

OBAMA’S POLITICAL SPEECHES ON EDUCATION AND POLITICAL REFORM IN AMERICA: A CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Interaction can take many dimensions such as face to face conversation, body language, written speeches, and so on. In almost every speech (spoken or written), the speaker or writer, in most cases, is the manager of his words. He controls and manipulates his words as he likes. In doing so, the speaker or writer puts information across to the listener or reader. The use of language in speech making is very important. The way language is used makes the speech meaningful to the listener. It is, therefore, necessary to look into the use of language in speech making. As far as this research is aware, not much has really been done in this area. Scholars and researchers focus their attention more on literary works than speech making. Political speeches have been severally made in various dimensions, and most of them have been analyzed in one way or another. However, such speeches as Obama’s political speeches on “Education and Political Reform in America” have been, in most cases, analyzed in terms of theory and practice. Speeches are supposed to be studied and interpreted using suitable apparatuses. Obama’s speeches on “Education and Political Reform in America” definitely have pragmatic implications, but unfortunately have not been exhaustively discussed. This paper, therefore, attempts to analyze Obama’s political speeches on “Education and Political Reform in America” within the frame work of pragmatics theory of Conversational Implicature.

Keywords: Conversational Implicature; Education and Political Reform in America; Political speeches; Speech making.

Introduction

To appreciate the success or otherwise of President Obama’s speech is to determine those factors in the speeches which have enabled him to configure the America world before the Americans. According to Monsuld (2007, p. 154), “To determine the way we perceive the world through discourse is to possess the decisive instrument of affecting control.” This is what Foucault termed the “game of Truth.” By game, Foucault (1994, p. 80) means “a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which as basis of its principles and rules of procedure may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing.” In pragmatics, it is widely held that the reality we perceive is a creature of the world. In using the world to create the desired reality, the veil of discourse is suspended between our faculties of perceptions, by metaphorical extension, expands or narrows down the possible versions we may have of the real world. Since this paper attempts to analyze the political speeches of Obama, there is a need for one to understand the relationship that exists between language and politics. To do this, it is important to refer to the view expressed by Anthony Paul Chilton (2004, p. 20) that politics is “the art of governance and power” while language is “the universal capacity of humans in all societies to communicate.” Politics as we know is a struggle for power in order to put certain political, economic and social ideas into practice (Bayram, 2010). Political power has to do with the position of being in charge over people’s behavior, making decisions and controlling of general resources of society.

For one to assume this position, a type of language is needed. Language use or the use of language plays a very significant function in playing politics. Despite the crucial role language plays in politics, Fairclough (2012, p. 1) contends that language can “misrepresent as well as represent realities, it can weave visions and imaginations which can be implemented to change realities and in some cases improve human well-being but it can also rhetorically obfuscate realities and construe them ideologically to serve unjust power relations.” This simply implies that effective use of language in playing politics can bring about democratic dividends or achieve the reverse. For Taiwo (2007, p. 92), language “conveys power. It moves people to exercise the franchise, debates and even revolt. It is,

therefore, a central explanation of political stability or polarization.” This shows that language is a vital tool in the implementation of successful democratic rule in any country. Wittgenstein (p. 44) posits that “the meaning of language depends on the context of use.” For him, language used in ordinary life constitutes a language game which holds that language user follow certain rules for accomplishing verbal acts.

The office of the president is the highest political office in any country. It, therefore, needs to be in constant touch with the people and this can only be made possible through speech making. It important these days to know that politics has now become a linguistic affair while language has become a political issue (Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere, 2004). The use of language in political speech and the way in which it is used so as to make the speech meaningful to the hearer is a very important enterprise that must be ventured into. This reason has prompted the researcher to explore the theory of Conversational Implicature in “ Race and Economic Renewal in America ”. The lacuna which this work recognizes is that the type of Conversational Implicature has not been explored in Obama’s two selected politica speeches under the present study.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this paper is to examine Obama’s speeches to determine the discursive ingredients which have propelled them, against all odds, to such huge success as to winning the American Presidency. In so doing, to achieve an effective analysis, it is necessary to rely on principles of pragmatics, literary stylistics and analogical mapping. The speeches have touched an almost all the aspects of life and woven around American history and in such captivating language that eclectic approach is considered most appropriate.

