

# Permissible Flouting Of Grice's Maxims In American Political Speeches

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## ABSTRACT

Our communicative exchanges must have cooperative efforts and we have to recognize some sets of purposes or accepted direction. Grice's cooperative principle and the four maxims have to be carried in every talk exchanges no matter in what field or what career people are practicing them. In this connection, while apologizing, the politicians at certain contexts and for specific reasons they flout these maxims. Thus, the study aims to find out the reasons for flouting these maxims while expressing the act of apology in three selected American speeches. Utilizing Grice's Model and Searle's and Bach and Harnish's models of speech acts, the study concludes that in both direct and indirect apologies, the speaker intentionally breaks the maxims of conversation and that the apologizer relies on extra words and expressions in order to justify and explain the act committed towards others.

**KEYWORDS:** Cooperative principles, Grice's maxims, violation, political apology, political texts

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Date of Submission: 25-09-2021

Date of Acceptance: 08-10-2021

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Making speeches is a vital part of the politician's role in announcing policy and persuading people to agree with it. Speaking publically to a group of people can vary and take different forms as well as depending on the subject matter involved in such spoken or written texts in a given context of situation. We shall confirm that the speaker is completely qualified and has a sort of authority that enables him to speak before his audience (Beard, 2000: 35). Through public speeches, speakers can bring about different purposes or goals on their audience in a way that they stress and outline their speeches in order to generate the effect they desire on hearers. In this respect, speaking publically can be that of giving a lecture (to inform, instruct, advice, etc.) as well as the speeches of war, welcome, conversation, conference, awards, etc, where the function and form of each is quite different because of the context in which these speeches are made by the speaker. The key goal behind every speech is to move the audience, to win, to motivate, to convince, to inspire, etc (Neale, 1998: 13). Language whether spoken or written is the means through which various fields, such as politics, express their principles, concepts, and ideas. The language of politics is a variety of language since it has its own lexical, syntactic and semantic features. Political language is a variety of language different from other varieties by which politicians, using certain effective aspects in their speeches, whether spoken or written, bring about the effect they seek on their addressees, publically on TV or on radio.

The concept of apology has often occupied the central place in the philosophy of language, since it is often thought that making apology is the use of language most crucial to linguistic meaning, and since apologies are the natural expressions of cognitive attitudes, hence of importance for theories of *knowledge* and *belief*. Therefore, apology can be applied to be carried out through the language of politics in the sense that it is a speech act in which something is claimed to hold by, for instance: *presidents, prime ministers, politicians*, etc.

The present research paper aims at discussing the reasons for flouting the maxims and the cooperative principle of Grice in a selection of political texts. The analysis corpus consists of fragments extracted taken from situations implying the use of political speech act of apology held by American politicians.

## Political Discourse

Language and politics are intimately linked at a fundamental level. Nothing in nature happens without a reason and nature itself has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech (Chilton, 2004: 4-5). From the above discussion, it is obvious that speech is the medium through which we can communicate. Communication in society happens chiefly by means of language. However, the users of language, as social

beings, communicate and use language on society's premises; society controls their access to the linguistic and communication means.

The most common interpretation of the notion of political discourse was given by Van Dijk (1998:12), namely "political discourse is ambiguous, focuses on the analysis of 'political discourse'. Still, we need to determine which discourse is political and which is not. On the other hand, there is also more critical reading of the label, viz., as a political approach to discourse and discourse analysis. Then, what exactly is a 'political discourse'? The easiest and not altogether misguided answer is that political discourse is identified by its actors or authors, viz., politicians.

Political language is usually described as a highly eclectic (selective) language. This, of course, creates a difficulty in approaching a clear-cut definition of this variety of language whose use depends on the context in which it is manipulated to bring about certain objectives. There are cases where political language is chiefly connected with facts about the world, and in other cases political language is totally emotive, personal, impersonal, informative, communicative, and expressive. The notion of political discourse does not remain restricted only to the situational field of politics (parliamentary discourse, speeches, election campaigns... etc.), but it also allows and is open to all linguistic manifestations that may be considered to be political, provided that it is convincingly argued what may be political (Zheng, 2000:1).

It is important to stress the observation of van Dijk according to whom the political discourse is not a genre, but a class of genres defined by a social domain, namely, that of politics. Therefore, government deliberations, parliamentary debates, party programs, and speeches by politicians are among the many genres related to the domain of politics. In addition, there is a kind of emphasis on studying, analyzing, and relating political discourse to genres that are totally linked with the domain of politics rather than the genres belonging to social domains, even though displaying political intentions such as anti-abortion campaign, or corporate talk intended to influence tax or investment legislation.

