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A Study of Apologies as Perlocutionary Effect of Injurious Speech Acts in Pakistani Social Media



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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to investigate how Pakistani social media celebrities utilize Public Apologies as a tool of reversed blaming strategies to negotiate accountability and reinforce class hierarchies, looking especially at the dehumanization of lower professional workers and marginalized communities in recent Pakistani digital media. For this purpose, the relevant excerpts of apologies particularly of Iqrar-Ul-Hassan, Ali Khan Tareen, Fiza Ali, and Nida Yasir, were taken through purposive sampling technique from a Pakistani social media platform "YouTube". The selected videos and comments were taken from the mentioned celebrities' official YouTube channels. Through the purposive sampling technique, the commentary either in the form of written comments or in the form of the trending memes on TikTok or YouTube regarding these celebrities' injurious speech acts has been discussed to highlight these celebrities' apologies as perlocutionary effect of their injurious speech acts at different levels or moments. The selected videos, written comments, and trending memes of TikTok, were analyzed at both micro and macro levels. At micro-level, the lexical and semantic features of the utterances are studied and at the macro-level, the socio-political environment in which the ordinary Pakistani people (low professionals) are victimized psychologically, and how blaming reversed technique is used by these social figures, is discussed. The selected videos of apologies in Pakistani society are the manifestations of wounded -psychology of ordinary professionals and how a specific community is marginalized by injurious speech Acts of such celebrities. The findings of this study demonstrate that in order to remove injustice and dehumanization, there is need to emerge as retaliative rather than apologetic.

Keywords: Apologies, Dehumanization, Injurious Speech, Negotiation To Accountability, Perlocutionary Effects

Introduction

Psychologists, sociologists, and psycho-linguists believe that humans' psychology is highly influenced by the environment in which they live. From psychologists we have Sigmund Freud (1865-1986), from sociologists we have Michel Foucault (1926-1984), and from psycho-linguists we have Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who supported this notion that humans are always affected by the surrounding environment. John Austin proposed the Speech Acts Theory of semantics in his famous book titled as, "How to do Things with Words". In this book he described this idea that speaking is not just about telling the reality or describing it, but also about performing actions. He proposed three types of speech acts in his book which are locutionary, illocutionary, and Perlocutionary acts.

The locutionary act encompasses the literal saying of the speaker. Illocutionary act deals with the specific action performed by the speaker through the utterance of the words for example it reflects the speaker's intent promising or asking. Perlocutionary act is the actual effect or the consequence of the speaker's utterance on listener for example persuading or threatening. Through these speech acts Austin emphasizes on the notion that meaning of the words totally relies on speech situation.

Judith Butler who is an American Philosopher born on 24 February 1956 extends Austin's theory in her famous book named, "Excitable Speech (2021)". Butler explains that Language has a "Power to Injure". According to her language injuries us when "language acts against us" (1997, p.1). She explains that all the modes of linguistic injury are equally important as the insulting words are, for this process all the subjects are positioned as objects of insult (1997, pp. 1-2). In New Work on Speech Acts, Mary Kate McGowan describes speech acts as they enact the reality and facts.

According to Fogal Harris and Moss (2018), Austin describes his speech acts as "exercitive". Butler was highly interested in interpellative aspect of speech which aimed to establish, indicate and maintain subjects in their hierarchical positions, for this Butler tries to highlight certain features of hate speech, which are utilized to reduce the addressee into a subservient position. It is assumed that language does not only enact the facts but also injuries the addressees to affect them psychologically and affix them as subject. It is essential to maintain the hierarchy between speaker and the listener, because they do not only get injuries but his social rank is also reestablished through Perlocutionary Effects. In this context linguistic injury works to challenge the power relations in society. By quoting an American lawyer Mari Matsuda (1956), Judith Butler explains this that speech becomes a tool to "reconstruct social foundations".

