

Conversational Implicature in Political Discourse: A Pragmatic Analysis of YouTube Podcast How America Lost Faith

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how conversational implicature operates within the YouTube podcast *How America Lost Faith in Everything*, exploring how implied meanings reflect political distrust and shape audience interpretation. Drawing on Grice's Cooperative Principle and Levinson's pragmatic framework, this research analyses selected segments from the podcast to identify implicatures used to express criticism toward institutional authority. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the researcher transcribed episodes and conducted thematic coding to uncover implicit messages embedded in the discourse. The findings reveal that implicature serves as a subtle rhetorical tool for shaping socio-political narratives expressing scepticism, irony, and ideological stance without direct confrontation. This study contributes to understanding how digital political communication constructs meaning through indirectness and how YouTube discourse influences public perception of trust in institutions.

Keywords: Pragmatics; Conversational Implicature; Political Discourse; YouTube; Trust; Political Language

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a major platform for accessing global news, expressing opinions, and engaging in public discourse. Among these platforms, YouTube stands out as a space where individuals, journalists, and content creators actively share their perspectives on current events, particularly politics. Unlike traditional media such as television or radio, YouTube allows for a faster and more interactive feedback loop, creating a dynamic exchange between speaker and audience. This interaction is not bound by time or location and is shaped by the digital language of the platform. In this commercialized digital environment, the value lies not only in the message delivered but also in the engagement generated through views, comments, and subscriptions.

In this context, the study of language use becomes essential, and linguistics offers a structured way to understand how communication functions in political discourse. Beyond analysing formal structures like phonology and syntax, linguistics especially through the lens of pragmatics explores how meaning is constructed

through context and interaction. One significant concept in this field is conversational implicature, which refers to implied meanings that are not directly stated but understood by the audience through shared knowledge and contextual cues. This pragmatic strategy enables speakers or writers to convey criticism, skepticism, or ideological stances without using explicit language, thus influencing public interpretation strategically. The text "How America Lost Faith in Everything" is an example of how implicature is used to reflect societal mistrust and highlight the gradual erosion of confidence in American institutions through subtle linguistic choices.

Although political discourse has been widely studied through rhetorical devices and framing strategies, there remains a notable gap in focusing on conversational implicature as a pragmatic tool in shaping political narratives. Most existing research emphasizes explicit political persuasion, overlooking the power of implied meanings that subtly guide public perception. Moreover, prior studies often treat political discourse in general terms without analysing specific cases that illustrate the growing distrust in institutional authority. The discourse in "How America Lost Faith in Everything" reveals a deeper ideological crisis, yet this dimension has not been sufficiently examined through the lens of implicature. Therefore, analysing this text through pragmatic implicature offers a new perspective in understanding how language is used not only to inform but also to construct socio-political reality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

After several research, the researcher found 5 previous studies to support this analysis. According to Cristina & Afriana (2021), The findings show that conversational implicature in the series serves several main functions. First, it is used for humor, where characters say things indirectly to produce comedic effects. Second, implicature plays a role in expressing emotions, such as sarcasm, annoyance, affection, or disappointment without stating them explicitly. Third, it supports social bonding and relationships, as indirect language helps build closeness or maintain politeness between characters. Additionally, implicature is used for criticism and teasing, allowing characters to challenge or mock each other in a playful or subtle way.

Another previous study is from Averina (2023), that the most violated maxim is the Maxim of Relation, which is followed by the Maxim of Quantity and Quality. It is less common to violate the Maxim of Manner. Students frequently avoid directly answering questions, showing emotional resistance, or defending their identities and personal experiences, which leads to flouting. In the meantime, the instructor (Erin Gruwell) deliberately disregards maxims to promote communication, ease stress, and establish an emotional connection with the students. According to the study's findings, disobeying classroom maxims is not a sign of a breakdown in communication but rather of power dynamics, emotional states, and attempts to

build trust. The film's main theme of fostering understanding via empathy and dialogue is reinforced by flouting.