Statement of the Problem

A lot may have been done about political speeches of Obama, but to the knowledge of this researcher, there seems to be a little evidence of the aspect of pragmatics in this regard.

Theoretical Framework/ Methodology

Conversational Implicature

Conversational Implicature in pragmatics is all about how we understand an utterance in conversation in line with what we expect to hear. As Mey (2001:46) observes, “ ... if we ask a question, a response which, on the face of it, doesn’t make ‘sense’ can very well be an adequate answer.” He used the following as an illustration: if a person asks me:

What time is it?

It makes perfectly good sense for me to answer:

The bus went by in a particular context of conversation. This context should include the fact that there is only one bus a day, that it passes by our house at 7.45 am each morning, and furthermore, that my interlocutor is aware of this and takes my answer in the spirit it was given, viz, a hopefully relevant answer.

To know what people mean, you have to interpret what they say. The problem with interpretation is that misunderstandings are always possible. Hence, Leech (1981:30-31) remarks that “interpreting an utterance is ultimately a matter of guesswork or (to use a more dignified term) hypothesis information.” Grice (as cited by Grundy, 2008:95), argues that “speakers should intend to be cooperative when they talk. According to him, one way of being cooperative is for a speaker to give much information as is expected.” Grice formalized his observation that we should be cooperative when we talk into what he called “Cooperative Principles”. This principle holds that you make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. Within this principle, Grice proposes four maxims as follows:

Quantity: This means that you make your contribution as informative as is required. For instance, “some of the robbers have been arrested.” This gives the implicature that not all the robbers have been arrested (by quantity). It also means that you do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: here, you make your contribution one that is true. Do not say what you believe to be false, and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: This means that you should be relevant.

Manner: This means that you should be perspicuous. Here, you avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity. You should be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity) and orderly. According to Grundy (2008:97), “The four maxims enjoin speakers to be informative to the expected degree (quantity), to say things that are well founded (quality), to be relevant (relation) and to be clear (manner).” These maxims are known to both the speakers and hearers; hence, the latter infer meanings that are conveyed but not stated. For instance, if my friend sips a glass of wine and says, “That is it,” I would infer that the wine is good. Kempson (1975) outlined five characteristics of the cooperative principle and the maxims therein as follows: Conversational implicature is dependent on the recognition of the cooperative principle and its maxims.

- a) They will not be part of the meaning of the lexical items in the sentence.
- b) The implicature of an utterance will characteristically not be the sole possible interpretation of the utterance.
- c) The working out of an implicature depends on the assumption about the world which the speaker and the hearer share.
- d) The assumption and implicature are cancellable.

Although Kempson’s procedure seems to be unique, Onigbo (2003, p. 12) notes that “these characteristics do not provide any information radically different from the original approach.” He points out that characteristic number five which talks about the assumptions and interpretations being cancellable is not in any way different from Grice’s position that communication and interpretation are intelligent activities which we arrive at by reasoning process called “inference to the best explanation.” He, however, acknowledges Kempson’s emphasis on the fact “that in actual use, sentences will not be restricted to an interpretation by the form and meaning of the sentence itself.” Levinson (1983) has thrown more light on the nature and power of pragmatic explanations of linguistic phenomena. He stated that, it is possible to mean more than what is actually said. According to him, the apparent sharp difference between logic and natural language vanishes as soon as pragmatic implications are taken into account in text analysis.

From the on-going, it can be clearly seen that the cooperative principles and the conversational maxims are the central tenets of the theory of implicature, especially as enunciated by Grice. As Grundy (2008, p. 97) observes, “the implicature . . . arise because the addressee assumes that the speaker is abiding by Grice’s maxims, that is, the contribution is as informative as is possible, is well founded, is maximally relevant in context, and is to be read in a way that assumes perspicuity.”

However, he also notes that the addressee probably has the thought already gone through his mind that speakers do not always abide rigorously by these maxims. Hence the maxims are sometimes flouted. He points out that the headline of a fashion magazine feature article:

“Brown is the new black as far as shoes are concerned”

Clearly obscures and so flouts the maxim of MANNER. In such a situation, we just have to provide a little more of the context ourselves and do a little more reasoning than would have been necessary had the speaker abided by the maxim.

The point being made clear here is that even when speakers flout the maxims, implicatures still obtain. This is because the hearer takes it that the speaker is essentially cooperative, in spite of flouting a maxim, and so must be intending to convey an implied meaning.

