

Compliance With Grice's Conversational Maxims by Two Deputy Presidential Candidates During The 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Debate

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ABSTRACT

Language plays a pivotal role in advancing political agenda. There are varied ways through which such agenda are propagated one of them being debate. Debates generally and televised ones specifically, fulfill a valuable democratic function by enabling voters to evaluate potential leaders and their policies. In Kenya, these televised debates have become an integral part of democratic dialogue, determining how citizens judge integrity, governance models and preparedness to rule. This study sought to examine how the deputy presidential candidates adhered to Grice's conversational maxims during the 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Debate. The intention of this study was to contribute to discourse studies by bringing to the fore how actors in the political arena use language as a tactical tool in momentous electoral communication, and to foster a more profound intellectual grasp of the connection between pragmatics, and ideology in Kenyan political debates. The study was guided by Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (hereafter DRA) (1992, 2001) and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. Fairclough's three-dimensional model was crucial because it provided an in-depth understanding on the structure of the discourse while Grice's maxims gauged whether the parameters within which conversations should be carried out to ensure effective communication are adhered to. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design and through purposive sampling excerpts from the debate were selected. The study revealed that candidates adhered to the maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner.

Key words: debate, governance, cooperative principle, parameters

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Politics is inherently dependent on language; complex relationships between the governed and those who govern them are enacted and mediated through language (Michira, 2013). Masiolo (2023) postulates that political communication plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behaviour during electioneering and referendum campaigns. Politicians often employ language as a powerful tool to advance their political agendas and promote specific ideologies. By strategically using words, terms, and idioms, politicians aim to construct persuasive narratives, shape public perceptions, and garner support from the electorate. Globally, debates have been held during the electioneering period where the contenders for given political offices have been given platforms to explain their political agendas and advance varied ideologies to citizens. Most of these individuals have used such platforms to appeal to their listeners to vote in their favour. Many of these debates are televised and the media has played pivotal roles in their organization. Both politicians and broadcasters argue that televised election debates fulfil a valuable democratic function by enabling voters to evaluate potential leaders and their policies (Coleman & Moss 2014).

The role of media in presidential candidates' debates cannot be underestimated. They take part in organizing such debates and in ensuring that candidates articulate their issues in front of their audience to enable them (voters/audience) make informed decisions. Ndonge and Ogola (2015) posit that in televised political debates, media has been accorded a chance to interrogate, on behalf of the public, the aspiring leaders, no matter how powerful they are or they were before the contest. The influence of the media in the Kenyan presidential debate

comes in from two viewpoints. First, this debate was organized by media and all media houses in Kenya were represented with 8 television stations and 34 radio stations involved in advertising and broadcasting the event live. Needless to say, social media had the presidential debate as the most trending event whenever it was broadcast. Second, is the fact that media was able to have millions of Kenyans watch the event and gave them a chance to participate from the onset by sending questions and watching the debate. This way, were it not for the media's idea to organize event, call on Kenyans to participate by sending questions, bringing together the candidates, advertising profoundly for the debate and broadcasting the event, the impact of the presidential debate on the election would not have been there and may be things would have been different.

Many countries globally have embraced political debates especially for those running for the presidency. Hughes (as cited in Gyasi & Sarfo-Kantankah (2024) opine that presidential debates have become a constant practice in the electioneering process of most countries. For that reason, discourse analysts have sought to investigate the use of language and the functions that presidential debates perform. Several functions have been brought to perspective for instance; debates enable the audience to assess the candidates based on the latter's policies and reactions to some thought-provoking questions concerning the economy and the welfare of a country.

The United States has a history of political debates stretching back centuries; this culture was given prominence in the 1960s. The most celebrated are the Lincoln-Douglas debates held in 1858 between rival candidates for the United States Senate from Illinois: the incumbent Democrat Stephen Douglas and his Republican challenger, Abraham Lincoln. All seven Lincoln Douglas debates covered a topic that dominated public discourse at the time: whether to permit slavery in the territories (Justice, Slaw & Koch, 2024). Windt (as cited in Justice, Slaw & Koch, 2024) contend that the arrival of televised presidential debates transformed the landscape of U.S. political debates. The Kennedy-Nixon debates revolutionized presidential campaigns and "established both precedent and format for subsequent debates. As a result, candidates have participated in the debates whose format was largely negotiated by teams for Kennedy and Nixon among others. The networks pushed for a format resembling the 1948 Oregon Republican primary debate, where candidates debated a resolution about the legal status of the Communist Party. Networks also favoured Oxford-style debate, where the candidates would ask each other direct questions. However, the idea of asking each other questions was later dropped in favour of candidates taking questions from a moderator and panel of journalists. The press, not the candidates or the public, would decide what topics were worthy of discussion in a presidential debate, and thus a presidential campaign. The candidates even agreed that the moderator should be a member of the press, despite suggestions from the networks that it should be an important public figure. As a result, since 1960, every debate has included at least one member of the press asking and/or moderating the asking of questions on several topics to the candidates. Self (as cited in Justice, Slaw & Koch, 2024) argues that little has changed with regard to the presidential candidates' debates. One of the slight adjustments that has been made is the introduction of the town hall format where citizens are tasked with asking the candidates questions.

Isotalus and Aarnio (as cited in Isotalus, 2011) posit that in Finland, as in most other countries, television debates have become a crucial part of campaigning. It is believed that they play a key role in determining the voting patterns since they are used by candidates to manipulate the audience to vote in their favour. Despite their role in the electioneering process, presidential debates are conducted in a way that is contrary to the norm of traditional debates. Because of this, some researchers in Finland have suggested that it would be better to talk about discussions than debates because the interaction between participants seldom resembles a traditional debate. Isotalus (as cited in Isotalus 2011) additionally notes the uniqueness in the Finnish presidential debates where moderators usually take a more prominent role than, for example, in the American presidential debates; the role of moderators resembles that of an interviewer and in these cases debating between politicians is virtually non-existent. Additionally, turn-taking between candidates is not structured such that they are freer to comment informally and interrupt each other than in the American presidential debates. In the 2006 Finnish presidential campaign, too, the debates had a prominent role; the media generated a great deal of anticipation, and it was supposed that the debates would even be a decisive factor in the election. Both candidates and television companies paid them a great deal of attention and other media followed them widely.

Africa has followed suit in conducting presidential debates during the electioneering period. One of the reasons for this is that debates provide citizens with opportunities to cross examine those presenting themselves for the presidency as a way of not only strengthening elections but also making it a democratic process. A lot has been

borrowed from the West (specifically the United States of America) on the way such debates are conducted. Varied nations across the globe have also sought the help of an American Institution, the Commission on Presidential Debate, which has provided guidance on how such debates ought to be carried out. Some of the African countries that have conducted these debates include Ghana, Tunisia, Nigeria, Liberia, Namibia and Kenya among others.

