A Pragmatic Analysis of FPRRD's Quad Committee Hearing on Drug War Using Grice's Maxims

Haninnah D. Dalgan

Master of Arts in Language Teaching English, Graduate School, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan Cotabato Philippines
haninnahd@gmail.com

Yusrha H. Kahar

Master of Arts in Language Teaching English, Graduate School, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan Cotabato Philippines
yusrhak@gmail.com

Donnie M. Tulud

Associate Professor V, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan Cotabato Philippines
dmtulud@usm.edu.ph

Rezeille May C. Amilbahar

Instructor III, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan Cotabato Philippines
rmcamilbahar@usm.edu.ph

Abstract

This study was conducted to analyze former President Rodrigo Duterte's responses during the Quad Committee hearing on the Philippine drug war through the lens of Grice's conversational maxims. An analysis of Duterte's dialogue revealed frequent violations of the maxims of Quantity, Relation, Manner, and Quality. These violations manifested as excessive, ambiguous, or irrelevant information, evasion of direct answers to critical questions posed by Congresswoman Brosas, and diversion from the central topic of inquiry. This behavior aligns with existing research indicating politicians may strategically avoid conversational maxims to evade cooperation. The study reveals that violations can undermine clarity and relevance in high-stakes political discussions, hindering effective discourse and accountability. Furthermore, the study suggests further research should focus on the strategic use of maxim violations in political contexts, their impact on public perception, and methods for enhancing clarity and transparency in political communication to foster more productive exchanges. Overall, with the help of conversational maxims and observed violations, it is easier to understand how political discourse can be manipulated to obscure accountability and hinder transparency.

1. INTRODUCTION

For the past few years, the problem of drug-related violence and crime has been in the spotlight, particularly the "war on drugs," which was launched by former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. A policy, typically a rather aggressive one towards illegal drugs, of this sort has been

accused of extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In response to the situation, the Quad Committee hearings convened by the Philippine House of Representatives have established a forum for critical examination. This forum unites law enforcement officials and the families of victims, to provide testimony regarding the implications of the policy in question.

The formal setting of a Quad Committee hearing is a rich source of pragmatic analysis that would show the strategies of speakers in communicating their points, particularly through Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and its Maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner. From Grice (1975), it assumes that people are cooperative, and they provide informative, true, and relevant messages in a clear form. Studies have shown politicians often intentionally disregard established conversational norms to obscure information, exert influence, or manipulate public perception (Buddharat et al., 2017; Awwad et al., 2019). Hadi and Mat Isa (2023) further argue that witnesses in political settings use maxim flouting to navigate power dynamics, while Khan (2019) asserts that political statements are typically deceptive to influence voter decision-making.

Despite extensive research into political discourse and the pragmatic violations identified by Zhang and Pan (2020), there has been a notable lack of focus on the application of these strategies within legislative inquiries, particularly in the unique context where a former president participates as a resource person. In contrast to campaign speeches or media interviews, committee hearings are characterized by institutional constraints that significantly shape discourse strategies. This study investigates how former President Duterte either adhering to or violating Gricean maxims to manipulate the narrative, evade accountability, or assert dominance. By addressing the gaps present in the current body of research, this study provides valuable insights into power negotiation, discourse control, and the pragmatic violations that occur within Philippine political hearings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The application of Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and conversational maxims in political communication has been widely studied, particularly in terms of how public figures communicate in high-stakes environments. These maxims—quantity, quality, relation, and manner—offer a framework for assessing the effectiveness, clarity, and purposeful dissonance in verbal communication. Political leaders, especially those in the public eye, will often use these maxims to manipulate narratives, deflect blame, or solidify ideological foundations (Thomas, 1995; Cutting, 2002). Yet, beyond these findings, more research is necessary on how political cultures affect the application and interpretation of these maxims, particularly in non-Western contexts.

Several studies have explored strategic non-observance of Grice's maxims during political discourse with varying results. For example, Xiang (2018) explored Chinese political discourses and concluded that politicians repeatedly violated the maxim of quantity by providing too much or too little information to deflect public attention. This strategic vagueness serves to hide contentious issues while preserving an image of responsiveness. Conversely, Kenzhekanova (2015) concluded that some politicians strategically observed the maxim of quantity in controlled media settings to project transparency and credibility. This suggests that politicians deliberately manage between observance and violation based on the setting and audience. Similarly, Fairclough (2001) emphasized that political leaders prefer to violate the maxim of relevance to deflect direct responses and shape public opinion in their favor. On the other hand, some studies, such as Van Dijk (2006), maintain that relevance is sometimes preserved when politicians aim to reaffirm ideological messages and mobilize support from particular audiences. These findings show that observance or violation of conversational maxims is highly reliant on the setting, audience, and purposes of the speaker. However, there is a limited research

on how political leaders manage such strategies over the long term and across sites, particularly digital and social media settings.

In Philippine political rhetoric, earlier research has investigated how pragmatic strategies are employed by political leaders to respond to controversial issues. Tarrayo and Tuazon (2020) analyzed the speeches of former President Rodrigo Duterte and found repeated maxim violations, especially through evasive assertions and imprecise words when referring to controversial policies like the war on drugs. From their findings, it appears that Duterte frequently violated the maxim of manner by employing colloquial or coded words that invited inferencing, rendering his words open to multiple meanings. This rhetorical approach enables political leaders to address multiple audiences at once without an apparent loss of deniability. Yet other research, like David (2019), documented cases of Duterte complying with conversational maxims when addressing his supporters directly, rendering his words taken as sincere and personalized. Although these researches shed light on Duterte's rhetorical approach, not much discussion has been made about how other Philippine political leaders, like senators or opposition parties, employ or violate maxims in other settings, such as debates, interviews, and official statements. This is an empirical shortfall in the research on the larger setting of Philippine political rhetoric and how maxim compliance or violation differs among different political leaders and settings.

Studies on Political committee hearing highlights the means through which politicians use linguistic devices to manage questioning and avoid accountability. Clayman and Heritage (2002) have emphasized how political leaders systematically violate the maxim of relation by producing non-sequiturs, thus enabling them to manage the discourse. Such strategic diversion helps politicians to avoid confrontation with sensitive issues. In congressional hearing studies, Bull (2003) noted that politicians use indirectness and rhetorical devices to project the image of cooperation while at the same time avoiding direct accountability. Conversely, Harris (2010) noted that in the legal and committee setting, some politicians observe conversational maxims for building credibility and legitimacy, particularly when sworn in or threatened with legal sanctions. These studies paint political speech to be on a strategic continuum, where politicians balance conformity to and violation of conversational maxims in line with their short-term rhetorical goals. Existing studies do not comprehensively illustrate how these strategies differ across legal, media, and public settings, thus highlighting the need for additional studies.

Despite the rich literature on political discourse and Grice's maxims, there still remain some research gaps. First and foremost, there is no comparative analysis between political cultures. Though previous research has examined different contexts, including China, the Philippines, and Western political discourse, there is little direct comparison on how politicians from different political and cultural paradigms manipulate these maxims. Secondly, the growing predominance of digital and social media in political discourse has not been examined comprehensively. The majority of the literature addresses speeches and committee hearings; however, there is little information on how politicians violate or adhere to maxims in digital modes of discourse, such as tweets, online debates, and social media messages.

Furthermore, more contemporary work is largely linguistically oriented in political rhetoric studies, but it does not fully examine audience reception and interpretation. Different demographic categories, both supporters and adversaries, can interpret the same conversational maxim violations in different ways, thus shaping their political attitudes and faith in leaders. Furthermore, there is a critical dearth of the temporal evolution of political discourse. Although studies are generally focused on specific individuals and events, there is insufficient reflection on whether the strategic use of maxims has evolved as a function of changes in media landscapes, public awareness, or political agendas. Knowledge of how public opinion evolves as a response to these rhetorical tactics is important to the more sophisticated analysis of political discourse (Hazhar, et al 2021).

Addressing these gaps has the potential to open new avenues of research, including cross-cultural political speech studies, the use of digital media in the manipulation of compliance with conversational maxims, and empirical investigations on how different audiences perceive violations of

such maxims. Furthermore, a general study of political figures in the Philippines, aside from Duterte, would give a better picture of conversational strategies prevalent in the politics of the Philippines. Further, examining the degree of manipulation of maxims and its impact on political trust and popular opinion might give us further insight into how effective these kinds of rhetorical tools are.

In summary, although research on Grice's maxims in political communication is informative regarding rhetorical manipulation, further work is necessary to examine these new dimensions. Greater understanding of maxim compliance and maxim violation in various political ideologies, media, and audience perceptions will contribute to the overall understanding of political communication strategies.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative textual analysis approach, which is widely used for exploring language use and meaning (Creswell, 2013). Grounded within the framework of pragmatics, it specifically utilizes Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle to examine how FPRRD and other participants adhere to, flout, or violate the conversational maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner during the Quad Committee hearings on the drug war to achieve communicative intent.

The primary material for this study is the official video recording of former Philippine Former President Rodrigo Duterte (FPRRD) speech during a Quad Committee hearing on the Philippine drug war. The video was chosen due to its direct relevance to the research objective, offering a rich source of pragmatic data to analyse the communicative strategies employed by FPRRD. To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the data, the video was sourced from ANC news channel and YouTube, a verified and credible information repository. The video was transcribed verbatim, capturing all spoken contents along with non-verbal elements such as tone, pauses, and emphasis which are crucial for a thorough pragmatic analysis.

A purposive sampling method was employed to select specific excerpts based on their relevance to the research objectives. Selected excerpts included moments of argument, explanation, or persuasion where maxims are not observed.

Data Analysis

The data were systematically examined based on their adherence and non-observance of Grice's maxim. Each identified instance of adherence or non-observance was categorized according to the relevant maxim. Further, the analysis included documentation of the specific utterance, its context within the discourse, and the likely communicative intention behind it.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, a comprehensive analysis of Grice's cooperative principle (1975) was used to identify the non-observance of maxims in the conversation exchange of Former President Rodrigo Duterte during the Quad committee hearing on drug war.

Maxim of Quantity

Brosas: So, can the former president look them in the eyes and say once more that he takes full legal responsibility for the deaths of their loved ones, Mr. Chair. [So, can the former president look them in the eyes and say once more that he takes full legal responsibility for the deaths of their loved ones, Mr. Chair?]
Mr. Chair: Mr. President, ahh, can you…
Duterte: What's the question?
Mr. Chair: What is the question? Ahh Again, you repeat the question.

