

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the description of the background of the study, the problem of study, objectives of the study, significances of the study, previous study, and the definition of terms. This research outline will be discussed in the following chapter with their sections on how to analyze this study.

1.1 Background of the research

Language plays a crucial role in political communication, especially in interviews where political figures have to not only convey information but also create meanings, positions and public images. Political interviews are not neutral exchanges of information, but strategic interactions where speakers carefully select linguistic forms to achieve particular communicative goals such as persuading audiences, legitimizing policies, defending positions or criticizing opponents. The meanings conveyed in political discourse are thus often implicit and need to be pragmatically analyzed in order to be fully understood.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies how context contributes to meaning in communication. Pragmatics is “the study of those relations between language and context which are grammatical, or encoded in the structure of a language” (Levinson, 1983). This perspective is essential to understanding political discourse, where speakers often rely on contextual cues, shared assumptions and implied meanings rather than explicit statements. Political actors use language strategically for communicative purposes that go beyond the literal content of their words.

In the political domain, language is an even more strategic and complex player. Language is crucially important for political actors to

justify actions, legitimize policies, construct leadership identity and shape public perception. Political language is not neutral but constructed by power relations, ideology and institutional roles (Chilton, 2004). Political speech is often indirect, ambiguous and carries implied meanings, especially in public interviews where speakers must balance transparency with political caution. Fetzer (2008) points out that political interviews are a place where media discourse and political discourse interact. Interviewers and interviewees negotiate institutional constraints and adhere to particular communicative agendas. Van Dijk (1997) further emphasizes that political discourse is fundamentally defined not merely by its participants but by the contextual conditions and political actions it accomplishes, making it essential to examine not only what is said but also the institutional settings, goals, and power relations that shape how political communication takes place.

The recent decades have been marked by an intensive academic interest in the investigation of political discourse. Researchers have examined various features of political discourse, including rhetorical devices, speech acts, politeness phenomena and implicatures. In a cross-cultural comparison of discourse markers in political interviews in Persian and English settings, Zand-Moghadam and Bikineh (2015) have found that linguistic means are crucial for the organization of political discourse and that cultural factors are vital in the construction of messages by political actors. Thus, their results demonstrate the significance of pragmatic analysis in comprehending the process of meaning negotiation in political discourse across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

A theory which explains meaning construction in pragmatic interaction is the Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975). According to Grice, successful communication relies on the notion that interlocutors cooperate through the observance of four principles in a conversation: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The quantity principle holds that

the speaker must give sufficient but not excessive or insufficient information. The quality principle implies speaking the truth and giving enough evidence for statements. The relation principle states that the speech contributions should be related to the topic under discussion. The manner principle holds that the speakers should express themselves in an unambiguous way.

However, in practice, when people are engaged in communication within a political context, they sometimes deliberately or unintentionally break these maxims for certain purposes, such as expressing their covert meanings, protecting their specific interests, or helping the listeners interpret their speech in a desired way. This paper looks into cases of breaking these maxims in two categories, as proposed by Cutting (2002), namely flouting, when a speaker deliberately breaks a maxim in order to create a conversational implicature to be understood by a listener. Political speakers frequently flout maxims to convey meanings that go beyond the literal content of their utterances, thereby creating conversational implicatures that audiences must infer.

The research on the Gricean maxims in political discourse has produced important results about the pragmatic strategies used by the political figures. Research in this field has found that political speakers strategically employ observance and non-observance of conversational maxims to influence audience interpretation, control public image, and effect persuasion. Political actors may choose to flout or break the maxims for the sake of projecting transparency and credibility, but also to communicate implied meanings, to avoid direct commitment, or to strategically withhold information (Harris, 2001; Bull, 2002). These findings suggest that the relationship between political language and conversational norms is complex and requires systematic pragmatic investigation.

Political interviews constitute an important forum of political discourse, where politicians can comment on various matters of public concern, along with managing their public image at the same time. As compared to a well-rehearsed speech, interviews involve a dynamic process of communication, which requires politicians to react to questions raised by the interviewers. In such circumstances, speakers may either follow conversational rules or deviate from them for realizing certain communication objectives. According to Mahmud, Talaohu, and Maulud (2025), in their discussion of political discourse in Indonesia, concerning politician Dedi Mulyadi, political figures employ assertive and inclusive discourses in conversation by employing speech acts, politeness strategy, and implicature in conversation. It is evident from this description that political interviews may be analyzed pragmatically to understand the process of meaning construction and stance formation through linguistic discourses.

