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Revisiting the apology as a speech act: The case of parliamentary apologies

--Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract

By looking at both apologies made in everyday conversation and those made by politicians in public, I aim in this paper to provide a full set of felicity conditions for the speech act of apology. I also discuss how refinements to previously proposed categories of apology strategies are needed to accurately describe how (British) politicians apologise. I endeavour to show that with these refinements, the speech act approach to apologies is applicable to those of a political nature, as well as those in everyday conversation. Using these developments I analyse how Members of the U.K. Parliament apologise for a variety of offences. This analysis shows that MPs make more fulsome apologies than the apologies found in everyday conversation. The type of offence has an effect on how an MP apologises, with apologies for financial irregularities being the more detailed and making use of more conventional strategies than other apologies.

1 Introduction

Studies into apologies in everyday conversation have, by and large, been couched in speech act theory (for instance Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Trosborg, 1987; Suszcyńska, 1999). Apologies made by politicians have come under increasing scrutiny in the last decade, with studies exploring them from a social-psychological standpoint (e.g. Blatz et al., 2009), a sociological perspective (e.g. Tavuchis, 1991), as well as taking pragmalinguistic approaches (e.g. Harris et al., 2006). In this paper, I aim to show that the speech act approaches found in research on apologies in everyday conversation can equally be applied to political apologies. I do this through the detailed analysis of 56 apologies made on the floor of the House of Commons. Before getting to this analysis, I explore the felicity conditions of the speech act of apology (section 2). In section 3, I go on to discuss how the apology strategies found in the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realisation

1

Patterns (CCSARP) project (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984) require some changes to fully describe apologies in political discourse. A discussion of the sometimes complex participation structure (Goffman, 1981: chapter 3; Levinson, 1988) found in the House of Commons follows in section 4. Section 5 provides and discusses the results – showing what strategies Members of Parliament (MPs) prefer when apologising on the floor of the House of Commons, highlighting how the type of offence can affect the form of the apology, and describing how apologies made by politicians differ from those found in everyday conversation. Suggestions for further work and conclusions are offered in section 6.

2   Felicity conditions

The CCSARP project did not propose a set of felicity conditions for apologies, instead it focussed on the various strategies used by speakers to perform their apologies and as Trosborg (1994:375) notes '[t]he act of apologizing is not among the types of illocutionary acts for which the rules of use have been explicitly formulated by Searle'. There have been, to my knowledge, just two proposals for a full set of felicity conditions for the apology, the first by Owen (1983) and more recently by Ogiermann (2009). They are similar in a number of respects and are both potentially problematic. In this section I will focus on the disadvantages of those suggested by Ogiermann (2009) though all of the criticisms except the one in §2.1.2 could equally be levelled at Owen's (1983:117-124) proposals since they share a number of similarities. I will also offer an alternative set of rules.

2.1   Propositional content

2.1.1   Speaker responsibility

Searle and Vanderveken (1985:16) argue that in an illocution of type $F(P)$, the illocutionary force F 'will impose certain conditions in the propositional content P. One of the implications of this, they suggest, is that 'if a speaker apologizes for something it must be for something that he [*sic*] has done or is otherwise responsible for' (*ibid*.) By way of example, they propose that a 'speaker cannot successfully apologize for the law of *modus ponens* or the

2

elliptical orbit of the planets' (*ibid.*).   Possibly in light of this statement, Ogiermann (2009:46) suggests that the propositional content of an apology is a 'past act A done by S[peaker]'.   I think that is an inaccurate proposal, even (and, perhaps, especially) in light of Searle and Vanderveken's definitions of illocutionary force.

This first difficulty with wording the propositional content in this way can be highlighted with an example taken from Holmes (1989:196, her example (2)):

(1) *Context*: A's child spills her drink on V's carpet.

   A: Oh look I'm terribly sorry. I'll clean it up. Have you got a cloth?

   V: Don't worry. I'll do it. It wasn't very much.

According to Ogiermann's propositional content, we would have to contend that this was an infelicitous apology since the speaker (A in this case) was not the person who performed the offensive act. However, V treats A's utterance as an apology with the response 'Don't worry' which according to Robinson (2004) should be considered a preferred response to an apology called 'absolution'. Furthermore, it may be the case that A's child is unaware of the offensiveness of the action and that the child also does not have the necessary linguistic resources available to him/her to apologise. In these instances, I think we are able to argue that it is possible for someone to apologise on other's behalf. Indeed, Searle and Vanderveken leave this possibility open by saying that an action which a speaker 'is otherwise responsible for' is a legitimate source of an apology.

Whilst it is fairly uncontroversial to suggest that apologies such as the one in example (1) are felicitous, there has been no real discussion in linguistic approaches to the apology regarding how widely the idea of responsibility for an offence should be interpreted. In their work on political apologies, Harris et al. (2006) discuss a number of examples of apologies made by British politicians. One apology highlighted was made by Geoff Hoon, the then Defence Secretary, following the death of a soldier (Sgt. Roberts) in Iraq

3

which was, in part, caused by the lack of protective equipment. In that apology, Hoon said:

(2) **Hoon:** Some 38,000 sets of that enhanced body armour was sent to theatre. We wanted him to have that equipment. I'm extremely sorry that he did not have it. (quoted in Harris et al., 2006:727)

Harris et al. (2006:727f) go on to discuss the controversy that surrounded the apology which was caused, amongst other things, by Hoon refusing to accept direct responsibility for the death. I highlight the example in (2) to show how responsibility for an action is not the same as having performed it. To satisfy the conditions set out by Ogiermann (2009:46), Hoon would, presumably, have to have been the person who fired the shot which was fatal to Sgt. Roberts. Though Hoon himself attempted to side-step the responsibility for the tragic outcome (by suggesting that he 'made enough body armour available, but it was not, by implication, properly distributed by those on the ground (the military)' (Harris et al., 2006:727)), we can argue that he is still (indirectly) responsible for Sgt. Roberts' death. As the minister in charge of the safe deployment of troops to Iraq, it was Hoon's duty to ensure that troops were receiving the equipment which his ministry was providing. So despite not having performed the action himself, and despite not accepting the direct responsibility either, I think it is still fair to argue that Hoon could apologise felicitously (if he so wished) for the death of Sgt. Roberts. Indeed, if his apology had been worded in a way which pleased Sgt. Roberts' wife, she would apparently have welcomed it as a satisfactory apology (Harris et al., 2006:727-8). This leads us to a wider interpretation of Searle and Vanderveken's 'otherwise responsible for' criteria than I believe they intended. I think a speaker need only be indirectly responsible for action to be able to felicitously apologise for it.

Taking this further, I think there is scope to extend the notion of 'otherwise responsible' beyond an apologiser being indirectly responsible. The recent trend of politicians apologising for acts of historical wrongdoing has been

4

widely noted and is fast becoming a cottage industry in linguistic and social psychological research (see Lind, 2008; Kampf 2009; Augustinos et al., 2011 for some recent examples of such work). Using Ogiermann's felicity conditions, and even Searle and Vanderveken's less strict suggestion of what constitutes the propositional content of apologies, we would have to conclude that modern politicians' apologies for their nations' involvement in the Slave Trade, support of military juntas, colonisation and denial of equal rights for women (amongst other things) do not represent well-meant apologies. Many, especially journalists, would agree that such statements cannot be classed as apologies. Let us look at Gordon Brown's apology to the Home Children[1] by way of example.

(3) To all those former child migrants and their families, to those here with us today and those across the world-to each and every one-I say today that we are truly sorry. They were let down. We are sorry that they were allowed to be sent away at the time they were most vulnerable. (Gordon Brown, 24/02/2010; vol. 506, col. 301)[2]

There was much debate before and after Brown made the statement. The view taken by most journalists is best summarised by Rod Liddle's opinion piece in *The Spectator* magazine:

> I never knew it was Gordon Brown who sent all those
> kids off to Australia, packed them off and waved
> goodbye from the quayside, and now feels terribly
> bad about the whole thing
> (http://www.spectator.co.uk/spectator/thisweek/55497

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[1] The Home Children were victims of the British Government's policy between 1869 and 1967 to send children from care homes to live and work in other Commonwealth countries. They faced abuse, neglect and poor living conditions in those countries.

[2] Vol. 506, col. 301 is a reference to where this example can be found in Hansard (the 'Official Report' of parliamentary business and available online at http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/).

5

Liddle implies that since Gordon Brown was not actually involved, neither directly nor indirectly, in the policy (he was only 15 years old when the forced migrations ended), he cannot apologise for it. But the response of journalists to the apology does not, necessarily, give us the best indication of what counts as a 'real' apology. In this instance, I think we should look to victims and their representatives to see how Brown's statement was interpreted. Harold Haig of *The International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families* said that Brown's statement was:

> a moment in history when there can be reconciliation between the government, the nation and child migrants (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8531664.stm, 24/02/2010)

We can argue that apologies have a perlocutionary goal of restoring good relations between the speaker and the injured party which we could otherwise describe as reconciliation (Turnbull, 2003:106). Since Harold Haig suggested that Brown's statement fulfilled the perlocutionary goal of an 'apology' (that of eliciting forgiveness and reconciliation), I think we should view the statement as a felicitous apology[3].

2.1.2 Timing of the offence

Aside from implications for speaker responsibility for offences, Ogiermann's suggested propositional content also restricts the timing of a felicitous apology[4]. By stipulating that only 'past acts' can be apologised for felicitously, the implication is that speech events which pre-empt an offence taking place

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[3] Apologies for historical wrongdoing do not form part of the corpus of apologies analysed for this article but I mention them here so that my suggested felicity conditions are as thorough as possible.

[4] Ogiermann and Owen's felicity conditions diverge when it comes to offence timing. Owen's propositional content allows an offence to be a 'past act, or an act that S is engaged in at the time of speaking, or a future act whose occurrence is assured' (Owen, 1983:117).

6

cannot be viewed as well-meant apologies. Such a restriction seems sensible when we consider an utterance like the one in (4):

(4) *I apologize for not having left by tomorrow (Fraser, 1981:261)

Such an utterance cannot be interpreted as an apology and would strike most native speakers as odd, to say the least. Fraser suggests that (4) does not constitute an apology 'since there is, at the time of speaking, no relevant act over which to apologize' (*ibid.*). I am not convinced by this explanation. I think the unacceptability of (4) lies in 'having + past participle' (normally used to indicate a completed, i.e. past, event) being used in combination with future event and *not* with the verb 'to apologise' being used with a future event. Changing this example so that it still conveys the same message (i.e. an apology for not leaving until after tomorrow) gives us a seemingly acceptable apology:

(4') I apologise for not being able to leave by tomorrow

A further example from a debate in the House of Commons on school teachers' pay and conditions may emphasise my point that future actions can be the subject of apologies:

(5) I apologise in advance to the House because I shall not be able to remain for the whole of the debate owing to a long standing and important commitment in another part of the Palace of Westminster. (Bob Dunn, 27/11/1990; vol. 181, col. 771)

In (5) Mr. Dunn apologises because he will leave the debate early, which breaches the parliamentary convention that, when speaking in a debate, one should stay in the chamber to see the conclusion of that debate.   Despite being for an act that is yet to occur, Mr. Dunn's utterance is seemingly accepted as an apology by the other participants in the debate (there is no uptake of the apology as we would find in everyday conversation, but nobody

7

passes comment from a sedentary position about the acceptability or otherwise of his statement). Moreover, we often find utterances similar to that in (5) in everyday talk – we apologise in advance when we are unable to attend meetings; public bodies apologise in advance of closing important services; we apologise before saying something potentially impertinent. Coulmas (1981) also discusses instances of *ex ante* apologies, as he calls them, for matters such as intruding on someone. Such apologies have led to 'the derived usage of apology expressions as attention getters' (*ibid.*:76). I think all of these apologies can be viewed felicitously (provided they fulfil the other felicity conditions).

2.1.3 Reformulating the propositional content

Bearing the previous discussions in mind, I propose that the propositional content for a felicitous apology should be thought of as:

> An act done, or to be done in the future, by the speaker or someone for whom the speaker is a formally recognised representative.

2.2 Preparatory condition

Ogiermann's (2009:46) suggestion for the preparatory condition, 'S[peaker] believes that [past act] A is an offence against H[earer]', may also be troublesome, if interpreted strictly. Consider the following example with which many couples will identify:

(6) *Context*: James has just left the bathroom; his partner Emily enters to use the toilet
Emily: For Christ's sake, can you stop leaving the toilet seat up?!
James: I'm sorry – I keep forgetting.

This seemingly frivolous example highlights the problem with wording the preparatory condition in this way. I do not find the act of leaving the toilet seat up to be an offence, indeed if Emily were to leave the toilet in this way I would be pleased rather than perturbed. In this case, then, is my apology

8

infelicitous? Given that I was the speaker in (6), I would contend that it was well-meant and heartfelt. Despite not personally finding the action offensive, I know from my world knowledge and from her utterance that my interlocutor does find my action offensive.

I was party to another instance of apology which gave me reason to reconsider the formulation of the preparatory condition. My brother and I were visiting my parents and engaging in some friendly banter when the following took place:

(7) James: [laughing] You are a total dick sometimes

Mother: Oi! There's no need for that. Say sorry.

Craig: Mam, it was only a joke

James: Sorry mate

The utterance I produced was not in response to any action which I thought that Craig had found offensive (indeed, his assertion that it was a joke suggests he did not interpret it as an offence), but instead to my mother's suggestion that my utterance was an offence. In producing my apology, my aim was to show my mother that I was willing to make good my relations with my brother (even if I did not think they had been damaged) and to some extent, repair any damage to my relationship between my mother and me. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain conceive of this sort of offence when they note that offences can be 'perceived by S only, by H only, by both S and H, or by *a third party* as a breach of a social norm' (1984:206, emphasis mine).