According to Butler when Injurious Speech is used against vulnerable individuals it acts as "Linguistic Injury" for dis-empowering and silencing these individuals. In Pakistan now- a- days such types of linguistic injuries are on trend where Social Media celebrities such as Iqrar-Ul-Hassan, Ali Khan Tareen, Fiza Ali, and Nida Yasir used such injurious speeches against lower professionals. Their injurious speeches become a source of public backlash and on the demand of public these celebrities' posted videos of apologies from their official YouTube channels and Instagram IDs. An apology is standardly described as a formal expression of regret for a wrongdoing with the intent to take responsibility, express remorse, restore results, fix a situation, and commit to change. There are three main types of apologies. An apology which is asked from an individual from his friends or family is called interpersonal apology. When a group of individuals ask apology from another group of individuals this type of apology is called collective apology. When an individual or institution asks for apology as an official statement on the demand of the audience of public these types of apologies are called public apology.

This study investigates the public apologies asked from mentioned celebrities of Pakistani social media. After discussing the Speech act theory, injurious speech and types of apologies now let's discuss the strategy of apologizing to negotiate to accountability by Pakistani social media celebrities. Before posting any official apology, video there is always an injurious act recently done by that individual which causes for public backlash. And through such types of apologies videos posted on social media accounts these types of celebrities attempt to keep the audience with them. For negotiating to accountability such celebrities place the responsibility on the listener by using special linguistic markers which support their stance, protect their right position, and challenge the hierarchical positions if the audience. These types of public apologies act as Perlocutionary Effect of injurious speeches of such celebrities. By "linguistic injuries" celebrities as Iqrar-Ul-Hassan, Ali Khan Tareen, Fiza Ali and Nida Yasir recently done in 2025 and 2026, try to dehumanize the lower professionals of Pakistani society. The speaker's injurious speech acts are from few professions that

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are assumed best for getting great opportunities for promotions and handsome amount of payback or highly valued profession in this era of digital media for example hosting, modeling, and acting. For example, Iqar-ul-Hassan was the host of "Sarr-e-Aam program" broadcasted on ARY News channel. Now recently in January 2026, he introduced "Awam Raj Tahreek". Ali Khan Tareen is a businessman, politician, and owner of Pakistan Super League Multan Sultan. Fiza Ali is a model, actress, songwriter, singer, and T.V host of 24 News HD. Nide Yasir is also hosting "Good Morning Pakistan" on ARY Digital. From the marginalized professionals we have airport alteration Syed Zeeshan Aziz, PSL's management, traditional lower middle class being audience of 24 News, and delivery riders.

Statement of the Problem

In Pakistani contemporary social media, the celebrities are indulging in injurious speech acts against the individuals of lower professional classes. These incidents are transcending individual conflicts serving the root cause of emerging systematic marginalization of entire classes and communities. Despite the psychological and social trauma caused by such linguistic injuries, celebrities are increasingly responding to public backlash with conditional performative apologies which do not function as genuine acts of repair, but strategic linguistic maneuvers to minimize the perceived impact of initial injury. By shifting the accountability from speakers to audience's interpretation this study describes such conditional performative apologies as Perlocutionary Effect of linguistic injuries or injurious speech against lower professionals to marginalized their whole communities.

Research Gap

Although many studies have discussed and explored Perlocutionary Effects of hate speeches and injurious speeches, but there is a gap which exists in the previous literature where little focus has been given to apologies. This study discusses the apologies of mentioned celebrities as Perlocutionary Effect of injurious speeches. In apologies of such celebrities a reversed blaming strategy is used by using few linguistic markers, if this issue is not addressed it may lead us to normalize the marginalization of professions and professionals in Pakistan.

Objectives of the research

- To identify the specific linguistics marker of "if phrasing" that shifts the responsibility from celebrities to Listeners.
- To analyze the description of lower professionals provided by such celebrities in their posted videos construct a discourse of dehumanization and marginalization of lower professionals.
- To evaluate how the digital audience's collective backlash acts as the primary force of demanding a Perlocutionary response in the form of public apology from the elite professionals.