Another study relevant to this research is by Akbar et al. (2023). This study is pertinent to conversational implicature. Implied meaning in police interrogation transcripts is examined in this study. Using Grice's Cooperative Principle, the study discovered that suspects often violate the Maxim of Quantity by giving scant or insufficient information in an effort to minimize blame or avoid self-incrimination. In the meantime, detectives sometimes deliberately reroute queries to elicit information from the defendant by violating the Maxim of Relation. The study comes to the conclusion that conversational implicature is important in the legal setting because forensic and judicial decision-making requires careful interpretation of indirect meanings.

Next previous study is according to Pertiwi et al. (2023). The study, which employs Grice's Cooperative Principle as the analytical framework, finds that humor is mainly created by speakers purposefully making statements that are not literally true or reacting in ways that seem unrelated to the subject at hand. Because the audience must deduce the underlying meaning from these disregarded maxims, humor is reliant on common cultural and contextual knowledge. The audience must deduce the implied meaning of these disregarded maxims, which means that humor depends on common cultural and contextual knowledge. The study also demonstrates that the Maxim of Manner is sometimes violated by ambiguous expressions that reflect regional speech patterns, while the Maxim of Quantity is occasionally violated by exaggeration. According to the study's findings, Banyumasan humor primarily depends on cultural awareness and indirect meaning within the speech community.

Another related study is by Nurhidayah et al. (2021). This study analyses movie and used Grice's theory as the analytical framework to examine the many types of conversational implicature that are present in the movie. The results show that while both Generalized and Particularized Conversational Implicatures are present in the film, Particularized Implicature is more common. This is because a lot of the movie's statements largely depend on situational situations and the characters' emotional bonds. The study also shows that characters frequently violate the Maxims of Relation and Quantity in order to convey emotional tension, avoid direct conflict, and express hidden meanings.

Based on the previous studies, it can be seen that flouting conversational maxims occurs across various contexts such as talk shows, classroom interaction, forensic interrogation, humorous regional speech, and film dialogue. Nonetheless, the motivation behind maxim flouting in these studies typically focuses on interpersonal relationships, cultural humor, emotional connection, or legal strategy. In contrast to those settings, the present study looks at disobeying maxims in a political and sociocultural podcast conversation, namely in the YouTube podcast *How America Lost Faith in Everything with Chuck Todd*. In this context, maxim

flouting is used to influence public opinion, create political narratives, and shape the ideological framing of social issues rather than just to amuse, avoid conflict, or express emotion. This offers a fresh viewpoint on how the Maxim of Relation is deliberately disregarded in order to change the subject, bolster claims, or subtly disparage organizations, reflecting more general problems with public mistrust and media discourse. In contrast to earlier research that looked at maxim flouting primarily for humor, emotional expression, or interrogative pressure, this study is novel in that it focuses on the rhetorical and persuasive functions of maxim flouting in political podcast communication.

Political Discourse in Social Media

Social Media, also important variable in political discourse, especially for Youtube. Digital platforms, in contrast to traditional broadcast media, promote conversational techniques that conflate personal comments with official journalism. According to recent research on digital discourse analysis, political podcasts primarily use narrative storytelling, evaluative language, and inferred meanings to draw listeners in and hold their interest. Because podcasts are casual and dialogic, speakers might use conversational implicature to quietly advance specific perspectives while making the talk sound impartial or thoughtful. Because political meanings are frequently conveyed indirectly rather than through direct debate, podcasts provide a powerful platform for pragmatic analysis. Rapid information sharing and public participation made possible by digital platforms have altered political communication, but they have also exacerbated issues like polarization and disinformation (Puri, 2025). According to Saputra (2024), this study highlights the relationships between users, content, and platform algorithms as it investigates how social media platforms affect political discourse, including polarization and narrative framing. According to Akromi & Santika (2024), this study use critical discourse analysis to examine how political personalities in Indonesia utilize language on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to demonstrate how linguistic techniques impact public involvement and political identification. According to Raziq (2025), political discourse is shaped by the interaction between the host and the guest, as well as by the expectations of a digitally literate audience. The interview format encourages spontaneous responses, narrative explanations, and evaluative statements rather than scripted political rhetoric. Last, according to Mutiara Alda Lekson et al. (2025), the study shows the podcast format further shapes the political discourse by fostering a conversational environment that blurs the boundary between political commentary and everyday talk.