Both of these matters need to be taken into account so I think re-wording the preparatory condition so that it reads something like:

9

S believes that the apology recipient (R), or a contextually relevant third party, believes that the act was an offence against R (or someone who R represents)[5]

gives a more appropriate, albeit slightly more convoluted, proposal.

2.3 Sincerity condition

I think it is certainly true that a speaker must feel some regret to be able to apologise felicitously, otherwise she[6] could be said to be simply 'going through the motions' in her performance of the apology (see Wachtel, 1980 for a discussion of this). However, regret does not simply stem from the performance of the action, as Ogiermann's (2009:46) wording of the sincerity condition ('S regrets A') would imply. Indeed, if we return to example (6), I would not regret leaving the toilet seat up if Emily had made no overt complaint about this state of affairs. As such, I believe that my regret stems not from having performed the action, but instead from the potential damage to an otherwise convivial relationship that may have been caused by the action. As a result, it may be better to say that in a sincere apology, the speaker can regret either the act itself or one of its consequences.

2.4 Summary

To re-iterate then I would argue that the following felicity conditions are able to capture the vast majority of utterances which we would describe as apology speech-acts (both in everyday talk and political discourse):

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[5] I include the idea that the offence can have happened to a party who is not the recipient, but rather someone who the recipient represents, because of the existence of the historical apologies discussed in section 2.1.1. A number of the victims of forced migration, for instance, had died before Gordon Brown's apology but had surviving family members present to hear it.

[6] Where the gender of a speaker/hearer is not clear from the context of an example, I use feminine pronouns (she/her/etc.) to refer to any Speaker (or a non-specific MP), and masculine pronouns (he/him/etc.) to refer to a generic Hearer.

10

Propositional content: An act done, or to be done in the future, by the speaker or someone for whom the speaker is a formally recognised representative.

Preparatory condition: Speaker believes that the apology recipient, or a contextually relevant third party, believes that the act was an offence against the recipient (or someone who the recipient represents).

Sincerity condition: Speaker regrets the act or one of its consequences.

Essential condition: Utterance counts as an apology.

3   Apology strategies

As discussed previously, the CCSARP project provides the most widely used categorisation of apology formulae, with studies including Trosborg (1987), Holmes (1989, 1990) and Suszcyńska (1999) relying on a more or less adapted version of their categories. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984:206) find that 'the act of apologizing can take one of two basic forms, or a combination of both'. Firstly a speaker may use an explicit 'illocutionary force indicating device' (IFID), or alternatively she may make reference to one of the factors which precipitated the need for an apology and her responsibility for the offence. I think that these suggestions are fair ones, however what the CCSARP coding scheme categorises as IFIDs is, in my opinion at least, contestable. The speech-act of apology can be carried with the following performative verbs which Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984:207) classify as 'IFIDs': (be) sorry; excuse; apologize; forgive; regret; pardon. Whilst it is true to say that all of these verbs can be used to produce utterances functioning as apologies, it seems wrong-headed to argue that they can all explicitly indicate the illocutionary force of apologising. I believe that property is restricted to the verb 'to apologise' used performatively (this is noted by Owen (1983:116) but not discussed further). Indeed, individual politicians and their advisors acknowledge that there is a (fundamental) difference between 'apologise' and the other verbs labelled IFIDs in the CCSARP endeavour.

11

Consider the following thought found in Condoleezza Rice's memoir about her preparations before giving evidence at the 9/11 Truth Commission:

(8) A part of me wanted to apologize, but the collective view of my advisors was that to do so would overwhelm anything else that I said. So instead I expressed regret. (Rice, 2011: xvii)

Here we can see that Rice's advisors did not want her to apologise but they found a speech act of indicating regret to be acceptable. There are further instances of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's 'IFIDs' not acting as IFIDs (at least not for the speech act of apology). Consider (9) which Deutschmann (2003:96) discusses and which comes from the spoken component of the British National Corpus:

(9) **Michael**: <--|--> [7] Well that <--|--> that is an entirely hypothetical question

  Nicky Campbell: <--|--> But in purely practical terms <--|-->

  Michael: <--|--> <unclear> <--|-->but I I'm sorry b--if you would let me answer.

Michael is being interviewed by Nicky Campbell who has interrupted him numerous times prior to this extract. With that taken into consideration we would not argue that Michael's 'I'm sorry' in (9) is an apology, but rather I would suggest that it constitutes a 'challenge'[8] or reprimand to the interrupter. Whilst these non-apologetic functions can be found for the other verbs listed as IFIDs, the same cannot be said for 'to apologise' which when used performatively and non-ironically does, indeed, indicate the illocutionary force of *apology* and I would venture cannot carry the force of another speech act.

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[7] Indicates overlapping speech in the BNC transcription conventions.

[8] Deutschmann (2003:96) himself describes this as a 'challenging apology' as he uses the term apology as a descriptor of form, rather than function.

12

Because of the inherent differences between 'to apologise' and the other verbs which can, but do not always, indicate an apology, I suggest that 'to apologise' stands alone as the IFID for English apologies with the other verbs conventionally implicating apology (see Table 1 for more details of the categorisation which I propose).

The problems with the CCSARP taxonomy go beyond the easily resolved mis-categorisation of some verbs as IFIDs. A further issue arises when we attempt to analyse an utterance of the sort found in example (10):

(10) **Nicholas Edwards** (01/03/1982; vol. 19, col. 21)[9] […] i would like to apologise to the right honourable gentleman for the rhondda for suggesting that he might have been drinking […]

Whilst the CCSARP codes for indirectness when looking at requests, no similar categories are proposed for apologies which are performed as indirect speech acts (see Searle, 1975 for a more detailed discussion). As a result, we are to assume that Blum-Kulka and Olshtain would categorise the apology performed in (10) as an IFID, in the same way as a direct utterance like 'I apologise'. I do not think this is satisfactory.

In example 10, the apology is performed indirectly through a speech act like 'statement of intent/desire'. We can say that the utterance gives rise to an implicature of the sort 'with this utterance, I am performing an apology'. However, as with all implicatures, that inferred meaning is cancellable – Edwards could easily have added 'but I've been advised against it' as we saw with Condoleezza Rice previously, or something more confrontational like 'but

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[9] Examples like the one in (10) have been transcribed using the conventions found in Jefferson (2004) from recordings provided by the Parliamentary Recordings Unit. Examples which are transcribed come from apologies analysed for the purposes of this paper, the results of which can be found in section 5. The main conventions are: capitalisation used only for speech which is noticeably louder, (.) = micropause, (0.3) = pause timed in seconds, °xxx° = noticeably quieter speech, x: = lengthened sound, xxx = emphasised word/syllable.

13

it was the case that he was drunk'. Neither of these utterances would contradict what had been said before and both would block the potential implicature that Edwards is apologising. This block would lead the hearer to access the literal meaning that Edwards would only *like* to apologise[10]. That an apology can be performed with what Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) would call an IFID, but also indirectly through another speech act needs to be acknowledged if we are to have an accurate description of how apologies are performed.

