

Interlanguage Pragmatics: Politeness Strategy of Apology by Thai Learners in Indonesian Learning Program for Foreign Speakers"

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Submission date: 04-Jun-2020 07:18PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1337648210

File name: ESP_JAZ_INTERLANGUAGE_FNL.doc (130K)

Word count: 5303

Character count: 30135

Interlanguage Pragmatics: Politeness Strategy of Apology by Thai Learners in "Indonesian Learning Program for Foreign Speakers"

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Abstract

An ability to use L2 in near native speakers' linguistic and cultural qualities within the context of their daily uses is one of the main objectives in the program of *Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers* or BIPA. This article aims to describe the politeness strategy in expressing the speech act of apology by BIPA students from Thailand. This study employs a qualitative approach with the interlanguage pragmatics study design. The data was collected from two institutions organizing BIPA for students from Thailand, namely IAIN Tulungagung and Indonesian for Overseas Tulungagung. They were collected by participatory observation technique, documentation, and interview and were analyzed by using interactive models. The results of data analysis found that (1) the forms of politeness of language in the speech acts of BIPA students from Thailand were *anticipatory apology* and *prescriptive or remedial apology*, (2) the triggering elements of apology by Thai students are space, time, speech, inability, indications on the pluses of lecturers, and violations of the norms, (3) apology by Thai students serves to (1) heal humiliation, (2) release the mind from deep-seated guilt, (3) remove the desire for vengeance, and (4) restore broken relationships.

Keywords: interlanguage, politeness, apology, guilty, humiliation.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Language Learning for Foreign Speakers (*Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers*) aims to train students to be able to use Indonesian language in various social contexts. In order that L2 students are able to use the language they learn in accordance

with their functions and social context, learning needs to be focused on mastering the language function rather than the language forms or structure. Learning focusing more on the language function is known as the pragmatic approach which gives more attention to the function of language in daily communication (Alonso, 2019). The pragmatic approach gives students the knowledge on how to use language according to the context in daily communication such as greeting, asking, commanding, and apologizing. Pragmatics invites students to communicate with the community because they are part of the community.

In recent years, there have been a significant development in pragmatic interlanguage studies as more and more researchers examine the development of pragmatic competencies in second language learners (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). Since then, studies on interlanguage pragmatics have increasingly improved in quality as well as in quantity. However, so far there has not been much literature describing the correlation between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competences in second language learners (Chang, 2011).

There is an assumption that the L1 pragmatic competence has been a big influence on the cultural adaptation of developing the L2 competence. Therefore, L2 pragmatic competence is not separable from L1 pragmatic competence. However, there is a difference between the development of L1 pragmatic competence and L2 pragmatic competence. The former runs subconsciously, automatically, and instinctively. Here the individual's awareness and willingness to get it play is of a relatively less role whereas the latter is controlled by the socio-cultural environment, the desire, and motivation to master a large role (Kecskes, 2015).

Pragmatics studies language in aspects of its function in human life. The focus of pragmatics studies is the language function realized in speech act. Searle (1969) divides speech acts into three types, namely locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts are acts of saying something. Illocutionary acts relating to the act of doing something with speech. While perlocutionary acts are related to consequences arising from illocutionary acts (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Illocutionary can be divided into five functions, namely representatives (or assertives), directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations (Searle, 2014; Searle, 1976, 2010).

In daily interactions, these speech acts are often used to fulfill the necessities of life and maintain social relationships (Mohd-Asraf, Hossain & Eng, 2019). Apology is one of the functions of language that is universally used to maintain harmony in social interactions. As apology speech acts used to maintain and improve social relations, interlanguage apology in the discourse of conversation has increasingly become a concern for linguists since twenty years ago. They have studied apology used by different ethnic groups (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981); studying international apology (Masita, 2006); studying apology in various relationships, both close personal relationships between partners and between friends at work (Chapman, G. & Thomas, 2006). The more interesting one is Coomer's research (1999) that examined the apology between humans and their pets (Jamal, 2013).

