CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. 1. Background of the Research

Clear communication has always been important in the aviation industry, particularly among Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) and pilots. In real-life operations, each instruction must be clear, unambiguous, and properly understood. Miscommunication in this context can have serious consequences, including delays, safety hazards, and even accidents. In addition, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has standardized phraseology and clear communication to minimize ambiguity.

Furthermore, miscommunication still happens in practice. For instance, in February 2025. A serious aviation incident happened at Chicago Midway International Airport involving a plane from Southwest Airlines. The aircraft was preparing to land when another jet entered the runway unexpectedly. Due to this situation, the Southwest pilot had to immediately perform a go-around, which means the plane stopped landing and flew back up into the air to avoid a possible collision.

Reports said that the other aircraft misunderstood the instructions given by air traffic control. This miscommunication created a dangerous situation on the runway. Fortunately, the pilots followed safety procedures correctly, and the plane later landed safely. The incident was investigated by the Federal Aviation Administration to determine exactly how the misunderstanding occurred.

Moreover, as one category of speech acts, directive utterances play a particularly significant role in aviation communication. As argued by Levinson (1983, p.240),

directives depend on a speaker's intention and context for interpretation. In air traffic communication, directive utterances dominate the interaction because ATCs constantly provide instructions, clearances, and alerts, while pilots are required to acknowledge and carry them out. For example, utterances such as *"Cleared for takeoff", "Maintain heading 270",* or *"Say again"* are directive in nature and must be interpreted accurately. Unlike directives in everyday conversation, aviation directives are highly structured and linked to immediate safety outcomes, which makes them a suitable focus for pragmatic analysis.

The following is an example of a conversation between ATC and the pilot when the aircraft is about to take off.

The transcript:

Pilot : Prosper 937 established on the localizer three three.

ATC : Prosper 937 position one two (unclear) Contact Minang Tower on one one eight decimal three.

Pilot : Prosper 937, See you.

ATC : See you, sir.

In this short exchange, the air traffic controller (ATC) instructs the pilot by saying, *"Contact Minang Tower on one one eight decimal three".* Based on Kreidler's (1998) theory, this utterance can be categorized as a directive utterance because the speaker attempts to direct the hearer to perform a particular action. In this case, the ATC instructs the pilot to change the communication frequency and contact another control

unit. Directive utterances are commonly used in aviation communication since clear instructions are essential to maintain safety and coordination between pilots and air traffic controllers (ATCs).

This short conversation shows how ATC uses clear, standardized directive utterances to manage aircraft movement and how pilots respond with accurate readbacks to ensure safety during takeoff, one of the most critical phases of flight. Air Traffic Controllers play an important role in controlling air traffic movement and maintaining flight safety. Air traffic controllers have the authority to provide instructions, commands, and clearances to pilots during flight operations. Therefore, communication between ATCs and pilots frequently contains directive utterances.

Additionally, according to Cushing (1994), communication in aviation is characterized by its focus on precision and safety, offering a suitable setting to explore how cooperative principles are observed. In the Indonesian context, studies on aviation English are still limited, and research focusing on its pragmatic aspects is even rarer. As published by the Statista Research Department 2025), considering that Indonesia is one of the busiest aviation markets in Southeast Asia, with rapid growth in both domestic and international flights, the need for clear and effective communication is particularly urgent.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill the gap by analyzing directive utterances in ATC-pilot recordings collected at Minangkabau International Airport (BIM), one of Indonesia's main international gateways. After that, the researcher had the opportunity to participate in an internship program at the BIM airport, West Sumatra. This is the central airport in West Sumatra. Anyone who comes to West Sumatra usually arrives through BIM before continuing to other destinations in the region.

This study aims to identify the directive utterances used in the recorded conversations between air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots at Minangkabau International Airport. The findings are expected to contribute to providing a better pragmatic understanding of communication patterns in aviation and also to the study of language use in professional and safety-critical contexts.

1. 2. Research Question

What types of directive utterances are found in radiotelephony communication between Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) and pilots at Minangkabau International Airport?

1. 3. The Objective of the Research

To identify the types of directive utterances found in radiotelephony communication between Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) and pilots at Minangkabau International Airport.

1. 4. Focus of the Research

This research focuses on analyzing directive utterances produced in radiotelephony communication among air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots at Minangkabau International Airport. Specifically, the study is limited to identifying the types of directive utterances. The analysis is limited to identifying the types of directive utterances based on Kreidler's (1998) categorization. This

research aims to make a specific and meaningful contribution to the study of pragmatics, particularly within the field of aviation communication.

