A Pragmatic Analysis of Misrepresentation in American Political Interviews

Mohammed Jassim Salih*
Tikrit university / English Department College of Education for Humanties
mj231376ped@st.tu.edu.iq
&
Dr. Ashwaq Jassim Mohammed
Tikrit university / English Department College of Education for Humanties
ashwaq.j.mohamed@tu.edu.iq

Abstract

Misrepresentation, whether intentional (fraudulent) or unintentional (innocent), involves false or misleading statements that influence decision-making. Although misrepresentation plays a crucial role in influencing public discourse, it has been largely overlooked in scholarly research from a pragmatic standpoint, especially within the framework of political interviews." This study highlights misrepresentation in political interviews featuring Donald Trump, Joe Biden, and Kamala Harris from a pragmatic perspective.

The study aims to achieve several objectives: (1) classifying and analyzing the types of misrepresentation employed by American politicians in American political interviews , (2) examining the pragmatic models used by politicians that lead to the distortion of facts

* **Corresponding Author:** Mohammed Jassim Salih**, Email:** mj231376ped@st.tu.edu.iq
Affiliation: Tikrit University - Iraq

_____ _____

in political communication, (3) determining the frequency and prevalence of violations of Grice's cooperative principle—particularly the maxim of quantity—in political discourse.

To address these objectives and test the hypotheses, the study adopts a qualitative supported with numbers and figures. It begins with a comprehensive literature review on misrepresentation from a pragmatic standpoint. A sample of political interviews conducted by the aforementioned politicians across various American media outlets is collected and analyzed using an adapted pragmatic model for qualitative analysis.

Key Words: Misrepresentation, Speech acts, Grice's Maxims

تحليل تداولي للتضليل في مقابلات سياسية امريكية

محمد جاسم صالح
كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية \ جامعة تكريت
و
د. اشواق جاسم محمد
كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية

المستخلص

التضـليل، سـواء كـان متعمـدًا (احتياليًـا) أو غيـر متعمـد (بريئًـا)، يشـمل البيانـات الكاذبـة أو المضللة التي تؤثر على عملية اتخاذ القرار. على الرغم من ان التضليل يلعب دور محوريا في تشكيل الخطاب العام, فانه قد تم تجاهله الى حد كبير في الدراسات الاكاديمية من منظور براغماتي, خاصة في سياق المقابلات السياسية. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على التضليل في المقابلات السياسية التي شارك فيها دونالد ترامب وجو بايدن و كامالا هاريس من منظور براغماتي. تهدف الدراسة إلى تحقيق عدة أهداف: (1)تصنيف وتحليل انواع التضليل التي يستخدمه السياسيون الامريكيون في المقابلات السياسية، (2) الكشف عن النماذج التداولية التي يوظفها السياسيون المؤدية الى تزييف الحقائق في التواصل السياسي، (3) تحديد مدى انتشار وتردد انتهاكات مبدأ التعاون لدى غرايس – وخاصةً ما يتعلق بمبدئ الكمية – في المقابلات السياسية..

لتحقيق الاهداف المـذكورة اعـلاه، تفتـرض الدراسـة مـا يلـي: 1) أن السياسيين فـي المقابلات السياسية الأمريكية يلجؤون إلى التضليل الاحتيالي لتشويه الحقائق والأحداث. 2) أن بعض أفعال

الكلام، مثل المؤكدة التصريحية، تُستخدم بشكل أكثر شيوعًا من غيرها.3.) أن مخالفة قاعدة الكمية تحدث بشكل متكرر مقارنة بالقواعد الأخرى.

للوصول إلى هذه الأهداف واختبار الفرضيات، اعتمدت الدراسة على نهج مختلط يجمع بين التحليل النوعي والكمي. بدأت بإجراء مراجعة شاملة للأدبيات حول التضليل من منظور براغماتي. تم جمع عينات من المقابلات السياسية التي أجراها السياسيون الثلاثة عبر وسائل الإعلام الأمريكية المختلفة، وتم تحليلها باستخدام نموذج براغماتي معدل للتحليل النوعي، مدعومًا بالأساليب الإحصائية المناسبة للتحليل الكمي.

الكلمات الدالة: التضليل، اقسام الكلام، مبادئ غرايس

1. INRODUCTION

Political communication serves as a cornerstone of democratic societies, facilitating dialogue between leaders and citizens. However, when language is strategically manipulated to distort facts or evade accountability, it undermines public trust and democratic engagement. This study investigates one such phenomenon—misrepresentation —in American political interviews from 2020 to 2024. Misrepresentation, defined as a false or misleading statement made with the intent to influence opinions or actions (Metts, 1989: 169).

 It encompasses practices such as exaggeration, minimization, and equivocation. Despite its significance in shaping public discourse, misrepresentation has not received adequate scholarly attention from a pragmatic perspective, particularly in the context of political interviews. To address this gap, this thesis conducts a pragmatic analysis of misrepresentation in American political interviews, focusing on three prominent figures: Donald Trump, Joe Biden, and Kamala Harris.

2. THE CONCEPT OF MISREPRESENTATION

Misrepresentation, as defined by Mallor et al. (2001: 1), refers to an assertion that is inconsistent with the truth or a false declaration that influences the decision-making of others. In legal contexts, it is characterized as a false statement made during negotiations between two parties, which can be classified as either fraudulent or innocent.

Galasinski (2000: 36) expands on this concept by suggesting that misrepresentation encompasses a spectrum of deceptive practices, ranging from outright lies and falsifications to half-truths and misleading implications. This broad definition includes any instance where a speaker's utterance diverges from what they believe to be an accurate representation of reality.