Furthermore, research on strategy of apology in interlanguage pragmatics has been widely carried out by language observers, including Nureddeen (2008) and Bataineh & Bataineh (2006). Nureddeen studied apology by Arabic learners as L2 from Sundanese. He wants to see the socio-cultural attitude and values of Sundanese learners who say apology in Arabic. Using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), he collected data from 110 colleges in Khartoum, Sudan. The study found that the apology strategies used by them and thus the it supports previous findings on the universal strategy apology. However, he also discovered aspects of culture-specific aspects of language use. From these findings, he hopes that there is a cross-cultural apology strategy comparison (Nureddeen, 2008). Bataineh & Bataineh (2006) reviewed the Apology strategies of Jordanian EFL university students. They found that men and women used the main strategies, namely strategies of statement of remorse, accounts, compensation, promises not to repeat offense, and reparation. They also found non-apology

strategies, such as blaming victims and brushing off the incident as unimportant to exonerate themselves from blame (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006).

To use an effective speech act of apology as desired by the apologizer, the apologizer should master the target language and understand the context of the use of the apology in the interlocutor's language (Chapman & Thomas, 2006). This is important to note because in accepting apologies, some people emphasize on apologetic expressions, while others emphasize on the recognition of responsibilities and promises of future improvement. But in the case of interlanguage pragmatics, errors in the linguistic aspect are usually tolerable by native speakers, but errors in the pragmatics aspect are usually less acceptable. Certainly differences in cultural contexts make native speakers less able to accept errors in these aspects of pragmatics (LoCastro, 1997). The most common example is the difference of people from English Speaking Countries who usually do not really care about the issue of honorifics, but is very disturbed when they are asked about issues relating to privacy such as age and religion. On the other hand, Indonesians do not mind being asked about age and religion, but are very uncomfortable if called without honorifics (Alonzo, 2019).

This current study examines the politeness of language by BIPA students from Thailand in conducting speech apology. In detail, this study describes the form of apology, the triggering elements of apology, apology strategy, and apology function by BIPA students from Thailand. In fact, there are two types of Thai students, namely those from the Pattani province who speak Malay as the mother tongue and those from outside Pattani who speak Siamese as the mother tongue. Students who speak Malay, because they are closer to Indonesian, they are quicker to master Indonesian than those who speak Siamese but culturally both groups have a lot in common.

METHOD

This study aims to describe the politeness strategies in expressing apology by BIPA students from Thailand. To achieve this goal, a qualitative study was conducted, by using the interlanguage pragmatics approach. The interlanguage pragmatics approach is used because this study examines the pragmatic competence of BIPA as L2 from Thailand (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). Because the data was collected over a long period of time, from basic to advanced level, this study used a longitudinal design in teaching and learning setting (Cai & Wang, 2013).

The data of this research are speeches that contain politeness in language, specifically the speech act of apology. The data were collected from two BIPA organizers in Indonesia, namely IAIN Tulungagung and Indonesian for Overseas Tulungagung. In collecting data, the researchers acted as the core instrument assisted by six BIPA lecturers, 4 lecturers from IAIN Tulungagung and 2 lecturers from Indonesian for Overseas Tulungagung. The data were taken from natural settings, namely the BIPA teaching and learning process, so that the data are authentic (Dahl, 1991). The data were collected by observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Observation was used to obtain fieldnotes on the use of apology. The interview was used to ask the factors, purposes, and contexts of the used speeches of apology. Documentation was used to obtain learning documents in the forms of pragmatic aspects, syllabus and lecturers' handbook.

As a speech act, apology is analyzed based on the form, triggering factor, strategy, and function based on the existing context. To analyze the data, the authors used a flow model adopted from Miles & Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 2014). The classification of data was based on Aijmer's (1996) thinking, namely the types and the triggering element of apology. While the function of apology was analyzed on Bentley's idea, namely healing humiliations, freeing the mind from deep-seated guilt, removing the desire for vengeance, and restoring broken relationships (Bentley, 2015).

The validity of the data was done by (1) lengthening observation, (2) increasing perseverance, and (3) using triangulation. Extending observations was done by increasing the duration of time to make more observation and frequency of visits to the study site. Perseverance was attempted by repeating and correcting data according to the established classification. Triangulation was accepted by matching data from different sources and different speech contexts and discussing with colleagues to get some inputs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Apology

Data analysis reveals that the forms of apology spoken by Thailand students of BIPA can be divided into (1) anticipatory apology and (2) retrospective apology. Anticipatory apology is an apology that appears before someone makes a mistake or makes the interlocutor uncomfortable. This kind of apology serves as an anticipation if what is done later makes the interlocutor disappointed or inconvenient. While retrospective apology is an apology that appears after a speaker makes a mistake and thus serves as a remedy for the given mistakes. Examples of data from both forms of apology are presented below.

Anticipatory apology

[1] Ln (Learner): Maaf, Bu ya kalau salah. Saya belum hafal semua, ya. (*Sorry, Ma'am if I'm wrong. I have not memorized everything, yes*). (1)

Lc (Lecturer): Coba saja sebisanya (*Try as best you can*). (2)

Data [1] above occurs when a student is asked to come to the front of the class to practice a speech on introducing themselves in Indonesian. To anticipate if something goes wrong in doing her job, the learner makes an apology, expressed in (1). This kind of apology often arises from learners who are usually less prepared to accomplish the assignments of their lecturers.

Retrospective apology

[2] Ln : Maaf, Pak. (saya) terlambat karena antri mandi. (*Sorry, sir, yes. I was late because I was in a queue of showers*). (3)

LC : Ya, silakan duduk! (*Yes, please sit down!*) (4)

BIPA students from Thailand who became the subject of research live in an Islamic boarding school (*Ma'had Jamiah*) and dormitories, in which they are always waiting in line especially for eating and bathing. Therefore, it has become a daily sight every first hour of entering class, they are frequently late in joining the class. This has triggered a great deal of retrospective apology among BIPA students from Thailand. ³²

The revealed forms of apology of Thai students in this study are in line with the findings of Jamal (2013) who studied apology strategy done by teachers of trainer (*Widya Iswara*) and the training participants at Surabaya Training Center. He found that the apology conducted by them and the training participants could be divided into anticipatory apology and remedy apology. Both appear equally frequent (Jamal, 2013).

Stimulant Element of Apology

Data analysis also found that apology expressed by Thai students was triggered by place, time, conversation, disability, display of the strengths of others, and violation of norms. The following are examples of each data.

Space

[3] Ln : Maaf, bu. Kita pindah keruang samping tangga. (*Sorry, Ma'am. We move in the side class near the stairs.*) (5)

Lc : Ya, mari! (*Yes. Lets!*) (6)

Ln : Maaf, bu. Tempatnya kotor dan panas. Tidakada AC. (*Sorry, ma'am. The place is dirty and hot. There is no air conditioning.*) (7)

BIPA classes are usually in the Language Development Unit (UPB). The room is clean and air-conditioned so studying in the room, the students and lecturers feel comfortable. Because on that day there was a TOEFL test administered by the English department, the BIPA class was momentarily moved to another classroom next to the stairs. The new room is still dirty, because it is rarely used, and is not air-conditioned so that it is quite hot. For this reason, the class captain conveyed the apology to the lecturer who was in charge of teaching on that day.

Time

[4] Ln : Maaf, bu. Saya terlambat, ya bu. Mencari sepatu tidak ada. (*Sorry, Ma'am. I am late, yes. Look for my shoes to find.*) (8)

Lc : Ya. Silakan masuk! (*Yes, please enter!*) (9)

Being late to class is a common problem that occurs during the learning process, specially when the students live in a dormitory. There are some reasons such as lining up, queuing for food, shoes worn by friends, and so on. As far as the delay can be tolerated, for example in 5-10 minutes, usually the lecturer can understand it. Apology that is triggered due to such a being late belongs to mild apology.

Conversation

[5] Ln : Maaf, bu. Mohon ulangi nama lain Indonesia apa? (*Sorry, ma'am. Please repeat the other Indonesian names, what?*) (10)

Lc : Nusantara. (*Nusantara/Archipelago*). (11)

Data [5] above occurs when the lecturer (Lc) explains about Indonesia at length by displaying a map of the Indonesian archipelago that stretches from Sabang to Merauke, one of the learners (L) interrupted for asking the teacher to repeat another name of Indonesia (10). The teacher answers, "Nusantara" (11). In this case, students make a speech before the teacher completes the explanation. For this reason, to reduce the discomfort of teachers who are being interrupted, the students do an apology. This kind of apology is a mild apology and often occurs in an interaction.

