Image Repair Strategies in Apology Videos by YouTube Creators

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Abstract

This study explored the image repair strategies used in apology videos by YouTube creators. This research used the Cooperative Principle Theory by Paul Grice. All the data are collected from several English videos on YouTube that represent apology-related subjects. The method used in this research is thematic analysis to examine discursive patterns in the data. The results found the data was collected using three different sorts of maxims: maxims of quantity, relevance, and manner. This research focused on the problem of content producers who become embroiled in a dispute and are forced to release an apology video. The purpose is not only to apologize to the wronged side but also to repair the bad image or impression and regain the trust of their viewers and supporters. The correlation between this case and cooperative principles is that the maxim sets the quality of a substantial context to deliver a proper impression and image to the media. When it comes to the entertainment industry, a genuine and perfect apology is hardly found. However, an apology doesn't have to be perfect but proper, reasonable, and acceptable. This study concluded that each maxim delivered in communication has a significant impact as strategies for repairing an image.

Keywords: apology videos, content creators, image repair strategies, media studies.

1. Introduction

In the recent development of social media platforms, expanding space for the newly progressed content creators from amateur to professional has significantly influenced the media platforms. These online content producers illustrate the demotic turn made possible by social media and reality television, enabling regular individuals to gain notoriety among a larger audience (Dekavalla, 2020; Turner, 2006). A cultural producer is referred to as a "content creator" if they use digital tools to make and share material on social media platforms out of a business mindset and a desire to establish their own "media brand." (Arriagada, Ibáñez, 2020; Craig, 2019). Many well-known content producers attempt to restore their public image through strategies like a YouTube apology video when they fall victim to crises and contentious charges. Since many politicians and celebrities have long used traditional media, such as TV and periodicals, to make public apologies, this information is not brand-new (Sandlin, Gracyalny, 2018).PR professionals have recommended well-known individuals use social media to express regret as it has grown more popular so they may engage with their audience there. (Matejic, 2015; Sandlin, Gracyalny, 2018; Schultz et al., 2011; Ulmer et al., 2017)

Sincerity is a fundamental component of an apology since it communicates to victims the offender's true, meaningful, non-coercive, and appropriate emotion toward their behavior (Choi, Mitchell, 2022; Hareli, Eisikovits, 2006; Wenzel et al., 2018). Five language components are required for an excellent interpersonal apology: accepting responsibility, acknowledging harm, expressing

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remorse, begging forgiveness, and providing compensation (Sadlin, Gracyalny, 2018; Schmitt et al., 2004). These factors raise the possibility that an apology will be taken seriously and lead to forgiveness (Darby, Schlenker, 1982; Schlenker, Darby, 1981; Sadlin, Gracyalny, 2018; Schmitt et al., 2004). Previous studies have repeatedly discovered a pattern of usage in which remedial action and minimizing offensiveness were the most effective tactics that attracted favorable public reactions, while denial was the most frequently employed but least successful technique out of the five (Arendt et al., 2017; Benoit, 2006; Choi, Mitchell, 2022; Ferguson et al., 2018).

Apology videos may be meant to create clarification, but at the same time, content creators need to pay attention and avoid mistakes in conveying informational sentences. Content creators, in their apology video, must obey the cooperative principle to prevent misunderstandings and misleadings. For instance, breaking the rule of quality can result in irony (Asada et al., 2022).

As more people joined the market to make videos and compete for subscribers, YouTube became overpopulated. As a result, many YouTubers began acting out in dramatic and extreme ways to gain attention (Choi, Mitchell, 2022). These behaviors include imitating kidnapping and death, playing practical jokes on the destitute, committing advertising fraud, and consuming lethal Tide pods (Choi, Mitchell, 2022; Grant, Kim, 2020). These actions show how YouTubers are willingly involved in these extremes to advance their careers (Choi, Mitchell, 2022).

Racist, bullying, and prank content on YouTube has recently made some users famous. These YouTubers' older videos were found and frequently included in news reports to call attention to their misbehavior. It appears that this compelled these YouTubers to make a formal public apology. Although many people are aware of the few well-known YouTubers producing them, there is a widespread lack of understanding of how YouTubers are producing these apologetic videos.

