Research Article

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Strategies and Leadership Values in Obama's Apology Discourse

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Abstract: This study analyses leadership apologies to gain insights into effective leadership performance from the perspective of apologising. The study explores Obama's leadership qualities that are projected through his apology discourse mainly the strategies used to construct his apologies and values that emerge from them. The study concluded that leadership should be versatile for a leader to be able to perform efficiently in crucial situations. It is important for a leader to have the ability to blend strategies to display good values to perform the speech act of apology well because in doing so, they will be able to bind themselves in good rapport with their followers which creates unity in the relationship. The significance of the study can be viewed in the potential to reframe apology as an empowering act that can positively impact leaders' image rather than an act that is viewed as taboo or ineffective for leadership.

Keywords: apology discourse, apology strategies, speech acts, leadership values, Barack Obama

1 Introduction

Apologies are powerful and are of great importance in reuniting the relationship between divided communities and nations, as exampled by Obama in his reconciliation speeches at Hiroshima, Laos, Cuba, Argentina, France and Egypt. Lazare (2004, p. 42) emphasised on this potential power when he stated "as the world becomes a global village, apologies are growing increasingly important on both national and international levels. In this international community, apologies will be vital to the peaceful resolution of conflicts." Consequently, an apology performed at this level has significant changes both domestically and internationally by universal morality and ethics (Bagdonas 2010). Therefore, an apology from a political leader is a hope that it will foster a welcoming communal bond and future relation. It is important that a political leader believes and practises the virtuous act of apology on his behalf as a frontrunner of the country. Liu (2010, p. 233) pointed out that "mistakes and failures are weighed against not only the leader's capabilities but also their character and moral integrity." In this prospect, apologies are awarded as the chief of a moral act (Luke 1997, Robinson 2004, Harris et al. 2006) and even a form of healing (LeCouteur 2001). Davis (2002, p. 171) supported this belief by recognising that "apologising can therefore be a lynchpin of moral growth," which has been crucial in the past, present and future times of this world.

However, a decision to apologise has potentially higher risk for a political figure than it would for a commoner. This is largely because society tends to associate errors with incompetence (Edmondson 2000)

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rather than regarding them learning steps. Kellerman (2006) acknowledges that even the wisest of leaders face the complexity of knowing when and how to apologise for their mistakes.

The leader chosen for this study is Barack Obama. Obama, as the previous President of the United States, performed many apologies during his reign in the political arena. It is a common practice that most political speeches and press statements are written by paid script writers to be read by leaders. However, the case was not so with Obama.

> Obama was not accustomed to using a speechwriter. From the time he was in state senate, he actually used to prepare texts, write remarks to himself, often in longhand on a yellow legal pad or on the back of scrapes of paper. He crafted most of his major speeches by himself, among them were Dreams from My Father, The Audacity of Hope, and his personal penned best-selling autobiography. (Berry and Gottheimer 2010, p. xxv)

Among the most remarkable attitude that Obama has as a leader is the nature to not withhold an apology when one is needed to resolve a misunderstanding. Obama's habit of apologising became a popular tease that it became the theme of Mitt Romney's unsuccessful presidential campaign (Obama's Apology Tour) and book biography (*No Apology: The Case for American Greatness*). The book was centred on Obama's diplomacy tour around the world apologising for America. This political framing suggests that for a president to apologise is to deny America's power and greatness. According to Maass (2018), President Obama was the first president who is not afraid to being perceived as weak by apologising.

2 Research problem

According to Mayfield and Mayfield (2017, p. 19), "many leadership communication problems are not intentional, but a reflection of educational deficit which can be corrected" in the area of language and leadership. Discourse is acknowledged as a crucial aspect of leadership performance to examine leadership from the perspective of language use. Schnurr (2009, p. 2), for instance, noted that "discourse is more than simply an ancillary aspect of leadership performance – it affects leaders' effectiveness on various levels and it lies at the heart of the leadership process." In fact, "imagining leadership outside of language is all but impossible" (Schnurr 2009, p. 2). However, in spite of this intricate relationship between leadership and language, there are very few studies which look at leadership performance from a linguistic perspective (Holmes 2000, Harris et al. 2006, Mullany 2007). Mayfield and Mayfield (2017) also believed that leadership communication constraints can be lifted when leaders mindfully expand and enrich their linguistic ranges. Schnurr and Schroeder (2018) noted that fresh air may be brought into leadership research from potential cross-fertilisation with fields beyond disciplinary boundaries and venturing into largely ignored areas of inquiry such as applied linguistics and pragmatics. According to them, this is one particular field that has been repeatedly identified for its potential to bring much needed fresh air to current leadership research, and where this cross-fertilisation promises to be particularly fruitful, namely, discourse analytical approaches to leadership. Research conducted in these disciplines also share an interest in understanding how leadership is actually done and – in contrast to much of the earlier mainstream leadership research – reject attempts to establish "grand theories of leadership" (Alvesson 1996, Clifton 2006). However, in spite of these shared interests and considerable overlaps, there is currently very little engagement between scholars in these disciplines (Schnurr and Schroeder 2018). Even though there are efforts for this intertwinement, studies conducted in applied linguistics and pragmatics fail to be acknowledged outside of their own discipline for their findings tend to be overlooked.

Therefore, there is a call for more research to approach the apologies of a leader from the linguistic angle. This study serves to fill in this gap of literature by adding not only to the literature of apology as a speech act but also to apology as used by a leader from a linguistic approach. However, there is a minimum account on Obama's apologies. Therefore, this warrants an investigation to study how Obama apologises as a political leader from a linguistic insight. This study also intends to fill in the gap of literature in Obama's apology discourse for leadership qualities in the light of his political career.

3 Literature review

As noted earlier, a decision to apologise or not has potentially higher stakes for a political figure than it would for a commoner in everyday life. Brubaker (2015) too specified that organisational leaders especially often choose to avoid apologising to protect themselves. In the Harvard Business Review article, Kellerman (2006) acknowledges that even the wisest of leaders have the difficulty of knowing when and how to apologise. After analysing a few situations, she makes an effort to address this dilemma by presenting a framework of apology leading to favourable and unfavourable outcomes. Her findings reveal that characteristics of an effective apology should include an acknowledgement of the wrongdoing, acceptance of responsibility by the offender, an expression of regret and a promise that the offense will not be repeated.