Inability

[6] LC : Suhaila, silakan maju! (*Suhaila, please come forward (class)!*) (12)

Ln : Maaf, bu. Saya belumbisa. (*Sorry, ma'am. I can't.*) (13)

Suhaila's inability to respond to the lecturer's order triggered her to do apology. This often happens, especially for the freshman in the first year who are still at the elementary level. However, along with the increasing ability of students at further level, in general, the apology that arises is due to disability decreases.

Showing the strengths of others

[7] Ln : Kemarin yang mengajar bu Maulida. Beliau banyak bicara dan menyanyikan

Indonesia Raya. Maaf, yabu! (*Yesterday who Mrs. Maulida thought us. Talk a lot*

and we are invited to sing Indonesian song (Raya). Sorry, ma'am. (14)

Lc : Oh, ya. Sudah bisa bernyanyi Indonesia Raya? (*Oh yes. Can you sing Indonesia Raya?*) (15)

The data [7] above occurs when one of the class teacher (Mrs. Rahayu) was absent. Mrs. Maulida, another BIPA teacher, replaced her. The next day, when Mrs. Rahayu entered, the captain of the class conveyed what Mrs. Maulida had done in the last meeting when she substituted Mrs. Rahayu. Realizing that students had sensed a comparatively better performance of Mrs. Maulida's other than Mrs. Rahayu's, the class captain anticipated Mrs. Rahayu's potential offence by making an apology to mitigate her discomfort.

Violation of Norms

Violation of norms in the world of Education are different from those of norms in society, which are more directed than in education setting. At school, the occurring violation of norms is normally made by the students who are not obeying school rules such as coming late, not wearing uniforms, not doing assignments (homework), and so on. Apology violation of norms by BIPA students can be seen below.

[8] Lc : Rusdeen, mengapa kamu tidak mengerjakan pekerjaan rumah (PR)? (*Rusdeen, why don't you do your homework?*) (16)

Ln : Saya lupa, maaf, bu. Insya Allah lain waktu saya akan kerjakan. (*I forgot, sorry, ma'am. God willing, another time I do (homework).*) (17)

The data above occurs when the teacher asks one of the students (Rusdeen) who did not do the homework given by the teacher in the previous meeting. Rusdeen's apology was followed by the reason "I forgot" and the promise "Inshaallah, another time (*time*) I (will) do (homework)". Violation of norms in school, as shown by the data above, is a violation of the rules of learning, that is, each student is required to do the assignment given by the lecturer. Apology caused by violation in a society usually results in a more severe consequent. If it is related to the state's law, even though the offender has conveyed apology, the legal process will continue. For example, the case of spreading a hoax, slander, hate speech, an insult in social media, etc., the violators are still subject to imprisonment according to laws even though they have expressed apology to the victims or the community,

In general, the triggers for acts of apology are acts that are wrong or a feeling that they have or will do wrong. This is what causes a person to do anticipatory and remedy apology. In Jamal's (2013) research, apology was triggered by several elements, such as elements of space, time, speech, inability, and superiority. In addition, he also discovered apology caused by linguistic malfunction and non-linguistic malfunctions (Jamal, 2013).

Strategies of Apology

Judging from the strategy used by BIPA students, we can categorize an apology into two types, namely explicit apology and implicit apology. The following are the examples of explicit and implicit apologies.

Explicite Apology

[9] Ln : Assalamu 'alaikum (menuju meja dosen). Maaf, bu. Pagi ini saya tidak masuk Karena sakit perut. (*Peace be upon you. (goes to the teacher's desk) Sorry, Ma'am. This morning I did not join the class because of a stomachache.*) (18)

LC: Ya. Seerayutdeen sudah sehat? (*Yes. Seerayutdeen is healthy?*) (19)

Explicit strategy in teaching-learning interactions in the classroom is often carried out because students are aware of differences in social status and social distance, making explanatory apology better to reduce the discomfort of the interlocutors. In contrast to interactions where the interactants have relatively the same social status, explicit apology requires a greater cost. Brown & Levinson (1978) underscore that severity of an act of apology is calculated based on the social distance and the status distance (power gap) of the interactants. The wider the social distance and the power gap between the speaker and the interlocutor is, the more severe the discomfort that rises (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The more severe the inconvenience resulted, it is expected that the more complete and complex the language of apology is conveyed. It should contain the explicit expression of apology, claim of being guilty and giving reasons, repairing the relation if there is a conflict, and promising not to repeat the same mistake (Cohen & Olstein, 1981; Chapman & Thomas, 2006).