Public Trust

Public trust, particularly trust in institutions and media, functions as an interpretive variable that emerges through language use rather than as a directly stated topic. Recent sociolinguistic and discourse studies argue that declining institutional trust is frequently reflected through indirect language, irony, and skepticism rather than

explicit accusations. In political commentary, speakers often imply distrust by questioning motives, highlighting inconsistencies, or making evaluative remarks that invite audience inference. Conversational implicature thus becomes a linguistic mechanism through which broader social attitudes, such as disillusionment with government or media institutions, are articulated. In the podcast *How America Lost Faith in Everything*, implicature allows speakers to reflect and reinforce narratives of mistrust without resorting to overt condemnation, making language a key site for understanding how social reality is discursively constructed.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employed a qualitative approach with a pragmatic and thematic analysis orientation. The research focused on analysing conversational implicature in political discourse presented in the YouTube podcast *How America Lost Faith in Everything*. The samples of this study consisted of selected podcast episodes that discuss issues of institutional trust, media credibility, and public scepticism. The episodes were chosen purposively based on their popularity, topical relevance, and level of audience engagement, such as view counts and comment activity. These criteria were applied to ensure that the selected data represented influential and widely consumed political discourse. The units of analysis were utterances produced by the speakers that potentially contain conversational implicature, particularly those involving the flouting of Grice's conversational maxims.

Instruments and Procedures

The primary research instrument in this study was the researcher herself, as the analysis required interpretative judgment to identify implied meanings in discourse. To support the analysis, several supporting instruments were used, including video recordings of the podcast episodes, verbatim transcripts, and a coding sheet. The transcripts functioned to document all spoken utterances, while the coding sheet was used to classify instances of conversational implicature based on Grice's maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The coding sheet consisted of categories for each maxim, contextual notes, and space for interpretative remarks regarding implied meaning.

The research procedure began with selecting relevant podcast episodes based on predetermined criteria. The selected episodes were then watched repeatedly to gain familiarity with the content. The researcher transcribed the podcast conversations to capture verbal data accurately and noted relevant non-verbal features such as intonation, emphasis, pauses, and gestures. After transcription, utterances containing potential conversational implicature were identified by observing maxim flouting. These utterances were then coded according to the type of maxim violated and grouped thematically to identify recurring patterns. Viewer comments

were also collected and examined as supplementary data to understand how audiences interpreted the implied meanings conveyed by the speakers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through qualitative thematic and pragmatic analysis by (Sugiyono, 2013). The transcribed data were carefully examined to identify utterances that generated conversational implicature through the flouting of Grice's conversational maxims. Each identified utterance was analysed in relation to its context to determine the implied meaning. The data were then categorized based on the type of maxim flouted and further grouped into broader themes related to political scepticism, institutional distrust, and media criticism. Non-verbal cues and paralinguistic features were considered to strengthen the interpretation of implied meanings. Audience comments were analysed to triangulate the findings and to observe whether listeners inferred meanings similar to those identified by the researcher. Finally, the findings were interpreted using Grice's theory of conversational implicature and Levinson's pragmatic framework to explain how implied meanings in political podcasts contribute to shaping public perception and discourse.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Flouting Quality

Datum 1

"Trust is the new currency but it's bankrupt everywhere." (paraphrased)

In pragmatic terms, this utterance flouts the maxim of quality because it is not meant literally trust cannot actually go bankrupt. The metaphor implies that institutions, leaders, and systems that rely on public trust have repeatedly betrayed it. As a result, trust has been overused, exploited, and exhausted. In political discourse, the statement indirectly criticizes institutional hypocrisy and moral failure, suggesting that although trust is constantly emphasized in rhetoric, it is absent in practice. The speaker communicates scepticism toward authority without making a direct accusation.

Datum 2

"Obama lost the identification vote. They only promoted Mitt Romney's numerous job outsourcing initiatives to China." (paraphrased)

The pragmatic functions pragmatically to shift the focus from identity politics to economic class issues through indirect criticism. By juxtaposing Obama's symbolic identification appeal with Romney's outsourcing practices, the speaker flouts the maxim of quality by implying, rather than stating directly, that economic interests

were more influential than identity in shaping political outcomes. The interpretation suggests scepticism toward political and media narratives that prioritize identity while downplaying substantive economic policies, indicating that class-based concerns played a decisive role in the political discourse.