2.1 Types of Misrepresentation

Misrepresentation can be categorized into three distinct types, each with its own legal and ethical implications. These include fraudulent misrepresentation, negligent misrepresentation, and innocent misrepresentation. Understanding these categories is

essential for analyzing their impact on contractual agreements and interpersonal interactions.

1.Fraudulent Misrepresentation: This type of misrepresentation occurs when a false statement is made knowingly or without belief in its truthfulness (Web Source 1). It is often referred to as dishonest misrepresentation because the defendant is fully aware that the statement is false or makes it recklessly, intending to persuade the other party to enter into a contract. The injured party has the right to sue for contract termination and seek damages as a remedy. Fraudulent misrepresentation is particularly egregious due to its deliberate intent to deceive.

2.Negligent Misrepresentation: This form of misrepresentation arises when a person makes a false statement without reasonable grounds to believe it is true. It typically involves a failure to verify the accuracy of the statement before entering into a contract, thereby breaching the principle of fair treatment. The consequences of negligent misrepresentation may include contract termination and potential penalties (Web Source 1). Cavico (1997: 57) outlines the key elements of negligent misrepresentation, which include: (1) a duty of care owed by the defendant to the claimant, (2) a false statement of material fact made by the defendant, and (3) resulting damages. This concept is particularly relevant in investment contexts and is supported by a body of case law.

3.Innocent Misrepresentation: This type of misrepresentation occurs when a false statement is made unknowingly. The defendant, at the time of contract signing, is unaware that the statement is misleading. While there is no intent to deceive, the remedy for innocent misrepresentation is typically the termination or cancellation of the contract (Web Source 1).

2.2 Related Phenomena to Misrepresentation
2.2.1 Distortion

Distortion encompasses various forms, including exaggeration, minimization, and equivocation (Metts, 1989: 169). A distorted utterance does not necessarily involve outright falsehoods; rather, it involves the manipulation of information through exaggeration, understatement, or misleading statements (ibid.). **2.3.2 Falsification**

Falsification, also referred to as false attribution, involves the deliberate misattribution of statements to others in order to create the impression that the speaker is providing a justified interpretation of the original statement (Galasiński, 2000: 39).

2.2.2 Disinformation

The concept of disinformation has been a subject of extensive discussion in both academic and media circles since the Cold War era. According to Martin (1982: 47), the term "disinformation" originates from the Soviet word *Dezinformatsiya*, which refers to the deliberate dissemination of false or provocative information. The Soviet Secret Service utilized disinformation as a strategic tool, relying on forged documents and staged events to achieve its objectives. Martin (ibid.) identifies forgery and fabrication as key components of disinformation. Similarly, Wardle (2017: 1) defines disinformation as the intentional creation and dissemination of information known to be false or misleading.

2.2.3 Misinformation and Mal-information

Misinformation is generally characterized in scholarly literature as the unintentional spread of inaccurate or erroneous information, often resulting from honest mistakes rather than malicious intent (Fallis, 2015: 401). Unlike disinformation, misinformation is not deliberately designed to deceive, though it may still have deceptive consequences. Mal-information, on the other hand, involves the use of factual information with the intent to cause harm to an individual, organization, or nation (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2018: 21). This distinction highlights the differing motivations and consequences associated with these phenomena.

2.3 Misrepresentation in Relation to Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory, a cornerstone of pragmatics, is rooted in the principle that language is used to perform actions, whether spoken or written, and whether honestly or deceptively (Cutting, 2002: 16; Archer et al., 2012: 35). The term "speech act" originates from the work of philosopher J.L. Austin and is now widely used in linguistics to describe a theory that examines the role of utterances in interpersonal communication, particularly in relation to the actions of speakers and listeners (Crystal, 2003: 427). Austin (1960) was the first to propose the concept of Speech Act Theory (SAT) to explain how utterances function in interpersonal communication. He emphasized that speech acts are not merely vehicles for conveying information but are themselves actions.

Austin (1962: 24) identified three fundamental dimensions of speech acts, corresponding to three simultaneous actions: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. These represent the basic levels or components through which a speech act is constructed. As Crystal (2003: 427) explains, a speech act is not simply an "act of speech" but a communicative practice defined by the speaker's intentions and the effect on the listener. Austin's work was further developed by Searle (1979), who introduced a set of conditions necessary for the successful performance of speech acts. These conditions, known as felicity conditions, must be met for a speech act to be considered appropriate. The term "felicity" derives from the Latin word "Felix," meaning "happy" (Mifflin, 2000: 173).

In accordance with Galasinski (2000: 81), the conditions for speech acts (SAs) can be outlined as follows:

1. **Propositional content conditions**, which pertain to the propositional act itself;
2. **Preparatory conditions**, which concern the contextual and background knowledge of both speakers/writers and hearers/readers that must exist prior to the execution of the act;
3. **Sincerity conditions**, which relate to the intentions, beliefs, and desires of the speaker/writer, as well as whether the SA is performed with seriousness and sincerity; and
4. **Essential conditions**, which are tied to the illocutionary point of the act, specifically "what the utterance signifies."

Galasinski (ibid. 83) contends that the violation of these conditions constitutes the core of misrepresentation. This implies that SAs can often be employed to distort facts and events when they are insincere or when they convey false presuppositions, thereby aiming to achieve a specific perlocutionary effect on the audience. Consequently, the breach of sincerity conditions is identified as one of the most pervasive characteristics of misrepresentation. As Birner (2013: 186) notes, Speech Act Theory (SAT) operates on

the premise that SAs can only function effectively if all parties involved assume that the speaker/writer is acting in good faith.