Literature Review

Judith Butler's work on performative and excitable speech acts has lifted the study of language from what is said to what linguistic expressions do. According to (Butler, 1997), certain recurrent exclamations such as "a female's integrity lies in her quality to be calm and silent", and on the other hand, "a man is the protector of the

domiciliary”. These societal standards function not as unbiased announcements but as performative acts. These utterances become part of a comprehensive cultural grammar that exemplify femininity as obedience, invisibility, and vulnerability, and manliness as command, control, and moral superiority. When such declarations are repeated crosswise generations and entrenched in religious discourse, they become what (Butler, 2021) later termed those formulative speech acts, which reproduce social hierarchies and gendered violence through repetition, legitimacy, and moral framing standards.

In Pakistani society, these stereotypical utterances are frequently deployed in the name of religious and cultural values. Common examples include the moralizing of female behavior through words like “sharam” (shame), “izzat” (honor), and “adab” (modesty). These are not only rapports of description rather they are gadgets of discipline. When young woman is told not to giggle loudly, not to voice freely, or not to interrogate elders, they are being accomplished into gendered silence through culturally authenticated speech. This linguistic training begins in childhood and is reinforced in family structures, schools, religious sermons, and media narratives (Tapal, 2023).

In a study on injurious speech acts, Dr. Tamsila Naeem investigated the effects of hate speech acts of powerful agencies, which are used to establish and maintain power relations by influencing the psyche of weaker groups to assign them a subordinate position. In this article the authors discuss this that feeling of being ugly has multiple and terrible influences on the mind and body of the subjects. They explored the injurious effects on the black people who consciously think themselves as agents of darkness, sun, crime, wickedness, immortality, and evil (2019).

In another study, "Muslims as Terrorists: Hate speech against Muslims", published in 2022, Tamsila Naeem explained how anti-Islamic forces are trying to suppress Muslims in order to psychologically subjugate them. In another study, "Analyzing COVID-19 Discourse as Traumatic Speech Acts in Pakistan", published in 2022, Tamsila Naeem discussed the Traumatic Physiological effects of COVID-19 and multiple corona threats spread through its discourse throughout the world. This study suggested that the proper attention should be given to physiological health of people.

Flores-Salgado (2011) discuss four strategies of apologies, starting from illocutionary force hinting the hidden derive, expression of responsibility, promise of forbearance, and moving towards effect of repair. This study suggested this that those things that people say to apologize do seem to be effective in identifying the self-presentational goals of apologizers. In another article, "From Recognition to Acknowledgment: Rethinking the Perlocutionary", published in 2025, Daniele Lovenzini elaborated the notion of Perlocutionary responsibility which he named as a specific form of a moral responsibility for the consequences of utterances that are not predictable.

Although many aspects of hate speech acts and their effects has been discussed in different researches such as discussed above but there is a crucial literature gap regarding studies of apologies as Perlocutionary Effect of Injurious Speech Acts.

This study bridges this gap by studying the public apologies of Pakistani selected celebrities highlighting the discourse which served the cause of dehumanization of lower professionals who are not active and in front of screen of digital media.

Methodology

This is qualitative research in nature. This study uses purposive sampling for data collection. Qualitative method is used for data analysis. The primary source of data is selected from YouTube videos of mentioned celebrities. The secondary data for data analysis is the Austin's theory of speech acts and Judith Butler's injurious speech acts. Furthermore, a few comments from audience's response are added to highlight how public demands for apologies from mentioned celebrities of Pakistani Digital Media. This research divides into five chapters. The study represents the injurious speech in form of stereotyping, demeaning, erasure and insulting discourse as illocutionary force and apologies as their perlocutionary effects in the selected situations in political scenario in Pakistan.

