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RESEARCH PAPER

An Analysis of Linguistic Strategies in Personal Public Apologies of Pakistani Media Figures

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to analyze the image repair strategies implied by the Pakistani media figures in their personal public apologies, from the perspective of *the speech act*(Austin,1962). This study looks at how public personalities use creative kinds of apologetic speech to lessen their responsibility for wrongdoings. However, many linguists believe that such public apologies are not real apologies in the sense that Speech Act theory defines them, but rather serve a different social function, such as helping as a tool for restoring their image. The current work builds on the work of Olshtain & Cohen (1983) within a framework of Austin's speech act theory, to analyze texts from the three public apologies in which each alleged speaker is a known Pakistani media figure. For a better understanding and interpretation of public apologies, Murphy's(2015) revised set of felicity conditions that can fully incorporate public apology as a performative speech act, is also employed. Despite their employment of face-saving techniques, the evidence shows that a public apology by celebrities is a performative speech act that meets, though varying in degree, the linguistic criteria or felicity conditions laid by several researchers.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to look at how public personalities use creative kinds of apologetic speech to lessen their responsibility for wrongdoings while weighing the costs and advantages of doing so. According to Tavuchis (1991), the word apology is derived from the Greek word "apologia," which means "an oral or written defense." For the purposes of this research, we define an apology as a performative speech act that must meet a set of linguistic criteria known as felicity conditions in order for the apology to be regarded successful or felicitous. Olshtain & Cohen(1983) are of the view that the apology event necessitates an action or statement intended to make things right(p. 20).

Kampf (2009) and Thaler (2012) consider the act of apology as fallible and they have claimed that public apologies are not legitimate apologies as defined by Speech Act theory, but rather serve a different social function.

The act of public apology by famous celebrities is a performative speech act which may meet linguistic criteria or felicity conditions laid by several researchers. However, such public apologies are not real apologies in the sense that Speech Act theory defines them, but rather serve a different social function, such as serving as a tool for restoring their image.

Material and Methods

The current work builds on the work of Olshtain & Cohen (1983) to analyze texts from three selected public apologies by Pakistani media figures within a framework of speech act theory. This framework of semantic formulas by Olshtain & Cohen (1983) gives a more detailed account of how public apologies are delivered. For a better understanding and interpretation of public apologies, Murphy's (2015) revised set of felicity conditions that can fully incorporate public apology as a speech act, is employed. The selected statements are encoded with numerals and alphabet for convenience. This study looks upon three celebrity apologies in which the alleged apologizer is a well-known media figure. Such apologies are culturally meaningful and heavily mediated in the public sphere, and they, too, draw public attention. Each of the apologies reviewed was reported in prominent media outlets, so it's safe to assume that they're familiar, if not well-known, to the broader public.

Framework of the Study

Speech Act Theory

J.L. Austin is credited with the idea that actions can be done by using precise words. Austin(1962) indicates that the functions that people execute with their words characterize assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative speech acts. This study examines the usage of apologies in the public realm and focuses particularly on expressive speech acts. As a result, we can assume that these apologies serve to communicate the speaker's mindset.

Felicity Conditions

The speech acts are felicitous, pragmatically well constituted, or infelicitous, (pragmatically inappropriate) rather than true-false. While each subtype of speech act has its own set of characteristics. Austin(1962) specified the speech act felicity conditions which are expanded and modified by Murphy (2015):

Propositional Content

An act of offense, for which the apology is being made.

Preparatory Condition

The offender believes that the act was an offense and public or offended party deserves a formal apology.

Sincerity condition

Speaker expresses regret for the conduct or one of its repercussions.

Essential condition

An apology is expressed verbally or in writing.

A Speech Act Set or Semantic formulae for Apology

According to Mills (2003), it is difficult to explain the concept of apology as a formal speech act which is based on semantic set of strategies. One can say apologies are a point of view related to someone's linguistic choices.

To talk about semantic formula, it depends on word, phrase or a sentence which is linked with a specific semantic strategy and an individual can use anyone of these to perform an act in a question. Olshtain & Cohen (1983) organized five major semantic formulas to describe the concept of interpersonal apologies, so that a set of speech act could be created, for the act of apologizing. In this situation, combinations are also possible so that new formulas could be formed. The combination of two to three formulas creates a higher level of speech act. One can describe these formulas directly or indirectly in relation to speech act of apology.

Here are five semantic formulas explained by Olshtain and Cohen (1983).

An Expression of Apology

This basically deals with expression of regrets, termed as IFIDs(Illocutionary Force Indicating device), for example I AM SORRY or I APOLOGIZE.