Kenya has not been left behind in this 'wave' that has swept across the African continent. Kenya's first Presidential debates took place in 2013. All eight Presidential candidates participated in the series of two debates, and millions of Kenyans reportedly watched or heard the debate, which was broadcast live on 42 local radio and TV stations, as well as YouTube. This debate reportedly helped to promote peace by exposing the electorate to the sight of the eight competing candidates shaking hands, disagreeing respectfully and pledging not to incite violence (Legal Assistance Centre, 2015). Moss and O'Hare (2014) note that the two debates in Kenya were widely celebrated as signalling a positive turn in Kenyan campaigning from the politics of personality and ethnicity towards a more sober, issue-based form of electoral competition. The debates offered a unique lens through which to consider the role the media defined for itself during the election period. This study argues that the debates were staged as part of the media's broader project of 'peace promotion' thus, the actual debate between the candidates was of secondary importance to the spectacle of having all eight candidates amicably share the debate floor. This study's approach therefore emphasizes the theatrical nature of the performances and the deliberate way in which they were designed to present a portrait of Kenya's maturing democracy. The study concludes that the use of seductive images, a broader trend in Kenya is a distraction from the present realities. This study is instrumental to the current because the setting is the same and the issues addressed are the same. While it centres on presidential candidates' debate and the first of its kind in Kenya, the current focuses on the deputy presidential debates.

Southmayd (as cited in Rakhmasari, 2023) opines that presidential debates play important roles for example, they can assist undecided voters in making decisions, prevent possible partisan ship-jumpers from voting for the other party, cause increased turnout on election day and most basically, provide any and all voters with more information, regardless of whether they pick their candidate based partly or solely on the debate. Even though there is a dearth of research on the deputy presidential candidate's debates, Benoit and Airne (2005) conducted a Functional Analysis of American Vice-Presidential Debates. They argue that compared to presidential debates, vice presidential debates tend to be given less prominence and there have been far fewer of them. The same scenario has been witnessed in the scholarly domain where scholars tend to ignore debates between the running mates of the presidential candidates. Despite them being relegated to the periphery, such debates are crucial for instance, through them voters can learn about the presidential candidates because their deputies also discuss their running mates. This study is important because there is paucity of research on the Kenyan Deputy presidential candidates debates this is evidenced by the limited literature found from searches conducted on Google Scholar, libraries, Research Gate and other major search engines; it is thus against this backdrop that this study sought to examine how the deputy presidential candidates adhered to Grice's conversational maxims during the 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Debate.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

To examine how the deputy presidential candidates adhered to Grice's conversational maxims during the 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Debate.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Isotalus (2011) carried out a study whose intention was to describe the characteristics of a Finnish television debate by means of the Functional theory and to critically evaluate the applicability of this theory to the analysis of Finnish political campaigns. The results show that a Finnish presidential debate differs in many ways from an American one. The study shows how strongly the culture is reflected in political television debates and how important it is to take account of the cultural perspective in the development of a theory. The study further revealed that both candidates used defenses more than other kinds of turns. Of Halonen's turns, 41% were defenses while the corresponding figure for Niinistö was 30%. Niinistö had nearly as many attacks (29%) as defenses, but Halonen had clearly fewer attacks (27%). However, the candidates used approximately the same number of attacks. Both of them had more uncoded turns than acclaims. Halonen had acclaims in 14% of her

turns and Niinistö 18%. Additionally, the subdivision of the turns into the subcategories of policy and character topics was similar between the candidates. The study concluded that Functional theory is not applicable to all cultures. This study is instrumental to the present in a number of ways for instance, it provides adequate literature on presidential debates and the function of moderators in the debate process. It is however different from the current study in that while it focused on presidential debates in Finland, the current is centred on deputy presidential debate in Kenya. This study was anchored on the Functional theory while the current on was analysed using a combination of the tenets of Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach and Grice's Cooperative Principle.

Using a model proposed by Van Dijk (2006), Muhammed and Flaifel (2013) carried out a Critical Discourse Analysis of 2012 American Presidential Debate. The study revealed that elite discourses of candidates contribute to the reproduction of domination, orientalism and Islamophobia. The study further noted that the contextual features of the debate are set intentionally to serve ideologically positive self-representation and negative other representation. Additionally, the analysis shows that the overall strategy of all these political ideologies appears to be within the framework of the ideological square. Its main purpose is to emphasize the racist polarization and differentiation between positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as a means of controlling the minds of others, hence, to maintain the misuse of power, manipulation, inequality, and exclusion. This study is crucial to the present since it provides information on political debates and their significance. It also informs the current study with regard to one of the theories used in data analysis. The two studies are however different in a number of ways firstly, while the previous focused on American presidential debates, the current is interested in the Kenyan deputy presidential debate. Secondly, the geographical contexts are also different with the previous taking place in America while the current in Kenya.

Grounded on the Rational Choice and Gratifications theories, Laninhun and Olowojebutu (2021) investigated voters' response to the 2019 presidential debate in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design and administered questionnaire on 460 voters in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The respondents were selected using the multistage sampling technique. Findings revealed that although the 2019 presidential debate had very little influence on voters' voting decisions in the 2019 presidential election, a majority of the voters perceived the presidential debate as relevant to the electoral process as it increased their knowledge of political issues as well as their knowledge of the candidates. The study found out that political affiliation was the most significant factor that influenced voters' choice of candidate. Even though this study focused on presidential debates in Nigeria, it was instrumental to the current one in a variety of ways for instance, it brings to perspective African political discourse which remains underexplored in many mainstream linguistic studies; it provides sufficient literature on the electoral process in Africa while bringing to the fore political issues that many African nations grapple with. Additionally, it provides the electorate with a platform on which to assess the candidates offering themselves for the highest political office thus enabling them make informed decisions. The points of divergence however between this and the current study is that while this was a study on a presidential debate conducted in Nigeria, the current analyses the 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Candidate's Debate held in run-up to the general elections of 2022. Additionally, the study on the presidential debate conducted in Nigeria was informed by two theories namely: Rational Choice and Gratification the current on the other hand, the present was based on Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational approach and Grice's Cooperative Principle. The methodologies used in data collection and analysis in the two studies also differed.

Du and Linh (2024) conducted a study with the aim of identifying the non-observance of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and finding out the underlying motives for this non-observance by two American presidential candidates namely Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee, and Donald Trump, the nominee of the Republican Party. The data were collected from two downloaded videos of the presidential debates in 2020, and were then categorized and analysed using Grice's Cooperative Principle. The findings show that both Biden and Trump did not observe all the maxims. Moreover, the rate of violation was much higher than that of flouting, and Trump more frequently flouted the maxims than Biden. The maxims of quantity and relation were the most frequently broken, whilst the maxim of manner was the most frequently observed. In conclusion, Donald Trump and Joe Biden consistently failed to observe Grice's conversational maxims and took use of this non-observance to portray themselves favourably and the other unfavourably in an effort to gain the audience's support. This study is significant to the current since it provides information on the Grice's Cooperative Principle, one of the theoretical frameworks used in data analysis. Moreover, it provides information on how the Cooperative

principles are adhered to and flouted. The points of divergence between these two studies however are that while the previous was interested in the flouting, adherence and violation of maxims in the American presidential candidates' debate, the present study is interested in the adherence to the maxims by Kenyan deputy presidential candidates in the debate that was held during the 2022 election period.