Implicite Apology

[10] Lc: Nasreen, mengapa kamu belum menyerahkan tugas minggu lalu? (*Nasreen, why haven't the assignments been submitted last week?*) (20)

Ln: Begini, pak. Selasa saya pulang kerumah (Hatjay, Thailand). Baru datang tadi pagi. (*Look, sir. Tuesday, I returned home (Hatjai, Thailand), just this morning I arrived.*) (21)

In the data [10] above, Nasreen did not explicitly apologize, but implicitly stated the reasons why he had not submitted the assignment yet. The given reasons have indicated that Nasreen actually apologized. He also said that his return was out of permission from the lecturer because the family suddenly delivered the news that his mother was sick and he was asked to go home. Therefore, he did not have time to ask permission.

Apology strategies found in this study are in line with those found by Jamal (2013). He found that the apology strategy carried out by the training participants at the Surabaya Education and Training Center was an explicit and implicate strategies (Jamal, 2013). However, it is different from what was found by Bataineh & Bataineh (2006), who study EFL students in Jordan. They found that the apology strategy used by Jordanian students was the primary strategies of remorse, accounts, compensation, promises not to repeat offense, and reparation. But the sequence of student responses of male students is different from the responses of female students. In addition, he also found non-apology strategies such as blaming victims and brushing off the incident as unimportant to exonerate themselves from blaming. Female students prefer to use non-apology strategy to avoid debate, while male student use it to blame the victim (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006).

The public apology strategy is different from the government for their mistakes. Cels (2017) found four strategies that were put together by the government or company leaders, namely "articulating values in relation to past and future"; "Defining the wrongdoing"; "Constructing moral communities" and "differentiating responsibilities" (Cels, 2017).

Apology without sincerity and real effort to improve the situation is in vain. Aboriginal leader Patrick Dodson stated that apologies by the Australian government were useless if it is not followed by concrete work to improve the fate of Aboriginal people, as native Australians, in the Australian constitution. Apology is not only a moral obligation but also central to reparative justice. Politically, apology is actually reparative justice (Thompson, 2008).

Apology function

One thing that often occurs in an interaction is that the interactants make mistakes, whether intentionally or not, mild or severe. The violation can make the speaker or the interlocutors feel uncomfortable, threatened on his face. To reduce discomfort, they usually do apology. In general, apology serves to foster, maintain² and improve social relations. In this study, four apology functions were found, namely (1) heal humiliations, (2) free the mind from deep-seated guilt, (3) remove the desire for vengeance, and (4) restore broken relationships. The following is an example of apology function taken from data by Thai students.

Heal Humiliations

[11] Lc: Azuwan, menurutcatatansaya, kamusudahabsen 4 kali. (*Azuwan, according to my notes, you have been absent 4 times.*)(22)

Ln: Maaf, pak.InsyaAlahsayaakanrajin. (*Sorry, sir. God willing, I will be diligent, yes.*) (23)

Azuwan is one of the BIPA students who did not enter the school most frequently. According to information from other lecturers, Azuwan did not attend seven meetings so he was not allowed to take the Writing Skills material test. In the interview, Azuwan said that he did not enter due to illness and returned to Thailand to seek treatment. Speech (23) shows that the person apologizes and promises not to repeat. This is done to reduce embarrassment in front of lecturers and friends.

Free the mind from deep-seated guilt

[12] Husna: Firman, maaf, ya. Kemarinsayabilangkamu malas. (*Firman, I'm sorry, yes. Yesterday I said you were lazy.*) (24)

Firman: Kamungawur! (*You're inconsequential.*) (25)

The data [12] above happened when Firman, one of the Thai students, did not enter the speaking skill course. When the lecturer asked why he was absent, Husna spontaneously replied that he was lazy. From the interview results it is known that he did not enter the class, not because of his laziness, but because of being overslept. In the next hour, Firman went to campus. Therefore, he told Husna, "You are inconsequential". His answer does not explicitly forgive Husna, but Husna feels that she is already out of the burden of error.

