

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

In the language learning process, communication skill is vital to be mastered to help students and teachers become more successful in their communication (Rahmatillah et al., 2022). An oral presentation is one communication skill that needs to be learned (Sari et al., 2021), since this has become one of the keys to employability and important professional skills in university students' future workplaces (Li, 2007 in Kuswoyo et al., 2022). Moreover, in academic English courses, regardless the crucial of understanding on text since text refers to the written expression (Afrianto & Widiyanto, 2022), oral presentations are also a crucial component for developing the language proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (hereafter *EFL*) students. Oral presentations offer teachers a learner-centered activity they can utilize to help their students become more proficient communicators in the language classroom (Brook & Wilson, 2014).

However, an oral presentation has become challenging for EFL students, especially undergraduates (Al Harun et al., 2016; Brook & Wilson, 2014). The difficulties of giving an oral presentation in front of others may decrease the pedagogical advantages of using presentations in the classroom if they are not put up properly. So, it is crucial that the language teacher is aware of the abilities required to deliver presentations as well as the possible challenges that oral presentations may pose for EFL students since their involvement, such as the use

of feedback strategies during the lectures to improve the students' language competence and literary knowledge (Rido et al., 2022).

Therefore, teachers and students are also required to have foreign language literacy skills (Amelia et al, 2022). Moreover, the oral presentation becomes challenging because EFL students are not only expected to be able to convey their ideas but also how they respond directly to questions from the audience. Besides, EFL students are also expected to understand what people mean in a given context and what context affects what is said. This phenomenon is under a pragmatic study.

Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning (Yule, 1996). This relates to the intended meaning of the speaker according to the context. One of the strategies for making the way someone says something reflects the context is by applying politeness strategies (Grundy, 2008). Applying a politeness strategy is an excellent way to reach effective communication (Mahmud, 2019; Rovita & Gulo, 2022). Effective communication aims to generate comfortable conversation among interlocutors, which can build solidarity and intimacy. In the communicative (speaking) classroom, where the emphasis is on genuine oral communication, group projects, and interaction, interaction also means participation, which is extremely important (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2021).

In practice, politeness strategies are applied by EFL students by using hedges in their oral presentations. Hedging is a communication strategy used to show the speaker's attitude. It indicates the degree of less than full commitment to the accuracy or precision of what is said by the speaker (Vlasyan, 2019). Hedging is also considered the way people soften their utterances. Faris (2015), in his research, found that hedges were used in all of the questions addressed to the presenters and lecturers in an EFL student's presentation. Since EFL students often apply hedges in their oral presentations, EFL students and lecturers must better understand hedges. Failing to use hedges correctly can threaten the image of students and other stakeholders in academic settings (Faris, 2015). Further, understanding the pragmatic function of using hedges in academic conversation is essential for EFL students since English has a remarkable culture of hedging (Loi & Lim, 2019). However, research on the use of hedging by EFL students is very limited compared to the number of studies on hedging in the speech and writing of native English speakers (Neary-Sundquist, 2013).

Studies on the use of hedges have been conducted (Loi & Lim, 2019; Yang, 2013). The findings from those studies confirm that native English people use hedges more frequently than non-native English speakers. Those studies also reveal that the function of hedges is to reduce the strength of the argument. Vlasyan (2019) also completed research on the use of hedges. This research claimed that hedges are the most distinctive component of fuzzy language and play an essential role in maintaining politeness in communication.

Another study on using hedges as a politeness strategy was completed (Zunaidah, 2020; Hassan, 2019). Those studies focus on the use of hedges as a politeness strategy by politicians. The results of those studies confirm that in a certain situation, someone uses hedges for certain purposes. Most previous studies are similar to the current study, which analyzes hedges as a politeness strategy. However, the pragmatic function of hedging needs to be interpreted based on the context where the communication takes place. Rather than analyzing hedges as a politeness strategy in a general context, the current study more specifically discusses hedges as a politeness strategy among EFL students in an academic context. Nonetheless, to ease the identification of pragmatic functions of hedging in this research, theories underpinning the categorization of the pragmatic function of hedging need to be employed.

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing hedges as a politeness strategy in the EFL student's book review oral presentations. This study explains the types of hedges employed by EFL students in their oral presentations.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

From the background already explained, the problem could be derived from the following:

1. What are the types of hedging devices used by the student in the EFL student's book review oral presentation?
2. What are the pragmatic function of hedging in an EFL student's book review oral presentation?

### **1.3 Research Objective**

There are two purposes of this study. First, this study aimed to reveal the hedges used by EFL students in their presentations. Second, this study can show the pragmatic function of hedging devices used by EFL students in their oral presentations.

### **1.4 Use of The Study**

#### **1.4.1 Practical Use**

The writer hopes that this study can help readers improve their understanding of the hedging devices used in an oral presentation. This study can help readers find the pragmatic function of each type of hedging device used in an oral presentation. Finally, this study can help the readers, especially EFL students, to use hedges properly according to the situation, especially in an academic context.

#### **1.4.2 Theoretical Use**

The writer hopes this study may help the reader understand the hedges theories' theoretical use. The writer also hopes that the readers can get new knowledge of studies about hedges by applying politeness theory for the student's book review oral presentation. Finally, this study can contribute to hedges studies for the readers who analyze the presentation or conversation using the same issue and approach.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The writer needed to limit the analysis to avoid broader discussion on the studies. This study focused on finding the hedges used by the students and the pragmatic functions of hedges in the EFL student's book review oral presentation. The writer applied the Politeness theory to analyze the hedges used in the presentation. The pragmatic functions of hedging are also explained in this study using the same theory.