Grice distinguished between conventional and conversational implicatures (Dahlman, 2022). Conventional implicatures, on the other hand, depend on the meaning that is generally associated with a word or phrase rather than the context in which it is used (Dahlman, 2022). Conversely, conversational implicatures do not depend on a lexical item's conventional meaning; instead, they only (or also) depend on specific aspects of the conversational environment (Dahlman, 2022). The identical statement may therefore be used to transmit or not a particular message depending on the discourse context (Dahlman, 2022). Grice made a distinction between conversational implicatures that are specific and broad. The discourse setting determines which conversational or particularized implicatures are appropriate (Dahlman, 2022). Unless they are canceled, generalized conversational implicatures tend to emerge in any circumstance by using specific linguistic forms and are independent of the particularized conversational environment (Dahlman, 2022).

Grice's analysis assumes that the implications of the conversation are systematically conveyed by the speaker as well as correctly calculated and interpreted by the listener because ordinary conversations are considered to be governed by the Principle of Cooperation – in which all parties involved have an equal interest in being cooperative for successful communication. (Dahlman, 2022). Informational redundancy, which has typically been described as a problem of over-informativeness, over-specification, or over-description, has been addressed using one of the parts of Grice's Quantity Maxim, which states that speakers should provide no more information than is necessary to convey their message (Kravtchenko, Demberg, 2022). In addition, this research utilizes Paul Grice's cooperative principle, which he defined as the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and method. It finds that apologies to viewers violate the cooperative ideal by being verbose and failing to be honest.

This study identifies and explains the flouting of the maxim in the apology video on YouTube, which attempts to reshape a good image that has been destroyed in the eyes of viewers. Moreover, this research analyzes videos by some vlog and game content creators, where they apologize for their past problems or behavior and provide introspection results so that similar situations do not occur in the future. In addition, this research applies qualitative analysis to videos from some of the most successful and established content creators and finds that apologies addressed to viewers violate the cooperative principle by being verbose and not giving honesty.

This research makes the case that the cooperative principle is significant in this video because of the interaction between the content producers and the viewers. Exploring the role of the cooperative principle in YouTube apology videos contributes to our understanding of the construction of clarity of information in this context. It highlights that it is not only about showing apologies but also about how content creators indirectly justified past behavior in their apology by violating maxims.

2. Materials and methods

The analysis focused specifically on English-language videos from YouTube content that served as the study's source material. These videos are specifically referred to as "apology videos", in which the creator expresses regret for an act for which they are held accountable or blamed. The author's intended audience may be addressed as a whole, a single person, or both. The focus of the analysis provided richer discursive data to examine the deployment of image repair strategies.

A systematic approach to finding patterns of significance in a collection of data is thematic analysis (Clarke et al., 2019; Dekavalla, 2020). Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that uses smaller datasets than quantitative methods to examine discursive patterns in the data rather than generalizability to a larger population (Dekavalla, 2020).

3. Discussion

A few of the YouTube beauty gurus who jumped on the racism bandwagon and were exposed for using racist slurs in their content include Jaclyn Hill, Kathleen Lights, Jeffree Star, and Laura Lee (Abad-Santos, 2018; Choi, Mitchell, 2022; Poston, 2018). It is commonly advised for public figures to apologize to viewers on social media platforms, especially when the offense was first committed there (Baer, Naslund, 2011; Matejic, 2015; Sandlin, Gracyalny, 2018; Schultz et al., 2011; Ulmer et al., 2013; Utz et al., 2013). The videos all conveyed remorse in some manner, but there were differences in how they decided to admit fault or pinpoint the specific transgression. It was often difficult to determine what behavior was being apologized for without gathering outside information since the apologizer did not always explicitly express or explain the precise action. The majority of these behaviors are depicted in the YouTube Content Creator's many apologies videos.