Likewise, studies by Hargie et al. (2010), Hearit (2010) and Roberts (2007) have attempted to produce similar situation assessment tools to guide leaders in apologising. Hargie et al. (2010) studied high-profile public apologies of banking CEOs to the Banking Crisis Inquiry of the Treasury Committee of the UK House of Commons in 2009. Following a gradation list of apology strategies, Hargie et al. (2010) claimed that the bad apologies of the CEOs lacked two prime necessities of an apology: blameworthiness and regret. This finding supports Darby and Schlenker's (1982, p. 742) most influential study on the defining features of apology, which are "admissions of blameworthiness and regret for an undesirable event." The analysis of CEO apologies depicted a context of blame attribution, avoidance of responsibility and heightened public anger. Proposing a resolution, the authors suggest a model for the CEO apologies to include explanation of the misfortune, statement of complete responsibility and a direct request for pardon. In addition, the CEO apologies should have a denial of intentionality, a self-rebuke at the error committed and description of personal remorse for the damage caused.

One well-known early study that is often cited regarding the importance of an expression of regret in an apology is by Fraser (1981). However, Fraser (1981) reckoned that the offender has to both admit responsibility for committing the offending act and express regret for the offence caused. This is because a statement of responsibility shows that the offender is alert of the violation of social norms, and so will be wary of committing such offence henceforth. It also implies that the wrongdoing should not be related to the personality of the offender because it was not the "true-self" that committed the offense.

Edwards (2010) also agreed that regret and responsibility is the main ingredient of a political apology. Edwards (2010) examined collective apologies by U.S. President Bill Clinton, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper for historical wrongdoing. The findings revealed a few commonalities in the three leaders' apology: expressions of regret, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, mortification and corrective action (pledged to prevent recurrences). To further explain, the acknowledgement of wrongdoing is done by discussing the crimes committed and the victims of those crimes. Mortification in this context is the acceptance of responsibility for the crime committed and an expression of remorse in the aftermath. Finally, in the effort of preventing recurrences, the offender offers solutions to rectify and repair the damage of the crimes (Edwards 2010).

Subsequently, leadership values such as trust (Savolainen et al. 2014), visionary, credibility and integrity are pertinent in any leader–follower relationship (Mussig 2003). This is in fact the practice of transformational leadership, whereby a leader leads and inspires his followers with higher order values. According to Basford (2012), humility and transformational leadership are important mediators of trust in the relationship of the followers with the leader. Followers who appraised their leader's apology as sincere perceived their leader as humble, which in turn generates positive follower reactions. This helps to reject feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction towards the leader.

Besides that expressions of regret by political leaders may encourage a transformation in the relationship dynamics between communities where the relationship moves forward from victimiser/victim to one built on common ground (Edwards 2010). Fraser (1981) considered that the apologiser has to both admit responsibility for committing the offending act and express regret for the offence caused. A statement of responsibility shows that the transgressor is aware that social norms have been broken and so will be able to avoid committing such a transgression in the future. Harris et al. (2006) suggest that

apologies that minimise responsibility and blame are often perceived as insincere or lacking in morality and have higher chances of generating further public controversy and debate. Therefore, the value of responsibility and accountability should come hand in hand in a leader to be able to demonstrate effective leadership at its full potential.

4 Methodology

One area where research in applied linguistics and pragmatics is particularly strong is in its ability to identify, trace and eventually capture the specific processes through which leadership roles and identities are claimed. The analysis should adopt a data-driven approach that allows themes to emerge from the data. The methodological approaches of current leadership research conducted in applied linguistics and pragmatics have much to offer in this respect. Researchers have to equip their research with the tools and processes to capture these complexities and to describe how leadership is accomplished is one concrete way by applying linguistic and pragmatic research, which can make important contributions to leadership.

This research design is qualitative, and the data were collected through purposive sampling. The study examines the apology strategies that are used to construct his apologies and the leadership values that emerge from them. The study employed pragmatics and positive discourse analysis as approaches to discourse analysis. Within pragmatics, the speech act theory (Searle 1969) and apology strategies (Murphy 2014) are employed to analyse the apology texts. Positive discourse analysis is an approach that constructively and optimistically values a social context in a positive perspective. Within positive discourse analysis, grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990) is used to perform a thematic analysis of leadership values from the apology texts using coding techniques (Halliday and Hasan 1976, Fairclough 1995) to derive humane values such as responsibility, accountability, sympathy, trust, regret, forgiveness and reconciliation. These values alike were highly expected to be practised by a leader through his leadership behaviour culled from leadership literature. Appendix shows the frameworks used.

Thematic analysis is transparent and directly data driven. It identifies, analyses and reports patterns (themes) through the coding process. The coding process involves axial and open coding to obtain emerging values from the text. During thematic analysis, the researcher inspects the apology texts for humane values using Table 3 in Appendix as a guide and kept vigilant for new emerging values as expected from raw data. After several rounds of coding, a saturation of values was achieved. These values are closely related to values such as responsibility, accountability, sympathy, trust, regret, forgiveness, trust, reconciliation and others that a leader should uphold as a good example (see Table 3 in Appendix). Thematic analysis involved a vocabulary analysis where the researcher seeks the vocabulary, specifically lexical repetition and meaning relations, as a device to organise and shape themes in a discourse (Halliday and Hasan 1976, Fairclough 1995), so as to uncover the underlying leadership values for the present study. The researcher labels the repeating words/concepts with codes and then compares them to see how they relate to one another through meaning relations. The researcher addresses the “why” and “how” questions to the themes to identify how the themes relate to the background of the story. An inference is then drawn on the relevancy and purpose of the themes resonating in the text. The results help to conclude on what Obama as a leader values and how he expresses those values in his apologies. According to Lancaster (2015, p. 146), great leaders know how to harness and use these values to lead others. Table 4 explains the procedure of analysis.