Discourses are communicated through a cluster of different types of political texts. Such cluster is seen by Chilton and Schaffner (1997:214) from two perspectives:

1. Texts that discuss political ideas, beliefs and practices of society or some part of it (text producers need not to be politicians only).
2. Texts which are crucial in giving rise to a political or ideological community group, or party. Within this perspective, finer distinctions are drawn: a) Inner-state discourse (domestic) and inter-state discourse (foreign policy and diplomacy). b) internal-political discourse (politicians talking, planning, deciding, etc. among themselves) and external-political discourse (politicians communicating with the public).

The use of language for various purposes is governed by the conditions of society, in as much as these conditions determine the users' access to, and control of, their communicative means. Apologies in the field of politics seems to have the purpose of maintain harmony, gaining the voters' support or manipulating the audience in personal advantage. Therefore, it is important to throw light on this act in politics and to discover, through scientific analysis, the hidden intentions of the giver or the concealed meanings of the apology.

### **Political Apologies**

Apology has been considered as a particular type of speech events. This particular type or other social encounters constitute what is known as "politeness-sensitive". Therefore, focusing on such social encounters or special kind of speech event, this however accounts for a wide range of politeness behavior and to represent these events as highly conventionalized actions (Leech, 2014: 115).

As a particular act, Searle sees apologies as those acts that can be classified under the expressive acts category. In this category, the illocutionary point refers to the psychological state that seems to be specified in the sincerity conditions about the state of affairs (1975b: 359). From another angle, Norrick (1978: 278) distinguishes between expressive acts (as apology included) from others by referring to them as acts expressing emotions, feelings, rather than intentions of beliefs. However, almost all the definitions perceive apologies as polite acts. Apology is "a polite speech act used to restore social relations" (Janet Holmes, 1995: 155).

Leech (2014: 116) gives four satellites of speech events through which apology can be accompanied:

- 1- confession of responsibility. Here must be an admission for the fault or offence done by the apologizer.
- 2- giving explanation or excuse for how and why such wrong act committed by the apologizer.
- 3- an offer of repair. The wrong act has to be repaired and to correct it. The apologizer has to make sure of remedying his/her offence.
- 4- promise of forbearance. Avoiding doing wrong doing acts in future is what represents this point.

There are four components of apology. Deutschmann (2003: 46) identifies four important components of an apology which can be expanded as:

- 1- *the offender*, refers to the one who does the offence or the fault (the one who takes responsibility for doing such act/s),
- 2- *the offended*, the one on whom the wrong act occurs,

- 3- *the offense*, it represents the wrong act whether real or potential one,
- 4- *the remedy*, this component consists: recognition of the offence, acceptance of responsibility, and excreting remorse and regret.

However, in the case of political apologies, the first component (offender) can be seen as represented by a political actor (as different from those apologies in public arena whereby the apologizer is a civil one), while the second component (offended) might be not political. Sanz (2012:15) considers apologies as political "if they involve political issues and are delivered by an appropriate political agent". The central power of political apologies as Govier, Werwoerd, and some other scholars point out, lies in their abilities to supply an acknowledgment of dignity to victims. An important fact has to bear in mind that not all apologies made by political actors constitute political apologies (Sanz, 2012: 15). For example, the bureaucratic apparatus of governments is made up of state institutions; however their character is, in principle, administrative and not political (ibid). For an utterance to be considered as a political apology, it must meet two specific requirements; it must be political content-wise and it must be formulated by a political agent. Political apology then is political for two reasons: the first, political apology involves political agents and, the second, political apology involves political issues (Chilton and Schaffner, 1997: 214).

As stated by Tavuchis, the importance of political apologies is to clear things and hence these apologies considered as reconciliation preludes (1991: 109). Sometimes, to perform a political apology, declaration documents, announcement through media, and public declarations are involved (ibid). Another purpose of political apology has been supported by Edwards (2010:61). According to him the purpose is "to repair relationships between victimizer and victim harmed by past wrongdoing".

Besides the reconciliation, political apologies help to build the confidence among parties (disputed parties). To put it in another word, they help to establish stabilization among them (Sanz, 2012: 12). Edwards (2010:36) points out another purpose for political apologies. According to him, these apologies help to build identities and nations. These apologies among different communities try to enact for these social communities, not only this, they try also to draw national identities (ibid).