Maxim of Quantity

As a result, Informativity serves as the cornerstone of the majority of pragmatic explanations in the Gricean tradition: the quantity of information necessary to produce a distinctive reference in a particular context (Rubio-Fernández, 2019). Grice (Grice, 1975) explains how the amount of information to be provided relates to the maxim of quantity (Malkmjaer, 2005). Given the purpose of the conversation is to contribute only as much information as is required. An apology video was delivered by Jeffree Star, a beauty youtuber who was in a feud with his fellow beauty youtuber, James Charles, concerning accusations and defamation towards James Charles. Back in May 2019, after Tati Westbrook posted a video where she accused the beauty guru of lying, manipulating, and being disrespectful, Jeffree shared his thoughts on the matter through Twitter calling James a "danger to society" and slamming him. In a ten-minute video titled "doing what's right," Jeffree addressed their continuing dispute with James Charles on July 19, 2022. His apologetic video itself has a lot of background. Jeffree looked back at his previous dramas, acknowledged his flaws and selfishness, tried to reflect and see the bigger picture, and gave lessons and insight regarding business and social issues in addition to dramas in the entertainment and beauty industries. This implied that more significant issues were at play than just minor dramas. Nevertheless, Jeffree frequently skirts the issue despite the rich context. The Maxim of Quantity is thus demonstrated.

"2020 has been very tumultuous for a lot of us, it has been a crazy year and I think that James and myself and anyone involved would agree with me that there are way bigger issues happening on this planet, I know that just some people may Jeffree you're just saying this as a distraction" (Jeffreestar, 2020).

"right now outside of our walls our world is falling apart and it's truly shocking" (Jeffreestar, 2020).

The second part of Grice's Quantity Maxim states that speakers should provide no more information than is necessary to convey their message (Kravtchenko, Demberg, 2022). In these few phrases, Jeffree gives information that's not necessarily required. To engage viewers and make them realize that, despite the drama involving him and anyone in the beauty industry, it is necessary to put an end to it all because other, more pressing issues require greater attention, he tries to provide insights into social issues occurring outside.

The maxim of quantity requires information provided in conversation to be genuine and justified. To give information of what you believe is right with adequate evidence. Additionally, studies have shown that comprehenders frequently tolerate overly detailed explanations and may even help comprehension when describing non-canonical traits or characteristics that may facilitate faster item identification (Arts et al., 2011; Engelhardt et al., 2006; Kravtchenko,

Demberg, 2022; Long et al., 2020; Mangold, Pobel, 1988; Paraboni et al., 2007; Paraboni, Van Deemter, 2014; Pogue et al., 2016; Rehrig et al., 2021; Rubio-Fernández, 2016; Sonnenschein, Whitehurst, 1982; Tourtouri et al., 2019). In July 2016, Tana Mongeau, a gaming YouTuber, published an apologetic video for his fans as a consequence of advertising various things on his channel in the first instance. She received criticism for promoting a gambling website that she and another YouTuber owned without revealing his connection with it.

"*The first thing I wanna talk about is the main thing, the thing that is everywhere, and that is videos of me saying the N word and more importantly the half-ass disgusting shitty way that I apologize for them in the past*" (Tana Mongeau, 2017).

Tana Mongeau captured a video, and it is clear that there is a Maxim of Quantity. Tana shortened the amount of the term "the first thing" by saying "the main thing" after "the first thing." The phrase "the main thing" in the sentence contributes excessively because it already conveys the idea of "the first thing," and it gives too much information. Maxim of quantity is described as trying to make your contribution true (Grice, 1975; Malkmjaer, 2005).

Maxim of Manner

The maxim of manners realizes that the speaker should speak clearly, directly, orderly, and briefly. Contribution to interaction is expected to be genuine, neither more nor less than is required, and clear and appropriate to the interaction. These maxims might be observed in conversations to help the recipients understand the practical significance of statements (Abdalhadi et al., 2022). In July 29, 2022, a five-minute apology video of Will Smith toward Chris Rock highlighted "My Behavior was unacceptable" became a heat in many people's eyes, including their fans and families. The controversy between them started when Chris Rock, who was a Master of Ceremony in Oscar, pulled a joke towards Will's wife, Jada Smith, regarding her bald head caused by a disease before announcing apologies with more of the components are perceived as sincere and more effective (in reducing the offender's guilt and punishment) than those with fewer components when the offense is serious. Will Smith's Oscar-winning. The feud happened when Will Smith impulsively went to the stage and slapped Chris in front of everyone at the award show to defend and give justice to his wife. Turns out, most people are drawn to Chris's side. When Will delivered his winning speech, he cried and didn't think of apologizing. Even though it's understandable that Will Smith is mad, it was not the most polite and proper thing to do.

