A Discourse Analysis on Logan Paul's Apologies: Are They Apologetic Enough?

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Abstract—**In a world full of Internet sensations and Internet scandals, a famous YouTuber named Logan Paul raised to fame by bringing one of the biggest Internet controversies in the beginning of 2018, which was the filming of a dead body in the Japanese Suicide Forest. Although he later apologized for his mistakes, the audience was not just convinced by his words. In response to the criticism, he made another apology. This study seeks to answer the questions: "Were his attempts apologetic enough?" and "What made them apologetic or not apologetic?" Several analyses have attempted to examine whether his apologies were sincere or not. However, none of these analyses analyzes his apologies from the perspective of linguistics. To fill in this gap, this study examines Logan's apologies from a linguistic point of view. It employs the qualitative method and frameworks by Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper [1], Benoit [2], Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster & Montada [3], Lutzky & Kehoe [4], and Deutschmann [5]. The findings reveal that Logan's first attempt at apologizing was not apologetic enough, and that his second apology was more apologetic.**

Keywords— Discourse Analysis on Apologies, YouTube Star, Linguistics of Apologies, Logan Paul's apologies

I. INTRODUCTION

In this modern era where people have easy access to entertainment, online streaming platforms, such as YouTube, rise to the occasion. Just like TV, YouTube also has its own stars who have gained fame from the platform. They are called YouTubers. One of the most famous YouTubers of the current generation is Logan Paul. Before becoming a YouTuber, he first gained his fame through a 6-second video application called Vine, which shut down in 2016. By the year 2017, Logan was "the fastest YouTuber in the history to ever hit 10 million subscribers in 2017" [6].With almost 19 million subscribers, his name made its way to the "the 20 most powerful influential people on the Internet in 2018" list [7]. With his slogan "be a maverick," he is a living proof of how being different and determined in what you do can get you far in life.

He was praised by the world for his achievements, until he got himself in trouble at the peak of his career. In the beginning of 2018, Paul made quite a commotion by exposing a dead body that he found in the Japanese Suicide Forest while he was exploring it. This exposure infuriated many people. The video received almost six million dislikes, and Paul started losing subscribers within minutes after uploading the video. People also expressed their disappointment and disgust in the video's comment section as well as on Twitter. After receiving a wave of backlash, Paul immediately took the vlog down and apologized

through his Twitter account. However, people were not willing to forgive him just yet because of what he said in his apology. A lot of people indicated that Paul seemed to be very insensitive regarding the situation and that his apology was terrible and self-centered. Many people on Paul's YouTube comment section seemed to think that he only made the apology because he got called out for his ignorant behavior and did not seem to regret it at all. On the same day when he posted his first apology, another attempt of apology was made in a nearly two-minute video. Even though his second attempt of apology seemed to be better than the first one, the audience was once again not convinced. The reason as to why people were not convinced was the fact that Paul monetized his apology video, and many were "questioning whether the YouTube personality [was] really sorry at all" [8]. After receiving the backlash of his second apology, Paul decided to demonetize the video.

Apologies, such as what Paul attempted to deliver, have been widely studied by experts across various fields. Most of the existing studies about apologies—including the ones written by Page [9], Ancarno [10], and Sandlin & Gracyalny [11]—use the theory of image repair strategies by Benoit [2]to examine whether an apology is successful or not. To analyze Logan Paul's apologies, this study combines Benoit's strategies with other theories, namely the five verbal components of an interpersonal apology by Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster & Montada [3] and the pragmatic components of an apology by Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper [1]. The frameworks of these theories are meant to reveal the common apologetic factors that are present or missing from Paul Logan's attempts.

This study examines Paul's written apology and videos taken from his personal Twitter [12] and YouTube [13] accounts. Unlike similar researches by Ancarno [10] and Page [9], which incorporate people's responses to explore how they contribute to the success and sincerity of an apology, this study only focuses on underlining the linguistic features of an apology. To be more specific, it investigates the elements of an affective interpersonal apology that may or may not exist in Paul's apology tweet and video. In addition to the frameworks, it also employs Lutzky & Kehoe's [4] Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) to find words that collocate with "sorry" without actually including the word "sorry." Lutzky & Kehoe [4] used IFIDs to help them analyze one particular word, which was "oops," to help them determine whether the word was actually used to mean sorry and if it was actually acceptable to the audience. Similarly, in this study, IFIDs are used to list down the words that are found in Paul's apology and to put them in

six categories without including the word "sorry." These categories are: expression of remorse, acknowledgment of the offense, explanation of the account, offering for repair, asking for forgiveness, and others. The IFIDs are also used to help analyze words that are still unclear in terms of who Paul was addressing them to.

The main objective of this study is to answer the questions: "Were his attempts apologetic enough?" and "What made them apologetic or not apologetic?"

II. Methods

This study used the qualitative method to analyze Logan Paul's apologies. The data were gathered from Paul's apologies on Twitter [12] and YouTube [13], which were both posted on 2 January 2018. For purposes of this research, data from the video were transcribed. The first stage of analysis laid out the elements found in the apologies according to pragmatics [1], image restoration discourse [2], and verbal components of interpersonal apology [3]. These frameworks were sorted based on the year the studies were published, and their aim was to identify the missing linguistic elements from the tweet and video apologies and examine any improvements made in the video. By doing this, we hope that the results will be able to determine whether the second attempt of apology was necessary and if it was more sincere and worth forgiving than the first one.

The second stage of the analysis involved making a list of words that are found in both apologies— without including the word *sorry*—using Illocutionary Force Indicating Device by Deutschmann [5]. In this second stage, the listed words were categorized into six categories, which are: expression of remorse, acknowledgment of the offense, explanation of the account, offer for repair, asking for forgiveness, and "others." The "others" category was filled with words that did not fit into any of the other five categories. These were also words that were still unclear in terms of who Paul was addressing them to; i.e., whether it is to the victim, to his audience, or to himself. Using this same framework, this study also attempts to explain the meaning and the possible reasons as to why Paul used other words that cannot fit into the categories above.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Results

Based on the data collected and on the analysis to examine whether there was any difference or improvement in Paul's second apology, the following elements were found, but unfortunately, they are still missing from both attempts of apology.

TABLE I.   Elements of a Successful Apology

Framework	Missing Elements	
	1st Apology	*2nd Apology*
Apology Within Pragmatics [1]	1	1
Image Restoration Discourse [2]	0	1
Verbal Components for An Affective Interpersonal Apology [3]	3	1
Total	4	3

From these results, it can be concluded that there are generally some improvements made in the second attempt of the apology. Notably, there are expressions that are not present in the tweet but are present in the video apology. For example, in the tweet, there is no expression indicating that Paul admitted the damage that he had caused. However, in the video, he took time to explain the situation and address those suffering from mental illness and were affected by his actions. Improvements in terms of how he used polite expressions, including "There's a lot of things I should have done differently, but I didn't […]," to admit his fault are also found in the video. In the tweet, Paul admitted his fault by simply saying, "For the first time in my life I'm regretful to say I handled that power incorrectly." He later made quite an improvement in the video by saying that he should have never done what he did and that there are things that he could have done differently. He emphasized this by saying, "Like I said, I've made a huge mistake." Another element that has also been improved in the video is the promise for forbearance from Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper's Apology within Pragmatics [1]. In the tweet, Paul promised his audience that the same mistake will never happen again without promising that he will change his attitude as a person altogether. However, in his second apology, Paul promised to be better. Not only did he promise that, but he also emphasized it by saying, "I will be better." By that simple repetition, Paul showed his determination to convince his audience that he will change his attitude for the better. From these analyses, we can conclude that his second apology was necessary to cover up for the missing elements in the first apology. Not only were the missing elements added, but Paul also used a different tone and elaborated the things that he should have explained further.

