THE FLOUTING OF MAXIMS IN THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE BETWEEN JOE BIDEN AND DONALD TRUMP 2020: THE ECLECTIC APPROACH

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Abstract*: Flouting maxims can cause the different perception which leads to such distortion and ambiguity to the hearers, particularly in debate. Based on the conformity with the search of the research, the eclectic approach had not been discussed. The aim of the research was to classify the types and strategies to flout the maxims. The data were taken from the utterances found in the transcript of debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. There were 37 utterances which were analyzed qualitatively by using Spradley Model Analysis to determine the types and strategies to flout the maxims. It was known as Ethnographic analysis contains four qualitative data analysis techniques. Those are domain analysis, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analysis. The result shows the flouting maxim of quantity is the most dominant one, with 18 utterances. Then it was followed by the flouting maxims of relation with 11 utterances. Flouting maxim manner also occurred in third place with 7 utterances. And the last one is flouting maxim of quality which rarely occurred. The interlocutors tended to flout maxim of quantity. The speakers tended to produce a very long and comprehensive explanation in order to persuade the hearers. There were five strategies employed. They were tautology, overstatement, understatement, rhetorical question and irony. There was one strategy that did not emerge in the finding. It was metaphor. Both debaters interrupted each other's speech when their standpoints being attacked and or to defend themselves. It is very significant to carry out this study about flouting the maxims, especially in debate because most debaters have tendencies to make exaggeration in proposing their agenda to influence the audiences' perception. This research is expected to be beneficial to further research especially, in comprehending the maxims flouting.*

Keywords*: debate, eclectic approach, flouting maxim, maxims, strategies*

INTRODUCTION

In every way, pragmatics cannot be separated from people's everyday life because living in a society is required to communicate mutually among them. In conversing, it not only engages reciprocally equal turn of both interlocutors but also provides a meaningful response. Supposedly, when we are dealing with communication, particularly verbal communication it involves more than one person to make it happen.

Therefore, for the sake of cooperation to create a smooth sailing communication, Grice proposes a notion called Cooperative Principle. He convinces that the flow of communication will run accordingly and effectively if the principles involving four maxims are abided (Grice, 1975, as cited in Ayasreh et al., 2019: 52). The effort to make contribution and be cooperative during communication or conversation is called Cooperative Principle. This principle is proposed By Grice (1975).

Grice has divided Cooperative Principle into four categories, they are maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation and maxim of manner (as cited in Embu-Worho, 2020: 14). However, the reality tells different things regarding how the speakers and hearers convey and receive the intended messages. When those maxims are failed to be obeyed, the non-observance maxims appear. One of the maxims which commonly occurs is flouting since the speakers cease to fulfill the maxim to urge the hearers to imply the concealed meaning or message behind the utterances, which is so called implicature (Levinson, 1983, as cited in Ibrahim, et.al., 2018: 82).

One of the situations of flouting maxims can be found in debate. In debate, the way speakers communicate will be different than that of daily communication between friends. When communicating with someone you are familiar with, the diction used is not a long-winded speech as that of in debate. In debate, due to a concealed motive to obtain, the debaters' choice of words contains a veiled message that is to influence society's interest.

In this research, it brought about the first presidential debate between Joe Bidden and Donald Trump in 2020 because those two used such a lengthened speech and indirect words just to beat their opponent or make a statement. The debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump is interesting to be analyzed because, after the winning of the elected president, the policy offered from their speech is going to be centred of attention. Indirectly, the policies can affect to the other countries when enacting a state policy.

There are some ways of maxim flouting used by the speaker in a conversation based on Grundy (2000: 76). Those are, tautology, metaphor, overstatement, understatement, rhetorical question and irony. Tautology is used by speakers as the way to express complex meaning in an easier way (Grundy: 2000). According to Levinson (1983: 148), metaphor is the use of an expression which metaphorical expression and literal expression are inter-correlated. Overstatement is used to make the speaker's utterance seems more important than it actually is by adding unimportant information. Grundy (2000) calls it as understatement in which the importance of the information given by the speaker is less than they need to give to the hearer. Rhetorical strategy is a strategy in which the questions are not needed to be answered. According to Leech (as cited in Cutting, 2002: 38), irony is an expression that is apparently polite and friendly but actually offensive.