An Explanation or Account of the Situation

This is only used when a reader is feeling the offense and it deals with several sub formulas like, accepting blame, self-deficiency, observing one's own fault, expressing no interest.

A Repair Offer

This formula is only used when harm or loss occurs.

A Promise of Forbearance

It is linked with the situation when the person could have avoided offense but he is unable to do so for no reason. It can be a promise that such offense will never happen again.

Literature Review

There are so many researches which have been done on this topic of public apology in multidisciplinary areas. Murphy (2015), Kampf (2009) and Page (2014) are among few apology researchers who examined public apologies from linguistic

perspective. Harris(2006) et al. pragmatically illustrated different types of political apologies as a recent development in politeness theory. Benoit's (2014) well-known Image Repair Theory improved their work by laying out several more ways. Denial, evasion of responsibility, minimizing the offensiveness of the incident, remedial action, and mortification are the five categories he divides the various techniques into(p. 253).

According to Goffman (1971), apologizing is a form of remedial action that aims to change the significance that an act could have otherwise (p. 109). Cheng(2016) had conducted a detailed analysis of a few US celebrity apologies from the perspective of stance making. For example Page (2014) and Murphy (2014, 2015) have discovered the concept of public apology in recent years on the basis of the framework of formulae. However, no study has been conducted so for to highlight what type of linguistic strategies appear in celebrity apologies coming from subcontinent for which this study provides a significant insight.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

The strategies for apologizing successfully can vary depending on the type of public figure and the specifics of the figure's professional persona. According to Benoit (2014), corporations and politicians, for example, can damage the general welfare in ways that celebrities cannot, influencing the magnitude of their deviance and the expectations for an apology. With this investigation, the researcher has included following three Pakistani media celebrity apologies that received a lot of media attention:

1. Bilal Saeed a renowned Pakistani singer and Saba Qamar, a famous Pakistani actor, took Twitter and Instagram to clarify a video shooting a Nikkah scene for one of their songs' sequence in the chambers of a mosque. Both posted separate public apologies on their social media handles on August 08, 2020.

2. Iqrar Ul Hassan, a famous crime show anchor tweeted a few lines, supplemented by a long apology video for defending a female TikToker on her lie, on October 12, 2021.

3. Yasir Hussain posted a few apology lines on his Instagram and twitter, by April 30, 2017 supplemented by a short apology video for an offensive comment related to child abuse that he made during HUM TV's Fifth Award Show.

The above celebrities' transgressions and how they strategically managed to handle crisis situations or attempted to restore their public image varied greatly. In the analysis section we will try to determine the extent to which these apologies can be considered as a felicitous speech act and which image restoration strategies have been employed. It also sheds some light on the more common patterns found in Pakistani celebrity apologies.

Sample 1:

Bilal Saeed and Saba Qamar's(2020) Tweet Video Apology

Presenting the "#Qubool" teaser…This is also the only sequence that was shot at the historical Wazir Khan Mosque. It's a prologue to the music video featuring a Nikah scene. It was neither shot with any sort of playback music nor has it been edited to the music track. The administration of the Mosque was also present at the time of shoot and they are witness that no music was played there. Further the full video comes out on 11th of August. Please watch the video before you guys jump to conclusions. And understand that we all are on the same page. We love and respect our religion as much as all of you and would never even think of doing anything to disrespect it. The BTS video that's been circulated on social media was just a circular movement to click stills for the poster of 'Qabool' depicting a happily married couple right after their Nikah. Despite this if we have unknowingly hurt anyone's sentiments we apologize to you all with all our heart. Love & Peace! (Saeed and Qamar, 2020).*

Video Transcript

Asslam o Alaikum.

I am Bilal Saeed. Saba Qamar and I shot a sequence of Nikkah video that caused a great misunderstanding and many people's sentiments got hurt. It created the impression that we were dancing, played music in the mosque and we violated the sanctity of the mosque. ALHAMDULILLAH, I am a Muslim and brought up in a Muslim family. In my wildest imagination, I just could not imagine doing something as heinous as this. I swear, in the name of Allah, that we did not dance or play music in the mosque. This can also be confirmed by the mosque administration.

Anyhow, this is a clip that caused misunderstanding. All of you and I, know that there had been many photo-shoots in the mosques previously and this video was also intended for that purpose only. We played no music and didn't make any dance move. But we realize that we unintentionally made a mistake and we admit it. We are human beings and humans make mistakes. We seek forgiveness from Allah, Who has said in Quran " Allah loves those who repent".