Considering our day to day language, it is obvious that some self-evident statements, regarding their truthfulness or falsity, have to be uttered for some to look for an implicature. For instance, the statement “I am a man” is self-evident true, when it is spoken by a man and, therefore, flouts the maxim of QUANTITY. If it is spoken by a woman, then it is self-evident false, and so flouts the maxim of QUALITY. Such self-evidently true or false statement are a signal to the hearer that there is need to look for an implied meaning. This is because there is what Grundy (2008) calls hedging maxims. Hedges are used by speakers to inform the hearer of the extent to which they are abiding by the maxims. For instance, in the statement “They say cigarettes are bad for you,” “they say” should be understood as a hedge on the maxim of QUALITY. This serves as a warning to addressee that the speaker’s information might not be as well founded as would normally be expected.

Generally, hedges do not add truth value to the utterances because they are attached to them. They are more of a comment on the degree or extent to which speaker is abiding by the maxims which guide contributions to conversation than a part of the utterance or what is conveyed. The implication here is that we not only send messages as we talk, but also regularly “inform each other how informative, well founded, relevant and perspicuous these messages are” (Grundy, 2008, p. 101).

In summary, all that has been said point to the truth that the principles provided by Grice to guide our utterances in conversation do really exist and that speakers orient themselves to these principles. Hence the employment of hedges. The application of the theory of Conversational Implicature to Obama’s two political speeches under this study allows us to see how language is used in interesting and social ways. It is also allows us to use words and give them inferred elements such as power aspects, because Obama’s audience is aware of his social standing. Similarly, his language can act in ideological ways to reinforce American societal values. The two speeches under the present study require more than a semantic analysis to reveal the intended meaning of the words and phrases. This study rests on the assumption that these speeches are about the intersection of language and power, just as they underscore or exemplify the important areas of pragmatics. The implicit understanding of a power relationship between, for instance, two speakers in an interlocution, is often indicated by the meaning implied by language used. And this meaning can be very context-dependent. For Grice (1975, p. 26), meaning and intention are never explicit and transparent; they can only be recovered, thanks to the implicit elements. Obama’s speeches have been sufficiently subjected to detailed pragmatics analysis of the kind intended by this study.

Analysis

Education Reform

Barack Obama made his speech on education reform on the second of May, 2008. The speech was addressed to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), America’s leading black advocacy group. He was invited to celebrate the triumph of civil rights movement, initiated about half a century ago by such heroes as John Lewis, Dorothy Height, Rosa Parks and Others (Olive, 2008)’

In praising the remarkable courage of these fighters of racial inequality and their likes, Obama constantly drew parallels with the present day yet-to-be-resolved inequalities of education, income, and career opportunity which are still constituting a cog in the wheel of America’s cycling to greater heights. Obama, in this speech, did his best to put education before the Americans as the bedrock of every success, achievement and greatness that the present and future generations of American children deserve. For him, if the people of America do not mutually do something about the worsening state of education, then nothing else matters. He put it thus:

We have a mutual responsibility to make sure our schools are properly funded, our teachers are paid, and our students have access to an affordable college education. And if we don’t do something about all that, then nothing else matters (Olive, 2008, p. 117).

Obama's speech would have ordinarily been a bitter pill for the Americans to swallow. They had been used to hear and believe that everything about their country in education, health care, military or economic strategy and expertise is universally envied as world-class and model. Obama's narration of the ugly situation of the U.S. education actually gave Americans the gitters. However, Obama backed his hard truth claims with historical facts and figures that could neither be denied nor twisted by his political opponents. For instance, he states:

When we see that our high school seniors are scoring lower on their maths and science test than almost any other student in the world at a time when expertise in these areas is the ticket to a high wage job, what are we doing about it? When we see that for every hundred students who enter ninth grade, only eighteen will earn any kind of college degree within six years of graduating high school, what are we doing about it? (Olive 2008, p. 122).