Brosas: Mr. Chair, sinabi nya po na full responsibility. So, Mr. Chair, totoo ba yan? [Mr. Chair, he said "full responsibility." So, Mr. Chair, is that true?]

Duterte: Correct. Very correct. Since I was the president, until this ahh, until now serious problems about drugs, I had to issue or make a statement about drugs. At ahh, all that happen, yung nangyari pursuant to my order to stop drug problem in this country, akin yun. Akin akin yun. Ako ang nagbigay ng order kasi ginawa nilang legal or illegal, akin yun. I took... [Correct. Very correct. Since I was the president, until this, until now with the serious problems about drugs, I had to issue or make a statement about drugs. And all that happened, what happened pursuant to my order to stop the drug problem in this country, that's mine. That's mine. I gave the order, whether they did it legally or illegally, that's mine. I took...]

In this exchange, Brosas directly asks Duterte to face victims' families while taking complete responsibility for their family members' deaths through extrajudicial killings. Duterte's response lacks clarity and brevity because he provides an unnecessary long-winded explanation. Throughout his response, Duterte explicitly asserts his acceptance of responsibility but avoids specific discussion about confronting the emotional situation of victims' relatives. His answer also includes less relevant details about the nationwide drug problem and his power to command law enforcement measures. The speaker violates the Maxim of Quantity which dictates that information delivered must be precise without exceeding or lacking requirement. The relevant aspects in Duterte's response receive excessive explanations while he fails to give direct acknowledgment of victims' emotional distress the question clearly targeted.

Duterte avoids the emotional intensity of the question while still appearing to answer it. His excessive repetition and broad statements serve as a deflection tactic, shifting focus away from the direct challenge of addressing the families' pain and toward a more generalized justification of his actions. This rhetorical strategy allows him to reaffirm his leadership and accountability on his own terms without fully confronting the moral and legal weight of the issue. As a result, the response feels incomplete and strategically evasive, leaving room for ambiguity about whether he genuinely acknowledges the impact of his actions on the victims' families.

Prior research supports this observation, as **Heritage & Greatbatch (1986)** found that politicians often employ excessive explanations and broad statements to **divert attention from the core issue,** a tactic evident in Duterte's rhetorical strategy. Similarly, **Bull et al. (1996)** identified that political figures frequently use **strategic avoidance techniques** to appear responsive while evading direct accountability. Duterte strategically stays away from the emotional weight of the question not only to evade the moral dilemma but risks losing the trust of his people with this issue by showing himself as not caring about the real human cost of his policies.

Brosas: Yes, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, ahh tanong ko, sinasabi nyo rin na ang war on drugs ay talagang utos nyo, di ba? Ahh pag sinabing war on drugs, Duterte yan. Sa inyo na nadikit yan, unless, eto po, tanong, pwede nyong i-expound, may iba kayong gustong itawag doon. Meron po ba kayong gustong itawag doon? [Yes, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is, you're also saying that the war on drugs was really your order, right? When you say "war on drugs," that's Duterte. It's associated with you, unless—and this is my question—you can expound on this, is there anything else you'd like to call it? Is there anything you want to call it?]

Duterte: Wala na po. Sabi ko I assume full responsibility for whatever happened in the actions taken by the law enforcement agencies of this country to stop the drugs or the serious problem of the drugs affecting our people. [Nothing else. I said I assume full responsibility for whatever happened as a result of the actions taken by the law enforcement agencies of this country to stop the drugs, or the serious problem of drugs affecting our people.]

In this conversation, Brosas asks Duterte whether he would prefer to rename the war on drugs. Duterte answer straightforwardly with "Wala na po" (Nothing else) providing adequate response to the question. However, he proceeded to provide an extended explanation about taking full accountability for all law enforcement actions toward drug war. The further details in his answer exceed basic required information for the initial query thus creating an unnecessary complex response. His response violates the Maxim of Quantity since speakers need to deliver information at an appropriate length that avoids excessive detail.

The violation of the Maxim of Quantity enables Duterte to move public attention from drug war renaming toward his complete authority in drug enforcement policies. Duterte sustains his position of authority through this additional information which defines the dialogue by concentrating it on police operations instead of terminology clarification. Through this method, he establishes his position as campaign leader before avoiding analysis of the public reception towards drug war initiatives. Extra remarks about the law enforcement issue function both to shift public attention away from term controversies and to protect the war on drugs from further investigation.

This result mirrors the findings of Va**n Dijk (2006),** who argues that **political discourse often manipulates focus and interpretation to maintain authority and avoid scrutiny.** Duterte's strategy in this instance distracts from other challenging questions about the drug war by reinforcing his image as a strong leader. Successively, Duterte avoids the issue of clarification by not mentioning the term, and instead claims responsibility for law enforcement actions to continue to strengthen his political narrative and avoid any more nuanced debate over the conflict of the drug war and its public reception.

Brosas: So, walang mga kriminal o walang insidente ng kriminalidad, bakit po? [So, there were no criminals or criminal incidents at all, why is that?]
Duterte: Merong mga insidente, not totally. It would be a dream of a city not to have any criminal incidence or violent. Pero overall, Davao City was safe. If a… the test or standard would be that is citizen of the city can walk all over the city and men and children can go home safely unmolested, undisturbed, that was the standard that I give to the police of Davao City. [There were incidents, not totally [crime-free]. It would be a dream for a city not to have any criminal incidents or violence. But overall, Davao City was safe. The test or standard is that citizens of the city can walk all over the city and men and children can go home safely, unmolested, undisturbed, that was the standard that I gave to the police of Davao City.]

In this conversation, Brosas seeks clarification from Duterte about the absence of criminals and crime incidents throughout Davao City, specifically asking why such a state was achieved. Duterte gives a prolonged answer rather than a direct response to the question. He admits that certain incidents existed in Davao although he does not specify how widespread those incidents were, stating, "Merong mga insidente, not totally." But he goes on to speak about how achieving a totally crime-free city remains a dream beyond reach which goes against the essence of the question. His standard of safety revolves around whether residents can move freely to their homes without disturbance thus designating the city as secure. This response violates the Maxim of Quantity because it overstates the necessary response length by providing extensive details which avoid tackling the fundamental question point. This rhetorical strategy aligns with Bull (2003), who highlights how political figures often shift the focus of discussions to maintain a favorable image and deflect from controversial topics. Similarly, Fairclough (2000) explains that leaders frequently frame narratives in ways that reinforce their authority while limiting scrutiny of their governance.

Furthermore, Duterte prevent to reveal crucial details about criminal statistics and police policy in Davao City. He avoids technical explanations about crime rates or the disappearance of criminals to focus the discussion on basic public security measured by freedom of movement. The redirected answer presents his leadership in a positive light as he

avoids any detailed examination of controversial enforcement practices which may have influenced Davao City's reputation. Through his reply, Duterte confirms his strength to lead while focusing on the positive results of his rule and avoiding a detailed analysis of unsettled aspects of crime management in Davao.

In doing so, Duterte focuses away from the particular method of managing crime and gives safety a more generalized stance, minimizing attention to more difficult and often more dubious facets of law enforcement for the sake of protecting his public image from partition and the avoidance of a public dialogue on governance and how policy is executed.

Maxim of Quality

Brosas: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask again noh. Ahh sa inyo po na karanasan, kayo mismo ba ang pumatay? [Mr. Chair, I would like to ask again. In your experience, did you yourself kill anyone?]
Duterte: Ako? Marami. Six… mga six or seven… [Me? A lot. Six... around six or seven...]
Brosas: So, what
Duterte: …ewan ko kung natuluyan, hindi ko na, hindi ko na pinull-up sa hospital kung natuluyan [I don't know if they died. I didn't follow up at the hospital to see if they died.]

In this conversation, Brosas questioned Duterte if he ever killed anyone himself. Duterte responds with "Ako? Marami. Six… mga six or seven…" (Me? A lot. Six… around six or seven…), followed by "Ewan ko kung natuluyan, hindi ko na, hindi ko na pinull-up sa hospital kung natuluyan" (I don't know if they died. I didn't follow up at the hospital to see if they died). Duterte gives an ambiguous reply which makes it hard to tell if he means what he says as fact, exaggerate or use sarcasm. His vague statement about "six or seven" fatal victims combined with his uncertainty about their death creates skepticism regarding his truthfulness.

The ambiguous nature of his statement weakens truth perception because Duterte rejects the Maxim of Quality, which indicates that speakers should only give information which can be supported by evidence. The reliability of his declaration becomes weakened because he shows uncertainty about whether the deaths actually happened. This allows people to misinterpret his words. Public reception of his statement becomes unclear because some people believe the literal meaning yet others view it as political rhetoric or empty bravado. This strategy creates obstacles to prosecution and validation by avoiding responsibility.

This finding is consistent with the study of Cutting (2002) found that violations of the Maxim of Quality in political discourse are often intentional, used to create uncertainty and protect the speaker from direct accountability. It was perhaps a good move for Duterte to keep his words ambiguous not only to protect himself from any legal consequences but also to stop the public from canning politicians for their own misconduct. He blurs the line between truth and exaggeration thus creating a rhetorical shield for him in order to avoid responsibility and maintain authority.

Maxim of Manner

Brosas: Mr. Chair, yes, or no? Davao style?
   Duterte: Do not ask me to answer yes or no. You are not an investigator.

In this conversation, Brosas seeks a definitive answer from Duterte regarding the Davao style protocols. Duterte avoids giving direct answers by asking Brosas not to make him pick between yes or no responses saying, "Do not ask me to answer yes or no. You are not an investigator." The way Duterte avoids answering violates the Maxim of Manner that necessitates clear concise and orderly communication. Duterte chooses not to give a straight answer that would bring focus back into the heart of the question, opting instead for an ambiguity and an evasion.

Through deflection, Duterte can control the conversation. This is a tactic that helps him stay neutral and therefore does not take a clear side in the matter. By leaving room for ambiguity, Brosas is forced to ask the question and steer the conversation while having to take the responsibility of both asking the question and guiding the conversation. In asking the legitimacy of the question, Duterte also questions the authority of the inquirer, thereby adding to the complexity of the discussion.

This finding reinforces the study of **Atkinson (1984),** who observed that **politicians often avoid firm commitments to maintain strategic flexibility. Zhu (2014)** also notes that in **Asian political rhetoric, indirect responses can serve as a tool for preserving power hierarchies while deflecting challenges**—a pattern evident in Duterte's **tactic of questioning the legitimacy of Brosas' inquiry itself.** Duterte does not only dodges the question and avoids taking the blame but also redirects the conversation to the questioner. Such can further complicate the public understanding of his position, thereby allowing him to continue exercise political power while minimizing his direct scrutinization.

Brosas: Mr. Chair, next question. Nung naging mayor po kayo, sabi nyo naging safe ang Davao, tama po ba? [Mr. Chair, next question. When you became mayor, you said Davao became safe, is that correct?]
Duterte: Ahh that… that… that would be a…a…a… that should be answer by a…a… a third person. I would not be answering that. It would be presumptuous of me to conclude. Hindi yung magsabi, I never said that Davao City was not…not…publicly. [That should be answered by a third person. I would not answer that. It would be presumptuous of me to conclude. I won't say, I never said that Davao City was not... not publicly.]
Brosas: Mr. Chair, as mayor masasabi nyo na naging safe and Davao sa panahon nyo. [Mr. Chair, as mayor, can you say that Davao became safe during your term?]
Duterte: Talaga. [Absolutely.]

In this conversation, Brosas asks Duterte if Davao City became safer while he served as mayor. Duterte presents an incoherent response, hesitating and repeating words: "That… that… that would be a… a… a… that should be answer by a… a… a third person." The uncertain delivery of his statement together with his frequent interruptions while talking creates confusion in understanding his response. He further adds, "I never said that Davao City was not…not…publicly," which is unclear and open to multiple interpretations.

His speaking manner violates the Maxim of Manner because he fails to deliver messages in an organized fashion while being brief and clear. The deliberate violation of Manner's Maxim through Duterte's unstructured responses leads to confusion about his position regarding Davao's safety level. The unclear and hesitant manner of his speech might function as a deliberate strategy to stay ambiguous at first so people can interpret his responses in different ways. The conversation reveals a strategic move where the speaker avoids definite commitments before reinstating a strong position about security upon definitive questioning. His uncertain statements possibly aim to protect himself against immediate questioning which might dispute his original statement.

Fairclough (2000) explains that political figures frequently employ vague language to maintain flexibility in their statements. Duterte's initial incoherence and later firm assertion of "Talaga" ("Absolutely") reflect a deliberate shift in communication, enabling him to appear decisive while initially avoiding potential scrutiny. Similarly, Bull (2003) argues that politicians often use hesitation and unstructured speech as a rhetorical tool to avoid direct accountability. Duterte's repeated use of fragmented phrases and self-corrections aligns with this strategy, allowing him to delay or redirect the conversation before giving a definitive answer. Duterte first poses a confusing answer; then he declares one offered firmly, and this provides a flexible façade to avoid an unwanted truth. Public perception can make it impossible to hold politicians to be accountable for what they say and how it is interpreted.

Brosas: So, walang mga kriminal o walang insidente ng kriminalidad, bakit po? [So, there were no criminals or criminal incidents at all, why is that?]

Duterte: Merong mga insidente, not totally. It would be a dream of a city not to have any criminal incidence or violent. Pero overall, Davao City was safe. If a… the test or standard would be that is citizen of the city can walk all over the city and men and children can go home safely unmolested, undisturbed, that was the standard that I give to the police of Davao City. [There were incidents, not totally [crime-free]. It would be a dream for a city not to have any criminal incidents or violence. But overall, Davao City was safe. The test or standard is that citizens of the city can walk all over the city and men and children can go home safely, unmolested, undisturbed, that was the standard that I gave to the police of Davao City.]

In this conversation, Brosas questions Duterte about Davao City's lack of criminals and its apparent absence of crime incidents. Duterte delivers an evasive and hard to follow response instead of clear straightforward information when asked the question. The starting point of his response, "Merong mga insidente, not totally", is a vague statement that highlights crime in some instances but not completely. He then adds, "It would be a dream of a city not to have any criminal incidence or violent," which is a general observation rather than a direct response to the question. To conclude his response, he describes the safety he achieved in Davao City by saying people could walk at ease throughout the city without disturbances. Instead of discussing actual enforcement methods or crime records, he concentrates on his own personal accomplishments. The vague expressions and imprecise statements in his statement violate the Maxim of Manner because clear and understandable communication is essential in discourse. The answer he provides contains multiple possible interpretations.

The ambiguous nature of Duterte's statement as he flouts the Maxim of Manner creates an open-ended response that becomes challenging to analyze which proves useful in avoiding extensive investigation. His generalized language produces uncertainty about the Davao City crime situation so he can talk about public safety without discussing concrete numbers or specific law enforcement practices.

This finding confirms the study Van Dijk (2006) which highlights that ambiguity in political communication serves as a tool for controlling public perception. Duterte's vague statement creates an impression of security in Davao City while preventing a detailed examination of law enforcement strategies that might be controversial. This way, Duterte escapes his responsibility to provide precise information and the shaping of public opinion: he remains immune to nuances or complexities of crime in Davao City.

Brosas: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask noh, hindi ka nagkandamatay sila sa panahon na iyon? [Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask, didn't they risk their lives back then?]

