

Apology as Public Mediation: An Analysis of Three Crisis Cases in Kazakhstan

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Abstract—The article examines official apologies issued by representatives of state institutions (in the context of the political and social crisis in Kazakhstan) as a public act of mediation. Establishing direct and effective communication with the public is the primary tool of public mediation for authorities, aimed at reducing social tension and increasing confidence, particularly trust in the institution of power. The aim of the study is to identify and describe the linguistic criteria for the effectiveness of official apologies by institutions of power. The theoretical basis for the research is grounded in speech act theory and the concept of mediated communication. Particular attention is paid to analysing the lexical-semantic, pragmatic, and discursive characteristics of formal apologies. The texts of public speeches and official statements by representatives of state institutions were used as empirical material during various crisis situations. A comparative analysis allows us to identify the main linguistic criteria for effective aspects of apologies, such as open acceptance of responsibility, sincerity and empathy, promises of compensation, and orientation towards collective values and social cooperation. The research findings show that, as part of public mediation, a formal apology not only serves as a communication that reinforces the legitimacy of authority and fosters open dialogue with citizens, but also fulfils a socio-political function. The conclusions drawn will serve as a basis for further study of discourse in crisis situations and the development of practical recommendations for the effective use of apologies in institutional communications.

Index Terms—official apology, institution of authority, public mediation, speech act theory, Kazakhstan

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no shadow of doubt that, in the age of modern digital technology, information is exchanged at a rapid pace. Something that happens in just one small district can instantly spread nationwide and spark a huge public outcry. It is impossible to predict the population's reaction. Obviously, depending on the event's relevance, various difficulties arise. In such cases, the authorities constantly interact with the majority not only to govern but also to maintain their authority (legitimacy) and gain the people's trust. All these actions are carried out through language. One of the most important functions assigned to language is the regulation of social relations. One of the main mechanisms for maintaining authority

and trust in the country, when situations arise that call into question the public's trust in the authorities, is to offer a formal apology. However, apologies do not achieve the goal of 'restoring social cohesion'; some apologies may even be completely rejected (Tavuchis, 1991). People may also perceive some apologies as 'insincere and merely conditional,' which will exacerbate the situation (e.g., failure to pay moral compensation) (Boyer, 2010). When this happens, researchers come to the question: 'What linguistic tools are best to use when apologising?'

In this research paper, the attempt at a formal apology in a public social environment is examined from the perspective of linguistic mediation. During a social crisis, institutions of authority act as mediators who try to synchronise their actions with public expectations, rather than as one side involved in the conflict. Dendrinis (2006) answers the question 'Who is a mediator?' as follows:

First, he is a social worker. There, he observes the course of communication in a social environment; second, he acts to assist the communication process, sometimes influencing its outcome.

Secondly, two or more interacting parties at public events act as a facilitator if they encounter difficulties in their relations or if there are contradictions between them.

Thirdly, a negotiator who acts as an agent in situations requiring reconciliation, mediation, or compromise (pp. 12-13). All three services presented here are characteristic of an institution of power. Consequently, representatives of political and social power institutions are regarded as mediators. The act of apology by representatives of this institution is transformed from an act of admission of guilt into a complex communicative act aimed at explaining what happened, negotiating, reaching a mutual compromise, and coming up with something new that will appeal to the people. According to another definition provided by researchers to the mediator, a mediator is a neutral person who transfers information from one source to another (Xirofotou, 2025, p. 1). Within this definition, an authoritative institution that apologizes can be considered a particular type of mediator.

The relevance of studying the language of official apologies by government institutions from a sociolinguistic perspective is determined by two main factors. Firstly, in the modern era, when digitalisation is in full swing, public activity is growing, and the government interacts directly with the population. Secondly, to evaluate such statements, it is necessary to develop clear, well-established linguistic standards of great interest to a range of scientific fields, such as political science, sociology, public relations, and linguistics.

The main scientific linguistic novelty of studying the language of official apologies by institutions of power lies in the fact that the act of an official apology, in addition to being considered from the point of view of discursive linguistic analysis and mediation theory, allows for a systematic analysis of the structure and effectiveness of institutions of power based on an intuitive assessment of apology texts. The study was based on real cases of compromise that occurred in Kazakhstan over the past five years (2020-2025).

The aim of studying the language of official apologies by institutions of power is to identify and describe linguistic criteria (linguistic features) that allow us to assess the effectiveness of official apologies by political institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. An apology is considered an act of successful mediation, a compromise with the majority in situations following incidents.

In order to achieve this goal, the following tasks are set:

- To justify the consideration of an official apology as an act of linguistic mediation between the authorities and the people.
- Develop an analytical model (checklist) of linguistic criteria for the effectiveness of an apology, including parameters such as the structure of the speech act, narrative strategies, and working with the addressee.
- Use the model developed for comparative linguistic analysis of apologies publicly requested on behalf of Kazakhstan's institutions of power during a number of social crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic and the tragic events of January 2022).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of public apologies by authorities is examined within the framework of speech act theory (Austin, Searle, Sbisà) and mediation laws (Kovach, Baraldi, Dendrinis). Public apologies, when socially controversial situations arise in everyday public life, play not only a role in moral acceptance of the situation but also in the restoration of reputation and trust that have been publicly damaged. Such an act will have a mediating linguistic effect, preventing tension among people, restoring the government's authority, and regaining the people's trust. The topic is relevant because of the social and mediating role of language in the mutual compromise between authorities and the population in the face of social contradictions arising in everyday life.

