Pragmatics of Political Blame in British and Iraqi Parliaments

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Abstract
This research is a pragmatic study of political blame in British and Iraqi Parliaments. It aims to unfold the similarities and/or differences in terms of the pragmatic and pragma-rhetorical strategies used by British and Iraqi politicians when they exchange blame in both offensive and defensive situations. A statistical analysis is conducted to quantitatively support the findings of the pragmatic analysis. The analyses conducted have yielded different results among blame is a process composed of two stages. Each stage is distinct for its pragmatic components and pragma-rhetorical strategies. British and Iraqi MPs at the blame stage tend to utilize impoliteness as their main strategy. However, British and Iraqi MPs perform differently at the blame avoidance stage in that British MPs employ politeness as their main defense strategy, whereas Iraqi MPs exploit impoliteness. Besides, British and Iraqi MPs at the blame stage tend to violate the maxim of quality by fabricating their statements. At the blame avoidance stage, the maxim of relevance was the most violated one through the strategy of evasion. As for pragma-rhetorical strategies, British and Iraqi politicians at the blame stage exploit the pragma-rhetorical strategy of number-game to support their credibility. At the blame avoidance stage, British politicians primarily utilize hyperbole, whereas Iraqi politicians deploy shifting blame.

Keywords: blame avoidance, British and Iraqi parliaments, impoliteness, political blame, politeness

Introduction

Blame is a key term in adversarial discourse where politicians attribute something bad or wrong **to another person. In the blame game, Bull and Wells (2012) make clear that Members of** Parliament can be either blame makers (those who do the blaming) or blame takers (those who are on the receiving end). The actions and policies of government officeholders often face blame for constructive and destructive goals. In democratic societies, blame as well as blame avoidance strategies come to the fore where politicians fight for power. According to Hansson (2015), "Linguistic aspects of blame avoidance are yet to be studied by discourse analysts in great detail" (p. 297). This requires a careful study to unfold critical features and techniques that help fuel blame and make it spread through government offices. Thus, the present study sets itself toward answering the following questions:

1. Are blame and blame avoidance strategies utilized by politicians similar or different in British and Iraqi parliamentary settings?
2. Are blame makers' linguistic utterances impolite and blame takers' ones polite?
3. How are blame and blame avoidance strategies realized pragmatically and pragma-rhetorically and what functions do they serve?
4. Are there any differences in the employment of the pragmatic strategies used by Iraqi and British politicians for blaming and avoiding blame?

It is hypothesized that British politicians use indirect strategies of blame, whereas Iraqi politicians tend to use direct ones. Moreover, blame makers and blame takers in both British and Iraqi parliaments utilize certain pragmatic strategies. Thus, blame takers tend to use politeness strategies more often than other pragmatic strategies to avoid damaging blame acts whereas blame makers resort to using impoliteness strategies to damage the image of Prime Ministers and Ministers. Moreover, Blame takers tend to violate the maxim of relevance more often than the other maxims to evade blame. In contrast, blame makers are inclined to violating the maxim of quality to create fabricated statements that are intended to shape people's thoughts as they want. It is also hypothesized that blame makers and blame takers in both British and Iraqi Parliaments utilize certain pragma-rhetorical strategies at the blame stage different from those they utilize at the blame avoidance stage.

Politicians often exploit the language for the sake of winning, a fact often spotted in political debates, interviews and even campaigning speeches. These genres were extensively scrutinized by discourse analysts worldwide. Still, parliamentary discourse requires more careful work to unfold key features and concepts which distinguish it from other sub-genres of political discourse. Unlike many genres of political discourse, parliamentary discourse represents the formal and institutionalized variety (Bayley, 2004). It has been defined as "a norm-regulated interaction which takes place among politically elected representatives for deliberation and decision-making purposes in a specific political institutional setting (the parliament) and which displays recurrent institutionalized communication patterns" (Ilie, 2010, p. 8). Being elected representatives, Members of Parliament MPs) are expected to stand up for their opponents and promote their voters' views. The deliberative nature of parliamentary discourse incites MPs to enhance their own image and question the credibility of government policies or other MPs' political agendas.

Parliamentary questioning is a subgenre of parliamentary discourse. It does not only scrutinize and question the government but even controls and reforms it. According to Wiberg (1995), parliamentary questioning represents a chance to get information and ask for clarification on some issues or to force a policy to be made. MPs direct questions to the PM and the Ministers about issues they are ignorant of, in desire of inquiring about the actions or policies of the government, or to know what the government intends to do regarding a particular issue without raising any charges against them (as cited in عباس, 2010; الخطيب, 2006; يحيى, 2008).

Due to the sensitivity and importance of the issues discussed during Iraqi and British parliamentary question sessions held upon request of parliamentarians to interrogate the Prime Minister including ministers of his/her cabinet regarding these issues, the latter are expected to utilize all means of attack and defense represented by impoliteness strategies as well positive and negative politeness strategies to pass their agenda contrary to what we see on television where parliamentary question sessions appear, as Hoggart (2011) describes them (as cited in Bates, Kerr & Byrne, 2012, p. 1), ' "like an unpleasant football match, in which the game played publicly is accompanied by all sorts of secret grudge matches, settlement of scores and covert fouls committed when the players hope the ref is not looking"' being turned, therefore, "from a relatively 'civilised' parliamentary session into something of a rowdy, mud-slinging spectacle catered more towards shallow political point scoring than serious scrutiny of prime ministerial activity" (Bates, Kerr & Byrne., 2012, p. 1). In short, parliamentary question sessions, in Bull' and Wells' (2012) opinion, are "notorious for adversarial discourse" (p. 1) where the prime minister or any minister from his/her cabinet being interrogated are always in an attack status not even having the chance to defend themselves.

Literature Review
Parliamentary Discourse
In his discussion of the parliamentary discourse genre from a pragma-linguistic perspective, Ilie (2015) argued that it "belongs to the wider field of political discourse. Hence it displays particular institutionalized discursive features and complies with a number of specific rules and conventions" (p. 2). Ilie (2015) went on to view parliamentary discourse from a rhetorical perspective saying that it "belongs to the deliberative genre of political rhetoric, which is defined as an oratorical discourse targeting an audience that is asked to make a decision by evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of a future course of action" (p. 3). In their attempts to verbalize their opinions and beliefs in the best ways when engaging in parliamentary debates, parliamentarians tend to constantly utilize their rhetorical skills and, as Ilie (2015) phrases it, "take advantage of institutional practices in order to score points by exploiting each other's weaknesses and vulnerabilities" (p. 2). Hence, it is often believed that parliamentarians act in adversarial ways, especially in their debates over issues of vital national importance. It is worthy of note that some of the more representative subgenres of the parliamentary discourse genre are "ministerial statements, interpellations, parliamentary speeches, parliamentary debates, parliamentary (oral and written) questions, and question time" which, in Ilie's (2015, p. 3) belief, "constitute goal-oriented forms of demands or requests for action, reaction, and/or information". Of these subgenres the present study focused on the parliamentary question.

Parliamentary Questions (PQs) are questions put formally by an MP and provide the PM and his/her cabinet with regular opportunities to give a public report on issues they are responsible for. PQs can take two forms: oral or written. Written questions are intended to obtain information while oral questions serve two functions: attack, if were asked by the opposition, or praise, if were asked by government MPs (Ilie, 2017). Numerous motivations underlie parliamentary questioning, among which Wiberg (1995) mentions the following:

- To request information.
- To press for action.
- To demand an explanation.
- To test ministers in controversial areas of their policies.
- To attack ministers in difficult political situations.
- To dispose of a large number of heterogeneous topics rapidly conveniently.
- To help build up a reputation in some particular matters.
- To demonstrate the government's faults.

In the British Parliament, the Parliamentary Question session is called Prime Minister Questions (PMQs). This kind of session is held every Wednesday from 12 p.m. to 12.30 p.m. An MP starts with an 'open question' about the PM's recent engagements. Following this type of question, an MP can ask supplementary questions. The Leader of the Opposition is allowed to ask the PM of up to six questions in succession. The PM does not have a clue about the questions he/she will be asked. Government departments briefly inform the PM of possible subjects (UK Parliament, 2019). The modern format of PMQs was introduced in 1961. It was aimed at formalizing the way MPs raise questions to the PM. This has led PMQs to become an increasingly significant event in British political life (Bates et al, 2012). The way questions are asked during PMQs is not random. MPs submit their questions in advance. These are questions directed to the PM about his recent and/or coming engagements. Because the questions are presented prior to the session, the PM will have an idea about what he/she is going to be asked about and also the list of MPs asking these questions (Bevan & John, 2015). As there are a lot of questions to be asked, a few are only chosen to be raised by a process called "The Shuffle", which is, to quote Kelly's words (2015) "a lottery, randomly choosing 15 Members whose name will go on the Order Paper to ask questions to the Prime Minister" (p. 5). In PMQs, MPs will be either friends or foes. Two kinds of questions are asked: negative and positive. Negative questions are raised by front- and backbenchers of the opposition whereas positive questions are raised by front- and backbenchers of the PM. The former is said to be critical in nature, allowing MPs to "put pressure on the government to respond to issues they might rather avoid" (Bevan & John, 2015, p. 3). Whereas, the latter is friendlier, shedding light on the bright side of the Government's actions and policies.

On the other hand, the Iraqi Parliament has two types of sessions: regular and extraordinary. The regular sessions are held along the four-year legislative term. While the extraordinary sessions are held upon the request of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, or fifty members of the Council of Representatives. This kind of session discusses subjects like economic crisis, war and natural disasters. The Iraqi Constitution grants the Council of Representatives permission to monitor the performance of the Executive Authority through Parliamentary Questions. Iraqi MPs can question the President of the Republic,

the PM and the Ministers. However, certain procedures need to be taken into consideration. Questioning the President of the Republic must be based on a petition made by an absolute majority of the members of the Council of Representatives. While inquiring about a policy and the performance of the Council of Ministers or one of the Ministers requires at least twenty-five members in order to be submitted to the Speaker of the Council of Representatives. MPs are allowed to ask the PM and Ministers on any subject within their specialty. Each one of them must answer the members' questions. It is not allowed for other MPs to comment on the answer (Iraqi Constitution). Similar to the traditions of the British Parliament, Iraqi MPs can question members of the Presidency Council, the PM, his deputies, ministers, deputy ministers, or other members of the government or leaders of independent commissions, and offices in written form, with notification of the Presidency Commission. This means that there will be time for answers to be prepared prior to the Question Session. Questions may be concerned with any subject the MP has no knowledge about, or to know what the government intends to do regarding a particular issue. MPs can also ask oral questions that are closely related to the main question (parliament.iq). However, the number of questions that are asked by the Member is not specified (Iraqi Constitution).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Model of Politeness
Despite numerous contributions to the theory of politeness, the highly influential work of Brown and Levinson (1987) is still regarded the most comprehensive one (Eelen, 2001; Leech, 2005). The components of their politeness theory are: face, face-threatening acts (FTAs) and positive and negative politeness strategies.

