# Analysing the Unintended Implicature in Corporate Apologies after Product Failures

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## Abstract
The current research examines the phenomenon of unintended implicature (i.e., an accidental implied meaning not intended by the speaker) in corporate post-failure apologies. While such apologies are typically communicated to express regret, accept responsibility, and save companies' image, they often fail to meet public expectations, resulting in negative perception or reputational damage. The study, adopting frameworks from CDA, Relevance Theory, and Apology Theory, explores a number of corporate apologetic statements from well-known companies including Facebook, Samsung, and United Airlines etc. between 2010 and 2024. The analysis shows that linguistic strategies such as euphemism, passivization, abstraction, and hedging frequently contribute to semantic ambiguity. These linguistic choices are manipulated to conceal agency and reduce clarity.

As a result, audiences may perceive the message in ways unanticipated by the company, such as believing the company is avoiding blame, being insincere, or refusing to take responsibility. By adopting a qualitative methodology, the study demonstrates how form and context interact to shape public perception of institutional sincerity. The findings highlight the critical role of language in managing organizational crises. They also emphasize the need for clearer, more accountable, and context-sensitive communication in institutional settings.

**Key words:** CDA, pragmatics unintended implicature, corporate apologies, Relevance Theory, product failure

## 1. Introduction
Corporate apologies, in today's highly mediated business contexts, have become essential tools for managing crises. Such apologetic statements often issued after product failures, that threaten public safety, consumer trust, or brand reputation. Corporate expect such apologies to perform multiple communicative functions: 1) to acknowledge wrongdoing, 2) to express regret, 3) to accept responsibility, and 4) to assure stakeholders that corrective actions will follow. However, even though corporate apologies are commonly used and follow standard formats, many do not fulfill public

expectations. Instead, they frequently provoke skepticism, public criticism, or additional harm to the company's reputation.

One of the main reasons for this disconnect is not the absence of an apology, but rather the way it is communicated and inferred by the audience. Public audiences interpret more than just the explicit content of corporate statements. They also draw conclusions based on what is implied, omitted, or ambiguously phrased. Often, corporate apologies unintentionally convey messages that imply insincerity, deflection of blame, or a refusal to take full responsibility, i.e., meanings that might contradict the company's intended message. Such unintended implicature can enormously weaken the effectiveness of the apology, leading to public distrust and prolonging the crisis (Coombs, 2007; Lee & Chung, 2012; Scher & Darley, 1997).

The current study of this type of implicature is especially relevant in a context whereby stakeholders demand clarity, ethical behavior, and authentic accountability. As corporate communication becomes more strategically constructed and legally aware, the potential for misunderstanding increases. Strategic choices in apologetic phrasing can have significant consequences for public perception. That is, one or more undesired messages can be encoded together with the intended one(s), with which the illocutionary force of the apology can be weakened. In other words, while not part of the core message, these "communicative residues" are an inevitable consequence of linguistic choices. Much like the residual side effects of medication, these elements are not the primary communicative intent but are nonetheless carried along with the message.

Critical-pragmatic frameworks help us understand how this blending of acts produces conflicting perlocutionary effects; namely, some audiences may interpret the statement as responsible, yet others might doubt the incredibility of the announcer (Mey, 2001; Verschueren, 2012). Thus, hybrid speech acts underscore the contradiction between the rhetorical function of apologies and the institutional desire to avoid accountability, all of which offer significant and valuable observations about the discursive dynamics of corporate apologetic language.

While an abundance of research has addressed the pragmatics of intended implicature in corporate discourse, little to no attention has been given to the conflict between the intended illocutionary force and the unintended implicatures. As such, undesired inferences that pragmatically undermine communicative intent may arise, leading to misinterpretation, reputational damage, and a weakening of the intended illocutionary force.

Understanding this phenomenon requires analytical tools that account not only for speaker intention but also for audience interpretation, particularly when the surface structure of the message conceals deeper discursive maneuvers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Corporate Apologies

Apologies are useful communicative acts companies perform to recover after a crisis. When a company fails to meet the public demands, by offering unreliable, poor-quality, dangerous products or behaving unethically, a clear and sincere apology can help repair the harm (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). It demonstrates to the public that companies take responsibility and aim to rectify the situation. This can rebuild trust with essential parties, including customers, investors, and employees. In this way, an apology helps corporates protect their reputation and improve their relationship with the people most vital to their interests.