To study Obama from the apology perspective, a list of Obama’s apologies ranging from year 2007 till 2016 was inventoried. Then two data were chosen from electronic websites based on their availability of text and extensive news coverage for contextual information to assist the case study of each apology. The two data are listed as follows:

Apology Text 1

A note of apology by Obama posted on a website addressed to the Indian-American community (year 2007). Website address: http://observer.com/2007/06/obamaapologizesfordpunjab/.

Apology Text 2

Transcription of statement of apology by Obama on the deaths of two hostages in U.S. counterterrorism operation (year 2015). Website address: https://www.whitehouse.gov/thepressoffice/2015/04/23/statementpresidentdeathswarrenweinsteinandgiovanniloporto.

These two apologies were chosen from contrasting background to avoid a similarity in ideology, so that a fair deduction of Obama's leadership styles can be drawn from different crises. One apology was contextualised from a voting campaign while the other was from a counterterrorism war operation. Both apologies were issued years apart: year 2007 and year 2015. The reason for years apart selection was to note whether Obama's apology behaviour and rhetoric changed when he was a Senator in the State House (first apology text) as opposed to when he was the President serving his second term in the White House (second apology text). The apologies were chosen because they demonstrated a good spread of apology strategies, spoke of the importance of core morals and values, had sufficient background stories behind them and both resulted in a peaceful aftermath by the public. Each datum was first examined using Murphy's (2014) felicity conditions that warrant an apology speech act. This was to ensure the validity of the chosen speeches as appropriate for the study.

5 Contextual background of Apology Text 1

Democratic candidates Senator Barack Obama and Senator Hillary Clinton were chief rivals for the 2008 U.S. presidential election. During the campaign, Obama's research team circulated an attack memo entitled Hillary Clinton (D-Punjab) to ridicule her as a Senator from the Indian region of Punjab. The memo referred to the former President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton's close ties with India, her financial investments in Indian companies, her efforts on fundraising among Indian–Americans and outsourcing. The memo implied that given her close Indian connections, she was better suited to represent the state of Punjab instead of America. According to *The New York Times* on 19 June 2007, "the memo created a fury in the Indian–American community and raised questions about Obama's claims that he is above attack politics." Dave Kumar, the spokesman of the "South Asians for Obama" group told the *Times* that "the issue people had with the memo was the implication that having close ties with the Indian–Americans in the U.S. is a problem." As a result, the memo caused Obama's followers to doubt his pledge to run an attack-free campaign. Before long, Obama's followers posted a devastating note on the "South Asians for Obama" fan page website saying that they were "shocked and dismayed by the memo" and "less than satisfied" with the campaign's initial responses. To worsen the situation, the U.S.-India Political Action Committee sent a letter to Senator Obama, accusing his campaign of using racial stereotypes. The letter read,

> We have been encouraged by your message of inclusion and your promise to bring a new kind of politics to our country. This is why we are so concerned about media reports indicating your staff may be engaging in the worst type of anti-Indian American stereotyping. (*The New York Times*, 19 June 2007)

As soon as Obama learned of the memo, he disavowed and criticised the memo's content. He quickly apologised and revealed that he was unaware about the existence of the memo. It was reported by news networks from the two press conferences that were organised to clarify the matter; the editorial board of the Des Moines Register and The Associated Press and Obama claimed "It was a dumb mistake on our campaign's part," "[...] it wasn't anything I had seen or my senior staff has seen" and "[...] it didn't reflect my view of the complicated issue of outsourcing. I and my campaign take full responsibility for it and we apologize" (*The New York Times*, 19 June 2007). Obama also released an official written apology for the

Indian–American supporters on the website of the South Asians for Obama at http://observer.com/2007/06/obama-apologizes-for-dpunjab/.

These efforts paid off well because the apology made its amends. According to *The New York Times*, the spokesman of the South Asians for Obama group, Dave Kumar, said that the community was satisfied that Obama was sufficiently and sincerely upset about the memo's content. In the election that followed, the BBC News reported that an impressive 84% of the 2.85 million of the Indian–American community voted for Obama in the 2008 presidential election. Eventually, America also witnessed a growth in the Indian–American population. The U.S. Census recorded a 2.8 million of American–Indians in 2010 to a 3.1 million of American–Indians in 2013. Therefore, it is evident that this apology made its reparation well and was successful in convincing the Indian–Americans of Obama's goodwill and clean political standards.

6 Findings and discussion: Apology Text 1

Lines 1 and 2

I wanted to respond personally to the concerns you expressed regarding the recent research memo that our campaign put into circulation.

Apology Strategy: A statement of desire, recognising H as entitled to an apology

Value: Responsibility, accountability

According to Searle (1969), the objective of the assertive class is to obligate and commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. Obama in line 1 recognises the other party as deserving an apology. Obama puts out his intention with "I wanted to respond personally" because he feels accountable and wants to take responsibility. Besides the first line, the apology on the whole made a heavy use of the first-person singular. This shows personal accountability. Leaders who are accountable are trusted and respected by their followers to keep their word. Accountability also displays humility because the leader has to put aside his pride to address his mistake. Lines 1 and 2 express the sub-formula of the apology speech-act model by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) as well, which is "to recognize the other party as deserving an apology." According to Murphy (2014), "recognising H as entitled to an apology" means that the perpetrator feels guilt over the wrongdoing towards the victim and has the genuine desire to apologise. This is depicted with the referrals of "I" as the offender and "you" as the victim. Obama put out his intention with "I wanted to respond personally [...]" as a statement of desire and also as an initiation of a responsible move, because the matter was concerning "you," the victim.

Lines 4–10

To begin with, the memo did not reflect my own views on the importance of America's relationship with India.

I have long believed that the best way to promote U.S. economic growth and opportunity for American workers is to continually improve the skills of our own workforce and invest in our own scientific research, technological capacity and infrastructure, rather than to try to insulate ourselves from the global economy.