And as your (public's) sentiments are also hurt and being a Muslim, I would feel the same if I were at your place. So, we apologize to you as well. Please forgive this because we realize our mistake. So I am removing that entire Wazir Khan Mosque clip from the video and I assure you that we will never ever in the life commit such mistake again(Saeed, 2020).

Saba Qamar did not publish any apology video in this regard.

Table 1
Apology Strategy Analysis of Sample .1

Major Semantic formulae	Sub Categories	Instances from Selected Apologies
An Expression of Apology	a. A performative IFID, an expression of regret **b.** an offer of apology **c.** a request for forgiveness	1(1a)Despite this if we have unknowingly hurt anyone's sentiments we apologize to you all with all our heart. 2(1a)So, we apologize to you as well. Please forgive this because we realize our mistake.

An Account of the Situation	a. Statements of explanation	1(2a)This is also the only sequence that was shot at the historical Wazir Khan Mosque. 2(2a)It's a prologue to the music video featuring a Nikah scene. 3(2a)It was neither shot with any sort of playback music nor has it been edited to the music track. 4(2a) It created the impression that we were dancing, played music in the mosque and we violated the sanctity of the mosque. 5(2a)We played no music and didn't make any dance move.
An Acknowledgement of Responsibility	a. direct or indirect expression of responsibility b. accepting blame c. expressing self-deficiency d. recognizing that the other person deserves an apology e. expressing lack of intent	1(3a) Saba Qamar and I shot a sequence of Nikkah video that caused a great misunderstanding and many people's sentiments got hurt. 2(3e) I just could not imagine doing something as heinous as this. 3(3e) we did not dance or play music in the mosque. 4(3e) This can also be confirmed by the mosque administration. 5(3e) But we realize that we unintentionally made a mistake and we admit it. 6(3c) We are human beings and humans make mistakes. 7(3d) And as your (public's) sentiments are also hurt.
An Offer of Repair	a. An offer/statement of repair/redress	1(4a)So I a removing that entire Wazir Khan Mosque clip from the video.
A Promise of Forbearance	a. A statement of non-recurrence	1(5a)and I assure you that we will never ever in the life commit such mistake again

Saeed(2020) came to Instagram to apologize to his admirers and to clarify the situation on behalf of the management. This apology fulfills all the major categories of Semantic Formulae proposed by Olshtain & Cohen (1983). The apology strategies used by this celebrity are displayed in Table 1. The Statements *1(1a)* and *2(1a)* are a direct expression of apology that is called a performative IFID. Statements *1(2a)* to *5(2a)* provide a detailed account of the situation which signifies what it was and how did it all happen. The celebrity takes a complete responsibility of the wrongdoing in the statement *1(3a)*. Statements *2(3e)* to *5(3e)* are an expression of lack of intention

behind the offense and that it was just a mistake. An expression of self-deficiency is seen in *6(3c)* and Saeed argues that it was a mistake and humans are liable to make mistakes. Moreover, Saeed justly highlights the need for an apology in *7(3d)* by accepting that they had hurt the public sentiments and the offended deserve an apology. The statement *1(4a)* the redresses the situation and Saeed explains that the team has decided to eliminate the entire mosque section from the video due of the accidental injury or insult made during the production, he explained. The final words in *1(5a),* reveal Saeed's promise on behalf of the entire team, for never committing such mistakes in their life again. The fulsome account of apology leaves no room for doubt and ambiguity and therefore it achieves the goal of restoring their public image as the speaker showcases respect for the public's sentiments. All attested apology strategies are found in this text, which make it a true apology. The direct acknowledgments of the offense may work to repair the image of the celebrities damaged by their action. The humbleness of the speaker may work to build their positive face.

On Twitter, Qamar, who also made her first directorial project with the video, copied the same apology statements.

Sample 2:

Iqrar Ul Hassan's(2020) Tweet and Video Apology

Tweet

I apologize that I sided with Ayesha Ikram who started blackmailing with those who exposed themselves in public. By God, it was not stubborn, I really thought that something went wrong with Ayesha and we should support her, but she sold her honor (Hassan, 2021).

Video Transcript

Iqrar Ul Hassan posted a long apology video in the backdrop of this incident.

Following is summarized transcript of his video.