Using Benoit's functional theory and employing a qualitative content analytical method, Gyasi and SarfoKantankah (2024) analysed Ghanaian presidential debates. The analysis revealed that the presidential candidates used attacks, acclaims, appeal and recommendation. The study further noted challengers acclaimed more than the incumbent, and that the candidates discussed more future plans/deliberative rhetoric. The study concludes that even though most of the assumptions of the theory were confirmed, additional persuasive strategies such as appeal and recommendation were adopted by presidential candidates in Ghanaian political debates. This study is instrumental to the current because it provides crucial information on presidential debates and their significance in the African context. Additionally, it informs the current study with regard to the technique used in data analysis. This study is however different from the current in varied fronts for instance, while it was conducted in Ghana and it focused on presidential debates, the present was conducted in Kenya and it focused on deputy presidential debate. Secondly, the data for this previous study was analyzed using the tenets of the Functional theory while that of the present is analysed using a combination of the tenets of Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach and Grice's Cooperative Principle.

Using a Critical Discourse Analysis Approach, Michira (2014) conducted a study investigating the language of politics: a case study of the 2013 Kenyan Presidential Campaign Discourse. The study employed both primary and secondary data. The study noted that varied rhetorical techniques were employed; these techniques make the Kenyan political scene rich, interesting and entertaining. This study informs the current with regard to literature on the role of language in politics and how it influences voting patterns. It is also significant because it provides sufficient literature on the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis on which the present study is grounded. The geographical contexts are also the same since both were conducted in Kenya. It however differs from the current in the sense that while it focused on presidential candidates and the strategies that they employ to endear themselves to voters, the current is interested in deputy presidential candidates and how they adhered to Grice's maxims during their debate. Additionally, while the previous study used both primary and second data, the current made use of primary data only.

O'Hare and Moss (2014) carried out a study titled Staging democracy: Kenya's televised presidential debates. This study contends that the debates were staged as part of the media's broader project of 'peace promotion'. In this way, actual debate between the candidates was of secondary importance to the spectacle of having all eight candidates amicably share the debate floor. This study was interested in the role that the media plays in such debates and it revealed that they partially abdicated their normative responsibility to interrogate the visions of the country's future being offered by the campaigns, and instead became complicit in the construction of a governance spectacle. In so doing, their ability to hold politicians and institutions to account was compromised. This study informs the present by providing pivotal information on the role of media in conducting presidential debates. It however differs from the present since it was not interested in whether the candidates adhered to Grice's conversational maxims which is the point of focus for the present study. In addition, the previous study dealt with presidential debate while the present is interested in Deputy presidential debate.

Masiolo (2023) conducted a comparative analysis to examine similarities and differences in language manipulation techniques used by politicians in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The aim was to identify country specific patterns and overarching strategies employed in each region. The study was interested in examining how politicians strategically use language to advance their political goals and shape public opinion. Data in the form of speeches, media interviews, and campaign materials were qualitatively analyzed. The study revealed that politicians strategically framed political narratives using specific words, terms, and idioms to portray themselves or their parties as the most suitable choice for the electorate. Positive language was often employed to emphasize achievements and future promises, while negative language was used to criticize opponents and rival parties. This study informed the current with regard to literature on the role of language manipulation in political communication during electioneering period. It further highlights the nuanced ways in which language is strategically manipulated to influence public perception and shape political outcomes. This study is however different from the current in that while it was a comparative study in which data was collected from Kenya,

Uganda and Tanzania, the current is a single study that focused in data from only one country in this case Kenya. Additionally, while the data collected from the previous study was from politicians in general, the present study used data collected from a deputy presidential debate held towards the run up to the 2022 elections. Also, while the previous study examined how language is manipulated using different strategies, the present is interested in how the Kenyan deputy presidential candidates adhered to Grice's conversational maxims during their televised debate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed two theories namely: Grice's Cooperative Principle and Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) in analysing data on the discourse of the deputy presidential candidates that took place in the run up to the 2022 general election in Kenya.

Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA).

Fairclough's model, known as the Dialectical-Relational Approach, focuses on how language is not only a tool for communication but also a force that shapes and reflects social power. Fairclough's main idea is that discourse which includes both written and spoken language does not just reflect the world but also helps shape it. He argues that language is always connected to power and ideology (Fairclough, 2001). This means that the way we talk about things, like politics, race, social issues, is not just about facts, but it also reveals the underlying values and power relationships in society. According to Fairclough (1992, 2010) comprehending a language entail examining it from three angles (text, discursive practice and social practice) which he refers to as the three-dimensional framework. The first angle which is the text, is the level at which we focus on the language used be it in a newspaper article, a conversation or speech. We are interested in the aspects of a language such as choice of word, the structure of a sentence and the way in which meaning is communicated. For instance, the way politicians package and convey their messages has an impact on how people perceive them.

The second angle is the discursive practice which deals with the production and consumption of texts. Fairclough's focus is on how texts are produced, comprehended and synthesized by the audience. It also deals with the roles of those involved in an interaction and the power relations exhibited therein. Those in power dictate how information is interpreted which in turn influences public perception. The third angle concentrates on the connection between discourse and the wider social practices. Fairclough contends that language shapes the social world by creating values and social norms. Language is thus pivotal not only in the way power is exercised but also in the way it is enacted in daily operations.

This study applied DRA because it recognizes that political language does more than convey information; it organizes meaning, shapes relationships and influences how people understand leadership. By examining the verbal cues used in the 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Debate, DRA enabled an integrated examination of how linguistic strategies operated textually through word choice, discursively through interaction and positioning, and socially through the reproduction or contestation of political ideologies. Therefore, the approach allowed the researcher to go beyond the surface meanings, uncovering the ideological and attitudinal dimensions embedded in language. Michira (2013) opines that language is not used in vacuum but rather in particular social, political, cultural and psychological contexts. This theory thus conveys the complicated relationship between the structure of texts and their social functions specifically when they are used to create and maintain differential power relations and structures.

Cooperative Principle (CP)

Cooperative principle (CP) is based on the assumption that participants in a conversation usually attempt to be truthful, informative, relevant and clear in order to facilitate successful communication. The maxim of conversation is also called the Gricean maxim. It suggests that conversation is based on shared principles of cooperation (Grice, 1975). Grice divided the cooperative principles into four conversational maxims namely: quality, quantity, manner and relevance. Below is an exploration of each maxim.

Adherence to Maxim of Quality.

The Maxim of Quality states that speakers should aim to be truthful and only say what they believe to be true. Grice's formulation suggests that speakers should not convey information that they think is false or for which

they lack sufficient evidence. The study drew on these insights to examine how the deputy presidential candidates in the 2022 debate constructed trust through adherence to truth-based responses.

Adherence to Maxim of Quantity.

The Maxim of Quantity asserts that speakers should provide neither too much nor too little information. Grice (1975) argued that speakers should aim to give the right amount of detail, ensuring that their communication is neither overly verbose nor too vague. Levison (1983) expanded on Grice's ideas, suggesting that the maxim of quantity operates in context-dependent ways. He emphasized that speakers adjust the amount of information they provide depending on what the listener knows or expects. This study applied this perspective to assess how candidates managed the amount of detail in their responses. This helped in mapping out how candidates demonstrated communicative effectiveness and informational balance.

Adherence to Maxim of Relevance or Relation.

The Maxim of Relation posits that speakers should only contribute information that is relevant to the conversation. Grice (1975) describes how relevance facilitates communication by helping speakers stay focused on topics that advance the conversation, reducing the risk of digression or confusion. He argues that if speakers provide irrelevant information, it interrupts the inferential process of interpretation. Drawing from this perspective, the study explored how the deputy presidential candidates aligned their responses with the moderator's questions. This offered insight into the coherence and the focus on the political discourse within the debate setting.