Looking at the ratio of elements that are found in the tweet and the video, it looks like there are two more elements missing from the tweet compared to the video, which only has one element missing. Like it has been mentioned before, Paul did not seem to be admitting his fault in the tweet, but he later corrected this in the video by admitting his fault. Another element that is missing from the tweet is the expression of asking forgiveness. According to Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster & Montada [3], saying "I'm sorry," which is an expression of remorse, is not simply the same as asking for forgiveness. The meaning behind *I'm sorry* can vary, depending on the situation. One can say "I'm sorry" to give a response to bad news. However, if one is asking for forgiveness, not only do they have to say "I'm sorry," but they also have to make it clear that they are asking to be forgiven by the person affected by the damage. Notably, in the video, Paul only stated that his intention was to apologize for the damage he had caused and that he did not expect anyone to forgive him. To analyze this expression, we need to take a look at Austin's [14] and Searle's [15] theories on speech acts. The study of speech acts concerns examining an utterance together with the kind of acts that derive from it. According to Austin [14] and Searle [15], there are three layers of meanings in speech acts, which are: locutionary

meaning, illocutionary meaning, and perlocutionary meaning. To have an understanding of an utterance, one must look past the locutionary meaning, which is the literal meaning of the expression. In the video, Paul did say that he did not expect to be forgiven, but the illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of his words imply otherwise. The illocutionary meaning is the meaning that is the implicit intention of a speaker when they are making an utterance. In Paul's case, the intention of his utterances was to ask for forgiveness. The perlocutionary meaning is related to the expected effect that the utterance may or may not cause on the other person. When he said that he did not need forgiveness, the expected outcome was that the audience would see that he had realized his mistakes and the damage he had caused to others. By making it seem like he had come to a realization and given up on the chance to be forgiven, the audience would then pity him and as a result, be compelled to forgive him. When looked at from this perspective, it can be concluded that Paul's utterances were tailored to trigger the audience to forgive him. All in all, the utterances can still pass the category of asking for forgiveness.

Despite all the elements that were improved or added in the video, two elements are still missing from both the tweet and the video. The missing elements are: offer of repair and offer for compensation. The answer as to why these elements are still missing cannot be ascertained. Looking at the frameworks above, offer of repair and offer for compensation seem to be referring to an act that Paul can do to cover the damage. This can be paying for the damage or doing a community service. However, looking at the situation itself, the damage that his Suicide Forest vlog caused was mostly affecting people around the world on their psychological level instead of occasioning material loss. Therefore, the only possible thing that Paul could do was to make a promise for forbearance, which is to convince the audience that he will do anything within his powers to prevent the same action from happening again in the future. Thankfully, the promise for forbearance can be found in both the tweet and the video. To even make it better, he stated it twice in the video. All in all, the second apology was necessary in order for him to be forgiven.

Identifying the elements of an effective apology is apparently not enough to analyze Paul's tweet and video apologies. Even though it has been shown that there are elements that were improved, the meaning and intention behind the words used in the video apology are still left unknown. Therefore, to find out their meaning and intention, this study further analyzes Paul's apologies using the framework of Illocutionary Force Indicating Device [5].

TABLE II.   ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE INDICATING DEVICE [5]

Categories	Tweet	Video
Expression of Remorse	✗	9
Acknowledgment of the Offense	8	5
Explanation of the Account	11	9
Offer for Repair	✗	✗
Ask for Forgiveness	✗	1
Others	6	6
Total	25	30

Just like it was established in the first step of analysis, there are still some categories that are missing from the apologies. There are three empty categories missing from the tweet and one from the video. The categories missing from the tweet are expression of remorse, offer of repair, and asking for forgiveness. In the video, the only category missing is offer of repair. However, there are words that do not fit into any of the five categories, and these words were put into a new category called "others."