Scholars such as Kim et al. (2009) state that a corporate apology act to be felicitous of depends not only on its content but also on how it aligns with the type of trust violated, whether it concerns competence or integrity. They argue that mismatched or vague apologies can lead to increased public skepticism and further erode trust.

Stakeholders, executives and corporate leaders view corrective actions by means of apology, as Bavelas (2004) states, may "turn out not to be a smooth path but one full of obstacles" (2004, p. 5). Corporates carefully scrutinize their apologetic messages not only in terms of their literal meaning but also what might these messages unintentionally imply. If a company's message is poorly worded or misleading, it may be interpreted by the public in a way that prompts legal complaints or exposes the company to legal liability. Recent works including Lewicki and Polin (2012) and Cheng (2020) emphasize that a corporate reconciliatory acts often prioritize protecting their image or reputation over moral repair. This would result in public skepticism and accusations of insincerity. According to Cheng (2020), the concept of *strategic ambiguity* refers to the intentional use of vague or euphemistic language by stakeholders to protect institutional interests while still appearing apologetic. Yet this deliberate vagueness can incur negative consequences, as audiences, particularly in highly visible, digital spaces, are increasingly sensitive to language that suggests avoidance of responsibility or blame-shifting. In such viral, mediated environments, responses are rapid and subject to immediate public scrutiny (Page, 2014).

Davis (2016) argues that public apologies are evaluated in both relational and symbolic terms. Their effectiveness depends on meeting audience expectations for emotional genuineness and ethical responsibility. When an apologetic act fails to clearly acknowledge harm or accept responsibility, they risk being dismissed as pseudo-apologies, statements that express remorse superficially without offering genuine accountability or tangible efforts to make amends (Lewicki, Polin, and Lount, 2016).This evolving understanding of apology as both a discursive act and a social negotiation suggests that corporate apologies must go beyond mere performative routines to demonstrate genuine engagement with public harm, institutional accountability, and reparative action.

Taft's (2000) typology categorizes apologies as full, partial, or pseudo, depending on the extent to which key elements, i.e., acknowledgment, acceptance of responsibility, expression of remorse, and offer of redress, are included.

Davis (2016) views public apologies as symbolic acts through which institutions seek to address violations of ethical norms. Rather than merely restoring public trust, such apologies are viewed as public rituals that must conform to commonly held standards of sincerity and accountability in order to be considered credible. When apologies fail to meet these standards, they risk worsening the crises and further damaging the apologizer's reputation (Benoit, 1997).

## 2.2. Critical-pragmatics and Corporate Messaging

Several studies have contributed to the domain of this research. These include Ogiermann's (2009) view I which he emphasizes that for an apology to be considered appropriate and effective, it must meet specific felicity conditions. Failure to fulfill these conditions can result in the apology being perceived as insincere or inadequate. Similarly, Murphy (2015) revisits the concept of apologies as speech acts and underscores the importance of fulfilling felicity conditions to ensure their success. He notes that apologies failing to meet these conditions may not achieve their intended perlocutionary effects, such as restoring trust or repairing relationships.

In the context of corporate communication, an apology functions as a remedial act aimed at redressing a face-threatening act (FTA) caused by the company's prior offense or harm. A well-formed apology serves to mitigate negative face damage by acknowledging the imposition or harm done, and to restore positive face by expressing solidarity, regret, or concern for the aggrieved party. For instance, in 2014, General Motors (GM) faced a

significant crisis due to faulty ignition switches in several vehicle models, leading to numerous accidents and fatalities. CEO Mary Barra issued a public apology, stating:

"*I am deeply sorry to everyone who has been affected by this recall, especially to the families and friends of those who lost their lives or were injured.*"

This apology demonstrates how a well-structured statement can address both negative and positive face needs, acknowledging harm and expressing empathy. When an apology fails to explicitly assume responsibility or uses hedged and impersonal language, it risks intensifying the FTA instead of repairing it. Thus, the illocutionary force of an apology is not only evaluated in terms of its semantic content but also its correspondence to with the socio-pragmatic norms of face respect and relational redress (Benoit, 1995 and Cheng, 2020).

