

DR. AHMAD KAREEM SALEM AL-WUHAILI

**PRAGMA-DISCOURSAL ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECH ACT
OF APOLOGY IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC
POLITICAL TEXTS**

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32

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The comparative approach of Dr. Ahmad Kareem Salem's volume with an impressive and relevant corpus of work (over sixty texts in English and Arabic), is quite rare in the analysis of language acts, knowing that each linguistic system has its own tools in their realization. The author analyzes a very particular language act in the political text – the apology – which he defines as an important social act for establishing and maintaining harmony among people. The analysis of this language act is all the more difficult to achieve as he proposes, and in my opinion he succeeds very well, to abstain from the external gestures that usually accompany apologies. I am convinced that the present work may be an important reference for the researchers of pragmatics in general and the pragmatics of political discourse (Arabic), in particular.

~ Prof. Laura Sitaru, University of Bucharest, Romania

From a methodological point of view, far from being just descriptive or limited analysis of the textual framework of English and Arabic, the work of Dr. Ahmad Kareem Salem Al-Wuhaili follows and applies to the political discourse the main milestones of speech and pragmatics studies of prestigious theoreticians in the field. The author's scientific approach is an interdisciplinary, complex one. Thus, linguistics (including sub-domains such as sociolinguistics) meets the elements of political studies, but also with the specific openness of the study of interpretation of a text, following the subtle mechanisms of expression of the apology.

~ Prof. Irina Mihai, "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, Bucharest, Romania

Dr. Ahmad Kareem Salem Al Wuhaili's volume – the revised version of his Ph.D. thesis successfully defended at the University of Craiova (2018) – is the result of his research of an aspect of political discourse from the perspective of pragmatics. I appreciate the in-depth and synthetic analysis of seminal works in the field of pragmatics, the author's personal and original contribution being the application of these principles to the political discourse in Arabic, for which the number of existing relevant studies is limited. The author's scientific approach is a significant and original contribution to the pragmatic study of the discourse in English and Arabic, and I highly appreciate the author's synthetic capacity, the use of topical resources, the relevance of the discourse and the originality of the approach.

~ Prof. Emil Sîrbulescu, University of Craiova, Romania

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Conversational Maxims (Adapted from Grice, 1975: 45-7)

Table 2: The Four Components of a Prototypical Apology (Deutschmann: 2003: 46)

Table 3: Direct and Indirect Apology in the American Texts

Table 4: Sentence Complexity, Voice and Mood in the American Text

Table 5: Direct and Indirect Apology in the Arabic Texts

Table 6: Sentence Complexity, Voice and Mood in the Arabic Texts

FOREWORD

1. Argument and Statement of the Problem

The main purpose of language is communication. When we speak we are performing speech acts, such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, apologizing and so on. The development of speech-act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969, 1975) has given readers and specialists a better understanding of what speakers intended to perform by means of communication.

Speech acts are mainly intended actions performed by speakers, among which is the speech act of apology. Apology is primarily and essentially a social act that aims at maintaining good relations between the members of a society and, to a large extent the member of different societies. In other words, to apologize is to act politely. Apology is a frequently used speech act which serves different purposes ranging from maintaining polite rituals that could vary from one person to another.

Searle (1969) affirms that these acts are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistics elements. According to Searle, the goal of spoken interaction is not communicating things to the hearer by getting the speaker to recognize the intention that one has to communicate those things. In order to make a clear cut between expressive and other illocutionary acts, Searle (1979: 15) announces that "... the aim of the illocutionary point of expressive is to express the psychological state that is specified in the propositional content." Among such verbs are thank, apologize, complain... etc. which have no direction of fit. In performing an expressive act, particularly that of apology, the speaker is neither trying to get the world match the words, nor the words match the world, therefore, the truth of the expressed proposition is presupposed. Consider the following example:

A- I apologize for not attending your wedding party.

B- It's okay.

As can be felt in the above utterance, the speaker in (A) (the apologizer) expresses his psychological states towards the hearer who has invited (A) to his/her wedding party, in which the speaker (S) typically feels the offence that he has caused to the hearer (H) by not attending. As a result, he/she feels also the need to express his regret (the need for an act of apologizing). Therefore, by hearing (A) saying *I apologize...*, that presupposes there is something went wrong before the time of apologizing and in our example, not attending the wedding party.