1. 5. Method of the Research

This research is conducted using a qualitative method. As explained by Creswell (2018, ch.9), qualitative methods rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs. This method is appropriate for the present study because it allows the writer to systematically collect, categorize, and interpret linguistic data in order to reveal pragmatic features of communication among air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots.

1.5.1. Data Collection

In this research, the data is taken from recordings of radiotelephony communication among air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots at Minangkabau International Airport. Therefore, the data in this research are the directive utterances from radiotelephony communication among air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots. Radiotelephony communication is the use of spoken language through radio signals to send and receive messages. It allows aircraft and ATC to communicate even when they are far apart. The recordings were taken from the real-time conversations among air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots during routine flights at Minangkabau International Airport.

The data collection is conducted in October 2025, with permission and supervision from AirNav Indonesia. October was selected because, during this

period, flight operations in Indonesia are relatively stable and the researcher had the opportunity to participate in an internship program at Minangkabau International Airport. This stability allows the writer to obtain representative data without operational anomalies and helps avoid seasonal bias, for example, the increase in aircraft movements during holiday periods.

Consequently, the data analyzed reflect language use patterns in normal operational conditions. In addition, the selection of October aligns with practical recommendations from the aviation sector, where various operational and air navigation reports, such as monthly air traffic reports, are generally stable during this period, supporting more consistent data collection.

To limit the scope of the data, the writer collected radiotelephony communication from five conversations between air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots. Each conversation occurred in different situations and involved different airlines, with an average duration of about 1 minute per flight. Besides, the conversations were recorded at different times of day, including the morning and afternoon. These differences influenced the tone and delivery of the utterances.

This limitation was applied to ensure that the dataset remained manageable while still sufficiently representing directive utterances in radiotelephony communication. In collecting the data, the following steps are performed in order:

1. Recording the radiotelephony communication between air traffic controllers (ATCs) and pilots at Minangkabau International Airport in real operational conditions.

2. Transcribing the recorded communication into written form. The writer transcribed all recorded conversations accurately to prepare the data for further analysis.
3. Organizing the transcription. The writer organized the transcribed data systematically and arranged them according to the communication sequences to facilitate the analysis process.
4. Documenting the data. The writer recorded and stored all transcribed utterances in a data sheet to ensure that the data were complete and ready for further analysis.

1.5.2. Data Analysis

The data are analyzed using a pragmatic approach. First, the directive utterances are classified based on Kreidler's (1998) categories of directives. In analyzing the context of the conversations, the researcher refers to the standard provided in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 10 Volume II: *Aeronautical Telecommunication* and ICAO (2007). *Manual of Radiotelephony (Doc 9432),* which serves as official guidelines for communication among ATCs and pilots.

Finally, the findings are described and interpreted to identify the types of directive utterances used in radiotelephony communication between ATCs and pilots at Minangkabau International Airport. Each directive utterance is classified and analyzed based on the selected theoretical framework.

The interpretation of the findings focuses on the use of directive utterances in operational aviation communication and how they facilitate the delivery of

instructions and information between ATCs and pilots. Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide insights into the importance of clear and effective communication in radiotelephony interactions, where accuracy and mutual understanding are essential for flight operations.

1.5.3. Presenting the Results

The results of this research are presented descriptively through tables and detailed explanations. First, the researcher classifies the data based on the types of directive utterances found in radiotelephony communication. The classification is conducted to identify the forms of directives used in communication between ATCs and pilots. Each utterance is then described according to its context to provide a clearer understanding of the situation in which the utterance occurs. The findings are presented systematically in tables that show the type of directive utterances.

1. 6. Definition of Key Terms

This research uses several key terms to help the reader's understanding:

1. **Directive Utterances**

   A type of speech act in which the speaker attempts to get the listener to perform a specific action. It aims to motivate the hearer to act, with the expectation that the requested action will be carried out. Such utterances include requests, commands, instructions, and suggestions.

2. **Aviation Communication**

Aviation communication refers to the verbal exchanges between pilots and air traffic controllers that ensure flight safety and operational efficiency. It is characterized by brevity, clarity, and standardized phraseology.

3. **Air Traffic Controller (ATC)**

   An air traffic controller is a ground-based operator responsible for managing the safe and orderly flow of aircraft within controlled airspace.

4. **Pilot**

   A person who operates the controls of an aircraft, especially as a job.

5. **Radiotelephony Communication**

   The standardized, voice-based, two-way radio exchange between pilots and ground stations ensures the safe and efficient operation of aircraft.