Adherence to Maxim of Manner.

The Maxim of Manner encourages speakers to present information in a clear and organized way, avoiding ambiguity and vagueness. Grice argued that speakers should strive to express their messages in a way that is easy for the listener to understand. Levinson (1983) suggests that what counts as clear or ambiguous might vary across different linguistic and cultural contexts, which means that speakers' adherence to this maxim can depend on their shared knowledge of the conversation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how the candidates adhered to Grice's conversational maxims. This debate was selected because it provided a nationally significant platform where candidates' language could be observed and analyzed in detail. The target population for this study was the verbal discourse produced by the two deputy presidential candidates during the 2022 Kenya Deputy Presidential Debate. This discourse encompassed all the verbal exchanges in the debate, but with a particular focus on the ways in which the candidates adhered to the Grice's Maxims. Purposive sampling was used to identify ten debate excerpts in which candidates engaged in question-and-answer sessions on major national issues. Systematic sampling was applied to select specific statements within each excerpt in an organized and consistent manner, ensuring a balanced representation of the debate. Combining purposive and systematic sampling allowed the study to focus on the most relevant and information rich excerpts while maintaining consistency, thereby enhancing both the depth and structure of the data collected (Kumar, 2019; Creswell, 2014). This approach ensured that the data were both highly relevant and analyzed in a structured way, providing a comprehensive basis for examining language use in the debate.

The researcher downloaded the live video recording of the debate by Citizen digital media from YouTube video in its entirety to ensure access to the full discourse, including all verbal exchanges, interruptions, and non-verbal cues. The researcher used the recording by Citizen digital media because it has consistently built a reputation for high journalistic standards in its news coverage, making it a trusted source for national and international news. After downloading the debate recording, the spoken content was transcribed into text. This involved a verbatim transcription process, where every word spoken by the candidates and moderators was captured, along with any non-verbal cues, such as laughter, pauses, or significant tone shifts, that may be relevant for analysis. The transcription was done manually to ensure accuracy. Time stamps were included where necessary to facilitate

easy reference to specific parts of the debate during analysis. The data was organized into manageable segments and this segmentation was guided by the research objective.

The primary research instrument was the YouTube video recordings of the deputy presidential candidates' debate. YouTube provides a medium that is not only attainable but also productive for capturing both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the debate. In so doing, it offers a detailed record of how candidates present themselves, respond to questions, and interact with one another (Rickie, 2010). The videos allow the researcher to examine not just the content of the candidates' arguments, but also how their tone, gestures, and facial expressions work in conjunction with their verbal language to express in depth meanings and attitudes. The analysis began with the researcher familiarizing herself with the transcribed data from the debate by reading and re-reading the transcript to get a sense of the overall structure and key moments of the debate. The focus was on segments that had direct exchanges, crucial political statements, rebuttals, and confrontations. These sections were deemed vital because they were likely to reveal how language is strategically used to influence the audience and express particular political ideologies.

To enhance validity and reliability of the study, the transcribed debate was triangulated with external sources. Media coverage from reputable Kenya outlets such as Citizen Digital Media, Capital FM, Tuko.co.ke and social media commentary were reviewed to cross check candidate's statements, and public endorsement. This triangulation ensured that interpretations of the candidates' language and strategic positioning were not solely based on transcripts but broader public and media perceptions, providing a richer, multi-dimensional understanding of debate discourse. Then the researcher embarked on coding the data after the familiarization exercise. Coding entailed giving a detailed account of the text's surface features, focusing on how the candidates employed these devices to express their attitudes toward their principals, opponents and national issues. The next step involved categorizing the identified codes into broader themes to reflect the linguistic features. The results finally involved synthesizing the findings from the qualitative descriptive analysis and the more interpretive findings from Critical Discourse Analysis using Fairclough's three-dimensional model.

DISCUSSION

Examining how the deputy presidential candidates adhered to Grice's conversational maxims during the 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Debate

The researcher analysed four excerpts from Rigathi Gachagua and Martha Karua. In this study, Candidate A is Rigathi Gachagua, the deputy presidential candidate for Kenya Kwanza political party and the running mate of William Samoei Ruto while Martha Karua who is Candidate B is the deputy presidential candidate for Azimio political party and the running mate of Raila Amolo Odinga. The first two excerpts are derived from the opening statements of both the candidates whose main focus was personal credibility and moral authority as a foundation for political legitimacy.

Opening Statement: Constructing Personal Credibility and Moral Authority

Candidate A

Excerpt 1

Moderator: Kindly introduce yourself to the audience.

Candidate A: *"My name is Rigathi Gachagua. Born and brought up in the slopes of Mt. Kenya, Herera Village 57 years ago. Family is a basic unit of society and the nation. Strong families make strong nations, I'm the head of a family and it's my pleasure and privilege to introduce my family tonight who are here with me. My wife of 35 years pastor Dorcas Wanjiku Rigathi and my firstborn son Kevin Gachagua a software Engineer and my second born son Doctor Keith Ikinu a medical doctor who helps me run the family business. Tonight is a defining moment for the people of Kenya. The people are in anguish, they are in state of helplessness, they have no food, they don't know where to get their next meal, they are devastated, they need hope. Tonight, I will present the Kenya Kwanza plan on how we intend to turn around the economy of this country, put people where they belong, restore their dignity, put money in their pockets and allow them enjoy their dignity. I look forward to a very objective debate not legalities, issues, issues, so that the people of Kenya have an opportunity to interrogate what we plan to do for them. Thank you very much."*

From the excerpt above, it is evident that Rigathi Gachagua, the deputy presidential candidate for Kenya Kwanza political party and the running mate of William Samoei Ruto has adhered to Grice's conversational maxims in varied instances. The following are instances where these maxims have been adhered to.

Adherence to Maxim of Quality

Candidate A's statements are truthful and consistent with campaign themes. Descriptions of social challenges reflect genuine national concerns rather than exaggeration. His family introduction also adds verifiable and authentic content, reinforcing his honesty and reliability in the opening statement.

Adherence to Maxim of Quantity

Adhering to maxim of quantity entails providing an appropriate amount of information: enough to inform the audience, but not so much that it overwhelms or distracts. Rigathi Gachagua has adhered to this maxim by clearly introducing himself and giving relevant personal background. "*My name is Rigathi Gachagua... brought up in the slopes of Mt. Kenya ...*" Beyond personal details, he outlines his party's manifesto "*... tonight I will present Kenya Kwanza plan ... put people where they belong, restore their dignity.... Put money in their pockets ...*" he effectively adheres to Maxim of Quantity by providing just enough personal and contextual information to establish identity, family background and his agenda for the debate.

Adherence to Maxim of Relevance

Candidate A maintains relevance throughout. He links family and personal background to national issues when he says: "*Family is a basic unit of society and the nation...*" He then transitions to the country's economic situation: "*The people are in anguish, they are in a state of helplessness, they have no food, they don't know where to get their next meal.*" This keeps each statement connected to the purpose of the opening: establishing credibility and introducing his campaign agenda.

Adherence to Maxim of Manner

Candidate A adheres to the maxim of manner in the sense that his speech is clear, structured, and coherent. He moves logically from personal background to family then talks of issues of national concern before embarking on his party's campaign plan. Repetition like "*issues, issues*" emphasizes focus without creating confusion. The carefully chosen wording and fluid progression eliminates ambiguity, allowing the audience to follow his narrative effortlessly.

