

## Uncooperativeness in Political Discourse: Violating Gricean Maxims in Presidential Debate 2016

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### Abstract

This paper analyses the different ways and forms by which politicians (during political debates) violate the Cooperative Principle (CP) in their communication. Applying Grice's four maxims to the second 2016 US presidential debate, chosen to serve as objective material for this research. The study provides insight into the nature of how political discourse works

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nowadays, with issues of how politicians display uncooperativeness, in addition to being untruthful in their conversation by means of violating the conversational maxims. The transcription data was analysed within the features of conversational implicature. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted. The finding revealed that maxims in political debates can be violated in a number of ways, categorised as, opting out of a maxim, maxim of clash, flouting of maxims and violation of maxims. By breaking the maxims that generate conversational implicature, this study reveals that the politicians are being uncooperative. However, the obvious way in which the politician's responses generate implicature is by flouting the maxims, especially that of quantity, quality and relevance whereas the maxim of manner was rarely found. This is why truthfulness, sufficiency or insufficiency of any piece of information cannot be readily understood because politics, most often, requires certain considerations in communicating any piece of information.

**Keywords:** Gricean maxims, political discourse, (un) cooperativeness, violation

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### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ได้วิเคราะห์รูปแบบและวิธีการต่างๆ  
ที่นักการเมือง (ระหว่างการโต้ว่าที่ประธานาธิบดี) ได้  
ละเมิดหลักสหการหรือหลักความร่วมมือ (CP) ใน  
การสื่อสาร คติบทของไกรซ์ทั้ง 4 ข้อได้ถูกนำมา  
ประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อตอบวัตถุประสงค์งานวิจัยในการศึกษา  
การโต้ว่าที่ของประธานาธิบดีครั้งที่ 2 ในปี 2559

<sup>1</sup> ผู้พิมพ์หลัก

การศึกษาในครั้งนี้ทำให้ทราบถึงกระบวนการทำงานเชิงลึกอย่างเป็นธรรมชาติที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวาทกรรมทางการเมืองในปัจจุบัน นอกเหนือจากนี้ยังทำให้เห็นถึงความไม่ร่วมมือและความไม่ซื่อสัตย์ของนักการเมืองผ่านบทสนทนาโดยวิธีการละเมิดคติบทแห่งการสนทนาของไกรธข้อมูลที่ได้ถูกนำไปถอดความและวิเคราะห์ในลักษณะของบทสนทนาแบบเป็นนัยยะ แนวคิดเชิงคุณภาพและปริมาณถูกนำมาใช้เป็นแนวคิดหลักในการวิจัยในครั้งนี้ ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า คติบทในการโต้ว่าที่ทางการเมืองนั้นสามารถละเมิดได้หลากหลายวิธี โดยสามารถจำแนกได้เป็น การเลือกไม่ใช้คติบท การขัดแย้งระหว่างคติบท การเยาะเย้ยคติบท และการละเมิดคติบท โดยการละเมิดคติบทของบทสนทนาแบบเป็นนัยยะแสดงให้เห็นว่านักการเมืองได้ปฏิเสธการให้ความร่วมมือ อย่างไรก็ตาม แนวทางที่ชัดเจนที่การโต้ตอบของนักการเมืองได้แสดงถึงความเป็นนัยยะคือการเยาะเย้ยคติบท โดยเฉพาะในเชิงของหลักปริมาณ หลักคุณภาพและความตรงประเด็น ส่วนในด้านของลักษณะหรือวิธีการพบว่า มีการใช้คติบทด้านนี้น้อยมาก จากผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่าการพูดโต้ว่าที่ทางการเมืองนั้น ความเชื่อใจของบุคคล ความครบถ้วนของข้อมูลหรือการนำเสนอข้อมูลเพียงบางส่วนไม่สามารถทำให้ผู้ฟังหรือผู้ชมเข้าใจในสิ่งที่นักการเมืองสื่อสารได้อย่างทันทีทันใด แต่จำเป็นต้องอาศัยดุลยพินิจของผู้ชมหรือผู้ฟังมาประกอบในการทำความเข้าใจ

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## Introduction

Conversation, an inclusive and involving process of information exchange between a speaker and a hearer, is the easiest way to transmit thoughts, ideas and emotions; a process that Khsravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011, p. 2) referred to as “the salient part of human communication”. Generally, it is assumed that interlocutors are implicitly aware of their communicative role in ensuring a meaningful and smooth interaction as they produce utterances in their communication. This would therefore mean that both the speaker and the hearer hold the same cooperative beliefs as they communicate in order to avoid misunderstanding and produce an ideal interaction (Crowley & Mitchell, 1994; Novianingrum, 2015). The set of rules and norms that regulate the manner in which conversation is conducted, thereby constituting a successful conversation among speakers and listeners is what is popularly referred to in the pragmatic use of language as conversational maxims. Introduced by the language philosopher Paul H. Grice (Mukaro et al., 2013) as the Cooperative Principle (hereafter CP), these maxims are normally observed by participants in their conversation. According to Grice, in his 1975 book, *Logic and Conversation*, the cooperative principle is governed by four conversational maxims of quantity (make your contribution as informative as required), quality (tell the truth), relation (be relevant and don't go off the point), and manner (be brief and unambiguous). These maxims are presumed to anticipate interlocutor's performance in a conversation, in general (Paltridge, 2006; Khsravizadeh and Sadehvandi, 2011; Ambele, 2014). In other words, certain restrictions are imposed by CP on participants to make them adjust and correspond their speech with the maxims. It is

undoubtedly obvious, however, that in real life people usually break the cooperative principle; more so, even much more glaring in political debates. Politicians consciously or unconsciously do not observe these maxims by way of violating, flouting, clashing or opting out of the conversational rule. Grice (as cited in Tupan and Natalia, 2008) maintains that when the speaker does not observe or obey the maxims, the speaker is said to 'violate' them, thereby causing misunderstanding, and as a result, leading to an unsuccessful conversation. The speaker sometimes delivers an implicit meaning to the other person in what he/she says; a situation Grice (1975) describes as a difference in meaning in what people say and what they mean, called implicature (Ambele, 2014; Novianingrum, 2015).

Implicature is an aspect of the meaning in what is meant in the speaker's utterance without being part of what the speaker said. The objective of this paper is to investigate the violation of Grice's (1975) four maxims (quantity, quality, relation and manner) of conversational implicatures in the second-round of the 2016 US presidential campaign debate. The suitability of this case for analysis was based on the observation that Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, whether consciously or unconsciously, did not seem to observe the rules of cooperation in their campaign debates by way of violating, flouting, clashing or opting out of the conversational rule (Novianingrum, 2015). It identifies some instances where the politicians concern violates, flouts, clash, and opts out in the debate, what the effects of the violations are and relate them to the principle of cooperation in conversations. This will be examined by means of the following research questions:

1. How are conversational maxims violated in political discourse?
2. What are the functions of these violations in political discourse?
3. What relationship does violation have with cooperation in political discourse?

Suffice to state here at the outset that the non-observances or rather violations of maxims are viewed differently from one scholar to another (Yang, 2008; Mukaro et al., 2013). Violations, in this paper, is operationalised as a holistic concept to mean any kind of non-observances of maxims, including violation of maxims, maxim clash, opting out and flouting of maxims.

### **A Theoretical Background of Gricean Theory of Conversational Implicature**

This section of the paper examines the theoretical principles of the Gricean maxims (2.1), the concept of implicature in conversation (2.2) and maxim violation in conversation (2.3).

#### **1. Gricean Cooperative Principle and the Maxims of Conversation**

Considering this study specifically investigates political debate within the Gricean framework, specifically, violations of the maxims of CP by the politicians concern, it is unavoidable necessary to provide a brief description of the CP. Grice's work on the CP cannot be unpretentiously acknowledged and its influence in research cannot be underrated as evidenced by the increasing body of literatures nowadays that use his theory, especially in the discipline of discourse analysis (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Horn, 1992; Davies, 2000; Zor, 2006; Ambele, 2014). The underlining fundamentals of the CP suggest that

people's involvement in a conversation with one another indicates that the interlocutors cooperate with each other in order to understand one another. The CP, for Grice, is rules that speakers and hearers abide by for successful communication (Yang, 2008, p. 64). According to Al-Qaderi (2015) and Zhou (2009, p.42), Grice (1975), in his article "Logic and Conversation" defines how people communicate by stating that:

Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction (Grice, 1975, p.47 in Zor, 2006, p.20).

Under the CP, there are four maxims, Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. For Bach (2006) and Ambele (2014), they are used to explain the relation between utterances and what is understood from them. Bach and Ambele also claim that we, as listeners, assume that the speaker is being cooperative by speaking truthfully, informatively, relevantly and appropriately. If an utterance appears not to conform to any of these presumptions, we look for other ways of taking it so that it makes sense. The four main maxims and their sub-maxims are as follows:

### **1. The maxim of Quantity**

#### **1.1 Make your contribution as informative as is required**



1.2 Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

## 2. The maxim of Quality

2.1 Do not say what you believe to be false

2.2 Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

## 3. The maxim of Relation

3.1 Make your contributions relevant

## 4. The maxim of Manner

4.1 Avoid ambiguity

4.2 Avoid obscurity of expression

4.3 Be brief

4.4 Be orderly

## 2. Gricean Theory of Conversational Implicature

It is an undisputed fact, which I believe many would attest to, that the crucial purpose of communication is to exchange information, amongst others. In applying the CP, the hearer is allowed to make assumptions about the speaker's intentions and implied meaning based on what the speaker said. According to Yang (2008, p. 59) "implicature is when speakers are able to mean more than what is actually said". Thus, implicature is the additional, unstated meaning which the speaker implies. Tupan and Natalia (2008) reiterated the fact that Grice, in his Theory of Conversational Implicature, claims that people might often produce implicit meanings in their discourse and their discourse participants are able to infer these intended meanings from their interactions. He believes that people tend to follow certain rules in their interactions, rules which do not determine how one should talk,

but explicate the listener's assumptions in line with the way the speaker talks (Tupan and Natalia, 2008; Hadi, 2013). Implicature best works in interactions where there is cooperation between the speaker and the hearer. Basically, this sums what implicature is all about and how discourse participants of a language get along cooperatively and politely. Therefore, one could say that implicature is a component of the speaker's meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker's utterance without being part of what is said (Horn, 1992). It is when the maxims are either observed or violated that an implicature is triggered. Grice stipulates that there is a strict order of beliefs and assumptions that trigger implicature:

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"S saying p conversationally implicates q if (i) S is presumed to be observing the maxim or at least the CP; (ii) the supposition that S believes q is required in order to make his saying p consistent with presumption; and (iii) the hearer H thinks that S thinks it is within H's competence to work out the supposition mentioned in (ii)" (Asher and Lascarides, 2010, p. 29).

Asher and Lascarides (2010) opine that this line of inference essentially captures the following; one adds information or content to the interpretation of utterances in order to ensure that any contribution that seem to be violating a maxim is doing so only apparently, rather than for real. The description presented here occurs in an ideal, standard situation where all factors are held constant and implicature can be manifested, hence, communication is possible and smooth.

However, Yang (2008) explains that there are cases where conversational implicature fails for varied reasons. The reasons could be of linguistic nature (that is, the linguistic form) or it could be because of failure to understand the speaker's real intentions or the misunderstanding of idioms of the language. I am also not going to be detailing these but suffice to say that conversation implicature can fail.

### 3. Violation of the maxims

People, however, sometimes cannot fulfill those maxims and they seem not to observe them. Grice (as cited in Cutting, 2002, p. 40) says that when the speaker does not fulfill or obey the maxims, the speaker is said to "violate" them. Violation is the condition where the speakers do not purposefully fulfill certain maxim. When speakers violate maxims, they misunderstand each other. Speakers who violate a maxim cause the hearer not to know the truth and only understand the surface meaning of what is said. In doing so the speaker can violate more than one maxim at the same time (a situation called multiple violations). Grice supported the Cooperative Principle with four conversation maxims as stated in 2.1, and he identifies four ways in which discourse participants may break or fail to fulfil maxims in a conversation (in this case, political debate): flouting, violating, clashing and opting out (Lindblom, 2001, p.1603).

In this research, the focus is going to be on these four ways of non-observances of the maxims that occur when the politicians blatantly fail to observe a maxim with a deliberate intention of generating an implicature and/or misunderstanding. This study investigates the maxims in the 2016 US presidential debates, particularly the second

round of the presidential debate between the Democrat nominee, Hillary Clinton and the Republican nominee, Donald Trump, and later compares this debate to that of the second 2008 presidential debate between Democrat nominee, Senator Barack Obama and Republican nominee, Senator John McCain at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee, to see the (un)cooperative behaviours of the debates/and or politicians concern in the examined political debates. The benchmark set up here as basis of instances for violations are built upon Grice's analogies which "are relevant to what he regards as a fundamental question about the CP and its attendant maxims" (Grice, 1975, p. 45, as cited in Tupan and Natalia, 2008; Al-Hamadi and Muhammed, 2009). For the purpose of the analysis, we assigned codes to each of these violation characteristics. They are elicited as:

**Quantity violation characteristics:**

Q1: If the speaker does circumlocution or not to the point

Q2: If the speaker is uninformative

Q3: If the speaker talks too short

Q4: If the speaker talks too much

Q5: If the speaker repeats certain words

**Quality violation characteristics:**

QL1: If the speaker lies or says something that is believed to be false

QL2: If the speaker does irony or makes ironic and sarcastic statement

QL3: If the speaker denies something

QL4: If the speaker distorts information

**Relevance violation characteristics:**

R1: If the speaker makes the conversation unmatched with the topic

R2: If the speaker changes conversation topic abruptly

R3: If the speaker avoids talking about something

R4: If the speaker hides something or hides a fact

R5: If the speaker does the wrong causality

**Manner violation characteristics:**

M1: If the speaker uses ambiguous language

M2: If the speaker exaggerates thing

M3: If the speaker uses slang in front of people who do not understand it

M4: If the speaker's voice is not loud enough

**Research methodology**

The 90-minute, second of three 2016 US presidential debate for the November 9 election was held at Washington University in St. Louis on Sunday, October 9, at 9 pm. It was moderated by CNN's Anderson Cooper and ABC's Martha Raddatz. From piloting all the three campaign debates (the first of which was on Monday, September 26, 2016, the second, Sunday, October 9, 2016, and the third, Wednesday, October 19, 2016) between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton against Grice's CP, the second-round of the debate campaign was observed to exhibit an overwhelmingly high number of CP violation cases. This therefore justified the basis for which the October 9 presidential debate was chosen as objective data for analysis in this study. The study is an investigation into this political debate based on

the theory of the Cooperative Principle. The non-observance of Grice's maxims is the framework used to analyze the collected data. This study provides a descriptive qualitative analysis of the concern 2016 US presidential nominees (politicians) utterances extracted from the 2016 presidential debate transcript (updated by Tara Golsman, October 9, 2016, 11:07pm) between the Democrat nominee, Hillary Clinton and the Republican nominee, Donald Trump.