Further to grasp the deep meaning, the researcher also employed the eclectic approach. What is meant by eclctic approach is employing more than one paradigm or set of assumptions to achieve complementary insight into a subject or utilizing different theories in certain cases.

There were several previous studies related to this research. Ibrahim, et.al (2018) focused on analyzing flouting of maxims that were flouted by the characters in the *Se7en* movie script and the motivation of the characters flouted the maxims. Another research was done by Rahmastra and Sosiowati (2018). It was aimed to identify the strategies applied and the reasons of maxim flouting by the characters in Lincoln movie script.

The aims of the research to reveal the types of flouted maxims, to unearth the strategies used to flout the maxims and to unpack how the eclectic approach view the flouting maxims in the first presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump in 2020.

METHODS

This research used descriptive qualitative method to analyse the 37 flouted utterances in the debate. The object of the study was mainly taken from the utterances that are flouted in the first presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump 2020. Those utterances were then analysed to determine the types of flouting maxims, what strategies were used to flout the maxims, and how the debate was viewed from eclectic approach.

After the data were collected, those were analysed by employing Spradley Model Analysis which is known as Ethnographic Analysis (1979:174). Ethnographic analysis contains four qualitative data analysis techniques. They are (a) domain analysis, (b) taxonomic analysis, (c) componental analysis, and (d) theme analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 37 utterances which were flouted by the speakers. They type of maxims can be drawn in the chart below.
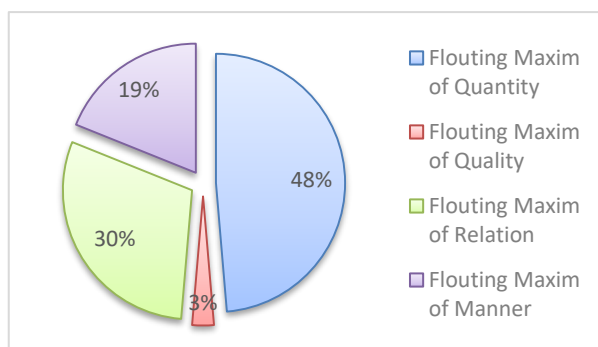

Figure 4.1 The Summary of Flouted Maxims

Based on the figure above, it can be seen that the 48 % (18 utterances) of flouted maxim utterances was dominated by flouting maxim of quantity. Afterward, it was followed by flouting maxim of relation with 30 % (11) utterances. The speakers also flouted the maxim of manner even though the percentage was not high, with only 19 % (7). And the last, it was likely that the debaters less flouted the maxim of quality with only 3 % (1) from the whole flouted utterances.

There were five out of six strategies utilized in flouting the maxims. The types of strategies employed to flout the maxims are drawn in the chart below.
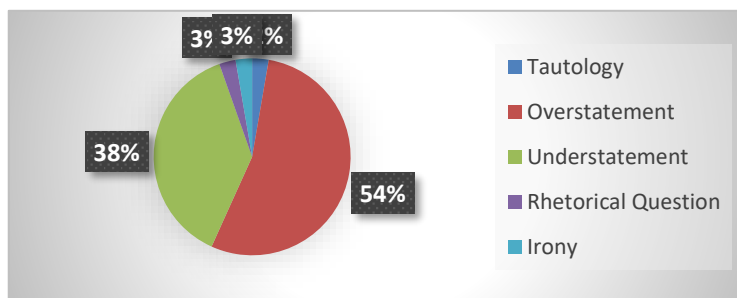

Figure 4.2 *Type of Strategies to Flout the Maxims*

The figure above explains about the strategies used to flout the maxims. There were five strategies found. They were tautology, overstatement, understatement, rhetorical question and irony. From the whole strategies, it seems that overstatement strategy was dominantly employed to flout the maxims, with 54% (20 utterances). Meanwhile, understatement strategy was in second with 38 % (14). Next strategy used was tautology, rhetorical question and irony, with 3% (1 utterance). Metaphor strategy did not appear in the analysis of first presidential debate.

Types of Flouting Maxims in the First Presidential Debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden in 2020

There were 37 utterances which were flouted by the speakers. They were categorized into four types of maxims.