He also vividly pointed out the scenes of broken schools, dilapidated classrooms and outdated text books. Criticizing Washington for paying lip service to education, he states:

I'll tell you what they've been doing in Washington. In Washington, they'll talk about the importance of education one day and sign big tax that starve our schools the next (Olive, 2008, p. 122)

Obama blamed Washington for tax cuts amounting up to one hundred billion dollars in favour of the wealthiest few and most profitable corporation. He is of the view that such a huge amount of money should have been invested in education which would prepare the American children for 21st century economy. He reminded his audience that all should take after initiators of the struggle against segregation, stressing that "the blessings of liberty enshrined in our constitution belong to all of us, that our children should be able to go to school together and play together and grow up together." (Olive, 2008, p. 120)

In order to improve the standard of the U.S. education, Obama advocated hard work on the part of the students, teachers as well as parents. He told the Americans that there is need for a change for 21st century, teachers to be paid what they worth and be equipped with the tools they need to prepare the children. This change requires the same courage summoned by those giants of the civil rights movement half century ago. He emphasized that people should show courage to ensure that American schools are foundations of opportunity for American children.

Obama quoted Martin Luther King Jr. who spoke to the crowd of thousands at Montgomery, saying, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice". He agreed with Martin Luther King Jr., but added that the arc does not bend on its own. Rather, it bends because we help it bend that way, He affirmed that the likes of John Lewis, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and thousands of ordinary Americans with extra ordinary courage have helped to bend the arc that way.

Finally, Obama called on all and sundry to imitate the examples of these heroes across the generations. He made it abundantly clear to the Americans that the example of these giants should inspire them to take their own two hands and bend that arc.

Grice's theory of conversational Implicature and Obama's Speech on Educational Reform

According to Grice, speakers tend to be cooperative when they talk. One way of doing this is by conveying as much information as is expected (Grundy, 2008, p. 95). Grice formalized this observation into a principle which he called the "Cooperative Principle". The principle states: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grundy, 2008, p. 95).

Grice did not stop at that. He developed four maxims within this principle, viz: Maxim of quantity, enjoining that “you make your contribution as informative as is required, and that you “do not make your contribution more informative than is required” Maxim of quality- “try to make your contribution one that is true,” ie., “do not say what you believe to be false, and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence” Maxim of relation, requires one to be relevant” and the Maxim of manner, which urges one to “be persepicious” in order to avoid obscurity of expressions and, avoid ambiguity

How does Obama’s speech on education reform square up with these maxims, the hub of Grice’s theory of conversational implicature? Or are there instances of flaunting the maxims? This is worth examining here.

The Maxim of Quantity

This states that the speaker should make his contribution as informative as is required and that the contribution should not be more informative than is required. One may ask, at this point whether Obama’s speech is as informative as is required? Is there any over-drilling to the audience/readers? Let us consider the following statement by Obama: “We have a mutual responsibility to make sure our schools are properly funded”.

The above statement is appropriately informative. By quantity, it gives rise to the implicature, (all of us have the responsibility to make sure that our schools are properly funded). The information being passed here is that responsibility for good education through proper funding is not for some people alone. There is need for cooperation. Even the Federal Republic of Nigeria has recognized that “all other agencies will operate in concert with education” so as to fully attain the potentials for the achievement of identified goals and values.

Contextually, Obama’s speech shows that he fulfilled the cooperative principle, which requires people to cooperate in the process of conversation or communication. According to Mey (2001, p. 71) “The bare facts of conversation come alive only in a mutually accepted pragmatically determined context.” Obama’s speech perfectly fulfils this requirement. It is determined not only to cooperate, but also to elicit the cooperation of all in uplifting the standard of American education.

The corollary to being as informative as is required is not being more informative than is required. This aspect of Grice’s maxim of quantity implies that there should be no over emphases, excessive details or exaggerations by speakers. Taken as a whole, the maxim of quantity requires the speaker to be neither too little nor too much in giving information. Obama’s speech on education reform is in accord with these aspects of the maxim of quantity. He skillfully gave information in a manner that held his audience captivated, apparently inspiring in them the sense of responsibility and inner disposition to face the challenges. For instance, at a point he asked the question, “and when we see broken schools, old textbooks, and classroom bursting at the seams, what are we doing about that?” (Olive, 2008, p. 122) According to Grundy (2008, p. 95), “Grice argued that speakers intend to be cooperative when they talk. One way of being cooperative is for a speaker to give as much information as is expected.” Checking the understanding of Obama’s statement, it can be stated that his audience wouldn’t have expected either more or less than what he said.