**Cooperative Principle and Conversational Maxims**

The cooperative principle theory has to be studied within speech act theory because; within discourse we need to examine the cooperation between the text's producer and the intended audience (Bazzi S, 2009: 93). Therefore, it is important to consider here the theory of meaning giving by Grice (1975). Let us consider the following example faced when someone asks me about Romania, as it follows:

A- *Do you think Romania is a good country to live in?*

B- *Yes, indeed. It's really a nice country to live in.*

Before examining the example, let us probe what Grice has stated in his theory. For Grice, the set of principles and rules which hold the communication among people can be identified. In this respect, Gricedesigns a principle realized as a "*cooperative principle*". According to him, common goals can be identified by the participants and these participants in turn can cooperate with each other due to the purpose of the conversation as it required.

The cooperative principle and the four maxims of conversation given by Grice can be summarized as in the following chart below:

No.	Conversational Maxims				
I.	Maxims of Quantity	1. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.	2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required		
II.	Maxims of Quality	Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true.			
		1. Do not say what you believe to be false.	2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.		
III.	Maxim of Relation	Be relevant.			
IV.	Maxims of Manner	Supermaxim: Be perspicuous.			
		1. Avoid obscurity of expression.	2. Avoid ambiguity.	3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).	4. Be orderly.

**Table 1: Conversational Maxims(Grice, 1975)**

Moving back to our example and applying the four maxims, we can notice that B's reply holds the maxims of quality (as the answer held by me) (being true towards the state of affairs stated by the question) and by saying B, the utterance was completely true as expressed by the speaker. But if someone realizes that B is not

telling what is considered to be true or the answer lacks an adequate evidence, then B violates the maxims of quality. B's answer also satisfies the maxims of quantity by giving the current exchange the exact informative answer that is required for the question stated by A. But by giving prolixity or ultra-short answer, then B violates the maxims of quantity. The third maxims also can be seen by B's answer because the answer was relevant to the question stated by A. Suppose that B's answer was *'I have to meet my supervisor tomorrow'* then the answer is irrelevant to A's question. By applying the fourth maxim 'maxims of manner', we can see that B's answer does not carry any prolixity, ambiguity, obscurity and it is stated orderly. For Grice, within a normal conversational interaction, we can generally observe these maxims and these principles of conversation. But what is more strikingly is that within apologies (more specifically in political apologies as the case of our study), these maxims are going to be flouted. Therefore, it becomes necessary to consider political apologies before examining the data selected.

## II. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study there are two subdivisions involved. The first requires the method followed in data analysis and results analysis, and the sample selected. The second comprises the proposed model for analyzing the act of apology in the selected data.

### A. Method and Sample

This research project utilizes the qualitative method to describe and examine the selected data and gain results. The data are assembled from three political speeches offered by American politicians in an attempt to apologize for a certain offense.

### B. Model of Analysis

In this paper we aim to analyze three selected speeches concerning the speech act of apology taken from American political texts. To account for the purpose of the analysis, two levels are involved: contextual and pragmatic levels. For contextual.....and for the pragmatic analysis, an eclectic model has been chosen for the data analysis, involving Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Bach and Harnish (1979). Felicity conditions are also given to be a tool for analyzing the data. In addition, we are going to apply the above given maxims on the way of apologizing in order to prove the manner in which those politicians flout these maxims along with giving the reasons for that.

### Data Analysis

1-*“At a point in every person’s life, one has to look deeply into the mirror of one’s soul and decide one’s unique truth in the world, not as we may want to see it or hope to see it, but as it is. And so, my truth is that I am a gay American. ... Shamefully, I engaged in an adult consensual affair with another man, which violates my bonds of matrimony. It was wrong. It was foolish. It was inexcusable. And for this, I ask the forgiveness and the grace of my wife” (Jim McGreevey 2004).*

These lines above are imputed to the previous New Jersey Governor, Jim McGreevy. The apology was offered by him in a press conference where he admitted having an adult consensual affair with a man. As a governor, the act of the American gay, Jim, is considered as a wrong act and that can violate his bonds of matrimony for being married and having a wife. Therefore, he decides to offer his apology for the audience and his wife.

Jim tries in his text to express his regret and his guilt for what he has done to his wife and the New Jersey residents as he is the governor. The extract can be seen as carrying Jim's responsibility for his previous act. As there is regret, feeling of repentance, and admitting the act, the extract can be considered as an apology. Pragmatically, the utterances stated by Jim can be interpreted as an apology for the fact that he was a gay; he had a consensual affair with a man. Therefore, the act may affect his matrimonial bonds with his wife. The following utterances can indicate admitting the act and convey the apology act: “my truth is that I am a gay American”, “Shamefully, I engaged in an adult consensual affair with another man, which violates my bonds of matrimony”, “It was wrong”, “It was foolish”, “It was inexcusable”, “And for this, I ask the forgiveness and the grace of my wife”. The apology in this extract is highlighted by the use of the declarative sentence. It is an indirect way of apologizing featured by Jim as being responsible for the act of having a relation with another man and hence breaking the bonds of his matrimony with his wife. For this, Jim is the offender, his wife and audience are the offended persons.

The governor expresses his psychological attitudes towards what he has done. The act therefore can be seen as an expressive act as Searle suggests. In the above extract, Jim refers to some utterances which can be treated as he is acknowledging the responsibility for what he has done.

It is obvious that the locutionary act is expressed by the use of words of apologizing, i.e. by the indirect apology rather than the exact words of apologizing. Jim's illocutionary act can be seen as that he apologizes for his engaging with a man in a consensual affair. By doing so, Jim is the offender person for this act.

By following the felicity conditions for Jim's act, the prepositional condition is that there is an act committed previously and what has been offered by Jim is an apology for that act. The preparatory condition for Jim's act is that he believes what he has done is wrong. By uttering "Shamefully, I engaged in an adult consensual affair with another man, which violates my bonds of matrimony", "It was wrong", "It was foolish", "It was inexcusable", "And for this, I ask the forgiveness and the grace of my wife", Jim regrets doing that and he asks forgiveness.

From the way Jim McGreevey has given his apology, we can say that he flouted the maxims of quantity. What he has stated is that he expressed his apology in a more informative way. In other words, he did not make his contribution as is required for the current purpose of giving the apology. Moreover, the speaker flouted the maxim of manner. Looking closely to his way of speaking, he was not brief enough to give his apology act. For others, his speech might seem to have prolixity.

**2-*"I'm here today to again apologize for the personal mistakes I have made and the embarrassment I have caused. I make this apology to my neighbors and constituents, but I make it particularly to my wife Huma. I had hoped to be able to continue the work that the citizens of my district had elected me to do, to fight for the middle class and those struggling to make it. Unfortunately, the distraction I have created has made that impossible"* (Anthony Weiner 2012).**

After engaging in inappropriate online relationships with several women, the previous congressman Anthony Weiner offers his apology to the embarrassment he caused to his wife, neighbors and citizens. The apology came after his revelation in a conference that he had sent lewd pictures to several women via social network sites, generally on Facebook. However, the speech came after denying having this kind of relation and sending naked pictures. Looking closely into this extract, the speaker admits his personal mistake that caused pain for his wife and others. Therefore, by saying that, the speaker seems to acknowledge the responsibility of doing an unpreferable action.

Pragmatically speaking, Anthony expresses his reason for his presence, i.e. he makes it clear that he wants to apologize for what he did (having online relationships with several women), "I'm here today to again apologize". This way of expressing himself can be shown as a hyper polite way of apologizing. However, Anthony's act can be utilized to indicate a direct speech act of apology. It is highlighted by the declarative sentence "I'm here today to again apologize". The apology is featured by Anthony's attribution as he is the responsible for engaging with several women in inappropriate online relationships. By giving his apology and by referring to the act as a personal mistake done by him and the embarrassment he caused, the speaker undertakes the responsibility for having online relationships.

There is an acknowledgment from the part of the speaker as he admits causing offence to his wife, neighbors and constituents. In terms of Austin's three suggested acts, the locutionary act for Anthony's speech is that apology is expressed by the exact detached apology verb (*apologize*). The apologizer apologizes for having and making online relationships with women, and by doing these two acts, Anthony is the offender who has caused pain to his wife, neighbors, and constituents.

The propositional condition for the above given apology is that an existed past action was caused by S (Anthony) (the act of involving with online relationships). The preparatory condition is that he believes making this kind of relationships is wrong action; particularly he is married and a congressman. It is wrong not only from the personal side, but generally the distraction may lead him to lose his earlier position job. By recognizing this, he regrets his wrong act and therefore what Anthony offers counts as an apology (essential conditions).