Public apologies - a socially communicative genre

The study of apology is based on speech act theory. Speech act theory, in addition to the exchange of information, is also grounded in pragmatics, which emphasises how language is used for specific purposes (Sadock, 2006). Speech acts can be conveyed in various linguistic and communicative ways. A simple opinion expressed by someone implies a hidden meaning that requires certain information or a linguistic strategy related to the subject or situation of the speech in question. According to speech act theory, all linguistic utterances imply an action. Research within this theory focuses on how speech acts are used in different situations. Speech act theory aims to analyse whether utterances have different effects

depending on the type of speech and the conversational context (Sbisà, 2009). Speech acts have different effects on conversation, so it is very important to study in detail how they are used in interactive situations.

Speech act theory considers: a) the speech act as a multi-level construct and identifies the illocutionary level (communicative goal, intention, speaker's attitude) as the main object of study; b) takes into account the speaker's goals to explain the processes of speech interaction; c) identifies the relationship between intention and other extralinguistic factors in accordance with the conditions and circumstances of the speech act – the psychological state of the speaker, their interests, social status, their perceptions of the communication situation, including the listener (their knowledge, interests, social status); d) identifies the main forms of reflection of the speaker's illocutionary goal in the linguistic structure of the sentence used (Suleimenova et al., 2008, p. 213).

The smallest unit of speech act theory is the speech act. According to this theory, every spoken word has an 'illocutionary meaning' (Sbisà, 2009). In general, pragmatists divide speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Austin (1962) argues that there are differences among these three levels of speech acts. Any speech act is considered a locative act. A speech act uttered with some intention is an illocutionary act. When the listener understands the speaker's intentions and responds positively, the perlocutionary act has been performed.

Searle (1976) classifies illocutionary acts into five groups (pp. 10-13):

1. Representatives, whose purpose is to inform about what is happening in the world. These include news, forecasts, and descriptions.
2. Directives direct the addressee to take action. These include requests, desires, prohibitions, orders, invitations, and so on.
3. Commissives manifest themselves in the speaker's commitment to do something. For example, there are commissives with oaths, speeches, pledges, etc.
4. Expressives are aimed at expressing the speaker's own feelings, emotions, and inner state depending on certain circumstances. For example, saying thank you, feeling sorry, rejoicing, apologising, expressing gratitude, etc.
5. Declarative utterances differ from the four types above. During this speech act, words are used not simply to convey information or describe a situation, but to perform a specific action or create a new situation. For example, words are used in situations such as appointing someone to a position, admitting someone to a party, or awarding a title.

French linguists offer their own classifications of illocutionary acts. Benveniste notes that there are three main types of speech: assertive (the direct expression of one's feelings), interrogative (words that serve as the basis for a question), and imperative (a demand or command). Gardin adds another type of speech to these three: exclamatory (admiration).

"Any phrase is based on one of these services, such as providing information to the listener, asking them a question, giving them an order, or making a promise," says Boissen, adding that speech acts will be informative, interrogative, and directive (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005).

Searle (1976) argues that there are certain conditions for speech acts to be successful. They are:

- both the addressee and the addresser must be fluent in the language in which communication takes place;
- both must act consciously;
- no one should coerce or intimidate the speaker;
- the listener and speaker should not have physical impairments such as hearing loss, aphasia, or laryngitis;
- neither should appear to be acting in a play, nor should they joke.

Austin (1962) and Searle (1976) interpret apologising as an illocutionary act aimed at restoring disturbed social peace. Noting that illocutionary acts differ from one another, Searle (1976) argues that forgiveness is uttered because of a psychological state. He believes that the phrase "I apologise" is not just a word, but a linguistic tool whose main function is to express the speaker's regret. A person utters this word automatically, without paying attention to their true feelings. Consequently, according to Searle's theory, forgiveness is not asked for to change the world or achieve any results.

Austin (1962) interprets the act of apologising as an action which, firstly, is a linguistic attempt, secondly, an action whose success/failure depends on conventionality and authenticity, and thirdly, may not achieve its goal (perlocutionary effect), even if it was successful as an illocutionary act (a case where the addressee did not accept the apology). According to Austin's (1962) theory, for an act of apology to be successful, several postulates must be observed:

- A conventional procedure, i.e., certain people must apologise in certain circumstances using certain words;
- The procedure must be carried out correctly, and all participants in the procedure must perform it correctly and completely;
- Sincerity, speech, and the psychological state of the person apologising must be consistent. Psychological state here means that the person apologising regrets what they have done. If the psychological state does not align with these indicators, forgiveness is considered insincere and therefore unsuccessful.