All transcriptions were obtained online [www.politico.com/story/2016/10/2016-presidential-debate-transcript-229519](http://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/2016-presidential-debate-transcript-229519)) and cross-checked severally with the actual video recording clip on youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJt6v5KhVCU>) to be sure that the transcriptions reflected the actual utterances of the said politicians. After piloting the criteria for analysis (by way of violating, flouting, clashing or opting out of the debate) in the first two presidential debates, the first of which took place on September 26, 2016 at Hofstra University in New York and the second on October 9, 2016 at Washington University in St. Louis, the utterances in the second debate served as appropriate and objective data for the research purpose in this paper. Political debates (not political interviews as we initially thought) served as data for cases of violation. Markers of violations were set up based on the CP suggested by Grice, as enumerated in 2.3.

### Findings and Discussion

As outlined above, the maxims, or to be exact, their violations form the basis of inferences that are drawn in the political debate. Having succinctly presented sufficient background information on the maxims and implicature above, this section examines how the maxims

are violated in the second-round of the 2016 US presidential debate. The objective is to investigate what the effects of violations are, and try to relate them to the principle of cooperation in interactions. Worthy of reminder here is the operationalization of violation in this study; it is an umbrella term that refers to any kind of non-observances of maxims. The violations of maxims in the analysis are grouped into four categories, namely, opting out, clashing, violating and flouting (after Yang, 2008). It should be noted that the politicians concern are very uncooperative in their debates as seen from the many instances where they violate the maxims. However, because of space only fewer excerpts from the analysed data will be presented as illustrative examples. Considering the sensitivity of political issues, and the need to stay neutral of such matters, the analysis in this paper will be solely based on the chosen debate transcriptions. The following sections present evidence of maxim violations from the data.

## 1. Opting out

In explaining opting out as one of the ways of violating the maxims, Thomas (1995, p. 75) defines this as a situation where a speaker "chooses not to observe a maxim and states an unwillingness to do so." From an outlook perspective, speakers' opting out from observing the maxims would seem unwillingness to cooperate within the requirements of the maxims. Thomas (1995, p. 74), in addition, posited that the "example of opting out occurs frequently in public life, when the speaker cannot, perhaps for legal or ethical reason, reply in the way normally expected. The speaker usually wishes to avoid generating a false implicature or appearing uncooperative." Thomas also specified

that giving the requested information might hurt a third party or put them in danger. Just a single instance of this kind of violation was found in the data:

**Karpowicz:** *The Affordable Care Act known as Obamacare, it is not affordable. Premiums have gone up, deductibles have gone up, copays has gone up, prescriptions have gone up and the coverage has gone down. What will you do to bring the cost down and make coverage better?*

**Cooper:** *That first one goes to secretary Clinton. You started out the last one to the audience.*

**Clinton:** *He wants to start it; he can start it. No, go ahead, Donald.*

**Trump:** *No, I'm a gentleman, Hillary. Go ahead.*

In the example, it is clear that several maxims are not observed, the very obvious of it is quality (QL1) and quantity (Q2). QL1 because Clinton actually does this when she said, "He wants to start it, he can start it", something she actually lacks evidence for as Trump had not previously indicated any willingness to be the first person to respond to this question, which would have suggested what she said. Moreover, both politicians violate Q2 as their responses do not, in any way, inform the audience about the topic of the question, which was to know what each of them would do to bring down the high cost of Obamacare and make coverage better for all Americans. In both situations, both politicians opted out from the maxims (being uncooperative) by expressing their unwillingness to be the first person to respond to the question. Nevertheless, although instances of opting



out will indicate uncooperativeness, this data could also be interpreted otherwise, as a sign that means the politicians violation of a maxim does not mean they are willingly uncooperative, by drawing on implicature. The implicature of Clinton's response could be that Trump would always want to unhesitantly respond to this sort of question. So, as a way to show her graciousness, she opted out from the maxims, yet, giving Trump the opportunity to first respond to the question asked. Trump, by implicature, as a gentleman, would want Clinton to begin as a way to prove his gentlemanliness and civility. As a result, it can be said, from another viewpoint here that their violation, though it signals uncooperativeness as they both violate the maxims on the part of the audience, is done so politely. This finding corroborates with that of Mukaro & et al., (2013, p. 164) on their study on maxim violation in Shona.

## 2. Maxim clash

Ying (2006) explains that maxim clash happens when the speaker, intending to observe the CP maxims ends up not fulfilling one of two of the CP maxims at the same level (usually between the maxims of quantity and quality). Instances of maxim clash in the data were predominantly evident in the responses of Trump. Here is an example:

**Cooper:** *For the record, are you saying that what you said on the bus 11 years ago, that you did not actually kiss women without consent or grope women without consent?*

**Trump:** I have great respect for women. Nobody has more respect for women than I do.

Obviously, Trump's response is uninformative based on the question (Q2). The question was simply for him to accept or refute what he said 11 years ago about kissing women without their consent. What he says when he talks about no one having more respect for women than himself is seemingly ironical (QL2, not after what he said in the video) and distortion of information (QL4, no one asked him a question of whether he respects women or not or more than anyone), and lacks evidence (QL1, so far in the campaign there is nothing he has said or done that vindicates him). It could be interpreted that he actually wants to observe the maxim of quantity by making his contribution information and thus cooperative, yet not saying more than what is required. Nevertheless, in doing so, he breaks the maxim of quality as he talks about his respect for women, something generally believed to be untrue. In this way, both quantity and quality maxims clash. Consequently, he ends up not observing any of them.