Furthermore, Searle's taxonomy of speech acts remains the most influential one because it rests upon a rich conceptual framework. It tries to schematize, reinforce and advance the original Austinian one. Searle classifies illocutionary acts into five macro classes (Searle, 1979:12-17).

1.Assertives

This class aims to state the false or the truth of the expressions which are expressed in a true-false dimension. It emphasizes the S's beliefs and commitments making the words fit the world. The belief may have different degrees of force. Assertives are so-called because they represent assertions about a state of affairs in the world. The verbs which represent this class are: describe, report, state, assert, claim, inform, remind, insist, predict, suggest, …etc.

2.Directives

Those speech acts, as the name suggests, express the S's wish or desire to direct the H to do or avoid doing something. The direction of fit is from world to words. Directives make things happen to change the world according to the S's wish. The verbs of this class are: ask, order, command, request, direct, demand, warn, advise, forbid, prohibit, urge, …etc. This class can be described as attempts at various degrees which may be modest attempts or fierce attempts. In the case of the former, the S invites the H to do something or makes a suggestion. In the latter, the S insists on doing the speech act.

3-Commissives

Those types of speech acts commit the S to do some future action. The direction of fit is world-to-words. The verbs which are used to represent this type of speech acts are: promise, threat, vow, pledge, offer, refuse, guarantee, …etc. The S obligates himself to do something. Thus, commissives are assimilated to directives. The two categories involve the sense of request which places the S and the H under an obligation.

4-Expressives

Those kinds of speech acts express the psychological state of the S and what s/he feels. In performing those speech acts, the S is neither attempting to get the world to match the words nor vice versa but the truth is expressed by itself. There is no direction of fit because the expression is basically subjective telling us nothing about the world such as when stepping on a person's toe, apologizing will not change anything in the world for both the stepper and the steppe. Expressive verbs are thank, congratulate, apologize, condole, greet, deplore, welcome, compliment, praise, criticize, …etc.

5-Declarations

Those speech acts change the state of the world. If declarations have been performed felicitously, then many alternations can happen. The S must have a special institutional role, in a specific context, in order to be able to perform this speech act successfully. The double direction of fit is both words-to-world and world-to words. The verbs that go under this class are: declare, pronounce, approve, appoint, nominate, name, abbreviate, …etc. This class is a very special category because it needs authority to show the force of declarations and to be distinguished from assertives.

Searle's taxonomy of speech acts provides a framework for understanding how various types of utterances in political interviews can lead to misrepresentation. This may occur through misleading assertions, manipulative directives, unfulfilled commitments,

insincere expressions, or unauthorized declarations. A thorough comprehension of these dynamics is essential for critically analyzing political discourse and identifying potential instances of misrepresentation in communication.

2.4 Misrepresentation in Relation to Conversational Maxims and Non-Observance

Misrepresentation can be analyzed through the lens of non-observance of conversational maxims, as it often involves the violation of one of these maxims. Grice (1975: 45) introduced the cooperative principle of communication, which states that participants in a conversation should contribute in a manner that aligns with the accepted purpose or direction of the exchange. This principle is underpinned by four key maxims:

1. **The Maxim of Quantity**: This maxim emphasizes the importance of providing an appropriate amount of information.
2. **The Maxim of Quality: This maxim focuses on truthfulness, with the following sub-maxims**
3. **The Maxim of Relation**: This maxim requires that contributions be relevant to the topic of discussion.
4. **The Maxim of Manner**: This maxim emphasizes clarity and includes four sub-maxims.

3.METHODOLOGY

This section discusses methodological issues and describes the data collection and description, as well as presenting the research design and the model adopted. It also depicts the analysis procedures used in this study.

3.1 Research Design

According to Kumar (2011:94), a research design is a procedure that the researcher uses to answer questions in a valid, objective, accurate, and cost-effective way. It enables the researcher to determine the type of study design he wishes to employ and share with others.

The current study employs an exploratory sequential mixed-method design, which consists of two distinct phases—qualitative and quantitative—because they complement each other and provide a clearer picture of the research problem. Additionally, they serve to answer the research questions and validate or refute the hypotheses.

3.2 Data collection and Description

The data utilized in this research was not selected randomly or incidentally. This study comprises 15 excerpts derived from 10 videos downloaded from various online platforms. The extracts are taken from a total of 20 videos featuring American political interviews conducted between 2020 and 2024.The interviews are political in nature, with the interviewees employing various strategies for misrepresentation. They were conducted by official media channels such as Fox News, CNN, and CBS's "60 Minutes," which specialize in political interviews where misrepresentation strategies are frequently utilized.

3.3 The Proposed Model of Analysis

The researcher employs an eclectic model to achieve the study's objectives. This model is based on Searle's (1979) speech acts theory, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principles .

4. DATA ANALYSIS
4.1. Qualitative Analysis
Below is a qualitative analysis of the chosen extracts

Extract (1)
Tucker: You said at the time when you were president that going to war with Russia either hot war or cold war would drive Russia into alliance with china that would displace us as the most powerful nation.
Trump : I did but we have a bigger problem. the bigger problem is the weaponry. the weaponry today is oh powerful. this isn't like second world war with army tanks shooting each other. this is weapons the likes which this is weapons the likes which the world has never seen before. China has the beginnings of a very big, very powerful unclear -- they're short 5 years. They had started much later. Russia and us are comparable, massive power. more than people understand? Yes. Were you surprised. if you look at Hiroshima, if you look at Nagasaki, you look at those two events many years ago and multiply that power times 500 that's what you're talking about bailer it melted granite unmelt able by blowtorch. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njsp3NyM7Fo

In the above extract, fraudulent misrepresentations are very clear; Trump employs exaggeration of nuclear threats. Trump claims that modern nuclear weapons are "times 500" more powerful than those used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This statement does not tell the whole story about how far nuclear weapons have come because it makes a direct comparison without taking into account nuclear deterrence or the limits that have been put on nuclear arsenals through treaties.