Apology Strategy: Explanation, expressing lack of intent

Value: Relationship, Reconciliation

As identified above, Obama has used the assertive speech act to transmit a piece of information that was used to correct the audience's knowledge and expectations of the word. The assertive illocutionary force is realised in lines 4–10 where Obama clarifies his belief that was previously perceived negatively.

He asserts in the imperative manner that the content of the memo did not reflect his belief of America's relationship with India. He further emphasises what he believes by stating each of them down in order to provide a clearer view for the audience to understand him from his perspective.

An intense reflection of Obama's self-agreement and self-disagreement along with the use of strong verbs such as "did not reflect my own views," "I have long believed," "ignored my longstanding relationship" and "I consider myself responsible" is portrayed in Obama's representatives. These firm statements are straight forward and not long-winded; they do not run-around-the-bush and create confusion. This helps to provide clarity and assertion to the readers of Obama's stand in this matter. The excerpt shows Obama giving an explanation of what he believed in, which was unfortunately portrayed in contrary to the truth in the incident. Lines 4–10 were a reinforcement of assertion that Obama used to his defence, expressing his lack of intent of the incident's negative outcome, and also that the memo failed to display his honest perception of America–India friendship ties.

Lines 20–25

We have taken appropriate action to prevent errors like this from happening in the future.
Please feel free to share this letter with other members of your organisation or leaders in the Indian–American community.
I look forward to our continued friendship and exchange of ideas – during the course of this campaign, and beyond.

Apology strategy: A statement of non-recurrence, An offer/statement of repair/redress, a request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness, a statement of desire, to appreciate/comfort/conciliatory expression

Value: Reconciliation, responsibility, relationship, visionary

The illocutionary goal of the commissive speech act is to commit the speaker to perform some future action. According to Searle (1983, p. 178), the communicative purpose of commissives is that the hearer shall be orientated as to a certain future behaviour of the speaker. He further adds that the social purpose of the commissive category, which he regards as "extra-linguistic," is to create stable expectations of people's behaviour. This is depicted in the lines of the apology excerpt: lines 20 and 21 and later in lines 24 and 25. The tone of the statement above is authoritative and legal. As a politician, Obama has promised to obligate himself to take the appropriate actions in preventing errors as similar as this from reoccurring. A promise by a politician is often given a higher regard and expectation often because the integrity of the politician is judged based on the capability to fulfil the promise made to the followers. A hint of obligation as a leader and responsibility is applied in the prior part of line 20, "We have taken appropriate action [...]," with assurance given in the latter part of line 20, "[...] to prevent errors like this from happening in the future." Obama kept his word and issued a new policy for campaigning purposes. The Fox news reported that this new policy requires every document irrespective of its purpose has to be first authorised by senior researchers before being released to the press or the public. Through this policy, a recurrence of a similar situation would be impossible in the near future.

According to Scher and Darley (1997, p. 130), a promise of forbearance increases the effectiveness of an apology by assuring hearers that the speaker will not repeat his transgression. If the function of an apology is to remedy the social breach and bring the transgressor "back in the fold," then it is important for social interactants to feel that the transgressor is aware of the violated rule and will strive to follow the rule henceforth. A promise of forbearance also shows the character of the leader whereby followers will be able to judge for themselves in the long run if the leader is trustworthy of his word or vice versa. The purpose of Obama requesting for the letter to be widely shared within the community is to ask for forgiveness. Obama wants the community to know and accept his apology in goodwill.

Commissives carry the future tense and also use words that refer to the future, as depicted in line 21 "[...] happening in the future," and in lines 24 and 25 "I look forward [...], and beyond." A hint of responsibility is applied in the prior part of sentence 20, "We have taken appropriate action [...]," with assurance given in the latter lines 20 and 21, "[...] to prevent errors like this from happening in the future"

sounds like a genuine promise. To assure (in the commissive use) is to commit oneself to something with the perlocutionary intention to convincing someone who has doubts. The presupposition of these doubts is a preparatory condition and the attempt to try to have the hearer "feel sure" of the commitment is, as in the assertive use, a special mode of achievement in giving assurance. Obama, in the above, calls for reconciliation. He hints for a lasting relationship between both sides. The above lines are voiced as a request for assistance. The request above will only be able to be fulfilled if the victims have agreed to spread the word of the apology within their community and also grant forgiveness for a continuity of friendship. Line 25 shows a hopeful yet confident Obama for a continuity in the relationship "during the course of this campaign, and beyond" given the reason for a continuous "[…] exchange of ideas […]" impresses a win–win relationship, a give and take, where both parties are equally in need of each other, not one party exercising dominance on the subordinate other.

Line 20 shows that accountable leaders who take "responsibility" for their actions focus on making the situation better, taking initiative to influence the outcome. By demonstrating "accountability," it allows everyone to move on and focus on the end goal rather than the problem. The next sentence that follows in the apology text is Obama informing the readers that they have taken appropriate action to prevent such an error as this from occurring again, which is the strategy of "a promise of forbearance." This is regarded as self-awareness, which according to Twain (2014), is an excellent form of strategy for an individual to identify his strengths and improve his weakness. Truly enough, as a lesson from this incidence, a new policy was established whereby all materials before their distribution to the public have to be first reviewed by senior staff. This example of Obama's action shows how improvement can be made from a mistake, which indirectly will have a positive influence on his followers.

Another value that Obama emphasises is the importance of the "relationship" between a leader and his followers. The apology depicts Obama emphasising on the relationship between him and the Indian–Americans. Lines 22 and 23 express a request in the directive speech act to help Obama share the apology with all the other Indian–Americans who missed out the apology to repair the tarnished relationship. The strategy "offer of repair" here is the magnitude of the apology itself to the victims. In lines 24 and 25, Obama shows that he values the relationship that he had with the Indian–Americans prior to the incident and requests for a reconciliation of that close relationship.