First, this research will analyze the words found in the tweet. There are six words that do not fit into the categories above, and the reasons why they do not fit into any of those categories will be explained further. The word *views* refers to the number of viewers that Paul gets in his videos, which are usually in an average of millions of viewers. He used the word to explain that he was not using the footage of the dead body in the vlog to get people to view his video because he already had a large number of subscribers; therefore, the action itself is proven to be unnecessary. What is interesting is that it shows that he had the choice to include the footage or just to leave it out on the editing floor. However, this utterance has been interpreted differently by the audience. The audience chose to look at it as a way of Paul bragging about getting a sizable number of views on his vlogs. This was one of the reasons as to why his apology was termed as being self-centered. The same thing goes to the word *sh*t*, which is not the word that one would typically find in an apology. However, that is not the reason as to why this word was put in the category of *others*. The word *sh*t* in itself is a type of slang that people nowadays use to replace a noun in a sentence. In this case, the word *sh*t* refers to what Paul is doing with his profession, which is to make daily videos. If that really is the case, then the *views* and *sh*t* can be put in the category of *explanation of the account*. However, his use of these words made his whole apology sound harsh, and as a result, he created a sense of arrogance Other words that also decrease the politeness of Paul's apology are *out* and *peace*. The exact utterance in the tweet is "I'm out of here. Peace." The word *out* is used to signal the end of his statement. According to the *Urban Dictionary* (n.d) [16], *I'm out* is an informal expression of goodbye that is usually used by a person to signal that they are leaving or to express disagreement. In this case, Paul simply used this word to casually say goodbye just like TV hosts *sign off* at end their shows. However, an expression as simple as *goodbye* and *thank you* would be an appropriate choice of words to end an apology. On the other hand, the word *peace,* as is used in Paul's utterance, does not seem to have any purpose. Just like *out,* it was just casually put in the utterance without any meaningful intention, yet it is in the part where he was signaling the end of the apology. Just as mentioned before, this utterance in itself is something that is usually found in a more casual situation, even though in this case, the situation required more polite expressions. Therefore, these words cannot be put into any category. As for *love* and *believe*, the intention behind Paul saying these words is simply to remind people, especially his fans, that he loves them and that they are good people who can understand the situation and all the decisions he has made.

Second, there are also six words that are found in the video that cannot be put into any of the five categories above. The words *promise, better,* and *will* are the words that

Paul used in the same utterance to express an offer for forbearance, which clearly means that they do not fit into any of the categories above. As for *heartless, cruel,* and *malicious*, they do not fit into any of the above categories because it is not clear who Paul was addressing these words to or what the intention was. Paul stated in his video that "The Internet is never to be heartless, cruel, or malicious." There are two possible reasons as to why he stated these words. The first one is because he was shocked by the response that he had gotten, which he perhaps found to be very mean and traumatizing. This, therefore, means that the utterances were directed toward the audience. The second possible reason is because the mistake he committed had caused emotional damage to many people, which means that he was addressing these words to himself as the person who had used his powers inappropriately. Looking at the utterance that he made before this one, it seems that the current utterance is leaning toward the second possible reason. The previous utterance is "The goal with my content is always to entertain, to push the boundaries, to be all inclusive in the world I live in. I share almost everything I do." If the two utterances are connected, it becomes clear that Paul was addressing the second utterance to himself rather than to the audience.

B. Discussion

In this section, we will discuss our findings from the linguistics public relations perspectives.

- The Apology Tweet

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, Paul's audience was not convinced by his first apology because it appeared to be insensitive and narcissistic. According to Chad Kawalec—the CEO of Brand Identity Center—in an interview with *The Wrap* [17], the first apology was riddled with Paul referring to himself and he had the audacity to add his trademark hashtag *#Logang4Life*. Chad further added that the first apology was simply made as an attempt of image repair by showing his narcissistic facade and referred to it as a "band-aid." Evan Nierman, the founder of Red Banyan (a crisis PR firm), stated in the same interview that perhaps the apology could have worked better if it was in form of a video because it connects him with his viewers better [17]. Red was baffled that Paul chose to make a written statement instead of a video. The vice president of Bernstein Crisis Management, Erick Bernstein, also had similar opinions with the previous experts. He, however, added that Paul should have considered the fact that he was addressing a wider scope of audience through his tweet, and not only his fans. According to Bernstein, there are three kinds of audiences, which are: "1) fans who will stand by you no matter what, 2) haters who aren't going to ever be convinced you're worth their time, and 3) those who are on the fence, unsure whether you're truly a villain" [18].