Again, when Grice’s concept of implicature is applied to the statement, there is no doubt that his audience understood, as implicit in the statement, that they are being called to a mutual responsibility and concerted effort in the education reform. This is implied in the rhetorical question: “When... , what are we doing about it?” the addressees are among the “we” that see the bad conditions of those “broken schools, old textbooks, and classrooms bursting at the seams”. So, “we” have to do something about it. Therein lies the implicature.

The Maxim of Quality

This maxim enjoins the speaker to contribute what is true, not to say what he believes to be false, or that for which he lacks adequate evidence. Let us consider this statement by Obama:

I'll tell you what they've been doing in Washington. In Washington, they'll talk about the importance of education one day and sign big tax cuts that starve our schools the next. They'll talk about leaving no child behind but then say nothing when it becomes obvious that they've left the money behind (Olive, 2008, p. 122).

The above statement gives rise to the implicature that the speaker believes that Washington is paying lip service to education. He also has adequate evidence for that. Hence he laments the huge tax cut by Washington, which is detrimental to education. Obama advocated hard work on the part of the teachers, students as well as parents in order to improve the standard of American education. He also stressed that expertise in the areas of mathematics and sciences is the ticket to a high-wage job, and so, something should be done to improve on the students performances in these areas.

In order to drive home his observation on the education sector, Obama clearly pointed out the scenes of broken schools, outdated textbooks and dilapidated classrooms. In so far as Obama's speech on education reform is considered to have contributed what he knew was true with evidence adequately cited, it can be said that Obama satisfied Grice's cooperative principle with regard to the maxim of quality.

Obama said the truth when he stated that change is never easy, but always possible, and that it comes not from violence or militancy..., but from great discipline and organization, and from a strong message of hope. He provided adequate evidence of this in the activities of the civil rights movements exemplified in people like John Lewis, Dorothy Height, Martin Luther King and others of the sort. Since he based his speech on truth, with adequate evidence, there was no room for false propaganda, and so he was able to sell his ideas and campaign manifesto to the Americans.

The Maxim of Relation

The maxim of relation requires the speaker to say what is relevant. The relevance of the speech can be explicit or implicit. Once the speech is relevant, the speaker himself becomes relevant. This maxim enjoins the speaker to be relevant to the situation and people he is addressing. For instance, the notice outside a shop which specialized in currency exchange reads, "Bring in your currency here". Explicitly the notice invites the reader to exchange his currency in the shop. On the other hand, a notice, which reads, "Do not forget your kids on children's day," just outside the children's entertainment centre, is implicitly telling you to bring your kids to the recreational and entertainment centre on children's day.

At this point, one may ask: was Obama's speech on education reform relevant? Did it obey or violate the maxim of relation? Let us consider this statement:

A student today armed with only a high school diploma will earn an average of only \$25,000 a year- if you're African- American, it's 14 percent lesser than that. (Olive, 2008, p. 121)

Looking at the above statement, one can identify the implicature: in order to earn a higher wage in future employment, a student should be equipped with degrees higher than a high school diploma. The statement shows that there is a difference between a higher degree holder and a diploma holder, and that there is a further difference between a pure American and African-American with the same degrees. Implicitly the statement is an invitation to students to work harder and acquire higher degrees in their education pursuit.

The statement by Obama can be said to be relevant since it brought out the importance of good education for earning a good job, and consequently a good income. Its relevance to the situation of education in America was underscored when he stated that meanwhile, countries like China are graduating twice as

many students with college degree as America. Then he challenged the Americans: “We’re falling behind, and if we want our kids to have the same chances we had in life, we must work harder to catch up”.

Obama employed much astuteness, often with a combination of challenging questions and statements to make his speech relevant to both the concrete situation and the Americans themselves. His reference to the historical past, lucid description of the present and clear vision of the future make his speech all the more relevant to the Americans and their education system. He never envisaged an easy way for the Americans. However, even in the face of challenges he held out a message of courage and hope. Hence he said:

And when we look at these challenges and think how, can we do this? How can we cut through the apathy and the partisanship and the business as usual culture in Washington? When we wonder this, we need to rediscover the hope that people have been in our shoes before and they’ve lived to cross those bridges. (Olive, 2008, p. 123-124).