A keener look at this example brings to mind another angle of interpretation of the CP here. It could also be interpreted that since Trump knew he lacked evidence to prove his respect for women based on what has been said on social media, he could have opted to satisfy both maxims by declining to give an answer. Maybe an optional response that satisfies both maxims could have been "I can't remember". In this way, he would have observed the quality maxim by not saying what he was not sure about nor have evidence for, and on the other hand, the quantity maxim would not have been violated because no information is given. However, Trump tries to observe quantity by violating quality because he wants to present himself as a suitable presidential candidate.

### 3. Violating Maxims

Grice (1975) defines violation of maxims as a situation where speakers intentionally refrain from applying certain maxims in their interactions in order to cause misunderstanding on the part of their participants or to achieve some other purposes. Violation of maxims was noted to be more widespread in the data. The purpose of the politicians' violation of the maxims was to eliminate any opportunity for the audience to ask more questions or in defense to allegations (presumably false allegations from one of them). Based on the data, Trump or Clinton did not obey the maxims for different reasons such as hiding the truth, saving the other's face, satisfying the hearer/ audience by giving an appropriate utterance or responses that might cheer the audience or avoid hurting one another. Besides, the politicians also wanted to build and win the trust and confidence of the people so that they could be voted in for the White House during the election in November. There were four groups of violated maxims from the data, that is, the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner.

#### 3.1 Maxim of Quantity

Maxim of quantity means that speakers should be as informative as is required, that they should give neither too little information nor too much. Some speakers like to point to the fact that they know how much information the hearer requires or can be bothered with. According to the analysis, this maxim seems to be the most violated of all by the politicians. This maxim can broadly be looked at into two main dimensions. The first is concerned with providing full information as required, and the second is neither to be more nor less informative

(Al-Hamadi and Muhammed, 2009). People who give too little information risk their hearer not to be able to identify what they are talking about because they are not explicit enough. This aspect of quantity violation (Q3) where the speaker talks too short was not predominant in the data, but for an instance:

**Cooper:** *Secretary Clinton, you get to respond then we have to move on to an audience question.*

**Clinton:** *It's just not true.*

Here, Clinton's response to Trump's accusations of her deleting 33,000. classified information e-mails does not tell all that there is to be told about the accusation. Her response was not as informative as is required, which explains why Trump continued with a follow-up question, (Trump: You didn't delete them?) just to ensure that she provided sufficient information to the accusation. On the other hand, those who give more information than what is required risk boring their hearer. Cases of Q1, Q2, Q4 and Q5 violations were heavily present in the data. An example of which is:

**Cooper:** *--Have you ever done those things? (kissing women without consent, grabbing their genitals)*

**Trump:** *-- And they have respect for me. And I will tell you, no I have not. And I will tell you, that I'm going to make our country safe and we're going to have borders which we don't have now. People are pouring into our country and they're coming in from the Middle East and other places. We're gonna make America safe again, we're gonna make*

*America great again but we're gonna make America safe again and we're gonna make America wealthy again. Because if you don't do that, it just, it sounds harsh to say, but we have to build up the wealth of our nation. Other nations are taking our job and they're taking our wealth.*

This example clearly demonstrates the violation of the quantity maxim, the obvious of which is a simple question of whether he has been kissing women without their consent or not, requiring a simple answer of either yes or no to show that he is cooperative, yet he ended up saying so many things (Q1, Q4), some of which does not add any information (People are pouring into our country and they're coming in from the Middle East and other places) to the topic, rendering the whole response uninformative (Q2). A case of Q5 violation from the data above is Trump's repetition of 'we're gonna' (four times).

### 3.2 Maxim of Quality

The second maxim is that of quality, which says that speakers are expected to be sincere, to be saying something that they believe correspond to reality. They are assumed not to say anything that they believe to be false or anything for which they lack evidence. Some speakers like to draw their hearer's attention to the fact that they are only saying what they believe to be true, and that they lack adequate evidence. In the example below, Clinton claims that Trump is unfit to serve as US president and Head of the army due to his lack of respect for women and immigrants as he said in his online videos. In response to this, Trump said:

**Trump:** *It's just words, folks. It's just words. These words, I have been hearing for many years. I heard them when they were running for the Senate in New York where Hillary was going to bring back jobs to upstate New York and she failed. I've heard them where Hillary is constantly talking about the inner cities of our country which are a disaster education-wise, job-wise, safety-wise, in every way possible. I'm going to help the African-Americans, I'm going to help the Latinos, hispanics. I am going to help the inner cities. She has done a terrible job for the African-Americans. She wants their vote and she does nothing. And then she comes back four years later, we saw that firsthand when she saw United States senator, she campaigned where-*

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From the example, it is clear that Trump violates the quality maxim by not just saying what is not true (QL1: *"I'm going to help the African-Americans, I'm going to help the Latinos, hispanics. I am going to help the inner cities"*), but denies his actions in the videos (QL3: *"It's just words, folks. It's just words"*), and sarcastically talks about Clinton (QL2: *"She has done a terrible job for the African-Americans. She wants their vote and she does nothing."*). To say here that he is going to help other races is ironical and suspicious of Trump as he has, on several occasions, express his dislike for other races in the US. All of Trumps claims here lack adequate evidence and reflects a complete distortion of information (QL4), thus, violating the quality maxim.

