

Linguistic Performance as Resistance in Saddam Hussein's Trial: A Performativity-Theoretic Perspective

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Received: November 16, 2025

Accepted: January 8, 2026

Online Published: March 2, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n4p82

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n4p82>

Abstract

Drawing on Butler's Performativity Theory (PT), this study explores how linguistic performance serves as a mechanism of resistance in the trial of Saddam Hussein. The main objective of the paper is to demonstrate the extent to which language is strategically employed to achieve resistance and formulate political and authoritarian identity, particularly within a context of political powerlessness. In so doing, the paper's analytical focus is on various linguistic strategies and discursive practices used by courtroom participants to show how linguistic performances contribute effectively to conveying resistance. These encompass speech acts, implicatures, lexicalization, and impoliteness strategies. Two main findings are revealed in this paper: First, despite his contextual powerlessness, Saddam Hussein possesses performative power. Such a performativity is dexterously achieved by the use of specific linguistic strategies, communicating particular pragmatic meanings that not only dislocate the discursive norms of courtroom discourse but also flout the linguistic expectations pertinent to this discourse genre. Second, Saddam's linguistic performance during his trial goes beyond its surface semantic functionality of defense towards further illocutionary meanings of ideological resistance.

Keywords: courtroom discourse, implicatures, impoliteness, lexicalization, linguistic performance, performativity theory, Saddam Hussein, speech acts

1. Introduction

Courtrooms are sites of linguistic and rhetorical power conflict (Coulthard, 1994), wherein conversationalists use linguistic strategies to communicate specific pragmatic and ideological meanings, particularly in political contexts (Prihantoro & Gillings, 2025). Courtroom discourse is a performative setting where identities are created, challenged, and managed through language. As a particular discourse genre, the language delivered by courtroom participants should be framed within particular linguistic codes and in a specific turn-taking order (Supardi, 2016). Specifically, the judge always begins with an introductory word, followed by the attorneys' opening statements, and then the questioning of witnesses may occur. These roles are presented in a specific linguistic manner. Sometimes, courtroom participants violate this linguistic manner and code to communicate particular meanings. In a context of linguistic power conflict, such a linguistic performance is usually used to attack or resist (Li, 2024). This study attempts to explore how linguistic performance serves as a mechanism of resistance in the trial of Saddam Hussein. The main objective of the paper is to demonstrate the extent to which language is strategically employed to achieve resistance and formulate political and authoritarian identity, particularly within a context of political powerlessness.

For Gibbons and Heffer (2020), courtroom discourse, especially that of political trials, is an important apparatus for rebuilding individual identity and affirming institutional authority through the employment of language and customary ceremonial procedures. In Saddam's trial, some conventional legal classifications, linguistic terms, and discursive roles, such as 'defendant' or 'criminal,' are consistently contested through premeditated verbal and nonverbal acts that aim to defy institutional authority and regain political credibility (van Hulst et al., 2024). Traditional legal and linguistic commentaries often overlook the performative dimensions of such resistance, thus framing it as mere non-cooperation or party politics. However, there is a notable absence of understanding of how linguistic performance, in light of performativity theory (Butler, 1997, 2020), can be used as a strategic tool to resist institutional redefinition in the context of judicial proceedings. Such an absence represents the research gap this study attempts to fulfill, as it attempts to investigate how Saddam Hussein's linguistic performance within the courtroom not only dislocates the discursive norms of courtroom discourse but also flouts the linguistic expectations pertinent to this discourse genre towards an intentional discursive performance of resistance that undermines the authority and legitimacy of the legal proceedings.

Saddam Hussein's trial before the Iraqi Special Tribunal (2005-2006) was a widely watched political event entangled with the intricate politics of post-invasion Iraq. Hussein went through a symbolic transmutation as the ousted president of a former independent state, from national leader to criminalized subject under a foreign-influenced judicial apparatus. Saddam Hussein frequently engaged in acts of language resistance, verbal and nonverbal, in the courtroom. This is conducted by using different linguistic strategies to communicate

such a type of resistance, including speech acts, implicatures, lexicalization, and impoliteness strategies. These linguistic performances overturned the normative courtroom discourse and stimulated more linguistic investigation into the ways in which language serves as a means of resistance in a context where the interaction process is governed by specific communicative and discursive practices.

The main objective of this study is to demonstrate the extent to which language is strategically employed to achieve ideological resistance and formulate political and authoritarian identity within a context of political powerlessness. This objective is pursued in light of Judith Butler's (1997) theory of performativity, which maintains that identities are neither intrinsic nor fixed but are unremittingly constructed and reproduced through linguistic performances. The analytical focus is on some discursive strategies that are employed to communicate resistance linguistically. By approaching Saddam's trial from this perspective, this paper attempts to interpret his courtroom utterances as performativity of linguistic resistance, and, therefore, it is anticipated to contribute to the continuing discussions about how language, power, and political identity interact in legal contexts. In doing so, the study seeks to answer four overarching research questions:

RQ1. How does Saddam Hussein's linguistic performance during his trial function as a type of resistance?

RQ2. What are the linguistic manifestations of Saddam's linguistic performance?

RQ3. What are the pragmatic meanings Saddam intends to communicate by his linguistic performance?

RQ4. To what extent is performativity theory relevant to the linguistic investigation of courtroom discourse?

In what follows, the paper presents the theoretical background and the literature review of the study in Section 2, in which the study offers detailed discussions on forensic linguistics, language as performance and resistance, courtroom discourse, and some previous and related studies. Section 3 displays the theoretical framework of the study, wherein discussions on performativity theory and the linguistic strategies used to communicate resistance linguistically are provided. Section 4 offers the methodology of the study, in which data collection, description, rationale, and the analytical procedures adopted in the analysis are demonstrated. Section 5 is the analysis of the selected data. Section 6 discusses the findings of the study. Section 7 concludes the paper and offers some recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature

2.1 Forensic Linguistics

According to Coulthard and Johnson (2007), forensic linguistics is the multidisciplinary study of language and the law. It examines how language is used, interpreted, and manipulated in legal settings and includes the linguistic components of legal interpretation, authorship attribution, speaker identification, courtroom discourse, and the analysis of legal texts. The core concern of forensic linguistics is the application of language theory and methodology to courtroom discourse (Gibbons, 2003). According to Coulthard et al. (2017), numerous areas of linguistics, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, phonetics, and discourse analysis, are incorporated within the field. They maintain that in criminal investigations, forensic linguistics assists in identifying the author of disputed texts, like threatening letters or ransom notes. In courtroom settings, forensic linguistics helps analyze witness statements, confessions, and cross-examinations for coercion, ambiguity, or deception; and in legislative contexts, it supports the creation of more lucid legal documents to prevent misunderstandings. Guillén-Nieto and Stein (2021) argue that forensic linguistics has come to rely on a range of research instruments and analytical approaches, including pragmatics, semantics, and semiotics. For Tiersma (1999), in order to identify suspects, deconstruct the power dynamics of courtroom language, or assess defendants' linguistic competency to determine their comprehension of court proceedings, forensic linguists may examine accents and dialects. Importantly, the emergence of forensic linguistics as a field of study is closely linked to examples of the practical use of language in courtrooms (Coulthard et al., 2017). The broader scope of forensic linguistics and the fact that many of its issues require analytical techniques to uncover the meanings contained in these texts are demonstrated by the list of sub-domains, particularly courtroom discourse (O'Keeffe et al., 2007).