Critical Discourse Analysis offers a valuable approach for analyzing corporate apologies as texts shaped by underlying ideologies. According to Wodak (2009), institutional discourse is never neutral; it is shaped by power asymmetries and designed to preserve legitimacy. However, in crisis situations, corporate language becomes more deferential, often marked by hedging, indirectness, and passive constructions (Fairclough, 2001). This stylistic shift is not simply a matter of politeness. It reflects a strategic repositioning in which the speaker (the corporation) adopts a lower-status position relative to the audience. As Giltrow and Stein (2009) argue, corporate apologies frequently invoke persuasive strategies (i.e., expressing regret, admitting responsibility, promising corrective action, and using humble language to appear accountable) that simulate humility in order to meet public expectations of accountability. This creates a contradiction: while the institution retains structural power, it must linguistically moderate its authoritative tone to restore public confidence. From a CDA perspective, these rhetorical choices are shaped by underlying ideologies. They help restore the institution's image while simultaneously concealing the persistent hierarchies of power.

This statement means that corporate apologies should not be viewed as simple or neutral expressions of regret. In her thesis, Beaudin (2018) employs CDA to examine public apologies across various domains, including corporate contexts. She demonstrates that these apologies are not merely spontaneous expressions of regret but are carefully constructed speech acts

influenced by broader social and institutional factors. The study highlights how apologies are shaped by:

- Institutional interests (e.g., protecting the company's legal or financial position),
- Media coverage (how the apology is reported or interpreted in the news and online), and
- Stakeholder goals (such as calming investors, satisfying regulators, or restoring consumer trust).

According to Koller and Mautner (2022), the language used in corporate communication is not objective or accidental. It is guided by ideological motives. In other words, companies carefully select their words to control public perception and maintain a positive image, even when they are accountable.

## 2.3. Relevance Theory and Inferential Processing

Successful communication depends on achieving effective relevance, where the audience can grasp the most meaningful interpretation with the least cognitive effort (Sperber and Wilson, 2004). Vague, euphemistic, or indirect language in corporate apologies increases the audience cognitive effort, as they are encouraged to derive unstated meanings through inference based on prior knowledge or assumptions. This often results in unintended implicature, such as perceptions of blame avoidance or insincerity, even when the company's intent was to express remorse and take responsibility.

This inferential gap is a rich source for unintended implicature, i.e., meaning that does not emerge from what is directly stated, but from what is left unsaid, poorly implied, or contextually inferred. For example, an apology that avoids using active voice or omits the actor responsible for the harm may trigger inferences of blame avoidance or insincerity, even if the company does not intend to convey these assumptions. Relevance Theory thus provides a cognitive-pragmatic account of how unintended meaning develops and why carefully constructed messages may be still interpreted as inadequate or manipulative (Sperber and Wilson, 2004).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

The present research paper adopts a qualitative framework to explore how unintended implicature emerges in corporate apologies following product failures. The eclectic analytical model incorporates methods from Koller and Mautner's (2022) approach to CDA, Wilson and Sperber's (2004) Relevance Theory, and Apology Theory of Lewicki, Polin, and Lount (2016) to explore

how corporate language encodes responsibility, blame-shifting, and gives rise to semantic ambiguity (i.e., language with multiple possible meanings, allowing for blame-shifting, flexible responsibility, or unintended interpretations). The goal is to provide a contextualized, deep analysis of the linguistic and pragmatic features that influence how apologies are constructed and perceived.

## 3.2 Data Collection

The researcher has gathered 10 apology statements made by companies such as Volkswagen, Samsung, and Equifax etc. during the period from 2010 to 2024. These statements were used as the main data for the study. These are selected by means of purposive sampling from publicly available materials, including official press releases, published statements on corporate websites, and public communications responding to product failure crises.

## 3.3 Analytical Framework

The qualitative analysis is grounded in eclectic model of three intersecting frameworks. First, CDA is employed to examine how discursive strategies, such as passivization, lexical abstraction, and euphemistic framing, reveal underlying power relations and institutional interests. Second, Apology Theory is used to assess whether apologies fulfill core conditions of effectiveness, including acknowledgment of wrongdoing, responsibility, remorse, and redress. Third, Relevance Theory provides a cognitive-pragmatic perspective on how under-informative or ambiguous statements create inferential gaps, leading audiences to derive meanings the speaker may not have intended. Together, these frameworks enable a layered interpretation of how linguistic form, discursive function, and pragmatic failure interact.

## 3.4 Ethical Considerations

This study analyzes publicly accessible corporate statements; therefore, it involves no human subjects and does not require formal ethical approval. However, the research maintains strict ethical standards by representing the statements accurately, contextualizing interpretations, and ensuring that all analysis respects the intent and scope of the original communications.

## 4. Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents the main findings of the study, derived from a qualitative discourse analysis of ten corporate apology statements. Each case is examined for its linguistic construction, discursive strategy, and pragmatic effect, guided by the principles of CDA, Relevance Theory, and Apology Theory. The goal is to identify how unintended implicature emerge from corporate language and affect public interpretation.

### Case 1: Samsung – Galaxy Note 7 Battery Fires (2016)

Statement: *"We are truly sorry for the discomfort and concern we have caused to our customers."*

Samsung's apology minimizes the severity of the crisis through strategic lexical abstraction, replacing concrete harm (e.g., burns, explosions, mass recalls) with softened terms like "discomfort" and "concern." These affective nominalizations abstract the nature of the failure, stripping away material specificity. The passive construction "have caused" obscures agency without directly naming the battery defect. From a CDA perspective, this language reflects a discursive strategy aimed at protecting institutional face and mitigating reputational risk by reframing the event as emotionally inconvenient rather than physically dangerous.

The lack of propositional detail forces the audience to infer the real-world consequences, increasing cognitive load and producing the unintended implicature that Samsung is evading accountability. In terms of Apology Besides, the utterance constitutes a partial apology, containing emotional appeal but lacking essential components of acknowledgment, responsibility, or restorative intent—thus weakening its persuasive and reparative force.

### Case 2: Facebook (Meta) – Cambridge Analytica Data Breach (2018)

Statement: *"We have a responsibility to protect your data, and if we can't, then we don't deserve to serve you."*

While the statement gestures toward ethical values, it avoids referencing the actual breach, employing a conditional structure that projects hypothetical responsibility ("if we can't") rather than asserting actual failure. The use of epistemic modality and conditional hedging reduces the speaker's commitment to the truth-value of the statement. This discursive choice represents an act of moral repositioning rather than admission, constructing Facebook as value-driven, while deflecting attention from its complicity in data misuse. The lack of temporal anchoring, agentive verbs, or past-tense markers results in a discursive erasure of the breach itself.

This omission triggers inferential compensation: readers must rely on prior knowledge to interpret what is unstated, often drawing the implicature that the company is avoiding a clear admission of guilt. This is a non-apology, no reference to harm, no clear act of contrition, and no restorative commitment are present, rendering it communicatively ineffective despite the seemingly reflective tone.

## Case 3: United Airlines – Passenger Removal Incident (2017)

Statement: *"I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers."*

This highly criticized apology is anchored in a euphemism, "re-accommodate", which replaces the violent forced removal of a passenger with a corporate neologism devoid of affect or specificity. The construction is agentively opaque and semantically deflective, avoiding reference to physical force or passenger distress. This represents a classic case of institutional sanitization: the corporation exerts discursive control to reshape the narrative into a logistics issue rather than a human rights violation. The use of bureaucratic lexis masks ethical wrongdoing.

The euphemism fails to meet the audience's relevance expectations; hearers must infer the real action through background knowledge, resulting in heightened public outrage due to the stark mismatch between word choice and reality. Moreover, this is a paradigmatic pseudo-apology, a formal apology frame is used, but the core act of wrongdoing is linguistically erased, violating all conditions of effective apology.

## Case 4: BP – Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill (2010)

Statement: *"We are sorry for the massive disruption it's caused to their lives."*

BP's statement employs lexical understatement through the use of "disruption" to describe one of the largest ecological disasters in history. This word acts as a softening euphemism, replacing harsher terms like "destruction," "devastation," or "loss." The passive construction "it's caused" lacks agency and fails to assign blame, reflecting a pattern of institutional distancing. CDA reveals how this lexical framing serves a damage-control function, offering a display of sympathy while strategically avoiding self-incrimination. Also, the statement generates a gap between linguistic input and contextual knowledge, leading the public to infer a lack of sincerity or acceptance of harm. The utterance shows that this as a partial apology at best, containing vague affect but no explicit acceptance of fault, no identification of victims, and no actionable commitment to restitution, rendering it inadequate as a moral repair mechanism.

## Case 5: Volkswagen – Emissions Scandal (2015)

Statement: *"We sincerely apologize for the breach of trust and are committed to making things right."*

This apology draws on abstract moral framing, "breach of trust", to describe deliberate emissions fraud. The use of metaphorical nominalization masks the concrete, measurable offense (illegal software manipulation) and reframes the

issue as a violation of sentiment rather than law. The second clause, "committed to making things right," is a future-oriented, idiomatic generalization that lacks propositional content or specifics. CDA shows this as a strategy of discursive deflection: the company centralizes trust and repair without confronting the underlying misconduct.

Such abstraction triggers inferential strain, especially among informed stakeholders who perceive a gap between expected and delivered information, resulting in implicatures of insincerity or evasion. Again, this is another case of a pseudo-apology, emotion and future action are signaled, but critical elements of direct responsibility and corrective disclosure are omitted.

## Case 6: Equifax – Data Breach (2017)

Statement: *"We apologize for the concern and frustration this may have caused."*

Equifax's apology deflects from the material breach by focusing on its emotional aftermath, "concern and frustration." It represents a shift from tangible to affective harm, signaling a metapragmatic orientation toward the audience's feelings rather than the company's wrongdoing. The modal "may" introduces epistemic uncertainty, which attenuates commitment to the reality of harm. The apology thus lacks a presupposition of actual damage, violating key expectations for factual acknowledgment.

The apologetic statement here emerges as a discursive minimization strategy, serving to soften institutional guilt and manage reputational stakes.

The reliance on modality and abstraction increases inferential demand and prompts skeptical readings, hearers must supply what is omitted, often drawing the implicature that the speaker is reluctant to admit fault. This is a weak apology lacking acknowledgment, responsibility, and redress.

## Case 7: Boeing – 737 MAX Crashes (2019)

Statement: *"We are sorry for the lives lost and are taking steps to ensure this never happens again."*

While this apology includes some expression of regret, it evades causality and fails to name the company's role. The phrase "lives lost" is passive and agentively suppressed, there is no reference to design flaws or regulatory oversight. The future-oriented clause redirects attention to action rather than responsibility.

Such a pattern reflects institutional preservation, where the company aligns with the language of restoration without addressing culpability. The vagueness in reference and structure forces readers to infer missing elements, increasing the likelihood of unintended readings as evasive or manipulative.

The utterance is a partial apology with expression of sorrow but no clear admission of failure, no naming of victims, and no concrete remedial plan.

## Case 8: Johnson & Johnson – Talc Powder Lawsuits (2020)

Statement: *"We stand behind the safety of our product and remain confident in its integrity."*

This statement is defensive rather than conciliatory, offering a denial framed in evaluative nominalizations like "safety" and "integrity." The use of "stand behind" signals corporate conviction, but avoids mention of lawsuits, evidence, or victims. The present-tense affirmation and absence of affect suggest a refusal to engage in apologetic discourse at all. CDA uncovers a clear resistance to discursive vulnerability, consistent with legal risk management.

The lack of apology or contextual grounding leads to audience-driven implicature, the public may infer bad faith, arrogance, or denial. This is a non-apology, as it fails to enter into the speech act of repair and instead reasserts institutional righteousness.

## Case 9: Peloton – Treadmill Safety Recall (2021)

Statement: *"Out of an abundance of caution, we have decided to recall the product."*

This expression frames the company's action as a voluntary, preventive measure, not as a response to consumer harm. The phrase "abundance of caution" functions as a preemptive euphemism that suggests over-responsiveness rather than necessary action. This discursive inversion of agency downplays culpability while preserving brand image. This reveals how the statement transforms the company from potential offender to responsible protector. The audience may infer a disconnect between language and real-world events, particularly when injuries and a death were documented. This results in the implicature that Peloton is masking urgency behind a posture of caution. The utterance represents a pseudo-apology framed as precaution, failing to meet sincerity and acknowledgment criteria.

## Case 10: Pepsi – Kendall Jenner Ad Controversy (2017)

Statement: *"Pepsi was trying to project a message of unity. Clearly, we missed the mark."*

This apologetic utterance focuses on corporate intentions rather than audience impact. The use of intent-based framing ("trying to project") reframes the controversy as a failed attempt at positivity rather than a misrepresentation of protest movements. "Missed the mark" is a colloquial idiom that diminishes the severity of public backlash and lacks evaluative depth. The apology is

seen as recasting a political misstep as a creative failure, thereby protecting brand ethos. The apology involves casual or conversational language which might not match the seriousness of the situation. This would in turn lead to inferences that suggest minimizing the seriousness of the wrongdoing. Apology Theory would classify this a partial or symbolic apology, where minimal remorse is expressed without addressing the offended parties or underlying ideological implications.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of ten corporate apology statements uncovered recurring discursive strategies. These include euphemism, passivization, hedging, and lexical abstraction. Consequently, the linguistic choices functioned as speaker's face-saving strategies and ideologically-driven implications, typically aimed at saving corporates' public image and redirect responsibility. Such strategies operate at the intersection of institutional image protection and public impression management. Although the surface structure of the apologies conformed to the conventional illocutionary force of expressing regret, the underlying linguistic construction diminished the perlocutionary effect.

