

## A Pragmatic Study of Circumlocution in Former Iraqi PM Al-Maliki's Political Interviews

By

**Muhammad Hussain Hamza<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of English, Imam Al-Kadhumi College, Iraq

**Haider Hadi Mohammed<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>Department of English, Imam Al-Kadhumi College, Iraq

**Muntadher Ali Mohammed<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup>Department of English, Imam Al-Kadhumi College, Iraq

Email: [elecba2@alkadhumi-col.edu.iq](mailto:elecba2@alkadhumi-col.edu.iq)

### Abstract

The present study pragmatically investigates circumlocution in former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Kamil Al-Maliki's political speech. It aims at (1) analyzing circumlocution used in Maliki's political speech, (2) exploring the purposes behind the use of circumlocution, and (3) showing how he flouts Grice's maxims and the cooperative principle on the one hand and observes the concepts of politeness and face on the other hand. The present study follows a qualitative descriptive approach as a research design to collect and analyze the data (preexisting data) that are two interviews cited from the PBS and CNN news channels and the Media Office of the Iraqi Prime Minister. The researcher adopts a non-random purposive sample. The instrument is the researcher who does everything; collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. The researcher follows the following procedures: reviewing the literature about circumlocution, its definitions and functions, discussing the pragmatic models; Goffman's (1967) concept of face, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness and, Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, which are adopted in this paper, and analyzing the data to answer the research questions. The findings show that (1) Maliki employs circumlocution by speaking around the topic when addressing tactful issues, (2) he uses circumlocution for some purposes such as emphasis, saving face, evasion, diminishing tension, and convincingness, and (3) he does not follow Grice's cooperative principle and conversational maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner). Therefore, he prefers adherence to politeness and face to non-adherence to Grice's maxims.

**Keywords:** Circumlocution, Cooperative Principle, Face Concept, Political Interview, Pragmatics

### 1.0 Introduction

Circumlocution is a roundabout method of talking; a circuitous style of statement; specifically, a studied roundaboutness or avoidance of language in discourse (Whitney, 1889, p. 1012). It is a figure of speech that is used widely by speakers and writers in discourse. It is a vital tool the politicians adhere to when speaking to the public about tactful issues in order to achieve certain functions. Therefore, this study sheds light on the pragmatic analysis of circumlocution in former Iraqi PM Maliki's political interviews and addresses the following questions: (1) what is circumlocution? (2) How does Maliki use circumlocution and what are the purposes of circumlocution in political interviews? (3) How are the cooperative principle

and conversational maxims tackled? And which takes precedence being honest, informative, relevant, perspicuous or polite?

The present study aims to (1) explain the term circumlocution, (2) analyze circumlocution as used in Maliki's political speech and explore the purposes behind using circumlocution, (3) show how he flouts the Gricean maxims and the cooperative principle on the one hand and observe the concepts of politeness and face on the other hand.

Few studies have been conducted to investigate circumlocution (Campillo, 2006; Dobao, 2007; El- Faisal et al., 2018; Sharif & Owais, 2019). A study was done by Sharif and Owais (2019) who focused on "circumlocution in the speeches of "King Abdullah II's Discussion Papers" considering "Critical Discourse Analysis" and "Corpus-based analysis." It investigated the part of circumlocution in recognizing the philosophies put in the language that is used by the King. The study adopted a qualitative research approach in order to collect and study the data. The findings of the study showed how King Abdullah's employment of circumlocution in his discussion papers in order to express his views, thoughts, and doctrines concerning democracy and betterment in his country. However, this paper does not apply any pragmatic model to analyze the texts.

Campillo (2006) studied the use of circumlocution in EFL learners who try to compensate for the breakdown in the communication by using circumlocution. The study focused on how learners utilized circumlocution to elaborate new lexical terms. A qualitative method was used to collect and analyze the data that contained six Spanish girls (15-18 years old). Campillo concluded that the learners used circumlocution to compensate for the failure in communication.

Similarly, Dobao (2007) studied how EFL Spanish learners utilized the strategies of circumlocution in interactive situations. Following a cooperative method to the examination of tactical communication, notice is given to the acts of the students and interactants, attempting to convey their messages but lacking the specific foreign words, employ circumlocution strategy. The findings of the research showed that the utilization of a circumlocution strategy in an in-person communication is part of a cooperative operation.

By the same token, Faisal et al. (2018) tackled circumlocution and pleonasm in written contexts by Babylon and Al- Qadisiya EFL university learners, at the third stage. They aimed at shedding light on the reasons for using circumlocution and pleonasm and to see the similarities and differences between the students of these two universities. The results of the study showed Iraqi EFL students use circumlocution to show respect, emphasis, ornament, and clearness. Besides, Al- Qadisiya EFL students utilize circumlocution more than those of Babylon university.