Duterte: Marami po. [A lot.]

Brosas: Sino sino po ang mga pumatay? [Who were the killers?]

Duterte: Wala akong listahan nyan, Ma'am. You have to go to the tawag nito… Hindi ako…I…I… hindi ko bitbit. Ang bitbit ko lang ho yung [I don't have a list of that, Ma'am. You have to go to the, what do you call it. I'm nott carrying it. The only thing I'm carrying is...]

In this conversation, Duterte flouts the Maxim of Manner by responding in a vague, disorganized, and unclear way. When Brosas asks who was responsible for the killings, Duterte avoids giving a straightforward identification of persons involved in the killings. Instead, he says, "Wala akong listahan nyan, Ma'am. You have to go to the tawag nito… Hindi ako… I…I… hindi ko bitbit." The fragmented nature of his answers combined with his hesitation causes his statements difficult to understand and follow. Duterte's response lacks both clarity and order when he uses unclear wording to hide information that the question asked for.

Not adhering to the maxim of manner results in confusing communication which makes it harder to discern exact responses. His disorderly speech pattern functions as an avoidance method because it stops him from explaining the matter directly when confronted with questions. This form of unclear communication forces Brosas to seek clarification allowing Duterte to avoid responsibility refuse scrutiny.

Additionally, Fairclough (2000) explains that political figures often use vague language to avoid accountability. Duterte's incomplete and hesitant statement allows him to withhold critical information while appearing to respond. This evasion is part of Duterte's way to control the discussion in the public domain, to avoid facing direct responsibility in the actions and decisions, and to shape the public perception on how responsible he is in sensitive issues.

Maxim of Relation

Duterte: I take full responsibility for it.
Brosas: Thank you. Mr. Chair, yun po yung tanong ko. Yung families of innocent extrajudicial killings, kayo din? [Thank you. Mr. Chair, that's my question. What about the families of innocent extrajudicial killing victims, is that on you too?]
Duterte: File the case in court.

In this conversation, Brosas attempts to clarify the situation when Duterte says "I take full responsibility for it." She wants to know if he accepts accountability for the relatives of civilians who died during extrajudicial killings. Duterte redirects the discussion when he says "File the case in court" instead of answering whether he accepts responsibility for innocent victim deaths. The speaker violates the Maxim of Relation (Relevance) through his response because he fails to provide an answer about his responsibility towards innocent victims, instead he redirects the blame to judicial processes.

The response allows Duterte to avoid directly admitting his accountability toward the families of innocent extrajudicial killing victims. He draws the conversation toward court proceedings to show that this matter ought to be settled by legal courts instead of personal responsibility acknowledgments. Through this response, he transfers the responsibility for seeking justice from handling extrajudicial killings onto the victims' families to pursue legal process instead of obtaining his position on his role in such activities.

This result supports the findings of Fairclough (2000) which emphasize that politicians often use legal frameworks to justify or evade direct ethical admissions. By telling Brosas to "File the case in court," Duterte **frames accountability as a legal matter rather than a moral obligation**. By deflecting responsibility on legal terms, the language that Duterte uses shields the public perception of accountability by making it a legal problem rather than a moral one, enabling him to avoid direct question.

Brosas: Ang lahat po kasi naalala ko sa war on drugs ahh yung mga accomplishment, may nahuli, nagbebenta, gumagamit, gumagawa ng droga. Lahat yan. [What I remember about the war on drugs is all the accomplishments, people were caught, selling, using, manufacturing drugs. All of that.]
Duterte: Ma'am, if you are the city executive or mayor, lahat ng utos mo na ginawa ng pulis and all the consequences, sagot ko yan. Pati ang ginawa ng pulis, sagot ko yan. [Ma'am, if you're the city executive or mayor, I take full responsibility for all the orders I gave to the police and all the consequences. I take responsibility for everything the police did.]

In this exchange, Brosas recalls the successes of the war on drugs, citing arrests and drug-related incidents. Instead of engaging directly with this subject, Duterte redirects the conversation to emphasize his role as a leader. His reply— "If you are the city executive or mayor, lahat ng utos mo na ginawa ng pulis and all the consequences, sagot ko yan."—does not specifically address the topic of arrests and drug-related matters but rather highlights his responsibility. By not providing a pertinent response, Duterte disregards the Maxim of Relation, which dictates that statements should be relevant to the ongoing discussion.

Duterte redirects the focus away from the details of the war on drugs' achievements and centers on his overarching accountability for police actions. This tactic might serve as a rhetorical device to evade detailed discussions about specific events, enabling him to manage the narrative. The implication is that, instead of contemplating the effectiveness of the initiative, he shapes the conversation in a manner that reinforces his authority and accountability. This approach can mitigate further examination of the details surrounding the drug war's effects while maintaining a commanding leadership image.

Moreover, Bull (2003) argues that politicians often **dodge direct engagement with policy details** to avoid scrutiny. Duterte does not **comment on the actual arrests or drug-related incidents** but instead **shifts the focus to his executive role**, avoiding any discussion of the drug war's concrete outcomes.