Contextual Hints
The interview between Tucker Carlson and Donald Trump took place on November 1, 2024, and was broadcasted on Fox News. This discussion focused on the potential for nuclear conflict and the geopolitical implications of U.S. foreign policy regarding Russia and China.

a. Speech Acts
"the biggest problem we have in the whole world. it's not global warming. it's nuclear warming all it takes is one madman and going to have a problem the likes of which the world has never season and you don't have to wait 200-300 years for it to happen"

Trump uses assertive (representative) speech acts in the extract, since this type conveys information or describe a state of affairs, with the assumption that they can be evaluated as true or false. He makes several assertive claims about nuclear weapons being vastly more powerful than those used in World War II and about the imminent threat of nuclear war.

b. Violating Maxims

> *"if you look at Hiroshima, if you look at Nagasaki, you look at those two events many years ago and multiply that power times 500 that's what you're talking about bailer it melted granite unmelt able by blowtorch"*

Trump violates the maxim of quantity; in his utterance, he provides excessive information when discussing the power of nuclear weapons, stating that their destructive capacity is "times 500" greater than that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki without sufficient evidence or context.

Also, the speaker violates the maxim of relation when he shifts topics in a way that may not directly address the questions posed by Carlson, particularly when he moves from discussing nuclear threats to criticizing environmentalists and global warming. For instance, when he states, "the environmentalist talks about all this nonsense," he diverts from the original topic of nuclear threats, making his comments less relevant to the discussion at hand.

Extract (2)

Tucker: *the reason I'm asking you is I'm looking at the trajectory since 2015 when you got into politics you know for real and then one there it started with protests against you massive protests organized protests by the left and then moved to impeachment twice right and now indictment. I mean the next stages is violence is are you worried that they are going to try and kill you why wouldn't why they try and kill you honestly.*

Trump: *they are savage animals they are people that are sick really sick you have great people in the Democrat party you have great people that are Democrats most of the people in our country are fantastic and I'm representing everybody I'm not just republicans but I represent everybody I'm the president of everybody but I've seen what they do I've seen the links that they go to when they make up the Russia Russia when that's exposed and they go down.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIsemTMgyO0&t=26s (7:11)

Contextual Hints

The interview between the Fox journalist Tucker Carlson and the former president Trump. The interview broadcast on Fox News; the show revolves around the escalating political tensions and the perception of threats Trump faces since he entered politics in 2015. Carlson highlights a timeline marked by significant events: from widespread protests against Trump to two impeachment trials and now multiple indictments.

The above extract, various types of misrepresentation can be identified, particularly fraudulent and negligent misrepresentation. These types can be characterized by their intent and the circumstances surrounding the statements made. Trump employs fraudulent misrepresentation, since this type occurs when a false statement is made knowingly with the intent to deceive another party.

In Trump's utterance, his assertion that the 2020 election was "rigged" despite numerous court rulings and investigations confirming its legitimacy could be viewed as fraudulent misrepresentation if it is determined that he knowingly spread false information to manipulate public perception and maintain support.

a. Speech acts

"They are savage animals they are people that are sick really sick" "Most of the people in our country are fantastic"

Trump uses speech acts of assertive by stating that immigrants are savages and animals, particularly those he claims are entering the country illegally. This inflammatory rhetoric is part of his campaign strategy focused on immigration issues. He has been escalating his anti-immigrant rhetoric as part of his election campaign strategy.

The speaker employs expressive speech acts when he states, *"It's sad to see."* He expressed a sense of disappointment and concern regarding the current state of the country and its political climate. He conveys a feeling of disillusionment with the political situation, particularly regarding the actions of his opponents and the perceived chaos in the country. By using "sad," he aimed to influence the audience's perception.

b. Violating maxims

Trump violates the maxim of quality, which requires speakers to provide truthful and evidence-based information. Trump refers to certain individuals as *"savage animals"* and *"sick people,"* without providing any concrete evidence to justify such extreme characterizations.

"*Are you worried that they are going to try and kill you? Why wouldn't they try and kill you honestly?"*? Trump violates the maxim of quantity by failing to provide the necessary information related to his personal concerns about potential violence and instead offering irrelevant details that do not address the core of Carlson's inquiry, whether he has taken precautions or if he feels threatened. This omission leaves a gap in the expected information**.**

The speaker violates the maxim of relevance by changing the topic. Trump often shifts the conversation to unrelated topics rather than directly answering questions.

Extract (3)

Morman *: Your stance and support for Israel has been unwavering during debate you said that we are the biggest producer of the support for Israel of anyone in the world you also said that we're providing Israel with all weapons they need and when they need them back in April26$ billion in Aid was sent or was approved to be sent to Israel why?*

Biden : I said defensive weapons I denied them offensive weapons that they were using 2,000Ib bombs and the rest because I made it real clear they cannot use weapons that we provide then to in fact using civilian areas that's why i put to gather this plan.

Morman : My question though is why your and united states at the current moment support for Israel so strong

Biden: Look Israel if there weren't Israel every Jew in the world will be at risk and so there's a need for it to be strong and a need for Israel to able to have after world war 11 the ability for Jews to have place that was their own that but you don't have to be a Jew to be a Zionist and a Zionist is about whether or not Israel is a safe haven for Jews because of their history of how they have been persecuted.