The categories for apology strategies that I propose are not radically different from those found in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) but include some refinements; the need for which I have outlined. In some respects, the strategies I suggest are more similar to the distinctions drawn by Fraser (1981) which have sadly been dismissed in some quarters as 'rather pedantic' (Schwartz, 1999:24). I think *not* drawing the distinction between statements of intent ('I'd like to apologise') and direct statements of apology ('I apologise') - as Fraser does - could lead us to missing nuances in the speaker's intention. Whilst in everyday conversation it may be that these slight differences have little bearing on the direction of the conversation, in political discourse meanings which have to be inferred may not always be accessed successfully by the hearer. Indeed, as Gastil (1992:481) notes, 'some listeners will infer the intended meaning; others will take other meanings, and some may miss the implicature altogether, thinking the surface structure meaning is sufficient'. It may also be that those implicatures are not accessed deliberately in order to either obfuscate or embarrass an interlocutor. Consider the following example from a session of question time in the New Zealand parliament:

(11) **Hon Chris Carter:** I would like to ask the Minister why she wrote in the October edition of the New Zealand Educational Institute's magazine, Rourou—

[10] Of course, Edwards did not say anything which blocked the inference that he was apologising and so his statement was accepted as an apology by The Speaker of the House of Commons, and the person to whom he was apologising.

14

> **Hon Rodney Hide:** I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. […] But, once again, the previous Minister failed to ask a question. To say "I would like" to do something is not asking a question.
>
> **Mr SPEAKER:** Technically, the honourable member is correct. (NZ Parliament, vol. 651, col. 707 – available from http://www.parliament.nz/)

In (11) Carter's statement would, in normal circumstances, be treated as a question and as such responded to by the minister. However, Hide refuses to accept the intended meaning which could be drawn from Carter's utterance in order to either delay the minister's having to provide an answer, or to make Carter seem foolish in that he cannot even ask a question properly[11]. To not draw attention to these indirect strategies for apologising would, therefore, give an incomplete picture of how politicians tend to apologise.

The table below shows the apology strategies which I believe to be most salient, I highlight each of them with an example taken from the corpus of parliamentary apologies analysed as part of this study.

Broad category	Sub-category (individual strategy)	Example (taken from apologies analysed in this paper)
A Explicit expression of apology	i. A performative IFID	James Gray (16/03/2000; vol. 346, col. 520): […] i therefore apologise to you and to the house […]
	ii. A commissive with 'apology'/'apologies' as a direct object	Nicholas Scott (10/05/1994; vol. 243, col. 155): […] i offer my unreserved apologies to the house.

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[11] Hansen (2008:1397f) gives further reasons for why otherwise inferable meanings may be rejected in favour of literal meanings.

15

		i. An expression of regret	**Michael Trend** (13/02/2003; vol. 399, col. 1073): °[…] i <u>am</u> sir so very sorry°.
B Conventional (indirect) apology formula		ii. A request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness	**Tony Baldry** (21/07/2005; vol. 436, col. 1430): […] and i HOPE the house will accept this heartfelt and unconditional apology […]
		iii. A statement of desire	**Kali Mountford** (27/07/1999; vol. 336, col. 149): […] i would like to apologise to you (0.3) and to the house.
		iv. A statement of obligation	**Peter Hain** (18/07/1994; vol. 247, col. 35): […] madam speaker i must offer you and the house a full and complete apology in two respects […]
C Non-conventional indirect apology strategy		i. Explanation, account, or excuse	**Tim Devlin** (19/01/1989; vol. 145, col. 494): […] i now know that the allegation that i made in the house yesterday was based on uh (.) untrue information […]
		ii. Accepting the blame	**Don Touhig** (27/07/1999; vol. 336, col. 149): […] it is the duty for each of us to take responsibility for our actions and i do not shirk from that duty today. […]
		iii. Expressing self-deficiency	**Tony Baldry** (21/07/2005; vol. 436, col. 1430): […] my letter to the secretary of

16

		state was clearly very poorly written […]
	iv. Recognising H as entitled to an apology	**Ben Bradshaw** (20/05/2003; vol. 805, col. 461): mister speaker the honourable gentlemen are both er entirely right […]
	v. Expressing lack of intent	**Stephen Byers** (17/10/2005; vol. 437, col. 639): […] I did not <u>deliberately</u> intend to mislead the select committee […]
	vi. An offer/statement of repair/redress	**Michael Forsyth** (05/02/1997; vol. 289; col. 1067): […] and i:: withdraw what i said […]
	vii. A statement of non-recurrence	**Theresa May** (30/06/2010; vol. 512, col. 863): […] i will ensure that it will not happen again.

Table 1: Categories of methods for apologising

We can see that there is a hierarchy of explicitness between the broad categories, with category A containing the utterances which can only be interpreted as apologies; utterances in category B can be thought of as Generalised Conversational Implicatures in that they require specific contexts for their processing as apologies to be blocked; strategies which fall into category C are best described as Particularised Conversational Implicatures since the idea that the speaker is carrying out an apology is only derivable by the context and is not contained in the utterance itself[12]. Whilst there is this hierarchy in the broad categories, I would not assert that within categories

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[12] Levinson (1995) explains the distinction between GCI and PCI in far more detail than I can provide here.

17

there is an order of explicitness – that is to say that there does not seem to be any basis for claiming that Bi (An expression of regret) is more of a GCI than Biv (A statement of obligation).

4   Participation structure in the House of Commons

In this section I explore the complex 'participation structure' (Levinson, 1988) in Parliament.   Put simply, participation structure seeks to describe the various rôles carried out by parties in a speech event.   Whilst it is certainly important to get away from 'the primitive notions of speaker and hearer' (Goffman, 1981:129) in our descriptions of everyday conversation, it is all the more necessary to do this in analyses of parliamentary discourse since the number of participants is frequently large and talk is influenced by rules and traditions.

Firstly, it needs to be noted that all of the apologies looked at in this study are for offences that an MP has herself carried out or is in some way responsible for.   In this respect the participation structure is less complex than apologies made by MPs for historical acts.   That being said, apologies made in parliament have the added complication that they cannot be directed at anyone other than the Speaker of the House of Commons.   Thus, as Ilie (2010:897) notes, when an MP uses the pronoun *you*, she is referring, in the vast majority of cases, to The Speaker[13].   Other members can only be referred to in the third person and by using formulaic expressions like 'My Honourable Friend', 'The Honourable Member', etc. and not by using their name.

The majority of apologies previously researched have been of a simple, dyadic type.   These tend to have a participation framework seen in Figure 1.

[[[INSERT FIG1 HERE]]]

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[13] I use 'The Speaker' as shorthand for *The Speaker of the House of Commons*, this should not be confused with 'speaker' (or S) which is used generically for a person who is speaking.