The three studies discussed above follow a qualitative approach for collecting and analyzing the data. Also, they focused on the use of circumlocution as a strategy to compensate for the breakdown in interaction and its importance in keeping the conversation flowing without pausing. Moreover, they have not tackled circumlocution as far as the pragmatic viewpoint is concerned; none of them used pragmatic models to analyze circumlocution in their chosen data. This shows a dearth in the study of circumlocution from a pragmatic perspective in utterances that are not compensatory, but round about sensitive topics intentionally. Therefore, the researcher will address these contextual, methodological, and practical gaps by referring to an Iraqi political figure, using a qualitative method for

collecting and analyzing the data pragmatically, and applying the pragmatic models to his speeches.

## **2.0 Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1 Circumlocution: Meaning and Function**

Circumlocution etymologically derives from Latin "circum-," meaning "around," and "loqui," meaning "speak". It is a roundabout method of talking; a circuitous style of statement; specifically, a studied roundaboutness or avoidance of language in discourse (Whitney 1889, p. 1012), for example, the sentence "we are continuing to review the situation on a daily basis" is circumlocution for "we review the situation daily" (Barrass, 2005, p. 74).

Circumlocution is defined as avoiding speaking about a topic directly, utilizing an unnecessarily enormous number of words. (Barrass, 2005, p.73; Haven, 1999, p. 95; Trask, 1997, p. 42). For illustration, "your horse...well, see, I was...in the barn...and there he was I mean I only wanted to get one of those new bridles to try out...anyway, he wasn't moving..." (Haven, 1999, p. 95). Here, the speaker employs circumlocution in order to evade the fact that the animal died. So, circumlocution is used when feeling uneasy with plain truth.

Thawabteh (2012, p. 154) agrees with Goffman (1967, p. 17) and Agyekum (2008, p. 82) that circumlocution is a politeness strategy that is intended to convey something in more words than necessary in a circuitous way.

Furthermore, circumlocution is deemed as a component of strategic competence, which in the same place with "grammatical competence", "sociolinguistic competence", and "discourse competence" form "communicative competence". Strategic competence is a person's capacity to use compensatory strategies to make up for an imperfect or defective linguistic knowledge and still implicate their meant meaning. Therefore, being a compensatory strategy, circumlocution forms a part of the learner's universal cognitive ability. Similarly, when the learners forget a specific word, circumlocution is used; therefore, they endeavor to come close to the meant word through characterizing it (Canale & Swain 1980 as cited in Mayahi & Alirezaee, 2015, p. 95-106). To exemplify, the word 'owl' may be circumlocution for 'a bird that flies at night' (Oxford, 1996, p. 142).

Circumlocution has many functions:

1- It softens the force of the negative or undesirable implications of the words in question (Farghal, 1995, p. 372).

2-It is used by the talkers to show self-esteem and consideration for other interlocutors (Goffman, 1967, p. 17, Obeng, 1997, p. 55).

3-It is employed to evade using particular terms (Meador, 1999, p. 38).

4-It is adopted by politicians in order to convey explicitly their hidden messages, broaden the comprehension of these messages, and improve their convincingness (El-Sharif & Owais, 2019, p. 75).

5-It is resorted by politicians to keep clear of threat or trouble or to utter utterances that do not cause face-threatening to the listeners. Also, it is used by them to protect themselves, their governments, their nations and to keep power (Obeng, 1997, p. 64).

## 2.2 Grice's Cooperative principle and Maxims

Grice (1975, 1989) suggests cooperative principle, which shows how people properly understand what others are intending by general conventions in human communication. These principles clarify how listeners can infer what the speakers intend. Grice terms such principles “conversational maxims”. Verschueren & Ostman (2009, p. 102- 3) argue Grice's model is dependent the participants who are innately “rational and cooperative”; when interacting with one another, except in some contexts, human's interactions will be intended to be informative. Grice (1989) denotes that statement in “cooperative principle”: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (p. 26). Moreover, he proposes a collection of supermaxims and sub-maxims talkers are predicted to observe when interacting:

A. “The Maxim of Quantity” that includes the following maxims:

1. “Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the purposes of the exchange)” (p. 26).

2. “Do not make your contribution more informative than is required” (p. 26)

2. “The Maxim of Quality” which means “try to make your contribution one that is true” (p. 27). It has the following submaxims:

1. “Do not say what you believe to be false” (p. 27).

2. “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence” (p. 27).

3. “The Maxim of Relation” which is simply put in this way: “be relevant” (p. 27).

4. “The Maxim of Manner”, which means “be perspicuous” (p. 27), includes the following:

A. “Avoid obscurity of expression. B. Avoid ambiguity. C. Be brief. D. Be orderly” (p. 26-7).

These “conversational maxims” have to be recognized as unstated assumptions used in dialogue. Generally, individuals give a suitable amount of information; they are honest, relevant, and clear as possible (Yule, 1996, p. 37), for illustration, ‘what is his job?’ a cooperative answer would be ‘he is a doctor’. Here, the speaker is honest, informative, relevant, and perspicuous.

