Remorseless apology: Analysing a political letter
Joseph Kimoga *
Makerere University, School of Education, East African Institute of Higher Education Studies & Development, Uganda

A R T I C L E   I N F O

Article history:
Received 27 August 2007
Received in revised form 16 December 2009
Accepted 6 February 2010

Keywords:
Apology
Politics
Power
Precedence

A B S T R A C T

Why should one say sorry if one does not feel any guilt? The phrase ‘remorseless apology’ comprises terms that seem semantically conflicting in as far as ‘apology’ is regarded as a moral activity. I use the phrase with the contention that sometimes ‘apology’ could be a pretentious activity. Where pretence reigns, sincerity of action is put to question. In most instances, apology as an act uses language as a tool. Through a critical study of the hidden meanings and implications in the language of the political reiteration by the President of Uganda1 to the Chief Justice over the High Court2 siege, I highlight that some ‘political’ apologies are remorseless. In the context of this study, the President uses a ‘political’ apology to minimise the position of the Judiciary and to assert power/precedence over the Judiciary. The objective of this article is to raise awareness to the language used in political or non-political apologies, in order to ascertain whether the apology is genuine or deceptive.

1. Introduction

In this article, “Remorseless apology: Analysing a political letter”, I analyse the concept of apology and how it is variously used. My analysis is a contribution to studying the act of apology in a political discourse. I do the analysis based on a letter written by the Ugandan President to the country’s Chief Justice as the leader of the Judiciary, in response to the tense situation caused by the event of the High Court siege. In the sections down the line, I explain the details of this event and then discuss the content of the letter. I analyse the content of the letter as a linguist, drawing on approaches of pragmatics. My findings could as well be of interest to any critical member of the public.

1.1. The Ugandan structure of governance

In Uganda, as in many other countries, there are three major arms of government – the Executive, Judiciary and the Legislature (Parliament).

- The Executive is the arm of government mandated by the constitution to carry out the administrative functions of the state. The Executive is headed by the Prime Minister and comprises Cabinet Ministers. They are members of the ruling party and most of them are also members of parliament.
Parliament is the arm of government that is charged with the duty of making laws for the good governance of society. It consists of members most of whom are elected through the ballot box except a few special interest groups like the army, women, youth and the disabled whose representatives are elected by Electoral Colleges.

The Judiciary is the third arm of government, and its role is to interpret the law and its application by rules or discretion to the facts of each particular case. It is formed by the various courts of judicature, which include the magisterial courts, High Court, Court of Appeal (Constitutional Court)\(^3\) and the Supreme Court. The Judiciary is headed by the Chief Justice (Mahoro, 2006; Uganda, 1995).

The three arms are equal in power and make up one government. Together they assist the President in managing the State.

The President, as Head of State, is above all the three arms of government and holds supreme power over them. For example, the President appoints the cabinet; the judges too are appointed by the President on recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission and approval of Parliament (Mahoro, 2006).

In Uganda, the President is the head of the ruling party, National Resistance Movement (NRM). Since 1986 when the party assumed power until the referendum on a political system suggested multi-party politics in 2005, the system of governance used by the NRM party was movement type in which all citizens of Uganda were regarded as members of one party, and no other party existed. The party came into power through a guerrilla war fought by the National Resistance Army (NRA). In the 1995 Constitution of Uganda (Uganda, 1995), the NRA became a national defence force and was named Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF). As Head of State, the President is the Commander-In-Chief of the UPDF. And as Commander-In-Chief, he takes full charge over the actions of the UPDF.

### 1.2. The event – Court siege

Word about the Peoples Redemption Army (PRA) began about early 2005. The PRA was perceived as a rebel group fighting against civil law. However, the Court Martial\(^4\) too had interest in the case with reason that the suspects were in possession of illegal arms at the time of their arrest, and thus were to be tried according to martial law. The struggle between the two courts necessitated the intervention of the Constitutional Court which decided in favour of the High Court to try the suspects. The Court Martial did not concede loss of charge and persistently continued trying the suspects. For sometime, the PRA suspects were tried simultaneously in both courts. Since the suspects were viewed by the High Court as qualifying for Court bail, it was granted to them. But before the bailed individuals left the High Court premises, they were immediately re-arrested by a security organ.

The security organ’s action of re-arresting the bailed persons in the High Court premises was popularly regarded as a Court siege. The Judiciary put down tools and all courts of justice in the country closed. The role played by the media in this situation has to be underlined. In Uganda, the media, mainly newspapers and radios, play a great role in transmitting information widely as well as influencing people’s political and social thoughts. Most of the media, be they or not founded and funded by particular political parties, are politically biased in their transmission. The media, mainly in favour of the opposition, endeavoured to convince the public that the Court siege was an action of attack on the Judiciary by a security organ and ruling party (original owner of the organ) and it warranted an apology. Amidst the tense situation, the President wrote a letter to the Chief Justice, the head of the Judiciary who is the main addressee (section 1.3). Copying the letter to other persons is a question of political protocol beyond my interest. In Uganda it is common that the President’s response to any situation that has caused public attention is distributed by the President’s secretariat to the major national media for

---

\(^3\) Constitutional Court or Court of Appeal was established by the 1995 Constitution. It is an intermediary between the Supreme Court and the High Court and has appellate jurisdiction over the High Court. It is not a Court of first instance and has no original jurisdiction, except when it sits as a Constitutional Court to hear constitutional cases. The Court of Appeal consists of the Deputy Chief Justice and such number of Justices of Appeal not being less than seven as Parliament may by law prescribe.

\(^4\) Court Martial is equal to High Court in judicial powers. The administration of justice in Court Martial is similar to that of High Court. However, it does not base on civil law but martial law. Court Martial does not try citizens but soldiers and members of other security organs.
دریافت فوری
متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات