

Title	人種差別支持発言疑惑に対するトレント・ロット米国上院議員の謝罪の分析
Author(s)	バーガー, デービッド
Citation	聖学院大学論叢, 16(2): 29-46
URL	http://serve.seigakuin-univ.ac.jp/reps/modules/xoonips/detail.php?item_id=157
Rights	

聖学院学術情報発信システム : SERVE

SEigakuin Repository for academic archiVE

An Analysis of Trent Lott's Apology for Remarks Appearing to Support Past Racism

David BURGER

人種差別支持発言疑惑に対する
トレント・ロット米国上院議員の謝罪の分析

バーガー・デービッド

2002年12月5日に米国の上院の多数である共和党の院内総務トレント・ロットはサウスカロライナ州の米国上院議員ストロム・サーモンドの100歳の誕生祝いで次の発言をした：「ストロム・サーモンドは大統領に立候補した時、我々は彼に投票をした。...そして、もし国の皆が我々のようにしたならば、こんなに沢山の問題がこのように長年続かなかっただろう。」この発言によってロットはサーモンド氏が当時擁護した人種分離の立場を支持していると広く解釈された。結果として、ロットが謝ることとなり、最終的に、ロットは共和党の院内総務を辞任することになった。この論文は社会語用論の観点から、異文化間発話行為実現企画（CCSARP）が創り出した手引書を利用しながら、ロットの謝罪を分析し、それがなぜ批判者を納得させなかったかを判断している。

On December 5, 2002, Mississippi senator Trent Lott was set to regain his post as the powerful Republican majority leader of the United States Senate and with it great influence in national politics. Yet, barely two weeks later, on December 20, Lott was forced to resign as incoming majority leader and forfeit the power and prestige that come with the position.

What brought about this precipitous fall from power? The simple answer is that on December 5, 2002, Sen. Lott attended a party in honor of South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond on the occasion of his 100th birthday. During the party, in his tribute to Thurmond, Lott made some off-the-cuff remarks that to many observers “seemed to support segregation” (Crockett, 2002, para. 1). During the two weeks following those controversial remarks, however, it was the bungling apologies that Lott made that played perhaps the decisive role in sealing the incoming majority leader's fate.

This paper will use a sociopragmatic approach to examine those apologies in an attempt to understand why they failed to stem the tide of criticism following the birthday remarks and culminated in Lott's resignation from his powerful post. Sociopragmatics is a subfield of pragmatics, which Leech

Key words; Trent Lott, Strom Thurmond, apology, sociopragmatics, Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)

defines as “the study of how utterances have meanings in situations” (1983, p. x). He further defines sociopragmatics as “the sociological interface of pragmatics” (p. 10). Thus, examining Lott’s apologies from a sociopragmatic perspective will seek to relate “the ways language is used to perform certain speech acts [in this case, apology] with the social and situational variables that potentially affect their use” (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, p. 5); namely, the language Lott used to apologize and how it fit into the social and situational setting in December 2002 and ultimately failed to assuage his critics.

The Background of Lott’s Remarks

Strom Thurmond was born on December 5, 1902, in South Carolina. It was a time in which racism was institutionalized in the states of the Civil War-era Confederacy by means of a legal system that mandated the separation of the races, mainly black and white, in most areas of public life. In its American incarnation, this apartheid-like system was known as segregation. During World War II, African-American soldiers, like all other American soldiers, had been told that they were fighting to defend freedom and democracy, yet found themselves fighting to defend those ideals in segregated units and being treated in general like second-class citizens. When they returned home, they reencountered the harsh reality of a society, especially in the South, that discriminated against them and denied them both freedom and democracy.

In the first presidential election after the war, in 1948, the Democratic Party adopted an anti-segregation civil rights platform at its presidential nominating convention in Philadelphia, and this infuriated many Southern Democrats. One of them was Strom Thurmond, then governor of South Carolina, who led a revolt from the Democratic Party and ran for president as the candidate of the breakaway States Rights’ Democratic Party, popularly known as the “Dixiecrats.” Thurmond ran on a platform supporting the continued segregation of blacks and whites in the South, declaring, “We stand for the segregation of the races and the racial integrity of each race” (Mercurio, 2002, para. 7). During the campaign, Thurmond, echoing the defiance characteristic of a good number of Southern Democrats at the time, vowed that “all the laws of Washington and the bayonets of the Army cannot force the Negro into our homes, our schools, our churches. . . .” (Douglass & O’Keefe, 2002, para. 6). Thurmond lost the election of 1948, but he won the thirty-nine electoral votes of four southern states: Alabama, Louisiana, his home state of South Carolina, and Lott’s home state of Mississippi.

Referring to this fact during his speech at Thurmond’s 100th birthday party on December 5, 2002, Lott said: “When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We are proud of it” (Doug-

lass & O'Keefe, 2002, para. 2). According to ABC News, this brought applause and laughter from the "invitation-only crowd of Republican supporters" (para. 3). Unfortunately for Lott, he did not end his remarks there. He added: "And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, *we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years either*" [italics added] ("Lott: Segregation and Racism," 2002, para. 4). Describing the reaction to this comment, ABC reported that "the room went virtually silent and some in the audience gasped" (Douglass & O'Keefe, 2002, para. 5).

Reaction to Lott's Remarks

If Lott's words sent a faithful Republican audience into stunned silence or audible gasping, the reaction from less friendly quarters was decidedly more vocal and harsh. Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, a Democrat from Maryland and the incoming chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, an influential group of African-American members of the House of Representatives, commented: "It sends a chilling message to all people" (Douglass & O'Keefe, 2002, "'Chilling Message' and an Apology" section, para. 1). Another member of the caucus, Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, a Texas Democrat, thought that "his remarks require minimally a much larger apology . . . a meeting with the black caucus . . . and whatever else the caucus may decide" ("Black Leaders," 2002, para. 3). Kwesi Mfume, executive director of the NAACP, one of the leading African-American civil rights organizations, termed Lott's remarks "blatant bigotry" and added, "I think that's about as racist as you can get" (Douglass & O'Keefe, 2002, "'Chilling Message' and an Apology" section, para. 2). The NAACP demanded Lott's resignation as Senate majority leader. Lott's Senate counterpart on the minority side, Democratic leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota, was at first sympathetic to the possibility of a slip of the tongue in front of a microphone, but perhaps sensing the way the wind was blowing later changed his mind and joined those blasting Lott's remarks: "Regardless of how he intended his statement to be interpreted, it was wrong to say it and I strongly disagree with it" (para. 9).

While critical of the birthday remarks, fellow conservatives were generally more willing to give Lott the benefit of the doubt. The only African-American Republican in the House of Representatives at the time, J. C. Watts, expressed the belief that "he went too far and I think he realizes that and I think that's why he apologized" (Douglass & O'Keefe, 2002, "Conservatives Share Concerns" section, para. 2-3). On the other hand, one fellow conservative, Robert P. George, an African-American syndicated columnist, called Lott's remarks both "historically ignorant and racially ignorant" (para. 1).

Lott's Attempts at Apology

It was not until four days after the brouhaha began that Lott finally apologized. He first issued a two-sentence written statement in which he defended his remarks: “My comments were not an endorsement of his [Thurmond’s] positions of over 50 years ago, but of the man and his life” (Mercurio, 2002, para. 9).

Predictably, his critics were not mollified. African-American leader Jesse Jackson called for Lott’s resignation, and former Vice President Al Gore termed Lott’s comments “racist” (para. 10). Gore’s comments on CNN probably represent the view of most who were critical of Lott for his birthday remarks:

To say that the problems that we have in America today, some of them, stem from not electing a segregationist candidate for president . . . is fundamentally racist. . . Trent Lott made a statement that I think is a racist statement. . . That’s why I think he should withdraw those comments or I think the United States Senate should undertake a censure of those comments. . . It is not a small thing . . . for one of the half dozen most prominent political leaders in America to say that our problems are caused by integration and that we should have had a segregationist candidate. That is divisive and it is divisive along racial lines. That’s the definition of a racist comment. (para. 16-18)

Later the same day, Lott released another statement in which he formally apologized: “A poor choice of words conveyed to some the impression that I embrace the discarded policies of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth, and I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement” (para. 2).

Former Vice President Gore’s comments to CNN indicate just how seriously any hint of racist sentiment is taken by the political establishment and by the media in the United States. As a result, Lott’s initial attempts at apology did little to satisfy his critics. Democratic minority leader of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi of California captured the crux of Lott’s dilemma: “I understand that Senator Lott has made an apology, and he can apologize all he wants. It doesn’t remove the sentiment that escaped his mouth that day at that party” (Douglass & O’Keefe, 2002, “Chilling Message’ and an Apology” section, para. 7).

Finally, on December 13—eight days after he had made the remarks that provoked the contro-

versy—and “under pressure from President Bush and other top Republicans” (“Lott: Apology No. 4,” 2002, para. 1), Lott apologized again. It was Lott’s lengthiest and most public apology to date and was delivered at a press conference in his hometown of Pascagoula, Mississippi. As the most formal and extensive apology offered by Lott during the controversy, a detailed analysis of the contents of this apology and of its sociopragmatic components will follow.

After reading his statement at the press conference, Lott took questions from the assembled journalists. In answer to one of the questions, Lott acknowledged:

when you’re from Mississippi and when you are Republican leader, you got an extra burden to make sure you think about every word and every phrase so that it doesn’t convey the wrong impression or hurt people. And so, while I was, you know, surprised because I was just into the event, I still have caused a major problem, and I want to get over that. (para. 46)

Nevertheless, it proved more difficult to “get over that” than Lott had perhaps anticipated. For one thing, journalists began examining Lott’s past statements as well as his voting record in Congress and found what some considered a pattern of insensitivity to racial issues. The Drudge Report pointed out, for instance, that Lott had made similar remarks more than 20 years earlier at a campaign appearance with Strom Thurmond in 1980. Lott reportedly had said: “You know, if we had elected this man 30 years ago, we wouldn’t be in the mess we are today” (“Black Leaders,” 2002, para. 8-9). According to ABC News (Douglass & O’Keefe, 2002, “‘Chilling Message’ and an Apology” section, para. 5), others remembered that Lott had recently been associated with the Council of Conservative Citizens, which some had described as a white supremacist group. Diane E. Dees (2002) catalogued a long list of votes during Lott’s tenure in Congress that she found to favor unfairness to women and homosexuals as well as to African-Americans. She chastised the media for talking “ad nauseam about one line from a speech that is merely a molecule in a drop of dirty water frozen at the tip of a huge, ugly iceberg” (para. 28).

Subsequent attempts by Lott to improve his image on race relations also seemed to show that the damage done by the birthday remarks would not easily be gotten over. Three days after his press conference in Mississippi, Lott attempted to mend fences with the African-American community by appearing on the Black Entertainment Network (BET) to be interviewed by journalist Ed Gordon. In the interview, Lott acknowledged that he had “‘made a terrible mistake, used horrible words, caused hurt,’” and repeated his apology: “‘I’m sorry about that. I’ve apologized for it. I’ve asked for forgiveness, and I’m going to continue to do that’” (“A contrite Lott,” 2002, para. 14).

The reaction of NAACP Board Chair Julian Bond indicated the futility of Lott's attempts to persuade African-American leaders to accept his apology. In a statement that Bond issued as a response to the BET interview, he derided Lott's claim that the controversy over his remarks had been a 'wake-up call' for him:

It could only have been a wake-up call for someone who was sound asleep from his college days 40 years ago until last week. Upon awakening, he's surprised to find he's been in bed with racists and white supremacists, and cannot explain how he got there. Lott kept saying he'd made a mistake, but he didn't make just one; his whole public life has been a mistake, and he compounded the mistake last night. He repudiated his own voting record, asking not to be judged by the very votes he'd cast. Thirty-four years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, Lott admits he did some good. He demonstrated abysmal ignorance of the legal status of affirmative action, praising its practice in Texas where federal courts have ruled it illegal. He persisted in his support of Judge Charles Pickering, who has opposed the principle of "one man, one vote." Five apologies have proven insufficient to wipe away the stain of 40 years. ("NAACP Chairman," 2002, para. 2)

Four days after the BET interview and barely two weeks after he had made the birthday remarks, Trent Lott resigned his post as incoming Senate majority leader, although he retained his seat as the senior senator from Mississippi. NAACP president Kwesi Mfume commented:

His insensitivity toward the pain of racial prejudice makes it impossible for him to know how deep it cuts. The Republican Party now has the opportunity to break from a past that is still marred by racial insensitivity, but it will require more than just words or this resignation. It will require deeds. (Crockett, 2002, para. 5)

In addition to pressure from African-American leaders, conservative media such as the *National Review* and the *Wall Street Journal* had also called for Lott to resign as majority leader. Leaders of the Republican Party had also put pressure on Lott to resign. Republican strategist Ed Rollins had called Lott an "embarrassment to his party" and another strategist, Peggy Noonan, had called on Lott's colleagues to remove him if he chose not to resign voluntarily ("That Rang Hollow," 2002, "An Embarrassment to His Party" section, para. 2-5). In fact, just the day before Lott's resignation, Tennessee senator Bill Frist had gained support for his own campaign to force Lott out (in fact, he would

eventually be elected by Senate Republicans to replace Lott as majority leader) (Crockett, 2002, para. 13). The White House itself had never openly called for Lott to resign, but their expression of support was lukewarm at best, and officials in the White House told The Associated Press that “Bush would not try to save Lott’s job” (“That Rang Hollow,” 2002, “Questions ‘Bigger than Lott’” section, para. 1).

An Analysis of Lott’s December 13, 2002, Apology

By some accounts (“NAACP Chairman,” 2002, para. 2), Trent Lott made at least five public apologies concerning his remarks at Strom Thurmond’s 100th birthday party. Of these, the one issued at his press conference in Pascagoula, Mississippi, on December 13, 2002, was the most formal and most extensive. In fact, the full text of Lott’s statement runs to 1456 words. The remainder of this paper will deal with that apology.

The speech act of apologizing has been studied extensively in the field of linguistic pragmatics. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) analyzed both spoken and written data and identified the commonly occurring components of a typical apology across several languages and cultures (Australian, American, and British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, and Hebrew). Based on this data, the CCSARP developed a manual that is commonly used today to code raw data from the speech act of apologizing on the basis of these commonly occurring elements or categories.

According to the CCSARP Coding Manual “apologies can be performed by any one of [five] strategies, or any combination or sequence thereof” (p. 289). Those strategies, and some of their sub-strategies, are:

- 1 . Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), which is “a routinized, formulaic expression of regret such as: *(be) sorry, apologize, regret, excuse, etc.*” (pp. 19-20)
- 2 . Taking on Responsibility
 - Explicit Self-blame
 - Lack of Intent
 - Justify Hearer
 - Expression of Embarrassment
 - Admission of Facts but not of Responsibility
 - Refusal to Acknowledge Guilt
- 3 . Explanation or Account

4 . Offer of Repair

5 . Promise of Forbearance.

An apology usually begins with a strategy other than an IFID. What the CCSARP Coding Manual terms “alerters” are typically used as an “opening element” (p. 276) preceding the actual apology. They function “to alert the Hearer’s attention to the ensuing speech act” (p. 277).

The examples of alerters in the CCSARP Coding Manual are all conversational. The parameters for alerting the hearers that an apology is about to be made at a formal press conference are obviously different. Lott’s opening words are typical of this format and serve to alert the audience that he is planning to say something serious:

Well, first, thank you for being here and giving me an opportunity to comment further on a number of things that have occurred and been said over the past few days. I have a prepared statement, and then I have a brief announcement, and then I’d be glad to take your questions.
(para. 6)

Perhaps the only words so closely associated with the act of apologizing that they might function as overt alerters of an apology in Lott’s 456-word opening remarks come more than 100 words before Lott’s IFID *apologize*: “I’ve asked and I’m asking for *forbearance* and *forgiveness* as I continue to learn from my own mistakes, and as I continue to grow and get older” [italics added] (“Lott: Segregation and Racism,” 2002, para. 14). However, this is more fundamentally an instance of the strategy “promise of forbearance” and will be discussed as such below.

As the CCSARP Coding Manual notes, any combination or sequence of the five identified strategies is possible, and Lott chooses the “explanation or account” strategy as his initial move. The manual describes this strategy as covering “any external (+/- human) mitigating circumstances offered by the speaker, i.e., ‘objective’ reasons for the violation at hand” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 293). Rather than explaining why he had said what he did at the birthday party, Lott first gives an account of his upbringing and how he has reflected on the mistakes of that racist past, learned from them, and become a better person. The “mitigating circumstance” that Lott offers is segregation:

Segregation is a stain on our nation’s soul. . . I grew up in an environment that condoned policies and views that we now know were wrong and immoral, and I repudiate them. Let me be clear: Segregation and racism are immoral. (“Lott: Segregation and Racism,” 2002, para. 7, 9-10)

Continuing his account of his growth towards greater open-mindedness, Lott then credits his religious faith with helping him to come to this new awareness:

I feel very strongly about my faith. . . And as I've grown older, I have come to realize more and more, if you feel strongly about that, you cannot in any way support discrimination or unfairness for anybody. It's just not consistent with the beliefs that I feel so strongly about. (para. 11)

He even invokes the authority of the president to lend credence to his point about segregation:

The president was right when he said that every day our nation was segregated was a day that America was unfaithful to our founding principles and our founding fathers. I lived through those troubled times in the South. And along with the South, I have learned from the mistakes of our past. (para. 13)

In the midst of his extensive “explanation or account,” Lott uses a number of “I” statements. According to the CCSARP manual, first-person statements should be considered a substrategy of the strategy “taking on responsibility” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 293). Of all the instances of the first person in the quotes above, the ones that seem to come closest to being an assumption of responsibility are the last two sentences (“I lived through . . .”), and particularly the last one (“. . . I have learned from the mistakes of our past”). Nonetheless, a cynical observer could be excused for noting that Lott is assuming responsibility not for his birthday remarks, but for having “gone with the flow” during the era of segregation, despite the dictates of his religious faith. If we nevertheless accept this admission of past mistakes as an instance of the strategy “taking on responsibility,” it could be interpreted as an oblique example of the first substrategy “explicit self-blame,” which is described as “the speaker explicitly acknowledges the fact that he or she has been at fault” (p. 291). Lott’s self-blame here is not that explicit, however.

Whatever self-blame Lott may be taking for the “mistakes” of his past is somewhat weakened by the impression the entire passage gives that he was simply no better and no worse than the rest of the people he grew up with. To his credit, he does “repudiate” that past and clearly acknowledges that “segregation and racism are immoral,” and this obviously made an impression on the writer who chose that quote to headline the CNN report on the press conference. If Lott is indeed expressing self-blame, he would seem to be blaming himself for moral or character faults.

Another interpretation, following the CCSARP manual, is that his words come closer to fitting the fifth substrategy of taking on responsibility; namely, “admission of facts but not of responsibility.” In so doing, “the speaker does not deny his or her involvement in the offensive act but abstains from openly accepting responsibility” (p. 292). If this is what Lott is doing, the responsibility he is abstaining from openly accepting in this 400+-word prologue is not for the birthday remarks themselves but rather for the mistakes of his upbringing and of his environment, which, it is implied, led to those remarks. In one sense, no one is responsible for the mistakes of their upbringing—their parents and other external factors would be more likely candidates for blame—but there seems to be little to admire in merely blaming one’s past and maintaining that you were no different from anyone else, even though you have learned from your mistakes—like almost everyone else. It is better than not having learned anything at all, but it does not elevate the speaker above the mere run-of-the-mill.

Lott’s next statement, as mentioned above, is an instance, though again a weak one, of the strategy “promise of forbearance.” Here it is used to conclude the theme of past mistakes and future growth: “I’ve asked and I’m asking for forbearance and forgiveness as I continue to learn from my own mistakes, and as I continue to grow and get older” (“Lott: Segregation and Racism,” 2002, para. 14). According to the CCSARP manual, a promise of forbearance “is usually expressed by a promise that *x* will never happen again” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 21). Lott’s statement here is not that direct. He is asking for forbearance—patience—from his listeners more than unequivocally promising to exercise forbearance himself in the future. He seems to be saying, “Bear with me; I’m trying my best. I’m learning.” It appears to be an attempt to gain sympathy from his audience for his efforts at improving the character flaws that led to his birthday remarks.

Then Lott appends this somewhat puzzling reference: “But as you get older, you hopefully grow in your views and your acceptance of everybody, *both as a person and certainly as a leader*” [italics added] (para. 14). It is puzzling because it is immediately followed by this:

With regard to my remarks about Strom Thurmond, Sen. Thurmond is a friend. He’s a colleague. And if no other reason, because he’s a 100 years old and still a member of the Senate, he’s legendary. But he came to understand the evil of segregation and the wrongness of his own views. And to his credit, he’s said as much himself. (para. 15-16)

Lott seems to be seeking tolerance and understanding both for himself and for Strom Thurmond, both of whom are leaders as well as individuals, and both of whom, he implies, have learned from their past mistaken understanding as they have gotten older.

What does this have to do with an apology? Is Lott promising forbearance on behalf of the man whose past mistaken understanding he himself got into trouble for appearing to support? As convoluted as it seems, it is likely that Lott is attempting to express something nobler; namely, that despite the problems his association with Thurmond have caused him, he refuses to turn against Thurmond and blame him for his current predicament. In addition, Lott is probably being respectful of his elders, which is a traditional virtue in the American South. Both imputed motives are admirable, but in the context of this apology, the chances that they will help make his apology more convincing are questionable at best.

This reference to Thurmond also has a rhetorical function; namely, to lead into the apology: “Last week, I was privileged to join hundreds of others to honor him. It was a lighthearted affair. But my choice of words were *totally unacceptable and insensitive, and I apologize for that*” [italics added] (para. 17-18). According to the CCSARP data, the most common IFID in English is *(be) sorry* (p. 20). However, because Lott’s December 13 apology was of a formal nature, he used the more formal IFID expression marked for register *apologize*. Looking at the full sentence, the use of the adjectives *unacceptable and insensitive* is an instance of the strategy “taking on responsibility.” They can further be coded as examples of the first substrategy of that strategy “explicit self-blame.” *Totally* is an intensifying adverbial, which magnifies the explicit self-blame contained in Lott’s apology.

The full apology IFID *I apologize for that* is followed immediately by another statement taking on responsibility:

Let me make clear, though, in celebrating his life, *I didn’t mean in any way to suggest that his views of over 50 years ago on segregation were justified or right. It was wrong and immoral then, and it is now,* [italics added] (para. 19)

The CCSARP manual codes this as belonging to the second substrategy of taking on responsibility, “lack of intent,” which is described as “the speaker explicitly states that he or she had not intended to hurt the hearer through his or her offence” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 291). The words *I didn’t mean to* are typically used in realizing this substrategy, and Lott strengthens the effect by adding the intensifying adverbial *in any way*.

Lott continues the strategy of taking on responsibility by further defending Thurmond—and by extension, himself:

By the time I came to know Strom Thurmond, some 40 years after he ran for president—I

knew of him when I was in the House of Representatives; I didn't really get to know him until I started running for the Senate and moved over to the Senate—he had long since renounced many of the views of the past, the repugnant views he had had, and he made public himself. (“Lott: Segregation and Racism,” 2002, para. 20)

What Lott is doing here is admitting the facts but not responsibility. However, to his credit, Lott does not continue to try to justify himself but instead follows this statement up with another unequivocal apology again using the IFID marked for register I *apologize*: “That said, *I apologize* for opening old wounds and hurting many Americans who feel so deeply in this area” [italics added] (para. 21). The opening phrase *that said* also helps to shift the focus away from the preceding admission of facts but not of responsibility and put it on the explicit apology that follows. As if to make his intention to take responsibility clearer, Lott next unambiguously states so: “*I take full responsibility* for my remarks” [italics added] (para. 22). Lott follows this with a less explicit statement of lack of intent: “I can't say it was prepared remarks. As a matter of fact, I was winging it. I was too much into the moment” (para. 22).

Lott next explicitly asks for forgiveness, which can be coded as an example of the IFID external apology intensifier “concern for the hearer”; namely, “the speaker takes explicit cognizance of the hearer's feelings, which he or she may have offended” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 291): “But I only hope that people will find it in their heart to forgive me for that grievous mistake on that occasion” (“Lott: Segregation and Racism,” 2002, para. 23). This is followed by an offer of repair, the fourth strategy in the CCSARP Coding Manual:

Not only have I seen the destruction by these immoral policies of the past, I have tried to and will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that we never go back to that type of society again. (para. 24)

This offer of repair also seems to be an indirect plea to be allowed to retain his current job. He says, in effect, that it is through his position that he is able to effect change.

Lott then expands on this theme by talking about what he has done in his home state to promote racial reconciliation. His offer of repair then quickly morphs into a strategy he had used earlier, “explanation or account,” that goes on for more than 500 words. The majority of this account is political and partisan; namely, what Lott advocates in this account would be associated by most Americans with the political philosophy of the Republican Party. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the fol-

lowing:

Government does best when it helps people help themselves. . . Human dignity is found not in a handout but a hand up to help people to be able to do more for themselves and their children and their grandchildren and their future. Government should be about giving people a real chance to do for themselves and help themselves to live the American dream. I believe this because I have lived it. (para. 31-32)

Lott is a politician, and for many American politicians the reference to living the American dream provides an opening to talk about their “humble” roots: “My father, when I was born, was a sharecropper—yes, a sharecropper. He raised cotton on somebody else’s land in a county where everybody was poor, regardless of race or anything else” (para. 33).

Lott continues this reflection on the American dream for another 100 words, and most of his listeners could have been forgiven for wondering if Lott realized that he was implicitly equating the social and economic status of poor whites and blacks at a time when racial inequality was legally institutionalized in his home state. However, as if to answer such criticism, Lott adds, “To those who believe that I was implying that this dream is for some and not for all, that’s just not true,” and then makes his third explicit apology using the IFID marked for register *I apologize*: “But I apologize for those that got that impression” (para. 36). Here, I am assuming that Lott merely misspoke by using *for* instead of *to* and did not mean to imply that he had to apologize *for* those who had the wrong impression about him but rather *to* them.

Lott follows his third IFID apology with his second use of the strategy “offer of repair”:

I work in this state to try to make sure that all Mississippians have a chance at the American dream. And *I will continue to do that as long as I live*. In the days and months to come, *I will dedicate myself to undo the hurt I have caused and will do all that I can to contribute* to a society where every American has an opportunity to succeed. [italics added] (para. 37)

This passage also includes an element of taking on responsibility (“the hurt I have caused”).

At this point, Lott’s American political instincts seem to impel him to insert another reference to his religious faith in a comment that seems somewhat out of place: “As a man of faith in a local church here, I read the Bible all of my life. I now more fully understand the psalm that says, ‘a broken spirit,

a contrite and humbled heart” (para. 38).

Only then does he make his offer of repair more concrete:

One final point: The next step to make sure that these are not just words here today is I am talking to and working with African-American leaders like Roy Innis, of the Congress of Racial Equality, and Bob Johnson, of Black Entertainment Television. And in that vein we are working to get the final agreement on a time next week—early next week when, for a full hour, I will talk about my hopes and dreams for the people in this state and this country regardless of their race, and to make sure that African-Americans have the opportunities that they deserve. (para. 39-40)

Regardless of whether this, or anything else that Lott said in his prepared statement, demonstrated “a contrite and humbled heart,” with that Lott ended his prepared statement and took questions from the audience.

Conclusion

Lott’s prepared statement of December 13, 2002, contains all the strategies that the CCSARP identified as constituent elements in performing an apology. He used the IFID *I apologize* three times, he took on responsibility a number of times using several substrategies, he explained or accounted for his words and actions at great length, he promised a kind of forbearance at least twice, and he also offered repair at least twice, most notably at the very end of his prepared statement. Then why was this apology not met with greater acceptance?

The answer has at least a political and a linguistic dimension; in other words, it hinges on the socio-pragmatic appropriateness of Lott’s prepared statement, what Crystal terms “the way conditions of language use derive from the social situation” (1991, p. 320).

Thus, the social and political situation in the United States in late 2002 cannot be separated from the conditions of the language used by Trent Lott, either in his offending birthday remarks or in his attempted apology. As Terrence Samuel and Roger Simon wrote in *U.S. News & World Report* (2002, para. 1), “it is no longer socially or politically acceptable to oppose what Strom Thurmond opposed in 1948: equal rights for all in an integrated nation.” It might be added that there is even less tolerance for such views if they are expressed by a white person from the South who is a Republican and who holds a prominent leadership position in the government. Trent Lott was all of these, and in his

birthday remarks he appeared nostalgic, and, thus, in support of, a time—the era of racial segregation—that has been repudiated by the American establishment, not least of all through legislation and legal decisions by the courts. The fact that Lott waited four days before making a public statement about the controversy—and then in written form rather than in person—also indicates that Lott may not have understood these crucial facts about the social reality in the United States at the end of 2002.

Thus, no matter what words he chose for his apology, the chances were not good that he could persuade the people he had offended to accept his apology. Or, as Americans often put it, the deck was already stacked against him, and, at any rate, Lott proved an inept card player. House of Representatives Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi expressed it well: “(Lott) can apologize all he wants. It doesn’t remove the sentiment that escaped his mouth that day at that party” (Douglass & O’Keefe, 2002, “Chilling Message’ and an Apology” section, para. 7). Consequently, more than any deficiencies in the pragmalinguistic aspects of Lott’s apologies—the structural properties of the language he used—it was this sociopragmatic aspect, in particular the fact that the sentiments that Lott expressed are simply no longer tolerated in mainstream American society, that sealed his fate.

Looking at Lott’s December 13, 2002, apology, we can see a number of sociopragmatic elements that helped make it even more unlikely that any apology could save Lott. In spite of the fact that his apology contained all the constituent elements that the CCSARP found in apologies across cultures, these sociopragmatic elements greatly weakened the force of his apology.

One was the sheer wordiness of his prepared statement, which contained a number of extraneous elements that it could be argued detracted from the perceived sincerity of his apology. One of those was his defense of Strom Thurmond. Although Lott clearly repudiated Thurmond’s racist past (“It was wrong and immoral then, and it is now”), he seemed to defend the man:

[He] is a friend. He’s a colleague. And if no other reason, because he’s a 100 years old and still a member of the Senate, he’s legendary. But he came to understand the evil of segregation and the wrongness of his own views. And to his credit, he’s said as much himself. (Lott: Segregation and Racism, 2002, para. 15-16)

As stated earlier, Lott may have been motivated by a noble desire not to desert a friend or to say anything against his elders, but his lengthy comments in defense of Thurmond only reinforced the perception, accurate or not, that he probably, deep down, really did believe what he had said at the birthday celebration. At the very least, Lott showed a lack of understanding of how deeply offensive his birthday remarks were to some people, thus making even a hint that he was defending Strom

Thurmond inappropriate.

Another extraneous element that detracted from Lott's apology was his lengthy evocation of his youth. On the one hand, he criticized it because of the racism that permeated that time: "I grew up with segregation here in these communities . . . I grew up in an environment that condoned policies and views that we now know were wrong and immoral, and I repudiate them" (para. 3-4). On the other hand, he glorified it as a shining example of the American dream:

My father . . . was a sharecropper. . . He raised cotton on somebody else's land in a county where everybody was poor, regardless of race or anything else. . . I was their only son; the first to earn a graduate degree. And I feel so strongly that everything I've been able to do, in my education, in my opportunities in life and in my political career, is evidence that, no matter where you're from or what your background of your parents or what your race is, you can, if you work hard and take advantage of the opportunities, get a good education, you can live this American dream. (para. 33-35)

Certainly, no past is either completely good or completely bad, but this partly self-critical, partly nostalgic evoking of his upbringing that implied that blacks and whites struggled equally during the days of segregation—and now have the same opportunities to succeed—only diminished the impact of Lott's apology and confirmed the suspicions of his critics.