From the above instances made so far, Obama’s speech on education reform can be unarguably said to be relevant, and thus has obeyed Grice’s maxim of relation. He did not even spare any effort to make his speech relevant to his audience and their situations. Being a black man born in Hawaii with father from Kenya and mother from Kansas, no one would have believed that he, Barack Obama, would be where he is today. But it has happened and he attributed it to education and the bravery of John Lewis and scores of courageous Americans who stood firm and lived to cross the bridge of the many challenges that faced them.

The Maxim of Manner

The maxim of manner enjoins the speaker to be perspicuous. What this entails includes the following: avoidance of obscure expressions, avoidance of ambiguity, being brief and being orderly. Was Obama’s speech on education in line with these entailments?

At the beginning of his speech, Obama, after praising those who have been fighting for justice and equality in America, stated that “the road we have taken to this point has not been easy. But then again, the road to change never is”. The statement is simple and straight, mincing no words about the difficulty involved in making a change. To that extent, Obama avoided an obscure expression. He left nobody in doubt that the road to education reform is an arduous one.

The first part of the statement, “The road we have taken to this point has not been easy”, however, seems to have an element of ambiguity in the phrase “to this point”. One can ask, “which point”? Obama was invited to celebrate triumphs of civil rights movement, organized by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), and he used the occasion to make his education reform speech. Now, does “this point” refer to the 50th anniversary of the NAACP, the present education system, or the overall situation in America?

In the light of the above observation, it can be argued that Obama flouted the maxim of manner. However, as Grundy (2008, p. 98) states, “even when speakers flout maxims, there are still implicature.” This because in spite of the fact that speakers often flout maxims, the addressee usually assumes that they are essentially cooperative, and so must be intending to put across an implied meaning. From this perspective, Obama’s statement gave rise to the implicature that it was not easy for the giants of the civil rights struggle to have arrived at 50th anniversary, and it will not be easy in the struggle for change in other areas, including education. Obama’s speech on education reform did not give room for unnecessary details. It was brief as well as orderly. For instance, the following statement can attest to the brevity of his point.

When we see that for every hundred students who enter ninth grade, only eighteen will earn any kind of college degree within six years of graduating high school, what are we doing about it? (Olive, 2008, p. 122).

After x-raying the problem in education and indicating Washington for paying lip service to the solution, the wastage of potentials and opportunities, he challenged the Americans themselves, thus:

Think about all that potential and all that opportunity. Think about the choice Washington made instead. And now think about what you can do about it. (Olive, 2008, p. 122).

Collectively considered, the four maxims enjoin speakers to be informative to an expected extent, to say things that are true, to say things that are relevant and to say them clearly. Invariably, these maxims are known to both the speakers and addressees. As such, the later usually infers meanings that are conveyed in the speech, but not explicitly stated. Hence Grice has observed that speakers and addressees are usually cooperative. This observation was manifested in Obama's speech on education reform. The Americans inferred meanings from his speech, even when these meanings were not stated. His speech had the overall implicature that the standard of American education was falling, and that the government of the day was not making adequate effort to address the issue, and that something should be done about it, for the good of the entire America, especially the future generation. The Americans understood him and gave him their votes.

Political Reform

In this speech, Barrack Obama tried to handle the issue of American politics in a manner that would appeal to the generality of the American people and inspire them to fight for a change. Typical of his stump speeches, Obama started this speech by congratulating his supporters for successes so far recorded. Next he sent condolences to the victims of the storms that hit Tennessee and Arkansas, stressing that those victims were in their (Americans) thought and prayers.

Obama made the speech on February 5, 2008. By then it was not yet clear whether he could break through to voters beyond his base of youth, Africa-Americans, and above –average income and educated whites, since the general election was yet to take place in November that year. However, the truth was self-evident in this speech, as in other speeches, was that he has the ability to inspire others to do things that are required to confront the challenges facing the American nation, no matter how difficult the task may appear.

Mr. Obama has a powerful way of inspiring and convincing his audience to buy his own ideas and see things from his own standpoints and convictions. For instance, he told his audience this, as recorded by Olive (2008, p. 246):

Well, the polls are just closing in California and the votes are still being counted in cities and towns across the country. But there is one thing on this February night that we do not need the final results to know our time has come, our movement is real and change is coming to America.

Obama made efforts in this speech to convince the Americans that the year would mark a turning point in the nation's politics where they would no longer settle for a politics of scoring points rather than solving problems. He reminded them of their stand on the steps of the Old State Capitol almost a year before to affirm the age-long truth that a house divided against itself cannot stand; that they are more than a collection of Red States, an Blue states, but United States of America.