The act of forgiveness is considered a perlocutionary effect of apology (as is the goal of general forgiveness – to receive forgiveness). Lazare assesses the act of forgiveness as "generosity that frees the apologisee from guilt and shame." *Pardon* is usually interpreted as an arbitrary cognitive-emotional process, often without a connection to legal exemption from punishment (Lazare, 2004).

Examining the act of apology within the framework of speech act theory allows us to define its specificity as a special communicative action aimed at restoring the disturbed social balance and trust between the speaker and the listener. Unlike other types of illocutionary acts, apologies combine elements of admission of guilt, expression of sympathy, and

desire for reconciliation. Thanks to this, the act of apology can be called an effective tool for social linguistic mediation. This approach serves as the basis for further analysis of the official act of apology by authorities, from the perspective of linguistic effectiveness criteria.

Social and communicative aspects of linguistic mediation

Mediation originally emerged as an alternative form of dispute resolution (Alternative Dispute Resolution – ADR). There are many forms of ADR used both within and outside the judicial system. All of them encourage individuals and groups to develop alternative ways to resolve conflicts and problems outside the court. Mediation, widely used in crowds, is sometimes called the ‘mother of ADR’. Mediation allows the parties to put forward ideas for reaching an agreement and discuss issues with a view to resolving the conflict that has arisen (Kovach, 1994).

In recent years, mediation has been studied in more depth in the scientific literature and has begun to be viewed as a special type of discourse that uses certain strategies to achieve a primary communicative goal (Chikrizova, 2024, p. 896). The goal of mediation is to facilitate interaction between two parties involved in a conflict and to bring in a third neutral person to steer it in a positive direction (Baraldi, 2017). According to Pöchhacker (2008), language mediation is a communication system that should not be confused with other forms of communication. Indeed, language mediation is a special type of communication that differs from ordinary dialogue or discussion. While standard communication aims to convey one's point of view and defend one's opinion, the main goal of mediation-based communication is to organise and regulate relationships between other people, rather than to convey information. Acting as a ‘communication architect,’ the mediator creates a safe space for parties who did not understand each other and were in conflict. Consequently, language mediation is considered a purposeful communication process aimed at managing other communication processes, rather than simply conversation.

From this perspective, the mediator has inherent communicative power. This is because they have the right to interpret, filter, and rethink the meaning of the expressed thought. However, the mediator cannot impose their decision on a particular party by abusing this power. The mediator pursues a goal that will lead both parties to mutual understanding and compromise (Dendrinis, 2006). The mediator also serves as a manager, encouraging the parties to cooperate in resolving the dispute (Kinderknekht, 2024). The success of mediation as a communicative act is measured not by the victory of one party but by the alignment of the conflicting parties' views on the world and the emergence of a common language.

Kazakh culture has a history of using alternative methods to resolve social conflicts. Nomadic Kazakh tribes, elected representatives of steppe democracy, appealed to the Biler court. The “Biler institution” emerged in early times and underwent several stages of development. Sh. Ualikhanov wrote about who is awarded the title of Bi: In the Kazakh steppe, the honorary title of bi was not awarded by the people through any kind of election or approval by the ruling authorities, but only to Kazakhs who had a deep knowledge of judicial procedure and were skilled in the art of public speaking. A person who wanted to become a Bi spoke before the people in some kind of oratory competition, demonstrating his knowledge and eloquence." One of the main goals of the Bi, elected by each region and clan community of the Kazakh steppe, is to reconcile disputing parties, initiate unity, and promote peaceful coexistence between countries. The Biler court in Kazakh culture does not fall within its jurisdiction; that is, it is impartial to the affairs of other villages and tribes and does not exert external influence.

The Council of Sultans and the famous bilers under the khan in nomadic culture dealt with matters of state importance and disputes between the zhuz (tribal unions) and tribes. Therefore, the court of bilers played an important role in shaping Kazakh society and is now part of the Kazakh people's heritage. Therefore, although mediation today is similar to the institution of bilers, there are differences between them (Kenzhebekova et al., 2023, p. 88):

The institution of Bile (judges)	Modern mediation
1. Biler (judges) conduct (resolve) disputes in a public form of open court	1. In the modern mediation process, disputes are considered both openly and anonymously (in accordance with the agreement of the parties).
2. Biler (judges) render arbitration (verdict) based on the counterarguments of the parties disputing certain issues	2. Mediators in modern life, acquiring professional skills, contribute to mutual compromise between the two parties and the termination of mutual agreement and a unified decision.

In traditional Kazakh culture, according to the principle of ‘Oner aldy kyzyl til’ (Өнер алды – қызыл тіл) (which literally translates as eloquence and the art of speech - an indicator of skill and knowledge), the art of speech is highly valued. As they say, the art of language is like a disease, and it is also an indicator of the potential of language. "Science has many linguistic functions. One of these functions is language's mediating role. Language mediation directly depends on the linguistic competence of the language user, on the essence of the linguistic personality. In traditional Kazakh culture, linguistic personalities included eloquent speakers, clan elders, and village elders. They understood the value of words and highly valued the unity of the country. In turn, the heads of state held peacemaking positions, defending the art of oratory equally, protecting the interests of both sides. This phenomenon is characteristic only of the Kazakh people, who are subject to the law of the steppe. Without relying on laws, lengthy documents consisting of various articles, they simply put an end to the confrontation. The principle of ‘Bas kespek bolsa da, til kespek zhok’ (Бас кеспек болса да, тіл

кеспек жок) (the meaning of the proverb is that even if they can take a person's life, they still cannot forbid him to speak. That is, a person always has the right to express their opinion). This proverb served as a principle and a measure of steppe democracy. The fact that representatives of ethnic groups stopped at the words of the proverb explained the value of the word, and that value rested on an understanding of its own significance.