2.2 Language as Performance

The notion of language as performance is an important area of focus within the context of linguistic studies. Basically, this notion constitutes that language cannot be taken primarily as a passive or neutral source of information dissemination but rather as an active and dynamic practice through which speakers and hearers express their identities, social positions, and cultural beliefs. This performative concept of language is mainly derived from the foundational work of Austin (1962), who initiated the theory of speech acts, such that uttering a sentence itself constituted an action. Austin made a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts and thereby accentuated the assumption that utterances can perform social acts of promising, commanding, or apologizing. Butler (1997) followed this system within the scope of identity and made the argument that identity is set apart by the repetition of performative acts, many of which are of a linguistic nature. Likewise, sociolinguists such as Goffman (1959) perceive everyday-occurring interactions to be linguistic performances through which people communicate their impressions and play roles by virtue of the social context. Here, language serves as performance and functions to convey various meanings targeted by its users.

Hymes (1974) and Bauman (1977) took the notion of language as performance another step forward to discuss it within the scope of ethnography and studies of folklore. They stressed aesthetic and patterned elements of verbal art, whereby speech events were judged with respect to their form, delivery, and social role. Bauman (1977), for instance, saw the performance itself as a separate mode of communication that directs attention to the act of speaking itself and therefore gives its power cultural saliency. This idea holds particularly with the case of rituals, storytelling, poetry, and political speeches, where style of speaking is of equivalent significance to

speech meaning. Within the realms of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, Gumperz (1982) and Tannen (1989) argue that speech styles possess a performative value, incarnating relational meanings, solidarity, or power communicated by elements of rhythm, pitch, and various interactional markers. Furthermore, Alim and Smitherman (2012) state that language is perceived as performance in studies of racism, sexuality, and computer-mediated discourse, by which linguistic decisions index identity and negotiate power relations. They maintain that linguistic forms represent performative acts of resistance and identity formation among oppressed communities. More broadly still, language as performance mirrors how speakers not only achieve the communication of meaning (or not) but also construct worlds and negotiate social realities through their linguistic activity.

2.3 *Language as Resistance*

"Language as resistance" refers to the strategic use of linguistic practice to challenge, subvert, or negotiate power relations, social norms, and institutionally exercised power. According to van Dijk (1998), using language as resistance is evident in critical discourse studies, linguistic anthropology, and sociolinguistics, wherein language is not only regarded as reflecting reality but also as one of the ways through which power is contested and identities asserted. Language as resistance can take many forms, including code-switching, silence, irony, appropriation of words that have been marked to connote deviance or racist insult, or the mobilization of vernaculars and minority languages within institutionally oriented sites (Scott, 1990). Furthermore, Foucault (1978) argues that where power is to be found, resistance is to be found, and that discourse is one of the sites over which such conflicts occur. As such, language becomes a source by which individuals can assert their agency, challenge dominant ideologies, and resist hegemony. This is of particular relevance within institutionally oriented sites such as the courtroom, wherein language is very highly regulated, formalized, and tied to legal authority.

Courtroom discourse is marked by strict procedural norms and power relations between legal professionals (judges, lawyers, prosecutors) and lay individuals (defendants, witnesses, litigants) that are asymmetrical. Herein resistance can occur within the ways that defendants or witnesses reply to legal language, resist construal, or contest courtroom norms. In courtroom discourse, resistance can emerge explicitly too, in the case of defendants challenging the legitimacy of the court, refusing to answer in expected ways, or employing satire and metaphor to challenge the discourses imposed over them. Furthermore, in political trials, defendants might go out of their way to politicize their speech and thus turn the courtroom into a resistance platform. This act of resistance through performance aligns with Butler's (1997) perception of language as a battlefield of power negotiations, whereby the expression of dissent against institutionally imposed discourse is an act of resistance. Additionally, Fairclough (1992) argues that there are specific ways through which power relations, ideologies, and resistance operate within institutions. He maintains that such practices of resistance can be traced through linguistic selections that affirm or challenge dominant discursive structures. Crucially, understanding language as resistance, especially within the courtroom, functions to demonstrate how power is embedded not only within legal codes but also within the very specific ways individuals may be authorized or expected to speak.

2.4 *Courtroom Discourse*

Courtroom discourse is defined as the discourse of legal language employed in courtroom contexts. It mainly focuses on the study of language delivered within legal settings and the way language is used and/or abused for communicating and maintaining specific meanings (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007; Stygall, 2012). Doty (2010) argues that courtroom discourse encompasses a variety of written and spoken language forms that can be manifested in various linguistic forms, including verbal and nonverbal language. These linguistic forms are used by discourse participants to communicate particular ideological and pragmatic meanings. This type of discourse also offers linguists and discourse analysts a broad field in which to conduct pragmatic and contextually oriented studies. Doty (2010) maintains that the core tenet of the courtroom is that interaction between participants is necessary regardless of the mode by which discourse is presented, i.e., in written documents or orally. Consequently, there are particular pragmatic goals associated with this type of language engagement in courtrooms (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007). These goals can be revealed by a thorough language analysis that ultimately functions to arrive at the comprehensive meaning of the discursive message. They frequently support the speaker's intended meaning during the courtroom discourse. Since language is a powerful tool for revealing hidden meanings conveyed by the many linguistic strategies used in courtrooms, such a type of discourse (i.e., courtroom discourse) also seeks to highlight the extent to which language and law are closely and reciprocally connected. Such a mutual relationship between language and law is demonstrated in a number of studies (e.g., Eades, 2000, 2008; Farinde, 2009; Supardi, 2016), which argue that linguistic analysis is always necessary to uncover the implied meanings that lie beyond the surface linguistic expressions in courtroom discourse. These studies also emphasize how language influences the court's ultimate decision, demonstrating that language functions well in both spoken and written legal texts.