18

In everyday conversation, it is virtually always the case that the speaker is not only the animator (i.e. the person uttering the words), but also the author (the person who planned what would be said) and the principal (the person whose feelings are being represented by the utterance). In such an apology, the offended party is nearly always the addressee (the person at whom the speaker directs her gaze and to whom the address pronouns used by the speaker refer) as well as the recipient (the participant for whom the speaker's words are intended). Depending on the situation, there may be other people in earshot of the speech event in which case there would also be ratified or unratified overhearers as participants in the conversation.

The situation is very different when it comes to parliamentary apologies. Let us consider one of the simplest examples analysed in this corpus. In 1988, a letter written by Sir Anthony Meyer which criticised and insulted a fellow MP was leaked to the press. Meyer sought to apologise to Donald Coleman, the offended party, by way of a personal statement made on the floor of the House of Commons. Personal statements must be shown to The Speaker in advance and s/he approves their contents. These statements must then be read word for word and are heard in silence and no comments or questions can follow them.   Figure 2 shows how we can consider the participant structure in Meyer's apology.

[[[INSERT FIG2 HERE]]]

Figure 2: Participant structure in Sir Anthony Meyer's apology

Firstly, we can see that the 'speaker' rôles are split, with the authorship of the apology being divided between Meyer, advisors who are often charged with drafting an MP's speeches in the Commons, and The Speaker who often asks for changes to be made to a personal statement before s/he allows it to be made in the chamber (House of Commons Information Office, personal

19

communication). Naturally, Meyer acts as the principal and animator since he delivers the apology and is assumed to feel the regret for the offence. The 'hearer' rôles are also divided between different parties. The Speaker is conventionally the addressee since all talk in the House of Commons is directed at the chair (indeed, Meyer begins his speech with: "Mr. Speaker I wish to make a personal statement"), however The Speaker is not the ultimate target of the apology proper. The apology is intended for Donald Coleman who we can label the 'recipient' of Meyer's utterances. Other people either present in the chamber, or those listening on the radio[14] can be thought of as ratified overhearers, since they are not intended by Meyer to be the target of his apology but are known to be listening to his words. There are no unratified overhearers since the apology is made in this highly public setting.

Apologies made in the Commons can be even more complex than the one show in Figure 2. In 1987, Richard Hickmet criticised the then Speaker of the House, Bruce Weatherill, accusing him of being biased in interviews to the press. He was forced to apologise to The Speaker by way of a personal statement in the House of Commons. In delivering his utterance, the participation structure for Richard Hickmett's apology statement can be thought of thus:

Figure 3: Participant structure in Richard Hickmett's apology

[[[INSERT FIG3 HERE]]]

Firstly, we find a non-human recipient in Hickmett's apology in that he apologises to 'the House', which acts as a metonym for all those people working in and associated with the House of Commons. *The House* can be found as a recipient in many of the apologies made in Parliament (43 of the 56 in this study) and I would suggest that it is invoked as a recipient as a means of acknowledging any damage caused to the reputation and standing of the House of Commons as a result of the apologiser's offence. Also significant in Hickmett's apology (and all those statements where The

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[14] Radio broadcasts of House of Commons business began in 1978, and video cameras were allowed into the House following a close vote amongst MPs in November 1989.

20

Speaker is the offended party) is the number of roles The Speaker finds him/herself playing. Not only is The Speaker the apologisee, but in some respects s/he is also the apologiser because of his/her function in the authorship of the apology. This reflects the ritual nature of apologies made on the floor of the House of Commons – Hickmett will have already apologised to The Speaker in person before his statement, but he must go through the motions of performing the apology in parliament so that the House and the overhearing parties can pass judgement on his statement.

Whilst Hickmett's apology is interesting, the majority of apologies in the corpus are not targetted at The Speaker for offences against him/her, but instead are for actions which breach the rules of the House or which offend an MP or MPs. Where these apologies are made as personal statements, as most are (40/56), the participation structure looks something like that in Figure 4.

[[[INSERT FIG4 HERE]]]

Figure 4: Participant structure in 'Personal statement' apologies

Some apologies are made as *points of order* instead of personal statements. This means that they are made after regular business – such a debates or question sessions – by catching The Speaker's attention. These apologies usually come quite quickly after the offence has occurred (usually less than 24 hours after it) and are often used to correct the record. Apologies made in this way are not scrutinised by The Speaker, can be made spontaneously (though are often written and read aloud) and can be commented upon by members afterwards. The participants in these apologies are similar to that shown in Figure 4, with the exception that The Speaker no longer contributes to the rôle of author, and if the apology is made very shortly after the offence, it may be the case that the MP's advisors also do not feature in that rôle.

21

The effects of having an addressee who is not necessarily the 'victim' at whom the apology is directed (the 'apologisee') can be seen in the low rates of usage of particular apology strategies, which will be discussed further in the following section (cf. §5.3 in particular).

5   Results

In this section I share the findings from the analysis of 56 apologies performed on the floor of the House of Commons.   My focus in this work was on instances of statements made in Parliament which had the principal aim of carrying out an apology. As a consequence, these 56 apologies are not the sum of all apologies ever made in the House and a large number of *adhoc* apologies which appear in other parliamentary contributions are not analysed. A parliamentary briefing note (House of Commons Information Office, 2012) provides a list of statements which had the purpose of apologising in the House of Commons since 1979.   Recordings of the statements listed in the document were then obtained from the Parliamentary Recordings Unit.   Six of the statements found in the list were not included in the analysis either because they are non-performative in nature (i.e. they only reported a previous apology, rather than actually carrying out an apology) or because the list inaccurately records them as oral statements when they were in fact letters sent to the Speaker. As noted previously, each apology was transcribed from these recordings to avoid reliance on the Hansard report since this ''corrects' the utterances of members of parliament' (Chilton, 2004:94) and thus may not give accurate information on MPs' apologising strategies.   These transcripts were then coded for the strategies discussed in section 3. I first present global results for all MPs, comparing these to those found in everyday conversation and I then show what, if any, effect the nature of the offence has on the form of the apology.

5.1   Overall results

Table 2 shows the frequency with which MPs use each of the apology strategies discussed in section 3, as well how frequently the strategies are used   in   the   average   apology.

22

Apology strategy	Total	Average/ apology	Broad category average
Ai *Performative IFID*	34	0.61	0.84
Aii *Commissive + 'apology' as direct object*	13	0.23	
Bi *An expression of regret*	20	0.36	1.11
Bii *A request for forgiveness*	3	0.05	
Biii *A statement of desire*	35	0.63	
Biv *A statement of obligation*	4	0.07	
Ci *Explanation, account, or excuse*	21	0.38	2.03
Cii *Acceptance of blame*	22	0.39	
Ciii *Expression of self-deficiency*	17	0.30	
Civ *Recognition of H's entitlement to apology*	9	0.16	
Cv *Expression of lack of intent*	26	0.46	
Cvi *An offer of repair*	16	0.29	
Cvii *A statement of non-recurrence*	3	0.05	
Total	*223*	*3.98*	*3.98*

Table 2: MPs use of each apology strategy

Looking firstly at the totals, we find that MPs are often much more fulsome in their parliamentary apologies than they presumably would be in their lives outside of politics. In her study of naturally occurring apologies, Holmes (1989:199) found that speakers used 295 apology strategies in 183 apologies – that is the mean apology contained roughly 1.6 apology strategies. The mean apology on the floor of the House of Commons utilised more than twice that, with the average MP using 3.98 apology strategies in their apologies.

