

**AN ANALYSIS OF APOLOGY EXPRESSIONS IN  
“THE LAST SONG” NOVEL BY NICHOLAS SPARKS:  
PRAGMATICS APPROACH**

**THESIS**



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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
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PUTERA BATAM UNIVERSITY  
2023**

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
English Sarjana Sastra**



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2023**

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is the real work of myself and I realize that this thesis has never been published in other media before, partially, or entirely, in the name of mine or others.

Batas, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2023



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**By:**

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## ABSTRAK

*Bahasa memiliki peran penting yang tak terbantahkan dalam komunikasi di masyarakat. Melalui bahasa, manusia dapat mengekspresikan pikiran dan emosinya saat berkomunikasi. Manusia mengekspresikan emosi, ide, dan pikiran melalui bahasa dan ekspresi tersebut memiliki peran penting dalam hubungan manusia. Salah satu tindakan ekspresif yang umum adalah meminta maaf, yang merupakan tindak tutur ilokusi yang dilakukan untuk memperbaiki kesalahan atau pelanggaran yang sudah berlalu, untuk memulihkan hubungan antara penerima maaf dan peminta maaf. Dalam penelitian ini, dua objek diambil untuk menjadi tujuan penelitian, yaitu jenis strategi permintaan maaf dan faktor dari permintaan maaf yang dapat ditemukan dalam novel "The Last Song" karya Nicholas Sparks. Peneliti menerapkan teori strategi permintaan maaf oleh Trosborg (1994) dan faktor-faktor permintaan maaf yang diteorikan oleh Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) untuk menganalisis objek dari penelitian ini. Penelitian ini telah menerapkan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif oleh (Creswell, 2013), dan didukung dengan metode observasional untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis data yang diteorikan oleh Sudaryanto (2015). Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 3 data strategi mengelak, 13 data permintaan maaf langsung, 9 data permintaan maaf tidak langsung, dan 2 data dukungan perbaikan. Untuk faktornya, ada 2 data faktor budaya, 23 data faktor pribadi, dan 2 data faktor kontekstual. Akhirnya, semua ucapan strategi dan faktor ditemukan dalam novel "The Last Song" oleh Nicholas Sparks.*

***Kata Kunci: strategi permintaan maaf; ekspresif; pragmatik***

## ABSTRACT

Language has an undeniably important role in communication in the society. Through language, human can express their thoughts and emotions while communicating. Human expresses emotions, ideas, and thoughts through language and such expression has an important role in human relation. One of the expressive acts commonly is apologizing, which is an illocutionary speech act that is performed to remedy past mistake or offence, in order to restore relationship between the hearer and speaker. In this research, two objectives are taken to be the research's objects, they are the types of apology strategies and the factors of the apology that can be found in the novel "The Last Song" by Nicholas Sparks. The researcher applied the theory of apology strategies by Trosborg (1994) and the factors of apology theorized by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) to analyze on the objects of the research. This research had applied the design of descriptive qualitative research by (Creswell, 2013), and supported by the method of observational to collect and analyze data theorized by Sudaryanto (2015). The results of the analysis showed that there are 3 data of evasive strategies, 13 data of direct apology, 9 data of indirect apology, and 2 data of remedial support. For the factors, there are 2 data of cultural factor, 23 data of personal factor, and 2 data of contextual factor. Finally, all utterances of the strategies and factors are found in the novel of "The Last Song" by Nicholas Sparks.

**Keywords: apology strategies; expressive; pragmatics**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TITLE PAGE</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>SURAT PERNYATAAN</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>DECLARATION OF THE THESIS ORIGINALITY</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>APPROVAL PAGE</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Research .....	1
1.2 Identification of the Problem .....	6
1.3 Limitation of the Problem .....	6
1.4 Formulation of the Problem .....	7
1.5 Objection of the Research .....	7
1.6 Significance of the Research .....	7
1.7 Definition of Key Term .....	7
<b>CHAPTER II</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES AND</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>8</b>
2.1 Pragmatics .....	8
2.1.1 Apology .....	8
2.1.1.1 The Apology Strategies .....	9
1. Evasive Strategies/Minimizing offense .....	9
2. Direct Apology/Expression of apology .....	10
3. Indirect Apology .....	10
4. Remedial Support .....	11
2.1.1.2 Factors of Apology .....	11
1. Cultural .....	12
2. Personal .....	12
3. Contextual .....	12
2.2 Previous Research .....	12
2.3 Theoretical Framework .....	15
<b>CHAPTER III</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>16</b>
3.1 Research Design .....	16
3.2 Object of the Research .....	16
3.3 Method of Collecting Data .....	16
3.4 Method of Analyzing Data .....	17
3.5 Method of Presenting Research Result .....	18
<b>CHAPTER IV</b> .....	<b>19</b>