### 3.3 Maxim of Relevance

The third maxim is the maxim of relevance, which says that speakers are assumed to be saying something that is relevant to what

has been said. This does not seem to be the case in the data as lots of the things politicians say sometimes do not directly answer the question asked. However, this is not surprising in a discourse as political debate where politicians usually have their pre-planned ideas of what they want to say to convince the people to vote for them. Sometimes, out of fear of past mistakes that may serve as a disqualifying attribute to their campaign, they prefer to avoid answering questions, thus, being uncooperative. Instances of violating the relevance maxim in the data is highly represented as either Clinton or Trump were found not providing answers to the questions posed to them. A glaring case is at the very beginning of the debate with the first question from Brock:

**Brock:** ...*The last presidential debate could have been rated as MA, mature audiences per TV parental guidelines. Knowing that educators assign viewing the presidential debates as students' homework, do you feel you are modelling appropriate and positive behavior for today's youth?*

**Clinton:** *Thank you. Are you a teacher? Yes, I think that's a very good question because I heard from lots of teachers and parents about some of our concerns about some of the things being said and done in this campaign. And I think it is very important for us to make clear to our children that our country really is great because we are good. (...) That's why the slogan of my campaign is stronger together. Obviously, I'm hoping to earn your vote, I'm hoping to be elected in November and I can promise you I will work with every American.*

**Cooper:** *Mr. Trump you have two minutes.*

**Trump:** *Well I'll actually agree with that. I agree with everything she said. I began this campaign because I was so tired of seeing such foolish things happen to our country. This is a great country. This is a great land. When I watch what's happening with some horrible things like Obama care where your health insurance and health care is going up by numbers that are astronomical: 68%, 59%, 71%. Whether it's in business and trade, where we are doing so badly. Last year we had an almost \$800 billion trade deficit. But I want to do things that haven't been done, including fixing and making our inner cities better for the African-American citizens that are so great and for the Latinos, hispanics, and I looking forward to doing- It's called make America great again.*

**Cooper:** *Thank you Mr. Trump. The question from Patrice was about 'Are you both modelling positive and appropriate behaviour's for today's youth?'*

Considering the example above, specifically the utterances of Clinton and Trump, one can realize that it is not providing the relevant answer to the question of Brock, it gives an unmatched response to her question (R1). Both politicians violate R2 (they talked about different topics in their responses as underlined above) by avoiding talking about whether they feel they are appropriate model for today's youth or not (R3). This supposes that the politicians are intentionally hiding something related to the question which they do not want to admit (R4). The politician's violation of the relevance maxim is even supported with the follow-up question that Cooper asked, indicating that what they earlier said is not relevant to the question asked. If a speaker wants to be cooperative the most, the relevance maxim seems to be



the most difficult to violate. Levinson (1983) supports this claim by supporting Grice's notion that it is hard to find instances where this maxim is violated. Nonetheless, the opposite of this claim seems paramount in this data, a characteristic of political discourse nowadays.

### 3.4 Maxim of Manner

The last maxim is that of manner, which says that speakers should be brief and orderly, and avoids obscurity and ambiguity. This maxim indicates that one's contribution should be clear, direct, orderly and to the point. The speaker should avoid using vague or ambiguous utterances when speaking. Levinson (1983) thinks that the most important of the sub-maxims of manner is the one that states that participants "be orderly". This maxim is not usually violated in the data as the politicians seem to be aware of the diverse audience they were addressing and the need to make their visions clear to them. However, Trump, in some instances, violates this maxim by mainly exaggerating things (M2). To show how he violated this maxim, illustrative excerpts of his utterances below are presented:

**Trump:** (...) *We want competition. You will have the finest health care plan there is. She wants to go to a single player plan which would be a disaster. Somewhat similar to Canada. If you ever noticed, the Canadians, when they need a big operation, when something happens, they come into the United States in many cases. Because their system is so slow, it's catastrophic in certain ways*

**Trump:** (...) *See, I understand the tax code better than anybody that's ever run for president. Hillary Clinton is extremely complex.*

**Trump:** (...) *We sign a peace treaty and everyone's all excited, but what Russia did with Assad and by the way with Iran who you made very powerful with the dumbest deal perhaps I have seen in the history of making, with the \$150 billion and with the \$1.7 billion in cash, which is enough cash to fill up this room, but look at that deal.*

#### 4. Flouting

Flouting of the maxims takes place when speakers intentionally cease to observe the maxims in order to persuade their interlocutors to infer the hidden meaning behind the utterance; that is, the speakers employ implicature. This situation is unlike that of violations (as seen above) which takes place in order to cause misunderstanding on the part of the listeners. The concerned politicians blatantly fail to observe a maxim in which they have no intention of deceiving or misleading the audience. The politicians wished to raise the audience attention to the implicit meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning. According to Grice, this additional meaning is called "Conversational implicature" and the way by which such implicature is generated is called "flouting a Maxim" (Grice, 1975, p. 71). If the politicians and the audiences have shared the same background knowledge, the knowledge of interpretation is not the roles of linguistic forms but the knowledge of the world, then the implicature will be accomplish.