The study of language and politics aims at understanding the role of linguistic communication in the functioning of social units, and how this role shapes language itself. The word “politics” is derived from the Greek word *polis* meaning “city-state”. The city as an organized social unit depends on linguistic communication for its functioning. For Joseph (2006: 347) “politics is the art, and language is the medium, whereby...[people] position themselves to get what they need, and beyond that, what they want.” Mazrui (1975: 170) defines politics as the continuous search for ways through which the “conflicting interest” can be resolved. Chilton and Schäffner (1997: 206) contend that politics cannot be carried out without language, and that it could be the use of language in the composition of social groups that leads to what is called politics. Language and politics, then, are too interrelated concepts. Language whether spoken or written is the means through which various fields, such as politics, express their principles, concepts, and ideas. The language of politics is a variety of language since it has its own lexical, syntactic and semantic features. Such a conclusion is reached at a variety of language or register refers to activities which are linguistically distinct such as scientific, political, legal, etc.

Political language is a variety of language that is different from other varieties by which politicians use certain effective aspects in their speeches, whether spoken or written, to bring about the effect they seek on their addressees, publically on TV or on radio. In this respect, *apology* can be applied to be carried out through the language of politics in the sense that *apologizing* is a speech act in which something is claimed to hold by, for instance: *presidents, prime ministers, politicians*, etc.

In addition, the concept of *apology* has often occupied the central place in the philosophy of language, since it is often thought that making *apology* is the use of language most crucial to linguistic meaning, and since *apologies* are the natural expressions of cognitive attitudes, and hence of importance for maintaining harmony.

Such political texts are often manipulated to express different types of meaning among which *knowledge, belief, truth, facts, logical necessity, probabilities*, etc. Then, they must explicitly and implicitly indicate the exploitation of *apology* meaning. Pragmatically speaking, the speech act of *apology* can be found numerously. Nevertheless, such pragmatic utilization of the speech act of *apology* may be realized in different syntactic forms alongside with the semantic interpretation. A problem needs deeper linguistic investigation which this study aims at. The following illustrate the different uses of *apology* in the political texts and speeches:

Text (1)

George W. Bush, Apologize for Iraq war, Washington, March 20, 2003:

“After my presidency I have come to the belief that Iraq war, although well intentioned, was unnecessary and too costly to justify. I deeply apologize to the American people and to our soldiers and veterans in particular for engaging them in such a conflict.”¹

Text (2)

President Bill Clinton issued a formal apology for the Tuskegee study. May 16. 1997.

“What was done cannot be undone. But we can end silence, we can stop turning our heads away. We can look at you in the eye, and finally say, on behalf of American people, what the United States government did was shameful and I am sorry”.²

It seems clear from the above texts that there are different formal configurations indicating the illocutionary force of apology. In (1) the use of additional markers accompanied with detached apology which used for intensifying the apology or signaling the emotional state of the speaker i.e. the use of (Intensifier + apology) (deeply + apologize) which conveys the speaker's involvement. The statement is expressed directly by using a declarative sentence. In (2) Clinton affirms his apology by the use of the formal configuration which indicates the illocutionary force of apology i.e. the emphatic form “did” along with using coordinating “and” indicating that there is some relation between the contents of the linked sentences. The apology is here used through the detached apology which is fully expanded from (I am sorry) (indirect apology act). Moreover what makes it more sophisticated is that sometimes speech act of apology can be express indirectly with the absence of verbs such as “apologize” or the use of expressions implying the word “sorry” as shown in the following example:

Text (3)

President Obama Apology to the Muslim world, January 27, 2009.[2]

“My job to the Muslim world is to communicate that the Americans are not your enemy, we sometimes make mistakes. We have not been perfect. But if you look at the track record, as you say, America was not born as

¹ Int. 1. [http: Presidentialrhetoric.com](http://Presidentialrhetoric.com).

² Int. 3. <http://www.britannica.com/Ebchecked/topic/1369625/Presidential-Apology-for-the-Study>.

colonial power, and that the same respect and partnership that America had with the Muslim world as recently as 20 or 30 years ago, there is no reason why we can't restore that.”¹

Here, this utterance can be pragmatically interpreted as an apology of the fact that “Americans are not perfect and they have done something wrong to Muslim world”. The speech act of apology is performed indirectly, implicitly realized through the use of the declarative sentence. It is obvious that the interpretation of *apology* is mainly determined by the context. The use of *but* expresses a contrast which is utilized here to function as explanation, excuses and justification for the offence stated in the above utterance.

Furthermore, the speech act of *apology* which is *directly* and *typically* made by the declarative sentence type can be also made indirectly with the absence of the verb *apology* as intended to express the speaker's psychological state towards the state of affairs.

2. Objectives

Besides the above given explanation, the study aims at:

1. Introducing the speech act theory with the aim of identifying the suggested speech act (the speech act of apology).
2. Investigating how the speech act of *apology* is used in different political texts (more specifically in English and Arabic political texts), focusing on ways of realizing the forms of the speech acts, as used in these political texts.
3. Selecting distinguishing criteria with which the speech act of *apology* can be distinct from other speech acts, such as *directive* (order, command, request, etc.) and *questioning*.

3. Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. The syntactic complexity of Arabic language can be reflected in the use of speech act of apology in political arena.
2. The speech act of apology in political texts can be expressed *directly* through the use of the declarative sentence highlighted by the utilization of verbs such as *apologize*.
3. The speech act of apology is sometimes *indirectly* expressed which can be interpreted in terms of the context in which an utterance is used.

¹ Int. 4. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/06/barack-obamas-apologies-how-the-president-has-humiliated-a-superpower>.

4. The socio-pragmatic interpretation of apology tends to play a crucial role in comprehending what is intended by the speaker especially in case of indirect apology.

4. Procedures

The following steps are to be adopted in this study:

1. Referring to some approaches of analyzing discourse, definitions of texts and discourse, and the characteristics and language of politics and the relationship between them is presented.
2. General review of speech act theory, focusing on a theoretical survey of the speech act of *apology* is made on the basis of the literature available.
3. Making a detailed pragmatic analysis on how the speech act of *apology* is applied to political texts (in English and Arabic).
4. Drawing some results, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5. Limitations of my approach

This study is limited to the *pragmatic*, *semantic* and *syntactic* analysis of **apology** in some selected political texts and speeches, taken from the American and Arabic politicians' speeches. Sixty political texts will be taken for the purpose of this study. It will be divided into thirty American and Thirty Arabic political texts for the period from 2000 to 2018.

6. The Significance of the Study

This study may be useful to those who are interested in linguistics, language teaching, textbooks writers and syllabus designers in order to shed light upon the various and actual use of **apology** in terms of *syntactic*, *semantic* and *pragmatic* viewpoints in political speeches. In addition, it is valuable to those who are interested in politics who could find this topic very beneficial and interesting guide to know the ways by which the politicians use the speech act of apology, their *knowledge*, *belief*, *truth*, *facts*, *attitudes*, *actions*, etc.

7. Literature Review

The field of politics is widely examined by researchers. One of the communicative situations within politics is the political apology. For that, apologies have become very common in all the fields of life and among them is politics. Therefore, a recent interest has been given to the public and political situations in which an apology is expressed. Yet, a special effort is given to political apologies by scholars like Thompson, (2005), Marrus, (2006), Celermajer, (2008), Kampf, Z (2009), Kampf and Lowenheim (2012), Sanz (2012), and so many others. Among them, Thompson, and Sanz's definitions of

political apologies have been considered in our work for the precise and clear idea they give about the concept. In his article *Apology, justice and respect: a critical defence of political apology*, Thompson, (2005: 1) defines political apology as “an official apology given by a representative of state, corporation, or other organised group to victims, or descendants of victims, of injustices committed by the group's officials or members.”

On the other hand, Sanz, (2012: 15) in his paper *National Apologies: Mapping the complexities of validity* defines political apologies as they are “political if they involve political issues and are delivered by an appropriate political agent. A political apology may come from a body or institution in the commercial, corporate, media, sports and medical fields (among others).” From the two definitions given above, we can state that the meaning of political apology did not change in the two different periods in which the definitions were given. Therefore, it gives us the information we need for our study.

The analysis of political apologies has been widely approached by researchers and authors all over the world. Many scholars, researchers, and authors have worked on analysing political apologies in the field of pragmatics, from cultural point of view, from a contrastive perspective, and some others they analyse it as a speech act. The most preeminent works which have considered the behabitives, expressive, and acknowledgment acts (apologies as part of them as our analysis shows) are the ones done by Austin (1962), Searle (1969-1979), and Bach and Harnish (1979). The most outstanding works of the three given names paid a salient importance to speech act theory. Therefore, as a speech act, apology is classified differently by them.

Austin (1962) in his book *How to Do Things with Words* classifies speech acts into five acts which can be identified according to their illocution. According to him, the five acts are Verdicatives, Expressives, Commissives, Expositives, and behabitives. According to Austin, the speech act of apology is sorted within behabitives speech acts. He states that apology act is given as a reflection for social attitudes towards the situation in which an apology is demanded. Discussing the speech act of apology, in his work *Expression and Meaning*, Searle (1979) gives another classification of speech acts. His classification is Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Declarations, and Expressives. Searle classifies apologies within expressive speech acts. In this case it expresses the psychological state of the speaker or the apologizer towards the situation in which s/he involved. On the other hand Bach and Harnish (1979) in their work *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* view apology as an acknowledgment act. By doing so, the apologizer is acknowledging the responsibility for doing the offence and the wrong act. According to them, speech act can be seen as divided into Effectives, Verdicatives, Constatives, Directives, Commissives, and Acknowledgment acts. The above classifications was very useful in analyzing the apology act in political fields. Since we are considering the apology act, we

have considered the three above given classification of apology act as imagined by Austin, Searle, and Bach and Harnish.