The evolution of the concept of mediation from a legal mechanism for dispute resolution to a multifaceted socio-communicative phenomenon reflects its universal nature in modern society. Considering mediation within the framework of communication allows us to recognise it not only as a means of achieving consensus but also as an important discursive resource that helps maintain trust, mutual understanding, and social harmony. This will serve as a theoretical basis for analysing mediation in the language of public apologies by institutions of authority. In accordance with this, models of sociolinguistic analysis of the manifestation of social and everyday life situations in the republic over the past 5 years in linguistic communication and the public environment will be presented.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis of the study is its interdisciplinary nature, which draws on approaches from linguistics, pragmatics, and mediation theory. Official apology texts from representatives of Kazakhstan's political institutions (the president, ministers, mayor, etc.) made in the context of social crises (emergency situations, the COVID-19 pandemic) were selected as empirical material.

Speech act theory was used as the main method (Austin, Searle), which allows us to consider an official apology as an illocutionary act with a specific pragmatic function. Methods of pragmalinguistic analysis (justification, admission of guilt, sympathy, compromise) are also used to identify speech strategies.

To assess the effectiveness of apologetic actions, a checklist of linguistic criteria was compiled, containing the following parameters:

- Acknowledgement of the occurrence of a negative event;
- Expression of regret;
- The audience to whom the apology is addressed;
- The level of personal responsibility assumed;
- The form of apology;
- Compensation/actions;
- Emotionality (sincerity) of speech;
- Level of effectiveness (evaluation).

To determine the most effective and ineffective aspects of public mediation according to the criteria presented above, the texts of official apologies issued by government officials were compared. Only the verbal aspect of apologies (text) is analysed in the research; non-verbal means (intonation, facial expressions, gestures) are not included. This is guided by the conditions for assessing effectiveness and the validity of linguistic parameters. The scientific methodology for the qualitative analysis of speech acts by institutions of authority in the context of an attempt at a public official apology is presented.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Specific cases that occurred in Kazakhstan over the past five years (2020-2025) were taken as the basis for analysis.

Case №1.

The global coronavirus was first reported in China in December 2019. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, and on 11 March, a coronavirus pandemic was declared worldwide. A pandemic is a large-scale epidemic that affects an entire country, several neighbouring countries, and continents (Dva goda pandemii COVID-19: xronologiya sobytij, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic in Kazakhstan began on 13 March 2020, when infected people were identified in the cities of Astana and Almaty. By 3 April, COVID-19 had already spread throughout the country.

It is known that the competent health authorities of Kazakhstan were not prepared for such an epidemic, which occurred unexpectedly, and the death toll increased due to difficulties such as a shortage of medicines and a lack of adequate medical equipment. In this regard, Murat Bakhtiyarovich, a statesman of Kazakhstan and member of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, apologised to the people at a Senate meeting:

There are enough accumulated problems. Worn-out healthcare buildings, medical equipment, a lack of medical centres, first-aid posts, rural clinics and qualified doctors in rural areas. Doctors and mid-level specialists have low salaries. The six universities in the country that train doctors do not train specialists in infectious diseases, virologists, etc.

It cannot be said that there have been positive changes in the healthcare system over the past ten years, despite the adoption of two major 'Healthy Kazakhstan' programmes and the allocation of trillions of funds to them. Many of these funds were wasted on systemic errors. We found ourselves under a wave of public criticism and condemnation and were unable to save the lives

of many of our citizens. We once again apologise to the people. Now we must do everything we can to ensure that such a tragic situation never happens again. All this was openly communicated to the minister. There is currently a two-month supply of medicines. We just need to control their cost. Ventilators are already being manufactured domestically. New infectious disease hospitals will be put into operation in all regions.

*Murat Bakhtiaruly, statesman of Kazakhstan,
member of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan
(Halyqtan taǵy da keşirim sūrainmyz, 2020)*

The information in the text is directed at two audiences:

- 1) the people (with the aim of reducing tension and anger in society, i.e., the goal is mediatory);
- 2) The highest authorities (through the phrase ‘all this was said to the minister,’ the author indirectly points out to the authorities the need for a quick solution to the problem).