The truth about Ayesha and her partner Rambo astounded me. I had no idea she was negotiating behind my back. I swear to Allah, it wasn't my stubbornness, and I was worried about this girl and how things had gone wrong with her. I backed her, but she traded her honour for a few cents. I could never imagine harming Pakistan's reputation. And now I am holding my hands, wobbling, and apologizing to the entire country. I could not be a hypocrite and a liar since, via my eight-year work, I had revealed the wicked guys in Pakistan. I used to refer to Ayesha as my sister, but she treated me badly. She had come to me if she needed money. I'd feel embarrassed to call her sister now. I seek forgiveness from the entire nation. I was not dishonest(Hassan, 2021).

Table 2
Apology Strategy Analysis of Sample 2

Major Semantic formulae	Sub Categories	Instances from Selected Apologies
1. An Expression of Apology	a. A performative IFID, an expression of regret b. an offer of apology c. a request for forgiveness	1(1a)I apologize that I sided with Ayesha Ikram. 2(1c) And now I am holding my hands, wobbling, and apologizing to the entire country. 3(1c)I seek forgiveness from the entire nation
2. An Account of the Situation	a. Statements of explanation	1(2a)I really thought that something went wrong with Ayesha and we should support her
3. An Acknowledgement of Responsibility	a. direct or indirect expression of responsibility b. accepting blame c. expressing self-deficiency d. recognizing that the other person deserves an apology e. expressing lack of intent	1(3e)By God, it was not stubborn, 4(3e)I could never imagine harming Pakistan's reputation. 2(3e)I was not dishonest. 6(3e)I could not be a hypocrite and a liar since, via my eight-year work, I had revealed the wicked guys in Pakistan 3(3e)I could never imagine harming Pakistan's reputation. 4(3e)I could not be a hypocrite and a liar since, via my eight-year work, I had revealed the wicked guys in Pakistan 5(3e) I could never imagine harming Pakistan's reputation
4. An Offer of Repair	a. An offer/statement of repair/redress	
5. A Promise of Forbearance	a. A statement of non-recurrence	

The apology strategies used by the celebrity Iqrar ul Hassan are displayed in Table 2. According to Fairclough(2003), the degree of concreteness or abstractness are the important factors to determine the value of a social event. A social event such as public apology can be considered more concrete if it observes the necessary linguistic techniques or Semantic Formulae. This apology meets the first three major categories of Semantic Formulae proposed by Olshtain & Cohen (1983). The statement 1(1a) is a performative IFID: *I apologize that I sided with Ayesha Ikram* and again this is a direct expression of apology and makes the apology concrete from linguistic perspective. The use of first person singular pronoun ''I'' is a subjective representation of his offense and reflects the intensity of how much the speaker considers himself as responsible for the offense. The repetition of first person singular reflects the image restoration strategies. Throughout the speaking, Hassan engages in bolstering and continues to refer to his dedication and commitment to good cause for Pakistan. Statement *1(2a)* provides an account of the situation. Statements *1(3e)* to *5(3e)* are a lucid expression of lack of intention behind the offense and Hassan retains that he did not do this offense intentionally. The degree of concreteness and abstractness shifts in

his statements. While he continuously accepted the responsibility that he did wrong but at the same time he maintained that he was standing with a good cause. In this way he has tried to readjust the negative opinions of the public about him. But his bolstering and detailed explanation of the lack of intention does not mitigate the responsibility of his action. Furthermore, Iqrar ul Hassan referred to his past good actions in *5(3e),* to make the apology more forceful and added that over his eight-year profession, he has indeed stood on the side of truth and he couldn't be a traitor to the prestige of his own country. By apologizing to the public, he stated it was not his arrogance that led him to abide by her side despite the nation's efforts to advise him, but rather that he was merely supporting a harassment victim. However, the instances of repair and forbearance are not found in Hassan's apology which makes his apology vague or less true as there is no promise available that he will ensure not to commit such an act of irresponsibility again.

Sample 3: Yasir Hussain's(2017) Twitter and Instagram Post and Video Apology

I strongly feel against child abuse and I will make sure to work in adding awareness of this issue! (Hussain, 2017).

Tweet

The comment that I made was unintentional. I didn't mean to hurt anyone. I regret saying it, as it was not a part of the script, and was more of a slip of the tongue that happened in the spur of the moment(Hussain, 2017).

Video Transcript

Asslam o Alaikum,

I am as against child abuse as all of you are and it should be so. And the joke which I made did not mean what is quoted. I say sorry to Ahsan Bhai and everybody else(Hussain, 2017).