In the above give extract, it is clearly that the speaker has flouted the maxims of quantity. In his way of apologizing, he did not follow the conversational maxims of being informative as is required. Anthony Weiner expressed his apology in a more informative way by giving explanation for what he had done. Another maxim has been flouted in this text is the maxim of manner. The apologizer was not brief when he expressed his apology. In other words, by giving extra explanation, he did not avoid prolixity.....

### **3-*John McCain – I apologize***

*I see strength when I look in your eyes*

*I got in deep with my big mouth*

*And I put my foot in it*

*John McCain's my hero baby*

*He went through a lot of pain*

*He is brave and he's courageous*

*John you take my breath away (Donald Trump 2015)*

These lines were extracted from a song given as an apology by Donald Trump to Arizona Senator McCain. The song was delivered by Trump in an interview with Fox News' O'Reilly. The apology was given

because the multibillionaire caused a stir to John McCain when he remarked that the latter was not a war hero. However, by giving and expressing his speech, it can be considered as a good behavior to show McCain his sincerity towards what he caused. Therefore, Trump used some features and lexical forms to color his act of apology.

The act can be shown to indicate the direct speech act of apology highlighted by the declarative sentences "John McCain – I apologize...". Trump has caused the offence to McCain by saying he is not a war hero therefore the apology here can be featured by Trump's attribution as he is the one who has said McCain is not a war hero. By giving his apology, Trump undertakes the responsibility for insulting the Arizona Senator. Therefore, the offender here is Trump while the offended person is McCain as he says "John McCain – I apologize...", i.e. apologizing by naming the offended person.

By offering the apology act for his deed of insulting John McCain, Trump apologizes for his behavioral attitude towards the Senator and hence it can be considered as a behavior act. Trump expresses his psychological state about what he has caused. But it is importantly to remember that he offers his apology informally (in aLyrics by James Rustad). To apply an apology that means to correspond to some decorum. For giving a successful apology as Negash (2006) says, is to give it in a formal way. However, by giving his apology, Trump acknowledges the responsibility for doing his offence.

The speaker in the above act (S) Trump utters the exact verb of apology i.e. (apologize) and by doing so this can be seen as a locutionary act for Trump's act, Trump apologizes for his wrong remark towards McCain (illocutionary act), and by giving the above two acts, Trump can be seen as the offender.

As there is a wrong remark given by Trump to McCain, he apologizes for doing that and this however can be seen as a propositional condition. Trump apologizes because he believes that by calling John McCain with "not a hero of war" is wrong and this can be considered as a preparatory condition for his act. However, by recognizing this, Trump regrets using the remark and what he offers can be counted as an apology act (essential condition).

By looking closely to what was given by Trump we can conclude that he has violated the maxim of quantity for the fact that he began to explain things which left his speech to be more informative than it should be as it shown above. Relying on the informal way of apologizing and using a lyric helped us to consider that the text has violated the maxim of quality and the maxims of manner. The use of such expressions like "my hero baby" can help to say that Trump gave his apology to what he believes to be false. From another angle, Trump was not brief enough in saying his words. Giving an apology in a long lyric and informal manner can also be interpreted as that the speaker violated the maxims of manner.

### III. CONCLUSION

The above study has led to the following conclusions:

1-Pragmatically, the apology act is realized in two ways; directly and indirectly. In case of resorting to the direct way of apologizing (using direct form of apologies), the speaker aims to be more clear, straight, and obvious in his/her manner of apologizing. But sometimes the speaker resorts to the use of indirect act (using some other forms of apologies), he/she aims to show a polite and respect way to offer the apology act. In other words, the speaker tries to mitigate the offence.

2- In both the direct and indirect way of apologizing, the speaker intentionally breaks the maxims of conversation. It seems clearly that at least in political field, the apologizer relies on extra words and expressions in order to justify and explain the act committed towards others.

3-The apology act needs to be given in a more informative way to mitigate the offence committed by the offender through the use of the explanation and justification accompanied to the apology given. However, this can justify the reason behind violating the maxims through the way of apologizing.

4-Although we cannot generalize that these maxims are flouted in all political texts, we can stress that this model of analysis can be applied with success when we are interested to have a deeper understanding of the speech act of apology and of the intricate intentions of the giver while offering an apology.

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AHMAD KAREEM SALEM AL-WUHAILI. "Permissible Flouting Of Grice's Maxims In American Political Speeches." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(10), 2021, pp. 33-39.