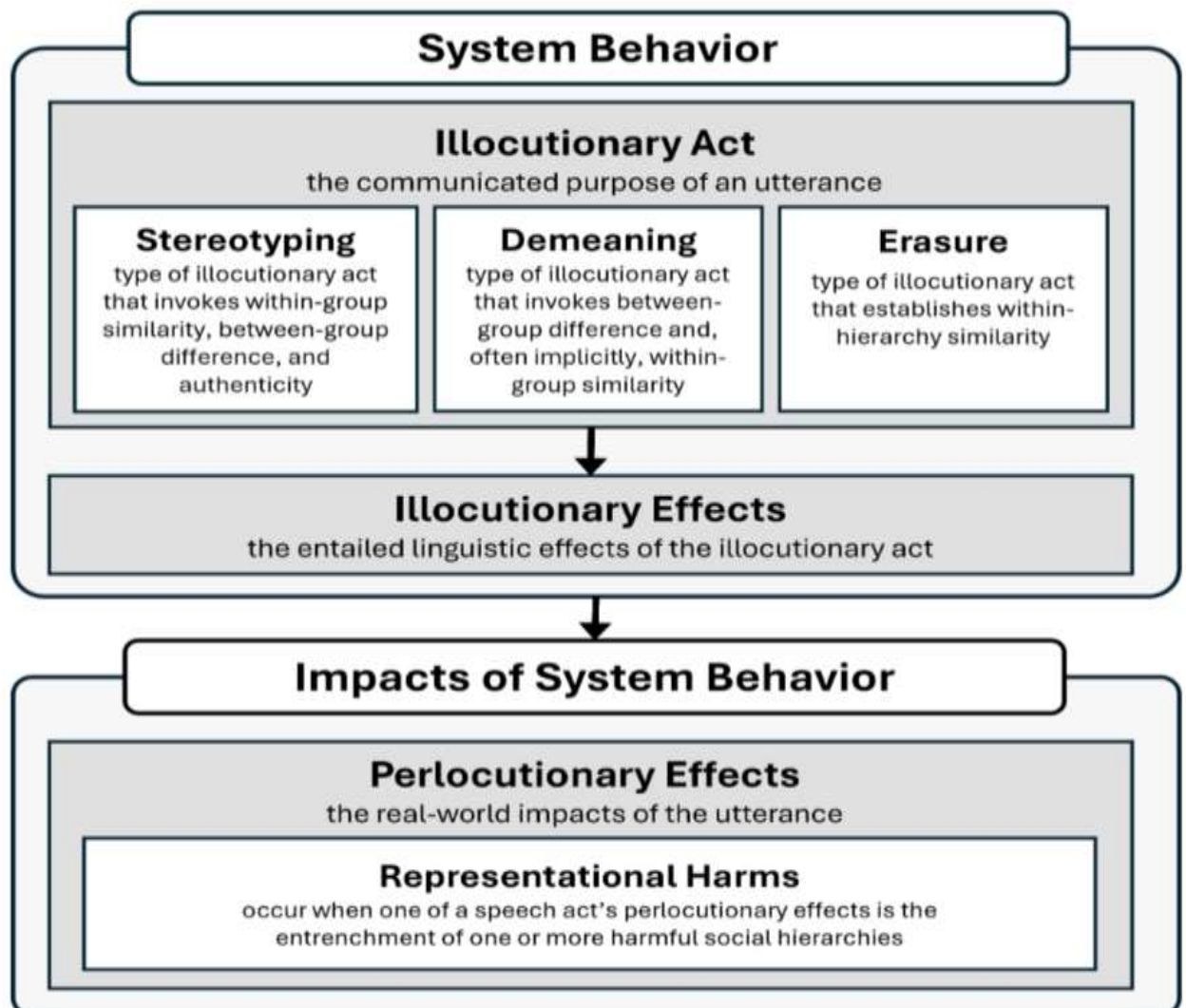


Figure 3.1

Findings

This section provides the analysis of four selected videos of above-mentioned celebrities of Pakistani social media.