23

This suggests that MPs either feel it necessary, or simply wish to be fulsome in their apologies. I would suggest that this fulsomeness derives from the lack of uptake for apologies made in Parliament. Whilst in routine conversation speakers receive instant feedback on whether their apology has been accepted, parliamentary apologies are most often heard in silence and are infrequently responded to. As a result a speaker must ensure she 'covers all bases' in her apology for it to receive the best possible reception.

Also noticeable in the results is the relatively high rate of 'explicit' apologies involving the performative 'to apologise' or a nominal formulation derived from it. This is in sharp contrast with everyday conversation where 'apologise' was found to be disfavoured in four major studies (Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Owen, 1983; Holmes, 1990 and Meier, 1992). We can attribute this low frequency in 'normal' talk to the 'formal sounding' (Fraser, 1981:268) nature of this sort of utterance. Indeed, using an IFID for many speech acts in regular conversation can seem stilted and oddly distant (consider an utterance like: 'I request that you open the window' *vs.* 'Would you open the window?' for the speech act of requesting). Whilst this distance is usually inappropriate, it is perfectly acceptable in the House of Commons where distance/deference is embedded in the interactional rules discussed in the previous section.

Strategies which tend to be avoided (that is, we find fewer than ten instances of their use) are Bii (a request for forgiveness), Biv (a statement of obligation to apologise), Cvii (a statement of non-recurrence), and Civ (Recognition of H's entitlement to an apology). The latter will be discussed further in section 5.3 on the influence of participation structure in apologies. As for the first three, I would suggest that requests for forgiveness are disfavoured for two reasons. The first is that such a request places a burden upon the hearer; instead of merely having to listen to an apology, he is having to make a decision on whether or not to forgive the speaker. Being burdened in this way is an additional face-threatening act. Secondly, directly asking for forgiveness strikes me as being somewhat desperate, which I doubt is a characteristic the average MP would wish to convey. An MP may avoid stating that she is

24

obliged to apologise because it could give the impression that she is only doing so out of obligation and under duress – rather than because she genuinely feels regret. Finally, one could cynically suggest that MPs shun pledges of non-recurrence for fear that their future actions will be more intensely scrutinised by the press and public to 'check up' on such a pledge. Tellingly, Keith Vaz and Jonathan Sayeed's apologies for financial misdemeanours which both employed strategies Bii and Biv have been described as 'ill-judged' and 'blatantly counterfeit' (Flynn, 2012:208). Whilst other factors may have contributed to this impression, the use of these strategies are likely to have played a rôle.

Aside from the results shown in Table 2, another noticeable difference in politicians' apology behaviour is the presence of a detailed description of the offence which is being apologised for, which can be found in each of the 56 apologies in the corpus (a description of the offence is different from strategy Ci – account, explanation or excuse – which gives reasons for why the offence happened, the description instead merely restates what the offence was). There are obvious contextual explanations for this – a description is (usually) absent in everyday conversation because the parties involved in the apology tend to know what the offence was, since, on the whole, an apology *directly* follows (or in some cases precedes) the committing of the offensive act. Apologies in the House of Commons, in contrast, not infrequently come some time after the offence (for instance, in this corpus Stephen Byers' apology for providing inaccurate information came almost four years after the incident occurred). In such situations there is a need for speakers to 'refresh the memory' of hearers about what triggered the need for the apology. Furthermore, the extra participants in a Commons apology also dictate the need for a description of the events leading up to it – for instance not all members present for Michael Portillo's apology for failing to remind the House of his financial interests in a previous debate will have been present at the time this misdemeanour occurred and may not have been aware of it at all. In this instance, they need 'filling in' about these events for them to be cogent recipients of the apology. The same is also true for members of the public

25

who are ratified overhearers and who are even less likely to be aware of the events which led up to the parliamentary apology. The presence of this description of the offence may also be explained by a more underhand motivation. By choosing to describe their actions, MPs can do so on their own terms[15], which gives them the opportunity to delimit the scale and severity of their offence. Consider the following extract:

> (12) **Malcolm Wicks** (20/05/2003; vol. 405, col. 861): […] a press .hh release was prepared with the intention that it would be sent out after the written statement had been issued (.) i <u>very</u> much regret that the press release was mis- mistakenly issued last night […]

Here the minister apologises for the offence which he defines as being the premature release of a press release. However, the actual action which led to his having to apologise was more serious than that what he describes. In fact, it was not simply a summary of the statement which was given to the press before details were given to Parliament, but instead the *whole* statement was leaked to the press so that word-for-word quotes appeared in the morning papers before MPs had time to scrutinise the minister's statement – a much graver discourtesy than Minister Wicks acknowledges. Here one can see that descriptions of offences have the potential to downplay the severity of such actions – this aspect of parliamentary apologies deserves further investigation, which I will provide in future work.

A further strategy found in some of the parliamentary apologies (12 instances in 10 of the 56 apologies) which is seemingly absent in routine conversation is the announcement of a previous apology or intention to apologise again (usually in person). Examples 13 and 14 highlight this strategy:

> (13) **Tony Baldry** (23/03/2000; vol. 346, col. 1121): […] this was clearly an error of judgement on my part for which i have already apologised

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[15] Though they must bear in mind that The Speaker has to approve their statement, if they are apologising by way of a personal statement.

<u>unreservedly</u> in person to the committee for standards and privileges […]

(14) **Peter Snape** (07/02/1984; vol. 53 col. 772): […] i intend to communicate that view and also an apology to the general manager of british rail southern region today.

I would venture that politicians adopt this strategy as it shows that they are not averse to apologising and that their doing so in person may indicate the seriousness of the regret that they feel for their offensive action(s). This further exemplifies MPs' desire to be as fulsome as possible in their apologies.

5.2   Influence of offence type

Holmes (1989:201) rightly suggests that 'the type of offence which appears to require remedial work' seems to be a major factor in influencing how we apologise. The type of offences which require remedial work in the House of Commons clearly differ from those found in everyday conversation, although there is some overlap with 'talk offences' such as insulting or criticising someone occurring in both discourse domains. Looking carefully at the offences which required an apology in the House of Commons we find the following groups of infractions (numbers in brackets indicate the frequency of such apologies in the corpus):

i)   Insulting/criticising another MP/MPs (16)

ii)   Misleading/providing incorrect information to the House (5)

iii)   Breaching a parliamentary convention (e.g. not telling another MP that he would be mentioned in one's speech; leaking a report) (14)

iv)   Financial irregularities/non-declaration of financial interests (18)

Three other apologies did not fit into any of these categories and did not form a homogenous grouping themselves (those apologies were for: hiring an assistant deemed a security risk; seeking out a sexual encounter in a public place; and damaging The Speaker's chair). These apologies were not

27

included in this analysis. Table 3 shows the average frequencies of the various strategies for the apologies in each of the offence categories outlined above (raw figures are given in brackets).