Table 3
Apology Strategy Analysis of Sample 3

Major Semantic formulae	Sub Categories	Instances from Selected Apologies
1. An Expression of Apology	a. A performative IFID, an expression of regret **b.** an offer of apology **c.** a request for forgiveness	1(1a)I say sorry to Ahsan Bhai and everybody else.
2. An Account of the Situation	a. Statements of explanation	2(1a) The comment that I made was unintentional
3. An Acknowledgement of Responsibility	a. direct or indirect expression of responsibility b. accepting blame c. expressing self-deficiency d. recognizing that the other person deserves an apology	1(3a)as it was not a part of the script, 2(3b)And the joke which I made 3(3b)The comment that I made

	e. expressing lack of intent		4(3c)and was more of a slip of the tongue that happened in the spur of the moment 5(3e)And the joke which I made did not meant what is quoted
4. **An Offer of Repair**	a. An offer/statement of repair/redress		1(4a)I strongly feel against child abuse and I will make sure to work in adding awareness of this issue!
5. **A Promise of Forbearance**	a. A statement of non-recurrence		

At the 5th Hum Awards 2017, actor Ahsan Khan took the stage to accept the best actor award for a negative drama role in the film Udaari, which is about child sexual assault. "*Itna khoobsurat child molester, kaash mein bhi bachcha hota,*" Yasir Hussain added at this time (What a lovely child molester (if only I was still a kid).This remark has received a lot of backlash, with many people calling it rude and inappropriate. Some Twitter users were likewise offended by the audience's reaction to the remark. Following the uproar, Yasir Hussain apologized publicly on social media networks. He explained that the remark that he made during the festival was unintended and he didn't mean to cause anyone any harm. It was a slip of the tongue that came on the spur of the moment, and he regrets saying it.

This apology is the smallest of all selected apologies and it does not fulfill all the major categories of Semantic Formulae proposed by Olshtain & Cohen (1983). There is only one IFID instance 1*(1a)I say sorry to Ahsan Bhai and everybody else.* The video discloses a lack of repentance on Yasir's face. The multidimensional factors for example facial expressions or body language is not taken into consideration for analysis in this study. However, the short direct apology remarks showcase the level of non-seriousness on behalf of the offender on such a serious and sensitive issue of child abuse. Other apology strategies of this sample are presented in Table 3. A promise of forbearance is not found in this apology. This signifies that the speaker does not ensure the nonoccurrence of such an offense in the future which makes his apology doubtful.

Analysis of Felicity Conditions

After carefully examining these apologies, it becomes evident that they all followed Murphy's(2015) felicity conditions for the most part. Bilal Saeed attests to the Preparatory condition in the first sample (*7(3d)*), in the usage of strategy, recognizing that the other person deserves an apology. The Use of Explicit IFIDs in all selected samples satisfies the Essential criterion. Yasir Hussain's apology lacks Sincerity condition on the ground that he did not express regret for the conduct on sound grounds. His statements are very brief and his body language, tone and facial expression in the video are also not favorable to an apology. It also lacks first felicity

marker which is propositional content, since it does not look to be a formal attempt of apology. Other two samples explicitly fulfill these conditions.

Common Patterns in Selected Pakistani Apologies

In way to build a narrative, the magnitude of all these two apologies leads towards the development of themes. While the content of these celebrity apologies clearly differed, three themes ran through them all: portrayal of lack of intention while committing the offence, 'respect' for the offended person's and public's sentiments, and efforts of restoring personal image. All the apologies have different focuses on their strategies but two common strategies are found in all the selected texts. First is the explicit expression of apology which is approached and second is that all of the apologies mainly focus on the acknowledgement of the responsibility which entails a relatively higher number of statements in all the samples. It would be safe to assume that Pakistani media figures find it as a powerful image restoring strategy to admit the responsibility of their offense and re-evaluate themselves, which may perhaps make their apology more successful. But all the apologies end up involving an expression of lack of intention in doing the wrong. This makes the Pakistani apologies less concrete. Another most commonly approached strategy in all the samples, after the acknowledgement of the responsibility is explanation and account, recounting the emotions and making the apologies longer. A promise of forbearance is found in two out of three samples and an offer of repair or corrective action is approached least of all, that is in one out of three samples. This might indicate that acknowledgement of responsibility and explanation and account are more effective strategies in Pakistani celebrities' apologies.

Conclusion

This research attempted to describe what distinguishes a public apology as a speech act, as well as how this speech act is based on felicity requirements. To solve this issue, Olshtain & Cohen (1983) employed a comprehensive analytical framework called Semantic Formulae to objectively assess the discourse tactics used throughout these three different public apologies. Despite their employment of face-saving techniques, the evidence shows that many of these public apologies nonetheless meet Murphy's(2015) felicity prerequisites for the performative speech act of apology.

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