Morman: Are you a Zionist

Biden: Yes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJP2zlH2nt8. (9:07)

Contextual Hints

The interview was held on Friday, July 12, 2024, with President Joe Biden and Complex's Speedy Morman, **CNN.** This interview was filmed in Detroit, one day prior to the attempted assassination of former President Trump in Butler, PA. Morman asked

Biden about his debate remark that "we're providing Israel with all the weapons they need and when they need them." Biden responded, "I said defensive weapons.

In the above extract, the president Biden uses fraudulent misrepresentation. This type of misrepresentation occurs when a false statement is made knowingly with the intent to deceive another party. Biden claims support for Palestinians. In light of rising casualties in Gaza, Biden claimed he had done more for Palestinians than anyone else, which was met with skepticism and ridicule from Palestinian rights advocates who assert that his policies have exacerbated their plight rather than alleviating it.

a. Speech acts

Biden employs assertive speech act of statement in his declaration, ***"I denied them offensive weapons that they were using, 2,000 lb bombs and the rest,"*** which obligates him to affirm the veracity of the proposition he presents. In this context, he is asserting a factual account of his previous decisions regarding the provision of weaponry to Israel.

b. Violating maxims

With regard to the violation of Grice's maxims within the Cooperative Principle, there is a clear breach of the maxim of quantity in the speaker's utterance: "I said defensive weapons; I denied them offensive weapons." President Biden violates this maxim by providing more information than was necessary to answer the question. Instead of directly addressing why military aid was sent to Israel, he elaborates on the types of weapons provided and withheld — specifically defensive versus offensive arms — which was not explicitly requested in the inquiry.

Biden then violates the maxim of relevance by not directly addressing the question about the $26 billion in aid. Instead, he focuses on the types of weapons provided, which is only tangentially related to the question. Biden's answer, "***Look, Israel, if there weren't Israel, every Jew in the world would be at risk,"*** violates the maxim of manner by being unclear and not well organized.

(Extract 4)

Bill Whitaker: The events of the past few weeks have pushed us to the brink, if—if not into an all-out regional war in the Middle East. What can the U.S. do at this point to stop this from spinning out of control?

Kamala Harris: Well, let's start with October 7. 1,200 people were massacred, 250 hostages were taken, including Americans, women were brutally raped, and as I said then, I maintain Israel has a right to defend itself. We would. And how it does so matters. Far too many innocent Palestinians have been killed. This war has to end.

Bill Whitaker: We supply Israel with billions of dollars in military aid, and yet Prime Minister Netanyahu seems to be charting his own course. The Biden-Harris administration has pressed him to agree to a ceasefire. He's resisted. You urged him not to go into Lebanon. He went in anyway. Does the U.S. have no sway over Prime Minister Netanyahu?

Kamala Harris: The work that we do diplomatically with the leadership of Israel is an ongoing pursuit around making clear our principles.

Bill Whitaker: But it seems that Prime Minister Netanyahu is not listening. Vice President Kamala Harris: We are not going to stop pursuing, what is necessary for the United States to be clear about where we stand on the need for this war to end.

Bill Whitaker: Do we have a--a real close ally in Prime Minister Netanyahu? Vice President Kamala Harris: I think, with all due respect, the better question is do we have an important alliance between the American people and the Israeli people. And the answer to that question is yes.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJys7OVH24E&t=486s

Contextual Hints

   This interview excerpt features Vice President Kamala Harris, who was campaigning for the U.S. presidency in the 2024 election, and journalist Bill Whitaker. The interview was broadcast on 60 Minutes , a prominent American television news magazine, on the CBS network. The selected segment under analysis addresses the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza.

   Harris employs fraudulent misrepresentation in the above extract when she states, "I maintain Israel has a right to defend itself," which aligns with U.S. policy but raises questions about the implications for Palestinian civilians. Critics point out that while she acknowledges Israel's right to defense, her comments about "far too many innocent Palestinians have been killed" seem to lack a balanced discussion on how U.S. military aid contributes to this situation. Harris misrepresents the facts since her administration is the one that supports Israel with weapons to kill innocent Palestinians.

b. Speech acts

   "Well, let's start with October 7. 1,200 people were massacred, 250 hostages were taken, including Americans, women were brutally raped, and as I said then, I maintain Israel has a right to defend itself"

Harris uses assertive speech acts to state facts and express her beliefs. For instance, when she discussed the October 7 attack, she said, "1,200 people were massacred, and 250 hostages were taken, including Americans." This assertive act establishes the context and gravity of the situation. By this disinformation, she attempts to convince her audience about Israel's actions in Gaza, ignoring the big number of casualties from children and women that were killed because of Israel.

   Harris employs commissive speech acts of commitment to commit to future actions or stances. When she stated, "*We are not going to stop pursuing what is necessary for the United States to be clear about where we stand on the need for this war to end,".* The use of vague language such as "necessary" and "clear" can be seen as a strategic choice to avoid addressing specific criticisms or questions about U.S. military engagement.

   Harris uses expressive speech acts to convey her emotions and attitudes. For instance, when she says, *"Far too many innocent Palestinians have been killed,"* she's expressing concern and empathy with Palestinian people have been killed during the war, misleading the fact that her country is part of this war by providing Israel with all weapons to the people of Gaza.

b. Violating Maxims

"The work that we do diplomatically with the leadership of Israel is an ongoing pursuit around making clear our principles"

   Based on this extract, Kamala Harris violates the maxim of quantity in her utterance by provided insufficient information, when she asked about U.S. influence over Netanyahu, Harris gives a vague answer about diplomatic work and principles, without directly addressing the specific concerns raised by the interviewer.

