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The Rhetoric of Silence in Iraqi Political Discourse: A Critical Pragmatic Approach

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Wasit University

College of Education for Human Sciences

Department of English



The Rhetoric of Silence in Iraqi Political Discourse: A Critical Pragmatic Approach

A Thesis

Submitted to the Council of the College of Education for Human
Sciences, Wasit University, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education in English Language and Linguistics

By

Ayat Emad Jasim

Supervised by

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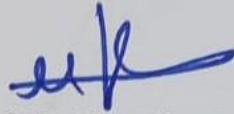
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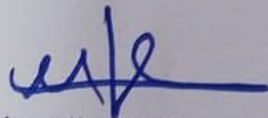


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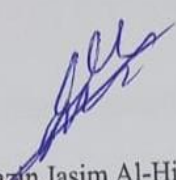
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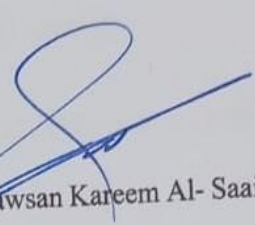
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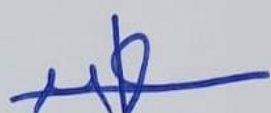
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DEDICATION

To Almighty Allah ... my eternal source of strength and guidance.

To my mother ... the light of my life.

To my father's soul ... forever present in his absence.

To my three sisters ... my first friends and forever support.

To my dear friend Rasha Hilal ... who surrounded me with her help and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CP	Cooperative Principle
CPr	Critical Pragmatics

Abstract

Political communication in politically constrained environments frequently relies not only on what is explicitly articulated but also on what is deliberately left unsaid. This phenomenon is particularly salient within Iraq's Muhasasa system, where rhetorical silence enables politicians to communicate sensitive meanings while minimising direct attribution and avoiding explicit political accountability. Despite its central role in Iraqi political discourse, the linguistic construction of rhetorical silence has received limited scholarly attention. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how rhetorical silence is linguistically constructed in Iraqi political discourse. The study adopts an integrated analytical framework that combines rhetorical analysis with critical pragmatics. At the rhetorical level, Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity is adopted. At the critical pragmatic level, Mey's (2001) critical pragmatic model serves as the overarching framework, incorporating van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies within the Critical Discourse Analysis dimension and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principles at the pragmatic dimension. The study qualitatively analyses eight extracts from official political interviews with representatives of Iraqi Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minor groups between 2006-2025. The findings reveal that rhetorical silence is rhetorically constructed through strategic polysemy, interpretive communities, and communicative advantage. From a critical pragmatics perspective, it is primarily realised through ideological-rhetorical strategies characterised by systematic vagueness and through the recurrent flouting of Grice's maxim of quantity. Therefore, the study concludes that rhetorical silence functions as a strategic communicative resource shaped by the institutional and ideological constraints of the Muhasasa system, where explicit political commitment often entails substantial political risks.

Keywords: rhetorical silence, strategic ambiguity, critical pragmatics, ideological-rhetorical strategies, cooperative principle

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Van Dijk (2002) pointed out that political discourse is defined by the speaker, the hearer, the occasion, and the end, arguing that whatever a politician says, and whatever is said with a political end, constitutes political discourse. Chilton (2004) observed that some lexical and structural aspects of language are associated with recognisable types of political behaviour and that political discourse is placed in a wider context of language use which is purposive in nature and contextually situated.

Beard (2000) highlighted that language is a key means of constructing and performing political careers, especially through speeches, and that power works through language in such a manner that the unsaid is at least as powerful as the said. Moreover, political discourse is ideological in nature. Fairclough (2015) pointed out that political speech casts doubt on the intent of speech. Hodge and Kress (1993) defined ideology as a system of ideas arranged in a certain perspective, and that certain linguistic decisions reflect and construct ideological standpoints.

In post-2003 Iraq, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraq was in a period of political transition under a system of power-sharing known as the Muhasasa system, which shares political power among the main ethnic and sectarian communities in Iraq (Dodge & Mansour, 2020). The system is consociational, which means that the roles of prime minister, parliamentary speaker, and president are assigned to Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish communities (Alkhudary, 2024).

Therefore, this institutional arrangement places political figures under competing communal and political pressures. Thus, political figures tend to navigate between competing communal loyalties, which may make direct attribution particularly risky. Explicit political attribution can therefore become subject to considerable restraint, as naming rival blocs or communities openly risks destabilising power arrangements (Tripp, 2007).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The communicative environment of Iraqi political discourse since 2003 is shaped by the power-sharing system that allocates political power among the main actors of the ethnic and sectarian groups of the country (Dodge & Mansour, 2020). The Iraqi system distributes state offices according to communal identity. Although the system is meant to guarantee inclusive governance, it also places considerable communicative pressure on the political figures who are forced to manoeuvre between competing communal loyalties, weak elite alliances, and ideologically charged audiences (Alkhudary, 2024).

Political discourse is not a neutral reflection of political reality but a central means through which political figures construct meanings, negotiate relationships, and exercise power (Fairclough, 2015). Under the communicative constraints imposed by the Iraqi power-sharing system, political figures often avoid explicit attribution while still communicating criticism, evaluation, and political positioning (Dodge & Mansour, 2020).

Within this context, Jangbar (2018) argued that silence is a rhetorical genre intentionally used to challenge the dominant communicative genre. In feminist rhetoric, Comouche (2021) stated that strategic silence is a rhetorical decision, not a passive stance and does not support the patriarchy but rather confronts it. Similarly,

Blanco-Cerda (2020) explored the rhetorical use of silence to negotiate trauma, power, and agency of women. From Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) perspective, Slemon (2025) stated that the absence and silence should be examined as discursive forms of ideology and power in CDA instead of communicative gaps. At the pragmatic level, Klieber (2021) argued that silence can be seen as a deliberate communication gesture that can assert an agreement, disagreement, or even an ideological stance. Despite of these contributions, previous studies have focused on rhetorical silence in rhetorical, feminist, narrative, CDA, or general pragmatic perspectives. Little attention has been paid to rhetorical silence in political discourse. More specifically, the linguistic construction of rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse has received very limited attention, particularly from an integrated rhetorical and Critical Pragmatics (henceforth CPr) perspective. To address this gap, the present study investigates rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse through an integrated framework combining rhetorical and CPr.

Example 1

This extract is taken from an interview with the former Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, in which the host asked him: "Why have you lost all your confidence in the prime minister, Nouri Al-Maliki?" (CNN, 2007, para. 1). Allawi stated:

"I lost my confidence, Wolf, really, in the process which is ongoing in Iraq" (CNN, 2007, para. 1).

The host's question explicitly referred to a specific political actor: Why have you lost confidence in Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki?. According to Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity, Allawi's response demonstrates a strategic polysemy. The named referent "Nouri Al-Maliki", is deliberately omitted from the answer and

replaced by the broader expression "the process," which is broad enough to refer to both the style of governance of the Prime Minister and the political system in the country as a whole after 2003. This substitution is used to avoid an explicit statement of responsibility while still allowing criticism, therefore constructing rhetorical silence through linguistic omission. Within van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the vagueness strategy makes the sentence syntactically complete; however, the agent is not specified, silence therefore becomes linguistically invisible. Based on Grice's (1975) CP, the maxim of relation is flouted because the response is relevant enough to maintain, but indirect enough to avoid a direct response, generating rhetorical silence where a named person is substituted by an abstract system.

1.2 Research Objectives

The current study aims to:

1. Examining how strategic ambiguity is employed by selected Iraqi politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse.
2. Identifying the ideological-rhetorical strategies employed by those Iraqi politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse.
3. Investigating the conversational maxims systematically flouted by these Iraqi politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse.

1.3 Research Questions

The present study intends to answer the following questions:

1. How is strategic ambiguity employed by selected Iraqi politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse?

2. Which ideological-rhetorical strategies are employed by those politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse?
3. Which conversational maxims are systematically flouted by those politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse?

1.4 Procedures of the Study

To reach the objectives of the study and draw conclusions, the following steps will be followed:

1. Reviewing the literature on the concept of silence, silence as a rhetorical strategy, CPr, and silence in political discourse, in addition to previous studies.
2. Selecting eight extracts from official Iraqi political interviews conducted between 2006 and 2025, representing four political communities: Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority.
3. Analysing the selected extracts using the integrated analytical framework. The analysis begins with Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity at the rhetorical level. Then, it proceeds within Mey's (2001) CPr framework, employing van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies at the CDA level, and Grice's (1975) CP at the pragmatic level.
4. Providing the findings, coming up with conclusions, and setting up recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

1.5 Scope and Limits

The present study adopts a qualitative approach to examine rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse. The data consist of eight selected extracts from official

political interviews with political figures representing the four major Iraqi communities. The study uses a complementary framework combining rhetorical and CPr frameworks. On the rhetorical level, the study adopts Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity as an analytical model. At the CPr level, the study adopts Mey's (2001) CPr as an overarching framework, which conceptualises language use as inseparable from its social, ideological, and political context. Within this framework, analysis is performed at two interrelated levels: van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies at CDA level, and Grice's (1975) CP at the pragmatic level, particularly the flouting of conversational maxims.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to the literature on rhetorical and CPr by providing a better understanding of how rhetorical silence is linguistically constructed in political discourse. Political discourse cannot be understood solely through what is explicitly stated; rather, it requires rhetorical, ideological, and pragmatic analysis to reveal how political actors communicate sensitive meanings, manage responsibility, and maintain political relationships under the structural constraints of the Iraqi power-sharing system.

Students, discourse analysts, and researchers may find this study useful because it provides an integrated analytical framework which combines both rhetorical and CPr to explore the phenomenon of rhetorical silence in political discourse. The study opens the way for further research on rhetorical silence, political discourse, and political communication in the context of Iraq and other political contexts because it encourages a deeper analysis of political language.

1.7 Layout of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One includes the background of the study, its problem, objectives, questions, scope and limits, significance, and the layout of the study. Chapter Two presents a literature review including silence, strategic ambiguity, CPr framework, and some previous studies. Chapter Three is concerned with research methodology, which deals with the nature of the study, data selection, and the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Four is devoted to the analysis of the data. Chapter Five presents the conclusions drawn from the findings. It also contains the contributions of the study, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give a literature review for the investigation of rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse. In this context, some theoretical concepts are addressed and discussed, including the concept of silence, rhetorical silence, CPr, and political discourse. Finally, some previous studies related to the present study are reviewed and discussed.

2.1 The Concept of Silence

Bao (2023) claimed that out of all the non-verbal categories, the conceptualisation of silence is one of the most mysterious. Silence is malleable and can only have relative, not absolute, meanings. It has long been understood by researchers that the larger concept of silence does include sound and language, although the literal meaning of this concept refers to the lack or inaudibility of sound or words. Glenn (2004) highlighted that silence does not necessarily mean lack of communication, but it can be a form of communication. Likewise, Jensen (1973) stated that silence is a key element in most communicative contexts.

Barron and Schneider (2014) paid attention to the unsaid speech. The unsaid speech, to them, is the verbal silence in which a speaker accompanies silence in a communicative situation. According to Klieber (2021), silence is encountered in daily life and can have peripheral meanings based on the communicative context. Jaworski (1993) was one of the scholars who took into consideration the role of silence in relation to speech. In his book *The Power of Silence*, he posed the question of whether it is possible to have absolute silence. There has also been a debate by scholars on

whether there can be absolute silence in communication or not (Bruneau, 1973; Maltz, 1985).

De Guerrero (1994) highlighted that silence assumes some attributes including ideational, mnemonic, textual, instructional, evaluative, interpersonal and intrapersonal. These functions illustrate that silence can be a component of communicative processes and not just the lack of speech. Jensen (1973) mentioned that body language, facial expression, and other cultural aspects play a significant role in deciphering the meaning of specific silent moments in a communicative setting. Although a person may not be talking, the unconscious facial expressions and body language can help other people to decipher the meaning of silence in certain circumstances. Likewise, Klieber (2021) asserted that the meaning of silence is not only determined by silence but also by contextual clues around it.

Jaworski (1993) asked whether it is possible to say something without speaking. However, he did not consider all forms of silence to be communicative. An example is that when two strangers meet each other on the street and neither of them wants to say anything to the other, the silence between them only means that they are strangers and do not want to communicate. In such cases, silence does not necessarily function as communication.

Sim (2007) clarified that in the past political silence has been imposed especially in dictatorial states where censorship is employed to curb the debate of sensitive matters. Governments can exercise silence by controlling the media, censoring the internet, or by limiting the flow of information. Brummett (1980) discussed the significance of strategic silence in political communication, and he stated that strategic silence is when speech is anticipated but intentionally omitted.

When this happens, the politician fails to clarify the silence and the audience is left to guess that it is a mystery, uncertainty, inactivity, or fear.

2.1.1 Functions of Silence

Silence is not only a mere absence of words, but it is also an act which implies a communicative meaning (Dahaam, 2019). Jensen (1973) mentioned five communicative functions of silence which have been taken up in later research: the linkage function, the affecting function, the revelational function, the judgmental function, and the activating function. Linkage function is the ability of silence to create or break linkages between interlocutors. Silence in this role means working together and is used to connect people together (Trandafir, 2018). Silence can unite people, but it can also divide and alienate them, thus creating a two-way linkage in the social effects of silence (Schroter, 2013).

The moving power of silence is the affectivity function. Silence can either have a positive or negative impact on individuals (Schroter, 2013). Silence can have a healing and/or a wounding effect, it can convey understanding, respect, acceptance, indifference, animosity, or defensiveness. The revelational function is concerned with the ability of silence to disclose one's attitude, feelings, and/or psychological state. Silence might be a tool for uncovering information that would be concealed in speech by psychotherapists (Huszar, 2016).

The judgmental function allows silence to express agreement or disagreement. Silence in this function does not mean that there is no disconformity, but it shows that there is no explicit disconformity in the conversation (Trandafir, 2018). Some researchers also suggest that silence can be a sign of agreement or support, but it can also represent disagreement, hostility, or anger, depending on the communicative

context (Huszar, 2016). The activating function is the level of involvement or disengagement of a silent interlocutor in an interaction. Pauses can convey a person's engagement in a conversation, i.e., pauses before the selection of specific words can imply reflection in the speaker's mind, as observed by (Trandafir, 2018).

Ephratt (2008) discussed the role of silence in Jakobson's (1960) communicative model, illustrating how silence works in the referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic, and metalinguistic functions of language. The referential function of silence is a zero-sign that communicates information about the external world; the emotive function is an iconic expression of the state of the inside world, such as emptiness or intimacy, and the conative function is a direct and indirect speech act addressed to the listener. He stated that silence is used to maintain contact and alliance, while for the metalinguistic function, silence can serve as a discourse marker or represent the communicative right to silence.

Ali and Yaseen (2023) identified four functions of silence as face-saving, affecting, evaluating and linkage. Face-saving function: Silences that are caused by external factors (e.g., circumstance, modesty, unfamiliarity) in which the speaker decides to avoid confrontation or to preserve his/her self-image. The impactful function – as in interpersonal communication – remains the same; it can enhance or deteriorate political relationships. The evaluating function allows silence to express judgments on character, motives and personalities, without making them explicit, such as approval, disapproval, contention or disagreement. In political contexts, the linkage function is bi-directional; that is, it can tie a speaker to an audience, or it can indicate distance and alienation from other actors. These frameworks provide an insight into the communicative richness of silence and its function, which depends on

the speaker's intention, the listener's expectation, and the social and political context in which it is produced (Jaworski, 1993).

2.2 Silence as a Rhetorical Strategy

Bizzell and Herzberg (1990) explained that rhetoric was first used to refer to the discourse of the people that is aimed at persuasion. Aristotle (1991) characterised rhetoric as the skill of identifying all potential methods of persuasion in a specific situation. Moberg (1990) claimed that rhetoric is not an art such as carpentry, but the way of participating in social life. Foss (1989) asserted that rhetoric is the utilisation of symbols to affect thought and action.

In this context, Mejdoub (2019) demonstrated that rhetoric is often viewed as the art of persuasion. It may also be interpreted as the misuse of words to manipulate fallacious arguments, disseminate half-truths, insinuate erroneous concepts, evoke emotions, and thus distort judgement and fool the audience. Moreover, Bogost (2007) stated that besides being linked with persuasion and deceit, rhetoric has also been used historically in the context of discourse in society. Rhetoric and oratory are almost synonymous in everyday use. It is possible to distinguish between rhetoric and oratory because the former is the theoretical ability to speak, whereas the latter is the practical one. Based on this definition that relates rhetoric to oratory, rhetoric can be considered an art form (Mejdoub, 2019). Similarly, Craig and Muller (2007) mentioned that rhetoric is an art of discourse.

In this regard, Grasso (2003) stated that rhetoric is relevant to the study of discourse in general since rhetoric is a subdiscipline of discourse studies that depends on the use of specific rhetorical structures in any discourse to produce some effects, including persuasion. Turner (1991) claimed that such assessments cannot be limited

to those structures only. They also include cognitive modelling and cultural effects of language use on the listeners or readers, along with the overall context of communication. Cathcart (1991) emphasised that a contemporary critic, asserts, "rhetoric is used... to refer to a communicator's intentional use of language and other symbols to influence or persuade selected receivers to act, believe, or feel the way the communicator desires in problematic situations" (p. 2).

Accordingly, Behnam and Nosratzadegan (2014) illustrated that some people believe that silence is communicative, while others believe that it is non-communicative. Non-communicative silence and communicative silence are different. The former was referred to as rhetorical silence. This type of silence is sometimes referred to as an active means since it is selected by the speaker in order to deliver his or her message. According to Ephratt (2008), rhetorical silence is silence that is deliberately chosen by the speaker, and in fact, it is a decision made by the speaker himself. Hao (2011) claimed that silence is too often construed as something that is opposite to speech. Silence can be seen as an indication of inactivity or inability to communicate. It can seem like an awkward gap in a conversation that has to be filled.

In this regard, Behnam and Nosratzadegan (2014) suggested that rhetorical silence is the intentional silence that aims to create a specific effect or emotional reaction. Rhetorical silence is not accidental but meaningful, as it is a special approach to emphasise certain problems. Brummett (1980) defined rhetorical silence as an intentional decision, particularly when one has a strong motive to speak but does not. Glenn (2004) stated that these rhetorical silences are a rhetorical art that is as powerful as the spoken or written word.

2.2.1 Strategic Ambiguity: Bach et al. (2025)

Building on Chaffee's (1991) framework for conceptual explication, that is a form of theorising that aims to clarify terms and their meanings with precision. Bach et al. (2025) presented a cross-disciplinary definition of strategic ambiguity. They describe it as a rhetorical strategy where a communicator creates: (1) a polysemic message with more than one reasonable meaning, all of which are supported in the text; (2) to audiences belonging to different interpretive communities; and (3) in such a way that the polysemy produces a particular benefit to the communicator.

The authors followed the evolution of the concept in various fields before coming up with this definition. In political science, Downs (1957) noted that deliberate vagueness in electoral candidates is advantageous because it makes them more appealing, but his explanation was limited to the vote-maximisation aspect but not on how certain textual characteristics produce divergent audience interpretations. Eisenberg (1984) demonstrated in organisational communication that ambiguity enables various interpretations to co-exist in institutions, which promotes unity without prescription, but once again without consideration of the role of audience differentiation. Ceccarelli (1998) proposed polysemy as an intentional authorial practice that draws conflicting audiences to convergent appreciation of a text, but restricted it to those instances where the only gain is a larger, unified audience.

The core of the model is the idea of interpretive communities by Fish (1976) communities of people who share interpretive strategies that are influenced by ideology, identity, and intertextual knowledge; that is why the same utterance can produce different meanings in different audiences. The model also differentiates strategic ambiguity from other related phenomena in the same literature: unlike lies, which allow only one interpretation to be true or false, strategic ambiguity supports

multiple readings simultaneously; unlike a non-answer or silence on a topic, strategic ambiguity is an intentional, not accidental polysemy. The communicative advantage can be of different types, such as electoral benefit, audience building, or plausible deniability, and in a limited political space, the authors observe, ambiguity is not only possible but structurally required.

Bach et al. (2025) noted that strategic ambiguity is a survival mechanism in semi-authoritarian situations, which allows communicators to appeal to divided audiences at the same time without arousing political conflict. Here, this framework is applied to the Iraqi Muhasasa system, in which coalition commitments among Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority constituencies require political actors to formulate utterances that are interpretively open utterance such that strategic ambiguity and rhetorical silence are not rival but rather complementary strategies in the same discursive economy.

2.3 Critical Pragmatics

Pragmatics has a unique place in linguistics, not focusing on the formal organisation of language but on the construction of meaning, its negotiation, and interpretation in context. Pragmatics is a broad functional view of linguistic phenomena in terms of their relation to language use and social behaviour, a definition that has broadened the scope of the field to adjacent fields such as sociology, cognitive science, and discourse studies (Verschueren, 1999).

Although it also focuses on the context and the use of language, traditional pragmatics has been criticised as ignoring the underlying ideological and social aspects that inform communicative action, like power relations, discrimination, and manipulation of meaning in the discourse of the masses. CPr is a reaction to this

shortcoming, which expands the pragmatic question into the area of ideology, social power, and the latent values inherent in language use (Chen, 2020). According to Huang (2017), CPr pays special attention to the connection between language and social power, as well as language and ideology, and is located at the crossroads of pragmatics and CDA.

More concretely, CPr is a sub-field of sociopragmatics, which operates in a similar way to CDA, but with a particular focus on the interaction between language and social power and between language and ideology. In this context, several studies have affirmed that pragmatics is a useful tool for the critical analysis of discourse. Consequently, critical discourse studies have increasingly incorporated a pragmatic perspective to examine issues of ideology and power across different types of discourse (Al-Hindawi & Jebur, 2021).

The roots of CPr can be tracked back to the foundational essay by Mey (1979) *Toward a Critical Theory of Language*, where the social issues concerning language were addressed with the help of a theoretical-Marxian orientation. Critical linguistics was developed, at the same time, by Roger Fowler and others, such as Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, at the University of East Anglia, with a Marxist framework that tackled sociological and pragmatic issues (Mey, 2017).

2.3.1 Mey's (2001) Critical Pragmatics

One of the most basic theoretical contributions in CPr is the theory of Mey (2001), who stated that language cannot be isolated from its social context, ideological orientations of its users, or the institutional purposes that it fulfils. According to Mey, meaning is never directly encoded in utterances but is co-constructed as a result of the conditions of production and reception, conditions which

are influenced by social structures, power relations and communicative conventions of particular institutional settings. This concept of language as socially constituted and ideologically predetermined offers a critical perspective on the analysis of communicative decisions, not as neutral or incidental but as intentional actions with social and political consequences. Accordingly, CPr is a field of study that focuses on the analysis of ideology and power abuse issues such as racism, linguicism, sexism, Americanism, and so on (Al-Hindawi & Jebur, 2021).

Theoretical contributions of Mey to CPr are a result of more than twenty years of scholarly growth. The idea of a CPr approach was first expressed by Mey (1979) in his foundational article *Toward a Critical Theory of Language*, which laid the conceptual framework of analysing language in terms of power and social struggle. This initial contribution was succeeded by his 1985 monograph *Whose Language* in which he proceeded to develop the CPr framework by exploring how social actors, both employers and employees, construct their realities through language. CDA had also become a parallel tradition by this time, and consequently, the evolution of CPr began to heavily rely on the efforts of CDA scholars, the most prominent of whom were van Dijk and Fairclough (Al-Hindawi & Jebur, 2021).

However, this relationship was not without tension. Fairclough did not accept the suggestion of Mey (1979) that CDA is to be considered as a sub-field of pragmatics. The basis of this rejection was twofold: first, that Mey adopted a methodology that focuses on textual analysis when Fairclough and his associates pre-empt the ideological aspects of discourse. Second, it is because Fairclough considered pragmatics to be theoretically inadequate in its approach to power and ideology (Fairclough, 2001; Archer et al., 2012).

The most detailed theoretical statement of Mey (2001) is in *Pragmatics: An Introduction*, which is organised into three parts that are interconnected. The part that is most pertinent to the current research is the one dedicated to *Macro Pragmatics*, where Mey follows the connection between the daily use of language and the more general issues of critical concern, shifting the focus of language users to how these communicative practices are predisposed by social structures and power relations. Crucially, the book explicitly addresses the correlation between pragmatics and power, and explores the diverse types of social struggle that are performed through language by applying the instruments of CDA to the theory of pragmatic acts as developed by Mey, thus establishing CPr as an integrated framework that brings together pragmatic analysis and critical discourse concerns.

This study adopts Mey's (2001) approach for investigating the rhetoric of silence in Iraqi political discourse. The framework is employed because it integrates pragmatic analysis with the principles of CDA, a combination essential for examining silence not merely as the absence of speech, but as a strategic communicative act embedded within power relations and socio-political contexts. This combined methodology allows the study to reveal how silence is rhetorically employed by Iraqi political actors to avoid responsibility, lessen accountability, build ideological stances, or gain control.

2.4 Critical Theory

The Frankfurt School has developed critical theory as an approach to questioning dominant forms of understanding by revealing the power relations and ideological assumptions that are hidden behind the supposed neutrality (Harney, 2014). Such disciplines as CDA are deeply rooted in this tradition (Thompson, 2017),

especially in its approach to critique as a normative practice that recognises social injustices and suggests models to deal with them (Fairclough, 2010).

The key aspect of this tradition is the notion of ideology, which is characterised as the system of ideas, beliefs, and goals (Baker & Ellece, 2011). According to Fairclough (1989), ideology works in a process of naturalisation in which the unequal power relations are stabilised and turned into common sense. Fairclough (1995) also believed that ideology operates in language at several levels, not in individual texts but in discourse as a whole social process.

2.4.1 Silence as an Ideological Strategy in Critical Discourse Analysis

Tannen et al. (2001) noted that discourse is a general term used to describe linguistic phenomena that do not just relate to individual sentences, but to larger social contexts, in fields like anthropology, philosophy, and psychology. CDA grew out of this tradition after a seminal conference in Amsterdam in the 1990s and was later developed by other scholars such as van Dijk, Fairclough, and Wodak (Al-Husseini, 2020). Fundamentally, CDA studies the processes by which social power, dominance, and inequality are practiced, reproduced, and resisted using language in social and political situations (van Dijk, 2001).

In this regard, Foucault (1972) provided a fundamental understanding of the connection between discourse and silence. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he contended that what is visibly spoken in discourse is in fact what is conditioned by what is not said, the not-said, which is a hollow that conditions and undermines everything that is said. For him, silence is not a lack, but a counterpoint to dominant discourses that constitute reality and knowledge, and discourse analysis cannot chart

silence per se, but can indicate the relations between dominant and marginalised discourses.

This observation has important methodological consequences for CDA. The existing methods which concentrate on dominant discourses only run the risk of ignoring the absences and silences which are also constitutive of power relations. The analysis of silence in CDA provides a fruitful analytical pathway, one that reveals not only what is said and how, but what is systematically omitted, repressed, or unspoken as an ideological strategy in its own right (Slemon, 2025).

2.4.2 Van Dijk's (2006) *Ideological-Rhetorical Strategies*

Van Dijk (1998) asserted that ideologies are the guiding principles of social representations of group members, which help in event interpretation and interaction. These ideologies shape individuals' perceptions of in-groups and out-groups, resulting in systematic polarisation in speech. Van Dijk (2006) hypothesised that speakers tend to portray their own group in a positive light and the other group in a negative light. Van Dijk (1998) emphasised that this polarisation is retried to as the ideological square, which instructs speakers to highlight our positive attributes, underscore their negative attributes, downplay our negative attributes, and diminish their positive attributes. Van Dijk (2006) asserted that this methodology makes discourse a field of ideological struggle, which demonstrates how domination and inequality are reproduced in the choice of language and rhetoric.

Van Dijk (2006) suggested some systematic strategies which can be taken to analyse discourse at various levels to identify how ideologies are expressed or enacted in discourse. Forty-one ideological-rhetorical strategies through which ideologies are

linguistically expressed exist at the micro level of discourse. There is set of ideological-rhetorical strategies:

1. Actor Description: is meant to give a full account of the entities (place, person, thing) of conversation. People who create discourse tend to say nice things about their own group and downplay their bad habits. On the other hand, people who are part of an out-group are said to be bad, and their bad habits are highlighted.
2. Authority: authorities like experts, global groups, leaders, and others are used by the speaker to back up their ideas and claims.
3. Burden: means the loss of a group, whether it is people or money. It is also meant to hurt a certain group of people.
4. Categorisation: where speakers and writers tend to put people into groups based on their political and religious beliefs, attitudes, and other similar things.
5. Comparison: when the speaker wants to compare people in the in-group in a good way, but he compares people in the out-group in a bad way.
6. Consensus: is used to claim or insist on consensus across parties or across the country.
7. Counterfactual: is used to create understanding and argument; the common way to say it is "what would happen if..." Therefore, it shows what would happen if certain things happened or not.
8. Disclaimer: means that the speaker is trying to keep face by talking about his good qualities first and then focusing on the bad qualities of the other group.

9. Distancing: the use of words to create perceived distance between individuals from different social groupings or classifications. This can be achieved by using terms and phrases that suggest isolation from the out-group, such as demonstrative pronouns, instead of simply naming or characterising them, such as those people.

10. Dramatisation: a rhetorical strategy that exaggerates events or positions to trigger emotions and influence an audience.

11. Empathy: being able to understand and share other people's feelings, which is often shown in political situations by showing support or understanding, and it can be real or planned.

12. Euphemism: it means replacing an insulting phrase with a nice one.

13. Evidentiality: the speaker uses references to authorities to back up his thoughts, views, and arguments. This approach helps the speaker's claims stick.

14. Illustration: in this way, the argument gets stronger, persuasive, believable, and easy to remember by using real-life examples.

15. Explanation: giving someone knowledge or reasoning to explain or defend a certain action or event.

16. Fallacies: this can happen in different parts of an argument, like the premises, the connections between the premises and the conclusions, or the ties between the speaker and the audience.

17. Generalisation: the speaker tends to make generalisations instead of examples or illustrations.

18. History as Lesson: a popular way to make an argument in which the present situation is compared to events that happened in the past, usually to help the reader understand or solve a problem.

19. Humanitarianism: a way of arguing that is based on the support for human rights, criticism of people who break these rights, and the setting of rules for how refugees should be treated humanely.

20. Hyperbole: it means to stretch the word. Ideological speech uses over-the-top language to talk about the out-group.

21. Implication: it means that speakers cannot say everything they know or believe. A lot of discourse is implied because it is like an iceberg; the viewer has to use what they already know to draw conclusions.

22. Illegality: it is a common argument among conservatives that most refugees are "illegals" or break the law by not taking the right steps. This is a popular argument used to make refugees look bad and arrest them.

23. Irony: is used to mean the opposite of what is said.

24. Legality: it means using laws and rules to back up a position against immigration. A lot of legislative groups, like parliaments, use this argument or topos. It is a way to back up a position that is against immigration.

25. Lexicalisation: people use words to show what they really believe.

26. Metaphor: it means to compare two different things and give the other thing the traits of the first thing.

27. National Self-glorification: this is clear in speeches in government. Immigration issues are used as a way to show a positive personal image of the nation. In this form of positive self-presentation, people say nice things about themselves, like "I admire or commend you." They love their country and its values, history, and customs.

28. Negative other-presentation: it means that speakers put people into two groups, the in-group and the out-group. That is why van Dijk (2006) asserted that grouping "is not value-free, but imbued with an ideologically based application of norms and values" (p. 738). The out-group is always talked about in a bad way.

29. Norm Expression: it means that speech like anti-racist speech is acceptable because it condemns and fights all kinds of discrimination. People listen to what the speaker says and do what they say.

30. Number Game: it means that speakers stress objectivity by using data to make a point. For instance, the number of new refugees is kept in check in news stories.

31. Openness: this is a common way to argue, suggesting that it is a good thing to talk about the subject freely.

32. Polarisation: it means putting people into two groups, the in-group and the out-group. As well as that, the speaker's beliefs and attitudes shape how they portray things, giving good traits to the in-group and negative traits to the out-group.

33. Populism: "The basic strategy is to claim that 'the people' (or 'everybody') does not support further immigration" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 738). This is a way for politicians to get more votes by stating their views and plans.

34. Positive Self-Presentation: this means that people talk about the good things about their group, country, party, etc., both in groups and one-on-one (by using a statement).

35. Presupposition: speech is like an iceberg: a lot of it is not stated directly. The speaker thinks that his audience utilises the shared sociocultural knowledge to draw conclusions and subsequently comprehend the speech.

36. Pseudo-Ignorance: the speakers of this argument claim that suggest that they know something about a subject when they do not actually know it. This is a misconception. When people use statements like "I do not know, but..." to make claims, this is a common issue not needing any proof.

37. Reasonableness: a technique that speakers use to show that their arguments are not only sound, but also logical and make sense. This method works especially well when the case makes it sound like the speaker is biased or not making sense.

38. Repetition: refers to the act of repeating words or phrases for emphasis or effect. In debates about immigration, repetition is often used to highlight the negative traits of immigrants or refugees.

39. Situation Description: refers to how the events, feelings, and whole situations are talked about. It is an important part of making a point because how something is described can suggest many things, like its causes, motivations, effects, and opinions.

40. Vagueness: it means that texts use unclear language that does not have a clear meaning, like "few" , "a lot" , "a lot" , "thing" , "high" , "low," etc.

41. Victimisation: indicates that discussions around something are defined by the dichotomy of in-groups and out-groups. For instance, immigrants are seen as the out-group, with their negative attributes accentuated, individuals may retell traumatic accounts regarding marginalised citizen. The in-group is portrayed as the victim.

These strategies collectively function to normalise ideological views, maintain hegemony, and shape public opinion through quotidian discourse. Van Dijk's taxonomy is extensively utilised in CDA to elucidate how language conveys power, bias, and ideology within political, media, and institutional frameworks (van Dijk, 1998, 2000, 2006, 2015).

2.5 Silence as a Pragmatic Aspect

Pragmatics, originally differentiated by Morris (1938) as the study of the relationship between signs and their users, has since become a wide interdisciplinary area of interest in the study of how meaning is constructed and interpreted in context (Crystal, 2008). Researchers have studied it through diverse perspectives as the study of speaker meaning outside of what is literally said (Yule, 2010), the analysis of linguistically encoded contextual relations (Levinson, 1983), and the question of how words and sentences get their meaning based on the circumstances of their use (Kroeger, 2019). Pragmatics has since the 1970s moved out of the field of linguistics into communication studies, discourse analysis, psychology, and cognitive science, no longer focusing on the sign itself, but rather on the application of signs in social situations (Nerlich, 2006). At the heart of this broadened focus is the acknowledgement that pragmatics is interested in the invisible meaning of how more is communicated than is said, and how listeners make inferences about what a speaker is saying beyond what is said in an utterance (Yule, 1996).

In this context, silence is a valid and important subject of pragmatic enquiry. Until recently, most of the early history of linguistics has regarded silence as a non-phenomenon, one of negativity, passivity and simply the absence of speech (Ephratt, 2008). This perception, however, changed fundamentally in the mid-1970s as scholars started to see silence as a form of eloquent communication where meaning is

communicated without sound (Pinker, 1994). In the 1990s with the rise of pragmatics, research on silence shifted to a more central role, exploring its pragmatic roles in communicative situations (Ephratt, 2008).

Moghaddam et al. (2014) explained that silence is a real communicative phenomenon, whose meaning differs depending on the culture and context. Kurzon (1998) differentiated communicative silence and stillness, the non-communicative lack of sound. Poyatos (2002) also observed that in spite of these developments, silence is still an under researched field in communicative linguistics. Al-Harabsheh (2013) pointed out that its interpretation requires a deep knowledge of the social and cultural context in which the discourse in question is located.

2.5.1 Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle

In linguistics, cooperation is a term that is used to demonstrate human behaviour in a conversation (Davies, 2007). Pragmatics is unable to operate without the recognition of the figurative or concealed meaning in the dialogue. The dialogic interaction is effective when we have the addresser and the addressee. When we have X and Y and they are engaged in a conversation, X poses a question to Y about something and he or she anticipates Y to be cooperative with him or her and respond to his or her question or statement, which must be pertinent to what X asks or says. They, therefore, seek to convey messages to one another (Al-Saedi, 2013).

Grice (1975) defined the CP as requiring participants to contribute to the conversation as much as is necessary, at the point at which it is made, by the purpose or direction of the exchange of the talk that is agreed upon. Thus, he suggested that participants in a conversation should provide sufficient information to enable interlocutors to understand the implied message. He proposed assumptions that are

considered a guide to conversational interaction to make the language use more effective and efficient; thus, the talk ends with cooperation (Levinson, 1983).

The properties that carry extra meaning that is in front of the semantic meaning of the words are known as conversational implicatures (Thomas, 1995). They can be either observed or non-observed, which means that people are either aware or unaware of observing the CP and the maxims, or they cannot observe them. On the one hand, adherence to the maxims implies that the conversational interaction can be successfully realised. The observance of the maxims works based on the assumptions called the maxims of conversation (Grice, 1975). Levinson (1983) explained these maxims in detail as in follows:

1. The maxim of Quality: try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

- i. Do not say what you believe to be false.
- ii. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

2. The maxim of Quantity:

- i. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
- ii. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

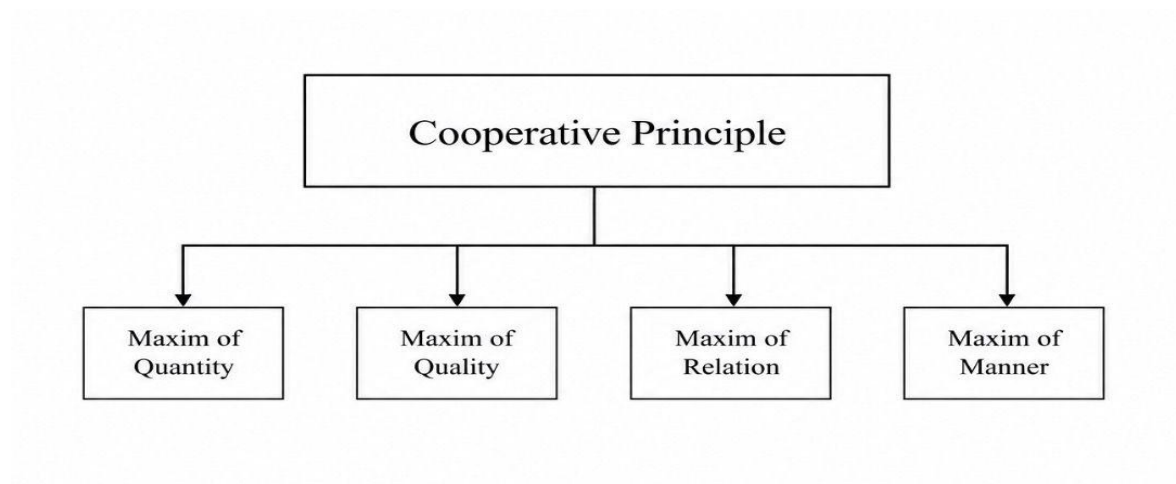
3. The maxim of Relevance: make your contributions relevant.

4. The maxim of Manner: be perspicuous, and specifically:

- i. Avoid obscurity.
- ii. Be brief and orderly.

When individuals lie, utter something sarcastic, or characterise something or somebody with strange utterances, it implies that they violate the CP and the conversational maxims. There are different kinds of breaking the CP and the maxims of conversations; they are flouting, violating, opting out, infringing, and suspending the maxims of conversations (Al-Saedi, 2013). In this context, the flouting of the maxims implies that implicatures are blatant and overt in their non-adherence to the maxim, and use it to serve communicative functions (Levinson, 1983). In other words, people fail to achieve the maxim because they have an idea and they try to make the receiver get the intended meaning behind this idea. All of Grice's maxims, see Figure 2.1 below, can be flouted as follows:

1. Flouting the maxim of Quality: this maxim can be flouted for different purposes; irony, metaphor, understatement (meiosis), overstatement (hyperbole), or rhetorical questions.
2. Flouting the maxim of Quantity: it means that the conversation can be either less or more informative. Moreover, tautologies show that the conversation flouts the maxim of the quantity, which means telling something non informative.
3. Flouting the Relation maxim: this maxim can be flouted to change the subject, and the conversation cannot be continued.
4. Flouting the Manner maxim: the communicators try to exploit the maxim by being not brief, orderly, etc. (Grice, 1975).

Figure 2.1*Grice's Cooperative Principle*

Note. Adapted from *Logic and Conversation*, by P. Grice, 1975, in P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics* (Vol. 3, pp. 41–58), Academic Press.

2.6 Silence in Political Discourse

Political discourse is not characterised by topic or form but rather by context in terms of who is speaking, to whom, on what occasion and with what intentions (van Dijk, 1997, 2002). Chilton (2004) defined it as the application of language in manners that are considered political, in which structural and lexical properties are associated with certain political behaviours and consequences. In this context, rhetorical use of linguistic resources by political actors is used to attain the intended effects (Wilson, 1990). Effective politicians have traditionally relied on their oratory skills to convince audiences and further political agendas (Obeng, 2002).

A new political system was formed after the invasion of Iraq led by the United States in 2003, which led to the creation of the 2005 constitution and transition to a parliamentary, multi-party system (Bremer & McConnell, 2006). The power-sharing arrangements based on ethno-sectarian principles were established to safeguard the

rights of all Iraqis, with the presidency assigned to a Kurd, the parliamentary speakership to a Sunni, and the prime ministership to a Shia, and respective deputy positions were distributed among communities (Tripp, 2007).

Obeng (1997) argued that silence in political communication is not lack of speech but a rhetorical choice and argued that any sufficient theory of political communication should consider verbal silence as an essential constituent. The silence used by politicians in a variety of political events, addresses, debates, and press conferences as well as obscurity, ambiguity, and obliqueness, is specifically due to the deceptive and high-stakes nature of political life. Furko and Abuczki (2014) emphasised that silence is a salient characteristic of political talk, especially in interviews where direct answers are habitually avoided. The strategic benefits of this silence are well-reported: it assists politicians to escape crises, save face, minimise risk, further careers, and safeguard the parties and governments that they represent (Obeng, 1997).

2.7 Previous Studies

The phenomenon of rhetorical silence has been studied in some previous studies; however, none of them has addressed the rhetoric of silence in Iraqi political discourse through a rhetorical and CPr framework.

Jangbar (2018), at University of Texas at Austin, conducted a doctoral dissertation entitled "*Rhetorical Silence: An Emerging Genre*." This study aimed at discussing silence as a deliberate rhetorical act in modern oral and online communication. It focused on the possibility of defining rhetorical silence as a new genre that has persuasive capabilities. The study examined the role of silence in a message saturation and communicative overload situation through a series of chosen

case studies. The analysis revealed that rhetorical silence works by interrupting the prevailing communicative practices and provoking thought instead of conflict. Consequently, the study determined rhetorical silence as a significant persuasive mode that broadens the scope of means of rhetoric beyond speech-based communication.

Blanco-Cerda (2020) conducted a doctoral dissertation titled "*The Rhetoric of Silence in the Captivity Narratives of Four American Women*." This study aimed at examining the use of silence as a rhetorical tool in the narratives of captivity of women in various historical periods. It focused on the role of silence as a factor of gender, power, trauma, and agency. Based on feminist rhetorical theory and trauma studies, the study explored the different types of silence, which include imposed, strategic, and resistant silence. The analysis revealed that silence helps women negotiate suffering and assert agency in constraining social structures. Therefore, the study defined silence as a rhetorical practice and not an indicator of lack or helplessness.

Comouche (2021), Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, wrote a master's thesis entitled "*Feminist Rhetorics: Theory and Practice of Strategic Silence*." This study was directed at the rhetorical theory of silence in feminist rhetorical theory. The study focused on the issue of challenging the notion of silence as a passive or marginalising strategy by examining silence as a deliberate and strategic rhetorical choice. The study was based on the feminist rhetoric, specifically Cheryl Glenn, and the difference between imposed silence and strategic silence. It showed that strategic silence can be a form of resistance, power shift, and rhetorical listening in patriarchal discourse. According to that, it set silence as a rhetorical

practice that is strong enough to broaden feminist rhetoric beyond speech-centred models.

Klieber (2021), at the University of Sheffield, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, wrote a doctoral dissertation entitled *"Your Silence Speaks Volumes: Silent Implicature and its Political Significance."* This study examined silence as a form of intentional communication, grounded in Grice's (1989) theory of implicature. The researcher developed the concept of silent implicature, arguing that silence can function as an active communicative contribution within conversational and political contexts. By analysing numerous political interactions, Klieber demonstrated that silence serves as a pragmatic tool for expressing agreement, dissent, or moral distancing, and that it often operates as a strategy of deniability and ideological alignment. The findings revealed that silence is not an absence of meaning but rather a complex communicative act that constructs both power and moral responsibility. This study forms a strong linguistic and pragmatic basis for the current study, which similarly seeks to uncover the rhetorical functions of silence in political discourse.

Dinkler (2021), at Yale Divinity School, conducted a study entitled *"The Narrative Rhetoric of Speech and Silence in the Acts of the Apostles."* In this study, the researcher was interested in the analysis of the narrative rhetoric of speech and silence in the Acts of the Apostles. It focused on proving the idea that silence is not an empty talking-nothingness but a rhetorical strategy with a variety of meanings. It analysed the way speech and silence interact to create plot development, characterisation and theological themes in Acts. The study revealed that silence has the power to convey power, resistance, attentive listening, and ethical engagement, depending on the context. Consequently, it developed the thesis that attending to silence and speech offers a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of

Lukan narrative rhetoric and disputes the conventional speech-focused method of biblical texts.

Slemon (2025), from the University of Western Ontario, authored a paper entitled *"Absences and Silences in Critical Discourse Analysis: Methodological Reflections."* This study re-evaluated the place of silence in CDA by proposing that the conventional CDA models have been overly concerned with explicit forms of language and have overlooked what is unsaid, absent, or omitted. Through a methodological reflection using a qualitative approach, Slemon suggested that silence and absence are not an analytic emptiness but a discursive sign of ideology and power. The study found that the study of silence in discourse can help understand the processes of exclusion and moral evasion since silence can be used to hide or support ideological dominance. It has direct methodological implications for the current study since it supports the incorporation of CDA and pragmatics to understand silence as a location of ideological meaning in political communication.

Previous studies have focused on rhetorical silence in a variety of contexts, including online communication, feminist, narratives, rhetorical, narrative, CDA, or general pragmatic perspectives. In contrast, there has been little attention paid to rhetorical silence in political discourse, especially in the Iraqi context. Furthermore, none of these studies has investigated the linguistic construction of rhetorical silence through an integrated rhetorical and CPr frameworks. To fill this gap, the present study investigates rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse by analysing eight official political interviews representing the major political communities in Iraq through a qualitative approach. It adopts an eclectic analytical framework based on Bach et al. (2025) model of strategic ambiguity within rhetoric and Mey's (2001) model within CPr, integrating van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies at

the CDA level and Grice's (1975) CP at the pragmatic level. Such an integrated framework allows for the examination of how rhetorical silence is linguistically constructed, ideologically organised, and pragmatically interpreted within the Iraqi power-sharing system.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the methodology to be employed in this study. Tanner (2017) mentioned that methodology is a strategy, plan of action, design, or process that has two main functions: directing the choice and implementation of certain techniques and linking them with the expected findings. Therefore, this chapter describes the nature of the study, data collection and description, the sources of the data, criteria of data collection, procedures of analysis and the theoretical framework.

3.1 The Nature of the Study

Research methodology defines the nature of any study. The two main types of research are quantitative and qualitative. According to Morse (2016), quantitative methods involve gathering and examining numeric information to measure behaviours, opinions, attitudes, and other variables to allow the extrapolation of findings to larger populations. In contrast, Creswell (2017) mentioned that qualitative research is non-numeric data (e.g., interviews, video, audio, photos) collected and analysed to gain insights into ideas, find the essence of a phenomenon, and find the perspectives or experiences of a particular issue.

The present study adopts a qualitative approach since the analysed data are selected extracts from Iraqi political discourse and require an in-depth analysis to understand the construction of rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse.

Krippendorff (2019) asserted that qualitative methods are used to understand how ideas get expressed and to uncover ideologies behind explicit claims.

3.2 Data Collection and Description

The data of this study consist of eight extracts from Iraqi political interviews produced between 2006 and 2025. The timeframe corresponds to the operation of the Muhasasa system after the 2005 constitution and allows the study to examine political discourse across different phases of the same institutional context. The year 2006 marks the first full-term government formed under the post-2005 power-sharing system, while 2025 represents its most recent phase. The timeframe was selected to maintain institutional consistency rather than historical coverage and allows the analysis to consider political discourse within a stable institutional framework rather than a single political moment.

These extracts are selected from interviews on official and recognised media outlets such as Reuters, Kurdistan TV, Rudaw and CNN. Such outlets are selected because they offer trusted transcripts and verifiable data of political discourse. As for the translation, most of the selected interviews are in Arabic, and official translations of the same are available on the same platforms. Two exceptions are noted: the interviews with Ayad Allawi and Jalal Talabani, who delivered their statements directly in English. The interview with Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani was conducted in Arabic on the APT YouTube channel. In all cases, the translated versions in this study are those officially available in the indicated sources, providing consistency and verifiability of the data set.

The data is composed of two political actors in each of the major political components: Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minorities. There are also representational considerations that motivate the selection of political figures within each community.

In the Shi'a component, Ayad Allawi is the transitional one after 2003 and was one of the earliest senior political figures who operated under the Muhasasa system, while Mohammed Shi'a Al-Sudani is the contemporary Prime Minister for the entire period of the Muhasasa system. Within the Sunni component, Saleh Al-Mutlaq and Salim Al-Jabouri are chosen because they both held senior state positions that had a direct impact on the national decision-making process, namely Deputy Prime Minister and Speaker of the Council of Representatives, while representing different institutional roles within the power-sharing system.

In the Kurdish component, Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani are chosen as the two top political positions at the federal and regional level. Talabani was the President of the Republic of Iraq at the federal level, while Barzani was President of the Kurdistan Region at the regional level, thereby capturing both federal and regional Kurdish political discourse. In the minority component, Vian Dakhil is chosen as one of the most prominent parliamentary representatives of the Yazidi community, while Yonadam Kanna is chosen as one of the most prominent representatives of the Christian community and as Secretary of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. Together, they represent two different minority communities within the Iraqi political system.

Two political figures are selected from each ethno-sectarian component because the present study adopts an in-depth qualitative analysis at rhetorical, ideological, and pragmatic levels. When only one figure is chosen from each component, the results are more representative of individual communicative patterns than of a broader discourse pattern. The opposite extreme would be to have a larger number of figures, but less depth of analysis per extract. Analytical saturation is achieved with two figures from each component. It is worth noting that the present

study does not seek to compare the use of rhetorical silence in the various political communities. Instead, figures from the various Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority factions is carefully selected for maximum variation to explore whether rhetorical silence is limited to the level of the individual politician or political community or is a reflection of structural constraints of the power-sharing system more broadly.

3.3 The Sources of the Data

The data of the study are gathered from official political interviews published by reliable online sources and news agencies. The selected extracts are of Iraqi political discourse across various political components. The political figures and their sources are listed in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1

The Sources of Data

No.	Figure	Party	Source (Arabic)	English Translation
1	Ayad Allawi	Shia (2007)	Originally delivered in English	https://transcripts.cnn.com/show/le/date/2007-08-26/segment/01
2	Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani	Shia (2025)	https://youtu.be/tA924NBn_cU?si=SKZeAu0rIa_e2XzL	https://www.reutersconnect.com/item/iraq-can-only-disarm-factions-once-us-withdraws-prime-minister-says/dGFnOnJldXRlcnMuY29tLDIwMjU6bmV3c21sX1ZBODk0MjAzMTEyMDI1UIAx
3	Saleh Al-Mutlaq	Sunni (2015)	https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/25/world/iraq-amanpour-	https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/25/world/iraq-amanpour-

			pleitgen-mutlaq	pleitgen-mutlaq
4	Salim Al-Jubouri	Sunni (2014)	https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/141120142	https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/141120142
5	Masoud Barzani	Kurdish (2017)	https://www.reuters.com/article/world/interview-iraqi-kurdish-leader-says-no-turning-back-on-independence-bidUSKBN19R1SK/	https://www.reuters.com/article/world/interview-iraqi-kurdish-leader-says-no-turning-back-on-independence-bidUSKBN19R1SK/
6	Jalal Talabani	Kurdish (2006)	Originally delivered in English	https://transcripts.cn.com/show/le/date/2006-09-24/segment/01
7	Vian Dakhil	Yazidi (2025)	https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/837700	https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/837700
8	Younadam Kanna	Christian (2024)	https://thenewregion.com/posts/996	https://thenewregion.com/posts/996

3.4 Criteria of Data Collection

The current study aims to investigate rhetorical silence as an indirect rhetorical practice employed by the chosen Iraqi politicians to control accountability, avoid direct attribution, and keep the balance of politics in the Iraqi political system. Accordingly, the study adopts a rhetorical and CPr framework. The rhetorical perspective explains the construction of silence, whereas CPr provides the broader interpretive framework through its critical and pragmatic dimensions. Together, they provide a comprehensive account of how rhetorical silence is both produced and understood. Crystal and Davy (1969) argued that political and institutional texts exhibit variation which reflects underlying ideological positions and constraints of

communication. Accordingly, the study relies on the discourse produced by more than one Iraqi politician and multiple political communities in order to represent the systematic nature of rhetorical silence in Iraqi political communication.

To ensure analytical saturation and enhance trustworthiness of the findings, the dataset is constructed to reflect the Iraqi power-sharing structure. In this regard, eight political figures are selected across four political communities: two Shia, two Sunni, two Kurdish, and two minority. The study is not comparative in the sense that it does not seek to make comparisons between the discourse of politicians or communities themselves. Rather, the choice of political actors from different ethno-sectarian communities enables the study to explore the possibility of rhetorical silence being a result of individual communicative choice or wider structural constraints of the Muhasasa system. Thus, it provides a systematic basis to identify recurrent strategies of rhetorical silence, while maintaining analytical depth without redundancy.

The political extracts included in the study are selected based on four criteria: (1) ethno-sectarian representativeness, ensuring coverage of the four major political communities constituting the Iraqi system, namely Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority representatives, with two political figures selected from each community; (2) institutional diversity, ensuring that the selected figures occupy different governmental and parliamentary positions within the post-2003 power-sharing system; (3) relevance to accountability-sensitive political issues; and (4) availability through publicly accessible and verifiable sources. By applying these criteria, the study provides a systematic basis for analysing how rhetorical silence is constructed and used as a meaningful communicative resource in the selected political extracts.

3.5 Procedures of Data Analysis

In order to put forward a systematic analysis, the researcher followed a set of steps for data analysis, which are summarised as follows:

1. Identifying the selected Iraqi political extracts and organising them in numbered extracts according to their institutional, political, and communicative contexts within the Iraqi power-sharing structure.
2. Analysing the selected extracts rhetorically based on Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity in terms of polysemy, interpretive communities, and communicative advantage.
3. Applying Mey's (2001) CPr by analysing the selected extracts at the CDA level through van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies.
4. Applying the same framework at the pragmatic level through Grice's (1975) CP to identify the flouted conversational maxims in the selected extracts.
5. Discussing the findings to formulate concluding insights.
6. Providing recommendations and suggestions for further studies related to the present study.

3.6 Theoretical Framework

An eclectic theoretical framework is adopted in the present study to examine the rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse. The framework is based on a complementary combination of rhetorical and CPr because they address complementary dimensions of rhetorical silence. While CPr explains how rhetorical silence operates ideologically and is pragmatically interpreted within broader social and political contexts, rhetoric explains how rhetorical silence is linguistically

constructed through strategic ambiguity. This dimension is addressed through rhetoric, which provides analytical tools to examine how politicians deliberately create ambiguity, manage meaning, and withhold attribution through strategic ambiguity.

The study is conducted within the rhetorical framework based on Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity, which defines ambiguity as a polysomic message that allows multiple interpretations, addresses multiple interpretive communities, and provides strategic benefits to the communicator. This model is chosen because it helps to explain the ambiguity of meanings that politicians deliberately leave inexplicit and unwritten, and the absence of definite commitments, which is the aim of the current study in analysing the rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse.

The main analytical approach of the present study is CPr because it places communicative acts in the context of wider structures of power and social constraint, making it particularly appropriate for the analysis of rhetorical silence as a socially and politically conditioned practice in the Iraqi Muhasasa system. In this approach, the study follows Mey's (2001) framework which consists of two complementary aspects: van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies at the CDA level and Grice's (1975) CP at the pragmatic level. This perspective enables the study to consider rhetorical silence as a communicative practice that is defined by its ideological and pragmatic functions in the institutional context.

The study adopts van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies at the CDA level of CPr. Van Dijk's framework is adopted because it identifies how rhetorical silence functions as a structured ideological practice that serves identifiable political interests, with a clear political agenda. It should be noted that the framework

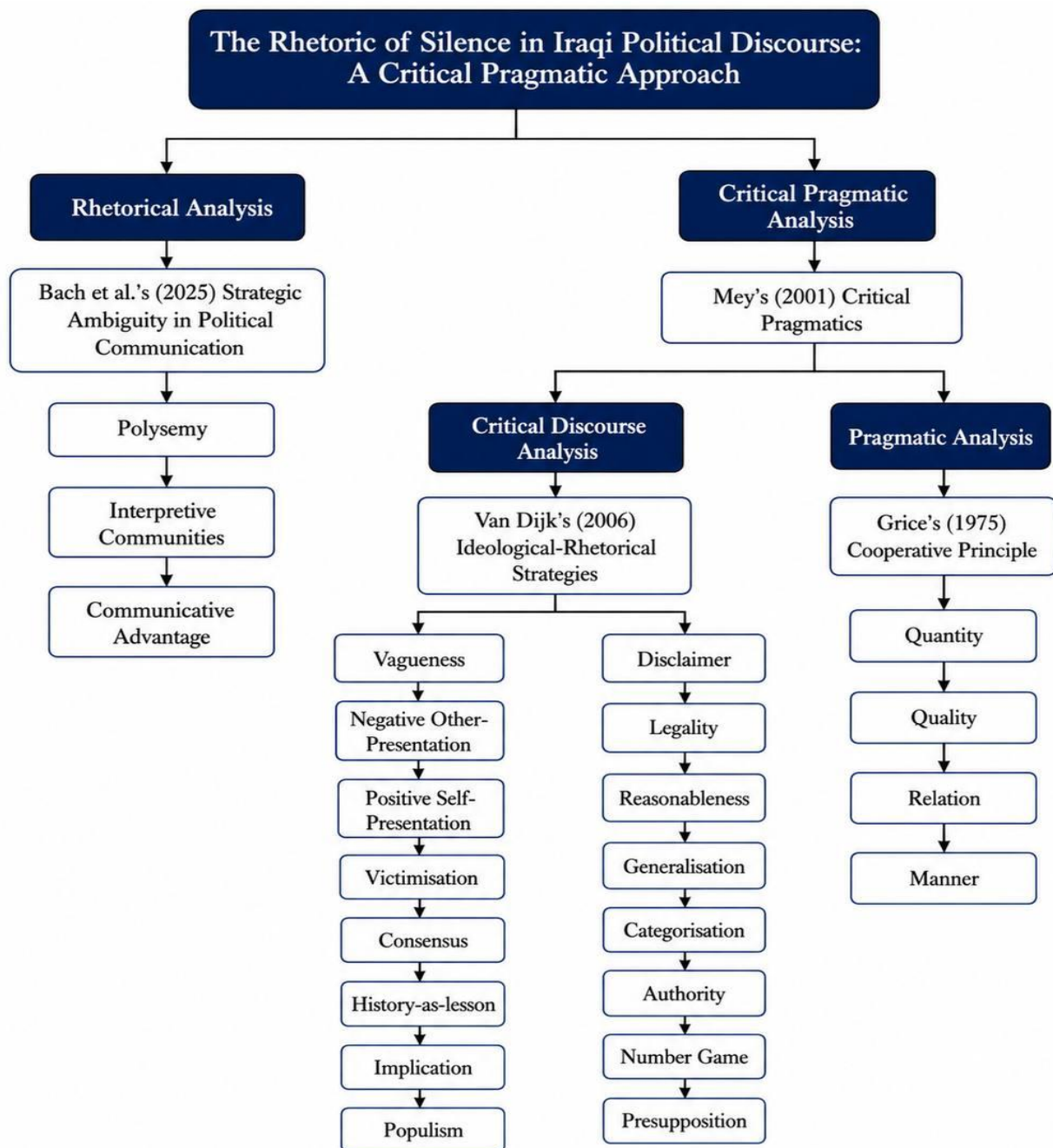
of van Dijk is used selectively in the current study, depending on the nature of the data itself determines which strategies of the model are analytically relevant.

In the pragmatic aspect of CP, the study follows Grice's (1975) CP, which is related to the flouting of conversational maxims. The framework offers a systematic way to the analysis of the intentional flouting of conversational maxims and enables the study to investigate how rhetorical silence is pragmatically interpreted through intentional omissions instead of explicit assertions. It is necessary to mention that Grice's model is also used selectively in the present study. Not every maxim has to be contradicted in every extract: only those maxims that are found in the data are analysed.

The three models are integrated because each one explains an analytical dimension which the others cannot. Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity model provides an explanation for how rhetorical silence is intentionally constructed. Van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies explain how it is maintained ideologically, thus shedding light on the power relations and the accountability management involved. Grice's (1975) model of CP helps to understand the creation of meaning through the intentional flouting of communicative norms and how the intended meaning is retrieved by the audience. None of the three alone can capture all three analytical dimensions, which is precisely why their integration is necessary. Finally, Figure 3.1 below gives the theoretical framework of data analysis which includes all the adopted theories to analyse the selected data.

Figure 3.1

Theoretical Framework of Data Analysis (Adopted From Bach et al.'s (2025) Strategic Ambiguity, Mey's (2001) Critical Pragmatics, van Dijk's (2006) Ideological-Rhetorical Strategies, and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle)



Note. Prepared by the researcher based on the framework of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of eight selected extracts of Iraqi political discourse. The data are organised into four sections according to political, sectarian, and ethnic affiliation, whereby two extracts are used to represent each group: Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority political discourse. The extracts are analysed based on a rhetorical and CPr framework. At the rhetorical level, Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity is adopted in the analysis. From a CPr perspective, the analysis is situated within Mey's (2001) CPr framework, which relates meaning-making to ideology and socio-political constraints. Within this framework, the analysis adopts van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies at the CDA level. It also adopts the model of Grice's (1975) CP at the pragmatic level. This analytical framework enables the study to reveal how selected Iraqi politicians construct rhetorical silence across different political periods and positions.

4.1 Analysis of Shi'a Political Discourse

This section analyses two extracts of Shi'a political discourse in the Iraqi power-sharing system. The first extract is taken from Ayad Allawi and represents the transitional phase that followed 2003, while the second is taken from Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, representing the contemporary phase of governance in Iraq.

4.1.1 Analysis of Extract (1): Ayad Allawi

This extract is drawn from an interview with former Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi on the CNN programme Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, published on 26 August 2007. Titled *"Interview With Ayad Allawi; Interview With*

Bill Richardson." During the interview, Blitzer asked Allawi: "Why have you lost all your confidence in the prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki?" (CNN, 2007, para. 1).

Allawi asserted:

I lost my confidence, Wolf, really, in the process which is ongoing in Iraq, which is based on sectarianism. It's based on supporting militias to take the rule of law in their hands, to get away from assertive regional politics. ... Unless the government decides to embark on a course of national unity or national reconciliation, on getting away from sectarianism, which is crushing the Iraqi people, it's very difficult to rejoin the government. ... It's not the person, Wolf, it's the system -- the system of running the government on sectarian basis, the system of running the government on non-reconciliation with the various groups in Iraq. ... I am not doubting whether he's a good guy or not a good guy. But I am doubting the system of militias, of sectarianism... I am not seeing that we are getting closer to having an assertive foreign policies, which would not allow Iran to intervene in Iraqi affairs. (CNN, 2007, paras. 1,3,5,8)

4.1.1.1 Rhetorical Analysis. According to Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity, the analysis proceeds through three dimensions: polysemy, interpretive communities, and communicative advantage. The interview began with the question of Wolf Blitzer: Why have you lost confidence in prime minister Nouri al-Maliki?. The question explicitly referred to the prime minister and requested a personalised response. The response of Allawi shifted out of this personal framing, providing the starting point for analysing the operation of rhetorical silence in the Iraqi political discourse.

The analysis starts with polysemy, where criticism is conveyed through linguistically elastic language which allows different interpretations. This ambiguity is illustrated by the statement "the process which is ongoing in Iraq." It may be a reference to the governing practices associated with the prime minister, as suggested

by the interviewer's question, or more generally to the post-2003 political system. Because neither interpretation is made explicit, the expression enables dissatisfaction to be communicated without directly identifying the political actor, thereby leaving responsibility implicit.

The same process occurs in the sentence "it's not the person, Wolf, it's the system," in which the discourse is explicit in shifting the criticism away from the individual level to an abstract structural level. The word "system" is polysemous, which may be alluding to the institutional structure of post-2003 power-sharing governance. Meanwhile, it allows the speaker to indirectly criticise the way the prime minister governed. This elastic expression enables discourse to hold back direct criticism without the loss of political criticism. Rather than presenting failure as the responsibility of a single political actor, the discourse depersonalises the crisis and reconstructs it as a systemic condition embedded within the governing structure itself. In this way, accountability is diffused over an abstract political order rather than attached to an identifiable individual.

The disclaimer "I am not doubting whether he's a good guy or not a good guy" offers another degree of ambiguity. As much as it seems to be an expression of fairness, it puts the speaker outside the circle of personal judgment but preserves the structural criticism. The discourse deliberately leaves the personal evaluation unresolved, allowing criticism to remain implicit without arriving at an explicit moral judgment. In the sentence "foreign policies which would not allow Iran to intervene," unlike the internal actors, which are kept in the abstract through terms such as "system" or "militias," Iran is explicitly mentioned. External responsibility is directly identified, while internal responsibility remains implicit.

The interpretive communities evoked by Allawi's language are not incidental but determined by an imbalance of political knowledge between his two audiences. For the international CNN audience, the terms "the system" and "sectarianism" serve as indicators of statesmanlike moderation: the speaker is not going to personalise a structural crisis, but instead place himself above the politics of faction. The identical expressions, however, are readable political code to domestic political actors. The terms "militias," and "non-reconciliation" are referentially accurate in the Iraqi power-sharing system that is not available to external audiences. Strategic ambiguity then takes advantage of this epistemic gap: the discourse is producing two coherent readings which are not mutually exclusive. What is perceived to be diplomatic ambiguity in the international arena is perceived to be stinging political criticism in the domestic arena. This dual legibility is not a rhetorical accident but a communicative design that depends on the unequal distribution of contextual knowledge across audiences. Rhetorical silence therefore functions not as communicative failure, but as audience-sensitive political calibration.

At the level of communicative advantage, the presentation of criticism in expressions like the "system" and "sectarianism" takes the debate off the issue of personal competition and focuses it on the larger governance issues. This rhetorical repositioning helps the speaker to be seen as principled and not factional. Therefore, the speaker gains discursive power by choosing not to name, but rather to restrain overt confrontation.

In addition, the sentence "unless the government decides... it's very difficult to rejoin" maintains the political manoeuvrability as it turns opposition into a bargaining point as opposed to a clean break. The criticism, therefore, serves the purpose of political pressure, whereby the possibility of future institutional adjustment

is open. Moreover, the repeated use of the address "Wolf," reinforces an image of restraint and civility in the interaction. This rhetorical structure in which the ambiguity is converted into a communicative asset, enables the speaker to maintain political flexibility while avoiding direct attribution. The speaker assigns fault while leaving responsibility unattributed. This allows him to be politically malleable in the Muhasasa system. Meanwhile, he upholds a statesmanlike image to the international community.

4.1.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. According to van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the extract begins with the reasonableness strategy in the sentence "I am not doubting whether he's a good guy or not a good guy" introduces the speaker as fair-minded, prior to any structural criticism, thereby avoiding the impression of a personal political attack. The disclaimer strategy is present in the statement "It's not the person, Wolf, it's the system," which explicitly removes any blame from the individual, and then transfers it to "the system of running the government on sectarian basis." The implication of naming a coalition partner would be factional, and therefore it would be better to use a more general term such as the system.

The vagueness strategy is embodied in the sentence "supporting militias to take the rule of law in their hands," in which the discourse foregrounds illegality, but at the same time, backgrounds agency. The statement creates a regulated form of charge whereby the presence of political malpractice is brought into view without being linked to specific individuals. Notably, the silence here is rhetorically powerful, because it is grammatically invisible: the sentence is still syntactically complete even though there is no explicit agent. Instead of abolishing responsibility, overall, the

discourse diffuses responsibility in an anonymous political space, thereby evading the partisan implications of overt accusation in the feeble Iraqi system.

The implication strategy permits saying what cannot be said directly, whereby the reference to foreign policies which should "not allow Iran to intervene in Iraqi affairs" presupposes that this interference has already occurred and indicates a failure to avert it at the moment. Iran is specifically mentioned, yet the domestic actors who facilitate such influence remain implicit, creating a discriminatory asymmetry which externalises responsibility and internal silence. The presupposition strategy embedded in "would not allow" is particularly telling by framing the policy in the conditional, the speaker does not state that there is a failure but creates an implication which has political force but is not bound by a direct assertion.

The consensus strategy is manifested through references to "national unity" and "national reconciliation" which can hardly be publicly challenged by political actors, giving the impression that the stance of the speaker is of national interest. The discourse constructs a political agenda where failure by the government is framed as self-evident, the participation under the existing conditions as unsustainable, and the speaker as a reform-minded statesman instead of a sectarian player, none of which mention a single person in charge of the crisis. The rhetorical strength of these strategies is that when they are put forward as national interest, any disagreement with the position of the speaker is re-packaged as dissent to reconciliation itself to silence any possible counter-argument in it spoken.

4.1.1.3 Pragmatic Analysis. According to Grice's (1975) CP, this extract primarily flouts the maxim of relation. Although Blitzer's question explicitly asks why Allawi lost confidence in Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Allawi avoided

engaging with this personal framing altogether. Instead, he redirected the discourse to "the process," "the system," and "sectarianism." The answer is responsive enough to maintain the dialogue, but is deflected enough to avoid a direct answer, producing rhetorical silence where the referent named in the question does not appear in the answer at all.

The maxim of manner is flouted by the intentional use of elastic terms "the system," "the process," "non-reconciliation" with the various groups in Iraq that are neither too specific to carry evaluative meaning nor too vague to be directly attributed. It is interesting to note that, saying "I am not seeing that we are getting closer" converts a political judgment into a subjective impression, stripping it of assertor force. The flouting here is not an accidental obscurity, but a communicative act, which generates rhetorical silence, in the sense that it allows evaluation without engaging to any definite attribution of responsibility.

The maxim of quantity is flouted in such utterances "supporting militias to take the rule of law in their hands" and "crushing the Iraqi people," where the evaluative content is high, and the agents are not mentioned. The information provided is less than the communicative situation requires, this transfers the burden of inference to the hearer, who has to rely on prior knowledge of politics to attribute responsibility, which allows implicit blame to be placed without direct responsibility.

The maxim of quality is flouted in the unsolicited disclaimer "I am not doubting whether he's a good guy or not a good guy." By preempting what is not being asserted, the utterance ironically attracts the focus to the subjective judgment that it claims to put on hold. The denial itself implies the suppressed evaluation. The disclaimer transforms evaluation into an interpretive possibility recoverable by the

audience without being textually asserted. No personal judgment is made, but criticism is implied.

4.1.2 Analysis of Extract (2): Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani

This extract is drawn from an interview published by Reuters, an international news agency with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani. The interview was conducted in Baghdad and published on 3 November 2025. Titled "*Iraq can only disarm factions once U.S. withdraws, prime minister says.*" Al-Sudani asserted:

سوف يكون هناك برنامج واضح لإنهاء أي مظاهر للسلاح خارج مؤسسات الدولة، وهذا هو مطلب الجميع. كل القوى السياسية تتحدث به، ليس فقط البعض. هذا اتفاق سياسي انه ننهي أي مظاهر وجود قد تعطي انطباع ان هناك نوع من الاحتلال نوع من التواجد غير الشرعي. حتى ينتهي مبرر انه انت تملك سلاح خارج مؤسسات الدولة. امامك مؤسسات امنية اما تدخل لهذه المؤسسات الامنية وتتخبط فيها او تذهب للعمل السياسي. لن نسمح لأي طرف بزع العراق في اتون الصراعات والحروب.

(APT-NEWS, 2025, 1:22–2:13)

There will definitely be a clear programme to eliminate all forms of weaponry outside the state institutions, this is everyone's demand. All political forces are discussing this, not just some. This is a political agreement, to end any manifestations of presence that could give the impression of occupation or illegal existence. Once that justification ends, there will no longer be any reason for anyone to hold weapons outside the framework of the state. There are official security institutions, either you join them or you pursue political work. ... We will not allow any party to drag Iraq into the furnace of conflicts and wars. (Reuters, 2025, paras. 1-4)

4.1.2.1 Rhetorical Analysis. According to Bach et al.'s (2025) conceptualisation of strategic ambiguity, the analysis begins by examining polysemy, since the discourse promises the elimination of non-state weapons while remaining open to multiple interpretations. The statement "weaponry outside the state institutions" ("السلاح خارج مؤسسات الدولة") can be understood as referring to technical security policies or to a coded reference to some armed actors. This polysemy is

reinforced by "this is everyone's demand" ("هذا مطلب الجميع") which may be interpreted as signalling genuine national consensus. At the same time, it produces rhetorical silence by making the demand seem to be distributed among people and not the responsibility of any one particular person.

Similarly, "all political forces are discussing this, not just some" ("كل القوى السياسية تناقش هذا، وليس بعضاً منها") may be read as broad agreement, and it presupposes an unnamed "some" ("البعض"), thereby concealing the identity of the excluded actors. Ambiguity extends to "any manifestations of presence that could give the impression of occupation or illegal existence" ("أي مظاهر وجود قد تعطي انطباع أن هناك نوعاً من الاحتلال أو"), where silence is sustained by leaving the goal of the statement intentionally unresolved, making it unclear whether the aim is material disarmament or merely the removal of visible markers.

The ambiguity peaks in the statement "once that justification ends" ("حتى ينتهي مبرر"), it can be read as the end of an external security rationale, or as a political justification whose end is undefined. The sentence "there will no longer be any reason for anyone to hold weapons" ("حتى ينتهي مبرر أنه أنت تملك سلاح") may represent legal containment, but it also reframes the problem in terms of debatable "reasons," rather than legality. Even "either you join them or you pursue political work" ("أما تدخل لهذه") sustains an either/or duality. This duality may be interpreted as institutional integration but also as a message directed to the armed factions, without specifying enforcement mechanisms. Finally, the sentence "we will not allow any party" ("لن نسمح لأي طرف") relies on non-naming silence, making a warning without identifying any particular party.

At the level of interpretive communities, when the speaker evokes "a clear programme to eliminate all forms of weaponry outside the state institutions" (" سوف يكون هناك برنامج واضح لإنهاء اي مظاهر للسلاح خارج مؤسسات الدولة"), it projects an institutional, rule-of-law discourse for the general audience, and procedural silence remains in operation. For the intended political actors, it may be understood as a coded reference to factional weaponry rather than a neutral administrative measure. Similarly, "this is everyone's demand" is framed it as a collective demand rather than the position of a specific political actor, thereby reducing the risk of direct political confrontation. For the intended political actors, it precludes the possibility of disagreement by making dissent fall outside the collective will. In "all political forces are discussing this, not just some", the general audience may read comprehensive agreement. For the intended political actors, the silenced "some" facilitates non-naming silence that avoids confrontation.

The reference to "the impression of occupation or illegal existence" may be interpreted by the general audience as image-management and diplomatic language. For the intended political actors, it serves as a coded warning to render practices that may be seen as occupation or illegality, non-named and silent. Likewise, "once that justification ends" assumes that there is shared knowledge between the intended political actors, while remaining opaque for the general audience.

On the communicative advantage level, the sentence "there will definitely be a clear programme" indicates commitment, but it does not specify how, when and where the programme will be implemented, enforced and realised. This ambiguity is reinforced by the statement "this is everyone's demand," which shifts responsibility from the speaker to a broader collective, thereby reducing individual political accountability. This shift enables the speaker to avoid direct blame and political

accountability. The statement "once that justification ends," does not define what is meant by "justification," nor provide any definition of when it will end or who will be responsible for ending it, which allows the speaker to remain politically flexible and delay commitment.

The use of the modal in the statement "could give the impression" ("قد تعطي") constitutes textual evidence of semantic mitigation, through which responsibility is displaced from the actor to perception and renders blame indirect. "We will not allow any party" ("لن نسمح لأي طرف") performs a deterrent speech act while sustaining silence by leaving the referent of the pronoun "we" unspecified, whether it refers to the government, coalition, or faction, so that the threat can be executed rhetorically without any institutionally specific anchoring.

4.1.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. Based on van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical-strategies, the extract opens with the vagueness strategy in "a clear programme" and "all forms of weaponry" ("أي مظاهر للسلاح") are not defined, so neither the programme nor the actors are specified. This vagueness allows the speaker to invoke a broad commitment and avoid the explicit attribution of responsibility, producing silence by keeping agency indeterminate in a system where naming certain actors would disrupt the relations of the coalitions. The consensus strategy operates in the sentence "this is everyone's demand," where generalisation overrides ideological differences and offers the stance as a common one. Further, it transfers responsibility of the speaker to general group and does not involve individual responsibility.

A similar pattern appears in the sentence "all political forces are discussing this, not just some." The main strategy in this case is the consensus strategy that presents the problem as something that is common to all and not a point of contention.

This strategy is reinforced by the generalisation strategy "all" and the vagueness strategy "political forces." The phrase "not just some" operates through the implication strategy, presupposing unnamed actors. Ideologically, this disperses agency and shields the speaker from direct attribution of blame. The discourse appeals to legality by saying that "this is a political agreement" ("هذا اتفاق سياسي"), making the action a shared decision, not an individual one.

The vagueness strategy is re-used with expressions such as "manifestations of presence," "the impression of occupation or illegal existence," and "once that justification ends," which are intentionally vague. This vagueness enforces rhetorical silence as regards agency and enforcement, which enables the speaker to manage responsibility without incurring a definite attribution or action. In discourse "there are official security institutions, either you join them or you pursue political work," the categorisation strategy forms a legitimate in-group in accordance with the state and an implicitly illegitimate out-group that is outside the state. At the same time, the statement leaves the enforcement mechanisms unspecified. This allows the speaker to suggest incorporation into state institutions as the only legitimate way, without engaging in a head-on conflict with the actors concerned.

Finally, "we will not allow any party to drag Iraq into the furnace of conflicts and wars" is an example of the authority strategy, which positions the speaker as an authoritative protector of national stability. This authority strategy is supported by the positive self-presentation strategy, as the pronoun "we" constructs the speaker as part of a legitimate governing in-group and naturalises authority as a collective function. At the same time, the expression "any party" generalises the blame while deliberately avoiding the explicit identification of the actors concerned. This serves the speaker's

political agenda by allowing deterrence and control, without directly attributing responsibility to them.

4.1.2.3 Pragmatic Analysis. Drawing on Grice's (1975) CP, the maxim of quantity is flouted throughout the utterance "weaponry outside the state institutions" and "all political forces," which withhold the identity of the actors involved, which provides less information than the communicative situation requires. This leads the target audience to infer the identity of the actors without their being explicitly named, allowing the speaker to avoid direct attribution while relying on the audience's contextual knowledge. The audience is therefore encouraged to fill in the missing information while the speaker remains deniable. This is the only practical arrangement that enables a prime minister to address armed groups without explicitly acknowledging their existence as political opponents. Meaning is therefore constructed through audience inference rather than explicit declaration.

The maxim of manner is flouted through intentional abstraction, where expressions such as "manifestations of presence" and "the impression of occupation" use abstract institutional and perceptual terminology instead of direct description. This obscurity produces procedural silence whereby the speaker discusses a political problem like "manifestations of presence" and "the impression of occupation," by characterising it as an image-management problem. Therefore, it avoids direct material accountability. This abstraction is important in the Iraqi power-sharing system, where clarity would entail picking sides in the Shi'a bloc.

The maxim of quality is flouted in the utterance "this is everyone's demand," which is unverifiable, and whose very unverifiability becomes rhetorically productive. This formulation shifts the responsibility from the speaker to an abstract collective.

By framing the claim as one shared by everyone rather than by political figures, it reduces the possibility of disagreement and diffuses individual accountability. This preference for claims about universal agreement is typical in systems of power-sharing in which reference to consensus is useful in sustaining coalition politics and as a way of limiting open disagreement.

4.2 Analysis of Sunni Political Discourse

This section analyses Sunni political discourse within the Iraqi power-sharing system through two extracts representing different institutional positions. The first is Saleh Al-Mutlaq, former Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, and the second is Salim Al-Jabouri, who served as Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives. Both are two of the most prominent Sunni politicians to have served in various institutional positions in the Iraqi system.

4.2.1 Analysis of Extract (3): Saleh Al-Mutlaq

This extract is drawn from a transcript of an interview with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Saleh Al-Mutlaq on CNN and published on 26 May 2015 which is entitled "*Iraqi army conduct in Ramadi surprised all of us.*" Al-Mutlaq stated:

أولاً، لا ينبغي حل الجيش العراقي، وقد قام الأمريكيون بحل الجيش العراقي. ثم قلنا بما أنكم قد قررتم بالفعل حل الجيش العراقي، فعليكم الآن بناء جيش وطني، ليس طائفيًا، بل جيش محترف. لكن لسوء الحظ، تم بناء الجيش بطريقة أدخلت فيها الميليشيات، كما أنه لم يتم بناؤه على أساس وطني، بل على أساس طائفي. للأسف، لم يكن الانسحاب مسؤولاً. لذا كان الاحتلال خاطئاً، وكان الانسحاب خاطئاً أيضاً. كلاهما خطوتان خاطئتان، أدت إلى ما نحن عليه الآن. علينا الآن أن نتحرك فوراً.

First, you should not dissolve the Iraqi army, and the Americans did dissolve the Iraqi army. And then, we said since you have already decided to dissolve the Iraqi army, now you have to build a national army, which is not sectarian, which is a professional army. But unfortunately, the army was built in a way that the militias were entered in it, and also it was not built on a national basis,

but on a sectarian one. Unfortunately, the withdrawal was not in a responsible way. So the occupation was wrong, and the withdrawal was wrong also. Both of them are wrong steps, which led to what we are now. Now we have to act immediately. (CNN, 2015, paras. 1-5)

4.2.1.1 Rhetorical Analysis. Based on Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity, the opening sentence "the Americans did dissolve the Iraqi army" ("وقد قام "الأمريكيون بحل الجيش العراقي") can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, assignment of blame on an external agent. On the other hand, it can be a rhetorical redirection that shifts the focus to the domestic actors. By referring to the external decision, the speaker does not have to refer to the actors who subsequently influenced the institution. This ambiguity makes it possible to criticise the dissolution of the army but not mention Iraqi political actors that took part in the further reorganisation of the army.

The sentence "we said since you have already decided to dissolve the Iraqi army, now you have to build a national army, which is not sectarian, which is a professional army" ("ثم قلنا بما أنكم قد قررتم بالفعل حل الجيش العراقي، فعليكم الآن بناء جيش وطني") works with the pronoun "we," whose reference is not clear. It may refer to the political bloc of the speaker, the broader Iraqi political group or political actors in general. This ambiguity generates silence, since the actors who are advising are not named, thus spreading the responsibility of the claim. The evaluative terms like "not sectarian" and "professional" sustain rhetorical silence by implying the opposite of the existing army without asserting it directly, allowing criticism to register without the speaker assuming accountability for the charge.

The statement "the army was built in a way that the militias were entered in it, and also it was not built on a national basis, but on a sectarian one" ("تم بناء الجيش بطريقة")

(*"أدخلت فيها الميليشيات، كما أنه لم يتم بناؤه على أساس وطني، بل على أساس طائفي"*) depends on passive constructions such as "was built" and "were entered." These structures eliminate the actor who took the action and the institutional change is explained without mentioning the person who facilitated it. Therefore, the procedure is recognised, but the actors are not named. This formulation enables the speaker to condemn the sectarian reorganisation of the army without mentioning the political figures in the integration of militias into the security institutions.

The sentence "the occupation was wrong, and the withdrawal was wrong also. Both of them are wrong steps, which led to what we are now" (*"كان الاحتلال خاطئاً، وكان ..."*) puts failure in broad and general terms rather than in specific decision-makers. The statement "what we are now" is polysemous, in that it may refer to security collapse, political fragmentation, or institutional weakness without reference to any one of them, producing rhetorical silence by recognising the crisis while keeping its internal agents and causes unnamed, since attributing responsibility to particular actors would implicate coalition partners whose cooperation remains politically necessary.

On the level of interpretive communities, the analysis shows that the explicit reference to American decisions in "the Americans did dissolve the Iraqi army" and the claim that "the occupation was wrong, and the withdrawal was wrong also" can be interpreted by foreign readers as a direct critique of the U.S. policy, and the speaker appears as an uninhibited foreign critic. Simultaneously, to the domestic Iraqi audiences, the same formulation can shift the focus to the internal repercussions of these decisions without necessarily mentioning the perpetrators. Similarly, the appeal to construct "a national army, which is not sectarian, which is a professional army" may appear to international listeners as a normative institutional vision, and to Iraqi

political listeners as an implicit indication of the sectarianisation of the security sector that is well known.

On the communicative advantage level, the analysis indicates that this discourse operates through explicit attribution in "the Americans did dissolve the Iraqi army", making the speaker appear as an explicit critic and shifting the blame outward. Moreover, the passive constructions in "the army was built" and "the militias were entered in it" allow the speaker to describe institutional failure without specifying those actors who made it work to create silence by making domestic agency invisible in a system in which it would be directly confrontational to name internal actors. The statement "Now we have to act immediately" ("علينا الآن أن نتحرك فوراً") conveys a feeling of urgency and political will and maintains rhetorical silence by not stating what will be done. This silence keeps the commitment open, and it gives an impression of decisiveness.

4.2.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. According to van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the extract opens with the negative other-presentation strategy, which is evident most clearly in the statement "the Americans did dissolve the Iraqi army." This explicitness organises the narrative in a way that foregrounds the external cause while neglecting subsequent internal control of the institution by avoiding reference to domestic developments, thereby leaving the domestic actors responsible for subsequent developments unidentified.

This move is reinforced through the history-as-lesson strategy. The dissolution of the army is given as the first mistake from which subsequent failures emerge, especially in the statement that the army "was not built on a national basis, but on a sectarian one." The narrative constructs a causal trajectory that starts with the external

decision and arrives at the present condition of the institution, while avoiding the explicit identification of the actors responsible for these subsequent developments.

The positive self-presentation strategy appears in the statement "we said... you have to build a national army, which is not sectarian, which is a professional army" ("ثم قلنا ... فعليكم الآن ببناء جيش وطني، ليس طائفيًا، بل جيش محترف"). Here the speaker places himself within a group that recognises the right institutional path. The formulation establishes a contrast between those associated with the idea of a "national" and "professional" army and those whose actions ultimately resulted in the creation of a sectarian structure. However, the pronoun "we" is not defined. Its referent may refer to a political bloc, a broader Iraqi political class, or political actors in general. This vagueness allows the speaker to assert correctness and legitimacy without defining the delimitations of the group that claims it, thereby establishing a rhetorical silence that spreads the responsibility among actors.

The vagueness strategy operates in the sentences "the army was built in a way that the militias were entered in it" and "it was not built on a national basis, but on a sectarian one." The institutional restructuring processes are described, and the agents of these are syntactically missing. The discourse thereby offers a tangible definition of a sectarian army which was shaped by militias though not the political actors that facilitated this change, which makes it an apparent exemplification of silence. The discourse serves a two-fold political agenda, in which it externalises the responsibility to foreign actors, and strategically deploys domestic agency. This helps the speaker appear to be critical without blaming internal actors, thus maintaining political prudence within the Iraqi system.

The negative other-presentation of American policy does not merely blame without, but it fulfills a secondary role of protecting ideologically unnamed domestic actors. By positioning the Americans as the source of the problem, the history-as-lesson strategy forms a cause-and-effect relationship where later decisions by the Iraqi government seem to be reactions to an external error, instead of being political choices themselves. The agents who constructed the sectarian army, and combined the militias, and controlled the institutional reorganisation are not ideologically visible, not because they are unknown, but because the discourse has already determined that the tale started elsewhere. This is an advanced use of vagueness not as the lack of detail, but as the strategic placement of detail in a certain place to take attention away from the other.

4.2.1.3 Pragmatic Analysis. Drawing on Grice's (1975) CP, the extract starts with the flouting of the maxim of quantity. Regarding external actors, information is displayed with apparent specificity in the utterance "the Americans did dissolve the Iraqi army," which provides a direct and recognisable attribution. When the discourse turns to internal developments, however, the same maxim is flouted in utterance "the army was built in a way that the militias were entered in it." In this case, the process is described, but the actors responsible for constructing the army in this way are not specified.

The maxim of relation is flouted in that the discourse of the crisis is turned back to the past historical decision, especially the dissolution of the army. The discourse foregrounds the earlier decision of external actors rather than addressing the current institutional situation. This shift does not completely break the relevance but reframes the explanation of the crisis as a matter of historical causation, as opposed to contemporary decision-making. In this context, the responsibility for subsequent

institutional developments is linguistically backgrounded, producing rhetorical silence regarding the internal determinations that shaped the security apparatus.

The maxim of manner is flouted by the regular alternation of active and passive forms. Active voice is used in connection with external agency, as in "the Americans did dissolve," the discourse turns to internal processes, the utterance turns to passive forms "the army was built" and "militias were entered." Such grammatical asymmetry creates an effect of clarity regarding external actors and ambiguity regarding internal actors. The pragmatic effect is achieved syntactically through sentence structure rather than lexical omission. The rhetorical silence, therefore, is embedded not only in what is said, but in how grammatical structure organises visibility and concealment.

4.2.2 Analysis of Extract (4): Salim Al-Jabouri

This extract is drawn from an interview with Salim Al-Jabouri, Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, published by Rudaw on 14 November 2014. Titled *"Iraq's parliament speaker: US military response too 'slow'."* Al-Jabouri maintained:

في الماضي، جاءت القوات الأمريكية إلى هنا بناء على طلب بعض الشخصيات السياسية أو الاجتماعية الرائدة وليس بناء على طلب الشعب. الآن، تدعو القبائل المحلية التي عارضت التدخل الأمريكي المجتمع الدولي إلى دعمها ضد داعش. ... هؤلاء الناس رهائن على يد داعش. أولئك الذين لديهم الوسائل الاقتصادية غادروا مناطق داعش. ولكن هناك العديد من الأشخاص الذين ظلوا رهائن لداعش ولا يمكنهم المغادرة. وقال إنهم يتعرضون للإرهاب باستمرار ولهذا السبب لم يتمكنوا من المغادرة. ... الحكومة العراقية هي الهيئة الوحيدة التي يمكنها القيام بذلك وحتى الآن لم نر الكثير منها. لا نريد أن نرى الميليشيات تسيطر على المناطق. ... بشكل عام، فإن الشخصيات السياسية الموجودة حالياً في أربيل مؤثرة جداً في العراق. إنهم يتمتعون بعلاقات جيدة مع قبائل مختلفة ويمكن أن يكونوا فعالين في مواجهة إرهاب الدولة الإسلامية.

In the past, US forces came here at the request of some leading political or social figures and not at the request of the people. Now, the local tribes that opposed US intervention call on the international community to support them

against ISIS. ... These people are hostages at the hands of ISIS. Those who have had the economic means have left the ISIS areas. But there are many people who have remained as hostages of ISIS and cannot leave. They are being terrorized constantly and this is why they haven't been able to leave. ... The Iraqi government is the only body that can do this and so far we have not seen much of it. We don't want to see militias taking over the areas. ... Generally, the political personalities that are currently in Erbil are very much influential in Iraq. They enjoy good relations with different tribes and can be effective in confronting the Islamic State's terror. (Rudaw, 2014, paras. 1–7)

4.2.2.1 Rhetorical Analysis. According to Bach et al.'s (2025) model of strategic ambiguity, the analysis opens with polysemy. In the statement "in the past, US forces came here at the request of some leading political or social figures and not at the request of the people" ("في الماضي، جاءت القوات الأمريكية إلى هنا بناء على طلب بعض"), the use of the quantifier "some" and the statement "leading political or social figures" allow multiple interpretations that the charge is specific enough to strike a chord with domestic readers who can recognise the connoted referents, but general enough to be denied to foreign readers. This produces rhetorical silence by keeping the accused actors unnamed, since a Sunni speaker naming specific Shi'a or Kurdish figures who invited US forces would directly destabilise the cross-communal coalition on which his own political position depends.

The expression "Local tribes" ("القبائل المحلية") is a consciously broad collective that assigns popular agency without identifying institutional identity, and "the international community" ("المجتمع الدولي") is also open, the appeal is spread across potential audiences without committing to a specific alignment. Through this device, the speaker compares nameless representatives of the past with those of the present, constructing a story of democratic redemption without mentioning either of the two

groups. The audience is left to fill in the implied meaning that political legitimacy has changed.

The victimisation statement "these people are hostages at the hands of ISIS. Those who have had the economic means have left the ISIS areas. But there are many people who have remained as hostages of ISIS and cannot leave. They are being terrorized constantly" ("هؤلاء الناس رهائن على يد داعش. أولئك الذين لديهم الوسائل الاقتصادية غادروا") introduces a shift from political argument to a humanitarian narrative. This shift is rhetorically intentional and is rendered immediate and emotionally powerful and the political choices that led to the situation are not discussed. The asymmetry is not accidental - the victims are referred to as a group; the agents of institutional failure are not. This generates silence where the how and why of the crisis are withheld and the human consequences of the crisis are foregrounded.

The reversion to political critique in "the Iraqi government is the only body that can do this and so far we have not seen much of it" ("الحكومة العراقية هي الهيئة الوحيدة") then translates this humanitarian framing directly into institutional responsibility. The blame is put on the government as a whole without indicating which actors within the government have failed, thereby producing institutional silence that is politically necessary in a coalition where it would be necessary to name particular partners to identify particular failures. The behaviour is recognised since it does not cost anything to recognise it, the actors responsible for this behaviour are not identified since it would cost everything to identify them. The final warning "we don't want to see militias taking over the areas" ("لا نريد أن نرى الميليشيات تسيطر على المناطق"), the threat is directed at actors who can be recognised by domestic audiences but not by international ones.

Within the interpretive communities level, for international audiences, the discourse generates a sovereignty-conscious statesman who foregrounds civilian suffering and speaks in the language of popular legitimacy. For domestic audiences, "some leading political or social figures," "militias taking over," and "political personalities in Erbil" have a certain resonance that needs no explanation, the places mentioned and unnamed actors are readable in the collective political knowledge of the Iraqi context. This two-fold calibration is not a stylistic device but a structural requirement of the Muhasasa system, where the same utterance must address many audiences without making a commitment to any one of them.

At the communicative advantage level, the speaker states the criticism of some of the internal actors, without naming them, thereby allowing for deniability and ensuring the message is delivered to the intended audience. The humanitarian language is used to recode and reanalyse criticism of institutions in a moral register that is hard for any critic to criticise without sounding like a proponent of harming civilians. Lastly, the implicit approval of certain actors by the positive mention of unnamed political actors in Erbil is a continuation of the implicit approval without explicit designation, which is precisely the reason why it is so politically flexible.

4.2.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. Based on van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the negative other-presentation strategy is obvious in the statement "in the past, US forces came here at the request of some leading political or social figures and not at the request of the people," which creates an implicitly delegitimised ground while keeping their identity concealed. The nameless individuals are positioned as the opposite of "the people," but their identity is not revealed, producing rhetorical silence that allows the accusation to circulate without triggering an immediate factional reaction. Since naming them would convert a

broadly shared political critique into a direct sectarian confrontation with identifiable coalition partners.

The populism strategy appears in the reference to "the local tribes" and implicitly to "the people" aligning them with the speaker's position, constructing a legitimate popular will against which the unnamed "leading figures" of the past are measured. This move elevates the speaker's position from factional to national, he speaks for the people, while unnamed others acted against them. The victimisation strategy operates in the statements "these people are hostages at the hands of ISIS," "they are being terrorized constantly," and "there are many people who have remained as hostages of ISIS and cannot leave," which construct collective suffering with emotional immediacy. While the political and institutional failures that produced the situation remain ideologically invisible, victims are foregrounded, structural accountability is not. It maximises humanitarian appeal while protecting the discourse from the political risks of institutional attribution.

The disclaimer strategy comes up in "the Iraqi government is the only body that can do this and so far we have not seen much of it." The institutional responsibility is acknowledged in advance of the critique, as a rhetorical pre-emption that lessens the force of the criticism, but does not eliminate it. The institutional failure is named because it costs nothing to name it, but it is difficult to name those responsible, because naming them would have serious consequences. This is not a concession, rather, it is a strategic move to make the speaker seem reasonable before bringing up the accusation.

The vagueness strategy is used to control the closing warning "we don't want to see militias taking over the areas." This is a political threat, it does not name the

referent, but it is a message that is known to the targeted actors. The behaviour is defined as "militia" takeover, but the actors who might be involved in the behaviour are not identified. The rhetorical silence functions ideologically as a sort of pressure mechanism, and is known through its absence, rather than being provided with a public forum to contest the charge.

The extract ends with a positive self-presentation strategy. The statement that "political personalities that are currently in Erbil are very much influential in Iraq. They enjoy good relations with different tribes and can be effective in confronting the Islamic State's terror" (الشخصيات السياسية الموجودة حاليا في أربيل مؤثرة جدا في العراق. إنهم "يتمتعون بعلاقات جيدة مع قبائل مختلفة ويمكن أن يكونوا فعالين في مواجهة إرهاب الدولة الإسلامية"). These actors are commended according to their place and role, not their political affiliation. This way endorsement can be given without having to be explicit, but the speaker can claim to be aware of a political reality without identifying its actors. The speaker's agenda is to draw attention to a failure of institutions and to alert the audience that there is another political resource. All in a discourse that places him in the role of a national statesman and not a factional one, and does not specify any particular person.

4.2.2.3 Pragmatic Analysis. Based on Grice's (1975) CP, the maxim of quantity is flouted in the utterance "Some leading political or social figures" (بعض "الشخصيات السياسية أو الاجتماعية الرائدة"), which names a category without identifying its members. Information given is enough to imply an accusation, but not prove it. Similarly, the statement "the Iraqi government is the only body that can do this and so far we have not seen much of it" holds an Iraqi government as responsible but does not explain which Iraqi actors have fallen short. In both cases, the implied meaning encourages the audience to add the missing referents from shared political knowledge, thereby shifting the burden of inference to the listener and giving the speaker

deniability. This represents a pragmatic configuration through which a Sunni speaker can criticise unnamed coalition partners without formally breaking with them.

The maxim of relation is flouted, rather than continuing the debate over who invited US troops and what the consequences were, the extract focuses on the suffering of civilians under ISIS "these people are hostages... they are being terrorized constantly." This redirection is not evasion, but a reframing, the connection between past political choices and current civilian suffering is left to the viewer to make, and the speaker is on the humanitarian ground. The return to institutional critique in "the Iraqi government is the only body that can do this" then implies humanitarian concern in relation to political accountability, resulting rhetorical silence in which the relationship between suffering and responsibility is not stated but suggested.

4.3 Analysis of Kurdish Political Discourse

This section examines Kurdish political discourse within the Muhasasa system. These two extracts reflect different political positions, as Jalal Talabani served as President of the Republic of Iraq at the federal level, whereas Masoud Barzani served as President of the Kurdistan Region at the regional level.

4.3.1 Analysis of Extract (5): Jalal Talabani

This extract is drawn from an interview with Jalal Talabani, President of Iraq, broadcast on CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, published on 24 September 2006. Talabani asserted:

In the times of Saddam Hussein, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi innocent people were buried in mass graves which we've discovered... . Now we have in Iraq only one problem, which is the problem of security. But if you look to other side of Iraqi people's life, you'll see much progress and development. ...

But it's not worse than the past. Months ago, you had daily in Baghdad about between 10 to 15 car bombs. Now you have two to three to four. Still, though, there are assassinations still continuing. But less than it was months ago. ... As Sunni and Shias, now we are going to see that the national reconciliation is going forward. Yes, there are Sunnis and Shias which argument about forming a committee to amend mandate of constitution... and national unity government headed by Nouri al-Maliki is going well, which is representing all Iraqi people. (CNN, 2006, paras. 63-71)

4.3.1.1 Rhetorical Analysis. Based on Bach et al.'s (2025) model of strategic ambiguity, the polysemy in this extract operates differently from that observed in previous data. Talabani's discourse does not spread out the ambiguity on unnamed actors or unspecified processes, but rather focuses the ambiguity within the evaluative framework itself. The statement "hundreds of thousands of Iraqi innocent people were buried in mass graves" is not linguistically vague, it is historically accurate. Its polysemy lies not in what it says, but in what it establishes: a comparative baseline so extreme that it silences independent evaluation of the present. When mass graves have become the standard, the quantifier "only one problem" and the statistical downgrade of "10 to 15 car bombs" to "two to three to four" is no longer a failure confession, but implicit assertions of improvement. The ambiguity is not based on words, but the criterion.

The quantifier "only one" in the statement "now we have in Iraq only one problem, which is the problem of security" is reductionist. The speaker fails to address the structural factors that enabled and perpetuated this crisis, and made a multi-faceted political, economic and sectarian crisis a one-dimensional security issue. The following statement "if you look to other side of Iraqi people's life, you'll see much progress and development" that upholds selective framing silence, the audience is led to a certain interpretation of reality, but what the progress is, is not given or verifiable.

The statistical comparison "months ago, you had daily in Baghdad about between 10 to 15 car bombs. Now you have two to three to four" is perhaps the most rhetorically advanced example of polysemy in the extract. The numbers can be interpreted as a sign of real security improvement. Nevertheless, they also expose the level of the existing violence. In any other context, this level would constitute a crisis. Even the mere fact of framing daily car bombings as a kind of progress creates rhetorical silence as to what a reasonable amount of security would appear like and the criterion of evaluation is undefined.

The reference to "national reconciliation is going forward" and "national unity government headed by "Nouri al-Maliki" is going well, which represents all Iraqi people" creates rhetorical silence by referring to process nouns and evaluative adverbs without giving an answer to what has been achieved, by whom, or by what mechanisms, as President of Iraq, Talabani cannot publicly challenge the government he institutionally supports. The use of the term "al-Maliki" sustains this silence further, functioning as institutional approval that forecloses scrutiny of the factional realities operating beneath the surface of the Muhasasa is not explored.

At the interpretive communities level, the sentence "hundreds of thousands of Iraqi innocent people were buried in mass graves" and the statistical diminution of "10 to 15 car bombs" to "two to three to four" may construct the speaker as a voice of cautious optimism for international audiences in a challenging situation. For domestic political actors, the identical statistical recognition of the fact of "assassinations still continuing," the vague reference to Sunni and Shia who "argument about forming a committee," and the claim that the national unity government "is going well" may carry more contested meanings, as they can be contrasted with lived political realities not discussed in the extract.

The communicative advantage level is so high that any current situation seems to be an improvement: at the same level, the statement "hundreds of thousands of Iraqi innocent people were buried in mass graves" sets a standard so high that almost anything else in the present seems like progress. The statistical reduction "10 to 15 ... now two to three to four" is a form of credibility created by the illusion of precision, but leaves out the human meaning of the last figures. Moreover, "national unity government headed by Nouri Al-Maliki is going well, which is representing all Iraqi people" enables the speaker to support the current power-sharing system without defining what representation is in practice and who may challenge this argument.

4.3.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. According to van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the history-as-lesson strategy dominates the opening sentence "in the times of Saddam Hussein, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi innocent people were buried in mass graves," which establishes a historical baseline against which the present is measured. Ideologically, this move is important not because it reveals anything about the past but because it suppresses independent evaluation of the present, by making the previous regime the reference point of evaluation. The speaker displaces any independent evaluation of present failures of governance, thereby shielding present actors from comparable evaluation.

The number game strategy structures the statistical comparison "months ago, you had daily in Baghdad between 10 to 15 car bombs. Now you have two to three to four." The use of particular numbers constructs an appearance of ideological objectivity whereby the speaker seems to recognise the crisis sincerely but the numbers themselves shift the focus away from the absolute level of the current violence to its relative decrease. Ideologically, this strategy constructs a narrative of

measurable progress while producing rhetorical silence about what the residual figures represent and what governance failures sustain them.

The vagueness strategy is used in statements like "national reconciliation is going forward" and "much progress and development." Both expressions refer to positive outcomes without specifying their content, timing and actors, thus leading to silence on generalisation and critical examination. The consensus strategy operates in "national unity government... representing all Iraqi people," the power-sharing arrangement is introduced as universally representative, silencing any recognition of contentious representation or marginalised groups in the Muhasasa system.

The positive self-presentation strategy is implemented by the speaker, who endorses that the government "is going well." Talabani, as President of Iraq, carries institutional authority in his endorsement, but the vagueness strategy also ensures that this endorsement cannot be falsified, no criteria are provided by which it can be evaluated that something is going well or not. The agenda of the speaker is to present the post-2003 political order as a relative improvement over the previous one by contrasting it with the past, thus safeguarding the legitimacy of the power-sharing system without discussing its structural inadequacies.

4.3.1.3 Pragmatic Analysis. According to Grice's (1975) CP, the maxim of quantity is flouted when the information is systematically withheld from the listener, excluding what is most needed by the communicative situation. The utterance "Much progress and development" does not specify what progress has been made, in what areas, or how it is measured. Likewise, the statement "National reconciliation is going forward" has no context as to what, on what terms, and with whom people are being reconciled. Similarly, the sentence "only one problem, which is the problem of

security", ignores the political, economic and sectarian aspects. This is a pattern in which the discourse conveys the implication that the speaker is informative, while the most politically sensitive realities are not mentioned. This is silence through generalisation, using general descriptions instead of specifying political responsibility.

The maxim of relation is flouted when the speaker's focus turns to the past, with reference to "the times of Saddam Hussein" and the finding of "mass graves." This reference is only tangentially relevant to the larger discussion of the direction of Iraqi politics, but it shifts the lens of judgment from the current government to a comparison with past governments. The statistical comparison of "10 to 15 car bombs" in the past and "two to three to four" in the present follows this trend, but instead of trying to measure the absolute level of violence, it offers a relative one. Consequently, the speech conveys implied meaning of the normality of the present instability, which is juxtaposed to a more catastrophic historical instability, since a President who institutionally endorses the existing order cannot acknowledge its failures without delegitimising the power-sharing arrangement he formally represents.

The maxim of manner is flouted in that the numerical reference of car bombings creates an impression of factual accuracy, but the human and political consequences of such figures are not addressed. Similarly, the naming of "al-Maliki" and mention of "forming a committee to amend mandate of constitution" imbues a sense of institutional specificity, and evaluative statements like "is going well" and "representing all Iraqi people" remain unspecified. This agreement between accuracy and indeterminacy of evaluation implicitly places the focus of political accountability on institutional process, which is already a form of silence: the activity of the government is privileged, while its actual effects are hidden.

4.3.2 Analysis of Extract (6): Masoud Barzani

This extract is drawn from an interview with Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region, conducted by Reuters and published on 6 July 2017. Titled *"Interview: Iraqi Kurdish leader says no turning back on independence bid."* Barzani stated:

لقد انتظرنا لمدة ١٤ عامًا وناقشنا هذه الشراكة، ولكن قيل لنا دائماً أن الوقت غير مناسب وأن التوقيت غير مقبول، لذا فإن سؤالي هو: متى يكون الوقت المناسب؟ علينا تصحيح تاريخ سوء معاملة شعبنا، وأولئك الذين يقولون إن الاستقلال ليس جيداً، سألنا لهم هو: إذا لم يكن جيداً لنا، فلماذا هو جيد لكم؟ إن شرعية الشعب أكبر من شرعية أي من الأحزاب السياسية أو أي من التدخلات الخارجية. لا أعتقد أن أحداً يستطيع الوقوف في وجه موجة شعب كردستان العارمة حين يقرر مصيره. ربما ستكون هناك بعض المحاولات لإحباطها... سنبدل قصارى جهدنا لمنع حدوث ذلك. لقد حذرتكم من أنه إذا لم تكن لديكم هذه الخطة السياسية، فسوف ينقلب الوضع رأساً على عقب.

For 14 years we have been waiting and we have been discussing this partnership but we have always been told it's not a good time and it's not acceptable timing so my question is, when is the right time? ... We have to rectify the history of mistreatment of our people and those who are saying that independence is not good, our question to them is, if it's not good for us, why is it good for you? ... The legitimacy of the people is bigger than the legitimacy of any of the political parties or any of the external interventions. I don't think anybody can stand against the big wave of the people of Kurdistan when they decide their destiny. Maybe there will be some attempts to foil (it)... We will try our best not to allow that to happen. ... I warned if you are not going to have this political plan, the situation will reverse. (Reuters, 2017, paras. 13-15)

4.3.2.1 Rhetorical Analysis. Based on Bach et al.'s (2025) conceptualisation of strategic ambiguity, the analysis starts with polysemy. The rhetorical question "for 14 years we have been waiting... when is the right time?" ("لقد انتظرنا لمدة ١٤ عامًا... متى") is polysemous at several levels simultaneously. At the surface, it can be interpreted as a sincere question, an invitation to unnamed actors to clarify the

terms according to which independence would be welcome. On a second level, it functions as an accusation where fourteen years of waiting constitutes evidence that no timing will ever be acceptable, making the question itself the argument. In this construction, the discourse creates rhetorical silence whereby political opposition is implied but not explicitly articulated.

A similar mechanism appears in "if it's not good for us, why is it good for you?" ("إذا لم يكن جيداً لنا، فلماذا هو جيد لكم؟"), the pronoun "you" is a purposefully ambiguous referent that may refer to a number of potential actors, such as the Iraqi federal government, neighbouring state actors, or international political actors who were against Kurdish independence. The word "good" is also open to various interpretations, and can be used to describe political legitimacy, economic viability, or regional stability. Since the actor and the exact meaning of the evaluation is not mentioned, the discourse enables various audiences to identify themselves with the statement without confronting it directly. The resulting confusion brings on another non-naming silence, this time with the criticism spreading without specifying what it is about.

The sentence "the legitimacy of the people is bigger than the legitimacy of any of the political parties or any of the external interventions" ("إن شرعية الشعب أكبر من شرعية أي من الأحزاب السياسية أو أي من التدخلات الخارجية") introduces a broader discursive shift where opposition is defined by abstract categories rather than recognisable actors. The mention of "political parties" and "external interventions" expands the list of potential opponents, but it is not mentioned. The speaker establishes popular legitimacy as the ultimate source of authority by introducing these actors as generalised categories. Rhetorically, this creates silence through generalisation in

rhetorical terms, which does not allow the development of a direct political confrontation.

The statement "maybe there will be some attempts to foil (it)" ("ربما ستكون هناك") ("بعض المحاولات لإحباطها"), where the possibility of opposition is recognised without any reference to its origin. The anticipated action is described in vague and hypothetical terms, indicating that there is resistance but not giving any details of who may be trying to interfere. In the same way, the threat "I warned if you are not going to have this political plan, the situation will reverse" ("لقد حذرتكم من أنه إذا لم تكن لديكم هذه الخطة") ("السياسية، فسوف ينقلب الوضع رأساً على عقب") leaves the nature of the reversal and those who would be affected deliberately unspecified, producing rhetorical silence by issuing a warning whose consequences remain open-ended, since defining the outcome explicitly would commit the speaker to a course of action that could alienate the very actors whose acquiescence the independence bid still requires.

At the level of interpretive communities, for the Kurdish domestic audience, the statement "for 14 years we have been waiting" and the reference to "rectifying the history of mistreatment of our people" reinforce a narrative of collective patience and historical grievance, strengthening internal political solidarity. The expression "the big wave of the people of Kurdistan when they decide their destiny" further frames independence as the inevitable outcome of a popular will. For international and regional audiences, however, statements such as "we will try our best not to allow that to happen" and the question "when is the right time?" may appear as calls for political dialogue rather than confrontation. Since there is no direct mention of opponents, the discourse can be both domestic mobilisation and international moderation.

At the communicative advantage level, the discourse shifts the emphasis on the political choice to conduct a referendum to the wider principle of democratic self-determination by putting the issue in terms of timing and popular legitimacy. The frequent mention of long waiting lines creates the speaker as patient and reasonable and implicitly delegitimises nameless actors who still resist the process. Meanwhile, the lack of clearly defined opponents and outcomes enables the warning to be conveyed to various audiences without the speaker being bound to a particular political conflict. By doing so, the rhetoric balances between the decisiveness of the public and the flexibility of the strategies in the disputed political landscape that is informed by the Iraqi power-sharing system. Therefore, silence in this case is not protective withdrawal, but a form of provocation, a rhetorical formation whereby the warning is issued precisely because the target is not named.

4.3.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. According to van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the victimisation strategy predominates in the opening statements of "for 14 years we have been waiting" and "the history of mistreatment of our people" ("تاريخ سوء معاملة شعبنا"), which creates a collective subject characterised by long-term resentment and historical injustice. The speaker gains moral authority by prefiguring a story of agony and endurance, prior to the political case of independence. Meanwhile, the negative other-presentation strategy is introduced by mentioning actors who have insisted several times that "it is not a good time." These actors are never directly named, and the charge of obstruction can be spread without directly challenging certain political adversaries.

The populism strategy operates in the statement "the legitimacy of the people is bigger than the legitimacy of any of the political parties or any of the external interventions" positions popular will as the ultimate political authority, overriding

both domestic institutions and international actors. By framing the referendum as the expression of an overwhelming collective will, the discourse elevates the issue beyond procedural debate. At the same time, the opposition is introduced in abstract expressions such as "political parties" and "external interventions." The vagueness of these expressions enables the challenge to cover a broad spectrum of possible opponents and avoids direct naming of the opponents. This reasoning is further supported by the mention of the big wave of the people of Kurdistan when they choose their own fate where independence is portrayed as an overwhelming popular movement and not a disputed political stand, and thereby the voice of internal dissent is muted.

The implication strategy operates in the closing warning "I warned if you are not going to have this political plan, the situation will reverse." The statement addresses an unnamed "you," refers to an unspecified "political plan," and threatens an undefined "reverse." This ambiguity in layers enables the warning to work on a variety of audiences without specifying the consequences. By doing so, the discourse keeps the possible opponents under pressure without obligating the speaker to a well-laid course of action. The agenda of the speaker is to coerce those who are against Kurdish independence by insinuating that there might be political instability in case the demand is not met, but not to threaten.

4.3.2.3 Pragmatic Analysis. Drawing on Grice's (1975) CP, the maxim of quantity is flouted through the question "when is the right time?" refers to the recurring objections to Kurdish independence without stating who has made them. Similarly, "any of the political parties or any of the external interventions" appeals to opposition without giving its institutional identity. The statement "maybe there will be some attempts to foil (it)" acknowledges potential obstruction while leaving both the

agents and the methods unspecified, and the warning that "the situation will reverse" introduces a potential outcome without clarifying what that outcome entails. Pragmatically, these gaps stimulate the audience to provide the referents that are missing with the help of common political knowledge. The targeted audiences can still be recognised to knowledgeable audiences although they are never directly named, producing an effect of rhetorical silence which allows the speaker to denote confrontation without being politically deniable.

The maxim of relation is flouted through a strategic change from declarative statements to interrogative framing. Instead of stating outright that the independence of the Kurdish people has been unreasonably postponed, the speaker asked a question, "when is the right time?." This rhetorical question seems to be applicable to the debate on independence but in practice, it transfers the responsibility of explanation to unnamed opponents who have continually postponed the decision. Similarly, "if it's not good for us, why is it good for you?" reframes the question as an asymmetry of political judgement. The statement creates an implicit opposition between Kurdish interests and those of unspecified others, instead of determining particular actors who gain in blocking independence. By this redirection, the discourse remains relevant and generates conditional silence of the political actors whose interests are implicitly criticised.

The maxim of manner is flouted in expressions such as "the history of mistreatment of our people" and "the big wave of the people of Kurdistan" ("موجة شعب") ("کردستان العارمة حين يقرر مصيره") are bright and emotional, and they introduce the independence project as the expression of collective grievance and popular wave. Conversely, the actors that may be against this movement are only characterised using abstract such as "political parties" or "external interventions." This specificity of

emotions and vagueness of institutions forms a pragmatic asymmetry, the validity of the demand of independence seems to be tangible and immediate, and the political institutions that stand against it remain vague. The discourse foregrounds the moral clarity of the speaker's position while sustaining silence regarding the precise institutional dynamics through which opposition might operate.

4.4 Analysis of Minority Political Discourse

This section analyses two extracts of minority political discourse within the Iraqi power-sharing system. The first extract is taken from Vian Dakhil, an Iraqi member of parliament and spokesperson for Kurdistan Democratic Party parliamentary faction, representing the Yazidi minority. The second extract is drawn from Yonadam Kanna, secretary of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, representing the Christian minority within the Iraqi political system.

4.4.1 Analysis of Extract (7): Vian Dakhil

This extract is drawn from Vian Dakhil, Iraqi MP and spokesperson for the Kurdistan Democratic Party parliamentary faction, covered by Kurdistan24 and held in Duhok on 29 April 2025. Titled *'Kurdish MP Vian Dakhil Slams Iraqi Parliament for Ignoring Yazidis: 'Our Case Means Nothing to Them.'* " Dakhil asserted:

في البرلمان العراقي، لا يعطى اليزيديين أي اهتمام - تعتبر قضيتنا غير مهمة. ... كان العديد من النواب مرتبكين وسألوا، ما هو اليزيديين؟ لم يسمعوا عنا من قبل. لا يهم ما إذا كنت تعرف من هم اليزيديين. ما يهم هو الحقوق التي منحها لهم، كحكومة، كدولة. ... لقد طرحنا أسئلتنا على بغداد مرات لا تحصى، وفي كل مرة لا نتلقى أي إجابات حقيقية. ... كل ما تبقى هو تنفيذه - إعادة بناء المنازل، وضمان الأمن، وإعادة النازحين إلى مدنهم. لكن بغداد تواصل تهمة قضيتنا، وتعامل المعاناة اليزيدية على أنها هامشية.

In the Iraqi Parliament, Yazidis are not given any attention our issue is considered unimportant. ... Many MPs were confused and asked, What is a Yazidi? They had never even heard of us. ... It doesn't matter whether you

know who the Yazidis are. What matters is what rights you, as a government, as a state, have granted them. ... We have posed our questions to Baghdad countless times, and each time we receive no real answers. ... All that remains is to carry it out — rebuild homes, ensure security, and return the displaced to their towns. But Baghdad continues to sideline our case, treating Yazidi suffering as peripheral. (Kurdistan24, 2025, paras. 3–6)

4.4.1.1 Rhetorical Analysis. According to Bach et al.'s (2025) model of strategic ambiguity, the opening statement "our issue is considered unimportant" ("تعتبر قضيتنا غير مهمة") introduces ambiguity through the use of passive construction. The statement introduces the Yazidi problem as institutionally marginalised without indicating the agents of this determination. The formulation can be read in two ways. It may reflect a broader culture of institutional negligence in parliamentary practice. Alternatively, it may implicitly accuse specific political actors who have decided to prioritise Yazidi interests less. This ambiguity produces rhetorical silence by keeping responsibility implied rather than directly attributed, since as a minority representative operating within a system dominated by larger communal blocs, naming specific actors would risk political isolation without any guarantee of redress.

The same mechanism appears in the statement "many MPs were confused and asked, 'What is a Yazidi?' They had never even heard of us" ("كان العديد من النواب مرتبكين") which gives testimony to ignorance in the institution and the MPs who put the question are not named. Through this construction, the question "What is a Yazidi?" is not only a statement of personal misunderstanding but rhetorically, a demonstration of institutional marginalisation, generating rhetorical silence in that the institutional failure can be shown by a concrete example, but the responsible actors are left implicit, as identifying individual

legislators by name would turn a structural critique into a personal challenge which a representative of the minority can ill afford in a majoritarian parliament.

The sentence "It doesn't matter whether you know who the Yazidis are. What matters is what rights you, as a government, as a state, have granted them" ("لا يهم ما إذا " كنت تعرف من هم اليزيديين. ما يهم هو الحقوق التي منحتها لهم، كحكومة، كدولة") perpetuates polysemy since the addressee can be interpreted in a variety of ways: it can be a general statement about the duty of government, and at the same time, it can be an implicit criticism of the Iraqi state. This construction thus creates silence, whereby the responsibility is channeled to the institution as a whole and the actors that work within the institution are not named. This kind of formulation allows the speaker to criticise the performance of the state without attacking certain political groups within the Muhasasa system.

The sentence "All that remains is to carry it out rebuild homes, ensure security, and return the displaced to their towns" ("كل ما تبقى هو تنفيذه - إعادة بناء المنازل، وضمان الأمن، " وإعادة النازحين إلى مدنهم") seems to provide a practical specificity, enumerating specific tasks. The statement, however leaves out the actors who will carry out these actions, the time frame and enforcement mechanisms needed to implement them. This rhetorical construction thus produces silence, where the intended end result is pronounced and the roadmap to that end result is not spelled out.

At the interpretive communities level, for a foreign audience, the statement "it doesn't matter whether you know who the Yazidis are. What matters is what rights you, as a government, as a state, have granted them" can be interpreted as a general human-rights argument, placing the Yazidi case within a larger principle of state responsibility towards minority rights. However, for domestic Iraqi political

audiences, the statements "we have posed our questions to Baghdad countless times" ("لقد طرحنا أسئلتنا على بغداد مرات لا تحصى") and "Baghdad continues to sideline our case" ("لكن بغداد تواصل تهميش قضيتنا") acquire a more specific resonance. In the Iraqi political context, the institutional centre of decision-making authority is represented by Baghdad, whereas the individual actors of power are safeguarded by institutional framing.

Finally, at the communicative advantage level, the statement "it doesn't matter whether you know who the Yazidis are. What matters is what rights you, as a government, as a state, have granted them" moves the discourse out of the area of identity recognition to the quantifiable arena of rights and state accountability, and thus eliminates any defence of ignorance. The construction "we have posed our questions to Baghdad countless times" documents a pattern of institutional non-response, but leaves the instances and actors out, letting the cumulative power of "countless times" serve as rhetorical evidence that cannot be refuted. Moreover, the claim "the agreement is signed. All that remains is to carry it out" presents the speaker as knowledgeable about existing political commitments while silence on implementation mechanisms leaves the accountability gap intact.

4.4.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. Drawing on van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the extract starts with the victimisation strategy, evident in the statements "Yazidis are not given any attention — our issue is considered unimportant" and "Baghdad continues to sideline our case, treating Yazidi suffering as peripheral" establish the Yazidi community as a group subjected to institutional marginalisation. At the same time, the passive form "our issue is considered unimportant" leaves the actors responsible for this judgement unnamed.

This rhetorical silence allows the speaker to reveal institutional negligence without directly identifying parliamentary actors in the power-sharing structure.

The negative other-presentation strategy is evident in the statement "many MPs were confused and asked, 'What is a Yazidi?' They had never even heard of us." In this case, the unnamed MPs are symbolic figures of institutional ignorance. Although the sentence implies that there are identifiable individuals, the discourse withholds their identities, which means that the criticism targets the institution as a whole rather than an individual. This construction therefore carries on rhetorical silence whereby the accusation gets disseminated at the institutional level, and individual blame at the linguistic level.

The vagueness strategy is used in the sentence "All that remains is to carry it out — rebuild homes, ensure security, and return the displaced to their towns." Although the statement lists concrete activities, the actors who are expected to carry them out are not specified. This formulation will result in the creation of rhetorical silence, since the activity anticipated is concrete but the agent who should accomplish the outcomes desired is not expressed. With such a structure, the speaker can highlight the role of the government without directly blaming any ministries or political leaders.

The consensus strategy is invoked by the reference to "the agreement" as already decided. The discourse identifies the demands as the enforcing of institutional commitments, and not the emergence of new political demands. At the same time, the inaction of Baghdad is conceptually designed as a violation of a common agreement, without saying what it includes, who is involved, and how it is put into practice.

4.4.1.3 Pragmatic Analysis. Within Grice's (1975) CP, the extract starts with the flouting of the quantity maxim through the combination of strong claims and missing details. In the utterance "we have posed our questions to Baghdad countless times, and each time we receive no real answers," the speaker focuses on repetition and persistence through the expression "countless times," but the questions, the instances when they were posed, and the authorities responding to them are not mentioned. This conveys implied meaning that the pattern of institutional silence is already known to the audience. A similar pattern appears in "all that remains is to carry it out rebuild homes, ensure security, and return the displaced to their towns." The tasks are well enumerated, but the institutions that are to implement them and the schedule of implementation are not stated.

The maxim of relation is flouted through the utterance "it doesn't matter whether you know who the Yazidis are. What matters is what rights you, as a government, as a state, have granted them." Instead of furthering the debate on Yazidi identity, the speaker changes the subject to the responsibilities of the state. The implied meaning here is that it is not the recognition or awareness of the Yazidis that is the issue, rather, it is whether the state has done what it is supposed to do for the Yazidis. This shift moves the debate from cultural identity to political responsibility.

The maxim of manner is flouted in the sentence "many MPs were confused and asked, 'What is a Yazidi?' They had never even heard of us." The example is concrete as it also contains a reported question, however, it is vague in several essential aspects. The term "many MPs" does not specify who these MPs are and the question is not attributed to any particular individual. This gives the impression of evidence and the actors involved are not specified. Pragmatically, this statement does not describe a certain event, but is a symbolic one of institutional ignorance.

4.4.2 Analysis of Extract (8): Yonadam Kanna

This extract is drawn from an interview with Yonadam Kanna, secretary of the Assyrian democratic movement, published by The New Region on 17 October 2024. Titled *"Assyrian leader says Kurdistan elections will restore legitimacy, criticizes court's Christian quota ruling."* Kanna stated:

لم يعرض على المحكمة قانون عام ١٩٩٢ الكامل أو القرار التكميلي الذي خصص خمسة مقاعد للمسيحيين. إن حكم المحكمة بإلغاء هذه المقاعد، إلى جانب ستة مقاعد أخرى، كان خطأ فادحا أضر بشكل كبير بالمجتمع المسيحي. مهما كانت النوايا، انتهى بنا الأمر إلى أن نكون الضحايا، وقد أثر ذلك بشدة على قدرتنا على تمثيل أنفسنا. ... في حين لا يمكن منع أي شخص من الترشح في نظام ديمقراطي، فإن أجندة بابل لا تمثل المجتمع المسيحي. إنهم دخلوا البرلمان بأصوات من خارج مجتمعنا، مما يفرض إرادة مجموعة أكبر علينا. ... سيكون هذا تحيزا إيجابيا ضروريا، حيث أن أعدادنا صغيرة جدا للفوز بمقاعد بخلاف ذلك، والنظام الحالي ليس مستعدا ديمقراطيا لحماية مصالحنا.

The court was not shown the full 1992 law or the supplementary decision that allocated five seats to Christians. The court's ruling to cancel these seats, along with six others, was a grave mistake that greatly harmed the Christian community. ... Whatever the intentions, we ended up being the victims, and this has severely impacted our ability to represent ourselves. ... While no one can be barred from running in a democratic system, Babylon's agenda is not representative of the Christian community. They entered parliament with votes from outside our community, which imposes the will of a larger group on us. ... This would be a necessary positive bias, as our numbers are too small to win seats otherwise, and the current regime is not democratically prepared to protect our interests. (The New Region, 2024, paras. 4-7)

4.4.2.1 Rhetorical Analysis. Based on Bach et al.'s (2025) model of strategic ambiguity, the sentence "the court was not shown the full 1992 law or the supplementary decision that allocated five seats to Christians" ("لم يعرض على المحكمة") leaves open several interpretations. It can be a sign of a procedural omission in the judicial procedure, or it may imply that the legal context was selectively introduced. Since neither option is

explicitly stated, the discussion maintains silence regarding the actors involved in the court's decision-making process. Such forms enable the speaker to challenge the validity of the result without directly accusing manipulation.

The statement "whatever the intentions, we ended up being the victims" ("مهما كانت النوايا، انتهى بنا الأمر إلى أن نكون الضحايا") by explicitly setting aside the question of intention, the speaker removes a potentially contentious dimension of the debate before it can be contested. Whether the actors in question were deliberate or not is treated as secondary to the physical impacts experienced by the Christian community. This construction allows the speaker to proceed with a powerful assertion of injustice without the evidential weight that would be necessary to make a direct assertion of intentional discrimination and creates a deliberate silence.

A similar mechanism is evident in the statement "while no one can be barred from running in a democratic system, Babylon's agenda is not representative of the Christian community" ("في حين لا يمكن منع أي شخص من الترشح في نظام ديمقراطي، فإن أجندة بابل لا تمثل المجتمع المسيحي"). On the one hand, the statement proves a commonly held democratic value, which means that the norms of political inclusiveness are followed. Simultaneously, it also brings about a criticism that can be viewed as a challenge to the legitimacy of the representative claim of a certain actor. The dual orientation makes the statement maintain two readings: one can take it as a defence of democratic openness, or an implicit critique of the authenticity of political representation.

The sentence "the current system is not democratically prepared to protect our interests" ("النظام الحالي ليس مستعدا ديمقراطيا لحماية مصالحنا"). It is not about actors, but about the structural aspects of the political system itself. The discourse thereby transforms the problem from individual to institutional responsibility whereby the responsibility

is placed on the systemic design as opposed to the individual decision-makers. Meanwhile, the speaker fails to indicate which institutions, legal frameworks or political actors constitute this system. Silence is maintained by identifying a structural failure without explaining the mechanisms through which it is sustained. This framing enables the speaker to condemn the ineffectiveness of minority protection in the system without necessarily blaming the political actors in the system perpetuation.

On the interpretive communities level, to international audiences, statements such as "whatever the intentions, we ended up being the victims" and "the current system is not democratically prepared to protect our interests" can be understood as a principled criticism of minority protection in democratic systems. In this aspect, the discourse frames the Christian case in larger discussions of representation and institutional safeguarding of minority groups. For domestic political audiences, the references to "Babylon's agenda" and to electoral support coming "from outside our community" carry a more immediate political implication. The effect of such expressions seems to be to question the representational legitimacy of a specific parliamentary actor, but leaves the larger alliances in politics unaddressed.

At the communicative advantage level, in the sentence "whatever the intentions" the Christian community nevertheless becomes the victim, the speaker retains the political charge of the complaint and avoids a possible controversial issue of motive. Similarly, affirming that "no one can be barred from running in a democratic system" establishes the speaker's adherence to the democratic ideals prior to challenging the validity of Babylonian representation. Finally, the argument that quota protection may require a form of "positive bias" reframes what could otherwise be interpreted as preferential treatment into a structural adjustment intended to compensate for demographic disadvantage. These moves put the speaker in the role of

both defender of democratic norms and protector of minorities, and leave enough ambiguity to avoid direct confrontation in the political environment of the Iraqi power-sharing system.

4.4.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis. According to van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies, the victimisation strategy appears in the statements "the court's ruling to cancel these seats... was a grave mistake that greatly harmed the Christian community" (إن حكم المحكمة بإلغاء هذه المقاعد... كان خطأ فادحاً أضر بشكل كبير ("بالمجتمع المسيحي") and "we ended up being the victims, and this has severely impacted our ability to represent ourselves" (انتهى بنا الأمر إلى أن نكون الضحايا، وقد أثر ذلك بشدة على ("قدرتنا على تمثيل أنفسنا construct the Christian community as a direct target of institutional harm. By framing the issue in this way, the speaker frames the political issue as the result of structural injustice rather than a conflict between rival political forces.

The negative other-presentation strategy operates in two different forms. The Federal Court is criticised indirectly in the statement "the court was not shown the full 1992 law or the supplementary decision that allocated five seats to Christians." The statement implies that there was a breakdown in the process but does not indicate who failed to provide the legal material, which generates procedural silence regarding the actors responsible for the omission. In contrast, the statement "Babylon's agenda is not representative of the Christian community" directly refers to a political actor. Ideologically, institutional actors are criticised cautiously through procedural framing, while political competitors are addressed more directly.

The vagueness strategy is evident in the statement that "Babylon entered parliament with votes from outside our community, which imposes the will of a larger

group on us" ("دخلوا البرلمان بأصوات من خارج مجتمعنا، مما يفرض إرادة مجموعة أكبر علينا"). The notion of "a larger group" remains undefined, producing rhetorical silence by keeping the implicated actors unidentified, since naming the dominant communal bloc directly would expose the speaker to political retaliation she cannot afford as a minority representative within the Iraqi political system.

The strategy of legality reinforces the argument of the speaker by making a reference to "the full 1992 law or the supplementary decision that allocated five seats to Christians." The quota is not presented as a political favour but rather as a legal right by basing the argument on certain legal framework. This source of law supports the validity of the argument and moves the debate out of the sphere of political bargaining into the sphere of institutional duty. The agenda of the speaker justified the political representation of the Christian community by putting the quota as a legal and democratic right, and asking questions about the legitimacy of other actors, without directly questioning the wider political frameworks within which they exist.

4.4.2.3 Pragmatic Analysis. According to the CP by Grice (1975), the extract demonstrates the flouting of the maxim of quantity by mentioning "the full 1992 law or the supplementary decision that allocated five seats to Christians," which gives the impression of a legal accuracy. However, the statement does not specify who failed to provide this information to the court or whether this omission was deliberate. Similarly, the claim that "they entered parliament with votes from outside our community" means that the party has been supported by outside sources to win elections, but the name of this wider voting block is not mentioned. The utterance "the current system is not democratically prepared to protect our interests" shows this trend is evident in the fact that a systemic problem is clearly identified, yet the agents that created or maintained the system are not referred to. In both cases, the utterance

seems to be based on a collective political knowledge, which depends on the audience to infer the absent actors.

The maxim of manner is flouted by the presence of precision and vagueness within the same discourse. On the one hand, the speaker refers to specific legal references such as "the full 1992 law" and explicitly references "Babylon's agenda." On the other hand, the terms "votes from outside our community," "a larger group," and "the current system" are deliberately vague. This contrast produces rhetorical silence, since the speaker can be accurate and legitimate in her argument, but can only be vague when naming actors, as this would otherwise put her at risk of some legal consequences that the legal system cannot remedy.

4.5 Findings

This section presents the results of the analysis carried out on eight selected extracts from Iraqi political discourse of Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority political figures. The analysis was conducted using Bach et al.'s (2025) strategic ambiguity at the rhetorical level, van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies at the CDA level, and Grice's (1975) CP at the pragmatic level. The findings are summarised in Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, which present the frequency counts of the rhetorical, ideological, and pragmatic features identified in the analysed extracts.

Table 4.1

Frequency of Bach et al.'s (2025) Strategic Ambiguity in the Analysis of Iraqi Political Discourse

Rhetorical Analysis	Frequency
Bach et al.'s (2025) Strategic Ambiguity	
Polysemy	8
Interpretive Communities	8
Communicative Advantage	8

Note. Prepared by the researcher based on the analysis.

Table 4.2

Frequency of van Dijk's (2006) Ideological-Rhetorical Strategies in the Analysis of Iraqi Political Discourse

Critical Discourse Analysis	Frequency
Van Dijk's (2006) Ideological-Rhetorical Strategies	
Vagueness	9
Negative Other-Presentation	6
Consensus	5
Positive Self-Presentation	4
Victimisation	4
Implication	3
History-as-Lesson	3
Disclaimer	2

Populism	2
Number Game	1
Generalisation	1
Categorisation	1
Authority	1
Reasonableness	1
Legality	1
Presupposition	1

Note. Prepared by the researcher based on the analysis.

Table 4.3

Frequency of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle in the Analysis of Iraqi Political Discourse

Pragmatic Analysis	Frequency
Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle	
Maxim of Quantity	8
Maxim of Quality	2
Maxim of Relation	6
Maxim of Manner	7

Note. Organised by the researcher based on the analysis.

Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 indicate the frequency of rhetorical, ideological and pragmatic features across the eight extracts analysed. They show the systematic construction of rhetorical silence through strategic ambiguity, ideological-rhetorical

strategies, and the flouting of conversational maxims in the speeches of the selected Iraqi politicians representing Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority communities.

Within Bach et al.'s (2025) model of strategic ambiguity, the equal distribution of the three elements: polysemy, interpretive communities, and communicative advantage is itself a significant analytical finding. Each appears across all eight extracts. This indicates that strategic ambiguity is never partial: no extract employs polysemy without at the same time engaging different interpretive communities and achieving communicative advantage. Polysemy generates the space of interpretive openness, interpretive communities ensure that this openness is politically productive across different audiences, and communicative advantage explains how the speaker benefits from not closing that space. The three elements are not independent rhetorical choices but rather a unified mechanism. This unified operation is analytically significant because it confirms that rhetorical silence a deliberate rhetorical choice. In the Iraqi political context, silence is not what happens when a politician fails to speak, it is what happens when a politician speaks in a way that makes direct attribution impossible.

Van Dijk's (2006) ideological-rhetorical strategies reveal a similar pattern. The vagueness strategy (9) emerges as the most frequent strategy, suggesting that the concealment of agency is a central mechanism through which rhetorical silence is constructed. The negative other-presentation strategy (6) is the second, where the criticism is suggested but not explicitly named, for explicit naming of criticism would turn political criticism into factional confrontation. The consensus strategy (5) follows, because the presentation of political positions as common, not individual, held to reduce individual responsibility. The positive self-presentation (4) and victimisation (4) strategies occur with equal frequency because both allow the speaker

to advance criticism without assuming accountability: in a system where naming responsible actors is politically dangerous, the speaker must find ways to criticise without attributing. Positive self-presentation does this by establishing moral authority before the critique, making it harder to dismiss as factional, while victimisation does it by making suffering the subject of the discourse rather than accountability. Speakers rely primarily on vague references that allow criticism to be communicated while responsibility remains implicit.

The implication (3) and history-as-lesson (3) strategies appear less frequently because each addresses a specific situation: implication is used when the political charge is too sensitive to be stated even indirectly, while history-as-lesson is reserved for moments when the speaker needs to shift accountability away from present actors by tracing the problem back to a past decision made by others. The disclaimer strategy (2) and the populism strategy (2) appear less frequently because their utility is context-dependent: the disclaimer is used only when a direct accusation is anticipated and must be pre-empted before it damages coalition relationships, while populism is deployed only when the speaker needs to ground a politically sensitive demand in collective will rather than personal agenda, making it harder for partners to oppose without appearing to contradict the public interest. The least frequent strategies: the number game, the generalisation, the categorisation, the authority, the reasonableness, and presupposition (1) occur less frequently because they are depend on the context.

These patterns are further indicated at the pragmatic level through CP by Grice (1975). The maxim of quantity is flouted across eight extracts (8), because rhetorical silence is mainly based on the strategic manipulation of information. The maxim of manner ranks second, flouted (7), through abstraction and syntactic indeterminacy

that keep institutional actors unnamed while the evaluative content remains recoverable. The maxim of relation follows, flouted (6), reflecting how frequently speakers find it necessary to redirect discourse away from the question being asked, towards humanitarian concern, historical causation, or institutional process because answering directly would require naming actors whose identification carries political consequences. The maxim of quality is flouted least frequently (2) because explicit factual claims increase political accountability. Together, these patterns of maxim flouting confirm that rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse is not the absence of meaning but a precise calibration of what is explicit and what is left for the audience to infer.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusions of the analysis conducted in Chapter Four. Through a rhetorical and CPr framework, the analysis covered eight extracts of Iraqi political discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an answer to each of the three research questions posed in Chapter One, which are answered in separate sections:

1. How is strategic ambiguity employed by selected Iraqi politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse?
2. Which ideological-rhetorical strategies are employed by those politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse?
3. Which conversational maxims are systematically flouted by those politicians to construct rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse?

After the discussion of each question, this chapter provides the contributions of the study, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Discussion and Concluding Remarks of Research Question 1

The analysis shows that strategic ambiguity is the primary rhetorical mechanism through which rhetorical silence is constructed in Iraqi political discourse. Through the interaction of polysemy, interpretive communities, and communicative advantage, politicians are able to communicate politically sensitive meanings without committing themselves to a single explicit interpretation. Instead of removing

meaning, strategic ambiguity allows multiple possible readings, enabling criticism, evaluation, and political positioning to be communicatively available without direct attribution.

The findings indicate that strategic ambiguity can be effective based on the presence of various interpretive communities. The same discourse allows multiple meanings for both domestic and international audiences, audiences with political knowledge and audiences without political knowledge, allowing politically sensitive messages to circulate without necessarily having to commit to a single meaning. This interpretive asymmetry enables speakers to reach out to more than one audience and to be rhetorically flexible.

The study also reveals that communicative advantage constitutes the primary functional outcome of strategic ambiguity. Political figures can retain political flexibility, minimise the dangers of direct attribution, prevent political escalation, and preserve relationships in a power-sharing environment by maintaining multiple possible interpretations. Strategic ambiguity thus functions not only as a rhetorical practice but also as a useful communicative practice that helps political figures to navigate conflicting political forces. Therefore, this positions the politician not only as a speaker, but as manager of discourse, who has control over the limits of the unsaid.

These patterns are consistent across all eight extracts and lead to a broader conclusion, that rhetorical silence is not accomplished by the lack of communication, but by the conscious control of meaning, interpretation, and attribution. The mechanisms are also found in Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority political figures regardless of differences in political affiliation, institutional position, and historical context indicating that strategic ambiguity is not an individual communicative

practice or a feature of a specific political community. Instead, it is a recurring communicative response to the structural constraints of the Iraqi political system in which direct attribution has political costs, upsetting political relationships, and limits future political collaboration.

5.2 Discussion and Concluding Remarks of Research Question 2

The findings reveal that rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse is ideologically constructed through the combined use of ideological-rhetorical strategies. All these strategies help political actors to avoid direct attribution, manage accountability, justify political standings, and preserve political relations and minimise the risks of open confrontation. Among them, vagueness turned out to be the dominant strategy, which means that ideological positioning is reached by indirect rather than explicit attribution. This process is further strengthened by other strategies such as negative other-presentation, consensus, positive self-presentation, victimisation, implication, history-as-lesson, disclaimer, and populism which frame political events and actors in a manner that serves specific ideological interests and constrains other possible interpretations.

The analysis also indicates that the combination of these strategies contributes to the construction of political legitimacy at multiple levels. They allow political actors to claim that their views and positions are sensible, national, consensual, or justifiable, and they help to obscure alternative interpretations. When there is political disagreement, the conflict is often redefined as a matter of group interest or moral duty, national unity or historical inevitability, thus narrowing the political arena for direct contestation.

The findings conclude that rhetorical silence is an ideological construction practiced by the selected political actors: Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority political actors, regardless of their political affiliation or historical period. This consistency indicates that the ideological function of rhetorical silence extends beyond individual preferences or community-specific practices. Rather, rhetorical silence appears to be a discursive practice that is repeatedly deployed by political actors to negotiate conflictual interests and to manage their legitimacy in the context of the power-sharing system in Iraq. In this context, the strategic regulation of blame, responsibility and legitimacy through silence constitutes a structurally necessary ideological resource to sustain political relationships and minimise the risks of direct political confrontation.

5.3 Discussion and Concluding Remarks of Research Question 3

The findings show that the rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse is constructed by flouting Grice's (1975) conversational maxims. However, these deliberate departures from the CP do not hinder communication. Instead, they optimise it under high-risk conditions, enabling political actors to convey sensitive meanings while decoupling themselves from the commitments of explicit attribution.

More specifically, the maxim of quantity becomes the most prominent maxim in this process; speakers consistently withhold the critical information, such as who is responsible for what, and only give enough information for the audience to identify the criticism. At the same time, agency is obscured by the flouting of manner through abstraction, while the flouting of relation redirects attention away from political vulnerabilities, and the flouting of quality allows harsh evaluations to remain implied rather than directly asserted. These patterns are collectively generate communicative spaces that still allow for the presence of meaning while protecting accountability.

Significantly, such practices of maxim flouting are found in all groups: Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and minority speakers, regardless of institutional status or political affiliation. This uniformity suggests that rhetorical silence is not an individual style or a localised practice. Instead, it is a collective, institutionalised and pragmatic adjustment to the structural dimensions of the Iraqi system of power-sharing, in which direct attribution has high political cost. In this context, meaning is best conveyed not by explicit statement, but by purposefully implied statement.

This study overall shows that language is not only a tool for communication but also a tool for building, interpreting, and negotiating political reality. By using appropriate language, politicians can shape meaning, guide interpretation, and even shape other political agendas without necessarily saying everything directly. In politically constrained environments, where direct attribution carries institutional and factional consequences, this strategic capacity of language becomes indispensable. Rhetorical silence is one of the most obvious examples of this as it can be observed in the Iraqi political discourse as shown by the present study. It is not a failure of communication, but is intentionally effected through rhetorical, ideological, and pragmatic strategies that enable the political actors to critique and evaluate, while at the same time, they restrict explicit attribution, accountability, and confrontation.

In this respect, rhetorical silence functions as a communicative medium, in which negotiations of interests, legitimation, and maintenance of political relations are made possible within the framework of the Iraqi power-sharing system. The uniformity of the rhetorical, the ideological, and the pragmatic patterns of selected political figures further illustrates that rhetorical silence is not a habit of the individual or a community communicative practice. Rather, it is a system of discursive adaptation that is determined by the structural requirements of the Iraqi political

system which can be characterised as a system of indirect but highly effective communication due to the political risk of direct attribution.

5.4 Contributions of the Study

The present study contributes to the fields of rhetorical and CPr by providing a linguistic analysis of rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse. It examines how meaning is constructed and conveyed by selected Iraqi politicians through the strategic absence of explicit speech. The study shows that rhetorical silence is not lack of speech, but can be a systematic form of communication that can be used to negotiate criticism, responsibility and disagreement within the context of the Iraqi political system.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the fields of rhetoric and Critical Pragmatics by providing the first integrated multi-level framework for analysing rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse, one that simultaneously accounts for its rhetorical construction, ideological organisation, and pragmatic interpretation within a single coherent analytical orientation.

From an empirical perspective, the analysis indicates that rhetorical silence is not only a communicative act but also a discursive system that reacts to institutional and political constraints. It is a structural characteristic of the discourse of Iraqi politics, which is influenced by the institutional context of political communication.

Finally, the study contributes to the general knowledge of the connection between political organisation and language selection. The findings indicate that rhetorical silence is a systemic discursive phenomenon, resulting from the political price of making this relationship explicit in the power-sharing system in Iraq. The present study demonstrates that political meaning is not just created by what political

actors say, but by what they do not say. It thus contributes to broader discussions of political accountability, rhetorical agency, and the role of institutional constraints in shaping political communication.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Stake holders in linguistics, political science, and discourse studies departments are encouraged to introduce silence as a structural communicative practice rather than an incidental feature of political discourse.
2. Researchers are encouraged to apply the integrated rhetorical and CPr framework adopted in the present study in other political contexts in order to further examine the linguistic construction of rhetorical silence.
3. Media and political analysts are encouraged to pay great attention to rhetorical silence in Iraqi political discourse. In addition to what politicians say, what they do not say should be analysed; silence is a strategic communicative rather than a lack of communication.
4. Journalists and news agencies covering Iraqi politics are invited to go beyond the surface of political rhetoric and focus on the strategies of vagueness, indirection, and omission that allow for the management of responsibility.
5. Teachers and learning professionals are invited to examine silence in pedagogical settings.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

Considering the results of the present study, the following topics are suggested for future studies:

1. A Rhetorical Analysis of Silence in Iraqi Political Discourse During Electoral Campaigns.
2. A Critical Pragmatic Analysis of Strategic Silence in Iraqi Political Discourse on Social Media.
3. A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Silence in Iraqi Political Television Interviews.
4. A Critical Discourse Analysis of Silence in Iraqi Parliamentary Debates.
5. A Comparative Study of Rhetorical Silence in Arab and Western Political Discourse.

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المستخلص

لا يعتمد التواصل السياسي في البيئات المقيّدة سياسياً في كثير من الأحيان فقط على ما يُصرّح به صراحةً، وإنما أيضاً على ما يُترك عمداً دون قول. ويتجلى هذا الأمر بصورة واضحة في نظام المحاصصة السياسي العراقي، حيث يُمكن الصمت البلاغي الفاعلين السياسيين من إيصال المعاني الحساسة مع تقليص الإسناد المباشر وتجنّب المساءلة السياسية الصريحة. وعلى الرغم من الدور المحوري الذي يؤديه الصمت البلاغي في الخطاب السياسي العراقي المعاصر، فإن بناءه اللغوي لم يحظَ باهتمام أكاديمي كافٍ. وانطلاقاً من هذه الفجوة، تتناول الدراسة الحالية كيفية البناء اللغوي للصمت البلاغي في الخطاب السياسي العراقي. تعتمد الدراسة إطاراً تحليلياً متكاملاً يجمع بين التحليل البلاغي والتداولية النقدية. على المستوى البلاغي، يوظّف نموذج الغموض الاستراتيجي لباخ وآخرين (٢٠٢٥). أما على مستوى التداولية النقدية، فيُعتمد نموذج مي (٢٠٠١) إطاراً تحليلياً شاملاً، يدمج الاستراتيجيات الأيديولوجية-البلاغية لـ فان دايك (٢٠٠٦) ضمن بُعد تحليل الخطاب النقدي، ومبدأ التعاون لـ غرايس (١٩٧٥) على المستوى التداولي. وتحلّل الدراسة نوعياً ثمانية مقتطفات من مقابلات سياسية رسمية مع ممثلين عن المكونات الشيعية والسنية والكردية والأقليات في العراق في الفترة ٢٠٠٦-٢٠٢٥. وتكشف النتائج أن الصمت البلاغي يُبنى بلاغياً من خلال تعدد المعاني الاستراتيجية، والجماعات التأويلية، والميزة التواصلية. ومن منظور التداولية النقدية، يتجلى الصمت البلاغي أساساً عبر الاستراتيجيات الأيديولوجية-البلاغية التي يهيمن عليها الغموض المنهجي، وعبر الخرق المتكرر لمبدأ الكمية عند غرايس. وعليه، تُظهر الدراسة أن الصمت البلاغي يؤدي وظيفة مورد تواصلية استراتيجي يتشكل بفعل القيود المؤسسية والأيديولوجية التي يفرضها نظام المحاصصة العراقي، حيث كثيراً ما ينطوي الالتزام السياسي الصريح على مخاطر سياسية جسيمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصمت البلاغي، الغموض الاستراتيجي، التداولية النقدية، الاستراتيجيات الأيديولوجية.

البلاغية، مبدأ التعاون



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قسم اللغة الانكليزية

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من قبل

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محرم ١٤٤٨ هـ

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