		Offence type			
		Insulting an MP/MPs	Misleading the House	Breaching a convention	Financial irregularities
Apology strategy	Ai *Performative IFID*	0.25 (4)	0.00 (0)	0.57 (8)	1.17 (21)
	Aii *Commissive + 'apology' as direct object*	0.13 (2)	0.80 (4)	0.14 (2)	0.28 (5)
	Bi *An expression of regret*	0.19 (3)	0.60 (3)	0.43 (6)	0.44 (8)
	Bii *A request for forgiveness*	0.06 (1)	0.20 (1)	0.00 (0)	0.06 (1)
	Biii *A statement of desire*	0.81 (13)	0.20 (1)	0.71 (10)	0.50 (9)
	Biv *A statement of obligation*	0.06 (1)	0.00 (0)	0.07 (1)	0.06 (1)
	Ci *Explanation, account, or excuse*	0.44 (7)	1.00 (5)	0.36 (5)	0.17 (3)
	Cii *Acceptance of blame*	0.06 (1)	0.20 (1)	0.36 (5)	0.83 (15)
	Ciii *Expression of self-deficiency*	0.13 (2)	0.00 (0)	0.07 (1)	0.72 (13)
	Civ *Recognition of H's entitlement to apology*	0.31 (5)	0.20 (1)	0.14 (2)	0.06 (1)
	Cv *Expression of lack of intent*	0.00 (0)	0.60 (3)	0.43 (6)	0.83 (15)
	Cvi *An offer of repair*	0.69 (11)	0.00 (0)	0.07 (1)	0.22 (4)
	Cvii *A statement of non-recurrence*	0.00 (0)	0.00 (0)	0.14 (2)	0.00 (0)
	Total	*3.13 (50)*	*3.80 (19)*	*3.50 (49)*	*5.33 (96)*

Table 3: The effect of offence type on apology strategy usage

Taking the results for the total number of strategies used in each apology, we find a large discrepancy between apologies made for financial irregularities

28

and all of the other offence types. MPs apologising for wrong claims on expenses or not declaring a financial interest use roughly two apology strategies more in their speeches in parliament than does an MP apologising for insulting or criticising a fellow member. Olshtain's (1989:163) finding that Hebrew speakers tend to 'intensify the expression of apology' by using more apology strategies when apologising for offences which they consider more serious seem also to be the case for British politicians and their apologies. Of the offences for which apologies were given in the House of Commons, it is certainly the case that financial misdemeanours have the worst possible outcome for MPs (David Laws was forced to resign as a Cabinet minister for his expenses claims, a number of MPs were not given the opportunity to stand for re-election because of their financial irregularities and still more were the subject of highly critical media attention). Because of the 'high stakes' involved when it comes to offences of this type, I think MPs feel it necessary to be viewed as being as apologetic as possible, in the hope that this regretful and contrite demeanour saves them from the worst punishments which can be meted out either by the parliamentary authorities or the press. (Whether or not this strategy is successful is another matter entirely).

This 'high-stakes' element could also help to explain the very high rates of explicit apology strategies (category A) for expenses abuses. My suggestion for MPs using more explicit strategies for the most serious of the offences is that they want to be certain that their utterance is interpreted as an apology and using strategies from category A gives them a fair chance of achieving this. On the face of it, this goes against Bergmann and Kasper's (1993) finding that speakers produce more IFIDs for *less* serious offences, but it must be noted that I classify far fewer verbs as IFIDs than they do, which may explain this discrepancy.

At the other end of the scale, apologies for insulting or criticising another MP are the least fulsome of those in the corpus (though still more fulsome than apologies in everyday conversation based on Holmes (1989) figures). It is probable that these apologies are less detailed because MPs expect some

29

'rough and tumble' in the chamber, such that criticisms and insults are to some extent part and parcel of the parliamentary experience (see Murphy (forthcoming) for a discussion of aggressive linguistic behaviour in this arena). Indeed, the backbench MP, Paul Flynn, in his instructional book 'How to be an MP' actively encourages MPs to be critical and insulting of one another in a section entitled 'How to cultivate enemies' (Flynn, 2012:190). Not only that, but the repercussions of insulting a member are fairly limited – whilst there may be some damage to the personal relationship between the MPs (if one existed), as long as the offender is seen to apologise then she will face no further punishment from The Speaker.

Looking at some other strategies more briefly, we find that explanations and accounts (Ci) form a large part of apologies for misleading the House of Commons. An MP would not wish to get a reputation for being untrustworthy in what she has to say and as a result needs to explain why any misleading or inaccurate information was provided to the House. This need also explains why an expression of a lack of intent (Cv) is often used in these apologies – inadvertence in misleading the House should hopefully absolve the MP of the suggestion that she is unreliable.

It is worth mentioning that an offer of repair (Cvi) mainly comes for the offence of insulting or criticising another MP. The reason for this is that repair is easy to provide for such offences – one need only 'withdraw' the insult or criticism, which is relatively easy when compared with what one would have to do to repair the other offences (e.g. paying back large sums of money in the case of financial wrongdoing).

The variation in MPs' readiness to accept the blame (Cii) seems also to be linked to the offence type. It is found only once in each of the categories of insulting an MP or misleading the House, but appears in nearly every apology for financial wrongdoing. I would suggest that accepting blame is used rarely when one has misled the House because to do so would tacitly acknowledge that one is untrustworthy. Another explanation of this relates to the media

30

coverage received by certain apologies. A great deal of media attention is placed on MPs' financial affairs and the aftermath of an MP being caught in wrongdoing, whereas less coverage is devoted to seemingly arcane matters of breaching parliamentary procedure, or issues which relate only to the 'Westminster bubble' such as insults in the chamber. In the case of the latter two offence types, an MP's words are less likely to be heavily scrutinised by the press and so the particularly face-damaging act of explicitly accepting blame need not be carried out for her apology to be viewed as acceptable. The MP apologising for expenses troubles is likely to encounter more scrutiny (frequently these apologies are broadcast on local news programmes, and in the case of high profile MPs, e.g. Cabinet Ministers David Laws or Jacqui Smith, are covered in the national media). In this case, the MP does not want to appear to be 'passing the buck' in any way and thus a strategy of accepting the blame seems a sensible way of appearing contrite and fully apologetic.

