have spoken only a few times this semester. You were the one responsible for sharing the project files on Google Drive. This morning, your classmate messaged you saying you accidentally shared the wrong version, causing them to work on outdated material for the past two days.
TASK	What will you write in your WhatsApp or LINE reply to this classmate to apologize? Write the message as you would actually send it.

Scenario 5. Student → Department Administrative Secretary: Disrupting a Process

SITUATION	You went to the English Department secretariat to urgently request a letter of enrollment. In your rush, you accidentally knocked over a stack of organized documents on the secretary's desk. The secretary, who had spent considerable time sorting them, looks visibly frustrated. You are still at the counter.
TASK	What will you say to the department secretary to apologize? Write your spoken apology in that moment.

Scenario 6. Student → Group Leader (Classmate): Missing a Shared

Group Exam

SITUATION	Your ELE class has a speaking test conducted in groups of four. Each member's absence affects the group's score. Yesterday was your group's scheduled test day. You experienced a sudden family emergency and had to leave campus without informing anyone. The test has now been forfeited for the whole group. Your group leader — a classmate you know but are not close to — confronts you the next day.
TASK	What will you say to your group leader to apologize for missing the group test and the impact it caused? Write your spoken apology.

The instructions for respondents and the respondent profile sheet that accompanied these six scenarios follow the same format described earlier in this section, and the complete instrument as administered to the participants is presented in full in Appendix.

To ensure the validity of the DCT instrument used in this study, the researcher employed Aiken's V as a measure of content validity. Aiken's V is a statistical index used to quantify the degree of agreement among expert raters regarding the relevance and representativeness of each item in a research instrument (Aiken, 1985, as cited in (Retnawati, 2016)). This index is particularly appropriate for validating instruments in educational and social science research because it provides a straightforward numerical value that reflects the level of expert consensus on item quality.

According to (Retnawati, 2016), the Aiken's V formula is calculated as follows:

$$V = \sum s / [n(c-1)]$$

Where s = the rating given by each rater minus the lowest possible rating (lo); n = the number of expert raters; and c = the number of rating scale categories. The resulting value of V ranges from 0.00 to 1.00. An item is considered to have acceptable content validity when its Aiken's V value is equal to or greater than 0.67 (Retnawati, 2016). Items with a value below this threshold are subject to revision or removal from the instrument.

In this study, the DCT instrument was validated by three expert validators, namely lecturers in the fields of English language education and pragmatics. Each validator was asked to assess the appropriateness, clarity, and relevance of each DCT scenario item using a rating scale. The Aiken's V coefficient was then calculated for each item based on the validators' ratings. Items that obtained a V value of 0.67 or above were retained, while items that fell below

this threshold were revised accordingly before the instrument was administered to the research participants.

Table 3. 3
Results of Aiken's V Calculation for DCT Instrument Content Validity

No.	Assessment Aspects	Rater 1 (s)	Rater 2 (s)	Rater 3 (s)	Σs	V	Category
1	Construct Suitability	15	16	13	44	0.92	High (Valid)
2	Content/Material Suitability	16	15	15	46	0.96	High (Valid)
3	Language Clarity	12	12	12	36	1.00	High (Valid)
4	Adequacy of Instructions	12	11	12	35	0.97	High (Valid)
5	Theoretical Relevance	11	11	12	34	0.94	High (Valid)
Σ	Overall Average (17 items)	66	65	64	195	0.96	High (Valid)

Note: Rater 1 = Lailatul Husna, SS., M.Pd; Rater 2 = Honesty Trila S. Pd.I., M. Pd; Rater 3 = Nurkhairat Arniman, SPd.I., M.Hum. s = score - lo (lo = 1); Σs = sum of s values from all raters; $V = \Sigma s / [n(c-1)] = \Sigma s / [3 \times 4] = \Sigma s / 12$; n = 3 raters; c = 5 rating categories.

Based on Table 3.3 above, the results of Aiken's V calculation from three expert validators indicate that all five assessment aspects of the DCT instrument obtained V values ranging from 0.92 to 1.00, which are well above the minimum threshold of 0.67 established by (Retnawati, 2016). Specifically, the Construct Suitability aspect yielded a V value of 0.92, Content/Material Suitability obtained 0.96, Language Clarity achieved a perfect V value of 1.00, Adequacy of Instructions obtained 0.97, and Theoretical Relevance yielded 0.94. The overall V value across all 17 indicators and three raters was 0.96,

which falls within the high validity range ($V \geq 0.80$) according to (Retnawati, 2016). This result demonstrates that there is a strong level of expert agreement regarding the content validity of the DCT instrument, confirming that all items are relevant, clear, and theoretically grounded. Therefore, the DCT instrument was deemed valid and suitable for use in data collection in this study.

D. Technique of Data Collection

According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2014), data collection in qualitative research involves obtaining detailed information from participants to understand the phenomenon being studied. In this study, the written responses obtained from the DCT served as a source of data to explore how students produce apology speech acts in different contexts.

The data in this study were collected through the administration of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) to the selected participants. The DCT was distributed to sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program, who were asked to respond to several situational prompts by writing appropriate apology expressions.

The process of data collection began with explaining the purpose of the study and providing clear instructions to the participants. After that, the DCT was administered, and participants were given sufficient time to complete their responses. The collected responses were then compiled as the primary data for analysis.

E. Technique of Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach. The analysis focused on identifying and classifying the apology speech acts produced by the participants based on their responses in the Discourse Completion Test (DCT).

According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2014), qualitative data analysis involves organizing, coding, and interpreting data to develop meaningful findings, and the analysis in this study followed these three stages. The first step in the analysis was organizing the data by collecting all participants' responses and preparing them for examination. Next, each response was carefully read and categorized according to the types of apology strategies, based on the framework proposed by (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983), which includes expression of regret, taking responsibility, explanation, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance.

After categorizing the data, the researcher identified patterns of strategy use, including how the strategies were combined and which strategies were most frequently used by the participants. The analysis also considered the influence of contextual factors, such as social distance, power relations, and the severity of the offense, on the participants' responses. Finally, the last step of the analysis was interpreting the results to describe the patterns and draw conclusions about the students' pragmatic competence in producing apology speech acts.

For the purpose of this study, the coding and pattern-identification procedure described above was applied specifically to the students' responses to Situation 1 and Situation 6 of the DCT, selected because they represent the heaviest and the lightest FTA weight among the six scenarios administered (see Table 3.2). This focused, contrastive approach allowed the researcher to examine how the same 79 respondents adjusted their choice of apology strategy when the severity of the offense and the social distance toward the offended party shifted from one extreme (a lecturer, in Situation 1) to the other (a classmate, in Situation 6). Responses to Situations 2 through 5 were collected as part of the same instrument but were not subjected to this detailed coding and pattern analysis.

In line with the framework above, each response was coded using six categories: Expression of Regret (ER), Explanation or Account (EX), Taking Responsibility (TR), Offer of Repair (OR), Promise of Forbearance (PF), and Non-apology/Other (NA), the last of which was added to accommodate responses that did not realize any apology strategy at all. Requests for permission to enter the classroom (e.g., "may I join the class") were treated as requests rather than as an Offer of Repair, since they did not involve a concrete action to compensate for the offense. A single response could be coded with more than one strategy, and responses sharing the same combination of strategies were then grouped into strategy patterns to determine the frequency and dominant pattern of apology strategy used by the students.