The mechanisms of the theory of communicative speech acts are presented in the text:

Excerpt from the text	Type of speech act	Illocutionary force	Perlocutionary effect (Impact on the listener)
<i>There are enough accumulated problems. Worn-out healthcare buildings, medical equipment, a lack of medical centres, first-aid posts, rural clinics and qualified doctors in rural areas. Doctors and mid-level specialists have low salaries. The six universities in the country that train doctors do not train specialists in infectious diseases, virologists, etc.</i>	representative	The text describes the actual situation and specific problems. The shortcomings within the system are criticized.	It creates an impression of authenticity for the public, as real-life information is presented. It prepares the ground for mentioning criticism and shortcomings in the following parts of the text.
<i>It cannot be said that there have been positive changes in the healthcare system over the past ten years, despite the adoption of two major ‘Healthy Kazakhstan’ programmes and the allocation of trillions of funds to them. Many of these funds were wasted on systemic errors. We found ourselves under a wave of public criticism and condemnation and were unable to save the lives of many of our citizens. We once again apologise to the people.</i>	representative + expressive	The text openly acknowledges the mistake made by the authorities. The speaker expresses regret and apologizes to the public.	Openly admitting the problem builds public trust. A mediating effect is visible, aimed at reducing public anger and tension.
<i>Now we must do everything we can to ensure that such a tragic situation never happens again. All this was openly communicated to the minister. There is currently a two-month supply of medicines. We just need to control their cost. Ventilators are already being manufactured domestically. New infectious disease hospitals will be put into operation in all regions.</i>	Commissive	The author of the text promises positive changes in the future. This act indicates an intention to confirm words through actions.	It gives society hope and strengthens trust

In the text, representativeness is manifested through the presentation of specific facts, problems, proposed solutions, and a description of the situation. The expressive function is manifested through a request for forgiveness from the people and an acknowledgement of mistakes. With the help of commissives, the author of the text promises that everything will be right in the future and assumes responsibility for rectifying the situation. The sequence of actions is as follows: first, acknowledgement of the problem → sharing of responsibility → request for forgiveness → promise to ‘solve this problem’ → instilling hope. Through these actions, language serves as a tool for requesting forgiveness from society and for mediating influence.

The request for forgiveness reflects society's moral values. If there is no request for forgiveness, there is a risk of violating mutual social values. Some mistakes can only be corrected by asking for forgiveness. Forgiveness contributes to social harmony. Tavuchis (1991) identifies the main components of the concept of forgiveness: (a) acknowledgement of a rule violation, (b) acknowledgement of guilt and acceptance of responsibility for the mistake made, (c) sincere regret

for the damage caused, and a request for forgiveness (pp. 9, 12, 20-22). All of these components are present in the above text.

In addition, this text is an example of monological mediative communication. The speaker takes into account the interests of both sides (the authorities and the people). The author of the text acknowledges the authorities' mistakes, asks for forgiveness from the people, and employs a strategy of de-escalation. Besemer notes that 'craftsmen have their tools, which they use for various purposes, and mediators must also master their tools' (Besemer, 2004, p. 154). Among these tools, he mentions 'figurative language and metaphors.' The text uses metaphors, such as 'accumulated problems' (comparing the problem to a burden), as well as emotionally expressive words: 'public criticism and curses,' 'tragic situation'.

From this point of view, the text is not simply an act of recognition and a request for forgiveness, but a complex communicative act aimed at correctly understanding the relationship between the authorities and citizens, that is, a true act of linguistic mediation.

Case №2.

The events of January 2022 (the 'Bloody January' tragedy) were protests in Kazakhstan caused by a sharp rise in the price of liquefied gas. These events, which began on 2 January, became the largest and most violent social conflict in Kazakhstan's 30-year history of independence. The protests began in Zhanaozen and then spread to other cities across the country. People took to the streets of Almaty, Aktobe, Aktau, Atyrau, Karaganda, Astana (Nur-Sultan), Shymkent, Kokshetau, Oral, and other cities, demanding not only economic changes but also social and political reforms. The initially peaceful protests subsequently escalated into armed clashes and looting (mainly in Almaty). The riots, which began on 5 January, were officially classified as a coup d'état (Qazaqstan biligi "memlekettik tönkeriske talpynys" jaily aita bastady, 2022).

During the riots in the city of Taldykorgan, the mayor of the Almaty region, Kanat Bozymbayev, speaking to the people, uttered obscene words under the influence of emotion. At that moment, he apologised to those present for his behaviour. Later, in comments to journalists, he said the following:

I did not want to say these words in front of the crowd, but I was there for about an hour and a half. The people standing there demanded, Mayor, say this, do that, do this.' When I started to respond, a few provocateurs shouted at the others, preventing me from speaking calmly... Then I got angry and said a harsh word to one person, emotionally... But after 30-60 seconds, I took the microphone and said to the people: "I gave in to my emotions and said a harsh word, I apologise". The crowd in the square forgave me 100%. It was a normal meeting with the people. I myself heard harsh words directed at me there. So there is no need to make a big deal out of it".

*Kanat Bozymbayev, Akim of the Almaty Region (regarding the events of January 2022, now Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan)
(Newmediagroup, 2022)*

According to the elected representative's explanation, the people in the square completely forgave him. However, it is unknown whether they actually forgave him, as the full version of the video is not available on social media. The video provided at the link (Esen, 2024) does not show the final part of the events.