Datum 3

"You have no right to treat him like a human. I believe he is a human." (paraphrased)

The utterance from the sentence functions pragmatically to express irony as an indirect critique of polarized media and public reactions. By deliberately contradicting itself, the speaker flouts the maxim of quality to mock outrage culture that symbolically strips political figures of their humanity. The interpretation suggests that public discourse has become so extreme that basic human recognition is treated as controversial, highlighting moral inconsistency and the dehumanization of individuals within contemporary political debate.

Datum 4

"I don't believe he has ever read a Federalist Paper. I don't believe he ever gave a damn about the reasons behind the nation's founding." (paraphrased)

The pragmatic function is to express indirect criticism through scepticism and exaggeration. By asserting an unverified claim about the individual's knowledge and concern for foundational political texts, the speaker flouts the maxim of quality to imply incompetence and disregard for democratic principles rather than stating it explicitly. The interpretation suggests that the individual lacks historical and constitutional understanding, which is framed as a serious threat to democratic norms and responsible political leadership.

Datum 5

"And millennials are just stupid now." Thus, Gen Xers are the only truly rational people." (paraphrased)

The functions pragmatically to convey sarcasm and exaggeration as social critique. By making an overgeneralized and clearly unreasonable claim, the speaker flouts the maxim of quality to mock generational stereotyping rather than endorse it. The interpretation suggests a criticism of simplistic generational narratives in public discourse, highlighting how such labels are used rhetorically to delegitimize certain groups rather than to present a serious or factual argument.

Flouting Relation

Datum 1

"We talk about democracy, but we act like shareholders." (paraphrased)

They uses metaphor and contrast to pragmatically offer oblique critique. The speaker violates the principle of relation to shift the conversation away from political rhetoric and toward a critique of political practice by contrasting the ideal of democracy with the actions of shareholders. According to the argument, there is a gap between democratic principles and real political action since economic concerns and profit-oriented reasoning drive decision-making while democratic values are cited symbolically.

Datum 2

"Well, I believe that definitely... Return to 2012. Is that the case of Romney v. Obama?" (paraphrased)

As a strategy of indirect remark, it serves pragmatically to change the subject. By shifting the conversation from the current topic to a previous political struggle, the speaker violates the relational principle. In accordance to the interpretation, the speaker is reframing the issue through historical comparison, suggesting that rather than concentrating only on the present, it is possible to better understand contemporary political processes by looking back at previous voting trends.

Datum 3

"I don't think as much about who or what comes next. Is what comes next a response to Trump or an extension of him? (paraphrased)

Redirecting attention from specific political actors to more general political continuity is one of the pragmatic purposes. The speaker violates the relational maxim by focusing on long-term political trends rather than individual leadership. In with this interpretation, long-lasting ideological movements have a greater influence on modern politics than individual leaders, suggesting that Trump is a structural influence rather than a passing fad.

Datum 4

"Is it possible that the normal state of America is complete polarization and that we grew up in an anomalous period of American history?" (paraphrased)

Through a philosophical change in viewpoint, it serves to pragmatically reframe political conflict. In order to shift the conversation from direct political blame to a more comprehensive historical understanding, the speaker violates the norm of relation by asking a rhetorical question. According to this interpretation, moments of unity are the exception rather than the rule, and polarization may be an innate and recurrent condition in American politics.

Datum 5

"World War I has never been resolved; the British and French are still to blame." (paraphrased)

Practically speaking, it introduces historical causation as a means of indirectly explaining current political issues. Instead of presenting a literal historical judgment, the speaker violates the quality maxim by creating an inflated and simplistic historical assertion. The interpretation implies that unresolved past conflicts and power structures are the source of current political instability, suggesting that understanding contemporary political disorder requires taking long-term historical responsibility into account.