From the perspective of linguistics, it has been proven that there are some elements missing from the tweet. Those elements are the expression of remorse, offer of repair, and asking for forgiveness. The absence of these elements made the apology appear insincere and self-centered because Paul seemed to be heavily leaning toward explaining the situation rather than acknowledging that the audience needed him to apologize and change his attitude. These findings corroborate what Bernstein stated. Does this make the first apology

apologetic? It seems like it is not because key elements are missing from the apology. Paul also mentioned some words that did not fit into any of the five categories, including *sh*t* and *views*, which seemed to portray the image that he was referring to himself and what he does as a social media influencer.

- The Apology Video

Bernstein [18], Kawalec [17], and Nierman [17] agreed that the second apology was better than the first one. Bernstein stated that Paul seemed to have finally stripped down his "YEE BOI" facade and genuinely looked remorseful. Nierman also thought that the second apology was a major step forward. Kawalec, on the other hand, stated that there were still key elements missing from the second apology, although he agreed that it was better than the first one. According to him, the missing element was "How [was] he going to use his platform to impact the issue at hand?" [17]. He also stated that the apology could have been better if Paul had directed his viewers to the National Prevention Lifeline, which could have been handy in giving those affected by his actions a sense of meaning and hope. However, just as mentioned before, some people still think that the second apology was not sincere because Paul monetized both the suicide forest vlog and the apology video. This made many people wonder whether he was truly sorry and if he really wanted to change his behavior.

Regardless of what his intention were, the apology video showcased undeniable improvements. From the results, Paul added two of the three missing elements from his tweet, which are the expression of remorse and asking for forgiveness. The ratio of the words in the categories of explanation of the account and offer of repair was also not as much as found in the tweet. In the two categories, Paul also shifted his focus to addressing his audience as opposed to making the apology seem as if it was about himself. However, just as Kawalec stated, one important element that is still missing from the video is the offer of repair. Paul needed to point out how he was going to fix the damage and how his platform was going to be used in facilitating this. All in all, due to the improvements that were made, the second video is somewhat apologetic, although it may not be a perfect apology.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results and discussions of this study have revealed that Logan Paul's first apology was not apologetic enough because three important elements are missing. The elements that are missing include: the expression of remorse, the offer of repair, and asking for forgiveness. As a result, a second apology was necessary. Some improvements were made in the second apology, and only one important element, which is the offer of repair, is still missing. The offer of repair in itself is considered an important element because it can be found in all the three frameworks that offer the components of a successful apology. In Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper's [1] framework, the offer of repair is complemented with a promise for forbearance. However, in Benoit's [2] framework, those two elements are merged into a strategy that is called *corrective action*. Therefore, the importance of the offer of repair is the limitation of this study. It is still not clear whether the offer of repair and promise of forbearance

can collectively be referred to as corrective action. If they can't, then what is it that differentiates them?

Since this research only provides the linguistic perspective and its key objective is to find out whether Paul was apologetic or not, it cannot answer the question whether his apologies were sincere or not because it does not include other suprasegmental elements, such as facial and tonal expressions. Therefore, future analyses on the sincerity of Paul's apologies should incorporate an analysis on facial expressions and, where possible, include audience study. Another analysis that can also be incorporated in future studies is an analysis on how the audience perceived the apologies. An audience study can be carried out as a comparative study that will focus on how the audience's background knowledge of Logan Paul can affect their perceptions toward his apology because there was certainly a change of behavior in his daily vlogs and in the apologies.

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