In addition, an added value that Obama portrays as a leader is his vision of the future. He uses the commissives wherein the future tense speaks his vision for the people. Vision is essential in leadership for it radiates optimism whereby a future outcome is anticipated for people to participate as partners in flourishing the expected outcome. Lines 24 and 25 show how positively Obama speaks of the future with the American Indians. He promotes a continued social interaction between both parties within a give and take concept. This is shown in the phrase "exchange of ideas." With the usage of "future" and "I look forward," Obama is hopeful and pushing for a reconciliation and renewed friendship to take place. This is an indirect manner of the strategy "an explicit expression of apology: a request for forgiveness." This is seen as he emphasises a continuity in the long-lasting relationship with the phrase "during the course of this campaign, and beyond." This shows the positivity of a visionary leader.

7 Contextual background of Apology Text 2

With the intention to wipe out a compound linked to al-Qa'ida militants in Shawal Valley in North Waziristan, a tribal area of Pakistan, the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) of the U.S. "authorized a counterterrorism operation with no idea that two hostages were being held captive by al-Qa'ida despite hundreds of hours of surveillance" (Baker 23 April 2015). The two hostages who were killed were aid workers devoted to improve the lives of the Pakistani people. Besides the hostages, the operation also reportedly killed an American al-Qaeda, Ahmed Farouq, leader of its branch in the Indian subcontinent, and another American al-Qaeda member, Adam Gadahn, a California native who converted to Islam and helped run al-Qaeda's propaganda department (Washington Post, 23 April 2015). The two American

al-Qaida operatives killed in the strikes "were al-Qaida leaders plotting against America as they held hostages," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Ed Royce, said in a statement (Washington Post, 23 April 2015).

The two hostages who were kidnapped by al-Qa'ida were Warren Weinstein, an American whom the C.I.A. had long sought to rescue since 2011 that al-Qa'ida terrorists released videos of, and Giovanni Lo Porto, an Italian national. Weinstein, aged 73, was a business development expert working on contract for the "United States Agency for International Development" when he was kidnapped in August 2011 in Lahore, Pakistan, just 4 days before he was scheduled to return to his family in the United States. Lo Porto studied at London Metropolitan University and worked on aid projects in the Central African Republic and Haiti before travelling to Pakistan to help rebuild a flood-ravaged area. Shortly after arriving in January 2012, he was abducted. The Italian government had been working with the U.S. to secure Lo Porto's release.

According to *The New York Times* dated 24 April 2015, Obama's aides said that the President did not sign off on this specific strike, because he had authorised the C.I.A. and military to carry out drone attacks without further consultation if the mission is befitting the guidelines. After the intelligence officials discovered the mistake, they informed President Obama who ordered the episode to be declassified to the public. A very regretful Obama then called the Prime Minister of Italy and Weinstein's wife to inform them of the deaths. Weinstein's wife said that her husband's captors bore responsibility, "The cowardly actions of those who took Warren captive and ultimately to the place and time of his death are not in keeping with Islam, and they will have to face their God to answer for their actions" (*The New York Times*, 24 April 2015). She also expressed her disappointment in the U.S. Government. In the aftermath of the situation, the government conducted two reviews of the drone strike to determine what went wrong, and if the episode could have forced a broader rethinking of President Obama's approach to fighting al-Qa'ida. President Obama said a full review would identify any changes that should be made to avoid similar errors being repeated. The U.S. conducts counterterrorism strikes based on protocols called "near certainties," White House spokesman, Josh Earnest, said at a press briefing after the official apology by Obama (*The New York Times*, 24 April 2015). These include situations in which the officials are highly certain that targets are at the site of a strike and that there will not be collateral damage. Earnest said the hostages' deaths may lead to a change in these protocols. The White House secretary added that the families will receive financial compensation.

Members of Congress criticised the administration and called for more oversight. The Republican of California argued that "Warren's death is further evidence of the failures in communication and coordination between government agencies tasked with recovering Americans in captivity – and the fact that he's dead, as a result, is absolutely tragic" (*The New York Times*, 24 April 2015). The deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union criticised that the government was not parallel with the regulations that it says it uses and the regulations that are actually being used. However, he was remarked by the unusual transparency of the government in disclosing their mistakes and information of the drone strikes. Human rights groups have also criticised Obama's administration by claiming that the deaths of the hostages highlighted the flaws in the policy. On 23 April 2015, according to *The Washington Post*, the White House released a written statement:

> It is with tremendous sorrow that we recently concluded that a U.S. Government counterterrorism operation in January killed two innocent hostages by al-Qa'ida. Our hearts go out to the families of Dr. Warren Weinstein, an American held by al-Qa'ida since 2011, and Giovanni Lo Porto, an Italian national who had been an al-Qa'ida hostage since 2012. Analysis of all available information has led the Intelligence Community to judge with high confidence that the operation accidently killed both hostages. The operation targeted an al-Qa'ida associated compound, where we had no reason to believe either hostage was present, located in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. No words can fully express our regret over this terrible tragedy.

Shortly after the apology statement, Obama took to the White House podium in a briefing to provide some details on the operations 3 months prior, details of which he had ordered to be declassified. President

Obama also made a personal apology in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, White House. The following analysis is based on the apology by Obama which has been transcribed.

8 Findings and discussion: Apology Text 2

Lines 25–45

As President and as Commander-in-Chief, I take full responsibility for all our counterterrorism operations, including the one that inadvertently took the lives of Warren and Giovanni. On behalf of the United States government, I offer our deepest apologies to the families. As soon as we determined the cause of their deaths,
I directed that the existence of this operation be declassified and disclosed publicly.
I did so because the Weinstein and Lo Porto families deserve to know the truth.
And I did so because even as certain aspects of our national security efforts have to remain secret in order to succeed, the United States is a democracy committed to openness in good times and in bad. Our initial assessment indicates that this operation was fully consistent with the guidelines under which we conduct counterterrorism efforts in the region, which has been our focus for years because it is the home of al-Qaeda's leadership. And based on the intelligence that we had obtained at the time, including hundreds of hours of surveillance, we believed that this was an al-Qaeda compound; that no civilians were present; and that capturing these terrorists was not possible. And we do believe that the operation did take out dangerous members of al-Qaeda. What we did not know, tragically, is that al-Qaeda was hiding the presence of Warren and Giovanni in this same compound.

Apology strategy: A statement of obligation, a commissive with 'apology' as a direct object, recognising H as entitled to an apology.