2.5 *Previous and Related Studies*

Much previous research (e.g., Supardi, 2016; Tiersma, 1999; Williams & Tessuto, 2013) investigated the connection between the use of particular linguistic expressions and legal discourse by concentrating on how a particular language use contributes effectively to the pragmatic interpretation of discourse. These studies further highlighted the fact that legal discourse is analyzed from both a legal and a purely linguistic standpoint, which, in turn, accentuates the complementary relationship between language and law. Consequently, this contributes to comprehending the different legal documents, including agreements, laws, testimony, and rules. Other studies have investigated courtroom discourse from different perspectives; by analyzing the linguistic features related to lexis used in legal discourse by law practitioners (Bhatia, 1993); illustrating the different ways that linguistic power is exercised in courtrooms and how such power relations influence the interpretation of legal texts (Supardi, 2016); and investigating the role of language in providing a fundamental

method through which discourses are originated and shared within specific legal contexts (Cheng & Machin, 2022). These studies also offer useful insights into understanding interactions in courtrooms and decoding the pragmatic goals conveyed in courtroom arguments.

In terms of the investigation of Saddam Hussein's trial, a few studies have analyzed Saddam Hussein's trial as a political and discursive process that extended far beyond the legal process. Naait and Alshimmary (2024) discussed the metapragmatic strategies used in Saddam Hussein's trial to communicate specific meanings. Their study attempts to show the extent to which the linguistic expressions, within particular contexts, go beyond their semantic proposition towards a further illocutionary force. Similarly, Badar et al. (2011) argued that Saddam's courtroom behavior, such as interrupting, rhetorical questioning, and non-compliance, were efforts at delegitimizing the court, noting how the trial was being utilized as a platform for political resistance. These studies accentuated that Hussein's linguistic behaviors were not submissive but rather were strategic performances of ideological resistance.

Concerning the notion of linguistic performance as resistance, it has been studied extensively in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Scott (1990), for example, formulated the concept of "hidden transcripts" (p. 27), whereby subordinated individuals resist domination through disguised, often coded, speech. In a similar vein, Alim and Smitherman (2012) demonstrated how African American vernacular English is a type of performative resistance to racial and linguistic hierarchies. These studies explained how language is strategically utilized by individuals to counter institutional power, not through violence and physical force alone but by symbolic linguistic action that challenges authority, confirms identity, and communicates resistance.

As for performativity theory, as discussed by Austin (1962) and Butler (1997), it has been applied to courtroom and political discourse in order to analyze how language does not only describe but also performs power. Solan and Tiersma (2005) have analyzed how legal language performatively creates legal realities, and Matoesian (2001) has applied performativity theory and conversation analysis to illustrate how gender and power are performed and contested in courtroom interaction. Furthermore, Wodak (2009) applied critical discourse analysis to advance the proposition that political identities are constituted through performative acts of language. Applying these insights to Saddam Hussein's trial, his speech acts, whether rejecting or accepting the jurisdiction of the court or invoking Arab nationalism, can be seen as a linguistic resistance that challenges the legal and ideological legitimacy of the tribunal. It is obviously shown that previous research has focused on many linguistic aspects within the scope of courtroom discourse, but it has not provided a detailed linguistic analysis of the use of language as resistance, particularly through the employment of specific linguistic strategies, such as speech acts, implicatures, lexicalization, and impoliteness, the core concern of this study.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Performativity Theory

The performativity theory has its roots in Austin's (1962) work, who introduced the idea of performative utterances, which refers to the speech acts that do not only convey information but also perform an action within particular contexts. Butler (1997) built on the idea of Austin when she transferred the performativity theory to the domain of social identities, arguing that identity is not a static internal essence but a series of repeated actions that conform to social expectations. Performativity, thus, refers to the way in which language brings about instead of merely represents social realities. According to Butler (1997), the performativity theory assumes that by virtue of discourse, speakers create and reinforce systems of power, norms, and identity. This account interrogates traditional notions of language as a neutral vessel instead of highlighting its constitutive role in the creation of social settings. In contexts where power and legitimacy constantly shift, like courtrooms, performativity offers a compelling standpoint by means of which we can describe how legal identity, power relations, and institutional authority get created as much as challenged by means of discourse.

Applying performativity theory to courtroom discourse shows how legal language is not only descriptive but also performative of legal action and status. For example, when a judge says, "You are hereby sentenced," the very saying constitutes a legal change, converting speech into institutional action (Solan & Tiersma, 2005). As such, courtroom positions, including judge, defendant, lawyer, and witness, are repeatedly performed and reconfirmed by particular linguistic behaviors and speech genres (Matoesian, 2001). This performative aspect also leaves room for resistance: individuals can subvert anticipated linguistic positions, infringe courtroom decorum, or use other discursive styles to counter institutional authority. Butler's (2020) characterization of performativity as both enabling and limiting draws attention to this tension; whereas courtroom discourse imposes strict norms, it also holds a potential for challenge and re-signification. Discourse theorists such as Cotterill (2003) and Heffer (2005) demonstrate how discursive practices, question-answer routines, and framing in courtroom discourse create specific realities and identities. Here, courtroom discourse becomes an ongoing site of perceptive negotiation where truth, authority, and identity are not so much put across as performed into existence.

3.2 A Performativity-Theoretic Perspective to Linguistic Performance as Resistance

Performativity theory provides a working paradigm for recognizing how language becomes not only a means of expressing pre-existing identity or thoughts but also a means by which resistance is performed (Butler, 2020). Performativity is thus productive as much as it is regulatory in continually producing identities, roles, and realities. Arguing from this position, language can never be neutral but is always inscribed in a field of power capable of sustaining dominant discourses as much as challenging them. In a performative paradigm, linguistic resistance can be defined as an intentional or strategic subversion of normal speech acts in order to counter dominant institutions, ideologies, or power relationships. Scott (1990) proposed that resistance frequently proceeds by hidden transcripts, subversive speech, gesture, and performativity by the powerless that often runs counter to the public transcripts required by authority figures, and in this regard, linguistic performativity becomes a strategic action. In the context of this study, performativity is linguistically represented by

four strategies that form the theoretical framework of analyzing linguistic performances as resistance. These include speech acts, implicatures, lexicalization, and impoliteness.

Speech acts, as theorized by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), form the foundational core of a performativity-theoretic perspective to linguistic performance as resistance, since they frame language not only as a vehicle of communication but also as a mode of action; that is, a performative tool through which power dynamics are enacted, negotiated, and resisted. Within this framework, every utterance is performative in that it carries the potential to constitute social relations, assert authority, or subvert dominance. When applied to contexts of resistance, such as courtroom discourse, speech acts become powerful instruments of defiance and redefinition. From a performative perspective, resistance is achieved not only through overt confrontation but also through illocutionary subversion, where speakers strategically manipulate the felicity conditions of speech acts to disrupt institutional expectations and reclaim agency. This aligns with Butler's (1997) extension of performativity theory, which situates resistance within the reiterative nature of discourse. Thus, when individuals employ speech acts in contexts of subjugation, they perform linguistic acts of resistance that challenge the authority embedded in institutional discourse, transforming linguistic performance into a site of contestation.