Another case of an obscene word being uttered in front of the public was recorded on 23 February 2024. During an extraordinary session of the Almaty Maslikhat, deputy and ecologist Timur Eleusizov had difficulty reading his speech and used several inappropriate words (Almatyda boqtağan deputat halyqtan keşirim sūradı, 2024).

He later apologised to the public on his Instagram page:

"Today, at the Maslikhat (council) session, I was unable to control my emotions. The situation was awkward. I am, like you, an ordinary person. I apologise to the people of Kazakhstan for my inappropriate behaviour. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who trusts me and believes in goodness. I am glad that I felt that I was not alone."

*Timur Eleusizov,
ecologist-activist, deputy
(ZAKON.KZ, 2024)*

Boyer considers actions taken at the request of individuals such as K. Bozymbayev and T. Eleusizov to be dependent on the individual needs of the person. In his opinion, internal needs may include the following:

1. Restoring personal moral and social balance;
2. The need to ask for forgiveness in connection with a personal point of view or professional activity;
3. Receiving forgiveness and resolving a conflict situation (Boyer, 2010).

All of these needs are evident in the actions of the two individuals mentioned above when they ask for forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness cannot change or erase a negative action, but it can mitigate its consequences and help restore mutual relations. Tavuchis (1991) describes this situation as the ‘non-surgical effect’ of forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness means that the subject has no reason to justify or explain their harmful action. If the act of asking for forgiveness is effective, it has healing properties (pp. 50-62).

Thus, K. Bozymbayev and T. Eleusizov tried to mitigate the consequences of events through their requests for forgiveness. Unpleasant emotional actions are a phenomenon inherent in all people. A person's ability to control their emotions is a psychological action. The adjustment, explanation, and coordination of emotional responses to the situation, the achievement of compromise with society, and the entry into general linguistic communication demonstrate compliance with moral and ethical norms and the level of a person's intellectual potential.

The theory and linguistic mechanisms of speech acts in these two cases can be analysed as follows:

Criterion	K.Bozymbayev's apology act	T. Eleusizov's apology act
Addressee	Specific audience- people gathered at the Taldykorgan city square during the January events	Wide audience — the entire population of Kazakhstan
Locutionary act	Reports that he said a harsh word and gave in to emotions	Reports that he was unable to control his emotions and committed an indecent act
Illocutionary act	Asks for forgiveness from the people on the square	Apologizes to the entire population of Kazakhstan
Perlocutionary effect	The gathered people fully forgave him (according to his words)	Gains the trust and support of the people, hopes to restore his authority
Communicative strategy	Self-justification (“gave in to emotions”) + mitigation of blame+ request for forgiveness	Self-justification (‘I am, like you, an ordinary person’) + seeking support from the people + asking for forgiveness
Type of speech act	Representative (reports the situation on the square) + expressive (asks for forgiveness for his action)	Representative (reports indecent behavior at a maslikhat (council) session) + expressive (asks for forgiveness for his actions)

From a mediation perspective, both texts are considered communicative actions aimed at alleviating tension in the situation and restoring social cohesion. Both authors of the text speak carelessly and annoy people. Nevertheless, he immediately takes control of the situation, apologizes, and tries to establish dialogue with the population. These actions are due to the fact that Chernyshenko notes that "mediation has its own cognitive, communicative and pragmatic strategies. Since the main communicative task of mediation discourse is to achieve an alternative solution, these strategies are considered to be the driving force behind the reconciliation of the parties" (Chernyshenko, 2014, p. 110).

Case №3.

The fire in the Abai region was a significant natural disaster that occurred in the Semey Forest State Nature Reserve following two lightning strikes. The incident occurred on 8 June 2023 at 12:03 p.m. in the 66th quarter of the Batpaevsky forestry, 25 km from the city of Semey. The large-scale fire was completely extinguished on 13 July at 1:00 p.m. As a result of the incident in the Abai region, 14 people died.

In connection with the tragic event, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, publicly apologised to the families of the victims:

"I am responsible to you. As head of state, I apologise for what has happened. I understand how difficult this situation is. You have lost your breadwinners, heads of families, your closest relatives. Unfortunately, such tragic events happen in life. There are no excuses for this. I repeat: moral and material assistance will be provided. Children will be placed in kindergartens and higher education institutions — everything will be done. I am, of course, with you. You are citizens of our country. Each affected family will be assigned individual assistance. I promise you: a special fund will be created under the President, and personal support will be provided to those affected.