The first celebrity is Iqrar-Ul-Hassan who was really famous for his program named "Sarr-e-Aam". All Pakistanis really appreciated his efforts and they still show respect towards Iqrar-Ul-Hassan due to this program. Recently he started his new profession

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as a politician on 15th January 2026, he announced his own political party titled, "Awam Raaj Tahreek".

On 29 April, 2026 Iqrar-Ul-Hassan posted a video from his official YouTube channel "@iqrarulhassansyed298" with subtitle as Iqrar-Ul-Hassan apologizes explanation video.

He starts his video by requesting from public to put aside all the matters and things before he asks for apology. After provide this statement he asks few questions from his audience such as, is it right for anyone wearing official uniform being on duty to throw arrow of any political comment on any person? (Translation), If you are with your sister, daughter, or your wife and anyone comments on you... What will you do? Will you ignore and pass that person without any reaction or try to make him feel shame about his words?

Later he requests about not assigning him the position of any political figure instead to give him the position of any common individual from Pakistani society. The most important phrases of this video are, you all know that what these Government officers do.... You would have become the victim of the brutality of such government officers in your lives somehow... (Translation). Then he apologizes in following way,

1. "I promise you I'll never ask for vote, never ever will take any position or will ask for donation or fund... If this is my mistake then I apologize"
2. "If it is a crime to raise voice for yourself or for other, then I apologize"
3. " If I shouted on sex-workers for the protection of the dignity of the girls and women, then I apologize"
4. " If I spoke Infront of corrupt and ill-reputed officers, then I apologize"
5. If I raised question on wrongdoing of government officer, then I apologize"
6. "My twenty years of Journalism are witnessed that I always rejected the notion of military intervention in politics... if it is my crime, then I apologize"

In this single video of Iqrar-Ul-Hassan there is six time of repetition of "conditional phrases if".

The next celebrity of Pakistani social media is Ali Khan Tareen, a famous businessman and owner of PSL team Multan Sultan. In his offical apology video posted on his offical I'd of Instagram which he later deleted and reported by Samma news on 24 October, 2025, Ali Khan Tareen apologized from PSL Management but by mentioning all the problems he raised and receiving the official notice sent by PSL Management team. In this video he discussed why did he receive this legal notice and which issues were highlighted in that notice even attending a zoom meeting ten minutes. In this video he apologizes in the following manner,

I apologize for raising and highlighting such crucial issues of mismanagement, you were right if I perceived them and took negatively and wrongly then I apologize (translation). He uses if phrasing in his video which hints at the main motif of his apology. And his last action where he divides the legal notice from PSL Management into two pieces by uttering these words, 'I hope you will like my apology video'.

The next celebrity is Fiza Ali who recently married for the third time to Ejaz Khan at the age of forty-one. On her viral clip from her live show and for hurting the Pakistani audience and their feelings she Apologized. <https://youtu.be/FtL1C7ejO7I?si=KXr0lDmjXY4PTABf>, in her this video she apologizes in the following way, "It was just a light spontaneous family moment but if someone found it inappropriate, I sincerely regret...." (Translation)

Here in her apology, it can be seen the presence of if phrasing in her apology.

The last selected celebrity is Nida Yasir, who asked for apology from her audience in her live show where she said I should have been more careful about the selection of my words. I used wrong words for the riders such as riders do this instead of saying few riders ... I mistakenly targeted the whole community while my intension was not wrong. I just wanted to share my personal experience...". In her video posted on public demand for apology she mentioned this that her selection of words was wrong not her intention. No matters the intention of the speaker was what... (Judith Butler explains this that when words or language acts against us it hurts us psychologically), the audience's psychology was injured at all no justifications can redo the psychologist effects of the injurious speech acts.

These videos of apologies and the presence of conditional phrasing highlighted that these apologies were playing the role of remedy for fixing the situation and consequences of injurious speech acts done by these celebrities.