Flouting Manner

Datum 1

"Faith? Depends on who's counting." (paraphrased)

Practically speaking, it creates intentional ambiguity to elicit contemplation. The speaker violates the rule of method, which calls for clarity and explicitness, by giving an ambiguous and partial response. The interpretation implies societal fragmentation and disparate standards of belief or measurement throughout society by arguing that concepts like religion are contentious and subjective.

Datum 2

"Really, it's like, you know, nobody's doing anything, but if I get in, I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that." (paraphrased)

Through haphazard and informal language, it serves pragmatically to convey political ambiguity and perplexity. The speaker violates the precept of manner, which calls for orderliness and clarity, by employing fillers, repetition, and an ambiguous framework. According to this perspective, political speech is disorganized and devoid of clear purpose, subtly criticizing leaders who rely more on nebulous pledges than on well-thought-out strategies.

Datum 3

"A man named Craig decided classifieds ought to be free, yada yada yada," is the cheap applause line I use. Donald Trump was elected president." (paraphrased)

The uses humor, omission, and ambiguous sequencing to pragmatically suggest a causal relationship. The speaker violates the canon of method, which calls for clarity and orderly exposition, by purposefully omitting information with phrases like "yada yada yada" and suddenly connecting unconnected events. Without specifically claiming or demonstrating the causal relationship, the interpretation implies a satirical critique of contemporary media and technical advancement, suggesting that seemingly little or ignored events can have significant political ramifications.

Datum 4

"They gerrymandered the counties." (paraphrased)

The practical purpose is to convey criticism by using euphemistic and straightforward language. The speaker violates the rule of style, which calls for clarity and explicitness, by utilizing a short, non-technical sentence without more explanation. The interpretation implies an unspoken charge of improper political manipulation, which permits the speaker to subtly criticize election procedures without providing a thorough or official justification.

Datum 5

"We got the short end of the stick, but we also kind of got a get-out-of-jail-free card because we grew up like scared kids. You know, we grew up when you could do anything you wanted, like run in the forest and play in the creek, and you know, that doesn't happen anymore." (paraphrased)

The narration is informal, repetitious, and loosely constructed in order to pragmatically induce nostalgia and social critique. The speaker violates the rule of manner, which calls for conciseness and clarity, by using fillers, repetition, and a long, aimless description. Without making a clear or methodical case, the interpretation implies a sense of loss and societal change by drawing a comparison between previous liberties and current restrictions.

Flouting Quantity

Datum 1

"It could be for his friends, it could be for any number of reasons, it could be good or bad, it could be legal or illegal, but by God are they doing stuff." (paraphrased)

It serves the practical purpose of overwhelming the listener with information that is repeated and excessive. The speaker violates the quantity maxim, which calls for delivering information that is neither more nor less than essential, by enumerating several hypothetical possibilities that do not bring new factual value. According to the interpretation, the speaker is more interested in emphasizing chaos and unpredictability than in providing a specific explanation, suggesting that political operations are being carried out without a clear rationale or clear direction.

Datum 2

"The world's largest deficit was turned into the world's largest surplus by Clinton, and when Bush takes office." it increases... blah blah blah blah." (paraphrased)

Practically speaking, it serves as a kind of criticism by offering copious yet contemptuous information. The speaker violates the quantity maxim by starting with precise economic arguments and then veering off into "blah blah blah blah," providing more information than is necessary while implying that more details are irrelevant. The interpretation implies that regardless of the political party in power, changes in fiscal policy are repetitious, shallow, and ultimately comparable, suggesting skepticism against political narratives about economic success and failure.

Datum 3

"In any case, the first episode of your podcast featuring the controversial character Steve Bannon was captivating. And you know what? It made me think of... I believe it just clarified that you took the appropriate action in light of what you just stated." (paraphrased)

The practical purpose is to conceal important information by using ambiguity and incompleteness. The speaker violates the quantity principle by giving less information than is necessary for complete comprehension by halting the thought and omitting to explain what it "made me think of." The interpretation implies an effort to sound thoughtful or encouraging without taking a firm stand, eschewing outright criticism or in-depth justification.