##### 4.1 Flouting the maxim of quantity

When the speaker blatantly gives more or less information than what the situation requires, the speaker usually flouts this maxim

because s/he uses insufficient words in conversation. In other words, the speaker gives incomplete words when s/he is speaking (Leech, 1983, 140). For instance:

**Trump:** *No, I'm a gentleman, Hillary. Go ahead.*

This utterance from the level of what is said is non-informative, but it is informative at the level of what is implied, and Clinton's interpretation to such utterance depends on her ability to explain the reason for Trump's selection of this particular speech. The functions of flouting this quantity maxim at this instance are ironical; Trump would always want to dominate and take turns anytime they have to answer questions. Individuals can also flout the quantity maxim in order to be humorous. Trump, in the example below flout the maxim of quantity (giving less/incomplete information) that stimulates laughter in the audience and even the politicians themselves.

**Clinton:** *Everything he just said is absolutely false, but I'm not surprised. In the first debate, I told people it would be impossible to be fact checking Donald all the time. I would never get to talk about anything I'd want to do and how we're really, going to really, make lives better for people. So once again, go to Hillaryclinton.com. We have literally Trump - you can fact check him in real time. Last time at the first debate, we had millions of people fact checking so I expect we will have millions more fact checking because, you know, it's just awfully good that someone with the temperament of Donald Trump is not in charge of the law in our country.*

**Trump:** *Because you would be in jail.*

*[Applause]*

This instance of Trump's response to Clinton's reaction provokes laughter, even from the audience. Clinton's reaction above is based on Trump's claim that she deleted 33,000 official e-mails and claims they were private mails.

#### 4.2 Flouting the maxim of quality

In order not to get some punishments from the addressee, the addressor intends to say something untrue or lies and denies something. The speaker misrepresents his information in order to make the hearer understands the intended meaning of the utterance (Levinson, 1983, 110). Example:

**Cooper:** *So for the record, you're saying you never did that?*

**Trump:** *Frankly, you hear these things, they are said. And I was embarrassed by it.*

One could infer that Trump is lying by that utterance; the implicature is clear enough to the audience that, in this case, Raddatz insists he makes it clearer enough for all to understand:

**Raddatz:** *You will get to respond right now. This tape is generating intense interest. In just 48 hours it has become the single most talked about story of the entire 2016 election on Facebook with millions and millions of people discussing it on the social network.*

**Trump:** *That was locker room talk. I'm not proud of it.*

By extension, Trump flouts this maxim of quality so as to deliver implicitly a sarcastic tone in what he states, when he says:

**Trump:** *But I have respect for women-- And they have respect for me. (...) I am a person who has great respect for people, for my family, for the people of this country.*

From the context of the utterance, and the tone of voice, it seems to be that the speaker has no adequate reason for supposing this to be the case, or possibly that he is the sort of person who would not stop short of such conduct.

#### 4.3 Flouting the Maxim of relation

The participant flouts this maxim in such a way that makes the conversation unmatched, the participants' topics are spoken in different ways; in this case the participant will change the topic by means of irrelevant topic shift in the conversation (Levinson, 1983, 111). Example:

**Trump:** *You didn't delete them?*

**Clinton:** (...) *We turned over 35,000.*

Clinton's response is in no way related to the question that Trump asked. In this case, she is being uncooperative by flouting the relation maxim which compels her to either accept or refute deleting, what Trump calls 'official e-mails'. In the situation, Trump has to infer that

'We turned over 35,000' means she deleted not only 33,000 (as he knows) of her private mails but more.

#### 4.4 Flouting the maxim of manner

When the speaker uses ambiguous language, or uses obscurity of expression which makes the utterance incomprehensible by the audience. This is the case of flouting the maxim of manner. Moreover, if the speaker uses slang or his voice is not loud enough he or she will flout this maxim (Levinson, 1983:104).

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**Cooper:** *Did you use that \$960 million loss to avoid paying personal federal income taxes?*

**Trump:** *See, I understand the tax code better than anybody that's ever run for president. Hillary Clinton is extremely complex.*

In the above example, Trump's actual response is extremely long and convoluted. He does not observe the maxim of manner in this instance. Cooper wants a brief, orderly account of whether he has been paying his federal income tax for the last 20 years or not, and how, but Trump fails to do so by giving an incoherent, exaggerated, ambiguous and obscure response. What Trump could be implying is that he is not sure of whether he has been paying his personal federal income tax for many years or the chronology of how he has been paying his taxes. The most probably action to be taken by Cooper is to ask him to be clear in his response in a follow-up question:

**Cooper:** *Can you say how many years you have avoided paying personal federal income taxes?*

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Thus, Trump flouted the maxim of manner in order to try to justify his tax situation.

To sum up, after qualitatively discussing the analysed data, the following subsection will quantitatively focus on the findings of comparing this debate with that of 2008 between Obama and McCain.

### 5. Comparison of cooperativeness in the 2016 and 2008 second US Presidential Debate

So far the findings have been interesting as it provides insight into the nature of how political debate works in general; issues of how politicians display uncooperativeness, in addition to being untruthful in their conversation as they exchange turns with one another in a bit to persuade the public to vote them in. Nevertheless, to be able to understand whether (un)cooperativeness is simply a matter of the nature of political debate nowadays or of the politicians themselves, we need to compare this debate with that of a similar debate (second of three US presidential debate in 2008).