Levinson (1983) states that giving linguistic attention to Gricean maxims is due to the fact that they generate implications beyond the overt meaning of what is spoken. these implications are called “conversational implicatures”. Implicature is meant to be at variance with words like “logical implication”, “entailment and logical consequence”. These words are commonly utilized to denote deductions that come exclusively from rational or conceptual content. Implicatures are not considered “semantic inferences”; instead, they are deductions depending on the interlocutor's intentions and particular expectations concerning the cooperativeness of normal oral communication. Correspondingly, Yule (1996) points out that implicatures are chiefly examples of more being conversed than is said; it is the addressers that interact meaning by using implicatures whereas the addressees distinguish those interacted meanings through deductions.

However, in everyday interaction, individuals do not always obey “the cooperative principle”; deviating of these maxims or norms (Hamza & Abbood, 2020). Therefore, they regularly try to shun giving anything that causes negativity to their face or to the listeners'. Asked about the information which they do not wish to answer, their face is subject to menace. It is not easy to be honest and thus they violate Grice's maxims (Flowerdew, 2013, p. 101; Tsuda, 1993, p. 67). To illustrate this violation, a dialogue between A and B is given below:

“A: Why did you leave the meeting early?”

“B: I wanted to.” (Leech, 2014, p. 312)

Here, the Maxim of Quantity is not observed: B’s reply provides less information, and so a logical inference (implicature) shows B is not willing to tell the real reason—perhaps because it would be upsetting, rude, etc. (Leech, 2014, p. 312)

Needless to say, Grice did not anticipate severe adherence to these maxims; actually, he was chiefly concerned about the way the maxims were ‘flouted’, thus wanting the hearer to deduce the unseen messages from hints obtainable from the context, which he named “conversational implicature” (O’Keefe et al., 2011, p. 62). Grice uses the terms “floutings” or “exploitations” of the maxims. These terms can engender numerous figures of speech. Thus, by obviously and blatantly breaking the maxims, the addresser can impose the addressee to comprehensively deduce his real intentions (Levinson, 1987, p. 109). For elaboration, a communicator can flout the quality maxim when s\he uses a metaphor, as in ‘my house is a refrigerator in January’. The listener would try to infer what is intended and comprehend that ‘the house was very cold indeed’ (Cutting, 2002, p. 38).

### **2.3 Face and Politeness**

As explained above, many participants do not observe the maxims of the cooperative principle in order to show politeness or to keep good relations between them. Likewise, violating the maxims, the speaker might be understood as being apparently polite. This proposes that another maxim should be added to the cooperative principle: “adopt an appropriate amount of politeness!” (Flowerdew, 2013, p. 106).

Leech (2014, p. 1) politeness in general is considered as interactive conduct which is existed normally in languages and between different cultures. Actually, it is deemed as a worldwide phenomenon of human culture. Being polite means to talk or act in such a way as to give profit or value not only to the speaker himself\herself but also to the other individual(s), particularly the individual(s) s\he is speaking to. Cutting (2002, p. 51) sees politeness as “a pragmatic phenomenon” that is not found in the locution or the words themselves but in their illocution and intentional social meaning. However, Yule (1996) states that politeness “is the means employed to show awareness of another person’s face. Showing awareness for another person’s face when that other seems socially distant is often described in terms of respect or deference” (p. 60).

Erving Goffman (1967), who suggests the face theory which is a key part in the study of interaction, pens:

The term *face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself (Goffman, 1967, p. 5)

Brown and Levinson (1987) describe “face” as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (p. 61). Face is composed of two associated parts: (a) “negative face”: the fundamental claim to territories, individual maintains, and privileges to non-diversion and (b) “positive face”: “the positive consistent self-image or personality” (p.

61) (significantly containing the need that this “self-image” be valued and accepted of) demanded by interlocutors.

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) takes the notion of “face” from Goffman and from the English traditional word, that links “face” with ideas of being uncomfortable or degraded, or “losing face”. Accordingly, “face” is the thing that is sensitively invested, and that may be damaged, upheld, or improved, and should regularly exist in communication. Generally, individuals collaborate and expect each other’s collaboration in preserving their faces in dialogue, such collaboration depended on the joint willingness to keep “face”.

In daily social communications, persons usually act on the condition that their anticipations regarding their popular “self-image”, or the wants of their face, would be esteemed. Perhaps, some behaviours could be inferred as a menace to another’s face resulting in face threatening acts (FTAs) or the speaker can act in a way that diminishes the possible threat leading to a face saving act (FSA) (Yule, 1996, p. 61).

“A face-threatening act” being involved in communication, a choice is made whether or not it is performed. Deciding to do it, it can be done directly, i.e. “on record” or circuitously, i.e. “off record”. The addresser doing it with no concern to the addressee, it is done 'baldly'. When the speaker attempts to mitigate the influence of this threat on the listener, s\he employs either “positive politeness” which denotes that the speaker endeavors to maintain the listener’s “positive face” by minimizing the gap among them or “negative politeness” that means the communicator attempts to preserve the listener’s “negative face” by respecting his private territory (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 68-71).