Along with the above discussion, an important fact to bear in mind is that any speech act can be directly or indirectly expressed. Among the speech acts, apologies can be also given in a direct or indirect way due to different reasons. Almost all the books that deal with pragmatics and take into consideration the theory of speech act refer to direct and indirect speech acts and what does it mean. Scholars like Searle (1975), Leech (1983), Levinson (1983), Mey (1983), Akmajian et al. (1995), Geis (1995), Yule (1996), Archer et al. (2012), and so many others have dealt with how people ask, request, demand, thank, apologize, either directly or indirectly. In other words, a full explanation was given to the direct and indirect speech acts and how it happens. However, between directness and indirectness, the latter remains questionable, i.e. how direct speech act occurs? Almost all the names written above for example: Searle (1975) in his book *Expression and Meaning*, Leech (1983) *The Principles of Pragmatics*, Mey (1983) *Pragmatics*, Geis (1995) and his explanation of direct and indirect speech acts given in his book *Speech Acts and Conversational Interaction*, Archer et al. (2012) *Pragmatics*, agree that direct speech act happen when the three types of sentences and the three illocutionary forces are associated together. In other words, when interrogative sentence is to ask a question that means it is a direct speech act. However, that helps to consider that direct speech acts can be achieved by using explicit performatives. On the other hand, they believe that the indirect speech act is performed by different syntactic structures. From another angle, speakers can mean something different from what they say. In this case, speakers' illocutionary force (intended illocutionary force) may not be determined by what they literally said and in this case the indirect speech act can be achieved. This classification of direct and indirect speech acts help us to analyze our data since people can apologize directly and/or indirectly.

Another study on apology act which can be carried in politics as in any other field is the one stated by Deutschmann (2003). Deutschmann (2003) in his book *Apologizing in British English* gives four components which have to be carried in any apology act. When an apology is demanded that means someone committed an offence. In this case, the doer is the offender and the wrong action is the offence. The other two components of apology act are the offended and remedy component. The victim or the one who suffers from the offence is the offended, while remedy refers to the recognition and acceptance of the offence from one hand and from another hand is to take or accept the responsibility and expressing the regret.

When it comes to political apologies, many researchers have approached it as a case of study all over the world. We mention for instance some of researchers and scholars who have considered political apologies in their studies: Marrus Michael (2006), Carroll (2008), Yamazaki (2006), Ancarno Clyde (2011),

Sanz Eneko (2012), James Murphy (2014), Sakurai (2016) and many others. Marrus Michael's *Official apologies and the Quest for Historical Justice* (2006) paper helped us to understand how to construct political apologies and the contexts in which these political apologies are needed. He argued in his study that for historical wrongs official apologies can be applied for bringing justice. His conclusion was that in reality official apologies cannot always bring justice and repair the wrong, but offering an apology is better than ignoring the offence. Therefore, his findings made us to question if there is a connection between the way in which an apology is constructed and its effectiveness in restoring harmony.

On the other hand, Carroll Ross (2008) pioneered a study titled *The Politics of Culpability: Apology and Forgiveness in International Society* in which he focused on the political discourse of Turkish. We have taken advantage from this study to bear in mind that in some countries due to socio-cultural and historical reasons, politicians refuse to apologize. In this case, it may help to show why political figures refuse to admit their culpability. For them, it is a degrading act. The above study shows a national official rejecting to apologize for the Armenians' genocide in 1915. However, the results of this study show that Turks do not interpret the apology act as a mean of rehabilitation rather they consider it as an outrageous act. Increasingly, Turkey has been forced in the last decades to admit its offence, but strikingly the country has considered and treated any confession of offence as it could be an exposure to leave Turkey an overly vulnerable.

Considering the political apologies in Japan, Yamazaki Jane's *Japanese Apologies for World War II: A Rhetorical Study* (2006) book helped us to understand how apologies can be expressed with fully explicit forms and some others with less explicit. In other words, it gave us an insight that some politicians use more or less explicit manner of apologizing. For some historical offensive acts such as the sexual slavery, war atrocities, civilians' mistreatments under colonial rules, and Nanking massacre, Yamazaki offers a precious insight to the way in which politicians in Japan tended to handle less explicit manner of apologizing than other countries. However, the study resulted in the fact that the apology act for Japanese politicians is expressed in order to stimulate national self-reflection, to mend the relations with other countries, to assert the proper principles and to improve the national identity.