Concerning implicatures, they are absolutely essential for the interpretative meanings related to linguistic performance, which is understood here as resistance through a conceptual framework on performativity (Grice, 1975). Implicatures allow for encoded communication for means that represent a subversive and/or performative element to a compliant message that can encode a degree of resistance on the part of the speaker to authority or power without necessarily directly challenging it. This linguistic performance constitutes something much like a performativity because it allows for a hold on listener reception by challenging conventional representational structures by which message communication is actualized.

In terms of lexicalization, which refers to the selection and employment of specific words to identify individuals, actions, or occurrences, it is also a powerful linguistic tool for enacting ideological resistance. It is both a process and a tool for exercising control over particular words that can typify individuals, actions, or occurrences. Such performances by speakers, when done with terms for institutional or ideological constructs, result in performances for enacting ideological resistance. Thus, lexicalization is enacted by challenging linguistic terms for authoritative purposes. According to Butler's (1997) performativity theory, performances can revise terms for subjecting individuals. That is, words that subject individuals can be revised by performances. These words can thus be employed within a context of linguistic performance to communicate specific meanings. In this regard, words are ideologically loaded and strategically used to convey particular meanings.

As for impoliteness, it is an important site where language performance enacts, negotiates, and opposes social authority. According to Austin's (1962) and Butler's (1997) theories of performativity, impoliteness can be viewed as a performative act that actively creates and challenges relational identities rather than just reflecting social norms. For Locher and Watts (2005), impoliteness is fundamentally relational work that is based on negotiation of face, power, and identity. Impoliteness functions as a discursive inversion of power in power-laden contexts, such as political trials, and serves to turn language violence into a performative tactic of empowerment (Bou-Franch, 2012). According to Bousfield (2008), impoliteness is further conceptualized as an interactional technique that allows speakers to reclaim agency in unequal encounters by defying social norms of deference. In light of Butler's performative perspective, impoliteness positions language as a site of resistance, managing social contact as well as carrying out ideological conflict.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data, Analytical Approach, and Rationale

The data for this study constitute publicly accessible video and transcript archives of Saddam Hussein's trial by the Iraqi High Tribunal (2004-2006), particularly his spoken interactions in key courtroom hearings. The analytical approach adopted in this study combines qualitative discourse analysis and a performativity-theoretic approach to investigate the way Saddam Hussein's linguistic performance operates as acts of resistance within courtroom contexts. The rationale for the selection of this dataset lies in its rich depiction of language use within strong power asymmetries, hence being especially pertinent to the investigation of how performativity functions as resistance in an extremely institutionalized and politicized legal context. The data are qualitatively analyzed with discourse-analytic tools in line with performativity theory, with the focus being made on speech acts, implicatures, impoliteness, and lexicalization. This approach allows for the understanding of how Saddam Hussein used language not only to communicate meanings but also to perform a resistant political self in a constrained judicial setting.

4.2 Analytical Procedures

The analysis begins with careful transcription and segmentation of some selected excerpts from the courtroom, with Saddam Hussein accorded centrality as he speaks at pivotal points of confrontation, identification assertion, or procedural disobedience. These segments are analyzed using Butler's (1997) performativity theory to identify performative uses, such as declarations, refusals, or challenges. Butler's (1997) performativity theory guides the analysis of how repeated linguistic and rhetorical strategies (e.g., invoking national identity, restaging legal issues, and resisting enforced subject positions) construct a resistant political self. In addition, elements of speech act theory (Austin, 1962), impoliteness (Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2011), lexicalization (Fowler, 1996), and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992) are incorporated to scrutinize the power dynamics embedded in the courtroom discussion and how Saddam Hussein's speech resists or remakes them. Through the use of these analytical tools, the study attempts to explore how resistance is not only expressed by content but also exercised by the structure of Saddam Hussein's linguistic performances.

5. Analysis

5.1 *Speech Acts as Linguistic Resistance Strategies in Saddam Hussein's Trial*

This part of the analysis demonstrates how Saddam Hussein uses various speech acts to resist the legitimacy of the court, frame himself, and mobilize the audience. This is linguistically manifested in the employment of assertives, directives, expressives, and declaratives. In light of performativity theory (Butler, 1997), speech acts do not only convey content but also constitute identity, contest norms, and subvert power. The first use of these speech acts as carriers of resistance comes when Saddam is asked to introduce himself to the court:

Saddam: I am Saddam Hussein al-Majid, the president of the Republic of Iraq.

Judge: Profession? Former president of the Republic of Iraq?

Saddam: No, present. Current. It's the will of the people.

Here, Saddam Hussein's conversational turns constitute three types of speech acts: the assertive, as he emphasizes that he is the president of Iraq, which also communicates a further declarative speech act by attributing a title to himself (being a president), and then the expressive speech act when he uses the negative operator 'no' in response to the court's denial of his current presidency that is also accentuated by his appeal to the public: 'It is the will of the people.' The use of these speech acts functions to resist what the court tries to communicate, i.e., that he is no longer a president, and is semantically augmented by the use of the two adjectives 'present' and 'current' as opposed to the judge's 'former,' which reconciles with Khafaga's (2024) argument that speech acts can be supported by specific words to strengthen their illocutionary force. The illocutionary force of Saddam's utterances functions as a linguistic resistance to the court's attempt to dismantle him from his title as president. He refuses to accept the epistemic framework that the court tries to ascribe to him. Also, the use of the definite article 'the' before 'president' and the repetitive meaning embedded in 'present' and 'current,' together with the negative operator 'no,' strengthen his linguistic performance as a resistance that manifested in the use of the three speech acts. In light of Butler's performativity theory, Saddam's speech acts are not intended only to describe actions but to constitute the identity of a president who tries to communicate that he is still the legitimate ruler of his country.

Another use of speech acts as resistance is found when Saddam praises the revolution and urges Iraqis to resist invaders:

I call upon all Iraqis, men and women in all parts of Iraq, and your resistance to the American Zionist invasion. You are great. In my eyes you'll always be great.

Saddam uses the directive speech act in 'I call upon all Iraqis' to instigate the potential of his people to resist invaders. Such indirect directivity is discursively intensified by the expressive speech act in 'you are great' and 'you'll always be great,' communicating a feeling of solidarity, admiration, and praise. The two speech acts serve to convey resistance against occupation on the part of the Iraqi people. Here, the use of directive and expressive speech acts as resistance strategies is syntactically heightened by the employment of the universal quantifier 'all' in 'all Iraqis' and 'all parts of Iraq.' Syntactically, the quantifier 'all' is employed to make a general statement, provide a total amount of a group, or as a universal quantifier generalizing over all members of a group. Also, in the case of more than one alternative noun phrase within the domain of the quantifier, 'all' gets domain-constrained, and its implications of interpretation increase argumentation by making an assertion more convincing. Crucially, the syntactic combination of the truth modal 'will' and the frequency adverb 'always' functions to communicate a high level of certitude and a sense of consistency, respectively. Saddam's linguistic performance, therefore, aims to change the court into a resistance site, where he attempts to transcend the courtroom and reach the political community, not only legal judges, and thus shifts the discourse wheel from a legal perspective towards a political one.