Value: Responsibility and accountability, Determination (to work hard), Dedication (to duty), Trustworthiness/Transparency.

The highlight of this sentence is the fragment "deepest apologies." The apology expressed at this juncture is not a gesture of condolence, rather an apology for making a mistake that caused the loss of both men. Obama as a leader is obliged to apologise on behalf of the country to both families. He recognises the families are entitled to an apology, and though he is the symbol of America's superpower, he does not try to hedge or down tone the apology.

Obama displays a strong sense of responsibility and accountability in this apology text. He reinforces the usage of first person pronoun referring mainly to himself and the U.S. Government as solely responsible for the deaths of both innocent hostages. Obama chiefly held himself responsible because of his position of authority as the Commander-in-Chief. He felt accountable of the grief that the family is going through as a consequence of his administration's mistake, which he does not deny but further acknowledged. The weight of responsibility was previously shown in the effort and determination that was channelled by the security team to rescue both hostages prior to their death. Obama's sense of accountability was further demonstrated as he promised to work on the measures of improvement to avoid similar casualties in the future.

In an interview with Jameel Jaffer, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union, despite criticising the government's policies, he noted that the disclosure was remarkable.

> I was going to say that one other thing that's remarkable about yesterday's disclosures is the very fact of the disclosures, because normally the government doesn't disclose information about individual drone strikes, at least not on the record like this. This is a very unusual thing, where the government is actually disclosing information about who was killed and a little bit of information about the operation. (www.democracynow.org)

Disclosing information that makes the leader appear more human improves the understanding relationship between the leader and the follower (Gardner and Stough 2002). Obama uses the representative speech act in line 31 to order the officials to report about the operation to the public. To order and to command require invoking from a position of authority and power which is often responded with an obligation of obedience. Obama ordered the existence of the operation to be declassified not only because he feels obliged to the families who are not entitled only to an apology, but also because they deserve to know the truth. Therefore, as a leader in a crisis, Obama had made the right commitment to reveal the truth and be transparent.

Obama also depicts the dedication to duty and the determination to work hard. Based on the analysis, an impression of relentlessness was portrayed not only by Obama but also by all the forces at work such as the national security team and dedicated professionals across the U.S. Government. As Obama revealed parts of the operation's activity, a sense of serious commitment is realised where they focused for years on Shawal Valley because it was the home of al-Qaeda's militants. The phrase "including hundreds of hours of surveillance," either metaphorical or otherwise, demonstrates the time and work that were consumed before the operation unit was ready to launch an attack. However, notwithstanding the hours of tireless labour since the abduction in 2011, the loss and further repercussions is a tarnished image that Obama has to deal with and repair.

Another leadership trait displayed is trustworthiness and the obligation as a leader to be truthful no matter the cost. Though the truth made the counterterrorism unit seem irresponsible in carrying out their duty efficiently, Obama made it a point to be responsible in disclosing the truth, being as transparent as possible about the details of the tragedy. The U.S. News reported that Republican Duncan Hunter said Weinstein's death was a casualty of the communication failures between government agencies like the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. (Brody 2015, April 23). It is undeniable that leadership roles are complex and leave possibilities for occurrences of mistakes. The body of literature suggests that not only are leaders vulnerable to committing mistakes, they are in fact in higher tendency to commit mistakes because of the given complexity of their status as a leader in making decisions (Finkelstein 2003, Hogan and Kaiser 2005). The strains of a mistake can cost a healthy relationship the leader once had with the followers. According to Bedell-Avers (2008), relationship mistakes (social errors) have a more negative impact on the leader's performance, resulting in loss of support from followers.

Lines 73–88

There could be no starker contrast between these two selfless men and their al-Qaeda captors.
Warren's work benefited people across faiths.
Meanwhile, al-Qaeda boasted to the world that it held Warren, citing his Jewish faith.
Al-Qaeda held both men for years, even as Warren's health deteriorated.
They deprived these men of precious, irreplaceable years with family who missed them terribly.
Amid grief that is unimaginable, I pray that these two families will find some small measure of solace in knowing that Warren and Giovanni's legacy will endure.
Their service will be remembered by the Pakistani men, women and children whose lives they touched and made better.
Their spirit will live on in the love of their families, who are in our thoughts and prayers today, especially Warren's wife Elaine, their daughters Alisa and Jennifer, and their families.
And the shining example of these two men will stand as a light to people all over the world who see suffering and answer with compassion, who see hatred and offer their love, who see war and work for peace.
May God bless these two brave men, and may He watch over and comfort their families for all the years to come.

Apology strategy: To sympathise/recognize victim's affliction, To appreciate/to comfort/to offer conciliatory expressions

Value: Appreciative (of the service and sacrifice), Sympathy (to comfort), Forgiveness

Obama compares and contrasts the hostages against their captors: the humanitarians versus the terrorists. Obama points out the issue of selflessness and selfishness. Warren served to the people in need irrespective of their faith; in contrast, al-Qaeda captured Warren and mocked him for his faith that was unparalleled to the extremists. Warren, aged 73, would have suffered from health issues as a result of being treated poorly as a hostage. The videos of him released by the terrorists did not show Warren being in a good state of health. To hold him hostage at an old age away from his family further shows of how unmerciful and unsympathetic they were. These sentences in the expressive speech act bring out the unspoken agony that the victims must have endured silently.

The new findings to these strategies against the apology text were the emergence of two other strategies: "To sympathize/recognize victim's affliction" and "To appreciate/to comfort/to offer conciliatory expression." The strategy "to sympathize/recognise victim's affliction" is to acknowledge and sympathise with the victim's suffering, while the strategy "to appreciate/to comfort/to offer conciliatory expression" focuses on appreciating the service/sacrifice, comforting the hearer and moving towards expressions that initiates reconciliation and closure. The sentences that represented these strategies were composed of hedging confessions, metaphorical expressions, sympathetic/empathetic/comforting statements, conciliatory expressions and emotion embedded adjectives. Both these strategies were pathos-like, emotional, and expressive in nature. Pathos represents an appeal to the emotions of the hearer and kindles feelings that are already resided in them.

Obama in lines 73–88 uses the expressive with the intention to comfort the families of Warren and Giovanni who are mourning in grief of their deceased beloved. He consoles them with phrases such as "will find some small measure of solace," "legacy will endure," "their service will be remembered," "lives that they touched and made better," "their spirit will live on," "shining example" and "as a light to people all over the world." Some phrases highlighted the difference that these men impacted on people to "see suffering and answer with compassion," "see hatred and offer their love" and "see war and work for peace." In other words, these men had a positive perspective of life, which stands as a "shining example" to people all around the world. There were antonyms present in the text where Obama used the positive to win over the negative, for example "suffering-compassion, hatred-love, and war-peace." This shows the spirit of positivity and optimism; to see the silver lining amidst crisis. Obama uses the future tense "will + verb" in these sentences, for instance, "will find some small measure of solace, will be remembered, will live on, will stand as a light" to signify a sense of never dying legacy, a continuity of the power of goodness. His final words mixed hope for closure for the victims with expressions of gratitude for them.

Besides that, a strong sentiment of appreciation was shown towards the sacrifice that Warren and Giovanni had made in their service as humanitarians. Obama also comforts and lends sympathy to the mourning families. This is seen in the references used to address them such as "brave" and "selfless men." A number of positive values were spoken personally of them as well. They were pictured as a "shining example" and as a "light" to others. These two men were able to see hope in the face of crisis. Obama encouraged the people who have hearts burdened with humanitarianism to view the service of Warren and Giovanni as an example of those "who see suffering and answer with compassion, who see hatred and offer their love, who see war and work for peace."

The apology bears witness to Obama lending his sympathy through the expressives in his apology. To sympathise is to be able to empathise with the pain of others and to have the desire to help ease those in pain. A feeling of helplessness and guilt is realised in between these lines (lines 73–88) whereby Obama can only express sympathy because he is powerless to undo the agony that the families were enduring. Sympathy is effective in comforting people in pain. Since the situation was out of Obama's hand as President, he related himself as a husband and father who could relate to the feeling of losing a family member.

Obama calls for forgiveness from the families through this apology text. He admits to being responsible, apologises for the tragedy, practices transparency throughout the apology and vows to learn from the tragedy. In other words, being unable to escape the consequences of the mistake but willing to learn and do better, he calls for trust to be bestowed once again upon him as the leader of the nation. This

is explained in Kidder's (2007) definition of forgiveness whereby the situation moves the leader to see the situation in a new light which leads to restorative measures towards reconciliation. Forgiveness finally leads to reconciliation, where it continues to restore the injured relationship which leads to social healing as well as governance, stabilisation and economic reconstruction (Worthington Jr 2013). Obama as a leader was in need to receive forgiveness to continue pursuing constructive efforts for the betterment of the country.

9 Concluding remarks

The discussion in both apologies above demonstrates that effective leadership involves a leader's dynamic and versatile skill in apologising through the blend of speech acts, strategies and values to inspire others. Obama used diverse strategies to facilitate a well-meant apology that helped to reduce the dissatisfaction of his angered followers. The use of strategies such as "a statement of desire," "a statement of obligation," "a commissive with 'apology' as a direct object," "a statement of non-recurrence," "an offer/statement of repair/redress," "a request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness," "a statement of desire," "recognising H as entitled to an apology," "explanation" and "expressing lack of intent" sided the construction of the apologetic statements. Two new additional strategies that were found were composed from the raw apologetic statements: "to sympathize/recognize victim's affliction" and "to appreciate/to comfort/to offer conciliatory expressions." Speech acts such as representatives, expressives and commissives composed the tone of the apologetic statements. The combination of this duo between strategies and acts in his apology construction birthed moral values, which addressed the followers' emotional needs. Among the values found from the physical construction of the apologetic statements are appreciativeness (service and sacrifice of victims), sympathy, forgiveness, responsibility, accountability, determination and dedication to duty, trustworthiness/transparency, reconciliation, relationship value and visionary. The angered victims were then able to receive the apology well. It is important that a leader's apology should be able to tap on values that are important and that matter to people.

To be a good leader, one must be able to perform the speech act of apology well. A significant political apology should be connected with meaningful action in terms of rectifying the damage caused by the offence and displaying an indication of the seriousness of the politician's sense of remorse (Harris et al. 2006). If a political apology is to be regarded as valid by those to whom it is addressed, it should be sincere and morally grounded with an explicit acceptance of personal responsibility for the act committed. It is our contention, that in doing so, leaders will be able to bind themselves well in good rapport with their followers which creates unity in the relationship. As a reward of his ethical leadership, Obama managed to redeem a good image and reputation after the damage with the truth behind the incidents that took place. Previous studies (Kellerman 2006, Brubaker 2015) suggest that leaders are resistant to apologise in fear that it will reflect weakness and undermine authority. However, this study has demonstrated how the language of apology can display leadership through it. Leaders should be aware that an apology can function as a tool for "image restoration and ethos repair" (Holling et al. 2014, p. 279). By apologising, one attempts to heal the victim and in turn redeems himself and restores his image and ethos. Leaders should not be ignorant or have an egoistic attitude by avoiding the rightful act to apologise if a transgression has been committed. It is crucial for leaders to understand that apology is an important leadership behaviour and practice; it is not to be viewed as taboo or ineffective for leadership.