Chilton and Schaffner (2002, p. 14) state that the FTAs and mitigation are deemed beneficial in comprehending the practices of political speech, especially, strategies of euphemistic terms, evasiveness and persuasion. In fact, politeness phenomena being regular in daily socialized communication makes them the more undetectable in political interactions. If a politician wants to talk to his or her voters that taxes are to be increased, the number of jobless people rise, and inflation is escalating, then these FTAs (demanding sacrifices, delivering bad news, providing warnings...) are tactically framed to diminish the offence. What is crucial in the world of politics, according to Chilton (2004, pp. 40-1), is that a balance should be achieved between positive and negative face strategies.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The current study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach because the researcher is dealing with words and sentences rather than with something statistical. Benson (2013, p. 1) argues that a qualitative methodological approach involves “research that relies mainly on the reduction of data to words (codes, labels, categorisation systems, narratives, etc.) and interpretative argument”. Similarly, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) point out that a qualitative approach makes narrative or documented descriptions of the studied phenomena, adding that it concentrates on the meanings of experiences by examining how individuals clarify, designate, and symbolically comprehend these experiences. Therefore, the study pragmatically investigates circumlocution in former PM Nouri Al-Maliki’s political speeches applying Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, Goffman’s (1967) concept of face, and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory to analyze his speech. Also, the researcher will analyze the political texts and identify the reasons behind the use of circumlocution.

Moreover, he will see what and how are the maxims violated and what is implicated? And how is politeness adhered to?

### **3.1 Sample and Procedure**

The present research uses a non-random purposeful sampling technique. The data of this study are preexisting and consist of transcripts of two political interviews with former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Kamil Mohammed Al-Maliki who ruled Iraq from 2006 to 2014. The researcher selects Maliki as an example of Iraqi politicians since he was the most influential political leader during this period and he ruled Iraq in an extremely sophisticated situation. In addition, the researcher selects this period because of the critical situation in Iraq at that time; civil war and fight against the US by some groups were prevalent and everyday routine. The transcripts are from two news channels: PBS (2006) and CNN (2008). Following the principle of saturation which means sampling can stop when no new and valuable ideas appear (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010, p. 142), the researcher only chooses two interviews to avoid redundancy.

To achieve the objectives of the paper, the researcher cites the transcripts of the two interviews from the PBS and CNN news channels and Media Office of the Iraqi Prime Minister (MOIPM, 2006-2008). He depends on the two channels' translation of Maliki's speech quoting his Arabic one from the official site in order to be more accurate.

### **3.2 Instruments**

Holloway and Wheeler (2010) state the researcher is the chief study instrument in qualitative research that does everything; collecting and analyzing the data that are analyzed by applying pragmatic theories to Al-Maliki's political speech. In addition, the documentary analysis tool is utilized in this paper as the data are extracted from electronic material to pragmatically be analyzed. Bowen (2009) defines documentary analysis as an organized technique for examining printed or electronic documents to deduce meaning, get comprehension, and enhance practical familiarity.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

This study uses the techniques of data analysis that are obtained by analyzing the data qualitatively. Also, this study applies the method of textual analysis, which is defined by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009), as "an analysis which emphasizes on the identification and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal sign of the data" (p. 210). What is important for textual analysis is meaning that is examined from the viewpoint of the addresser's aim, the addressee's response, the social context of the created text, or the current historical and social context of the experienced text. Consequently, each viewpoint on meaning will probably provide a various understanding of a text. When finding a text (any kind of text; object, written, spoken, visual that have symbolic meaning), textual analysis can be followed. In this research, the data are collected from Al-Maliki's political interviews. In addition, the researcher categorizes the data based on Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and conversational maxims, Goffman's (1967) concept of face, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. Finally, he sums up and infers the data analysis built on the research objectives. The researcher plays the role of the interpreter of the selected texts explaining the

gathered data so that he can get the meaning and properly categorize the data based on the utilized models.

## 4.0 Findings

Analyzing the data in the two interviews shows that the former PM Nouri Al-Maliki has used circumlocutions in both interviews with PBC and CNC channels. The study has found that he employs circumlocution for certain purposes. Also, the researcher has found that the PM breaks the cooperative principle and Grice's conversational maxims, but he observes face and politeness. Certain examples of circumlocution from the two channels are explained below. The bolded sentences are of the researcher who does so in order to show how circumlocution is used.

### Text (1)

“In the last three years Iraqis have achieved a lot: a constitution and free elections. But what can you say to reassure Americans about the situation in the future?” (PBS, 2006, para. 1)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، لا شك بان الذي سيحدث مرتبط بما حدث، وسنتجه في المستقبل لما حققناه في المرحلة السابقة التي تأسست فيها الدولة على اسس دستورية وديمقراطية وانتخابات بعدما كانت الدولة تقوم على حزب واحد او قاعدة واحدة، هذا هو الذي يجعلنا ننظر الى المستقبل من خلال الواقع. بالرغم من كون الواقع يشهد تحديات أمنية ناتجة عن تحديات سياسية داخلية واقليمية ودولية، لكن هذه المسألة تعتبر طبيعية بالنسبة لدولة تنتقل من ظل الاستعباد والقمع الى الحرية والديمقراطية والتعددية السياسية. نقول انه طبيعي لانه خرب مصالح الارهابيين والصداميين والطائفين الذين كانوا يمارسون اعمال القتل باستخدام الاسلحة الكيماوية كما في حلبجة، والمقابر الجماعية والاعدامات والقتل في جنوب العراق ووسطه. هؤلاء تضررت مصالحهم واصبحوا يعارضون الوضع الحالي. نحن ننظر الى المستقبل من خلال ما حققناه وهو يستند على قاعدة قوية واسس متينة... (المالكي، 2006، الفقرة 2.)

「In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful, no doubt what will happen is tied to what has already happened and we are looking forward the future to what we have already done such as establishing the state according to constitutional and democratic foundations and elections after the one party rule. This makes us look at the future through the current situation. It's true that there are security challenges that have resulted from internal political challenges, and also regional and maybe international ones. But this is all natural for a state making the transition from oppressive rule to the space of freedom, democracy and political pluralism. This is natural, because what has been achieved in Iraq has affected the interests of terrorists, Saddamists and sectarian elements that have used chemical weapons in Halabja and mass graves and executions in the south and the center. That is why they are in the opposition. What is important is that we look at the future through what has been achieved, and we think that this represents a solid base and firm foundation...」 (Maliki, 2006, para. 2)

The interviewer asks Maliki to reassure the US officials about the situation in Iraq. Answering the question, Maliki uses circumlocution by speaking around the issue. Instead of saying the situation will be the same, he uses the same long paraphrased utterances (“no doubt what will happen is tied to what has already happened and we are looking forward the future to what we have already done), (This makes us look at the future through the current situation) (we look at the future through what has been achieved”) (Maliki, 2006, para. 2). He keeps narrating the situation in Iraq providing irrelevant information about what “the terrorists” and “Saddamists” did and what happened in “Halabja” City.

According to Grice's perspective, Maliki violates the maxims: quantity (be informative) because of widening and repeating his speech; relevance (be relevant) since he talks about irrelevant issues such as "Halabja" city and "mass graves" and manner (be perspicuous) for he does not answer the question clearly and briefly. Here, non-adherence to Grice's maxims is not considered bad rather acceptable in the sense that there is a purpose behind this. Maliki is still cooperative implicating that the situation will be the same. Using circumlocution, he endeavours to convince the listener that he did well before now and will do the same in the future. In addition, he wants to show that he is the right man on whom the US officials can depend. Moreover, he uses circumlocution by paraphrasing the same phrase "a solid base and firm foundation" (Maliki, 2006, para. 2) violating the maxim of quantity for the same aim. This is pointed out by Bain (1875, p. 72) who classifies paraphrase as a sort of circumlocution.

### *Text (2)*

"Iraq has suffered for hundreds, if not thousands, of years from deep sectarian divisions. Why would these problems be solved in a matter of 10 or 15 years?" (PBS, 2006, para. 25)

عندما مرت أمريكا وأوروبا بمراحل من التناقض والصراعات والعصابات والميليشيات والحروب الدامية، لكنها عندما اتجهت اتجاهًا صحيحاً فإنها استطاعت أن تواجه هذه التحديات. نحن نجد أن هذه المنطقة هي بلد حضاري تاريخي، وهو أول من علم الإنسانية القراءة والكتابة وأول من قام بسن التشريعات، لذلك فإن بلدنا يمتلك من الامكانيات والطاقات الحضارية ما يؤسس للتعايش وفق أسس حضارية. (المالكي، 2006، الفقرة 26)

「Even Europe and America have gone through periods of divisions, conflict, bloody wars and reigns of gangs and militias, but when they took the right path they were able to overcome those challenges. We find that this region {Iraq} is a historical and civilized country and it was the first to teach the world reading and writing, and the first that legislated law, so Iraq has the basis for civilization and coexistence, and that is building foundations according to civilized basics」. (Maliki, 2006, para. 26)

The interviewer asks Maliki whether Iraq is able to solve the rooted problems in the future. He does not provide the interviewer with a candid reply, rather he talks about the "bloody wars" that happened in Europe and America. Then, he keeps speaking about the history and civilization of Iraq. He does circumlocution by talking indirectly about the topic without explicitly stating how Iraq will overcome these problems.