A further employment of speech acts as resistance carriers is found in Saddam's statements concerning his involvement in razing groves in Dujail:

Your honor, you are looking for things and you have clarity in your hands, but you leave it and go looking for the unknown. For instance, the razing of Dujail's groves. I razed them. So why do you go after Taha Yassin Ramadan and Barzan (Ibrahim, two of his seven co-defendants)?...I signed the decree...If putting a defendant on trial...there was only one [head of state]... Try him, and let the others go their way.

The above extract encompasses the use of three different speech acts as resistance strategies. The first is the declarative in 'you have clarity in your hands, but you leave it and go looking for the unknown,' which functions to discredit the legitimacy of the trial by saying that someone else is being scapegoated or was unfairly accused, which would be deflecting blame or creating inconsistencies. The second is the use of the assertive speech act in 'I razed them' and 'I signed the decree,' wherein Saddam uses performative confession to claim authority and responsibility for razing the groves in Dujail. Here, Saddam tries not only to assert his responsibility but also to control the discourse of the court, which, in turn, serves as a resistance to the court as it goes in the opposite direction to what the court tries to argue for. The third speech act is the directive manifested in the imperatively-based request in 'try him' and the let-construction in 'let the others go their way.' The two directives also function as resistance, in the sense that Saddam intends to suspect the legal fairness of the court. Significantly, the use of the first-person singular pronoun 'I' in 'I razed' and 'I signed' communicates the competency of a leader, and the use of the past tense to emphasize completeness of action heightens the intended linguistic resistance by delineating Saddam as though he accepts some behaviors but disapproves of what he believes to be an unfair extension of obligation.

Proceeding with the same use of speech acts as resistance strategies, Saddam interrupts the judge during cross-examination by employing

the directive command and the assertive in 'don't talk to me like that. I am Saddam Hussein, the president of Iraq. You know that better than anyone.' Here, Saddam's performative utterances, 'don't talk,' 'I am Saddam Hussein,' and 'the president,' challenge the power dynamic in the courtroom and reconstruct hierarchy, even when disempowered. Pragmatically, the employment of the negative operator 'don't' in 'don't talk to me like that' serves as a face-threatening act against the judge and discursively operates as a reassertion of power hierarchy within the courtroom. Here, Saddam refuses to be linguistically subordinate and performs linguistic power and superiority even when he is contextually powerless.

Table 1. Speech acts as linguistic resistance carriers in Saddam Hussein's trial

Main linguistic strategy	Performative illocutionary meaning	Resistance function	Supporting linguistic strategies
- Directive speech acts	- Calling for action (resistance)	- Communicating the identity of a president who is still the legitimate ruler of his country.	- Imperatives
- Assertive speech acts	- Confessing responsibility for action	- Suspecting the legal fairness of the court.	- Truth modality 'will'
- Expressive speech acts	- Offering affective validation for people	- Challenging power dynamic in the court by being linguistically powerful while contextually powerless.	- Repetition
- Declarative speech acts	- Claiming authority over legal responsibility		- Past tense
			- Let-construction
			- Quantifiers 'all'
			- Agency via the use of the first-person singular pronoun
			- Negation 'no'
			- Frequency adverbs 'always'

5.2 Implicature as a Linguistic Resistance Strategy in Saddam Hussein's Trial

Using implicatures is another strategy through which linguistic performance functions as resistance. According to Gricean (1975) pragmatics, implicature is what a speaker implies without saying it explicitly. It depends on context and shared assumptions and can therefore be a way of performing resistance by encoding a critique or claim without an overt statement.

Saddam: You also have to introduce yourself to me...What resolution, what law formed this court?

When I'm talking, you should consider me as your brother, your brother in the sense of brothers in Iraq, in the nation. I care about a death sentence even less than about an Iraqi's shoe. I'm not afraid of being executed. ... I know that you are being pressured.

Saddam Hussein's above words communicate various implicated meanings. His 'introduce yourself,' directed to the judge, as well as his question, 'What resolution, what law formed this court?' implicates three meanings: first, the judge is not appropriately introduced or is hiding behind authority; perhaps the judge is illegitimate or not transparent; second, the tribunal itself is not constituted on rightful legal bases but rather on arbitrary or imposed authority; and third, whatever legal authority that is claimed by the court is suspect or of unlawful origin. This linguistic performance functions to create a sort of resistance manifested in the implicated meanings by which Saddam emphasizes that legitimacy is not assumed and should be demonstrated. Saddam's implicatures also serve to put the judge on the defensive, challenging procedural correctness and weakening the frontage of lawful neutrality of the court. Saddam, therefore, resists the performative framing of law. Furthermore, Saddam's 'I care about a death sentence even less than about an Iraqi's shoe' and 'I'm not afraid of being executed' implicate that he is courageous and enduring, someone undefeated by death. The use of the passive voice in 'being executed' and 'being pressured,' and the repetition of 'brother(s)' are very indicative in the sense that they implicate that the judge is not independent but is affected by an outside party and create a sense of solidarity with his people, respectively. Also, the use of the second-person singular pronoun in 'you have to' communicates the status of a powerful speaker in a context of powerlessness and further mirrors the use of language to resist.

Other uses of implicatures as resistance can be found in Saddam's following words:

Every Iraqi home is my residence...I won't answer to this so-called court ...Who are you? What are you? The occupation is illegitimate. I retain my constitutional rights as the president of Iraq...How a defendant can defend himself if his pen was taken. Saddam Hussein's pen and papers were taken.

The above extract comprises many implicatures that operate as a site of performative resistance in Saddam's trial. Saddam's 'every Iraqi home is my residence' implicates inclusiveness and solidarity. The implicature here is metaphorically based to communicate resistance by indicating that Saddam's domain is universal among Iraqis. He implies that he is not confined to a specific physical place but belongs to a political and moral domain that establishes him as a president whose sovereignty permeates the land and people. Saddam's 'so-called' court is dismissive, conveying disdain and his rhetorical questions, 'Who are you?' and 'What are you?' intensify his resistance to the court, as his discourse is escalated from refusal to broad condemnation. Further, the metaphorical use of the 'pen' in the last two sentences is highly indicative in communicating resistance. Here, the 'pen' is a metaphor for speech, and the act of depriving him of his pen and papers implicates the court's attempt to silence him. Saddam's resistance here is manifested in the symbolic act of silencing, and his linguistic performance is to highlight the various procedural injustices he encounters within the court.