The three-dimensional framework initiated by Fairclough (2010) entail the text, discursive and social practices. With regard to text, Gachagua's opening is structured around three dominant linguistic clusters: biographical identity, moral-family discourse, and economic crisis framing. The opening clause "*My name is Rigathi Gachagua. Born and brought up in the slopes of Mt. Kenya, Herera Village 57 years ago.*" foregrounds geographical rootedness. The prepositional phrase "*in the slopes of Mt. Kenya*" functions as a place-identity marker. It localizes him culturally and ethnically without explicitly naming ethnicity. This is a lexical strategy of regional identification. This conveys a relatable and trustworthy stance toward the national electorate, positioning himself as grounded and culturally resonant. The declarative statement "*Family is a basic unit of society and the nation*" is structured as a relational process ("*is*"), presenting the proposition as universal truth rather than opinion. There is no modal hedge. Grammatically, it reads as a social fact. This naturalizes the ideological assumption that political order begins with family order reflecting a principled and protective stance toward national governance, linking moral family values to societal stability

The metaphor "*Strong families make strong nations*" is a parallel construction built on repetition of the adjective "*strong*." The repetition produces cohesion and rhetorical rhythm. More importantly, it maps private domestic strength onto national political strength. This metaphor collapses the boundary between private morality and state governance. Transitivity patterns consistently position Gachagua as an Actor: "*I will present...*", "*we intend to turn around...*", "*put people where they belong...*", "*restore their dignity...*". These are material processes. They project agency, action, and intervention. The lexical field describing citizens is intensely emotive: "*...anguish, they are in state of helplessness, they have no food, they don't know where to get their next meal,*

they are devastated, they need hope.” this cluster constructs a semantic field of suffering. The repetition of pronoun “*they*” reinforces victimhood and collective distress.

The phrase “*put money in their pockets*” is a concrete economic metaphor. Unlike abstract economic jargon, this is bodily and tangible. It translates macroeconomic policy into everyday experience. Finally, the clause “*I look forward to a very objective debate not legalities, issues, issues*” is revealing. The repetition of “*issues*” emphasizes thematic focus while “*not legalities*” implicitly distances him from technocratic or legalistic discourse possibly pre-empting his opponent’s professional identity as a lawyer. Communicating a critical stance toward the opponent’s technocratic orientation. At the textual level, therefore, Gachagua constructs a narrative of: rooted identity, moral legitimacy, national crisis, economic restoration and an anti-elitist positioning.

At the level of discursive practice, this opening statement performs multiple strategic functions within the debate genre. First, it conforms to the conventional structure of political self-introduction: from biography to family and then national vision. However, Gachagua amplifies the family component far more than is minimally required. The detailed naming of his wife, her title “*pastor*”, and his sons’ professions functions as symbolic capital. It communicates stability, religiosity, education, and professional success. Second, the statement draws on populist economic discourse. The repeated depiction of “*the people*” as suffering aligns with broader campaign narratives of economic hardship. This is not spontaneous description; it recontextualizes campaign messaging into debate space. Third, the rejection of “*legalities*” strategically frames the debate terrain. It attempts to define the rules of engagement before policy confrontation begins. In doing so, he indirectly delegitimizes overly technical argumentation and foregrounds practical solutions. Fourth, the phrase “*Tonight is a defining moment*” elevates the debate into a historic event. This is a performative framing device it constructs urgency and significance for the audience. Thus, at the discursive practice level, Gachagua’s opening statement is a carefully staged performance combining populist rhetoric, moral discourse, and strategic boundary setting within debate norms.

At the macro-social level, the discourse reflects broader ideological constructions of leadership and nationhood in Kenya. The elevation of family as the foundation of the nation aligns with conservative social ideology in which leadership legitimacy is grounded in patriarchal household authority. By presenting himself as “*head of a family*,” he invokes a culturally resonant model of governance: of the nation as an extended household. He uses the crisis narrative depicting citizens in “*anguish*” and “*helplessness*” to situate the election within a moral economy framework. Economic suffering is framed not merely as policy failure but as a dignity crisis. The use of repeated reference like “*restore their dignity*” positions economic reform as moral restoration. Additionally, the populist construction of “*the people*” as unified sufferers contrasts covertly with political elites. Although elites are not named, the structure of the discourse implies a divide between ordinary citizens and those responsible for economic decline. The anti “*legalities*” stance also reflects a wider ideological tension between technocratic governance and populist practicality. Leadership is framed as action-oriented rather than procedural. Gachagua’s discourse contributes to sustaining a hegemonic model of political authority built on: patriarchal moral stewardship, electoral-populist alignment with “*the people*”, economic nationalism and action over procedure. He demonstrates a supportive and laudatory attitude toward his principal, a critical stance toward his opponent, and a protective and interventionist attitude toward national issues

The next is an excerpt from Martha Karua’s speech during the 2022 Kenyan Deputy Presidential Debate which took place in Nairobi at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. The study has used this excerpt to show instances in which this candidate (Candidate B) adhered to Grice’s conversational maxims.

Candidate B

Excerpt 1

Moderator: Kindly introduce yourself to the audience.

Candidate B: “*Thank you, Sofia. I was born and brought up in Kirinyaga, and I want to thank my parents who are still alive thank God, for instilling the values of honesty, hard work, community and respect, values that still hold good to this day. In this debate and in the audience, I have my family; my two children Wawira and Edward, my grandchildren four of them, my brothers and sisters some of them, others are online. I represent the Azimio*

hope for this country, Azimio together with Kenyans of goodwill is out to rescue this country from the strangle hold of corruption cartels, this country can't breathe, we cannot get the services that people do require because moneys intended for public services are going into the pockets of corruption cartels, who then become instant millionaires with huge bank balances, we intend to help this country, to help citizens get their country back and all resources of this country will be utilized for the best interest of the entire nation not a select few. I am here to discuss those issues and I am glad that my opponent is also talking of issues which is what we've been calling for in our campaign. I am able, ready and willing."

From the excerpt above, it is evident that Martha Karua, the deputy presidential candidate for Azimio political party and the running mate of Raila Amolo Odinga has adhered to Grice's conversational maxims in varied instances. The following are instances where these maxims have been adhered to.

Adherence to Maxim of Quality

Candidate B adheres to the maxim of quality by presenting statements that are consistent with her campaign platform. For instance, her claim that "*moneys intended for the public services are going into the pockets of corruption cartels*" reflects her campaign standing. While specific figures are not given in the opening statement, her statements are presented as assertions of fact aligned with her public messaging and do not mislead about her personal background.

Adherence to Maxim of Quantity

Candidate B provides an appropriate and balanced amount of information thereby adhering to the maxim of quantity. She shares personal background: "*I was born and brought up in Kirinyaga, ...*", introduces her family: "*I have my two children Wawira and Edward, my grandchildren four of them,*", and highlights her political agenda: "*Azimio... is out to rescue this country from the stranglehold of corruption cartels.*" The information is sufficient to give the audience insight into both her identity and her policy focus without overloading or omitting key points.