In order for this kind of comparison to be permissible, the second political debate between Democrat nominee, Barack Obama and Republican nominee, John McCain in 2008 was used as a benchmark. The CP maxims were applied to the debate transcription (<https://www.c-span.org/video/?281621-2/2008-presidential-candidates-second-debate>) to see to what extent this debate violates or observes the Gricean maxims as a way to ascertain their cooperativeness or uncooperativeness.

Table 1 and 2 below represent the numerical distribution of the maxims violated in each interview question response. The unit of

violation was counted by each question, as per the categorization of cases of violation. The findings showed that violating the maxims (19 times) was characteristic of the 2016 debate, followed by flouting (10 times), maxim clash (4 times) and opting out (1 time). For the 2008 debate, on the other hand, flouting of the maxims characterised the debate (17 times), followed by violation (5 times), with no instance of maxim clash and opting out.

After applying the same criteria for observance and violations used in the 2016 debate on this one, it is clearly indicative that Obama and McCain seem to observe the CP maxims more, thus, their debate can be described as being more cooperative than that of Trump and Hillary who violated the maxims more (19 times) than flouted them (10 times). Obama and McCain flouted the maxims more (17 times) than violated them (5 times), thus, they triggered a lot of implicature, which best work in their debate since they are already being cooperative. The implicature was made possible for mutual understanding by means of the context and background knowledge shared by both politicians and audience.

In just very few instances (5) did they violate the CP maxims, especially the quantity maxim (Q4: the speakers talked too much). This in another way could, though indicates violation, mean the speakers are trying to provide more information that may possible convince the audience to vote for either of them as president (can be noticed on transcript, otherwise not presented here because the turns are too long). However too much of the talking time that they used, they yet observed the other maxims of quality, relation and manner to a larger extent.



Table 1: Violation in 2016 debate

Interview question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Opting out	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Maxim clash	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	4
Violation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	19
Flouting	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	-	x	-	x	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	10
Total	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	34
Opting out	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0		
Maxim clash	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0		
Violation	x	x				x					x						x	5		
Flouting	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	17		
Total	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	22		

A very reasonable implication for this kind of comparison is that it gives us an idea of the undergoing changes in political discourse; from the very truthful and cooperative kind of debates (the case of Obama and McCain), where the politicians answered the moderator's questions, to what is nowadays described in political discourse as 'politicians usually dodge from answering questions'. This clearly depicts the case of Trump and Hilary's debate, who in almost all instances of responding to their questions, never answered the questions asked but say something else that they already have in mind, which of course, is not related to the question asked.

### Conclusion

Although Grice's (1975) cooperative principle describes one of the best practices in communication in order to facilitate the process of conversation to be smoother for interlocutors, in some situations, people frequently and deliberately break these maxims in order to achieve certain purposes. When people break the maxims, they seem to have their own personal reason for doing so.

In analyzing violations in the transcript of the 2016 second-round US presidential campaign debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, by utilising the Gricean Theory of Cooperative Principle, the findings of the investigation show the politicians violate the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. They do so by way of flouting, violating, clashing and opting out of those maxims. By breaking the maxims that generate conversational implicature, this study reveals that the obvious way in which the politician's responses generate implicature is by flouting the maxims, especially that of quantity, quality and relevance. The politicians flout the quantity maxim in order to

communicate their thoughts to the audience since the goal of the campaign debate was to persuade the people to vote for either of them as next president, even if what they were saying was not related to the question asked. This brings to light how they violate the quantity, quality, relevance and manner maxims throughout their responses (19 times). It would suggest that they had already planned what to tell the audience irrespective of the questions posed to them. Almost all their responses in the data unmatched the topic by either changing the conversation topic abruptly or avoid talking about something and say some other thing. This, they do, by giving more information even when the audience question needed a brief response. On the contrary, by flouting the maxim of quantity, quality, relevance and manner, it can be concluded that the politicians seem not to be brave in justifying a statement or concern from the audience, whether the concern is true, especially when they abruptly changed the topic to talk about something else. This is because politicians have to be careful with their responses (what they admit or refuse in public), knowing it is what determines their candidacy into power. This is why truthfulness, sufficiency or insufficiency of any piece of information cannot be readily understood because politics, most often, requires certain considerations in communicating any piece of information.

Hopefully, this finding would contribute to the general understanding that political discourse nowadays is uncooperative, in addition to being untruthful. This general notion that people have about political discourse corroborate with the finding in this study, especially when examined comparatively with the debate of Obama and McCain in 2008. Back then in 2008, based on the data, the politicians in the debate responded to the question, and at very insignificant instances said things that

unmatched the topic. However, today, the purpose of debates has changed as debates now show what people want to say, not what they should say as per the questions. By extension, the finding in this study can also influence education policy in terms of teaching communication skills to students. Looking at the role communication plays within ELT classroom nowadays, the finding can help students and teachers alike to appreciate the relevance of cooperation in communication if they want to have a successful and comprehensible conversation. Education policy, through carefully design communicative curriculum should be able to emphasize and ensures this is implemented in the classroom.

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