<b>RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 Analysis of Apologies Strategies and its Factor .....	19
4.1.1 Evasive Strategies.....	20
4.1.2 Direct Apology .....	22
4.1.3 Indirect Apology.....	29
4.1.4 Remedial Support .....	35
4.2 Findings.....	36
<b>CHAPTER V .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION .....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1 Conclusion .....	39
5.2 Recommendation .....	40
<b>REFERENCES</b>	
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix 1. Data Collection	
Appendix 2. Curriculum Vitae	
Appendix 3. Surat Keterangan Izin Penelitian	

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework.....	15

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

This study aims to investigate speech act realization pattern. Another goal is to compare user of apology by myself and how to use how to apply to the people around. As a simple example is while I know the people but I didn't mention the name, it is looks like a small thing but it will hurt the people that I didn't mention before. In this situation need the fast response to have an apology with say sorry, I am so sorry or any else to have forgiveness. A simple example from myself, with a great hope that it can have a positive influence.

In learning another language, the ability to communication using the language is a difficult task as often grammar and vocabulary are not enough to support the communication. As one of the largest communication tools, language's role is undeniably important in the society. Conversation between individual encourages social interaction that preserve relationship in the society. Through language, human can express their thoughts and emotions while communicating.

Human expresses emotions, ideas, and thoughts through language and such expression has an important role in human relation. Building relationship to another individual contribute to the ever-growing society that cannot ever be lost, because human cannot live alone in world without another human. Therefore, expression can be done with more than a simple spoken sentence as spoken word can carry a

larger influence as an action. Some expressive actions that human show in the society is: thanking, condoling, congratulating, praising, and apologizing.

There is a study about speech acts, expressive is one of them. Expressive speech acts are the point at which certain psychological states are expressed, while they are not a suitable direction in which various psychological states can be expressed, where propositions give property or act to the speaker or listener, for example: congratulations, thanks, apologies (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985).

Apologizing is one of expressive acts of illocutionary. A conversation is shown below of a situation when a speaker (A) expressed an apology to the listener (B) who was dealing with a mistake that the speaker had made. The listener accepted the speaker's mistake. Therefore, it can be concluded that the speaker was considered successful in neutralizing the situation. The reason is, the speaker wanted to align the connection between them.

Speaker (A) : **“My bad, I shouldn’t have done that”**  
 Listener (B) : “Oh why does that matter? It’s fine, it’s not the end of the world”

The conversation presented above shows an apology situation when the speaker utters “My Bad” for admitting their mistake. The utterance is continued with the sentence of “I shouldn’t have done that”, as a supporting sentence in the apology. It is shown that the speaker tries to communicate with the listener regarding the apology and remorse. Holmes (2013) stated that apology is used to repair relation broken due to a violation of the speaker. It can be explained that Apology is an expression which people show for correcting mistake in a social contact in order to not affect a relationship. It also has the function to amend a bad situation in a relationship becomes good again. Apology is not only a simple sentence but rather serves as a correction action. In the conversation, the speaker tries to keep the relationship good with the listener by apologizing and showing the remorse. As a result of the apology, the listener accepts the apology hence the attempt to amend relation is successful.

There are another phenomenon shows about apologizing speech acts. The discussion below tells of a situation where the speaker (A) is in his friend (B) made

her furious. The conversation starts when the beloved watch of B is lost. He does not necessarily lose the watch but (A) does. Nonetheless, (A) does not imply such an act, nor does it wish to.