Adherence to Maxim of Relevance

Candidate B's statements remain relevant to the context of an opening statement. The personal background and family introduction connect to her values "*honesty, hard work, community and respect*" which then link to her campaign objectives: ensuring public resources benefit all citizens, not a few, and fighting corruption. Each element contributes meaningfully to establishing credibility, values, and campaign priorities.

Adherence to Maxim of Manner

Candidate B's opening remark is structured in a logical and comprehensible manner, moving from personal background to family then values and finally political mission. Though some sentences are long, the flow is clear, and key points such as "*I am able, ready and willing*" provide succinct emphasis, maintaining clarity for the audience. In order to understand how language works, Fairclough (2010) argues that three levels that is text, discursive and social practices must be brought to perspective. At the level of text, Karua's discourse is structured through carefully selected lexical fields, pronoun patterns, metaphor, and evaluative language. First, her opening statement forefronts a moral lexical field: "*honesty,*" "*hard work,*" "*community,*" "*respect.*" These abstract nouns are value laden and positively examined. Their clustering constructs a semantic domain of integrity and ethical uprightness. Importantly, these are not policy terms; they are character terms. This lexical choice shifts authority from technocratic competence to moral credibility.

The repeated use of first-person pronouns "*I was born,*" "*I want to thank,*" "*I represent,*" "*I am here,*" "*I am able, ready and willing*" constructs a strong agentive identity. The transitivity pattern places Karua consistently as an Actor in material processes "*I represent,*" "*I intend*" and relational processes "*I am ready*". She is positioned as active, capable, and intentional leader. The metaphor "*this country can't breathe*" and the phrase "*stranglehold of corruption cartels*" introduce a suffocation metaphor. Corruption is not described neutrally; it is personified as a force choking the nation. The noun phrase "*corruption cartels*" intensifies this framing by invoking criminal networks rather than isolated malpractice. This lexicalization transforms corruption from

administrative failure into organized predation. Her Pronouns shift from “I” to “we” to “this country” creating layered identification. “I” establishes authority. “We” constructs collective political alignment (Azimio and the citizens). “This country” universalizes the issue, elevating it beyond partisan politics. At the textual level, then, Karua’s vocabulary, metaphor, transitivity patterns, and pronoun use construct her as morally grounded, agentive, and aligned with a suffocating nation in need of rescue.

Strategically, Karua’s opening statement tactically blends personal narrative, campaign discourse, and reformist political rhetoric. Her biographical introduction draws on a familiar debate genre convention where candidates establish credibility through personal history. However, she does not merely introduce herself; she recontextualizes family upbringing into political qualification. The values instilled by her parents are presented as continuous and still operative “*values that still hold good to this day*”. This constructs ideological continuity between private upbringing and public leadership. Her reference to “*Azimio hope*” embeds her speech within campaign branding discourse. The word “*hope*” functions intertextually, recalling reformist political narratives used globally. She integrates party slogan with moral crisis framing, aligning personal credibility with party mission. The problem solution structure is also significant. The speech moves from: personal lawfulness to a depiction of national crisis (corruption) and lastly emphasizes the party’s collective rescue mission. This narrative sequencing shapes audience interpretation. The audience is guided to understand her candidacy as the logical moral response to systemic corruption. Even her brief acknowledgment that her opponent is “*also talking of issues*” functions strategically. It performs civility while reinforcing that issue-based debate is something Azimio has “*been calling for.*” She subtly claims discursive leadership. Thus, at the discursive practice level, the statement is not just language; it is a strategically produced campaign text embedded within debate norms, reform rhetoric, and party branding. By embedding campaign slogans like “*Azimio hope*” and aligning with the party’s reform agenda, she expresses a supportive, ideologically alignment attitude with her principal.

Within the national and cultural framework, Karua’s discourse engages with wider Kenyan socio-political structures; particularly public distrust in governance and entrenched narratives around corruption. By framing corruption as a suffocating force and describing resources as diverted to “*instant millionaires with huge bank balances,*” she positions governance within a moral economy discourse. Wealth accumulation is framed as illegitimate when disconnected from public service. This reflects broader societal frustration with elite enrichment. Her emphasis on honesty and respect also resonates within Kenyan political culture, where moral uprightness is frequently invoked as a measure of leadership permissibility. However, as a female candidate in a political sphere often dominated by masculinized authority, her grounding of power in ethical steadiness rather than aggression carefully reconfigures dominant leadership norms. Furthermore, by presenting Azimio as a collective rescue movement rather than merely a political coalition, she situates the election within a larger ideological struggle between predatory elites and reclaiming citizens. This constructs politics as a moral battle over national ownership. At this macro level, her discourse contributes to sustaining and reshaping normative interpretation of leadership, corruption, and national belonging.

Through carefully structured responses, both candidates projected distinct leadership philosophies grounded in competence, lawfulness and public responsibility. These broad claims of credibility were later subjected to closer scrutiny as the discussion subsequently shifted to candidates’ positions on resignation.

Theme: Resignation As a Viable Option in Case of Disputes.

Candidate A

Excerpt 2

MODERATOR A: However, aah Honourable Rigathi just quickly to follow up on that we have seen Martha Karua in 2000... and 9 resign after they disagreed with the president as a minister. You saw the former deputy governor Nairobi when they could not work with the governor again resign. So isn’t it on principle that those who push for... if it doesn’t work out.

CANDIDATE A: *I don’t think it is Honourable to be a quitter; I think you must fight from within and aah pursue what you intended to do. When the Nairobi deputy governor quit, he left a vacuum in Nairobi and that allowed president Uhuru Kenyatta to bring the military into the city, you know because if he was there the mess in Nairobi*

will not be. You cannot be a quitter; you must fight on. My sister Martha Karua quit president Mwai Kibaki's government when Kibaki needed her, when Kibaki was in trouble, when Raila Odinga was making life impossible for him (audience laughs) Mwai Kibaki needed Martha Karua and at a time when Martha Karua needed to assist Mwai Kibaki she quit. Mwai Kibaki is and has been the gentleman of Kenya's politics an amiable old man, a good man, a respectable man, a man who was listening to everybody. Any leader who could not work with Mwai Kibaki I have serious doubt if that leader can work with anyone else (audience laughs)

Adherence to Maxim of Quality

Candidate A's claims are based in real events and observable facts, such as Karua's resignation. His evaluative judgments "*I have serious doubt if that leader can work with anyone else*" are configured as reasoned opinion rather than unverifiable assertions, upholding the maxim of Quality. Audience reactions like laughter also indicate credibility and resonance with listeners.

Adherence to Maxim of Quantity

Candidate A provides ample information to justify his stance against quitting. He cites multiple historical examples: the Nairobi deputy governor's resignation, and Martha Karua leaving Mwai Kibaki's government. He explains the consequences of these actions: "*he left a vacuum in Nairobi and that allowed president Uhuru Kenyatta to bring the military into the city.*" The detailed elaboration ensures the audience fully understands why he considers quitting detrimental, fulfilling the maxim of Quantity.

Adherence to Maxim of Relevance.

All examples are directly tied to the moderator's question regarding whether deputies should resign. Candidate A links past resignations to present leadership expectations: "*You cannot be a quitter; you must fight on.*" Even when he comments on Mwai Kibaki's character "*Mwai Kibaki is and has been the gentleman of Kenya's politics*", the information reinforces his point about loyalty and effective leadership, maintaining relevance.