Brosas: So, Mr. Chair alam nyo po ba kung ilan ang arrested sa mga drug operations at how much ang drug noh na naseize nung time na yan? [So, Mr. Chair, do you know how many people were arrested in the drug operations and how much drugs were seized at that time?]
Duterte: Ma'am I was not notified in advance that I have to make an accounting for the arrested persons in davao City. That is a…a…a…I would not… I would not want to… that would not be the proper question [inaudible] [Ma'am, I was not notified in advance that I had to provide an accounting for the arrested persons in Davao City. That would not be the proper question.]

In this exchange, Brosas requests Duterte to provide specific statistics on the number of arrests and the number of drugs confiscated during the operations. Rather than answering the question, Duterte avoids the issue by claiming he was not informed in advance to provide such figures. He deems to assert that the inquiry is inappropriate. His reply fails to directly address the request for factual data, rendering it unrelated to the initial question. This disregard for the Maxim of Relation means Duterte avoids giving a definitive answer regarding the results of the drug operations. His response diverts attention from the discussion of data and accountability to the procedural matter of not being prepared for the inquiry. This diversion allows him to evade direct examination of the drug operations' results.

Furthermore, by labeling the question as "not proper," he implicitly questions its validity, which may deter further investigation into the matter. Such response undermines transparency and hinders a factual assessment of the drug war's outcomes. His answer also avoids political responsibility and instead highlights his lack of preparation. This confirms the findings of Bull (2003) which argues that political figures **frequently deflect responsibility** by questioning the procedural legitimacy of an inquiry. Duterte's rejection of the question not only deprives him of addressing important data but also forms public perception of the drug war. He avoids dealing with the issue at hand by deflecting focus to larger issues aimed at a general erosion of trust in governmental transparency.

Brosas: Yes, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair siguro ahm tatanong ko na lang ng diretso Mr. Chair, yung former president ba ay willing na…ahm… mag cooperate sa investigation sa ICC kaugnay dito? [Yes, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, perhaps, I'll just ask directly, Mr. Chair, is the former president willing to cooperate with the ICC investigation regarding this?]
Duterte: ICC Ma'am? I am… I'm asking the ICC to hurry up and if possible, they can come here and start the investigation tomorrow. This issue has been left hanging for so many years. Matagal Maam baka mamatay na ako baka hindi na nila ako maimbestiga. So, I am asking the

ICC through you na magpunta na sila dito bukas, umpisahan na nila ang investigation. And if I am found guilty, I will go to prison and wrath there for all time. [The ICC, Ma'am? I'm asking the ICC to hurry up, and if possible, they can come here and start the investigation tomorrow. This issue has been left hanging for so many years. It's been a long time, Ma'am; I might die before they even get to investigate me. So, I am asking the ICC, through you, to come here tomorrow and start the investigation. And if I am found guilty, I will go to prison and rot there for all time.]

In this dialogue, Brosas directly asks if Duterte is willing to cooperate with the ICC investigation. Rather than answering straightforward, Duterte deflects by making a sarcastic comment about the slow progress of the ICC, suggesting they should come right away to investigate him before his death. Although his reply references the ICC, it does not directly address his willingness to cooperate. This disregards the Maxim of Relation, which states that responses should be pertinent to the question asked. Through sarcasm and hyperbole, Duterte diverts the main topic instead of dealing with the core issue.

By disregarding the Maxim of Relation, Duterte successfully avoids stating his position on cooperating with the ICC investigation. His answer introduces vagueness, allowing for varying interpretations—while some may view it as a challenge, others could see it as ridicule towards the investigative process. This rhetorical technique aids him in evading responsibility, as he does not clearly agree to or decline cooperation. Additionally, by concentrating on the ICC's sluggishness, he positions the matter as a failure of the ICC rather than his readiness to comply, subtly shifting the focus away from his own actions. Such responses can shape public perception by minimizing the gravity of the investigation and framing it as a trivial or delayed issue rather than a legal obligation he must confront.

This aligns with **Atkinson (1984),** who noted that **politicians use humor and exaggeration to control narratives while downplaying serious allegations.** Furthermore, **Zhu (2014)** points out that **sarcasm in political discourse can serve to trivialize accusations while fostering public skepticism toward institutions like the ICC**. Duterte's deflection does not take a concrete stand on cooperation but also changes the ICC investigation's narrative.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of non-observance of Grice's conversational maxims during the Quad Committee Hearing on the Philippine drug war, specifically focusing on Duterte's responses, reveals consistent violations of the maxims of Quantity, Relation, Manner, and Quality. Duterte frequently flouts these maxims, often offering excessive, ambiguous, or irrelevant responses instead of directly addressing the questions posed by Congresswoman Brosas. His replies tend to avoid straightforward answers and sometimes shift focus to unrelated matters, such as procedural issues or personal reflections, which detracts from the clarity and relevance of the conversation.

Moreover, Duterte frequently violated the Maxim of Quantity by either providing excessive details or withholding necessary information, avoiding yes-or-no answers and instead elaborating unnecessarily. The Maxim of Quality was also flouted in cases where his statements seemed exaggerated or lacked verifiable evidence, such as claiming that Davao was completely crime-free or vaguely acknowledging personal killings without specifics. Additionally, Duterte repeatedly flouted the Maxim of Relation by providing off-topic responses, rhetorical questions, or deflections rather than directly addressing the inquiry. Finally, his responses often violated the Maxim of Manner, as they contained ambiguity, stammering, and vague phrasing, making it difficult to extract clear conclusions. On the other hand, Brosas generally adhered to the maxims by keeping her questions direct, relevant, and

clear, yet Duterte's consistent evasions, ambiguity, and rhetorical diversions made the discussion inefficient and hindered the extraction of straightforward answers.