**The speaker (A)** : “I’m sorry. I’ve made you angry”  
**The hearer (B)** : “It’s ok”

The conversation above shows the apology when the speaker (A) utters “I’m sorry”. The utterances of “I’m Sorry” expresses remorse and guilt from speaker (A) spoken toward listener (B). In speaker (A) showing their guilt regarding a violation done to listener (B), speaker (A) also expresses remorse by uttering “I’ve made you angry” in attempt to amend the relation with listener (B). In repairing relation when violation has been done by the speaker, apology can be used to soothe the situation Holmes (1992). After the speaker apologizes, the listener accepts the apology hence the social relation has been restored. The similar utterance that expressing apologize such as “I’m Sorry” also show in a novel entitled “The Last Song”.

“The Last Song” is an original United States novel written by Nicholas Sparks. This novel is a romantic novel released in September 2009 by the publisher of Grand Central Publishing in the United States. The life of Veronica Ronnie Miller, aged seventeen, changed when her parents divorced, and her father moved to live in Wilmington, North Carolina. Three years later, she was still angry and alienated from her parents, especially her father, until her mother decided to bring her and her younger brother, Jonah, to spend the summer in Wilmington with her father. Ronnie's father, a former teacher and concert pianist, had a quiet life in the

coastal city, muffled in creating works of art that would become a staple of the local church.

The act of apologizing can be seen also in the novel of “The Last Song” as quoted shown below.

“He paused, chastened. “You’re right. **I’m sorry.**” He reached for his glass again.”

Referring to the quotation above, Ronnie and Kim have a close relationship because they are family. The apology strategy above was pronounced from Ronnie as daughter to Kim as mother. The utterance of “You’re right” was a statement to admit that Ronnie was wrong and Kim was right. The next utterance was “I’m sorry” to express that Ronnie apologize because of her mistake. These remarks manage to minimize Kim's doubts and worries. Ronnie used direct apology to show her awareness that she had made a mistake and made Kim worried and confused. As Trosborg (1994) stated that, direct apology used common and standard words or phrase to express apology that can be widely recognize. Therefore, Ronnie uttered her apology in “I’m sorry” which directly expresses her remorse to her mother, Kim.

“He took a quick step back and automatically reached for his bracelet. He rotated it almost absently. “**I’m really sorry about that.** I was going for the ball and—”

In the quotation above, an apology is spoken between Kim as Ronnie's mother and Ronnie as Kim's daughter. Kim utters “I’m really sorry about that” as an expression to show the act of apologize. It also followed by some explanation of the reason behind the apologize with utterance of “I was going for the ball”. In this conversation, Kim used evasive strategy in order to minimize the offense in



apologizing to her daughter. As Trosborg (1994) stated that, evasive strategy occurs when the speaker does not deny the responsibility of their action but refuse or reluctant to fulfil it hence by minimizing the damage done by the violation. Kim apologized to Ronnie but she tried to minimize the damage done by adding excuses behind the apology.

Research about apologizing has been done before by some researchers. Waluyo (2017) aimed to find out the categories of AR strategies carried out and also to describe the factors that influence the realization of AR strategies conducted by EFL students in one of the leading universities in Indonesia. Data was analyzed by using Trosborg's theory and design with descriptive qualitative method. The sample was selected from 20 students in namely English education and English literature. In general, the results show that the four main AR strategies were carried out by all twenty participants with, in particular; 27 of 33 extended strategies detected. In detail, the possible reasons that influence the realization of the utility produced by participants are the significant role of power, relationships, situation settings, and the degree of error that connects participants to recipients.

Research about apologizing has been done before by some researchers. Retnowaty and Maulida (2019) aimed to study the types of apology strategies used by students at the University of Balikpapan. The research aims to study how age and social status influence their choices in apology strategies. The design of this research is descriptive qualitative. The instrument for collecting data was the DCT assignment designed by Hasan in 2014. Data were analyzed and categorized using Trosborg and Aijmer theory. The findings show that most apologies are a

combination and not a single type. The combined strategy most often used by students at the University of Balikpapan is 'explicit apology + acknowledging responsibility + offering compensation'. In addition, it can be concluded that age and social status influence the choice of apology strategy participants because the results of this study indicate that they have a different combined apology strategy based on older, younger, same age and higher social status, lower, same.