Table 2. Implicatures as linguistic resistance carriers in Saddam Hussein's trial

Main linguistic strategy	Performative implicated meaning	Resistance function	Supporting linguistic strategies
Implicatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The judge lacks legitimacy. - The court is not founded on a legitimate legal basis. - The judge is not independent. - Projecting an image of a courageous leader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weakening the frontage of lawful neutrality of the court. - The court's legitimacy is not assumed and should be demonstrated. - Positioning the judge on the defensive. - Creating a performing solidarity with Iraqis. - Delegitimizing the court's independence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The obligation verb 'have to' 'should' - Questioning - Passive voice - Solidarity - Lexical choices - Repetition - Metaphor - Rhetorical questions

5.3 Lexicalization as a Linguistic Resistance Strategy in Saddam Hussein's Trial

In Saddam Hussein's trial, lexicalization, which means the use of particularly selected words, phrases, and collocations, is employed as a linguistic resistance strategy. According to Fowler (1996), lexical items often carry ideological significance that goes beyond their perceived semantic propositions. The same holds true with Khafaga's (2023b) argument that the choice of specific words and/or phrases in discourse, whether spoken or written, is intended to communicate further pragmatic functions that serve the goals of the speaker or the writer. Table 3 displays a number of lexical choices that are dexterously employed to convey linguistic resistance in Saddam Hussein's trial.

Table 3. Examples of lexical choices as linguistic resistance carriers in Saddam Hussein's trial

Manifestation of lexical choices	Targeted meaning	Resistance function
The so-called court	Suspecting the court's legitimacy.	Refusing to accept the court as a legitimate source of justice.
The forces of invasion	The legal actors are invaders and occupiers.	The court is not judicial but political and military. The court is a site for colonial power.
Coalition forces	The legal actors are invaders and occupiers.	The court is not judicial but political and military. The court is a site for occupational power.
Current/ present (president)	Legitimizing himself as a president.	Rejecting the court's framing for him as a former president.
The will of the people	Saddam is the legitimate president.	Contesting the court's authority to define him as a former president.
The justice system	Elevating the form of justice Saddam invokes; one that has dignity rather than the one that was imposed by occupiers.	Using emotive language to support his claims.
Proud to be leader of the people	Saddam is still the legitimate president.	Challenging the court's attempts to frame him as former president.
Will not disturb a hair	Saddam is a leader whose identity cannot be influenced by false allegations and accusations.	He refuses the court's allegations against him. He is an unbreakable leader.
The trial is being run by malicious American desire.	The court is not legitimate.	It is a more political trial than a legal one.

Proceeding with the use of lexicalization as a resistance strategy, Saddam Hussein's use of lexicalization throughout his trial is perceived and interpreted as an exercise in discursive practice that facilitates resistance by a dexterous choice of words. In the context of the trial, where power is to be on display, Saddam's manipulation of lexicalization constitutes an exercise of resistance, shutting down the power of the tribunal and restoring his own agency. In light of Butler's (1997) performativity theory, language is not just descriptive but constitutive, as it performs power and identity through reiterated speech acts. The constant use of terms such as 'occupation,' 'puppet court,' or 'traitors' by Saddam turns the courtroom into an oppositional political space. These word choices do not simply convey disagreement but do disagreement, making the trial a drama in which power relations are being negotiated rhetorically. In Saddam's referring to the U.S.-dominated court as 'the agents of occupation,' he inverted the legitimacy of judges themselves, inverting the accusers-accused hierarchy. Through such performative resistance, Saddam's words were now a declaration of symbolic resistance, a repetition of political independence over judicial choices.

With regard to performativity, Saddam's counter-hegemonic lexicalization always fashioned his identity as a resisting rather than a submissive defendant. According to Butler's theory, identities are not intrinsic but are discursively created through performative linguistic repetitions. Saddam's insistence on being addressed in terms like 'President of Iraq' and his refusal to use deferential address forms, i.e., 'your Honor,' demonstrates how lexical moves were performances of self-legitimation. These phrases restaged his political power in

circumstances designed to strip it away. Similarly, lexicalization manifested itself in his rhetorical questioning and accusatorial framing in 'who are you to judge me?' which reframed the power dynamic and disqualified the tribunal's moral and legal authority. Such is the case with Saddam's speech as an example of performativity-based resistance, where every word choice performs a resistance against domination. Saddam's use of specific lexicalization, thus, not only serves as communication but also as a performative act of resistance that deflected the law into a space of ideological struggle where linguistic offense became a way of appropriating back political identity and refusing to be subordinated.

5.4 Impoliteness as a Linguistic Resistance Strategy in Saddam Hussein's Trial

Impoliteness is another linguistic strategy used to communicate resistance in Saddam Hussein's trial. The use of impoliteness as a resistance carrier is emphasized by Bousfield (2008), who argues that impoliteness is strategically used to resist others' face in discourse, and is also accentuated by Eelen (2001), who maintains that impoliteness is utilized to enact identity and resistance in social interactions. Consider the following:

- (a) You are all agents of the Americans. This court is illegitimate.
- (b) I am the President of Iraq, not your prisoner.
- (c) You have no right to judge me. Who appointed you? The invaders?

Saddam's words in (a) demonstrate a blatant act of impoliteness as resistance. He overtly attacks the moral character and legitimacy of the court, employing what Culpeper (2011, p. 135) defines as "bald on-record impoliteness." By calling the judges and prosecutors 'agents of the Americans,' he positions himself as a victim of an unjust system while delegitimizing the authority of the tribunal. This type of verbal aggression is a discursive resistance to institutional power, challenging the asymmetrical relationship between the accused and the court. Impoliteness in this context, for Bousfield (2008), is not only an emotional outburst but also a strategic act of self-positioning. Saddam's rhetorical attack contextualizes the trial as a political confrontation rather than a legal trial, which, in turn, thus allows him to perform a resistant identity, a performance of recouping voice and agency within a coercive communicative context.

Similarly, in (b), Saddam uses a politeness inversion strategy, whereby he employs formal structures of politeness to be in charge rather than being subordinated. By reasserting his presidential identity, he is taking control by self-authorizing, doing what Locher and Watts (2005, p. 9) call performing "relational work," meaning negotiating social identity through language use. Saddam's negative phrase 'not your prisoner' is a rejection of the ascribed role, avoiding the institutional script of shame and subordination. The statement is a face-enhancing act, which tends to assert positive face and control in a setting designed to dismantle him of both. Saddam's impoliteness to the court (through his refusal to acknowledge its authority) and politeness to himself (through title) blend in a resistance strategy that subverts institutional hierarchy through self-legitimation.

In the same vein, Saddam employs rhetorical questioning as impoliteness in (c), a discursive resistance that questions the authority of judicial interlocutors. Transforming questions into interrogatives disputes the presumed authority of the court and mirrors the power of judgment back on itself. According to Bou-Franch (2012, p. 1552), impoliteness can be a "discursive inversion of power," whereby the speaker places institutional agents outside the law or moral legitimacy. Saddam is here being sarcastic and disdainful, as he attempts to conceptualize the courtroom linguistically as an occupied rather than a judicial setting. Questioning is more about revealing answers than exposing ideological bias, thereby turning his defense into political performance. Its pragmatic force lies in its face-threatening potential, insulting both the interlocutors' competence and moral ground and reasserting effectively the speaker's autonomy in discourse.

A further employment of impoliteness as a linguistic resistance strategy can be noticed in Saddam's following utterances:

- (a) I do not recognize this court. It was built on lies.
- (b) You can kill Saddam Hussein, but you cannot kill Iraq.
- (c) Down with the traitor, down with traitors, down with Bush...long live the ummah [Islamic nation]...long live the ummah...long live the ummah.)

Saddam's utterance in (a) demonstrates a type of refusal politeness, which refers to a sort of impoliteness in a declarative form (Culpeper, 2011). Saddam's utterance employs a declarative format in refuting the entire communicative context and instantiates what Bousfield (2008, p. 204) calls "meta-pragmatic resistance." In refusing to comply with the institutional context, Saddam rejects the pragmatic basis on which politeness rituals, such as turn-taking, honorifics, and address terms, are founded. Saddam's verb phrase 'built on lies' is a metaphorical delegitimization, casting his opposition in an ethical framework of truth and falsehood. Here, the impoliteness is ideological rather than emotive, a rhetorical strategy for inverting the morality of the trial. The result is a discursive power reversal, in which the defendant semantically inverts the institution order by placing himself morally high but procedurally low.

Furthermore, in (b), Saddam uses strategic politeness with ideological height, constructing a collective face that extends beyond his individual self. He employs a declarative speech act that carries martyr rhetoric and positive politeness strategies, appealing to in-group membership (Iraq) as a response to individualization and dehumanization. Following Mills (2003), politeness can also be used as counter-discourse, as it allows speakers to situate themselves within a broader social group. Saddam's statement redefines the court's punitive power as ineffective and temporary, and his invocation of the nation is an act of symbolic transcendence; he contextualizes his trial to be a struggle between Iraq and foreign occupation. In accomplishing this rhetorical manipulation, he attends to the face threat of being

tried by invoking national politeness, with moral authority being transferred to himself and the imagined community of the nation.

Likewise, Saddam in (c) uses a performative act of ideological and impolite resistance that manifested itself in a combination of aggressive impoliteness and a collective politeness strategy in a display of disdain and moral superiority. The imperative repetition 'down with the traitor(s)' is a bald-on-record impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011; Khafaga, 2022a), representing an open attack on perceived enemies and on the ideological legitimacy of the court. This repetition amplifies affect and becomes a rallying cry, transforming an accusatory arena in a courtroom into a political performance of protest. By invoking 'traitor' and calling out 'Bush,' Saddam deflects accusation and places his resistance in the service of anti-imperialist discourse, a representative face-threatening act of vilification designed to blacken the names of his accusers. The slogan 'long live the ummah' shifts tone through an optimistic politeness strategy (Locher & Watts, 2005), wherein in-group solidarity is intended to be communicated. Linguistically, it builds a collective face by drawing upon the shared religious identity of the broader Muslim community. This call to the 'ummah' transforms personal defense into a communal moral stance, elevating Saddam from defendant to symbolic figure of Islamic resistance to Western intervention. The repetition of the phrase functions as a "ritualized performative" (Austin, 1962, p. 14) that reformulates the declaration into a slogan of public survival and religious legitimacy. As such, the whole extract represents a dual resistance structure: denunciative impoliteness (down with) and inclusive politeness (long live). According to Bou-Franch (2012, p. 1552), this kind of linguistic dualism is a case of the "discursive construction of resistance," whereby impoliteness serves as a verbal attack upon outside authority, and politeness constructs in-group unity.

Table 4. Impoliteness strategies as linguistic resistance carriers in Saddam Hussein's trial

Main linguistic strategy	Performative implicated meaning	Resistance function	Supporting linguistic strategies
Impoliteness	- Performing accusation, collective solidarity, and public condemnation. - Implicating corruption within the institution, martyrdom, moral continuity, and the court's lack of authenticity.	-Transforms the trial into a political confrontation. - Reasserting authority and identity and rejecting imposed inferiority. - Transforming personal defense into collective resistance. - Conveying moral and religious legitimation.	- Speech acts (directives, interrogative) - Rhetorical questions -Bald-on-record strategies -Metaphor -Contrastive negative - Moral and religious legitimation - Repetition - Religionization

5. Discussion

The abovementioned analysis demonstrates that Saddam Hussein's discursive performance in the court is a perfect example of linguistic performance as resistance, wherein not only representation but also action is involved in the whole process of interaction in the courtroom. In light of Butler's (1997) performativity theory, Saddam's utterances in his trial are not only meaning carriers but also resistance conduits that function to reconfigure his place in the institutional hierarchy and reformulate power relations structures. His linguistic performance transforms a site of judgment (i.e., courtrooms) into a site of confrontation and resistance that serves to reshape the traditional conventions of courtroom discourse. For Butler (1997), Saddam's utterances are counter-performances that repeat speech and assume a position of authority, reversing their power by using the same discursive strategies against their original producers. The analysis also shows that whenever Saddam is giving his speech, he is not only challenging the legal accusations against him but also challenging the ideological context supporting the justification of the tribunal itself. The trial is hence a performativity site in which institutional authority and subject resistance discursively interact. It is analytically clarified that Saddam Hussein consistently performs acts of resistance through various linguistic strategies, including speech acts, implicatures, lexicalization, and impoliteness. His linguistic performance, with all its linguistic manifestations, functions as a performative challenge to institutional hegemony. Such a linguistic performance serves as a strategy of power inversion and a discursive shield of self-legitimization, which, in turn, tends to produce a resistant identity performance that redefines courtroom interaction from legal interrogation to political contestation.

The analysis further shows that the employment of speech acts is entirely evident as a linguistic strategy of resistance in Saddam's trial. He uses various speech act modes, including declarative, assertive, and directive, as performative tools of power subversion. In Austin's (1962) words, utterances can do more than report on action, an implication that Saddam grasps throughout his trial. Utterances like 'I am still the President of Iraq' or 'this court is illegitimate' are not propositional but declarative acts trying to reconstitute reality in the very language of domination. These declarations show what Butler (1997) calls the reiterative force of the performative, in which language re-enacts existing authority in affirmative or subversive terms. Further, Saddam's linguistic performance, manifested in speech acts, is a performative repudiation of institutional subordination. This is analytically evidenced by Saddam's unremitting emphasis on his continuous presidency and on denying the legitimacy of the court. The speech act reprises an alternate political reality that resists the juridical construction imposed upon him. With these speech acts, Saddam not only violates the pragmatics of courtroom discourse but also discredits the court's own act of judgment as an institution, i.e., its performativity, by launching his own competing performance of sovereignty.