Flouting Maxim of Quantity

Flouting maxim of quantity occurs when speakers blatantly provide much or less unessential information. The first example was taken from the excerpt in first segment.

Chris Wallace: (06:04)

"…And in fact, recently you have cited the issue of waiters touching their masks and touching plates. **Are you questioning the efficacy of masks?"**

President Donald J. Trump: (06:20)

"No, I think masks are okay. You have to understand, if you look… I mean, I have a mask right here. I put a mask on when I think I need it. ...-"

From the snippet of the excerpt found in the debate, the moderator Chris Wallace asked about the efficiency of masks. The hearers expected that President Donald Trump gave necessary answer with sufficient information. On the contrary, when answering the question from the moderator, President Donald Trump provided more than needed information.

Flouting Maxim of Quality

When a speaker flouts the maxim of quality, he/she does not give truthful information or say something that obviously does not represent what she/he thinks.

Vice President Joe Biden: (09:12)

"...Well, there's seven million people that contracted COVID. **What does it mean for them going forward if you strike down the Affordable Care Act?"**

President Donald J. Trump: (09:39)

"Joe, you've had 308,000 military people dying because you couldn't provide them proper healthcare in the military. So don't tell me about this."

The utterance from President Donald Trump did not give Vice President Joe Biden truthful information. Instead, his answer was laced with irony to attack the opponent. The remark, **"So don't tell me about this"** denoted that what President Joe Biden said was contradictory with the real situation at hand.

Flouting Maxim of Relation

Flouting maxim of relation happens when a statement is made to be irrelevant to the previous utterance. It is to expect that the hearers are able to imagine what the utterance did not say and make connection between his/ her utterance and the preceding one. The example can be drawn as follow.

Vice President Joe Biden: (14:12)

*"**I'm here standing facing you, old buddy."***

President Donald J. Trump: (14:14)

"If Pocahontas would have left two days early you would have lost every primary."

The exchange between President Donald Trump and Joe Biden flouted the maxim of relation. The topic they discussed was about Bernie Sanders, US Senator. Each of them

tried to beat up the opponent by throwing words even though they were related. The bolded utterances indicated that the speakers flouted the maxim of relation.

Flouting Maxim of Manner

Flouting maxim of manner occurs when speakers fail to being brief, using obscure words and being ambiguous. The may say something not briefly or orderly. The example of flouting maxim of manner can be explained below.

President Donald J. Trump: (14:46)

You'd be surprised. You'd be surprised. Go ahead, Joe.

Vice President Joe Biden: (14:47)

The wrong guy, the wrong night, at the wrong time.

The exchange between Donald Trump and Joe Biden is obviously to attempt to tear each other down. The excerpt above clearly highlighted the obscure words remarked by Vice President Joe Biden. When President Donald Trump made a statement, Joe Biden responded by saying obscure words. Joe Biden failed to fulfil the hearers' expectation in the exchange by flouting maxim of manner.

Strategies Used to Flout the Maxims in the First Presidential Debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump in 2020.

After the analysis, it was found that there were five out of six strategies utilized in flouting the maxims. From the whole strategies, it seems that overstatement strategy was dominantly employed to flout the maxims. Metaphor strategy did not appear in the analysis of first presidential debate.

Tautology

This strategy is used by speaker as the way to express complex meaning in an easier way. There was only one tautology strategy found in the analysis. Tautology was used to flout the maxim of quantity. The example was taken from datum 33 Segment VI.

Chris Wallace: (01:03:58)

Sir.

President Donald J. Trump: (01:03:58)

… all run by Democrats-

Chris Wallace: (01:03:59)

Two minutes is two minutes.

From example above, the utterance "**Two minutes is two minutes**" can be implied that Chris Wallace flout the maxim of quantity because he did not give an informative statement. The utilization of tautology functioned to remind President Donald Trump that duration of speaking had ended.

Overstatement

The strategy of overstatement occurs when a speaker gives to much information than what is needed. It can also be called as hyperbole which is used to exaggerate expressions. This strategy is employed to make utterances seem to be more essential than it actually is by adding up unnecessary information. The examples are displayed below.

Vice President Joe Biden: ([14:10](#))

I beat him by a whole hell of a lot.

President Donald J. Trump: ([14:12](#))

Not by much.