In terms of the maxim of manner, the speaker in this utterance violates this maxim. The speaker's responses are often vague and ambiguous, lacking the clarity required by the maxim of manner. For example, when asked about U.S. influence over Netanyahu, she responds with a general statement about "***ongoing pursuit around making clear our principles***" without specifying what those principles are or how they're being communicated.

Regarding the maxim of relevance, the speaker violates this maxim when she avoids the direct question, ***"Do we have a— a real close ally in Prime Minister Netanyahu?"*** Harris shifts the focus from Netanyahu to the relationship between the American and Israeli people.

Extract (5)

Bill Whitaker: how close is this to becoming a regional conflict that could draw in US troops?
Harris: we have absolutely no intention nor do we have any plans to send combat troops into Israel or Gaza period the US is not telling Israel what to do but is providing advice equipment and diplomatic support a terrorist organization Hamas slaughtered hundreds of young people at a concert by most estimates at least 1,400 Israelis are dead Israel without any question has a right to defend itself that being said it is very important that there be no conflation between Hamas and the Palestinians the Palestinians deserve equal measures of Safety and Security self-determination and dignity and we have been very clear that the rules of war must be adhered to and that there be human humanitarian Aid that flows. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lLYNsAda_Pk

Contextual Hints

The interview featuring Vice President Kamala Harris and journalist Bill Whitaker was conducted as part of the CBS program "60 Minutes," which aired on October 29, 2023. The conversation primarily focused on the intensifying conflict between Israel and Hamas, addressing various topics including the United States' military assistance to Israel and the potential consequences of regional conflicts that might engage American military forces. Harris emphasized that the United States has no plans to send combat troops to either Israel or Gaza, while also affirming Israel's entitlement to self-defense against Hamas, which had recently launched a significant attack resulting in numerous casualties.

Harris misrepresented the facts about humanitarian aid; she mentioned the importance of humanitarian aid flowing into Gaza while asserting that "the rules of war must be adhered to". However, the reality is that the ongoing blockade and military actions severely restrict humanitarian access and exacerbate suffering among civilians in Gaza. Her comments might create an impression that humanitarian efforts are adequately supported when, in reality, many organizations report significant challenges in delivering aid due to security concerns and logistical barriers.

a. Speech Acts

"***Hamas slaughtered hundreds of young people at a concert by most estimates at least 1,400 Israelis are dead Israel without any question has a right to defend itself that being said it is very important that there be no conflation between Hamas and the Palestinians the Palestinians deserve equal measures of Safety and Security***"

Harris utilizes assertive speech acts in her statements, as her utterances convey information or express beliefs about the world. Her assertions regarding Hamas as a terrorist organization and Israel's entitlement to self-defense exemplify this category. For instance, her claim that "at least 1,400 Israelis are dead" presents factual information. However, it is important to note that Harris's presentation of statistics may be misleading or taken out of context; she emphasizes Israeli casualties without adequately addressing the deaths and suffering of Palestinians. This selective representation risks misrepresenting the overall humanitarian crisis, which includes the significant loss of life among women and children and the displacement of thousands of Palestinians.

   "We are as committed to Ukraine as we've always been to authorize additional aid to defend itself against Russia's unprovoked aggression that is not going to waver".
Harris utilizes commissive speech acts of pledge through her use of utterance such as "unprovoked aggression," which can be contentious. This choice of language presents the situation in a particular manner that may overlook the intricate geopolitical dynamics involved. Such framing has the potential to mislead audiences regarding the nature of the conflict and the underlying motivations for U.S. support, indicating a possible disparity between the speaker's intentions and public understanding.

b. Violating Maxims

   The speaker violates the maxims of quantity in Harris's response of "Don't" to Bill Whitaker's question about the message to Iran, representing a clear violation of the maxim of quantity, which states that contributions to a conversation should be as informative as necessary. By responding with a single word, **"Don't**," Harris fails to provide adequate information regarding the context or implications of this directive. While the brevity may seem impactful, it lacks the necessary elaboration that would help the audience understand the U.S. position towards Iran in the context of ongoing military tensions. This response does not fulfill the expectation that a speaker will provide enough detail for comprehension.

   Also, the speaker violates the maxim of manner, which emphasizes clarity and brevity in communication. Harris's utterances include lengthy explanations that could obscure her main points, particularly when she discusses the rights of Palestinians and the U.S.'s stance on Israel. For instance, her elaboration on humanitarian concerns and military actions against Iran may detract from the clarity of her primary message regarding U.S. troop involvement. This verbosity can lead to confusion about her actual stance on the question posed by Whitaker, thereby violating the principle of being brief and efficient.

Table (4.1): Speech Acts Employed by American politicians in *political interviews*

The types of speech acts	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	5	56%
Commissives	2	22%