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Appendix

Table 1: Searle's (1969) categories of illocutionary speech acts

Categories of speech act	Descriptions
Representatives	The acts that the speaker believes to be true or false, such as to affirm, to deny, to explain, to deduce and to estimate
Directives	Intentions of the speaker to the hearer to do something, including the acts to command, to beg and to request
Commissives	The acts when the speaker expresses a commitment for future action; for example, to promise, to guarantee, to threaten and to pledge
Expressives	All acts that express the speakers' psychological state. Examples of expressives are to thank, to apologise and to congratulate
Declarations	The acts refer to the immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs; for instance, to appoint, to marry and to resign

Table 2: Murphy's (2014) apology strategies

(A) An explicit expression of apology	i. A performative IFID	James Gray (16/03/2000; vol. 346, col. 520) [...] i therefore apologise to you and to the house [...]
	ii. A commissive with "apology"/ "apologies" as a direct object	Nicholas Scott (10/05/1994; vol. 243, col. 155): [...] i offer my unreserved apologies to the house.
(B) Conventional (indirect) apology formula	i. An expression of regret	Michael Trend (13/02/2003; vol. 399, col. 1073): [...] i am sir so very sorry○.
	ii. A request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness	Tony Baldry (21/07/2005; vol. 436, col. 1430): [...] and i HOPE the house will accept this heartfelt and unconditional apology [...]
	iii. A statement of desire	Kali Mountford (27/07/1999; vol. 336, col. 149): [...] i would like to apologise to you (0.3) and to the house.
	iv. A statement of obligation	Peter Hain (18/07/1994; vol. 247, col. 35): [...] madam speaker i must offer you and the house a full and complete apology in two respects, [...]
(C) Nonconventional indirect apology strategy	i. Explanation	Tim Devlin (19/01/1989; vol. 145, col. 494): [...] i now know that the allegation that I made in the house yesterday was based on uh (.) untrue information [...]
	ii. Accepting the blame	Don Touhig (27/07/1999; vol. 336, col. 149): [...] it is the duty for each of us to take responsibility for our actions and i do not shirk from that duty today.
	iii. Expressing self-deficiency	Tony Baldry (21/07/2005; vol. 436, col. 1430): [...] my letter to the secretary of state was clearly very poorly written [...]
	iv. Recognising H as entitled to an apology	Ben Bradshaw (20/05/2003; vol. 805, col. 461): mister speaker the honourable gentlemen are both er entirely right [...]
	v. Expressing lack of intent	Stephen Byers (17/10/2005; vol. 437, col. 639): [...] i did not deliberately intend to mislead the select committee [...]
	vi. An offer/statement of repair/ redress	Michael Forsyth (05/02/1997; vol. 289, col. 1067): [...] and i: withdraw what i said [...]
	vii. A statement of non-recurrence	Theresa May (30/06/2010; vol. 512, col. 863): [...] i will ensure that it will not happen again.

Table 3: Leadership values

Values	Descriptions
Responsibility	Increases sympathy and forgiveness, reduces anger (Weiner et al. 1991). Eliminates anger and negative responses (Lee 2005, Coombs and Holladay 2008). Recovers relationship with victim and improves public perception. Shows awareness of social norms and responds with action of repair to avoid the offense in future (Scher and Darley 1997). Exemplifies to others a moral attitude or behaviour (Patel and Reinsch 2003, Robbennolt 2003).
Accountability	Takes ownership of the ultimate result; a pass or a fail. Responsible for an offence that was a result of his action. Admits his accountability to show that he recognises his choices and chooses to make a decision that is morally right. Willing to answer for the outcomes of his behaviours, choices and actions in all situations. Does not pass the blame to others. Focuses onto the end goal and not the problem (Lichtenwalner 2012).
Sympathy	Heightened awareness of the suffering of another person as something to be alleviated (Wispé 1986). Increases the sincerity of the statement. Two perspectives of sympathy: the first intensifies the sensitivity to the emotions of the other person's pain, the second is a feeling of compassion and the yearning to help people who suffer from the same pain. A legally reliable crisis response (Robbennolt 2003). A morally valuable characteristic that increases the perceived sincerity of the apology (Weiner 1986). Relieves public anger.
Trust	Trust is honesty, forward thinking, inspiration and competence (Mussig 2003). An open, regular and clear communication is linked with high levels of trust (Cho and Poister 2014). Valued leadership characteristics include: honesty, integrity and truthfulness (Podsakoff et al. 1990). Trust mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' satisfaction (Zhu and Akhtar 2014). Two types of trust: Cognition-based trust and affect-based trust (McAllister 1995). Decreases by betrayal and causes hurt and emotional damage (Hansson et al. 1990). An ethical character trait (Newman et al. 2014).
Regret	Shows guilt and remorse. Admits to responsibility prior to regret (Fraser 1981). Helps to rebuild the relationship between the offender and victim (Orenstein 1998). A victim is likely to forgive after hearing expressions of regret (Hareli and Eisikovits 2006).
Forgiveness	Repairs damaged workplace relationships and overcomes debilitating thoughts and emotions resulting from interpersonal injury (Kymenlaakso 2012). Willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment and indifferent behaviour towards one who unjustly hurt them, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love towards him or her (Saunders 2011). A willed change of heart and replaces bad thoughts of bitterness and anger with compassion and affection (Petersen 2009). Moves the leader to see the situation in a new light which leads to restorative measures towards reconciliation (Kidder 2007). Forms a bilateral relationship; the victim releases the emotional attachment of the traumatic event and the offender acknowledges the harm, sincerely apologises and ask forgiveness, and makes a compensation (Ferch 2011, Worthington Jr 2013). Requires individual to release the desire of seeking revenge and harbouring bitterness. Requires victim to take a risk in trusting that the offender will not re-engage in the same wrong doing again.
Reconciliation	Re-establishing relationship, renewing trust and settling differences so that cooperation and a sense of harmony is restored (Wilmot and Hocker 2011). To move forward past the hurt after a betrayal of trust happens (Daicoff 2013). Restoring the relationship between victim and perpetrator which then makes it possible for social healing as well as governance stabilisation and economic reconstruction (Worthington Jr 2013). Reconciliation follows after forgiveness (Augsburger 2000).

Table 4: Procedure for data analysis

Step 1	The texts are cross-examined by the felicity conditions (Murphy 2014) to be verified as apology texts.
Step 2	The texts are read thoroughly and an inspection is done to the contextual background of each apology for the researcher to collect additional information and obtain a firm understanding of each case.
Step 3	The apology strategies (Searle 1969, Murphy 2014) are used to analyse the apology statements.
Step 5	Several rounds of thematic analysis for leadership values (see Table 3) and coding techniques (Halliday and Hasan 1976, Fairclough 1995) were carried out rigorously on the apology text to achieve saturation of values found.