To conclude this discussion of the effect of the offence type on apology strategies, I would suggest that it is not necessarily the seriousness of the transgression which influences the apology strategies selected by the apologiser as Bergmann and Kasper (1993) argued. Whilst this *may* explain the high frequency of explicit apology strategies, I think it is the nature of the offence which accounts for the presence or absence of other strategies. For instance, apologisers cannot easily express a lack of intent when apologising for insulting someone (or at least not without sounding dishonest) and it is this fact that explains its absence, not that the offence is viewed more or less seriously. Moreover, offering repair when one has misled the House is not really feasible – providing the correct information during the apology does not expunge the misleading information from the record and there is nothing tangible that an MP can offer to 'undo' the damage. A consideration of the context of a transgression needs, therefore, to be primary in our analyses.

5.3   The rôle of participation structure

Participation structure influences the form of parliamentary apologies in a number of ways. The first is that the addressee (The Speaker) is always

31

acknowledged at the start of the apology statement. This acknowledgement usually takes the form of asking permission from The Speaker to make a personal statement, or thanking him/her for calling the apologiser to contribute.

An MP's constituents, who are always potential ratified overhearers to the apology, can be invoked directly in the apology, which upgrades their status to recipients. This can be found in the apologies for financial misdemeanours (7 of the 18 apologies for this offence type), but is not found in the any of the other apologies. In cases where constituents are mentioned, they are not just apology recipients, but are often the subject of flattery from the apologiser. This can be seen the following example:

(15) **Harry Cohen** (29/01/2010; vol. 504 col. 1044): […] two further apologies, (0.3) firstly to my constituents, (0.3) the good people of leyton and wanstead do not deserve to have their faith in their parliamentary representative so severely shaken (.) they deserve the best untarnished representation also the best of my efforts for the last twenty seven years has been to take up their cases including of injustice to them in the last ten months of this intensive inquiry into me i've had to give a lot of time to my own case when i would have much preferred to have been dealing with theirs. […]

That constituents are not recipients of apologies for other offences is clearly partly to do with the nature of the offence. Constituents are not the offended party when an MP has leaked a statement to the press, or insult another MP, for instance. But the consequences of those actions can impinge upon the constituents in ways similar to those highlighted by Harry Cohen in (15). As a result, it is plausible for an MP to apologise to her constituents if she faces suspension from the House for insulting another MP, because this will impact upon the quality of representation that she can provide. That MPs do not invoke constituents in apologies for these other offences may be explained by what I have said previously about the mediated nature of some the apologies.

32

Given that the apologies for financial misdemeanours are more likely to be seen by an MP's constituents, it makes sense for her to apologise to them directly.

That the hearer rôle is split between the addressee and recipient has implications for the viability of one of the apology strategies in particular. *Recognising that the hearer is entitled to an apology* (Civ) is made more difficult because the hearers number more than simply the party who was offended. Acknowledging that the hearer is entitled to an apology is, I would suggest, more difficult to achieve in Parliament where the role of hearer does not (automatically) correspond to the offended party (i.e. the person(s) who would be deserving of the apology). Moreover, because MPs cannot refer to each other by name and instead are required to use the name of an MP's constituency or their job title to identify the particular target for their utterance (see Ilie 2010: 893ff for more on this), this makes picking out an individual referent (in this case, the offended party) more difficult. This is, perhaps, further motivation for avoiding this strategy.

The complexity of the participation structure can be (and is) exploited by some apologisers. The case of George Galloway apologising for calling Ben Bradshaw a liar is a good example of this. In a debate in Westminster Hall (an additional debating chamber used to allow non-partisan adjournment debates), Galloway was described by Minister Ben Bradshaw as 'not just an apologist, but a mouthpiece, for the Iraqi regime over many years' (an insult for which Bradshaw later apologised). In response to this accusation, Mr. Galloway called the Minister 'a liar' and refused to withdraw the insult. In his apology, the MP said the following:

(16) **George Galloway** (07/03/2002; vol. 381 col. 450): [...] in the debate in westminster hall yesterday exchanges became <u>frank</u> (.) to the point of being unacceptable and i should like to apologise to the chairman my honourable friend the deputy speaker in westminster hall (.) hh to you mister speaker and to the house for my part in that. [...] i would like to

33

say i am sorry for stepping out of parliamentary order and for my failure to withdraw my remarks when asked to do so by the deputy speaker and now to so withdraw them

Here, Galloway highlights a number of recipients for his apology: the Deputy Speaker who was in the chair and whose order to withdraw the insult was ignored; The Speaker who is ultimately responsible for the orderly conduct of the House, despite him not being present at the time of the offence; and the House which is a metonym for those who work in and for the House of Commons. Notice, however, that Galloway does *not* apologise directly to the offended party, Ben Bradshaw. This refusal to acknowledge the offended party suggests that Galloway is not sorry for the (potential) damage done to the 'victim' but instead is sorry simply for the breach of the parliamentary norm (and the possible negative effects this could have on his speaking rights in the House).

This section has described but a few ways in which the complex participation framework in the House of Commons impacts upon the form of an MP's apology. The MP frequently has in mind not only who is present in the chamber when she is apologising, but also who may access her apology after it is delivered. Further dissemination and scrutiny of an apology may lead to an MP ensuring that those who are potential overhearers are 'promoted' to recipients. Also indicative of an MP's attitude towards performing an apology (her reticence or otherwise to do so) is the absence of recipients who ought to be there, for instance the offended party.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to develop a set of felicity conditions which accurately captures a full range of apologies, both public and private. I have also provided some refinements to the CCSARP project's taxonomy of apology strategies which I believe are necessary to describe parliamentary apologies, but are also applicable more widely. The nature of participation structure in the House of Commons has been explored, I believe, for the first

34

time. The complexity of that participation structure has been shown to affect politicians' apologies, by limiting the acceptability of the strategy of accepting the hearer's entitlement to an apology. The fulsomeness of MPs' apologies has also been highlighted and the effect that offence type has on the detail of these statements has also been noted. There still remains a great deal of work to be done on parliamentary apologies, not least the issue I mentioned regarding how an MP's description of an offence gives her the opportunity to mitigate the seriousness of her transgression. The extent of mitigation more generally in political apologies needs to be further explored, too, as does the employment of paralinguistic features (tone of voice, gaze, body language, etc.), which seems to have a significant part to play in whether an apology is seen as genuine. Thus, for instance, Flynn (2012:207) notes that 'Derek Conway's personal statement accepted full guilt for employing a relative. But his confident smiling demeanour showed no evidence of remorse'. What the paralinguistic components are in a 'good' apology merits detailed investigation. The taxonomy I have employed could also be used to see if apologies in the U.K. Parliament are similar to apologies found in parliaments throughout the world.

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36

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38

Figure

Speaker	Hearer
Offender	Offended Party

Figure
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| | | Addressee |
| | | The Speaker |

script the apology →

| Principal |
| Animator |
| Sir Anthony Meyer (Offender) |

apologises for offence →

| Recipients |
| Speaker Weatherill (Directly Offended Party); The House (Indirectly Offended Party). |

| Author |
| Sir Anthony Meyer; Meyer's advisors; Speaker Weatherill. |

| Ratified overhearers |
| Clerks of the House; Visitors in the Strangers' Gallery; Television viewers. |

Figure