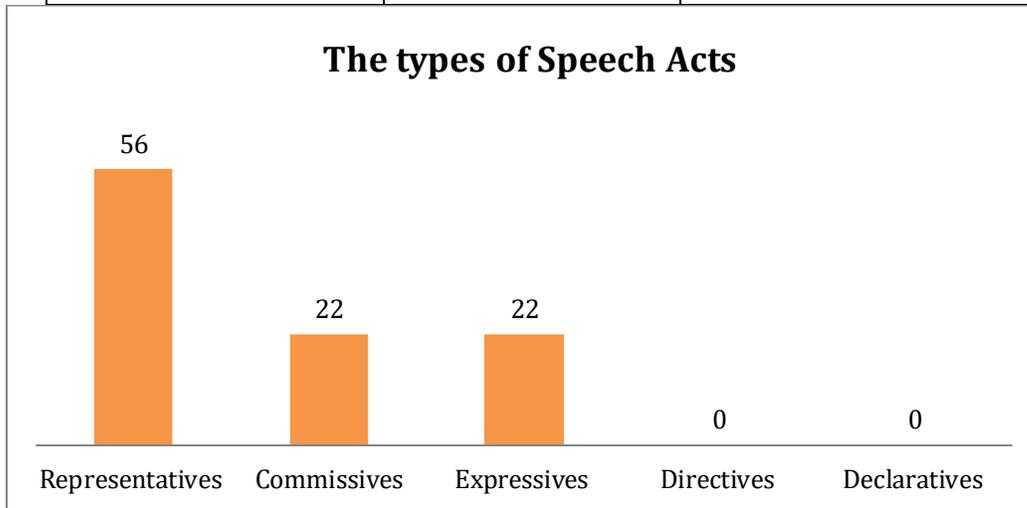| Expressives	2	22%
Directives	0	0%
Declaratives	0	0%
Total	**9**	**100%**

The types of Speech Acts

Figure (4.1): Speech Acts Employed by Politicians in *American political interview*

Regarding Grice's maxims, Table (4.2) and Figure (4.2) show that in order to convey the misrepresentation, the politicians violate all the maxims with different frequencies and percentages. The total violations are 12. The quantity maxim is the highest violating maxim with a frequency of (5) and a percentage of (41.666%). The relevance is the second most violating maxim with a frequency of (3) times and a percentage of (25%). Manner maxim is the third violating maxim with a frequency of (3) times and a percentage of (25%). The last and least violating maxim is the quality maxim. It stands for a frequency of (1) times and a percentage of (8.333%).

Table (4.2): Violating Grice's Maxims Employed by American Politicians in *political interviews*

Grice's Maxims	Frequency	Percentage
Quantity maxim	5	41,666%
Quality maxim	1	8,333%

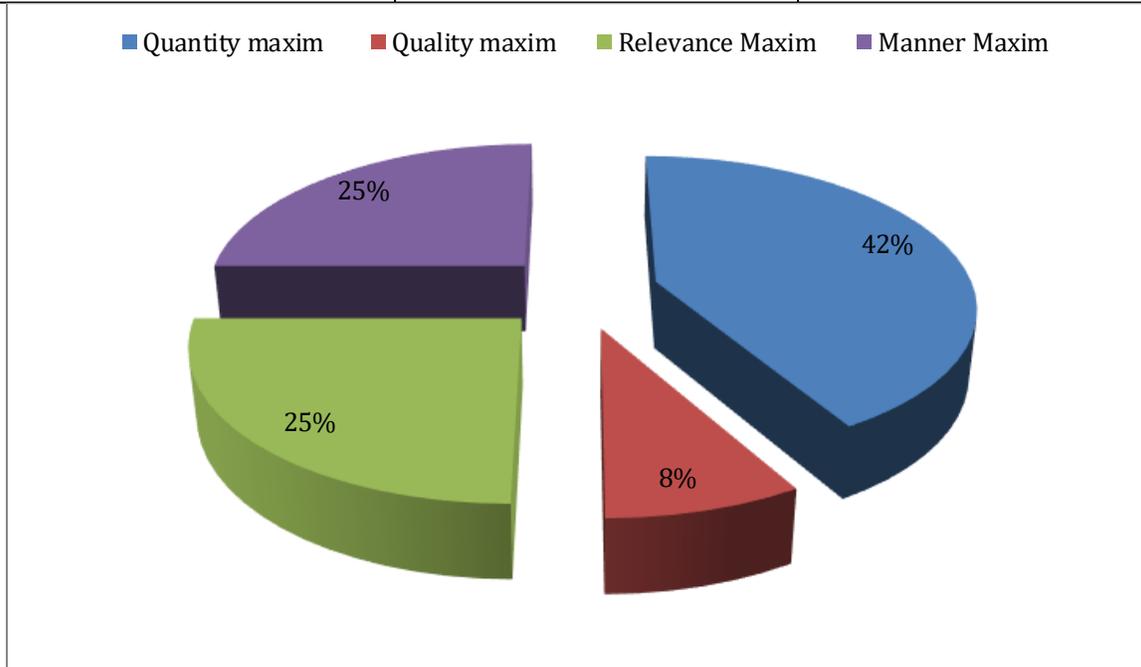| Relevance Maxim	3	25%
Manner Maxim	3	25%
Total	**12**	**100**

Figure (4.2): Violating Grice's Maxims Employed by Politicians in *American Political interviews*

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that American politicians systematically employ fraudulent misrepresentation as a strategic tool to influence public opinion and maintain political dominance. The analysis reveals that these deceptive practices manifest primarily through representative/assertive speech acts (constituting 56% of cases), which allow politicians to project conviction while sidestepping factual accountability. Furthermore, consistent violations of Grice's cooperative principle emerge as a hallmark of political discourse, with the maxim of quantity being most frequently breached—a tactic that enables information manipulation through deliberate over-disclosure or omission. Notably, distinct patterns emerge among individual politicians: while Trump and Harris predominantly violate the maxim of relevance through topic digression, Biden more commonly contravenes the maxim of quality via unsubstantiated claims. Collectively, these findings underscore how political communication is weaponized through calculated pragma linguistic models , serving to obscure truths, reinforce partisan narratives, and ultimately consolidate power. This research not only illuminates the mechanisms of political misrepresentation but also raises critical questions about its implications for democratic accountability and informed public discourse.

References

Archer, D., Aijmer, K., & Wichmann, A. (2012). *Pragmatics: An advanced resource book for students* . Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Austin, J. (1962). *How to do things with words* . Harvard University Press.