This study focuses on an interview with former United States President Joe Biden entitled “Joe Biden: Former US president gives first interview since leaving the White House,” broadcast by BBC News on 7 May 2025. This interview is particularly significant because it was Biden's first major interview after leaving office. In the interview, Biden reflects on several major political issues, including the war between Ukraine and Russia, criticism of former President Donald Trump's approach to the conflict, the values of democracy, and the future of alliances between the United States and Europe. As a former president, Biden no longer speaks as an active policy-maker, yet his statements still carry political authority and ideological weight.

The interview context makes this study relevant and interesting. Biden's responses are reflective, argumentative, and historically grounded, providing a wide range of utterances in which conversational maxims may be observed or not observed. Analyzing how these maxims operate in his speech can reveal how political stance, leadership reflection, and

international positioning are constructed linguistically. Furthermore, studying a post-presidential interview offers a unique opportunity to examine how a political figure communicates when freed from the immediate constraints of office yet still engaged in shaping public discourse on significant political matters.

1.2 Research Problems

In political interviews, language functions not only as a medium for delivering information but also as a tool for constructing political meaning and positioning ideological perspectives. Political figures often employ pragmatic strategies that involve the observance or non-observance of Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), particularly conversational maxims, to manage responses, emphasize viewpoints, or avoid direct statements. However, in the context of political interviews, especially those conducted after a leader's presidency, speakers do not always strictly adhere to these maxims, and their pragmatic choices may carry implicit political meanings. Despite this, while existing studies such as Oladeji (2024) and Mahmud et al. (2025) have examined conversational maxims and pragmatic strategies in political discourse, studies that examine both the observance and non-observance of conversational maxims and how they contribute to the construction of political meaning specifically in post-presidency interviews remain limited. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by analyzing Joe Biden's first post-presidential interview on BBC News. Based on the background described above, this study addresses the following research problems:

- 1.1 What types of maxims are found in Joe Biden's first post-presidency interview on BBC News?
- 1.2 How do the maxims contribute to the construction of political meaning in Joe Biden's interview on BBC News?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the researcher is intended:

1. To identify the types of maxim observance and non-observance found in Joe Biden's first post-presidency interview on BBC News; and
2. To analyze how the observance and non-observance of Grice's conversational maxims contribute to the construction of political meaning in Joe Biden's interview on BBC News.

1.4 Research Significances

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of pragmatics by extending the application of Grice's Cooperative Principle to post-presidential political discourse. It demonstrates that conversational maxims are not merely rules for effective communication but also play an important role in shaping meaning within political discourse.

Practically, this research may help students, researchers, and the general public better understand how political figures use language in interviews. By recognizing the observance and non-observance of conversational maxims, audiences can become more critical listeners and better interpret implicit meanings in political communication.

1.5 Previous Study

Several previous studies have addressed issues related to conversational maxims and other pragmatic aspects in non-political discourse settings. One such study carried out by Oladeji (2024) in the paper titled *Flouting of Grice's Cooperative Principles Maxims in Biden's Inaugural Speech* focused on examining the phenomenon of maxim flouting in a political speech setting. The researcher established that all four cooperative principles maxims were flouted in Biden's inaugural speech, but

the maxim of manner was flouted most frequently via the use of metaphors, repetition, tautology, and anaphora. It was observed that flouting maxims is a common practice during political speeches, and it is often done consciously for rhetorical purposes, manipulation of facts or information, and avoiding awkward situations. While this study shares a similar focus on Gricean maxims in Biden's political language, it differs from the present study in two significant ways: first, it focuses exclusively on flouting and does not examine maxim observance or violation; and second, it analyzes a prepared inaugural speech rather than a spontaneous interview setting, which involves different communicative dynamics and pragmatic strategies.