To further bring home the message or change to the people, he emphasized that what began as a whisper in Springfield has today swelled to a chorus of millions calling for change: a chorus that can neither be ignored nor deterred. Obama also stressed that the stakes are too high and the challenges too great to play the same Washington game of division and distraction, to which they have gathered to say no.

Not satisfied with the state of affairs at the time, Obama made it clear to his audience (the American People) that they are faced with a real choice: change versus more of the same, and the future versus the past. It is a choice between having a debate with the other party about who has the greatest experience in Washington, or having one about who is most likely to change Washington. To sensitize the people all the more, he assured them that his presidency would end the tax breaks to companies manned by the wealthiest few who don't need them and didn't ask for them. He lamented that these tax breaks which Washington had been granting to the companies have mortgaged the future of the American children "on a mountain of debt at a time when there are families who can't pay their medical bills and students who can't pay their tuition" (Olive, 2008, p. 249).

Finally, Obama stated that his presidency would put an end to a politics that uses 9/11 as a way to scare up votes, and start seeing it as a challenge that should unite America and the world against the common threats of the twenty-first century: terrorism and nuclear weapons; climate change and poverty; genocide and disease.

Grice's Principle Applied to Obama's Political Reform Speech

Through communicative implicature, pragmatic principles make it possible for hearers to get meanings from what the speakers say, as well as interpretations beyond the speaker's utterances (Leech, 1983). The speakers use language and choice of words worked so positively on his audience that they became convinced, without any atom of wavering, that Obama's party and presidency are the ones they have been waiting for. They are the hope of the future. They are the change that they seek.

In this bold political reform speech, Obama proved the veracity of Watzlawick (1967) assertion that is impossible not to communicate, as far as human beings are concerned, and that every healthy human being engages in the activities of communication. The outstanding richness of Obama's speech becomes glaring when Grice's principle applied to it. Regarding the maxim of quantity, Obama's speech can be said to have been as informative as was required. For instance, his statement that "there are families who can't pay their medical bills..." gives rise to the implicature that "not all the families (by quantity) can pay their hospital bills".

With regard to the maxim of quality it requires the speaker to make contribution that is true, not to say what he believes to be false, and not to say that for which he has no evidence. In his speech, Obama stated that the Republicans running for president have already tied themselves to the past. This is a true statement for which he provided adequate evidence. He gave as evidence the Republicans, bent on war in Iraq, their talking of billions more on tax breaks for the wealthiest few who neither needed, nor asked for, them, and their using 9/11 as a way of scaring up votes. On the contrary, his own party is that of the future: the hope of those who have little, and answer to the cynics who say that they can't achieve togetherness. Obama's statement here gives rise to the implicature that he believes and also has evidence that, in truth, the Republicans cannot take Americans to their expected and desired heights. The maxim of relation requires the speaker to be relevant. Olive (2008, p. 25) quotes Obama as saying:

You see, the challenges we face will not be solved with one meeting in one night. Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time.

The above speech gives rise to the implicatures that the addressees should meet more regularly and be personally and actively involved in working for the desired change, and that the time to do so is now. In the light of these, it can be stated that Obama's speech obeyed the maxim of relation. It made change relevant to the people through their active participation in the electoral activities.

The maxim of manner enjoins the speaker to be perspicuous – avoid obscurity of expressions and ambiguity and to be brief and orderly. Obama's speech fulfilled this maxim in that he used simple English that was clearly understood, and the meaning assimilated by his audience. He did not mince words on the hypocrisy of Washington and the attendant adverse consequences on the present and future

of the Americans. He outrightly assured them that his presidency, together with the people, would mark a turning point for the better.

Conclusion

From this paper, it can be stated that Obama's speeches under the present study obeyed Grice's maxims to a great extent and flouted the same to a lesser extent. This has been observed from the analysis of his speeches in the light of the maxims of quantity, quality, manner and relation. According to Grundy (2008), every utterance has both natural meaning (entailment) and non-natural meaning (implicature), whether it abides by or flouts the maxims. He further states that flouting a maxim is a particularly salient way of bringing the addressee to draw an inference and thereby recover an implicature. In other words, flouting a maxim obviously alerts the addressee that there is an implicit meaning.

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