"*I was fogged out by that point. It's all fuzzy. I've reached out to Chris and the message that came back is that he's not ready to talk*" (Will Smith, 2022).

In his apology video and the scene above, people are skeptical regarding his genuineness towards Chris Rock and exaggerate it by saying it was the worst apology someone has ever made. Will mentioned and apologized not only to Chris but also to Chris's parents and brother, Will's wife and family, and everyone who was hurting and offended by his impulsive action. Furthermore, the maxim of manner is related to how an utterance is said, not paying attention to what is said (Grice, 1975; Malkmjaer, 2005). The maxim of manner is also mentioned as being perspicuous specifically to avoid ambiguity, be concise or avoid unnecessary dissemination, and be organized (Grice, 1975; Malkmjaer, 2005). People thought Will Smith was more deeply sorry, more genuine, and more enthusiastic towards everyone he mentioned except Chris. Not to mention, Will stutters a lot when he utters things towards Chris, resulting in repetition, and seems so unsure about him as if he has no idea about how to make up for his mistake since there might be unfairness left in his mind and heart for the fact that he had to apologize to someone who offended his beloved wife. The overall image that he shows regarding Chris Rock is obscure and seems ambiguous. Maxim of manners is suitable for this case.

Maxim of Relevance

Maxim of relevance provides relevant information to the conversation (Stepin et al., 2022). This type of maxim occurs if the speaker contributes to giving irrelevant information to the question.

"*However I do feel like I owe you guys an apology. I am sorry to each and every one of you who voted like that was not made clear enough to you*" (Ego Rapture, 2016).

Additionally, apologies with more of the components are perceived as sincere and more effective (in reducing the offender's guilt and punishment) than those with fewer components when the offense is serious (Lewicki et al., 2016; Sandlin, Gracyalny, 2018; Scher, Darley, 1997). However, the use of more complex words in order to appear sincere to other people makes Tmartn's apology irrelevant to the topic in which he involves.

4. Results

By using the concept of the cooperative principle, we have explored the maxim of quantity, relevance, and manner, which then construct the violation of the cooperative principle as it is found in a few apology videos on YouTube. The result shows that the maxim violations in apology videos by YouTube content creators essentially affect how an apology is delivered and how an image is constructed in the eyes of the viewers. The maxim violation shows that even a small talk can positively and critical impact when cooperative principles are applied correctly. The advantage of analyzing the types of maxim in the context of apology videos is also to give awareness to people regarding the importance of every aspect needed in an utterance and in delivering attitudes or manner which, in the big picture, is capable of identifying one's character. Furthermore, people consciously or unconsciously create images of what they want others to see in any expression and communication. In this case of apology acts, repairing an image can be a risky thing to deal with, especially when it's done carelessly. A good and positive image can be rebuilt while on the other hand, a continuous negative image would still be in control for those who neglect some importance in their defensive act. People have their way of receiving and processing data, meaning it is important for people with influence to bring such issues to the table and think about them thoroughly. Delivering a positive image can still result negatively for some people. However, an essentially proper and substantial apology will lead to continuous support from viewers in regaining a positive image. The consideration of using maxim in delivering ideas is to properly define what you want others to perceive and express empathy, enthusiasm, and manners decently.

5. Conclusion

This research investigates the cooperative principle's linguistic features in YouTube apology videos. After conducting the study, it is found that three types of maxim, which is the maxim of quantity, manner, and relevance, occur during the videos. The analysis of the maxim found in the apology video is to understand what's missing in delivering ideas and repairing an image. Each maxim has a significant impact when it's conveyed and expressed in communication, making it a standard for how utterances and ideas are appropriately delivered. In this case, repairing an image through one-sided communication needs to be wisely understood that it is not an easy and brief thing to do as to just saying sorry. An apology from someone with influence could go a long way to being truly accepted by many viewers. A good intention can result in bad outcomes when an apology is not done properly. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the context and correlate it with types of maxims as a standard in delivering what needs to be said in an apology to regain good image.

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