All of the above-mentioned apologies as Perlocutionary Effect of Injurious Speech Acts show suppression of their voices. In April 2026, Iqrar-Ul-Hassan was involved in a confrontation with Federal Investigation Agency's immigration officer. When the officer was in conversation with his colleague Iqrar-ul-Hassan noticed he is commenting against me. On his comments Iqrar-Ul-Hassan opened his cell phone and started recording the video of that officer by forcing him to repeat his words and challenging him by saying... "be a man... accept your words...you are working under Mohsin Naqvi and establishment...leave your job and become a real "youthia".

In this whole video the officer stayed calm he didn't react against Iqrar-Ul-Hassan except repeating this that I was just talking to my colleague or friend. And there was no evidence against him that could prove Iqrar-Ul-Hassan right and that officer wrong and his belonging to (Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaaf) PTI. Instead, he was psychologically tortured on camera. This injurious speech act engendered by Iqrar-Ul-Hassan raised controversy and audience criticized Iqrar-Ul-Hassan for calling the officer "youthepia". Here are few comments regarding his injurious speech, "Stop using political traction for attention" (Mishi Khan)

The following picture is presented to get the idea of this reaction,



Figure 4.1

On www.TimesofKarachi-Pk, Iqrar-Ul-Hassan accepted that he had not any evidence that could prove this that FIA officer abused me.



Figure 4.2

Doctor Shahbaz Gill Khan posted his official video and highlighted the wrong words used to criticize that officer. Farah Nadeem gave her interview to KarachiTimes in which she said "by through such tacktacks you are not going to get famous".



Figure 4.3

And there are so many other comments. Everyone supported that officer and public backlash leaders Iqar-Ul-Hassan to post a public apology video. Dawn.com on official TikTok account reported this that Ali Khan Tareen "will not stay silent" after PSL threat in apology video. Look at the following report,



Figure 4.4

Fiza Ali Khan asked apology from her audience after getting her clip viral and on public's demand for apology. And Nida Yasir spoke something that raised harsh criticism on her in the form of TikTok memes from delivery riders and protest from the whole community of riders as well as from social media celebrities such as Fiza Ali Khan criticized Nida Yasir for her harsh words for delivery riders like "They do not carry loose change to return the remaining payment so they carry it with themselves cunningly".

Their apologies act as the perlocutionary effect of their injurious speeches are to marginalize the specific working communities. In the posted apology videos these celebrities use reverse blaming technique for convincing their audience that they were not at wrong.

Judith Butler proposed that Perlocutionary Effects come after injurious speech acts and from the above discussed apologies and public backlash which was the result of injurious speeches, this study provides answers of all the questions raises to conduct this study. The answer of first question is that conditional phrases used in all four videos of apologies are the Linguistic markers which shifted the responsibility back to listeners and help celebrities to fix the situation and safe their position.

The answer of the second question is this that all the mentioned and discussed celebrities presented the lower professionals such as riders, conventional Pakistanis of lower middle classes, FIA officer, and PSL Management as the corrupt one. The answer of the third question is this that the description provided by such celebrities such as "youthpeya", "riders play trick for getting and saving the money", nothing was wrong in my clip just a spontaneous family moment it was, and management under authorities is highlighting all normal things on which they should not take notice and send legal notice.... these descriptions provide such discourse that marginalize and dehumanize specific targeted communities

Conclusion

The findings reveal that the public, especially common masses are treated cold-heartedly and as subordinate people in their country. Due to the acts of marginalization behind insulting speech acts, the anchors, will never dare to raise their voice against their opponents, because if these raise their voices and come in front of screen, they wouldn't be able to get much support as these the political authorities enjoy. In this way such the powerful agencies continue to exercise their power in order to dehumanize the targeted professionals. The audience's collective backlash in

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the form of comments, interviews, podcasts, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube Videos, forced the mentioned and discussed celebrities to act as the primary force for demanding a perlocutionary response (as apology) from Pakistan digital media celebrities. The study recommends that there is a strong need to raise your voice for justice and peace, since if people raise their voice against injustice, oppression and tyranny, there is a hope to have better Pakistan in future.

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