Two final extraneous elements that detracted from Lott's apology were his inclusion of discourses on his religious faith and his political philosophy:

I feel very strongly about my faith. I grew up in a local church here. I actively participate. And as I've grown older, I have come to realize more and more, if you feel strongly about that, you cannot in any way support discrimination or unfairness for anybody. It's just not consistent with the beliefs that I feel so strongly about. (para. 6)

We want a color-blind society that every American has an opportunity to succeed. . . Government does best when it helps people help themselves. . . Human dignity is found not in a hand-out but a hand up to help people to be able to do more for themselves and their children and their grandchildren and their future. Government should be about giving people a real chance to do for themselves and help themselves to live the American dream. (para. 28, 31-32)

Many people are put off by politicians' resort to religion to justify their actions or to justify their

characters. Likewise, probably the majority of the people most offended by Lott's birthday remarks were not Republicans, so the potential that Lott's words supporting the Republican political philosophy would put off the very people he should have been trying to pacify was great. That Lott would be expected to hold these political views is not in question, but what is in question is why he did not realize that they were divisive, particularly in a context where he should have been focused on being as conciliatory as possible. Therefore, Lott's remarks about his religious faith and political philosophy were pragmatically inappropriate in this context.

Taken together, the possibility that all of these extraneous remarks could make Lott appear pompous and arrogant rather than humble and contrite—an impression many Americans already had of him—was high. In the case of a politician, this perception could also depend heavily on whether or not one were already inclined to be forgiving of Lott's birthday remarks. Lott's apparent lack of cognizance of the negative effect his many extraneous remarks might have on the efficacy of his apology implies that he did not sufficiently understand the social situation he found himself in. If that was the case, his resignation as Senate majority leader was the most appropriate outcome.

A commentator for a conservative website suggested:

One is hard pressed to find a concept more universally useless than the public apology. Surely the Senator should be made to answer to the question as often as the electorate (Republicans especially) should call upon him to answer. But apologies never really make up for something stupid, and Trent Lott would be wise to remember that the Confederacy wasn't admirable, neither was Dixiecratism, and neither were the men who spearheaded either cause. (Wise, 2002, para. 7)

Trent Lott did everything right in pragmalinguistic terms—he said all the things we expect in an apology. Unfortunately for him, he did not seem to sufficiently understand the social conditions within which his words of apology were uttered. Perhaps it is true that “apologies never really make up for something stupid,” but this is not really an ideal case to test that theory. If Trent Lott had understood the depth of feeling that his birthday remarks provoked, if he had not been such a polarizing figure well before his remarks, and if he had simply shown a little more contrition along with his apology instead of bringing in too many extraneous points that not only detracted from his apology but may even have helped alienate his opponents even more, then his words of apology might have been received more graciously. But he did not, and he lost his powerful position as a result.

References

- A contrite Lott tells BET he's changed. (2002, December 16). Retrieved October 26, 2003, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/12/16/lott.controversy/>
- Black leaders reject Lott apology. (2002, December 10). Retrieved October 26, 2003, from <http://www.talkleft.com/archives/001586.html>
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*. Norwood, NJ, Ablex Publishing, 1989.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G., "Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics: An introductory overview." In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*. Norwood, NJ, Ablex Publishing, 1989, pp. 1-34
- Crockett, S. A. (2002, December 20). Sen. Trent Lott Steps Down as Senate Majority Leader. Retrieved October 23, 2003, from <http://www.bet.com/articles/0,,c1gb4963pg2-5686,00.html>
- Crystal, D. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 3rd ed. Oxford, UK, Blackwell, 1991.
- Dees, D. E. (2002, December 17). What the media missed in Lott's apology. Retrieved October 26, 2003, from http://www.democraticunderground.com/articles/02/12/17_media.html
- Douglass, L. & O'Keefe, E. (2002, December 10). Trouble for Lott: Black lawmakers, Democrats blast Senate GOP leader over comment. Retrieved September 11, 2003, from http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/lott_thurmond021210.html
- Leech, G., *Principles of Pragmatics*. London, Longman, 1983
- Lott: Apology no. 4. (2002, December 14). Retrieved October 26, 2003, from <http://archive.salon.com/politics/feature/2002/12/14/apology/>
- Lott: Segregation and racism are immoral. (2002, December 13). Retrieved October 23, 2003, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/12/13/lott.transcript/index.html>
- Mercurio, J. (2002, December 10). Lott apologizes for Thurmond comment. Retrieved October 23, 2003, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/12/09/lott.comment/index.html>
- NAACP chairman calls latest Senator Lott apology insufficient: BET interview only compounded Lott's mistakes. (2002, December 17). Retrieved October 26, 2003, from <http://www.naacp.org/news/releases/lottapology121702.shtml>
- Samuel, T. & Simon, R., "Lott is having to say he's sorry" *U.S. News & World Report*, 133 (24), 2002, p. 23
- 'That rang hollow': Lott offers new apology; GOP analysts call him 'embarrassment'. (2002, December 17). Retrieved October 26, 2003, from http://abcnews.go.com/sections/GMA/DailyNews/lott_apology021217.html
- Wise, B. S. (2002, December 9). Trent Lott's big mistake. Retrieved October 26, 2003, from <http://www.intellectualconservative.com/article2038.html>