*Kassym-Jomart Tokayev,
President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Toqaeв öрттен qaza tapqandardyñ otbasynan keşirim
sürady, 2023)*

The text can be analysed within the framework of speech act theory according to the following scheme:

Excerpt from the text	Type of speech act	Illocutionary force	The perlocutionary effect (influencing the listener)
<i>'I am responsible to you. As head of state, I apologise for what has happened. I understand how difficult this situation is. You have lost your breadwinners, heads of families, your closest relatives. Unfortunately, such tragic events happen in life. There are no excuses for this.'</i>	Expressive	An official request for forgiveness and an expression of empathy	To inspire trust and strengthen the people's faith in the government. Sharing the grief of the people, establishing an emotional connection on a human level
<i>'Moral and material assistance will be provided. Children will be placed in nurseries and higher education institutions — everything will be taken care of. Each affected family will be assigned individual assistance. I promise you: a special fund will be created under the President. Personal support will be provided to those affected.'</i>	Commissive	The President promised to provide social and financial assistance in the future, and has assumed the obligation	Strengthening the hope of the people, building trust, preventing popular discontent, strengthening faith in the future and state institutions

From the text of the President of Kazakhstan's apology, it can be seen that five of the six potentially important elements of an apology described by Blatz et al. (2009) are present. These include:

1. Regret (Unfortunately, such tragic events happen in life.)
2. Acceptance of responsibility (*I am responsible to you. I promise you that a special fund will be created under the President. Personal support will be provided to those affected.*)
3. Recognition of the adverse consequences of the event (I understand how difficult this situation is.)
4. Acknowledgment of the damage caused (*You have lost your breadwinners, heads of families, and closest relatives.*)
5. A promise that the situation will not be repeated (X)
6. An offer of compensation (*Moral and material assistance will be provided. Children will be placed in kindergartens and higher education institutions — everything will be done. Each affected family will be assigned individual assistance.*)

One characteristic feature of Boyer's concept of apology is the payment of compensation, which, in his view, improves victims' emotional state (Boyer, 2010). However, this does not guarantee an improvement in the mood of most people who have experienced the tragedy, but it is a perlocutionary factor that influences the chronotope and content of the act of apology. In addition, the personal presence of the head of state, not at a distance but directly at the scene of the event among the victims, is considered a key factor, which significantly mitigates the mediating situation, promotes reconciliation and understanding in society, and encourages the acceptance of responsibility.

Lederach (1997) notes that 'the role of mediator is most often performed by a prominent figure who has authority in society' (p. 44). K. Tokayev's personal visit to the scene without sending assistants is a vivid confirmation of this. The President of Kazakhstan meets face-to-face with the families of the victims. Mediators have many methods of conflict resolution at their disposal, including active listening and individual conversation (Besemer, 2004, pp. 20-21). It is these tactics that enable the problem to be solved through direct communication, an important strategy for resolving the situation.

The text above is an example of mediation discourse aimed at preventing social conflicts in public life and restoring social trust. First and foremost, the President of Kazakhstan acknowledges his responsibility to the people and asks for forgiveness (*'I am responsible to you,' 'As head of state, I apologise for what has happened'*), thereby taking the first step towards mediation. This element corresponds to one of the principles of mediation — the constructive resolution of any problem (Besemer, 2004). In addition, the text clearly contains linguistic units expressing empathetic support (*'I understand how difficult this situation is,' 'You have lost your breadwinners, heads of families, your closest relatives'*). This linguistic strategy reduces the psychological distance between the parties by sharing the addressee's grief and creates favourable conditions for dialogue with the people.

Comparing the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of official apologies based on linguistic criteria

A sociolinguistic analysis of official apologies issued by government officials in various situations that have occurred in the republic reveals a number of linguistic features that directly influence the public's perception and effectiveness of these apologies. Despite differences in the communication strategies of apologising government officials, all texts demonstrate certain invariant features (acknowledgement of guilt and expression of regret).

For a more accurate comparison of these parameters, it is advisable to present them in a structured form. In this regard, the table below provides a comparative analysis of the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of official apologies according to linguistic criteria, systematising the main elements of apologies and highlighting their strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of speech act theory.

TABLE 1
COMPARATIVE TABLE OF THE EFFECTIVENESS/INEFFECTIVENESS OF FORMAL APOLOGIES BASED ON LINGUISTIC CRITERIA

Linguistic criteria	Actions of individuals when apologising	Actions of individuals when apologising	Actions to apologise on behalf of a group	Actions to apologise on behalf of a group
Linguistic criteria	K. Bozumbayev	T. Yeleusizov	M. Bakhtiyarovich	K. Tokayev
Acknowledgement of the occurrence of a negative event	– States that he used ‘harsh words’ under the influence of emotions; partially acknowledges his actions	– Openly acknowledges: ‘I committed an inappropriate act’	– Partially acknowledges	– With the phrase ‘I am responsible for you,’ he takes full responsibility upon himself
Expression of regret	Expresses the regret but refers to the unstable situation in the square, claiming he was forced to speak harshly	Openly expresses regret	Has a sense of regret, formally expressed	Expresses genuine human regret saying: “I understand it was a very serious situation” “...no excuse can justify it”
Audience to whom apology is addressed	Specific audience: city residents gathered in the square	The people of Kazakhstan	The people of Kazakhstan	The affected families and the entire nation (a national day of mourning is declared)
Level of responsibility is taken	Blames provocateurs for his actions, tries to justify his own fault	Highlights human factor by saying “I am an ordinary person too”	Mentions that ventilators will be available and hospitals will be opened in the future	As President, assumes full responsibility
Form of apology	Oral, spontaneous	Statement on social media	Statement made at an official meeting	Official speech in front of the public
Compensation/actions	No specific actions mentioned	Thanks the people who trust him	Offers precise actions with the aim: “such incidents will not happen again”	Provides specific promises of material and moral support
Emotionality of speech	Medium, neutral, self-justifying	Medium, sincerity is noticeable	High, designed to impact the people	High, focus on words expressing regret
Effectiveness (evaluation)	Medium: the act of apologizing partially reduces tension, but justification dominates	High, sincerity strongly enhances the apology	Above average: concrete steps to resolve the issue are presented	Very high: apology+ empathy+ concrete actions= increases public trust