According to Grice, Maliki flouts the maxims of both quality ("do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence" (Grice, 1989, p.27)) because he does not have evidence that the problems in Iraq, depending on its history, will be resolved and quantity when providing more information than required. He also violates the relevance maxim because of the irrelevant utterances to the issue for example, "even Europe and America have gone through periods of divisions... or it was the first to teach the world reading and writing, and the first that legislated law" (Maliki, 2006, para. 26). Even the maxim of manner is infringed for not being concise and vague. Using circumlocution in answering the question, Maliki wants to defend his face and country and highlight the idea that Iraq will be able to surmount the problems due to its heritage.

### *Text (3)*

"I want to ask you about [radical Shi'ite cleric] Moqtada al-Sadr. How powerful is this man, and what challenge does he present to you?" (PBS, 2006, para. 29)

「Moqtada al-Sadr has an influence and a movement that is part of the political process now, and he made some good statements and positions that support the government, when he forbade bloodshed and when he ordered his followers to stay away from militias and violence. This success can be repeated with other leaders who have militias, and I am working to achieve that with them so that they would forbid their followers from committing any acts of violence, murder and kidnappings. Also, the government has made a political decision supported by all political groups to deal firmly and strongly with anyone who acts outside the law. So we stand strongly against those who carry unlicensed weapons」. (Maliki, 2006, para. 30)

The interviewer's question is direct but the interviewee's reply is indirect. He asks him about al-Sadr's power and the challenge he presents to him. Maliki cunningly evades answering the question and starts talking round the subject. He goes on speaking about al-Sadr's influence and political movement and his role in supporting the government and forbidding bloodshed tactfully raving him and hoping all leaders follow the suit. He ends his speech with circumlocution by reiterating and paraphrasing the same idea, "the government...deal firmly and strongly with anyone who acts outside the law. So we stand strongly against those who carry unlicensed weapons" (Maliki, 2006, para. 30).

From Grice's perspective, the interviewee does not observe the quantity maxim because he provides more information than required going around the topic and broadening his speech. Moreover, he flouts the relevance maxim because his response is not to the point and nothing is said about al-Sadr's challenge to him. Being not concise and vague in his response, he infringes the maxim of manner. Here, circumlocution is a good strategy Maliki uses to save his face, government, country, soften the tension between him and al-Sadr and build a positive relationship with him.

#### ***Text (4)***

“Mr. Prime Minister, you surprised a lot of U.S. officials when you went on the offensive in Basra. Why didn't you tell the Americans what you were doing?” (CNN, 2008, para. 1)

「I think the reality is not like that. Initially the desire was for those operations to be an Iraqi responsibility and undertaking. and we did ask the coalition forces -- both the U.S. and British forces -- not to participate or get involved directly because that would give an excuse to some militant groups to say that this is a foreign force attacking us. But as far as General [David] Petraeus is concerned he was informed and he was in the picture about what we were going to do, and we told him this is an Iraqi operation that will target gangs -- some outlaws who were controlling the ports or are involved in smuggling or killing, and we made it very clear to them that we want it to be an Iraqi operation and when there is a need for assistance from Multi-National Forces we will make a request. If there is a need, they were informed, and there was agreement with both the Americans and British sides that this should be an Iraqi operation」 (Maliki, 2008, para. 2).

The interviewer asks the interviewee about the operation in Basra and why he did not “tell the Americans” about it. Replying the question, Maliki employs circumlocution by speaking round the issue and evading a specific frank answer. He starts and finishes his speech with the same idea that it is agreed the “operations to be an Iraqi” (Maliki, 2008, para. 2). He broadens his speech by repeating the idea of Petraeus being told about the operation, put in picture, and informed that this is an Iraqi operation. Then, he paraphrases and repeats

his words “when there is a need for assistance...we will make a request” “If there is a need, they were informed” (Maliki, 2008, para. 2). He can provide a direct answer saying this is not true and telling Petraeus about that.

According to Grice’s theory, three maxims are violated; namely quantity, relevance and manner. Maliki violates the maxims of quantity because of providing more information than is necessary and relevance because of the unrelated speech to the topic when talking about the operation in details. Only the relevant speech is when Maliki (2008) says “Petraeus ...was informed” (para. 2) about the operation. Moreover, he flouts the maxim of manner since his speech is not clear and vague. Despite non-adherence of the maxims, an inference can be reached from this long speech that he told the Americans about the offensive. Using too many words where some words are enough is Maliki’s style of persuading the hearer and emphasizing his own claims. He also tries not to get into trouble with the Americans and maintain his face and his government.