An empirical study carried out by Hamidah, Arifin, and Ariani (2022) titled *Analysis of Flouting of Conversational Maxims by Characters in The Help Movie* investigated the occurrence of maxim flouting in movie dialogues. According to the results obtained in the analysis, it was revealed that there was an extensive use of maxim flouting, specifically Quantity and Relation, in order to communicate hidden meanings with regard to power dynamics, social satire, and character motives. From the findings, one can conclude that maxim flouting serves as a pragmatic technique of conveying hidden meanings in conversations without leading to communication breakdown. Nonetheless, this study differs from the current study in that it only examines flouting without observing other types of maxims uses in political dialogue.

Another relevant study was conducted by Tarmini, Solihati, Fitriani, and Ibrahim (2023) entitled *The Violation of the Cooperative Maxim in Early Childhood: A Pragmatic Case Study*. This study focused on the violation of conversational maxims in early childhood interactions and found that violations often occur due to limited linguistic competence and developmental factors. While this study is relevant in its focus on maxim violation, it differs significantly from the present study in terms of both context and subject examining unintentional violations in child language rather than deliberate pragmatic strategies in adult political discourse.

Moreover, Perliansyah, Edy, and Fauziah (2025) performed an analysis titled *An Analysis of Conversational Implicature Found in Know Your Meme*, in which conversational implicature in the digital context was explored to reveal that implication was often employed to express humor, sarcasm, and common cultural knowledge. Despite the significance of pragmatics highlighted by the mentioned research in the understanding of communicative meanings beyond their literal senses, this research is distinct from the current one in the sense that it analyzes implicature in the context of digital conversation as opposed to political discourse.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the pragmatic use of conversational maxims across various contexts, they tend to focus primarily on a single type of non-observance either flouting or violation and pay limited attention to maxim observance. Furthermore, none of them examines how both observance and non-observance function together within post-presidential political discourse. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by analyzing both observance and non-observance of conversational maxims in Joe Biden's first post-presidency interview on BBC News, focusing on how they contribute to the construction of political meaning in reflective political discourse.

1.6 Definition of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and to clarify the key concepts used in this study, several important terms are classified and defined as follows:

1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies meaning in relation to context and how speakers convey implied meanings through language use. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of meaning as conveyed by a speaker and understood by a listener, with an emphasis on the speaker's intended meaning rather than the literal meaning of the words.

2. Cooperative Principle

The Cooperative Principle is a theory introduced by Grice (1975) that states that individuals taking part in a dialogue should cooperate so that there can be successful communication. The Cooperative Principle introduced by Grice (1975) states that individuals participating in a conversation should make their contribution to the conversation as required, given the accepted purpose or direction of the discourse.

3. Conversational Maxims

Conversational maxims are conversational norms proposed by Grice (1975) consisting of four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, which guide speakers to provide sufficient information, speak truthfully, remain relevant, and communicate clearly in order to achieve effective and cooperative communication.

4. Observance of Maxims

Observance refers to the condition in which speakers follow conversational maxims appropriately in communication, contributing to conversation in ways that are truthful, sufficiently informative, relevant, and clearly expressed (Cutting, 2002).

5. Non-Observance of Maxims

Non-observance takes place when participants do not strictly observe the rules of conversation. The present research explores the phenomenon of non-observance using the framework of Flouting suggested by Cutting (2002). Flouting is a kind of non-observance where the participant does not observe maxims but expects listeners to understand the implied meaning.

6. Political Discourse

Political discourse refers to the use of language in political contexts that reflects ideology, power relations, and institutional roles. Van Dijk (1997) argues that political discourse is defined not merely by

its participants but by the contextual conditions and political actions it accomplishes, while Chilton (2004) further emphasizes that political language is never neutral as it is always shaped by power relations and ideological considerations.

7. Political Meaning

Political meaning refers to the implicit political ideas, values, or perspectives conveyed through language use in political communication. As Fairclough (1989) argues, language in political contexts is never simply informational but is always ideological, reflecting and reinforcing particular ways of understanding the social and political world.

8. Utterance

Utterance refers to a unit of spoken language produced by a speaker in a particular context (Cutting, 2002). In this study, the utterances analyzed are Joe Biden's responses in the BBC News interview broadcast on 7 May 2025.