The researcher had decided to analyze the apology expressions that can be found in the data source as chosen. The researcher was interested in analyzing strategy of apology and kind of apologizing by using pragmatic approach in a research entitled “The Analysis Of Apologizing In The Last Song Novel By Nicholas Sparks: Pragmatics Approach”.

## **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

1. People apologize when they make mistake.
2. The problem of change behavior.
3. The problem to have knowledge.
4. The problem of grammatical change.
5. The problem using wrong form and usage in apology.
6. People apologize in maintaining relation.
7. Strategies of apologizing found in “The Last Song” Novel.
8. Factors of apologizing expressions found in “The Last Song” Novel.

## **1.3 Limitation of the Problem**

1. The strategies of apologizing found in “The Last Song” Novel.
2. The factors of apologizing expressions found in “The Last Song” Novel.

#### **1.4 Formulation of the Problem**

1. What are the strategies of apologizing found in “The Last Song” Novel?
2. What are the factors of apologizing expressions found in “The Last Song” novel?

#### **1.5 Objection of the Research**

1. To reveal the strategies of apologizing found in “The Last Song” Novel.
2. To analyze the factors of apologizing expressions in “The Last Song” Novel.

#### **1.6 Significance of the Research**

The research is expected to be able to give benefit for:

1. Theoretical Significance

This research hopefully can give additional inputs and knowledge to students in improving the ability to analyze the expressive speech acts especially about apologizing.

2. Practical Significance

It can be used as a reference for similar research and as stimulation for other researchers concerning the act of apologizing.

#### **1.7 Definition of Key Term**

Apologize: action of asking forgiveness (Janet Holmes, 2013).

Pragmatic: the study of how the hearer gets the implicit meaning of the speaker's utterances (Yule, 1996).

**CHAPTER II**  
**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES AND**  
**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**2.1 Pragmatics**

Pragmatic has several definitions, which every linguist has a different explanation of the pragmatic definition. The study of pragmatics, defined as the field of examining forms of expression in accordance with social distances that limits participants involved in certain conversations (Yule, 1996). It can be defined that pragmatics is a study that discussed about how people could understand the meaning of the words between speaker and listener.

The term pragmatics more broadly is the rules of the use of language, namely the choice of the form of language and the determination of its meaning in connection with the intent of the speaker in accordance with the context and circumstances. Thus, pragmatics here also includes why someone can say "thanks" to peers, but not to the teacher or parents. In conversation, the speaker's expression can be done in many different ways as there are different purpose when it comes to communication.

**2.1.1 Apology**

Apology is one of the acts used by speaker in conversation, which is defined as an act of expressing guiltiness or empathy with some related reasons such as mistake or hearing bad news. In a relationship whether it is romantic, friendship, or

family, miscommunication or disagreement is bound to happen. It is used to maintain relationships and harmony after the violation occurs. Apology's purpose is to express remorse for offending and making things uncomfortable for someone who can ruin a relationship. Holmes (2013) defined apology as a speech act that directed at the face needs and intended to correct the violations the speaker is responsible, and thus restore the balance between the speaker and the listener. Apology refers to the act of speaking that rebuilds the relationship between the speaker and the listener, after the speaker has offended the listener intentionally or unintentionally. The act of apologizing is related to two main things: apologizing or the complainant and the recipient.

#### **2.1.1.1 The Apology Strategies**

In delivering an apology, the offender needed to use a specific strategy of apologizing that is appropriate for the situation. It can be done directly through an explicit apology using one of the verbs that directly signifies an apology, which are apologize, excuse, and more. It can also be done indirectly by taking responsibility or giving an explanation (Trosborg, 1994). There are several linguistic strategies that can be used in expressing apologies, as shown below are further explanations of Trosborg's (1994) apology strategies.