### *Text (5)*

“What is the long-term solution to bring security in Sadr City? It's an area U.S. troops can't go into. It's become a haven for militias, even special groups who are getting weapons from Iran. What is the long term solution?” (CNN, 2008, para. 9)

「With regards to Sadr City and another city, Shula, we have opened the door for a real firm confrontation with these gangs, and we will not stop until we are in full control of these areas and dismantle the infrastructure they depend on. Politically, we have managed to gather a wide national front to confront and finish this gang. Yesterday the Political Council for National Security had a meeting and issued a resolution with a number of points and action necessary to confront and end the existence of this gang. The operation has started and will not stop until a decisive victory is achieved, a victory that will not enable these people to attack the Green Zone or other areas, now [that] they are suffering from a breakdown in their operations. Operations will not stop until the problem is finished and we are able to start reconstruction and begin to establish stability. Reconstruction and stability can not be established without putting an end to those criminal gangs who is funded from beyond the borders」 (Maliki, 2008, para. 10).

The interviewer asks the interviewee a clear and direct question about “the long term solution” in Sadr area. Maliki does not answer the interviewer’s question directly but instead cleverly using long repeated and paraphrased utterances. He never gives him a specific time for “the long-term solution” in the area and begins speaking round the subject. From the beginning to the end, he keeps repeating and paraphrasing the same idea that “we have opened the door for a real firm confrontation with these gangs, and we will not stop until we are in full control of these areas” (Maliki, 2008, para. 10).

Maliki, from Grice’s viewpoint, violates the maxims of quantity for his long reiterated speech, relevance as he talks about irrelevant information and manner because his utterances are not clear and ambiguous. In spite of this non-adherence of the maxims, he implicates that he does not know when to “bring security in Sadr City” that is why he finds circumlocution as a way of evasion and convincingness at the same time. Furthermore, he attempts to defend his face, his government and emphasize his viewpoints.

**Text (6)**

“Many people say that this {operation} has actually weakened you because it set back security in Basra... {and} Sadr City, that you've been obligated to the Iranian government for resolving this. This makes you weaker the critics say” (CNN, 2008, para. 13).

「This is one of the issues that media outlets should look into thoroughly. Before we launched the operation in Basra, the ports were completely under the control of these militias, smuggling was a routine, burglary and looting were also ongoing. Now Basra is back as a city under the control of the state, and its inhabitants are happy and optimistic now about what the state can do for them. Now and for the first time Iraqis stand strong by their state after they saw the state take a decisive stand against this gang that is on cornered and on the run. These facts? The state came out with the maximum power, nationalism, popular and national support that expressed itself, and for the first time, the one who is cornered and defeated is this gang. A decision was taken yesterday that they no longer have a right to participate in the political process or take part in the upcoming elections unless they end the Mehdi Army and the unanimous decision agreed on by the political powers today. And this is the first time political powers dare say this -- the solution comes from dissolution, which means solving the problem comes in no other way other than dissolving the Mehdi Army」 (Maliki, 2008, para. 14).

The interviewer claims that Maliki became weakened due to the operation in Sadr City, Basra and how he has “been obligated to Iranian government for resolving this” (Maliki, 2008, para. 14). He is supposed to talk about this point and to deny this claim if wrong but instead he begins to talk too much about Basra, what the political parties did and how he achieved victory shunning any direct reference to Sadr City and the role of Iran in solving the problem. He also uses circumlocution when repeating and paraphrasing his speech; “the solution comes from dissolution, which means solving the problem comes in no other way other than dissolving the Mehdi Army” (Maliki, 2008, para. 14).

In his response to the interviewer's question, Maliki flouts all Grice's four maxims. Providing no adequate evidence when commenting on the question, the maxim of quality is violated. He does not obey to the maxim of quantity for speaking too much where few words are enough to convey his message. To give information unrelated to the question, the maxim of relevance is breached. Finally, being his speech vague and not clear, he violates the maxim of manner when saying, “the solution comes from dissolution, which means solving the problem comes in no other way other than dissolving the Mehdi Army” (Maliki, 2008, para. 14). It can be deduced that he does not want to talk about the role of Iran and how he became weak because of the operation. Therefore, he uses circumlocution to save his face and his government, not to take responsibility, keep on power, send hidden messages, emphasize his talk, and convince the listener that he did well not the opposite.

**Text (7)**

“...American commanders say one of the biggest threats for their troops are Iranian-backed special militia groups, who have Iranian weapons, who are trained by Iranian forces...What are you telling the Iranian government to do about this?” (CNN, 2008, para. 19)

「They don't only threaten U.S. troops. They are a threat to Iraqi forces too. Any security incident -- a bombing, assassination or kidnapping -- targeting Iraqis or foreigners on Iraqi soil is a challenge for the government. Therefore we don't want it being said that what

special groups carry out only targets the U.S. side. An attack on any organization or individual on Iraqi territory is an attack on the Iraqi government. We understand that this comes because of the background of the deep differences between Iran and the U.S., and we are encouraging them to go back to the negotiating table with Iraqi mediation. Now also there has been agreement, and both sides have indicated willingness to go back to dialogue with Iraqi mediation. We are not only the mediators, we are the side that is on the receiving end of many of the consequences of the differences between Iran and the U.S., so Iraq has got an interest in creating an understanding between Iran and the U.S., at least to make Iraq at least avoid being affected by these differences. We will always reject the idea of any side using Iraq as a launching pad for its attack on others. We reject Iran using Iraq to attack the U.S., and at the same time, we reject the idea of the U.S. using Iraq to attack Iran, because we want to have peaceful positive relations with all sides] (Maliki, 2008, para. 20).