    Face is an important notion in relation to politeness theories. Brown and Levinson's (1987, p. 61) notion of face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" is adopted from Goffman (1967, p. 5) who defines face as a "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face is twofold: the positive face which is every member's wants to be desirable to at least some other members, and the negative face which is every competent adult member's desire for others not to impede his/her actions. To Brown and Levinson (1987), a face-threatening act (FTA) is the one that runs against the face wants of the addressee and/or the speaker. In other words, it damages the positive or negative face of a speaker or hearer. It is almost impossible to satisfy all face wants, either positive or negative, of either the speaker or hearer. However, the need to be polite is a necessary component of friendly communication and involves the redressing of positive and negative face through a number of strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) provide four politeness strategies: bold on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record which are schematized in Figure one:
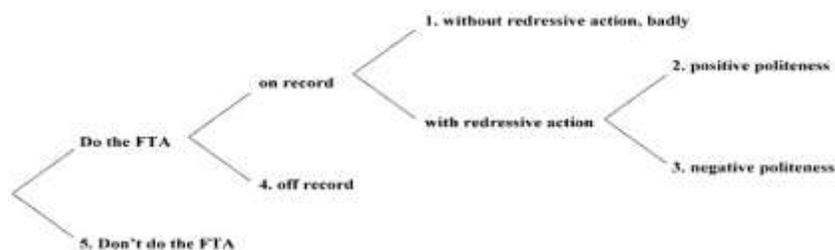

Figure 1. Brown and Levinson's (1987, p. 60) scheme of politeness strategies

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A participant may choose to go on-record to deliver the message unambiguously. This has the implication that the participant does not want to minimize any threat to H's face. Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that there are two options for speakers to choose from: (a) doing an act "without a redressive action, badly" or (b) doing an act with a redressive action through the use of positive and negative politeness strategies. The former is meant to do an act "in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible". The latter is intended to give "face to the addressee" and "counteract the potential face damage of the FTA" (p. 69). As for positive politeness strategies, they seek to mitigate the threat to H's positive face. Foley (1997) states that "the speaker (S) indicates his recognition that the hearer (H) wishes to have his positive-face wants honored" (p. 271). These positive strategies are usually used by speakers who know their hearers quite well. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 103-129) propose fifteen positive politeness strategies which include:

Strategy 1: Notice, attend, to H (interests, wants, needs, goods)
Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with).
Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H.
Strategy 4: Use in-group identity markers.
Strategy 5: Seek agreement.
Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement.
Strategy 7: Presuppose / raise / assert common ground.
Strategy 8: Joke.
Strategy 9: Assert or Presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants.
Strategy 10: Offer, Promise.
Strategy 11: Be optimistic.
Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity.
Strategy 13: Give (or ask for) reasons.
Strategy 14: Assume or assert reciprocity.
Strategy 15: Give gifts to the H (goods, sympathy, understanding cooperation).

Speakers, on the other hand, employ negative politeness to mitigate the imposition of particular impositions on the addresses. Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 132-210) name ten negative politeness strategies, these are:

Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect.
Strategy 2: Questions, hedge.
Strategy 3: Be pessimistic.
Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition.
Strategy 5: Give deference.
Strategy 6: Apologize.
Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H.
Strategy 8: Generalize the FTA as a rule, regulation, or obligation to disassociate S and H from imposition.
Strategy 9: Nominalize.
Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H.

The last of these strategies is doing FTAs off-record which entails, as Brown and Levinson (1987) show, the conveyance of numerable communicative intentions by the speaker's

communicative action. In other words, no specific or explicit intention is revealed. This shields the speaker against being held responsible for doing an FTA and keeps all options on the table for the addressee to elicit the desired intention. In order for this to happen, the speaker violates the Cooperative Principle and its maxims. Brown & Levinson (ibid.) exhibit fifteen strategies for doing off-record FTAs which invite conversational implicatures via hints triggered by violation of Grice's Maxims of relevance, quantity, and quality or result in vagueness and ambiguity through the violation of the maxim of manner as shown below:

Violating Relevance Maxim
Strategy 1: Give hints.
Strategy 2: Give association clues.
Strategy 3: Presuppose.
Strategy 4: Understate.

Violating Quantity Maxim
Strategy 5: Overstate.
Strategy 6: Use tautologies.
Strategy 7: Use contradictions.

Violating Quality Maxim
Strategy 8: Be ironic.
Strategy 9: Use metaphors.
Strategy 10: Use rhetorical questions.
Violating Manner Maxim
Strategy 11: Be ambiguous.
Strategy 12: Be vague.
Strategy 13: Over-generalize.
Strategy 14: Displace H
Strategy 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis.

Culpeper's (1996) Model of Impoliteness

Culpeper's framework of impoliteness is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. He argues that Brown and Levinson's account of impoliteness is marginal to everyday conversation. He urges the need for establishing an analytical framework of impoliteness (Mullany & Stockwell, 2010). In his model, Culpeper analyzes conflictive and impolite illocutions in U.S. army training discourse and many other discourses. This makes Culpeper's (1996) model more reliable than other models.

Culpeper (1996) looks at the other face of the coin and states that "instead of enhancing or supporting face, impoliteness super strategies are a means of attacking face" (p. 8). He describes them as follows:

- Bald on record impoliteness – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimized.

- Positive impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants.
- Negative impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants.
- Sarcasm or mock politeness – the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.
- Withhold politeness – the absence of politeness work where it would be expected.

Culpeper (1996, pp. 357-358) also proposes sub-strategies to positive output strategies:

- Ignore, snub the other – fail to acknowledge the other's presence.
- Exclude the other from an activity.
- Disassociate from the other – for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.
- Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic.
- Use inappropriate identity markers – for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.
- Use obscure or secretive language – for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.
- Seek disagreement – select a sensitive topic.
- Make the other feel uncomfortable – for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.
- Use taboo words – swear, or use abusive or profane language.
- Call the other names – use derogatory nominations.

Sub-strategies to negative output strategies involve:

- Frighten – instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.
- Condescend, scorn or ridicule – emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous.
- Do not treat the other seriously.
- Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).
- Invade the other's space – literally or metaphorically.
- Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect – personalize, use the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.
- Put the other's indebtedness on record.

Grice's Cooperative Principle

In 1975, Paul Grice introduced the Cooperative Principle, which reads "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (p. 45). The Cooperative Principle allows language users to communicate cooperatively to be understood in a particular context. Bach (2006) captures this observation when he divides a speaker's participation into two layers: what is said and what is implicated. He also notes that what a speaker means by his/her utterances may not be explicitly available to listeners.

Under the cooperative principle, Grice (1975: 45-46) lists four maxims:
1. Quantity
Make your contribution as informative as is required.
Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
2. Quality

Do not say what you believe to be false.
Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
3. Relation
Make your contributions relevant.
4. Manner
Avoid ambiguity.
Avoid obscurity of expression.
Be brief.
Be orderly.

Grice believes that following the cooperative principle and its maxims marks participants as rational agents. However, there are situations where language users may fail to fulfill the maxims in four ways: violating, flouting, opting out and classing. As far as this study is concerned, violating the maxims is going to be the main focus.

Violating Grice's maxims results in four strategies which include:

1. Fabrication violates the maxim of quality. It can take the form of saying something that is completely false or failure to provide adequate evidence. (Gupta, Sakamoto & Ortony, 2012)
2. Concealment**.** Ekman (2009) considers concealment a deliberative act of withholding information. Hiding information results in the violation of the maxim of quantity when the speaker provides insufficient information or more information than is required in a specific situation.
3. Vagueness. This is a strategy which is employed to create a fuzzy image in the mind of people to shield themselves against possible attacks and direct the attention towards unimportant things.
4. Evasion. Fraser (2010) defines evasion as the failure that the hearer experiences when he/she receives information from the speaker that does not fit his/her expectation. Evasion might be the most powerful defensive strategy which is exploited to avoid unveiling correct information that may have potential damage to one's positions.

Rhetorical Devices
As has already been mentioned, combining both pragmatics and rhetoric within the same framework is useful in illustrating both the communicative intention and the intention of persuasion which occur in most communicative uses of language (Larrazabal & Korta, 2002). McQuarrie and Mick (1996) maintain that rhetorical devices are strategically utilized in persuasion to deliver more effective forms of expression than those of the literal meaning of the propositional content. To them, a rhetorical figure of speech such as hyperbole, litotes, irony, metaphor, number-game, and shifting blame, to name but a few is "an artful deviation in the form" that is used to convey unconventional meaning.

Pragmatics of Blame and Blame Avoidance
The ritualized character of parliamentary discourse is governed by traditions, rules and regulations. Rules and rituals are not unified in all parliaments but they all require particular linguistic choices. MPs do not use any kind of language. Instead, social and institutional norms of their culture restrict their access to certain language forms. All parliaments serve similar goals. Still, there are some linguistic and non-linguistic variables that make parliaments dissimilar. These

include observing certain rules of politeness, tolerating aggressive linguistic choices, utilizing concepts of irony and humor, etc (Bayley, 2004).

There is no doubt that parliamentary discourse is adversarial. MPs often criticize and/or accuse each other or government ministers for some policies or actions provided that they prove them with evidence. In other words, MPs exchange blame and denial regarding domestic or global issues. In Alasko's (2011) opinion, blame is manifested through criticism, accusation, punishment and humiliation. With these strategies in mind, blame can detect fault with another individual or a group. Hence, blame is a powerful tool that can be used for better or worse. One of the requirements of 'blame' is the occurrence of two actors: a blame maker or 'blamer', and blame taker or 'blamee' (Hood, 2011). In the parliamentary setting, which is characterized by conflict talk (Wodak, 2006), government MPs and opponent parties exchange blame over recent policies and actions that each believes to be true from their standpoint. As such, an MP can be a blame maker one day and a blame taker the other. However, blame can be highly risky in parliamentary discourse. If a blame maker cannot prove an MP or another government officeholder blameworthy, he/she may lose credibility, worsen the issue under discussion or be the subject of blame him/herself. As such, a blame maker should be very careful while attributing blame.

Blame frustrates people and, ultimately, does not let them "speak up or take the right action" when they should (Dattner, 2011, p. 2). Thus, to be on the safe side, blame takers blame the act of blame itself and try their best to prove its misplacement on an individual or group. In other words, they avoid blame by denying their "agency, competence, and responsibility for the unfavorable outcome" (Tilly, 2008, p. 103), in the belief that fingers should, rather, be pointed at others who are blameworthy. Accordingly, blame takers utilize various blame avoidance strategies which include among many others: *'limiting the agenda'* which aims to prevent politically harmful issues from being established in the first place, *'finger-pointing'* when politicians may resort to pass the responsibility for a decision on some other party or government officeholder, *'shifting blame'* which politicians use when the responsibility for an unfavorable decision cannot be placed on someone else, so they try to shift blame or find a scapegoat, *'denial'* as when politicians try their best to prove that there is no problem at all to eliminate the rise of blame, and *'lying'* which politicians practice to protect themselves against possible reputation damaging acts. Dijk (2008) sees lying as "a verbal act that involves the illegitimate manipulation of knowledge in interaction and communication" (pp. 245-246). Generally, lying violates the ethical norms of truthfulness that form the basis of all human interaction.

From a pragmatic perspective, parliamentarians are supposed to act and interact with each other using various strategies which include politeness strategies, impoliteness strategies, and strategies of violating Grice's maxims. Lakoff (1975) views politeness as a set of strategies intended to mitigate dispute in communication. Leech (1980) defines politeness as a means of "strategic conflict avoidance" (p. 18). With reference to face-saving, Goffman (1972) indicates that "the person will have two points of view – a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the other's face" (p. 325). As such, the defensive theme of Lakoff's definition is intended to save a speaker's face while the protective theme of Leech's definition is meant to save the other's face. Rather than dealing with politeness, Culpeper, Eelen and Bousfield have taken the opposite direction, i.e. impoliteness. They argue that politeness

theories deal with impoliteness superficially and inadequately. Culpeper (1996) defines impoliteness as the use of strategies that are intended to cause social disruption. This definition goes directly against Brown and Levinson's (1987) definition of politeness. Eelen (2001) points out that politeness and impoliteness are related to each other. She believes that they represent two sides of the same coin. In other words, people's interaction is either positive (polite) or negative (impolite). Eelen (2001) mentions two possibilities: first, "impoliteness is doubly negatively defined: as the absence of politeness which results from the absence of cultural scripts", and second, "the conceptualization of impoliteness as a conscious act in its own right" (p. 100). As for the last set of strategies, Grice believes that following the cooperative principle and its maxims marks participants as rational agents. However, there are situations where language users may fail to fulfill the maxims in four ways: violating, flouting, opting out and classing. The major focus in this study is violating the maxims which results in a set of strategies which include fabrication, concealment, vagueness, and evasion.

In their exchanges of adversarial, challenging, and often mutually accusatory replies (Ilie, 2015), blame makers and blame takers may have recourse to a set of rhetorical strategies. Rhetoric changes reality by creating a discourse in which the audience is so immersed. In this context, rhetoric is persuasive. The relationship between pragmatics and rhetoric is deeply rooted. Bitzer (1968) states that "a work of rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself" (pp. 3-4). Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu (2012) asserts that pragmatics and rhetoric share the same objectives: language in use and the intentionality to produce certain effects on the addressee. This link is also asserted by Archer, Aijmer and Wichmann (2012) who assert that a pragmatic view of language implies the use of language to affect others and alter their actions in certain ways. Larrazabal and Korta (2002) claim that a 'pragma-rhetorical' perspective would be useful in illustrating the "intentional phenomena that occur in most communicative uses of language, namely, the communicative intention and the intention of persuading" (pp. 1-2).Therefore, rhetorical devices, such as figures of speech, can be useful to deliver powerful messages that are persuasive in a certain context.

It is noteworthy that the aforementioned pragmatic and rhetorical strategies represent the components of an eclectic model which constitutes the basic apparatus for systematizing the data obtained from the analysis of both British and Iraqi corpora in the present study.

Methodology
Research Design

In the current study a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is used for the investigation of British and Iraqi corpora with respect to the strategies utilized in the interrogation process. According to Duff (2010), "quantitative and qualitative approaches are currently viewed as complementary rather than fundamentally incompatible, and a more mixed-paradigm research is recommended" (p. 54). Qualitative research serves to answer questions which begin with: Why? How? In what way? (Hancock, 1998). To enhance the qualitative approach, the researcher adopts the quantitative approach to subject the analyzed data to statistical treatment to "support or refute alternate knowledge claims" (Williams, 2007, p. 66).

Corpus Description

Eight British and Iraqi transcripts of parliamentary sessions dated from 2016 to 2019 will be examined as a first stage in the analysis to obtain an overview of how certain goals are achieved by examining the pragmatic and pragma-rhetorical strategies detected in British and Iraqi corpora to find out which of these strategies are more characteristic of the British and Iraqi parliamentary discourse and which are more frequently used than others in the British and Iraqi texts by conducting a statistical analysis. It is worth mentioning that the transcripts have been downloaded from the official websites https://hansard.parliament.uk and https://www.parliament.iq respectively but the data selected for analysis comprises a set of excerpts representing those conversational interactions which exhibit noticeable blame and blame avoidance acts. Tables one and two provide a description of the British and Iraqi corpora selected for the analysis in this study.

Table 1. *Description of British data*

Session No	Speakers	Status of Speakers	Topics	Setting
S1	- Thangam Debbonaire - Theresa May - Jeremy Corbyn - Khalid Mahmood - Ian Blackford - Nick Thomas-Symonds	Labor MP Leader of the Conservative Party and the PM Leader of the Labor Party Labor MP Leader of the Scottish National Party Labor MP	Climate change Arms export Violence in Yemen Racism Brexit deal	26 June, 2019 Palace of Westminster (London)
S2	- Theresa May - Jeremy Corbyn	Leader of the Conservative Party and the PM Leader of the Labor Party	Brexit plan Customs Jobs	9th May, 2019 Palace of Westminster (London)
S3	- David Cameron - Jeremy Corbyn	Leader of the Conservative Party and the PM Leader of the Labor Party	Economy Poverty Cuts	9th March, 2016 Palace of Westminster (London)
S4	- Boris Johnson - Jeremy Corbyn	Leader of the Conservative Party and the PM Leader of the Labor Party	Economy Poverty Cuts	4th September, 2019 -Palace of Westminster (London)

Table 2. *Description of Iraqi data*

Session No.	Speakers	Status of Speakers	Topics	Setting
S1	- Hanan Al-Fatlawi - Qasim Al-Fahdawi	- MP - Minister of Electricity	Corruption	31st January, 2018/Baghdad
S2	- Abdulrazzq Mehebis - Qasim Al-Fahdawi	- MP - Minister of Electricity	Corruption	3rd February, 2018/Baghdad
S3	- Haitham Al-Jubori - Hoshyar Zebari	- MP - Minister of Finance	Corruption	25th August, 2016/Baghdad
S4	- Awad Al-Awadi - Adeela Hmood	- MP - Minister of Health	Corruption	1st April, 2017/Baghdad

The Analytical Model

An eclectic model which draws upon ideas and assumptions adopted from a set of paradigms, which were introduced in the literature review, has been developed to accord with the achievement of the aims of the study and the verification or rejection of its hypotheses. It is divided into two stages: blame and blame avoidance. Each stage comprises, as an analytical tool, a set of pragmatic and pragma-rhetorical strategies adopted from the following four paradigms.

Figures one and two graph the analytical model which comprises a set of strategies utilized at the blame and blame avoidance stages in the parliamentary setting. This model has been developed from the four paradigms already discussed.
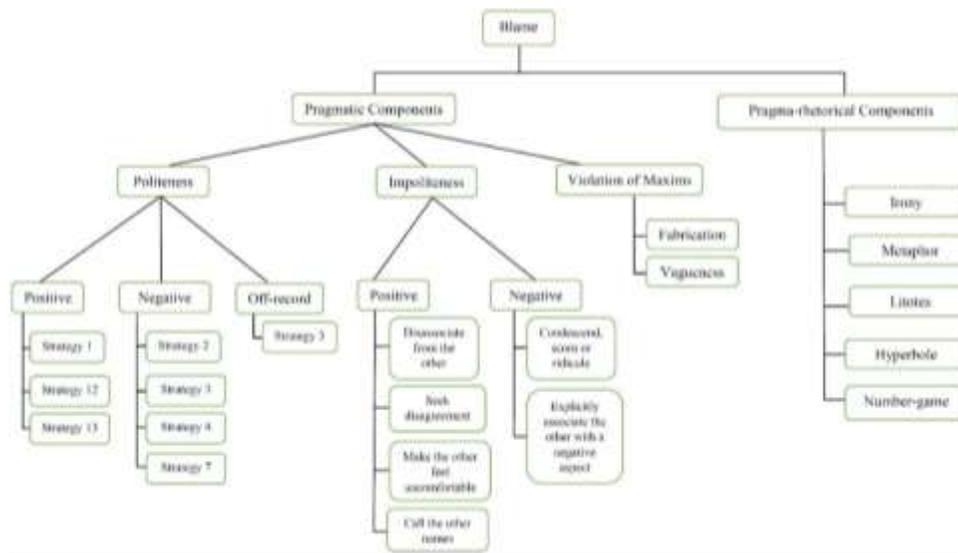
Figure 2. The eclectic model of the blame stage
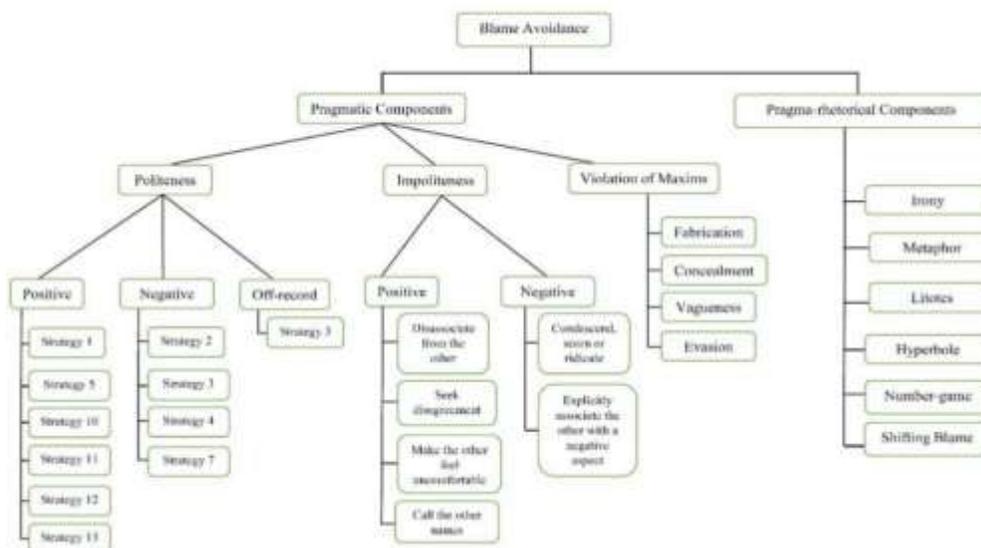
Figure 3. The eclectic model of the blame avoidance stage

Results and Discussion
British Data

At the pragmatic level, the statistical analysis of the British corpus which comprises four Parliamentary Question sessions reveals the following rates and frequencies of the strategies used at both blame and   blame avoidance stages as detailed in table three:

Table 3. *Overall frequencies of pragmatic strategies detected at the blame and blame avoidance stages in British sessions*

Stage	Pragmatic Strategies							
	Politeness Strategies		Impoliteness Strategies		Violation of G's Maxims Strategies		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Blame Stage	105	43.5	122	50.6	15	6.2	242	39.1
Blame Avoidance Stage	245	64.9	77	20.4	55	14.5	377	62
Total	350	56.6	199	32.03	70	11.3	619	100

To begin with, a close examination of these statistics shows that out of the (619) strategies used at both stages politeness ones have the highest frequency with (350) instances making up 56.6% while impoliteness as well as violation of G's maxims strategies show less frequency with (199) and (70) instances constituting 32.03% and 11.3% respectively, these results suggest that politicians in the British parliament appraise avoidance by being indirect.

As for the pragmatic strategies utilized at the blame stage, both politeness and impoliteness strategies were found to be somehow equal in rates making up 43.5% and 50.6% respectively, this reflects a preference on the part of blamers to use a strategic method which is to prove blamees blameworthy especially with regard to issues which the former believes to be true from their standpoint but at the same time they tend to avoid conflict by saving blamees' face which is necessary even in a political setting like the Parliament. In this respect, Sheridan (2013, p. 4-5) writes: "We need politeness when we criticize others, give negative feedback, or do things that threaten people's ego and face, so as to allow social interactions to communicate face-threatening information while simultaneously showing concern for others". Only (15) instances representing the violation of Gricean maxims strategies at the blame stage were spotted in the data analyzed forming 6.2% of the strategies used at this stage due to both blamers and blamee's realization of the importance of the critical issues being discussed where there is no room for any of the deceptive strategies.

Regarding the strategies used at the blame avoidance stage, the data under analysis reveal that politeness strategies represent (245) instances making up the highest rate of frequency 64.9% in comparison with (77) instances of impoliteness strategies and (55) instances of violating Gricean

maxims forming only 20.4% and 14.5% respectively. The high frequency of politeness strategies conveys that blame takers prefer to take a defensive position and obey Erskine May's (1844) *Treatise on the law, privileges, proceedings and usage of Parliament* that prevents conflicts. The lower instances of impoliteness strategies and the violations of Gricean maxims indicate that blame takers are more careful with their statements than blame makers to avoid escalating things and, therefore, escape blame.

As regards pragma-rhetorical strategies whose rates and frequencies of occurrence are detailed in table four, the data under analysis revealed that they are more frequently used at the blame avoidance stage than they are at the blame stage with 54.5% and 45.5% respectively. This suggests that those politicians are primarily motivated by their desire to avoid blame leading them to adopt a variety of pragma-rhetorical strategies, including hyperbole, number-game, shifting, litotes, metaphor, and irony, for fear of their reputations being diminished and their careers being damaged as a result.

Table 4. *Overall frequencies of pragma-rhetorical strategies detected at the blame and blame avoidance stages in British sessions*

Stage	Pragma Rhetorical Strategies	
	No.	%
Blame Stage	71	45.5
Blame Avoidance Stage	85	54.5
Total	156	100

Blame Stage
     Politeness Strategies
As shown in table five the total number of politeness strategies at the blame stage is (105) among which positive strategies constitute the highest proportion with (55) instances making up 52.3% in the four sessions. Negative strategies come in the second place with (31) instances representing 29.5% followed by (19) instances which stand for bald off-record strategies making up 18.09%. Positive strategies have scored higher because blame makers want to protect the positive face of their counterparts by having their views and actions supported within the Parliament. In other words, they help politicians accept the personalities and policies of their interlocutors to eliminate doubt and establish solidarity and cooperation to ease the questioning process.

Table 5. *Overall frequencies of the politeness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Politeness Strategies						Total	
Positive Politeness		Negative Politeness		Bald off-Record			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
55	52.3	31	29.5	19	18.09	105	100

.

The beginning is with positive politeness strategies whose frequencies and percentages are detailed in table six.

Table 6. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of positive politeness strategies detected in the four sessions*

Session No.	Positive Politeness Strategies						Total	
	Include both S and H in the activity		Give (or ask for) reasons		Notice, attend, to H			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	5.5	4	7.3	1	1.8	8	14.6
2	4	7.3	0	0	0	0	4	7.3
3	16	29.1	2	3.6	0	0	18	32.7
4	22	40	2	3.6	1	1.8	25	45.4
Total	45	81.8	8	14.5	2	3.6	55	100

Looking at the percentages of occurrence of positive politeness strategies, it can be noted that the Strategy 'Include both S and H in the same activity' is far more frequently used than Strategies 'Give (or ask for) reasons' and 'Notice, attend, to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)' having the frequency of 81.8 %, 14.5% and 3.6% respectively. This is mainly because politicians primarily aim to achieve cooperation with their interlocutors and mitigate FTAs to save their face from being damaged.

In the second place come negative politeness strategies which amount to (31) instances as shown in table seven which provides a detailed statistical analysis of each of these strategies which were found to be used in the British setting.

Table 7. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of negative politeness strategies in the four sessions*

| Session No. | Negative Politeness Strategies | | | | | | | | Total | |
| | Questions, hedge | | Be pessimistic | | Minimize the imposition | | Impersonalize S and H | | | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	4	12.9	2	6.4	1	3.2	0	0	7	22.5
2	0	0	0	0	2	6.4	0	0	2	6.4
3	1	3.2	3	9.7	1	3.2	0	0	5	16.1
4	7	22.6	6	19.4	2	6.4	2	6.4	17	54.8
Total	12	38.7	11	35.5	6	19.2	2	6.4	31	100

As for Strategies 'Questions, hedge' and 'Be pessimistic', a close approximation is noticed between their percentages 38.7% and 35.5% respectively in comparison with Strategies 'Minimize the imposition' and 'Impersonalize S and H' having the frequencies of 19.2% and 6.4% respectively. The dominance of Strategies 'Questions, hedge' and 'Be pessimistic' shows that blame makers do not want to coerce nor assume that H is likely to do something (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The only bald off-record strategy detected in the British corpus at the blame stage is 'presupposition' whose ratios of occurrence in the four British sessions are detailed in table eight. It is worth noting that this type of strategies is used far less than both positive and negative politeness strategies with (19) instances only. The reason behind its low occurrence can possibly be attributed to the fact that politicians do not want to leave the addressee with a number of interpretations that may arise from going off-record. Rather, they try their best to attribute clear communicative intentions to their acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Table 8. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of bald off-record strategies in the four sessions*

| Session No. | Presupposition | |
	No.	%
1	3	15.8
2	1	5.3
3	7	36.8
4	8	42.1
Total	19	100

Impoliteness Strategies

The statistical analysis of impoliteness strategies which total (122) revealed a close approximation in the statistical results between positive strategies which constitute (63) instances typifying 51.6%, which is only 3.3% higher than negative strategies which amount to 48.3% with (59) instances. These approximate results indicate that blame makers want to severely damage the addressee's face and wants by seeking disagreement, using derogatory nominations, explicitly associating them with negative acts, making the other feel uncomfortable, etc.

Table 9. *Overall frequencies of the impoliteness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Impoliteness Strategies				Total	
Positive Impoliteness		Negative Impoliteness			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
63	51.6	59	48.3	122	100

Concerning the occurrence of positive impoliteness strategies, the findings in table ten show clearly that there is more preference for Strategy 'Make the other feel uncomfortable' than strategies 'Disassociate from the other', 'Seek disagreement', and 'Call the other names' with 92.05%, 3.15%, 3.2%, and 1.6% respectively. This is because blame makers want to push the pressure on their counterparts to the extreme to question their competency as Ministers and make them feel insecure in the questioning process itself to increase the possibility of damage caused to their political status and disclose their failing actions and policies.

Table 10. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the positive impoliteness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Positive Impoliteness Strategies									
	Make the other feel uncomfortable		Disassociate from the other		Call the other names		Seek disagreement		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	8	12.7	0	0	1	1.6	1	1.6	10	15.9
2	17	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	27
3	2	3.15	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3.1
4	31	49.2	2	3.15	1	1.6	0	0	32	53.9
Total	58	92.05	2	3.15	2	3.2	1	1.6	63	100

As for negative impoliteness strategies whose percentages of occurrence in the four sessions are detailed in table 11, the results indicated that the Strategy of 'Explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect' is by far the most frequently used strategy with 79.6% in comparison with 'Condescend, scorn or ridicule' which records 20.3% only. This reflects the blame makers' obsession with attributing blame towards their counterparts by explicitly associating them with negative actions and policies to ruin their reputation and make them lose power and position.

Table 11. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the negative impoliteness strategies detected at the blame stage*

| Session No. | Negative Impoliteness Strategies | | | | | |
| | Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect | | Condescend, scorn or ridicule | | Total | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	7	11.8	2	3.4	9	15.2
2	3	5.1	4	6.8	7	11.9
3	18	30.5	0	0	18	30.5
4	19	32.2	6	10.2	25	42.4
Total	47	79.6	12	20.4	59	100

Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies

    Regarding the violation of Grice's maxims strategies, table 12 makes clear that fabrication is far more frequently used than vagueness with (14) instances for the former vs one instance only for the latter making up 93.3% and 6.6% respectively. This demonstrates that blame makers want to intentionally create false beliefs in the minds of others to make them easy to control and deceive unlike vagueness which, according to Zhang (2011), can be passive when a speaker has no other choice due to the lack of knowledge.

Table 12. *Overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims detected at the blame stage*

| Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies | | | | Total | |
| Fabrication | | Vagueness | | | |
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
14	93.3	1	6.6	15	100

The incidence of these two strategies in the four sessions is detailed in table 13.

Table 13. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies				Total	
	Fabrication		Vagueness			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	5	33.3%	1	6.6%	6	39.9
2	1	6.6%	0	0%	1	6.6
3	2	13.3%	0	0%	2	13.3
4	6	40%	0	0%	6	40
Total	14	93.2%	1	6.6%	15	100

Pragma-Rhetorical Strategies

   As explicated in table 14, a modest approximation is noticed between number-game and hyperbole with 47.9% and 42.3% respectively in comparison with metaphor and litotes which are manifested poorly with only (4) and (3) instances making 5.6% and 4.2% of the total number of pragma-rhetorical strategies at this stage. No instances representing irony were detected in the data under analysis. This is because politicians want to attribute blame acts directly to their counterparts. In other words, the real meaning is not hidden or contradicted by the literal meaning of the words.

Table 14. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of pragma-rhetorical strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Number-Game		Hyperbole		Metaphor		Litotes		Irony		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	14	19.7	10	14.1	1	1.4	0	0	0	0	25	35.2
2	3	4.2	5	7	1	1.4	1	1.4	0	0	10	14
3	10	14.1	7	9.8	1	1.4	0	0	0	0	18	25.3
4	7	9.85	8	11.3	1	1.4	2	2.8	0	0	18	25.3
Total	34	47.9	30	42.3	4	5.6	3	4.2	0	0	71	100

Blame Avoidance Stage

   Politeness Strategies

   Examining the statistics provided in table 15, it can be clearly shown that positive politeness strategies have the majority percentage which is 80% with (196) instances out of the total (245) whereas negative politeness strategies and off-record ones show minor percentages which are 13.1% and 6.9% with only (32) and (17) instances respectively. The high occurrences of positive politeness strategies reflect the desire to fulfill one's positive face which include claiming

familiarity with the addressee, minimizing the distance between S and H, and conveying that S and H are cooperators. In other words, blamed politicians' best option is to use intimate language to ease the questioning process in the parliament and minimize possible FTAs in this conflictive setting.

Table 15. *Overall frequencies of the politeness strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Politeness Strategies						Total	
Positive Politeness		Negative Politeness		Bald off-Record			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
196	80	32	13.1	17	6.9	245	100

Positive politeness strategies constitute the highest proportion at the blame avoidance stage are given a statistically detailed description for their use in each session in table 16 where it can be noticed that the positive strategy 'Include both S and H in the same activity' records the highest percentage. This can be attributed to the fact that blame takers strive to involve themselves with their counterparts in the same unsuccessful policies and actions that have created the state of conflict to the level of exchanging blame, using the inclusive 'we' and its variant 'our'.

Table 16. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of positive politeness strategies detected in the four sessions*

Session No.	Positive Politeness Strategies														Total	
	Include both S and H in the activity		Notice, attend, to H		Give (or ask for) reasons		Be optimistic		Offer, Promise		Seek agreement					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
1	37	18.9	4	2.03	7	3.6	3	1.5	2	1	2	1	55	28		
2	27	13.8	5	2.5	0	0	0	0	4	2.03	1	0.5	37	18.8		
3	39	19.9	6	3.1	6	3.1	3	1.5	2	1	5	2.5	61	31.1		
4	17	8.7	5	2.5	4	2.03	10	5.1	6	3.1	1	0.5	43	21.9		
Total	120	61.3	20	10.13	17	8.73	16	8.1	14	7.13	9	4.5	196	100		

Among negative politeness strategies which show poor presence in the four British sessions as made clear in table 17, the strategy of 'Question, hedge' was found to be utilized by politicians more often than others. This explains the blame takers' avoidance of conveying sharp opinions to evade future retribution if they were proved wrong.

Table 17. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of negative politeness strategies in the four sessions*

Session No.	Negative Politeness Strategies								Total	
	Question, hedge		Be pessimistic		Minimize the imposition		Impersonalize S and H		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	4	12.5	0	0	1	3.1	0	0	5	15.6
2	0	0	0	0	1	3.1	1	3.1	2	6.2
3	4	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	12.5
4	5	15.6	11	34.4	5	15.6	0	0	21	65.6
Total	13	40.6	11	34.4	7	21.8	1	3.1	32	100

Bald off record strategies at the blame avoidance stage have the lowest number of occurrences in the four sessions represented only by 'Presupposition' as made clear in table 18. This is due to the fact that blame takers are not afraid of performing FTAs against their opponents to save their face at any cost in a clear, direct way.

Table 18. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of bald off-record strategies in the four sessions*

Session No.	Presupposition	
	No.	%
1	7	41.2
2	2	11.7
3	2	11.7
4	6	35.3
Total	17	100

Impoliteness Strategies

As regards impoliteness strategies, the data under analysis revealed a close approximation in the statistical results between positive and negative impoliteness strategies recording (33) and (32) instances respectively as shown in table 19. These statistical results are compatible with the politicians' desire in this setting to undermine the personal features of their counterparts, with their intention to take the questioning process personally to ruin their reputation and underestimate the alleged successes they had achieved in their ministries. Moreover, blame takers want to impede the questioning process to limit the blame makers' freedom in scrutinizing the Government and its Ministers.

Table 19. *Overall frequencies of the impoliteness strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Impoliteness Strategies				Total	
Positive Impoliteness		Negative Impoliteness			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
33	50.7	32	49.2	65	100

Tables 20 and 21 give a detailed statistical analysis of the occurrences of these two types of impoliteness strategies observed in the four sessions at the blame avoidance stage. Among positive impoliteness strategies it can be seen that the Strategy 'Disassociate from the other' constitutes the highest proportion with 54.5% whereas among negative impoliteness strategies there is a bigger tendency to use 'Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect' Strategy than 'Condescend, scorn or ridicule' strategy representing 71.8% and 28.1% respectively. The statistics computed coincides with the fact that blame takers do their best to disassociate themselves from unfavorable actions and policies while, at the same time, redirecting them at the blame makers to avoid blame and accountability.

Table 20. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the positive impoliteness strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Session No.	Positive Impoliteness Strategies									
	Disassociate from the other		Seek disagreement		Make the other feel uncomfortable		Call the other names		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2	6.05	3	9.1	2	6.05	0	0	7	21.2
2	5	15.15	3	9.1	4	12.1	0	0	12	36.35

3	6	18.2	1	3	0	0	0	0	7	21.2
4	5	15.15	0	0	1	3	1	3.03	7	21.18
Total	18	54.5	7	21.2	7	21.15	1	3.03	33	100

Table 21. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the negative impoliteness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Negative Impoliteness Strategies					
	Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect		Condescend, scorn or ridicule		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	5	15.6	2	6.2	7	21.8
2	4	12.5	0	0	4	12.5
3	6	18.8	3	9.4	9	28.2
4	8	25	4	12.5	12	37.5
Total	23	71.9	9	28.1	32	100

Violation of Grice's maxims Strategies

A detailed statistical account of the rates and frequencies of Gricean strategies which politicians were observed to violate at the blame avoidance stage is produced in table 22 where it can be noticed that 'evasion' appears to be the strategy that was more frequently violated than others having a frequency rate at 58.2%, a statistical result which is normally expected, for 'evasion' is a technique which politicians resort to in order to cope with blame makers' questions and interruptions which may cause possible threats to the former's face, hence they avoid giving answers to questions.

Table 22. *Overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies								Total	
Evasion		Fabrication		Concealment		Vagueness			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
32	58.2	12	21.8	9	16.4	2	3.6	55	100

Table 23 provides is a detailed statistical analysis of the violation of the strategies of Gricean maxims in each of the four sessions.

Table 23. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Session No.	Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies									
	Evasion		Fabrication		Concealment		Vagueness		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	6	10.9	2	3.65	2	3.65	0	0	10	18.2
2	9	16.4	3	5.5	1	1.8	0	0	13	23.7
3	6	10.9	0	0	1	1.8	1	1.8	8	14.5
4	11	20	7	12.7	5	9.1	1	1.8	24	43.6
Total	32	58.2	12	21.85	9	16.35	2	3.6	55	100

Pragma-rhetorical Strategies

    Calculating the frequencies of pragma-rhetorical strategies at the blame avoidance stage revealed that hyperbole and number-game record the highest ratios among other strategies recognized in the data under analysis with a close approximation in their statistical results accounting for 39.9% and 31.7% respectively as detailed in table 24. In the face of blame makers' endless attacks, ministers are inclined to magnify their alleged successes in running their ministries which are enhanced by statistics to add credibility to their utterances and prove themselves blameless.

Table 24. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of pragma-rhetorical strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Session No.	Hyperbole		Number-Game		Shifting Blame		Litotes		Metaphor		Irony		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2	2.3	1	1.18	4	4.7	1	1.18	0	0	0	0	8	9.4
2	9	10.6	1	1.18	2	2.35	2	2.35	1	1.1	0	0	15	17.6
3	12	14.1	16	18.8	2	2.35	1	1.18	0	0	0	0	31	36.4
4	11	12.9	9	10.6	7	8.2	1	1.18	3	3.5	0	0	31	36.3
Total	34	39.9	27	31.7	15	17.6	5	5.8	4	4.6	0	0	85	100

Iraqi Data

A detailed statistical account of the rates and frequencies of pragmatic and pragma-rhetorical strategies which have been detected in the Iraqi corpus represented by four Parliamentary sessions at both blame and blame avoidance stages is explicated in table 25. A close examination of these

statistics reveals that out of the (537) strategies used at both stages impoliteness ones occupy the highest frequency with (341) instances making up 63.5% while politeness as well as violation of G's maxims strategies show less frequency with (110) and (86) instances constituting 20.4% and 16% respectively out of the overall ratio. The high percentages that impoliteness strategies have scored indicate that politicians in the Iraqi parliament prefer to take offensive standpoints at both stages to intentionally cause damage as much as possible to their counterparts for the sake of winning and proving themselves blameless.

As for the pragmatic strategies utilized at the blame stage, impoliteness strategies were also found to score higher than others in rates making up 84.2% with 9.5% for politeness strategies. This reflects a preference on the part of blamers to use direct strategies of blame which usually create conflict between politicians to raise the possibility of damaging blamees' face. This also reflects the politicians' desire to violate the social norms and values that are expected to be followed by each individual for the sake of proving their standpoints. Only (17) instances representing the violation of Gricean's maxims strategies at the blame stage were spotted in the data analyzed forming 6.2% of the strategies used at this stage due to both blamers and blamee's realization of the importance of the critical issues being discussed where there is no room for any deception or manipulation.

Regarding the strategies used at the blame avoidance stage, the data under analysis reveal that impoliteness strategies represent (111) instances making up again the highest rate of frequency 42.04% in comparison with (84) instances of politeness strategies and (69) instances which represent the violation of Gricean maxims strategies forming only 31.8% and 26.1% respectively. This demonstrates that politicians in the Iraqi parliament always tend to use impoliteness strategies to serve one of two purposes: to defend themselves against possible blame acts that may result in the loss of their positions and ruin their reputation, or attack other politicians to prove themselves blameless and shift the blame towards some other individual or authority. Furthermore, it reveals that politicians do not always obey the Rules of Procedures of the Parliament and the Iraqi Constitution.

Table 25. *Overall frequencies of pragmatic strategies detected at the blame and blame avoidance stages in Iraqi sessions*

Stage	Pragmatic Strategies						
	Politeness Strategies		Impoliteness Strategies		Violation of G's Maxims Strategies		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Blame Stage	26	9.5	230	84.2	17	6.2	273	100
Blame Avoidance Stage	84	31.8	111	42.04	69	26.1	264	100
Total	110	20.4	341	63.5	86	16	537	100

As for the pragma-rhetorical strategies whose frequencies of occurrence are presented in table 26, the statistics computed reveals that they are more frequently utilized at the blame avoidance stage than they are at the blame stage reaching 64.5% compared with 35.5% of their occurrence at the blame stage. This suggests that politicians at the blame avoidance stage are more inclined to exploit

hyperbole, number-game, shifting, litotes, metaphor, and irony to have a more persuasive effect on their opponents, to persuade them into believing that they are irresponsible of wrong decisions which may have been made and that blame is baseless or, rather, it should be directed towards some other authority or individual.

Table 26. *Overall frequencies of pragma-rhetorical strategies detected at the blame and blame avoidance stages in British sessions*

Stage	Pragma Rhetorical Strategies	
	No.	%
Blame Stage	83	35.5
Blame Avoidance Stage	151	64.5
Total	234	100

Blame Stage
Politeness Strategies

Table 27 shows that the total number of politeness strategies at the blame stage is (26) among which positive strategies comprise the highest proportion with (18) instances making up 69.2% in the four sessions. Negative strategies come in the second place with (8) instances representing 30.8%. The analysis of the data shows that bald off-record strategies were not employed at all. The high percentage of positive politeness shows that politicians have the desire to build up solidarity and cooperation and appraise positively and publicly their interlocutors to avoid conflict, as Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 70) state "Positive politeness is oriented toward the positive face of H, the positive self-image that he claims for himself".

Table 27. *Overall frequencies of the politeness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Politeness Strategies							
Positive Politeness		Negative Politeness		Bald off-Record		Total	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18	69.2	8	30.8	0	0	26	100

The beginning is with positive politeness strategies whose frequencies and percentages are detailed in table 28.

Table 28. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of positive politeness strategies detected in the four sessions*

| Session No. | Positive Politeness Strategies | | | | | | Total | |
| | Include both S and H in the activity | | Notice, attend, to H | | Give (or ask for) reasons | | | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	16.7	2	11.1	2	11.1	7	38.9
2	0	0	2	11.1	0	0	2	11.1
3	5	27.8	0	0	0	0	5	27.8
4	2	11.1	0	0	2	11.1	4	22.2
Total	10	55.6	4	22.2	4	22.2	18	100

It can be noticed that the positive politeness strategy 'Include both S and H in the same activity' is far more frequently used than Strategies 'Give (or ask for) reasons' and 'Notice, attend, to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)' having the frequency of 55.6%, 22.2% and 22.2% respectively. This amounts to the cooperative effect politicians want to establish in questioning their opponents to minimize FTA and help them get answers without damaging their face.

Negative politeness strategies come in the second place with (8) instances as shown in table 29 where the 'Minimize the imposition' Strategy scores the highest percentage with 75% in comparison with the Strategies 'Question, hedge' and 'Impersonalize S and H' having the lower percentages of 12.5% each. This is because politicians want to mitigate the impact of FTAs that may be found in their utterances as well as the imposition on H's freedom. The analysis of the data shows that the negative politeness strategy 'Be pessimistic' was not used at all.

Table 29. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of negative politeness strategies in the four sessions*

| Session No. | Negative Politeness Strategies | | | | | | | | Total | |
| | Minimize the imposition | | Question, hedge | | Impersonalize S and H | | Be pessimistic | | | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	37.5	1	12.5	0	0	0	0	4	50
2	1	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12.5
3	1	12.5	0	0	1	12.5	0	0	2	25
4	1	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12.5
Total	6	75	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0	8	100

As has already been mentioned, no instances of bald off-record strategies have been spotted in the four Iraqi sessions. The reason behind the zero occurrence of this type of politeness strategies can possibly be attributed to the fact that politicians do not want their utterances to implicate a criticism (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Impoliteness Strategies

The statistical analysis of impoliteness strategies with total (230) reveals a clear disparity in the results between positive strategies which constitute (145) instances typifying 63%, with (85) occurrences of negative strategies that comprise 37%. The high percentage of positive impoliteness strategies conveys the politicians' intention to damage the addressees' positive face wants. More specifically, it was scored more by those politicians who scrutinize government officeholders to ruin their reputation and make them lose their power.

Table 30. *Overall frequencies of the impoliteness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Impoliteness Strategies				Total	
Positive Impoliteness		Negative Impoliteness			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
145	63	85	37	230	100

Examining the occurrence of positive impoliteness strategies, the findings in table 31 show clearly that there is more preference for making the other feel uncomfortable than disassociating them from the other, seeking disagreement, and calling the other names, with 89%, 9.7%, and 1.4% respectively.

Table 31. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the positive impoliteness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Positive Impoliteness Strategies									
	Make the other feel uncomfortable		Seek disagreement		Disassociate from the other		Call the other names		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	32	22.1	10	6.9	1	0.7	0	0	43	29.7
2	28	19.3	2	1.4	1	0.7	0	0	31	21.4
3	39	26.9	1	0.7	0	0	0	0	40	27.6
4	30	20.7	1	0.7	0	0	0	0	31	21.4
Total	129	89	14	9.7	2	1.4	0	0	145	100

Concerning the negative impoliteness strategies whose percentages of occurrence in the four sessions are detailed in table 32, the results show that the Strategy 'Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect' is by far the most frequently used strategy with 87% in comparison with the strategy 'Condescend, scorn or ridicule' which records 13% only. This is mainly because politicians want to damage the reputation of their counterparts permanently by associating them with negative acts that will always be remembered when their names come to the fore instead of ridiculing or scorning them for a temporary effect.

Table 32. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the negative impoliteness strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Negative Impoliteness Strategies					
	Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect		Condescend, scorn or ridicule		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Session 1	23	27	5	5.9	28	32.9
Session 2	16	18.8	3	3.5	19	22.3
Session 3	16	18.8	1	1.2	17	20
Session 4	19	22.4	2	2.4	21	24.8
Total	74	87	11	13	85	100

Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies

As for the violation of Grice's maxims strategies, table 33 makes clear that fabrication is far more frequently used than vagueness with (16) instances for the former vs one instance only for the latter making up 94.1% and 5.9% respectively. This reflects the desire of blame makers to deviate from the truth to the extent of shaping others' thoughts as they please by creating "distorted versions of the sensitive information" (McCornack, 1992, p. 9).

Table 33. *Overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims detected at the blame stage*

Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies				Total	
Fabrication		Vagueness			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
16	94.1	1	5.9	17	100

The incidence of these sessions is detailed in two strategies in the four table 34.

Table 34. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies				Total	
	Fabrication		Vagueness			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2	11.8	1	5.9	3	17.7
2	6	35.2	0	0	6	35.2
3	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	8	47.1	0	0	8	47.1
Total	16	94.1	1	5.9	17	100

Pragma-Rhetorical Strategies

The statistics with regard to the pragma-rhetorical strategies identified in the Iraqi transcripts at the blame stage shows that 'number-game' surpasses the other strategies with 73.5% as made clear in table 35. The extensive use of the 'number-game' Strategy at the blame stage reflects the blame makers' intention to add credibility to their statements and, hence, support their blame acts against their counterparts.

Table 35. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of pragma-rhetorical strategies detected at the blame stage*

Session No.	Number-Game		Hyperbole		Metaphor		Litotes		Irony		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	12	14.5	10	12	2	2.4	4	4.8	1	1.2	29	34.9
2	5	6	2	2.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	8.4
3	31	37.3	0	0	0	0	1	1.2	0	0	32	38.5
4	13	15.7	2	2.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	18.1
Total	61	73.5	14	16.8	2	2.4	5	6	1	1.2	83	100

Blame Avoidance Stage
Politeness Strategies

Among politeness strategies used at the blame avoidance stage table 36 shows that positive politeness strategies come in the first place with (57) instances accounting for 67.8%. The next on line is negative politeness strategies which are represented by (17) instances only forming 20.2%. Bald off-record strategies which are embodies in (10) instances stand third in line comprising

11.9%. The high percentage of positive politeness strategies explains the politician's desire to establish harmony with his/her audience to achieve certain goals by claiming common ground with H, conveying that S and H are in cooperation, and fulfilling H's wants (Pastor, 2001).

Table 36. *Overall frequencies of the politeness strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Politeness Strategies						Total	
Positive Politeness		Negative Politeness		Bald off-Record			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
57	67.8	17	20.2	10	11.9	84	100

As for positive politeness strategies, comparing the occurrences of these strategies in the four Iraqi parliamentary sessions in table 37 shows clearly that Strategies 'Give (or ask for) reasons' and 'Seek Agreement' which have approximate percentages of occurrence recording 40.3% and 38.5 respectively are used far more often than others utilized at the blame avoidance stage. Giving reasons via the Strategy 'Give (or ask for) reasons' and satisfying H's desire to be right by raising safe topics through the use of the Strategy 'Seek Agreement' can help politicians create harmonious environment with their counterparts to minimize their FTAs.

Table 37. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of positive politeness strategies detected in the four sessions*

Session No.	Positive Politeness Strategies												Total	
	Give (or ask for) reasons		Seek Agreement		Include Both S and H in the same activity		Notice, attend, to H		Offer, promise		Be Optimistic			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	5	8.8	8	14	6	10.5	1	1.7	0	0	0	0	20	35
2	7	12.3	3	5.2	1	1.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	19.3
3	3	5.2	2	3.5	1	1.7	1	1.7	0	0	0	0	7	12.2
4	8	14	9	15.8	1	1.7	1	1.7	0	0	0	0	19	33.3
Total	23	40.3	22	38.5	9	15.7	3	5.2	0	0	0	0	57	100

As regards negative politeness strategies whose distribution in the four Iraqi sessions at the blame avoidance stage is detailed in table 38, it can be observed that two strategies were found to be used more often than others: 'Question, hedge' which is by far the most frequently used strategy with 64.7%, next in order is 'Impersonalize S and H' strategy with (5) instances making up 29.4%. The

extensive use of (Question, hedge) Strategy explains the politicians' desire to present tentative opinions to decrease the possible damage to their reputation in the future if they were proven wrong.

Table 38. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of negative politeness strategies in the four sessions*

Session No.	Negative Politeness Strategies								Total	
	Question, hedge		Impersonalize S and H		Minimize the imposition		Be pessimistic			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	1	5.9	2	11.8	0	0	0	0	3	17.7
2	2	11.8	3	17.5	1	5.9	0	0	6	35.2
3	2	11.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	11.8
4	6	35.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	35.2
Total	11	64.7	5	29.3	1	5.9	0	0	17	100

The only bald off-record strategy detected at the blame avoidance stage is 'presupposition' whose distribution in the four sessions is detailed in table 39. As has already been mentioned, this sub-strategy has the lowest number of occurrences among positive politeness strategies.

Table 39. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of bald off-record strategies in the four sessions*

Session No.	Presupposition	
	No.	%
1	3	30
2	1	10
3	3	30
4	3	30
Total	10	100

Impoliteness Strategies

Examining the frequency of occurrence of impoliteness strategies at the blame avoidance stage in table 40 shows clearly that positive impoliteness strategies record a higher utilization rate than negative ones having frequency rates which stand at 84.6% and 15.3% respectively. The reason behind the high occurrence of positive impoliteness strategies can possibly be attributed to the fact

that blame takers' best strategy is to target their counterparts' personal characters and political beliefs to prove their incompetency as MP to diffuse the blame acts against them.

Table 40. *Overall frequencies of the impoliteness strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Impoliteness Strategies				Total	
Positive Impoliteness		Negative Impoliteness			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
94	84.6	17	15.3	111	100

Concerning positive impoliteness strategies whose rates and frequencies are statistically described in table 41, 'seek disagreement' Strategy of which (71) instances were detected constitutes the highest proportion which amounts to 75.5% as compared with those instances of the other strategies detected at this stage. This amounts to the confrontational nature of Iraqi Question Time sessions where blame takers express quite publicly their rejection of the beliefs and opinions of their counterparts to cause severe damage.

Table 41. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the positive impoliteness strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Session No.	Positive Impoliteness Strategies									
	Seek disagreement		Make the other feel uncomfortable		Disassociate from the other		Call the other names		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	14	14.9	3	3.2	6	6.4	0	0	23	24.5
2	19	20.2	4	4.3	0	0	0	0	23	24.5
3	13	13.8	1	1.06	1	1.06	0	0	15	15.9
4	25	26.6	7	7.4	1	1.06	0	0	33	35.06
Total	71	75.5	15	15.96	8	8.52	0	0	94	100

In table 42 the findings about the occurrence of negative impoliteness strategies reveal clearly that Strategy 'condescend, scorn or ridicule' is embodied in (17) instances accounting for 100% whereas no instances for Strategy 'explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect' were detected in the selected texts. This can be attributed to the fact that blame takers (Ministers) want to emphasize their power and ridicule the blame acts of their opponents to belittle them as much as possible and leave no space for blame to be attributed. In other words, they strive to emphasize their honesty and competency in running their Ministries and make fun of the questioners to highlight their ignorance of the actions and policies of the Government and its facilities.

Table 42. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the negative impoliteness strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Session No.	Negative Impoliteness Strategies					
	Condescend, scorn or ridicule		Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	2	11.7	0	0	2	11.7
4	15	88.2	0	0	15	88.2
Total	17	100	0	0	17	100

Violation of G rice's maxims Strategies

As made clear in table 43, a comparison of the frequency rates of Gricean strategies which politicians seemed to ignore at the blame avoidance stage reveals the following results: evasion which amounts to 68.1% occupies a higher occurrence than fabrication, concealment, and vagueness which constitute 21.7%, 8.6%, and 1.4% respectively. This is a normal result in such settings because the blame takers' priority is to prevent MPs from accessing critical information they have to save their reputation and stay in their positions as long as they can.

Table 43. *Overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies									Total	
Evasion		Fabrication		Concealment		Vagueness				
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
47	68.1	15	21.7	6	8.6	1	1.4	69	100	

A detailed statistical analysis of how these strategies were employed by blame takers is provided in table 44.

Table 44. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of the violation of Grice's maxims* strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage

Session No.	Violation of Grice's Maxims Strategies								Total	
	Evasion		Fabrication		Concealment		Vagueness			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	4.3	5	7.2	1	1.4	0	0	9	12.9
2	10	14.5	3	4.3	1	1.4	0	0	14	20.2
3	21	30.4	4	5.8	3	4.3	1	1.4	29	41.9
4	13	18.8	3	4.3	1	1.4	0	0	17	24.5
Total	47	68	15	21.6	6	8.5	1	1.4	69	100

Pragma-Rhetorical Strategies

    A quantitative analysis of pragma-rhetorical strategies is presented in table 45 where we can observe that there is a tendency on the part of blame takers to use 'shifting blame' which constitutes 43.04% far more often than 'litotes', 'number-game', and 'hyperbole' with a disparity in the use of these strategies whose percentages of occurrence are 29.1%, 16.5%, and 9.9% respectively. 'Metaphor' has the lowest percentage of occurrence 1.3% with no instances of irony spotted in the data analyzed. This shows the desire of blame takers to address things directly while trying to shift the responsibility of an unfavorable decision to a scapegoat to avoid being held blameworthy. In other words, they redirect blame to previous or current officeholders' policies and actions which has allegedly resulted in the current failures.

Table 45. *A detailed description of the overall frequencies of pragma-rhetorical strategies detected at the blame avoidance stage*

Session No.	Shifting Blame		Litotes		Number-game		Hyperbole		Metaphor		Irony		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	9	5.9	9	5.9	11	7.3	2	1.3	2	1.3	0	0	33	21.8
2	15	9.9	9	5.9	3	2	6	4	0	0	0	0	33	21.8
3	17	11.2	9	5.9	2	1.3	4	2.6	0	0	0	0	32	21.1
4	24	15.9	17	11.2	9	5.96	3	2	0	0	0	0	53	35.1
Total	65	43	44	29.1	25	16.5	15	9.9	2	1.3	0	0	151	100

Comparing British and Iraqi Data

At the pragmatic level, the statistical analysis of the British and Iraqi corpora which encompass four Parliamentary Question sessions each shows the following rates and frequencies of the strategies utilized in the parliamentary setting as illustrated in table 46. The results reveal a great disparity between British and Iraqi politicians in terms of using politeness and impoliteness strategies at both stages. British politicians tend to use more politeness strategies than Iraqi ones with 56.4% and 20.5%, respectively. British politicians are expected to obey the rules of Erskine May's (1844) *Treatise on the law, privileges, proceedings and usage of Parliament*. However, due to the aggressive nature of Question Time sessions, MPs utilize politeness strategies to save their opponents' face while performing FTAs, but abide by the rules of the British Parliament at the same time. On the other hand, Iraqi parliamentarians perform rather differently by using impoliteness strategies more often than British parliamentarians do with 63.5% and 30.1% respectively. This reveals their desire to win arguments, answer questions, and ruin others' reputation at any cost by violating the Rules of Procedure of the Iraqi Council of Representatives set in 2006. As for violations of Gricean maxims, British and Iraqi politicians perform quite similarly with 13.5% and 16% respectively.

Table 46. *A comparison of British and Iraqi data in terms of pragmatic strategies used at the blame and blame avoidance stages*

Type of Data	Pragmatic Strategies							
	Politeness Strategies		Impoliteness Strategies		Violation of G's Maxims Strategies		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%

Arab World English Journal   367
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British	350	56.4	187	30.1	84	13.5	608	100
Iraqi	110	20.5	341	63.5	86	16	537	100
Total	460	39.7	528	45.5	170	14.7	1145	100

Concerning the pragma-rhetorical strategies, table 47 reveals that Iraqi politicians tend to use them more often than British politicians do for the sake of persuasion and manipulation to change the addressee's attitudes and feelings towards a particular individual or topic in both defensive and offensive positions (Mihas, 2005).

Table 47. *A comparison of British and Iraq data in terms of pragma-rhetorical strategies used at the blame and blame avoidance stage*

Type of Data	Pragma Rhetorical Strategies	
	No.	%
British	156	40
Iraqi	234	60
Total	390	100

Blame Stage

As illustrated in table 48, impoliteness strategies achieve the first place among other kinds of pragmatic strategies and this is evident through the high percentage of their occurrences 84.2% and 50.4% in the Iraqi and British settings respectively. The British MPs attempted to have a balance between attacking the PM and respecting the rules of the House of Commons at the same time by employing both politeness and impoliteness strategies with almost equal percentages, 43.4% and 50.4% respectively. This is mainly because direct FTAs are not acceptable and must be withdrawn or rephrased. On the other hand, Iraqi MPs have utilized impoliteness strategies 84.2% more often than politeness strategies 9.5% to convey their power and desire to defeat their counterparts at any cost, ignoring the Rules of Procedures of the Iraqi Parliament as well as the Speaker of the Council of Representatives.

Table 48. *A comparison of British and Iraqi data in terms of pragmatic strategies used at the blame stage*

Type of Data	Pragmatic Strategies							
	Politeness Strategies		Impoliteness Strategies		Violation of G's Maxims Strategies		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
British	105	43.4	122	50.4	15	6.2	242	100
Iraqi	26	9.5	230	84.2	17	6.2	273	100

Total	131	25.4	352	68.3	32	6.2	515	100

The findings in table 49 reveal that positive politeness strategies prevail over other politeness strategies in British and Iraqi Parliaments with 22.7% and 6.6% to minimize the threat to H's positive face, i.e., wants, actions, values of the addressee should be desirable and approved. Positive and negative impoliteness strategies have scored approximate percentages in the British setting accounting for 26% and 24.4% respectively, since British MPs want to ruin the political status of their opponents. On the other hand, Iraqi MPs primarily employ positive impoliteness strategies more often than negative ones recording 53.1% and 31.1% respectively to emphasize the incompetency and lack of personal features of their counterparts who are expected to run high positions in the Government. It is also found that British and Iraqi MPs are inclined to create fabricated statements in the minds of the other politicians to avoid blame as these cannot be detected easily in the questioning process. In the British and Iraqi Parliaments, fabrication has scored 5.8% and 5.9% respectively, while vagueness has only hit 0.4% for each.

Table 49. *A comparison of British and Iraqi data in terms of the sub-pragmatic strategies used at the blame stage*

Type of Data	Politeness Strategies						Impoliteness Strategies				Violation of G's Maxims Strategies				Total	
	Positive Politeness		Negative Politeness		Bald off-Record		Positive Impoliteness		Negative Impoliteness		Fabrication		Vagueness			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
British	55	22.7	31	12.8	19	7.9	63	26	59	24.4	14	5.8	1	0.4	242	100
Iraqi	18	6.6	8	2.9	0	0	145	53.1	85	31.1	16	5.9	1	0.4	273	100
Total	73	14.2	39	7.6	19	3.7	208	40.3	144	28	30	5.8	2	0.4	515	100

Pertaining to the pragma-rhetorical strategies at the blame stage, table 50 shows that British politicians utilize two main strategies: 'number-game' and 'hyperbole' which amount to 47.9% and 42.3% respectively. Likewise, Iraqi politicians seem to exploit 'number-game' and 'hyperbole' as their main pragma-rhetorical strategies, scoring 73.5% and 16.9% respectively. As mentioned by Leech (1983), hyperbole is a rhetorical pragmatic strategy which magnifies some real state of affairs. As for number-game, Dijk (2000) emphasizes the point that politicians use statistics and large numbers to add credibility to their utterances and doubt to those of others. As such, these two strategies add more damaging effect to the addressee's political status and help to prove them blameworthy.

Table 50. *A comparison of British and Iraqi data in terms of the various pragma-rhetorical strategies used at the blame stage*

Type of Data	Number-Game		Hyperbole		Litotes		Metaphor		Irony		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
British	34	47.9	30	42.3	3	4.2	4	5.6	0	0	71	100
Iraqi	61	73.5	14	16.9	5	6	2	2.4	1	1.2	83	100
Total	95	41.7	44	28.6	8	5.1	6	3.9	1	0.6	154	100

Blame Avoidance Stage

Table 51 reveals some differences between British and Iraqi politicians in the employment of pragmatic strategies at the blame avoidance stage. British politicians appear to take an indirect approach in facing blame attacks against them through the use of politeness strategies which have hit the highest percentage of 65%, while impoliteness strategies and the strategies of violating Gricean maxims have only scored 20.4% and 14.6% respectively. On the other hand, Iraqi politicians were clearly dependent on impoliteness strategies without showing any abidance by the rules and procedures of the parliament. This can be noticed through the highest percentage impoliteness strategies have scored which amount to 42%, while politeness strategies and the strategies of violating Gricean maxims have hit lower percentages: 31.8% and 26.1% respectively. Table 51. *A comparison of British and Iraqi data in terms of pragmatic strategies used at the blame avoidance stage*

Type of Data	Pragmatic Strategies							
	Politeness Strategies		Impoliteness Strategies		Violation of G's Maxims Strategies		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
British	245	65	77	20.4	55	14.6	377	100
Iraqi	84	31.8	111	42	69	26.1	264	100
Total	329	51.3	188	29.3	124	19.3	641	100

In table 52, British and Iraqi politicians seem to perform similarly as regards politeness strategies and the strategies of violating Gricean maxims. As for politeness strategies, positive ones have scored the highest percentages, which amount to 53.7% and 21.6% in the British and Iraqi settings

respectively, and this reflects the cooperative effect these politicians strive to establish with their counterparts to ease the questioning process and underestimate the damage caused by the blame attacks. British and Iraqi politicians have also shown a similar tendency to employ the strategy of evasion to avoid blame by talking about irrelevant issues or claiming their incompetence in answering the questions of the MPs. It is clear in the percentages this strategy has achieved in the British and Iraqi Parliaments: 8.7% and 17.8% respectively. Concerning British Parliamentarians' use of impoliteness strategies, positive and negative ones have hit similar percentages (9% and 8.7%) to convey their desire to express their direct refusal of the attributed blame acts against them and make the blame makers follow their own opinions. Iraqi politicians performed differently by exploiting the positive impoliteness strategies more often than the negative ones to emphasize their disagreement and enmity towards their counterparts; therefore, positive impoliteness strategies have scored higher than negative ones: 35.6% and 6.4% respectively.

Table 52. *A comparison of British and Iraqi data in terms of the sub-pragmatic strategies used at the blame avoidance stage*

Type of Data	Politeness Strategies			Impoliteness Strategies		Violation of G's Maxims Strategies				Total	
	Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness	Bald off-Record	Positive Impoliteness	Negative Impoliteness	Evasion	Fabrication	Concealment	Vagueness		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
British	196	53.7	32	8.7	17	4.7	33	9	32	8.7	32	8.7	12	3.3	9	2.5	2	0.5	366	100
Iraqi	57	21.6	17	6.4	10	3.8	94	35.6	17	6.4	47	17.8	15	5.7	6	2.3	1	0.4	264	100
Total	253	40.3	49	7.8	27	4.3	127	20.1	49	7.8	79	12.6	27	4.3	15	2.4	3	0.4	630	100

Table 53 reveals the reliance of British politicians on the pragma-rhetorical strategies of 'hyperbole' and 'number-game' at the blame avoidance stage to achieve positive opinions, emotions, and attitudes by their utterances, such as complimenting, congratulating, praising, expressing sympathy, approving, and delighting, as well as enhance their credibility through the use of numbers. (Cano, 2006). This is evident in the high percentages these strategies have scored: 40% and 31.8% respectively. On the other hand, Iraqi politicians were inclined to utilize the strategies of shifting blame and litotes (43% and 29.1% respectively) to redirect blame towards other current or previous individuals or authorities in the Government for the unfavorable decisions they had made, i.e., they shift blame to them. If their attempt to redirect blame failed, they would choose to minimize it to cause a little damage to their public face to make sure they stay in power.

Table 53. *A comparison of British and Iraqi data in terms of the various pragma-rhetorical strategies used at the blame avoidance stage*

Type of Data	Shifting Blame		Number-Game		Hyperbole		Litotes		Metaphor		Irony		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
British	15	17.6	27	31.8	34	40	5	5.9	4	4.7	0	0	85	100
Iraqi	65	43	25	16.6	15	9.9	44	29.1	2	1.3	0	0	151	100
Total	80	33.8	52	22	49	20.7	49	20.7	6	2.5	0	0	236	100

Discussion

The main area of investigation of this study was to examine the pragmatics of political blame in the parliamentary setting, and the similarities and/or differences in terms of the pragmatic and pragma-rhetorical strategies used by British and Iraqi politicians when they exchange blame in both offensive and defensive situations. In order to test the hypotheses, the researchers adopted the mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative analyses.

The findings of the analysis of the data exemplified in the situations above show that political blame is processed according to two stages: blame and blame avoidance. In addition, it is indicated that each stage encompasses pragmatic and pragma-rhetorical strategies. In Iraqi Parliament, impoliteness strategies prevailed over strategies at both stages (see table 25). In British Parliament, impoliteness strategies were dominant at the blame stage while politeness strategies scored the highest at the blame avoidance stage (see table 3).

The reliance of Iraqi politicians on impoliteness strategies at both stages explains the aggressive nature of Iraqi question sessions where politicians strive to win at all costs. On the other hand, British politicians took defensive positions at the blame avoidance stage to diffuse attacks triggered at the blame stage.

Conclusions

In its endeavor to investigate the pragmatic structure of which blame is composed, the study has revealed the following:
- The model developed for analyzing the data proved to be a workable and successful tool to achieve the aims of the present study.

- Both Iraqi and British parliaments utilize certain pragmatic and pragma-rhetorical strategies either to defend themselves against damaging blame acts or to damage others' images and prove them blameworthy.
- One major difference observed between British and Iraqi Parliamentarians is in terms of indirectness and directness achieved by means of politeness and impoliteness strategies where it has been found that British politicians show an inclination to be indirect using politeness strategies at both blame and blame avoidance stages in comparison with Iraqi politicians where the statistical analysis has shown that they tend to be impolite through their frequent use of impoliteness strategies at both stages.

- British and Iraqi blame makers have performed similarly by fabricating their statements and violating the maxim of quality to deceive other politicians. Moreover, both British and Iraqi blame takers tend to violate the maxim of relevance more often than the other maxims through the strategy of evasion to avoid blame.

- Concerning pragma-rhetorical strategies, both British and Iraqi blame makers at the blame stage have exploited the pragma-rhetorical strategy of number-game to support their standpoints with statistics to enhance their credibility. As for the blame avoidance stage, British blame takers have utilized hyperbole as their main pragma-rhetorical strategy whereas Iraqi blame takers have utilized shifting blame strategy.

Recommendations

According to the conclusions, some suggestions are proposed:

1. Politicians are advised to avoid using impoliteness strategies for offensive or defensive purposes as they increase the possibility of conflict and result in numerous losses.
2. Strategic maneuvring is another important area that requires attention in analysing a conflictive setting like the parliament.
3. Speech acts is another worth subject of study in the parliamentary setting.
4. Manipulation and deception are expected to be intrinsic in parliaments where elected representatives (Members of Parliament), who are closer to the audience than ever, strive to deploy for the sake of winning. Accordingly, a pragma-rhetorical study of these two subjects would fill this gap.

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