Datum 4

"I was raised in Miami. My parents cancelled each other's votes. My father is everyone but Carter, and my mother remains dubious of Reagan." (paraphrased)

Practically speaking, it serves as an indirect argumentation tactic by offering an overwhelming amount of personal backstory. The speaker violates the quantity maxim by providing an in-depth personal account that is not strictly required to address the current political issue. According to the interpretation, the speaker legitimizes their position without explicitly engaging in political arguments by framing themselves as politically neutral or balanced through personal experience.

Datum 5

"Congress is seen with greater mistrust. It's just friends and family rating you right now, as John McCain used to say." (paraphrased)

The practical purpose is to bolster criticism with amusing and superfluous embellishment. The speaker violates the quantity principle by delivering more information than necessary by repeating a joke ascribed to John McCain rather than offering a clear explanation. In accordance to this interpretation, the public's mistrust of Congress is so pervasive that humor serves as a powerful means of highlighting the extent of institutional disapproval, so reinforcing the criticism through exaggeration rather than real information.

Table 1

Maxim	Times Flouted	Common Function / Implicature
Maxim of Quality	33 instances	Irony, exaggeration, sarcasm, or metaphor that used to mock, criticize, or emphasize absurdity.
Maxim of Quantity	22 instances	Over-elaboration or insufficient infoused to imply emotional tone, humor, or critique.
Maxim of Relation (Relevance)	13 instances	Topic shifts or tangents, used to suggest analogies, deeper meanings, or humor.

Maxim of Manner	17 instances	Informality, vagueness, repetition, creates conversational realism or irony.
Total 85 instances		

The researcher found in 14 parts of Youtube Video Podcast, the most common maxims are 33 instances of flouting maxim of quality, second most maxims are 22 instances of quantity, 17 instances of manner, and the least flouted are 17 instances of relation. So, the total data inside the Youtube Podcast are 85 data. Strategic ambiguity is seen in the host's use of sarcasm and layered meaning, which supports Wodak (2009), theory that political language retains multiple meanings to appeal to a range of audiences. These implicatures show how language context converts literal meaning into communicative meaning, according to Levinson. The host's tone and word choice create a story of mistrust and cynicism that is essential to the discussion's ideological framing. Inferential participation is also seen in audience responses, where many people read irony or sarcasm as societal criticism, demonstrating that implicature effectively arouses public cynicism toward political institutions.

These statements on flouting quality use metaphor and exaggeration instead of factual claims to highlight perceived moral failings, hypocrisy, or oversimplification in political discourse. This supports Grice's argument that, particularly in evaluative and critical circumstances, speakers violate maxims when they expect listeners to deduce meanings beyond factual reality. The frequent disregard for relation illustrates how political discourse in podcasts frequently veers away from current issues in favor of more comprehensive historical, ideological, or structural views. Rather than directly addressing current political challenges, statements that make reference to previous elections, polarization, or unresolved historical disputes serve to reinterpret them. Neglecting the manner maxim emphasizes how informal and conversational podcast talk is. Euphemism, humor, fillers, ambiguity, and chaotic language are all employed as practical tactics in addition to being stylistic elements. Lack of clarity encourages audience interpretation and emotional connection. This lends credence to the idea that, in contrast to formal political speeches, podcasts prioritize relatability and conversational authenticity over accuracy and organization. On the other hand, rather than offering comprehensive information, violations of quantity, through excessive detail, ambiguity, or personal anecdotes these serve to highlight political turmoil, mistrust, and neutrality. Overall, these results imply that political podcasts serve as interpretive environments where implicit meaning is created. Speakers engage audiences in critical thinking while preserving an informal and approachable communicative style by defying conversational maxims. This reinforces implicature's essential role in modern political discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that conversational implicature serves as a pragmatic tool for expressing political distrust in digital media. The podcast *"How America Lost Faith*

in Everything" employs indirect language, irony, and violations of conversational maxims to construct narratives of disillusionment while avoiding direct confrontation. This implicature allows critique of power structures with politeness and interpretive flexibility. The research identifies three pragmatic patterns: Flouting Quality, which uses irony to critique institutional hypocrisy; Flouting Relation, which suggests polarization through topic shifts; and Flouting Manner, utilizing ambiguity to encourage reflection on societal issues. Overall, the host's use of implicature conveys a tone of mistrust towards political institutions, indicating that political language carries layered meanings to engage various audiences.

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