The interviewer talks about the threat of “Iranian-backed special militia groups” to the US troops in Iraq and asks the interviewee about his role in informing “the Iranian government” about its support to these groups. Maliki, giving not specific reply to the question, tells the interviewer their threat is for both the US and Iraq and he starts speaking round the issue explaining their danger to Iraq; “any security incident -- a bombing, assassination or kidnapping -- targeting Iraqis or foreigners on Iraqi soil is a challenge for the government...”(Maliki, 2008, para. 20). He then narrates the relationship between Iran and the US and again utilizes circumlocution when he repeats his speech, “We will always reject the idea of any side using Iraq as a launching pad for its attack on others...” (Maliki, 2008, para. 20).

In accordance with Grice’s point of view, Maliki breaches the maxim of quantity since he provides more information than necessary speaking about the Iraqi security and rejecting the idea “using Iraq as a launching pad” for offense on both. Violated the maxim of relevance when he irrelevantly speaks about the topic and the maxim of manner since his utterances are not brief and unclear. It can be implicated that he does not want to answer the question directly and invites the listener to infer from his speech. Thus, employing circumlocution saves him from this critical situation. He uses circumlocution to send unseen messages, broaden the comprehension of these messages persuade the listener, and protect his face and country as well. Thus, he tries to be neutral in the Iran-US conflict on the one hand and shows that the threat is for all not only for US soldiers.

## **5.0 Discussions**

After analyzing the data, it is shown that the former PM is very cautious in his responses to the interviewers’ cunning questions by talking about certain critical topics indirectly using circumlocution to achieve many purposes; to give value to his own ideas, avoid direct answers, use long words, convince others of his strong debate, diminish tension and conflict with other, show politeness; saving his and his country image. This study is identical to Faisal’s et al. (2018) finding that learners utilize circumlocution to show respect. Also, it goes with Sharif and Owais (2019) who found that the king used circumlocution to express his ideas about different issues.

Furthermore, the results reveal that the former PM breaks the cooperative principle and Grice’s maxims (quantity, quality, relevance and manner). Flouting the maxim of quantity, he gives too much information than required. Talking about unrelated topics and being not brief violate both the maxims of relevance and manner respectively. This kind of

non-observance of Grice's maxims is not deemed bad but rather reasonable in the sense that he does it for a reason. Yet, it can be inferred what is intended by his long-repeated speech. indeed, this is due to the nature of circumlocution that requires one to speak a lot, provide irrelevant information, and obscure his\her speech. In addition to that, the former PM adheres to politeness and face attempting to be polite to preserve his face and his country when the interviewers threaten him with sensitive questions. Therefore, circumlocution is a strong strategy in the politicians' hands.

This current study is limited to circumlocution from a pragmatic point of view and applied to two interviews with an Iraqi political figure. Further research should be conducted on different strategies because the current paper is restricted to one strategy, circumlocution. Besides, the researcher, who focuses on Grice's (1975) cooperative model and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, recommends future papers about different theories; Leech's (2014) model of politeness, Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory. Finally, it is interesting to address the topics that focus on politicians' impolite speeches.

## 6.0 Conclusions

After analyzing the texts, the study has found that former PM Maliki employs circumlocution by speaking around the topic when addressing tactful issues. More, specifically, he uses circumlocution for many purposes: (1) to emphasize his own idea or viewpoint, (2) to evade giving a direct answer, expand, reiterate and paraphrase his speech, especially, when questioned about a sensitive subject, (3) to enhance the comprehension of his political points and convince the listener of his argumentation, and (4) to reduce the stress and not to get into trouble with others who influence on his position and his country that is why he tries to protect himself, his country and government.

Moreover, the researcher has concluded that the former PM does not follow the cooperative principle and Grice's maxims (quantity, quality, relevance and manner). Flouting the maxim of quantity, he gives too much information than required. Talking about unrelated topics and being not brief violate both the maxims of relevance and manner respectively. This kind of non-observance of Grice's maxims is not deemed bad but rather reasonable in the sense that he does it for a reason. Yet, it can be inferred what is intended by his long-repeated speech. indeed, this is due to the nature of circumlocution that requires one to speak a lot, provide irrelevant information and obscure his speech.

In addition to that, the former PM prefers adherence to politeness and face to non-adherence to Grice's maxims; he tries to be polite in an attempt to save his face when asked face-threatening questions. Giving direct answers may threaten himself, his government, country, and any third party. So, in order to lessen this threat, he utilizes circumlocution as a politeness strategy.

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