Remove the desire for vengeance

[13] Thohiroh : Brak! (HP Halawatyjatuh). Oh, maaf, Hala. Jikanatirusaksayaakan perbaiki. (*Brak! (Halawaty's cell phone falls). Ouch, sorry Hala. If it breaks later I fix it.*) (26)

Halawaty : Gak apa-apa, koq. (*Well. It's okay, bro.*) (27)

The data [13] above explains Thohiroh who accidentally dropped Halawati's cellphone. He was worried that Halawati would return the cellphone. But after Thohiroh apologized and was responsible for repairing it, Halawati forgave by saying, "Well. It's okay". Hearing Halawati's answer, Thohiroh felt that Halawati would not retaliate.

Ultimately restore broken relationships

[14] Sanma : Mas, Ya (Yahya). Kenapa SMS saya tidak dibalas? (*Mas, Ya. Why didn't you replied my SMS?*)(28)

Yahya : HP saya rusak. Maaf! (*My cellphone is broken. Sorry!*) (29)

Sanma and Yahya are close friends since they were in Walailak University which sent them to study in Indonesia. Because of their closeness, sometimes they have a sharp conflict. However, after forgiving each other, their closeness is well repaired. The same thing happened on that day. After Sanma found out that Yahya had not replied to his text because his cellphone was broken, Sanma forgave him and they both befriended again.

The function of apology found is in harmony with the ideas put forward by Bentley (2018), namely (1) heal humiliations, (2) free the mind from deep-seated guilt, (3) remove the desire for vengeance, and finally (4) restore broken relationships (Bentley, 2015). In terms of apology, we need to analyze it by realizing that in an interaction there is something often hidden in the corner of the heart, namely shame, feeling guilty, and fear of embarrassment that makes someone feel reluctant to apologize. In fact, there are several things we can do, even deepening our understanding on national and international conflicts and how to resolve them. Doing an apology is the simplest way we can do to resolve the conflict (Bentley, 2015).

An act of apology is considered complete, or sincere, and not sincere, it can be based on several four apology content indicators, namely (1) apology expression, (2) acknowledgment of responsibility, (3) offer of repairs for damage (if any), and (4) guarantee for not repeated again in the future (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). In line with Cohen & Olshtain, Chapman & Thomas (2006) state that the complexity of apology includes five things, namely (1) regret, (2) acceptance (error), (3) offering compensation, (4) honesty (will not repeat), and (5) apologies. The more indicators that are met by the speaker, an apology is considered more sincere.

Conclusion³⁹

The results of the data analysis found that (1) the form of politeness in language in apologizing acts of BIPA students from Thailand was anticipatory apology and prescriptive / remedial apology, (2) the triggering elements of apology expressed by Thai students were respectively space, time, speech, inability, indicating other pluses of lecturers, and violation of norms, (4) apology strategy undertaken by Thai students is exploitative strategy and implication strategy, and (5) in general the function of apology by Thai students is to improve and maintain social relations. However, apology specifically done by Thai students functions as to (a) heal humiliations, (b) free the mind from deep-seated guilt, (c) remove the desire for vengeance, and ultimately (d) restore broken relationships.

In this study, prescriptive or remedy apology forms appear more frequently than anticipatory apology because it is hypothetically influenced by the cultural background of the mother tongue, namely Siamese. The most common triggering element is incompetence and violation of norms. However, the former decreases as the students' competence increases, while the latter still occurs despite the given corrective feedbacks. However, there is no element that triggers severe apology that causes great discomfort on the part of the interlocutors, such as serious face threatening. Both explicit and implicit strategies are usually followed by reasons. This strategy choice is usually based on the severity or discomfort potentially felt by the interlocutors. At last, the apology functions have been acquired by all Thai students and thus make the interaction between students and lecturers or among the students run harmoniously.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank the BIPA instructors who have helped them in data collection process. They are Rahayu, Maulida, Muyassaroh, Mustofa, Mujianto, and Marista. Thanks also go to the 2015 Class students both studying at IAIN and at Indonesian for Overseas Tulungagung.

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