##### **1. Evasive Strategies/Minimizing offense**

This strategy is closely related to the strategy where the speaker had failed to take responsibility, but the speaker does not deny responsibility. The difference can be seen in the fact that the person who apologizes to the hearer does not refuse responsibility. Instead, it filled towards the hearer in order to minimize the level of

violations, either by arguing that the violations that it considers to be unimportant, are in fact 'hardly worth mentioning', or by asking the preconditions on which the hearer are based (Trosborg, 1994). This strategy can be in three forms, such as minimizing, requesting prerequisites for example: Well, everyone usually does that; Blaming others is that violations committed by complaints can be partly.

## **2. Direct Apology/Expression of apology**

The speaker may choose to express apology directly in this form of apology strategy. This strategy applied small number of certain verbs, and the expression is formed in a certain accepted formula of expressing apology. The speaker may express regrets or request for forgiveness to the hearer. Austin (Austin, 1962) point to expression to the apology indication active with a first person singular subject as the explicit performative for the act of apologizing.

## **3. Indirect Apology**

This is a strategy where the speaker will try to describe what had happened and whether is responsible or not. The speaker may choose to take responsibility using low to high intensity levels of self-deviation, which can be counted as the apology in acknowledgement of responsibility. Speakers can claim responsibility directly or indirectly for their actions, which they usually blame themselves. In this apology strategy, the speaker can also try to minimize the impact of the guilt by giving an explanation of the violated situation. In this strategy, the speakers would argue that the violation is not something he wanted to happen. (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) suggest the notion of apology speech act set to encompass the potential range of apology strategy and may count as a realization of an apology.

#### **4. Remedial Support**

Apologies that occurred in social situations often do not meet the demands of how apology should be to express sincerity. So, several additional support to add in the apology in order to express sincerity are offered, which can be the expressing of concern to hearer, promise in regard to future behavior, and the offer for repair. In the strategy of expressing concern to hearer, speaker can express his concern and sympathy to the hearer's condition. While, apologizing in term of promising, it meant that the speaker is responsible for expressing remorse, and he will be expected to behave consistently and not immediately repeat the action he just apologized. The speaker would promise not to make the same mistakes or to correct his behavior. Lastly, the offer of repair is when the speaker expressed his apology and offer to repair the damage he had caused or done. Apology occur as a social routine which may not meet the demand express in the sincerity condition. (Owen, 1983)

##### **2.1.1.2 Factors of Apology**

According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), there are factors that could influence a person's decision to apologize, where the intensity is done. Basically, three different levels of factors can be distinguished, namely the cultural level, personal, and contextual. Depending on the level of commitment made, such as the violation of norms on behavior, affection on the role, and relationship of the interlocutor, the speaker could choose the intensity of a specific apology.

### **1. Cultural**

At a cultural level, arriving late to a meeting can be seen as a more serious offense at an American meeting than in comparable Israel. Therefore, Americans will apologize with more intensity for coming late.

### **2. Personal**

The individual level refers to differences in a person's personal apology behavior. Some people tend to apologize more than others.

### **3. Contextual**

Regarding the contextual level, physical arrangements may be relevant. Crashing into someone on a crowded bus might be considered a lesser offense than crashing into someone in an open space.

## **2.2 Previous Research**

Belfas and Musyahda (2015) had conducted an analysis on the apology strategies most commonly used by Telkomsel's customer service personnel. It has the purpose to reveal what type of apology strategy happens the most in conversation, which can contribute more knowledge about apology strategies in public services. This study used apology strategy theory proposed by Trosborg in order to analyze data. This research applied method with a qualitative research method approach. From the analysis, the result showed that the customer service officers at Telkomsel mostly used explanations or accounts with 50% incidence to respond on the customer complaints, because it can satisfy the customer and soften the customer's feelings.



Nabilah and Aliah (2016) focused on analyzing apology strategies, namely ways to express apology and social functions of apology in the film "The Proposal". The researcher has the purpose to find out the expressions of verbal and nonverbal apologies taken from English film transcripts. The researcher used the theory of apology strategies as theorized by Olshtain and Cohen. Descriptive method research is applied to investigate the phenomenon of apology. The result researchers found 32 data that contained apologies expressed by the characters. Expressions of remorse emerge as the dominant strategy, which direct apologies are expressed more than indirect ones, and defusing the recipient's anger is the most dominant function of apologies. Although making mistakes or violations is unavoidable in communicating, by conveying an apology, the speaker would be able to minimize its effects, resolve problems, and restore threatened relationships.

Cedar (2017) conducted an analysis that has the purpose to investigate the effect of the level of English proficiency on the apology strategies used by Indonesian EFL students (English as a Foreign Language) of two levels of English proficiency. The researcher applied the apology strategy theory framework from Olshtain and Cohen along with Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper to analyze data. This study used the method of DCT (Discourse Settlement Task) questionnaire and involved 21 A2 students and 21 B1 students majoring in English in their first year period from a university in Indonesia. The findings result show no significant differences between the two subject groups in the overall use of the apology strategy, although differences are noted in each individual strategy level. Nevertheless, group B1 uses apology and strategies more frequently than group A2.

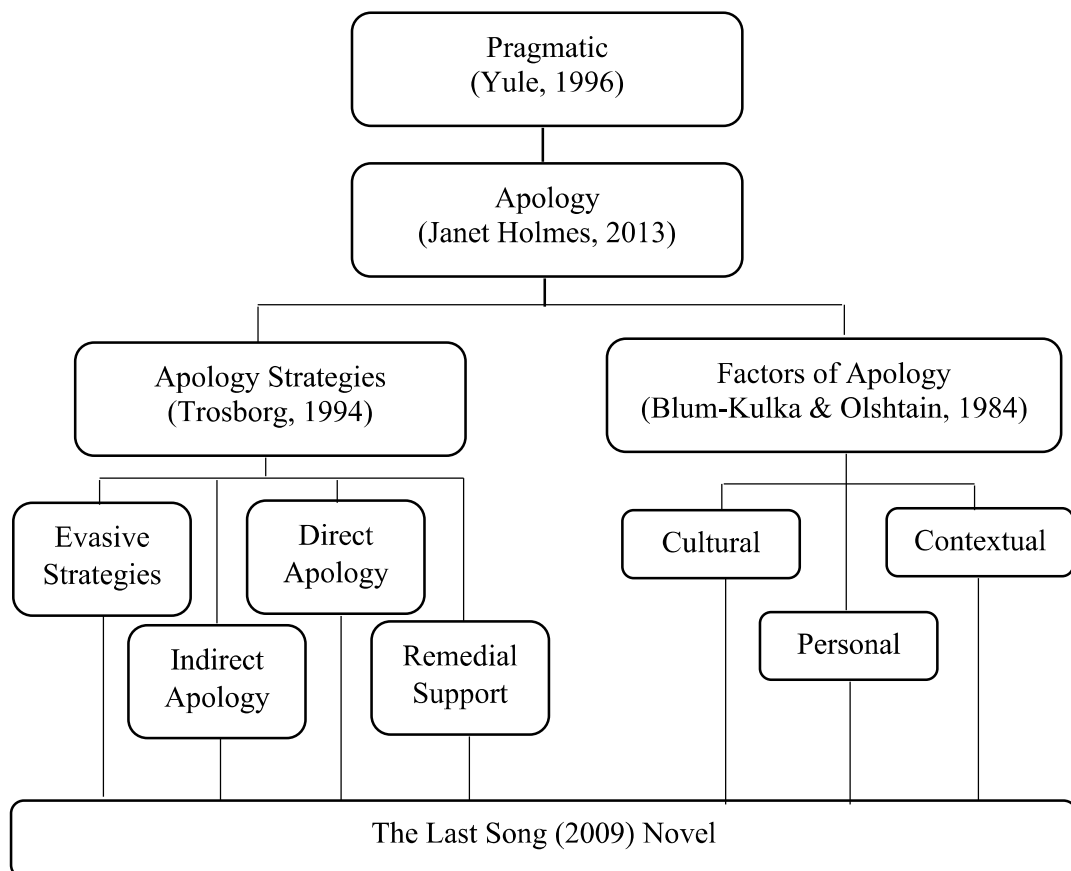
In addition, this study found two forms of pragmatic transfers carried out by the subject and a new apology strategy.