Bahatia, A. (2006). Critical discourse analysis of political press conference. *Discourse and Society* , 17(3), 173–203.

Bavelas, J. B., Black, A., Chovil, N., & Mullet, J. (1990). *Equivocal communication* . Sage.

Birner, B. J. (2013). *Introduction to pragmatics* . Wiley-Blackwell.

Bluma-Kulka, S. (1983). The dynamics of political interviews. *Text* , 3(2), B1–153.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* . Cambridge University Press.

Carson, T. T. (2010). *Lying and deception: Theory and practice* . Oxford University Press.

Castiglione, D., & Pollak, J. (2019). *Political representation: Concepts, theories, and practices* . Oxford University Press.

Cavico, F. J. (1997). Fraudulent, negligent, and innocent misrepresentation in the employment context: "The deceitful, careless, and thoughtless employer." *Campbell Law Review* , 20, 1.

Charnock, R. (2010). The linguistics of misrepresentation: Intention and truth values. *Intention and Truth Values* , 427–449.

Crystal, D. (1992). *An encyclopedic dictionary of language and languages* . Blackwell.

Cuddon, J. A., & Preston, C. E. (1999). *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory* (4th ed.). Penguin Books.

Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and discourse* . Routledge.

Danler, P. (2005). *Linguistic approaches to misrepresentation* . Peter Lang.

Fallis, D. (2015). What is disinformation? *Library Trends* , 63(3), 401–426.

Fearnside, W. W., & Holther, W. B. (1959). *Fallacy: The counterfeit of argument* . Cambridge University Press.

Fortenbaugh, W. W. (1996). Aristotle's account of persuasion through character. In C. L. Johnstone (Ed.), *Theory, text, context: Issues in Greek rhetoric and oratory* (pp. 147–168). SUNY Press.

Galasinski, D. (2000). *The language of deception: A discourse analytical study* . Sage.

Govier, T. (2010). *A practical study of argument* . Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: 3 speech acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.

Guasti, P., & Almeida, D. (2019). Claims of misrepresentation in democratic politics. *Journal of Political Discourse* , 12(3), 152–164.

Handelman, D. (2009). *Models and mirrors: Towards an anthropology of public events* . Berghahn Books.

Handelman, S. (2009). *Thought manipulation: The use and abuse of psychological trickery* . Greenwood Publishing Group.

Harris, S. (1986). Questions in political interviews. *Journal of Pragmatics* , 10(1), 60–62.

Hatch, E. (1992). *Discourse and language education* . Cambridge University Press.

Heritage, J., & Greatbatch, D. (1991). On the institutional character of institution talk: The case of news interviews. In D. Boden & D. H. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Talk and social structure* (pp. 93–137). University of California Press.

Hoffer, P. C. (2014). *Sensory worlds in early America* . Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hoffer, S. R. (2012). Misrepresentation: The Restatement's second mistake. *University of Illinois Law Review* , 115–175.

Houtlosser, P. (1995). The pragma-dialectical analysis of rhetorical questions. In F. H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, J. A. Blair, & C. A. Willard (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Third ISSA Conference on Argumentation* (pp. 255–266). Sic Sat.

Hudson, G. (2000). *Essential introductory linguistics* . Blackwell.

John, S. (2007). *The art of political speechwriting* . Routledge.

Knops, A., & Cleen, B. (2019). Victimhood and misrepresentation in political discourse. *Political Studies Review* , 17(2), 167–180.

Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics* . Cambridge University Press.

Martin, L. J. (1982). Disinformation: An instrumentality in the propaganda arsenal. *Political Communication* , 2(1), 47–64.

Mey, J. (2006). *Concise encyclopedia of pragmatics* . Elsevier.

Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.

Metts, S. (1989). An exploratory investigation of deception in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* , 6, 159–179.

Peccie, J. (1999). *Pragmatics* . Routledge.

Primoratz, I. (1984). Lying and the methods of ethics. *International Studies in Philosophy* , 16, 35–57.

Puzynina, J. (1992). *Language in the world of values* . Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

Renkema, J. (1993). *Discourse studies: An introductory textbook* . John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Rigotti, E. (2005). *Misrepresentation and insincerity in communication* . John Benjamins Publishing.

Romanik, D. (2014). Persuasion and influence in marketing. *Journal of Marketing Research* , 51(3), 274–290.

Saward, M. (2010). *The representative claim* . Oxford University Press.

Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and meaning* . Cambridge University Press.

Šírová, E. (2016). *Misrepresentation in commercial contracts: A legal perspective* . Cambridge University Press.

Šírová, E. (2016). *Misrepresentation in contract law: A comparative analysis. European Journal of Legal Studies* , 9(2), 200–215.

Tarasov, A. (1990). *Manipulation in social contexts* . Progress Publishers.

Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics* . Longman.

Van Eemeren, F. H., Grootendorst, R., & Snoeck Henkemans, A. F. (2005). *Argumentative indicators in discourse: A pragma-dialectical study* . Springer.

Ward, J., & Fearnside, W. W. (2005). *Reasoning and writing: A guide to critical thinking* . Pearson Education.

Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2018). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making* . Council of Europe.

Whaley, B. (1982). *Strategem: Deception and surprise in war* . MIT Press.

Zuckerman, M., DePaulo, B. M., & Rosenthal, R. (1981). Verbal and nonverbal communication of deception. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* , 14, 1–59.

Web Sources

1 .http://library.college.police.uk/docs/theses/Picornell-cues-to-deception-2013.pdf
2 .https://thelawdictionary.org/article/3-types-misrepresentation-matter/