Joe Biden failed to observe maxim of quality by saying **"I beat him by a whole hell of a lot"** as a response to Donald Trump's statement. The use of a phrase **a whole hell of a lot** indicated of exaggerating expression. The function of the words is to emphasize that he succeeded in defeating Bernie Sanders.

Understatement

Understatement is one of the strategies to flout the maxims in which the speaker gives too little information than the hearer required to know. The significance of the information provided by the speaker is regarded as something that is less than they need to give to the hearers. The examples were provided as follows.

President Donald J. Trump: ([14:46](#))

You'd be surprised. You'd be surprised. Go ahead, Joe.

Vice President Joe Biden: ([14:47](#))

The wrong guy, the wrong night, at the wrong time.

Both the candidates of US President seemed tried to attack each other. It can be seen from how Joe Biden replied to Donald Trump's remark. By giving unrelated information, Joe Biden flouted the maxim of relation. Thus, the little information received by the hearers justified that he employed understatement strategy.

Rhetorical Question

Rhetorical question is a strategy in which the speaker asks the question that does not need an answer because the answer is already obvious. It was found there was one rhetorical strategy in the analysis which was employed to flout the maxim of relation.

Chris Wallace: (46:19)

"... Well, you're a side agreed to it and why don't you observe what your campaign agreed to as a ground rule. **Okay, sir?"**

Vice President Joe Biden: (46:33)

He never keeps his word.

The fact that Chris Wallace threw question to remind the President Donald Trump to not go off the track of the topic, Vice President Joe Biden answered the question. This such question which does not need an answer because the response is already clear.

Irony

Irony is an expression that is in the surface it looks polite and friendly but it is in fact laden with offensive intention. Irony is the way someone to commit flouting maxim by saying something nice but not truthful. The example of irony can be explained below.

Vice President Joe Biden: (09:12)

… **Well, there's seven million people that contracted COVID. What does it mean for them going forward if you strike down the Affordable Care Act?**

President Donald J. Trump: (09:39)

... **So don't tell me about this.**

Based on the example above, it can be implicitly perceived that according to President Donald Trump, what Vice president Joe Biden was not the truth. By saying "don't tell me about it", he implied that Vice President Joe Biden did contrarily to what he had said.

The Flouted Maxims Viewed from Eclectic Approach of Analysis in the First Presidential Debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump in 2020.

This debate was viewed from eclectic approach since the behaviour of both debaters was included in the scope of humanistic values such as analyzing the manner when they conduct the debate. Both debaters interrupted each other's speech when their standpoints being attacked and or to defend themselves. To express their disagreement, it was not unusual to cut the opponent in the middle of delivering their argument. From the

behaviours of how the debaters engage in debate, especially, from The President Donald Trump's, it is not a good manner and utterly rude to cut someone's speech before they end their words. In psychology, it is called as dissociative identity disorder (DID), which means a person has two or more different personalities. Further in philosophy, it tends to dualism issue.

As the saying goes "*Manners Maketh Man*", people judge one's characters from their conduct and mannerisms. They are reflected to the behaviour when dealing with communication with other people. No matter what excuses or ulterior motives they have, when speaking on public, it is essential to the manner of speaking.

CONCLUSION

The result of this present study revealed that in the debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, the interlocutors tended to flout maxim of quantity. In one hand, each of their arguments was laden with giving too much information when trying to convince the hearers or to defend their stance. On the other hand, when the opponent seemed to argue, attack and rebut his standpoint, the other speaker vaguely answered and deflected it by providing less information. The analysis indicates that in debate, the speakers tended to produce a very long and comprehensive explanation in order to persuade the hearers.

The implication of such a finding was that both candidates of US President had tendency to give much more information than necessary and exaggerate it in order to make conviction to the hearers so that subconsciously, they believe in what they propose. This kind of setting appeared to happen in the attempt to persuade the mass by giving additional information to be polished as important information, even though in reality it was not that necessary. Overstatement strategy was mostly used to flout the maxim of quantity and maxim of manner.

Thus, if people have knowledge of flouting the maxims, when they choose certain candidates of president, their choice will be determined wisely. The researcher suggests to other researchers to conduct and explore the studies in wider area to dig up new phenomena related to flouting the maxims.

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