Such formulations can trigger inferential overload, where the audience is required to derive meaning from what is left unsaid or ambiguously stated, thereby increasing the probability of pragmatic insincerity. The conflict between the institutional intention and the audience's inference reveals a discursive contradiction: while the corporation aims to appear apologetic, the linguistic form undermines the function of the apology. As such, this often leads to interpretation of evasion, strategic ambiguity, or symbolic reconciliation rather than sincere acknowledgment of responsibility.

Relevance Theory helps explain how these apologies are infelicitously communicated. When such apologies are vague or lack sufficient detail, audiences are left to exert additional cognitive effort to infer the missing information. This increased inferential load often results in skeptical interpretations, as observed in the cases of Facebook and Equifax.

Despite expressing regret, many corporate apologies lack the essential components that define a sincere and effective apology. These include clear acknowledgment of harm, taking responsibility, and an offer of reparation. Without one or more of these elements the apology risks being perceived as superficial or insincere. This incomplete form of apology can damage public trust even further and intensify the public negative perceptions instead of promoting reconciliation.

## 6. Conclusion

Unintended messages in corporate apologies often arises when vague, hedged, or euphemistic language is used. Such linguistic choices obscure agency, mitigate the severity of harm, and leave key information unstated. These apologetic statements might manifest the surface structure of an apology, i.e. expressing regret or signaling corrective intent, yet frequently fail to meet the felicity conditions of sincerity and responsibility. When felicity conditions are not fully met, the illocutionary force of the apology becomes less effective, and the perlocutionary effect shifts toward skepticism rather than reconciliation.

To achieve communicative success, corporate apologies must focus not only on what is said but also on how it is expressed. Clear, agentive, and context-sensitive language helps match the speaker's intended meaning with the audience's interpretation. This reduces the likelihood of miscommunication, helps restore public trust, and protects the company's public image.

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# تحليل التلويح غير المقصود في اعتذارات الشركات بعد فشل المنتجات

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قسم اللغة الانجليزية / كلية اللغات والعلوم الانسانية / جامعة گرميان

**مستخلص البحث:**

تتناول هذه الدراسة ظاهرة التلويح غير المقصود في الاعتذارات المؤسسية الصادرة عقب الاخفاقات في المنتجات. فعلى الرغم من أن هذه الاعتذارات تهدف عادةً إلى التعبير عن الندم، وتحمل المسؤولية، وطمأنة أصحاب المصلحة، إلا أنها غالباً ما تخفق في تلبية توقعات الجمهور، مما يؤدي إلى التشكيك أو الإضرار بالسمعة. ومن خلال الاعتماد على أطر التحليل النقدي للخطاب، ونظرية الصلة، ونظرية الاعتذار، تفحص الدراسة عشر تعابير اعتذارات مؤسسية صادرة عن شركات عالمية بين عامي 2010 و2024. ويكشف التحليل أن استراتيجيات الخطاب مثل التلطيف، والتعبير بالمبني للمجهول، والتجريد، واستخدام أدوات التحفظ تساهم بشكل متكرر في الغموض التفسيري. إذ تؤدي هذه الخيارات اللغوية إلى إخفاء الفاعل وتقليل الشفافية، مما يدفع الجمهور إلى استنتاج معانٍ قد لا تكون مقصودة من قبل الشركات، مثل التهرب من اللوم، أو عدم المصداقية، أو غياب المساءلة. وباستخدام منهج نوعي يستند إلى المنهج التداولي وتحليل الخطاب، تُظهر الدراسة كيف يتفاعل الشكل والسياق في تشكيل تصور الجمهور لمصداقية المؤسسة. وتسلط النتائج الضوء على الدور الحاسم للغة في إدارة الأزمات التنظيمية، وتؤكد الحاجة إلى تواصل مؤسسي أكثر وضوحًا وحساسية للسياق.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التحليل النقدي للخطاب، التداولية، التلويح غير المقصود، الاعتذارات المؤسسية، نظرية الصلة.