The apologies issued by K. Bozymbayeva and T. Eleusizova fall into the category of individual apologies aimed at restoring personal reputation and harmonising relations with society. According to the checklist of linguistic criteria for effectiveness, both examples include an explicit acknowledgement of the mistake, making the apologies more sincere. T. Eleusizov's speech is characterised by more pronounced empathy (‘I am just as ordinary a person as you are’), while K. Bozymbayev's apology is dominated by elements of self-justification. Both acts can be considered effective at a basic level, but T. Eleusizov's empathy and focus on the addressee are higher. Therefore, his apology appears more convincing and has greater mediative potential.

The apologies made by K. Tokayev and M. Bakhtiyaruly fall into the category of collective official apologies, as they are made on behalf of state institutions and society as a whole. According to the checklist of linguistic criteria for effectiveness, both texts contain elements of acknowledgement of responsibility and expression of regret, which meet the basic requirements for a successful apology. K. Tokayev's apology is characterised by a higher level of empathy (‘*I am responsible for you*’, ‘*I am, of course, with you*’ / *presence at the scene of the incident alongside the victims*), which enhances the mediating effect and demonstrates solidarity with citizens. In M. Bakhtiyaruly's apology, the emphasis is on problems in the system and collective responsibility, which reflects the institutional nature of the statement but reduces the emotional impact. Thus, both acts perform a public-mediating function, but K. Tokayev's statement, combining official status with a high level of empathy, increases the sincerity of linguistic mediation and proves more effective.

Thus, a comparative analysis of official apologies shows that the effectiveness of the authorities' speech acts depends not only on the content of the message but also on its linguistic mediating potential. Society considers the most convincing and sincere apologies to be those that combine an acknowledgement of responsibility, empathy for the victims, and concrete actions or specific promises to remedy the situation. At the same time, formal and generalised apologies cause distrust and limit the influence of linguistic mediation. These conclusions demonstrate that the language of official apologies should be viewed as a dynamic tool of public communication capable of directly influencing the restoration of social justice and reducing the potential for conflict.

V. CONCLUSION

The research conducted within the framework of this article has revealed the peculiarities of the language of official apologies by government institutions, which can be considered a special form of public mediation in the context of social crises in Kazakhstan. As sociolinguistic analysis has shown, apologies in official discourse not only serve to acknowledge guilt and express regret, but also serve as a means of restoring trust, stabilising social tensions, and establishing dialogue between the authorities and society.

Based on speech act theory, the perlocutionary effect of the act of apology was demonstrated, the effectiveness of which depends on a number of linguistic criteria (narrative strategies, addresser-addressee orientation, etc.). A comparative analysis of cases has revealed that this action is effective only when several conditions are met: clear

acknowledgement of responsibility, expression of empathy and regret, specification of concrete compensatory measures, and direct address to the affected recipients.

Empirical data have confirmed that two types of apologies can be distinguished in Kazakh political communication: individual apologies (e.g., apologies by individual politicians for unethical behaviour) and collective-institutional apologies (in times of social crisis, on behalf of the state or state bodies). While individual apologies aim to restore a person's reputation, image, and trust, collective-institutional apologies have a significant mediating effect, strengthening social unity, preventing the escalation of conflict, and preventing further aggravation of crises.

The study showed that a formal apology can be considered a form of public linguistic mediation between state institutions and society. Such an act not only acknowledges mistakes or shortcomings but also helps restore trust, reduce social tension, and establish dialogue in times of crisis.

To assess the effectiveness of official apologies, an analytical tool in the form of a checklist was proposed, including parameters of speech acts (structure, strategy, interaction with the addressee, etc.). The developed model allows for the systematisation of linguistic features of successful mediative discourse and serves as a criterion for analysing public statements by government officials.

Applying this tool to specific cases (the COVID-19 pandemic, the January 2022 events in Kazakhstan) enabled the identification of differences in communication strategies and their effectiveness. A comparative analysis showed that language's mediating potential in such situations plays a decisive role in maintaining social harmony and can serve as a basis for further research in political and institutional communication.

Thus, the language of official apology can be seen as an important resource for public mediation, where the effectiveness of communication depends on the sequence of speech acts, such as acknowledgement, expression of regret, and promise of action. The results obtained allow us to assert that a linguistically and pragmatically correct apology can serve as a social mechanism for overcoming emergencies, reducing the level of conflict, and promoting dialogue between the authorities and society'.

Further research plans include expanding the corpus of empirical materials, comparing the practice of official apologies in Kazakhstan with international practice, and developing a more comprehensive model for assessing their effectiveness from a mediative perspective.

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