Adherence to Maxim of Manner

Although his speech includes long sentences and minor self-corrections "*when Kibaki needed her, when Kibaki was in trouble, when Raila Odinga was making life impossible for him*", the flow remains logical. Discourse markers such as: "*you know,*" "*any leader who could not work with...*" and repetition "*must fight on*" guide comprehension, ensuring clarity despite spoken hesitations.

To further understand the implications of the discourse linguistically, Gachagua's response is overtly analytical and morally loaded. The central lexical item is the noun "*quitter.*" This is not an impartial vocabulary. It is a negatively charged identity label. By stating, "*I don't think it is Honourable to be a quitter,*" he constructs resignation not as an institutional act but as a personal flaw. The relational clause "*it is Honourable*" frames the issue within a moral register, but immediately negates it. Honour and quitting are positioned as mutually exclusive. The modal construction "*you must fight from within*" introduces strong deontic modality. "*Must*" signals obligation. There is no hedging. This constructs perseverance as moral duty rather than strategic choice. The repetition of "*you cannot be a quitter; you must fight on*" strengthens the normative force. The parallelism reinforces ideological rigidity: staying equals strength; resigning equals weakness.

When referencing the Nairobi deputy governor, Gachagua employs causal attribution: "*he left a vacuum... that allowed President Uhuru Kenyatta to bring the military into the city.*" The transitivity structure assigns agency to the deputy governor's resignation as the cause of institutional instability. The lexical choice "*vacuum*" implies absence, danger, and disorder. The personal attack heightens when he states: "*My sister Martha Karua quit... when Kibaki needed her.*" This lexical choice indicates a critical, alarmed attitude towards institutional dysfunction. The possessive framing "*My sister*" superficially softens the critique, but the clause structure immediately moves to accusation. The repetition of temporal clauses "*when Kibaki needed her, when Kibaki was in trouble, when Raila Odinga was making life impossible for him*" creates cumulative moral pressure. It portrays resignation as abandonment during crisis. The evaluative string describing Kibaki: "*a gentleman... an amiable old man... a good man... a respectable man...*" is excessive praise. This is positive lexical stacking, constructing

Kibaki as morally unimpeachable. The implication is that failure to work with such a figure indicates personal deficiency. The final statement “*I have serious doubt if that leader can work with anyone else*” introduces epistemic modality “*I have serious doubt*” but functions rhetorically as condemnation. It questions Karua’s relational competence as a leader. His language clearly conveys a discrediting and undermining stance towards Karua’s choice, privileging hierarchical loyalty over principled autonomy. Textually, therefore, resignation is lexicalized as: Quitting, abandonment, reaction of vacuum, and failure of loyalty. The language constructs a moral binary of fighters versus quitters.

In terms of how speech is staged and received, Gachagua’s response is highly strategic. To begin with, he reframes the moderator’s neutral question about “*principle*” into a question of character weakness. This is a discursive shift. The debate moves from institutional ethics to personal stamina. Subsequently, he mobilizes historical political memory; Kibaki’s presidency, Raila Odinga’s internal disputes, and Nairobi’s governance crisis. These references rely on shared audience knowledge. The laughter markers (“*audience laughs*”) show that the attack is performative and calibrated for crowd reaction. Moreover, he constructs a narrative of contested loyalty. By portraying Kibaki as embattled and in need, and Karua as absent, he recontextualizes resignation as betrayal. Lastly, the rhetorical elevation of Kibaki strengthens the attack indirectly. Rather than attacking Karua directly, he strengthens the moral stature of the figure she allegedly failed. This is a form of comparative delegitimation. Within debate genre conventions, this move energizes supporters, produces humour, and frames the opponent as unreliable; all while appearing to defend perseverance and loyalty. Thus, at the discursive practice level, resignation is recontextualized as cowardice through narrative storytelling and moral dramatization.

In the broader socio-political context, this discourse reflects a deeply embedded ideological model of leadership in Kenyan political culture. Gachagua constructs leadership as: Loyal, Persistent, Combative, Resistant to withdrawal. The metaphor of “*fighting from within*” invokes militaristic imagery. Politics is conceptualized as struggle rather than deliberation. Within this framework, resignation becomes synonymous with surrender. This aligns with a hegemonic masculinity model of political authority: endurance, toughness, and refusal to retreat are valorized traits. Furthermore, by framing resignation as creating a “*vacuum*,” the discourse suggests that stability depends on physical presence in office rather than institutional mechanisms. Authority is personalized rather than procedural. The attack also reinforces a broader ideological divide: Leadership as loyalty to hierarchy (stay and support the president) versus leadership as principled autonomy (resign on disagreement). Gachagua’s discourse clearly privileges hierarchical loyalty. At the level of social practice, therefore, resignation is delegitimized as destabilizing, disloyal, and morally inferior to perseverance within power structures. He constructs a morally evaluative, adversarial attitude toward the opponent.

Gachagua demonstrates alignment with the conventional hierarchical norms of political conduct, presenting loyalty central to leadership. Karua’s response shifts the focus, framing resignation through ethical principles and deliberate action, thereby contrasting established loyalty with a more principled approach to authority.

Rebuttal

Candidate B

Excerpt 2

MODERATOR A: Honourable Martha Karua Response.

CANDIDATE B: *For those who do not understand principle they can never envisage resigning but I do think it is dishonest to continue to take salary, to take the privilege and all that goes with office when you know you can no longer deliver either because of differences or because of other things. I respectively withdrew myself by resignation from Mwai Kibaki’s government in a respectful manner, no name calling such that we were able to continue when we meet to sit down and talk. I don’t think the same can be said of Mr. Gachagua’s aah principal. Entertaining disagreement outside government and publicly is disruptive, no wonder the government in which Mr. Gachagua’s principal serves is unable to fight corruption because its pulling in two different directions that is why we have a paralysis today.*

Adherence to Maxim of Quality

Candidate B pillars her argument in a personal political act: *“I respectively withdrew myself by resignation from Mwai Kibaki’s government in a respectful manner, no name calling.”* By drawing on her lived history, she provides verifiable evidence of principled action. This outside theory reference demonstrates sincerity and truthfulness, distinguishing her from mere rhetoric. When she claims *“we were able to continue when we meet to sit down and talk,”* she supports her point with an outcome sustained dialogue which enhances the credibility of her narrative.

Adherence to Maxim of Quantity

The response offers enough material to make her case persuasive without overloading the audience. She begins broadly *“it is dishonest to continue to take public salary... when you know you can no longer deliver”* then zooms in on a personal example her resignation, and finally contrasts it with the situation of *“Mr. Gachagua’s principal.”* Each step adds a depth of principle, practice, and comparison. She avoids digressing into unrelated history or personal grievances, keeping the amount of detail balanced.

Adherence to Maxim of Relevance

Her comments stay firmly tied to the moderator’s question on whether resignation is a matter of principle. The opening assertion *“For those who do not understand principle they can never envisage resigning”* addresses the ethical dimension directly. The personal anecdote illustrates her own position, while the critique *“no wonder the government in which Mr. Gachagua’s principal serves is unable to fight corruption”* extends the argument to contemporary governance. Every segment ties back to the theme of leadership and accountability, ensuring her remarks do not wander.