Najihah (2019) investigated apologies spoken by EFL students when they arrive late into the classroom, in order to find out their real intentions of apologizing. It used Lakoff's courtesy theory and elements of apology proposed by Smith as the basic theory to analyzing data. Method applied with descriptive qualitative research because it is carried out to get a deep and detailed analysis of objects, which are in the form of speech and words. Data were taken from students of the Faculty of Cultural Sciences majoring in English and Literature at the State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang. This research was conducted to aimed in depth the types of apology's elements found in students' apologies and how the elements of apology represent the principle of politeness. The results showed at least 3 elements were found and a maximum of 6 elements were involved. Students generally realize that what they do remains the other party but the remarks do not fully mean apologizing, some even show a good apology. Furthermore, it is possible to include that the maxim of modesty from the principle of politeness is the dominant proverb found in this study. The principle of politeness is well represented by the elements of apology found in students' remarks.

Savana and Rosiah (2019) discussed apologies on Whatsapp by Japanese Department Students of Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah University in several situations using semantic formulas. The purpose of this study was to find out how Japanese Language Department Students from Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah University expressed their apologies through Whatsapp in some situations to

teachers, seniors, and friends. The theory used in this research is theorized by Blum-Kulka about apology strategy with semantic formula. Theory of this research used descriptive method with a qualitative approach because it is analyzed descriptively with qualitative methods. The analytical method uses a semantic formula to classify an apology based on the situation. The result of this research is the tendency of students that most of them used the appointment of speech act instructions and they do not really use emojis to express apologies to teachers.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework



## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research is descriptive qualitative research, which is a research that focused in describing facts with meanings, process and understandings that are gained with words or pictures (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research has a descriptive point for a deeper understanding. The researcher had applied the descriptive qualitative research design because the research is in the form of words, phrases, and sentences in the result from the data analysis.

#### **3.2 Object of the Research**

Objects of a research is the activities that are determined by researchers to be researched on. The objects in this research are the apology strategies and the factors of apology strategies that can be found in the novel entitled “The Last Song” by Nicholas Sparks. The researcher used the theory of apology strategies by Trosborg (1994) and the factors of apology theory by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). The focus of the analysis is the dialogues or the sentences that refer to apologies and its factors found in the novel.

#### **3.3 Method of Collecting Data**

The researcher used the observational method by Sudaryanto (2015) in order to collect data. The perception strategy is the research strategies done by reading the exploration items to gather all information. The researcher utilized non-participatory method by Sudaryanto (2015), explained that this method is used because the researcher did not take part in the scenes or words with the speaker in

the novel. There are steps to collect the data. First, the step started with reading the novel to understand the context of the novel. Next step is by taking notes of the utterances or dialogues which considered as apology. Finally, the data are highlighted and categorized regarding to the research's questions, which are the apology strategies and its factors.

### **3.4 Method of Analyzing Data**

In analyzing the data, the researcher applied "Metode Padan" theorized by Sudaryanto (2015), which is an analysis method that was done by analyzing the utterances and each factor related with them. It means that each identified utterances could cause a certain action reaction depends on the context of the situation. This theory is also supported by observational method and non-participatory technique by Sudaryanto (2015) which explain that the researcher only observed the dialogues uttered by in the data source, and there is no involvement by the researcher into the dialogues. Several steps are taken in order to analyze the data. First, the researcher identified the highlighted data and classified into each categories regarding to the research's objects, which are the apology strategies and the factors. The data then are explained and analyzed by the researcher using the theory of apology strategies and its factors as theorized. Finally, the analyzed data are structured into a complete result of the apology analysis on the novel "The Last Song" by Nicholas Sparks.

### **3.5 Method of Presenting Research Result**

In order to present the result of the analysis, the researcher used the informal method by Sudaryanto (2015). There are two methods of presenting data which are formal and informal. Formal method is the method of presenting by using signs and symbols, while informal method is used to present the research's results by using words and sentences. In the case of this research, the researcher presented the research's result by using the informal method, because this research contained explanation in form of words and sentences.