The conversation demonstrates how language can be strategically used to deflect accountability, control the narrative, and introduce ambiguity, especially in political or legal settings. Duterte's frequent violations of Grice's Maxims allowed him to avoid making explicit statements that could be used against him, shift the discussion toward broader themes rather than specific incidents, and create multiple interpretations of his words. These tactics made it challenging for the inquiry to establish concrete conclusions regarding his direct involvement in the war on drugs and alleged extrajudicial killings. The lack of precise and cooperative responses in such formal investigations not only affects the clarity and efficiency of the proceedings but also influences public perception, making it difficult to hold officials fully accountable for their actions.

In this analysis, it is recommended that stricter protocols be put in place to ensure that resource persons give straightforward and clear answers, especially to yes-or-no questions, in order to promote clarity and accountability in political and legal investigations. Follow-up questions should be used effectively to confront vague answers, urging respondents to clarify their statements instead of sidestepping them. Furthermore, hearings ought to limit open-ended questions that allow for excessive elaboration and concentrate on well-structured and specific questions that necessitate direct confirmations. Setting clear standards for speech during hearings, such as restricting response times and avoiding rhetorical diversions, would aid in keeping discussions focused and preventing unnecessary elaboration. Additionally, enhancing public and media literacy regarding political rhetoric is essential to help individuals identify and critically evaluate the strategic language employed by public figures to avoid accountability. By adopting these strategies, political dialogues and investigations can become more transparent, efficient, and effective in ensuring that public officials deliver truthful and relevant responses that adhere to the principles of cooperative communication

REFERENCES

Atkinson, M. (1984). *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics. Routledge.*

Awwad, A.S., Al-Hamadi, A., & Al-Mahmoudi, M.A. (2019). Flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims in Political Discourse: A Study on Malaysian Politicians' Interviews. *International Journal of Linguistics, 11(3), 1-15.*

Buddharat, C., & Srisawat, T. (2017). Violating Gricean Maxims in Presidential Debate: A Study of Political Discourse. *PSU Journal of Social Science,* 23(3), 180-190.

Bull, P. (2003). *The Microanalysis of Political Communication: Claptrap and Ambiguity*. Routledge.

Bull, P., Elliott, J., Palmer, D., & Walker, L. (1996). Why politicians are three-faced: The theory and practice of evasive language in political interviews. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 35(2), 267–284.*

Clayman, S., & Heritage, J. (2002). *The News Interview: Journalists and Public Figures on the Air. Cambridge University Press.*

Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and Discourse: A Resource Book for Students. Routledge.*

David, R. (2019). *Duterte's Political Discourse: A Pragmatic Perspective on Philippine Populism. Philippine Sociological Review, 67(2), 45-67.*

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power*. Pearson Education.

Grice, P. H. (1975). Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics (Vol. 3, pp. 41-58).* Academic Press.

Hadi, N.A., & Mat Isa, I.A. (2023). Analysis of Flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims by Syed Saddiq in a Podcast Interview. *Journal of Language Studies, 18(1), 45-60.*

Harris, S. (2010). *Interrogating the Political: Linguistic Strategies in Parliamentary Hearings*. Journal of Pragmatics, 42(5), 1234-1248.

Hazhar, A., Mohammad, O. S., Arcelus, J., Amir, S., & Mansoor, A. (2021). Speech act analysis of President Jalal Talabani's address at the UN general assembly on September 25, 2008. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 252-265.

Heritage, J., & Greatbatch, D. (1986). Generating applause: A study of rhetoric and response at party political conferences. *American Journal of Sociology, 92(1), 110–157.*

Human Rights Watch (2020). "License to Kill": Philippine Police Killings in Duterte's "War on Drugs."

Kenzhekanova, K. (2015). *The Role of Grice's Maxims in Political Discourse Analysis. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 206, 250-255.*

Khan, I. (2019). Analysis of Grice's Maxims in The Speech of Prime Minister Imran Khan at the UN General Assembly. *Journal of Political Discourse Analysis, 5(2), 22-37.*

Tarrayo, V., & Tuazon, D. (2020). *Language, Power, and Ideology in Duterte's Speeches: A Pragmatic Analysis. Kritika Kultura, 35, 128-150.*

Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics. Routledge*

Van Dijk, T. A. (2017). Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach. Cambridge University Press.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Politics, ideology, and discourse. *Elsevier Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics, 2nd Edition.*

Xiang, M. (2018). *Pragmatic Strategies in Chinese Political Speeches: A Study of Grice's Maxims. Journal of Language and Politics, 17(4), 572-590.*

Zhang, Y., & Pan, Y. (2020). Pragmatic Analysis of Political Discourse: Flouting Grice's Maxims in Chinese Political Speeches. *Asian Journal of Communication, 30(1), 45-61.*

Zhu, Y. (2014). Politeness in political discourse: Western versus East Asian strategies. *Discourse & Society, 25(2), 142–163*