The study of Ancarno Clyde *Press Representations of Successful public Apologies in Britain and France* (2011) is beneficial for us because it helps us to consider the way in which an apology can be expressed successfully. In other words, it helped to give us an insight for the successful conditions of political apologies. The investigation of the above paper is focused on more than 250 press representations of successful apologies expressed in public. The entire apologies were taken from popular British and French newspapers. Ancarno aimed through this study to find and to explore the felicity conditions for the

apologies which are publically expressed in British and French media culture. Ancarno concluded that within press, the subjectivity permeates the objective forms of press discourse. According to the findings, the succession of apologies is profoundly embedded in context in which an apology is performed. Therefore, this study declares the impossibility of formulating and giving a systematic account of apologies which are publically expressed. By referring to the ideologies in press discourse, the study shows that French and British fail to account for the public apologies (the specificities of public apologies). Their aim was to adhere to the standard views which are center on private apologies.

Sanz Eneko's paper "National Apologies: Mapping the Complexities of Validity" (2012) helped us to consider if there are any conventional procedures that can be made for applying the national apologies. Sanz claimed that the term 'national apology' particularly is an analytically elusive term. According to him, the 'age of apology' started two decades ago therefore, an attempt was given by him to clarify this issues. Moreover, by mapping an exercise and analyzing the nuances linked with term itself, the paper attempts to find out and address these issues. Sanz's paper offers a better understanding for both the critiques and the composition of national apologies. However, the study resulted in the fact that there are no conventional procedures that can be made for performing national apologies. Moreover, unlimited cultural and political context, transgenerational responsibility, and some other collective identities resulted as competing views for the fundamental issues.

When it comes to pragmatic analysis of political apologies, James Murphy's work *Apologies in the Discourse of Politicians: A Pragmatic Approach* (2014) opened our eyes to the way of analyzing political apologies from a pragmatic point of view. In his study, James considered a variety of genres for the data used. His data was collected from some statements and debates in the "House of Commons, the Leveson Inquiry and news interview". The entire study explains the function and gives a description for the form of political apologies. James argued that what constitutes the meaning of apologies in political sphere is the negotiation between the offender and the offended person (the apologizer and the apologisee). His aim was to through light also on some of the expectations about the inner or the psychological state which apologies have to process and how apologies should be produced. Besides the fact that James tried to give a detailed account of political apologies for British, he concluded that some of these apologies are similar or closer to the apologies of everyday life than others. Due to the analysis of some events, part of the apologies seems to be backgrounded to these events which can be explained in terms of prototypical as he claimed.

In a comparison between East and West, Sakurai Joji stresses the differences between them in what might be count as a political apology. This study helped us to consider how apologies can be differently perceived in two

different countries in East and West. In his study *Abe and Blair: Political Apologies, East and West* (2016) Sakurai affirmed that apologies in West are seen as part of the process of reconciliation. These apologies are taken care of by time, until the offensive act is forgotten. On the other hand Apologies in East, in Japan more specifically, they can be seen as the key objective. In other words, the offended part may demand an apology act for the offence committed by the offender and unless the relationship between them is preferred to remain frozen. According to him, apologies can be understood as a mean to reset the relationship to the position from where it was ended. The study resulted in the fact that if in Western countries the debate for concerning the extent to which everybody tells lies with the ideal expectation that everybody tells the truth is still open, the reigns in Eastern countries (in Asia) are a more utilitarian perception of the dynamics between the reality and the polite façade.

Thus, from what was stated above, we can say that the entire studies which were given to political apologies are different from one to another to the one we aim to undertake. Our study deals with *Pragma-discoursal Analysis of Speech Act of Apology in English (American) and Arabic in Political Texts*, and the novelty of it is that according to the literature reviewed, we did not find any other work that analyses the Arabic and the English political apologies. However, we mention one research has taken by Rula Fahmi under the title *Cross-cultural Study of the Speech Act of Apology in American English and Jordanian Arabic* (2004) to compare apology act between American and Arabic (more specifically Jordanian). But the data were not political one. It was selected from students who practice apologies at universities.

8. Dissemination

The partial outcomes of this research will be presented in international conferences, and in scholarly journals both in Romania and abroad, while the end-product will be finalized in a book form which, hopefully, will be a significant contribution to the field.