Adherence to Maxim of Manner

The answer is logically sequenced and easy to follow. She moves from the general claim *“resignation as honesty”*, to her own case *“leaving Kibaki’s government respectfully”*, to a contrast of *“her opponent’s principal’s disruptive disagreements”*. The structure itself acts as a roadmap for the listener. Even when she hesitates *“Mr. Gachagua’s aah principal”* the brief pause does not obscure meaning. Her use of oppositional phrasing, such as *“respectful”* versus *“disruptive”* and *“dialogue”* versus *“paralysis,”* sharpens clarity by casting her position in simple, memorable terms.

Expanding the analysis beyond cooperative principles, in terms of language use, Karua’s discourse is strongly evaluative and contrastive. The opening clause, *“For those who do not understand principle they can never envisage resigning,”* contains a generalized nominal group, *“those who do not understand principle.”* This construction avoids direct naming while clearly targeting an opponent. The abstraction *“principle”* is singular and unmodified, which universalizes it suggesting resignation is a moral absolute rather than a situational choice. The modal expression *“can never”* indicates strong epistemic certainty. It is not hedged; it constructs incapacity as inherent in the unnamed subject. This is a relational judgment disguised as observation. Karua then shifts to first-person material process: *“I respectfully withdrew myself by resignation...”*

The verb *“withdrew”* emphasizes agency and voluntariness. The adverb *“respectfully”* softens confrontation and constructs moral civility. The structure of clause positions her as Actor in a deliberate ethical action. The contrastive move becomes explicit in: *“I don’t think the same can be said of Mr. Gachagua’s principal.”* The modality shifts: *“I don’t think”* introduces apparent subjectivity, but functions rhetorically as strategic mitigation. It moderates the accusation while still delivering it. The relational process *“can be said”* indicates reputational evaluation rather than factual description. The contrastive phrasing communicates a judgmental yet decorous attitude, critiquing the opponent’s camp without personal attack. Further lexical amplification appears in: *“Entertaining disagreement outside government... is disruptive.”* The adjective *“disruptive”* encodes negative assessment. It suggests institutional instability and irresponsibility. The metaphor *“pulling in two different directions”* conceptualizes government as a physical body experiencing internal tension. The noun *“paralysis”* extends this bodily metaphor communicating incapacity, dysfunction, and systemic breakdown. The vocabularies like *“principle,” “paralysis”* and *“disruptive”* frames resignation in moral and functional terms,

indicating a principled, system conscious attitude towards governance. Thus, at the textual level, the excerpt is structured around: moral abstraction, strong modality, contrastive self/other positioning, institutional dysfunction metaphors and evaluative adjectives such as “*dishonest*,” ... “*disruptive*”)

Through the structure and performance of the speech, this excerpt performs three strategic functions within the debate. Karua recontextualizes her historical resignation from Kibaki’s government as political capital. A past political act is transformed into present moral evidence. Her biography becomes argumentative proof. The criticism of Gachagua’s principal is indirect. She does not attack Gachagua personally but redirects critique toward his presidential candidate. This preserves debate decorum while moving ideological confrontation to the presidential level. The discourse draws upon an established political narrative in Kenya regarding executive disharmony during the Jubilee administration. By invoking public disagreement and corruption paralysis, she taps into widely circulated media discourses. The audience is expected to recognize the intertextual reference. Importantly, the speech operates within debate norms that reward composure and moral authority. By presenting herself as respectful and measured while portraying the opposing side as destabilizing, she claims discursive superiority. Thus, the statement is not merely evaluative: it is strategically crafted within the genre of political debate to reshape audience interpretation of past political events.

In the society at large, the excerpt engages with broader ideological questions about governance, accountability, and executive power in Kenya. By framing resignation as a matter of “*principle*,” Karua elevates political office from pragmatic loyalty to moral obligation. This challenges a dominant political norm in which leaders often remain in office despite public disagreement. Her depiction of executive disagreement as producing “*paralysis*” reflects wider societal anxiety about state dysfunction and corruption. Governance is conceptualized as a unified moral body that must act coherently. Internal dissent becomes not democratic plurality but institutional breakdown. Furthermore, her contrast implicitly constructs two models of leadership: Ethical, self-regulating, principled withdrawal with self-interested persistence in power despite dysfunction. This binary reinforces a moralized understanding of political legitimacy authority is valid only when aligned with ethical consistency. At the level of social practice, therefore, Karua’s discourse participates in broader struggles over what constitutes responsible leadership in Kenya. She exhibits a measured yet unyielding evaluative stance toward her opponent, methodologically undoing his construction of resignation as political frailty and repositioning it as an expression of ethical constancy. Without engaging in overt confrontation with Candidate A’s principal, she nonetheless unsettles the idealization of uncritical political loyalty, advancing instead a normative vision of leadership anchored in accountability and constitutional fidelity.

Triangulation: Public Reception and Endorsements

The linguistic and discursive strategies deployed by both deputy presidential candidates during the 2022 debate were not only evident in the transcript but also widely circulated and publicly acknowledged. According to the Media Council of Kenya, approximately 34 million Kenyans tuned in, with roughly 70 % watching specifically for the face-off between Rigathi Gachagua and Martha Karua (Tuko.co.ke, 2022). This confirms that the candidates’ opening statements, framing of resignation, and moral positioning reached a substantial audience and were potentially interpreted in the public sphere. Media coverage and social media endorsements further validate this public exposure. DP William Ruto praised Gachagua for his rooted identity, agency, and economic populist framing. (Citizen Digital, 2022; Tuko.co.ke, 2022). Similarly, Azimio la Umoja presidential candidate Raila Odinga commended Karua for her composure, principled stance, and mastery of the subject matter. (Tuko.co.ke, 2022; Mwakilishi.com, 2022). Media coverage further highlighted how the candidates’ stances on resignation were interpreted: Gachagua’s critique of Karua was reported as framing resignation as personal weakness, while Karua’s defense was presented as principled and ethically sound (Tuko.co.ke, 2022; Mwakilishi.com, 2022). These reports and endorsements demonstrate that the candidates’ strategies were not only disseminated widely but also recognized and reinforced by influential public actors, supporting the textual and discursive analyses of moral positioning, leadership framing, and audience engagement.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that both candidates adhered to Grice’s conversational maxims. In relation to the maxim of Quality, both candidates’ statements were truthful, credible, and well-substantiated. Their contributions revolved around verifiable facts; they both avoided speculation and claims that were not supported with plausible

evidence. With regard to the maxim of Quality, both candidates adhered to it by providing responses that were both sufficient and elaborative. Even though their answers were concise, they ensured that the information relayed to the audience was informative. The candidates also adhered to the maxim of Relevance by giving responses that were interconnected to the broader themes of the debate as well as the questions posed by the moderator. The candidates ensured that they did not deviate; their contributions remained contextually appropriate even as they elaborated on the points they had expressed. The way in which the candidates expressed the maxim of Relevance was different but strategic. While Candidate A tied his responses to the vision of his presidential candidate, Candidate B anchored hers in institutional accountability and governance. Lastly, both candidates adhered to the maxim of Manner through maintaining clarity in their expressions, organizing their thoughts and ensuring that they used straightforward language. By conforming to Grice's conversational maxims, the candidates' goal is to ensure that the message conveyed reaches the intended audience so as to achieve successful communication. In sum, language in the debate was used not only as a medium of persuasion but also as a way of shaping political identity and endorsing leadership.

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