Saddam's discourse also uses conversational implicatures as resistance to deny explicit submission while maintaining coherent deniability. In Gricean terms (1975), implicatures are meanings indirectly communicated by context rather than explicit statements. Saddam repeatedly uses irony, rhetorical questions, and elliptical sentences to undermine his interlocutors' authority without overt confrontation. For example, rhetorical questions, such as 'who appointed you? The invaders?' or 'where is the justice you talk about?' convey levels of implicatures that

undermine legitimacy, reveal hypocrisy, and insinuate occupation. Here, Saddam's use of rhetorical questions is an attempt not only to implicate the court's illegitimacy but also to shift the power relation structure within the court. This discursive obliquity is a quiet act of resistance, a denial to cooperate with institutional norms of transparency and compliance. This is consistent with Fairclough's (1995) argument that the understanding of discourse as a site of social struggle, such implicatures are micro-political acts of reframing meaning within power-laden interactions. Saddam expresses resistance not only through explicit and direct confrontations but also through the orchestration of context for interpretation, an act of control of meaning that symbolically reclaims agency and heightens resistance.

A further central strategy of Saddam's resistant performance is located in his strategic lexicalization, or his ideological use of word choice to organize perception. Van Dijk (1998) points out that the choices of specific items are not usually neutral; they are locations of encoded ideological positions that shape social reality. Saddam's employment of lexemes, such as 'traitors,' 'agents,' 'invaders,' 'occupation,' and 'ummah,' is a linguistic reconstruction of the discourse of the trial. Through such lexicalization, Saddam describes the institutional culture of the court as a continuation of political struggle rather than objective justice. Such a lexical strategy enables him to redefine his political image from that of a criminal defendant to that of a figure representing anti-imperialist resistance. This reconciles with Khafaga's (2023b) argument that lexicalization is one of the most effective linguistic strategies used in courtrooms to communicate particular ideological and pragmatic meanings that target the benefits of language users. Also, this finding is in conformity with Wodak's (2001) argument that lexicalization is the most significant discursive tool for the construction of self and other. In the context of Saddam's trial, his frequent appeals to oppositions between 'traitors' (the judges and Western allies) and 'the ummah' (worldwide Islamic community) discursively construct a world in terms of good and evil/they and us in which he stands morally above. Therefore, lexicalization becomes a discursive resistance carrier, whose pragmatic weight serves to regain moral and political legitimacy through the descriptions of the ideological limits of the encounter.

Still, the most powerful demonstration of Saddam's performative resistance appears in his premeditated employment of impoliteness strategies. Courtroom discourse, as an institutional genre of legal interaction, is founded upon norms of politeness that underpin asymmetrical power relations between judges and the rest of the participants within the court (Cheng & Machin, 2022). Saddam's repeated violation of these norms by using direct insults, interruptions, sarcasm, and withholding of deference. All these linguistic performances are acts of strategic impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011; Bousfield, 2008). The analysis highlights that by means of bald-on-record impoliteness in 'you are all agents of the Americans' and refusal politeness in 'I do not recognize this court,' Saddam reverses the pragmatic order of the trial by making impoliteness a discursive mode of resistance. Simultaneously, Saddam oscillates between impoliteness and positive politeness appeals, for instance, appealing to solidarity with the 'ummah,' thereby creating a twofold discourse of confrontation and affiliation. As Bou-Franch (2012) argues, this blending linguistically heightened the discursively constructed quality of resistance because impoliteness deconstructs and politeness reconstructs. Through these linguistic performances, manifested in impoliteness, Saddam reformulates the hierarchical framework of the courtroom; that is, he projects an image of a rhetorically and textually powerful leader, while he is contextually powerless.

From a performativity-theoretic perspective, Saddam Hussein's use of language is not so much a reaction to domination but a linguistic performance of power. According to Butler (1997), the performative nature of language allows subjects to project a particular image for themselves. This is conducted by using different linguistic strategies. In the context of this study, as alluded to before, these strategies include the skillful use of speech acts, implicatures, lexicalizations, and impoliteness strategies. By employing these strategies, Saddam's performative discourse serves to redefine and reframe the discourses of sovereignty (president), legitimacy (justice), and morality (traitor, ummah) in counterhegemonic settings. He uses various linguistic strategies to communicate a discourse of resistance that defies the type of discourse the tribunal works to redefine against him (i.e., that he is a dictator, criminal, tyrant, etc.). This process of self-image reformulation functions to maintain what might be called a resistant identity performance, that is, a strategic performance of resistance that shifts the discourse wheel from a legal interrogation into a political argument. These acts of performativity operate as power inversion tactics (Fairclough, 2001; Khafaga, 2023a), whereby linguistic agency serves as a replacement for political power that is lost. The courtroom then becomes a discursive conflict site in which performativity supersedes violence and linguistic performance itself is used as the resistance medium.

To recap, Saddam's linguistic performance during his trial is an exemplification of the performative logic of resistance explicated by scholars like Pennycook (2007), wherein linguistic performances within specific political and judicial contexts can produce new contexts of agency paradoxically. Saddam's linguistic performance is rendered at once a defense shield and an offense weapon against institutional hegemony and demonstrates that resistance is not in silence or obedience but in the creative exploitation of the performative power of language. In the deliberate manipulation of speech acts, implicatures, lexicalization, and impoliteness, Saddam Hussein shifts the discursive wheel from communicative powerlessness and marginalization into discursive powerfulness and empowerment. Consequently, the whole process of discursive practices in his trial is not only a legal process but also a performative and ideological site of resistance (Khafaga, 2022b) in which language itself is deployed to combat hegemony, regain identity, restructure power relations, and maintain a powerful self-image presentation of a deposed president within a political context of powerlessness.

6. Conclusion

This study provided a linguistic investigation of Saddam Hussein's trial to explore how linguistic performance serves as a mechanism of resistance. The analysis showed that language is strategically employed to achieve resistance and formulate political and authoritarian identity, particularly within a context of political powerlessness. The analysis demonstrated that Saddam Hussein's linguistic performance is

used not only as a strategy of defense but also as a form of resistance, rendering him a sovereign leader under siege. Such resistance has been realized by various linguistic strategies, including speech acts, implicatures, lexicalization, and impoliteness, which strategically enable him to avoid institutional control and transition from the subject position of a defendant to that of an oppositional political agent. The study, therefore, clarified that Saddam's linguistic performance during his trial illustrates the tripartite interweaving of power, language, and identity and confirms Butler's (1997) argument that linguistic performance is a resource by which subordinated voices acquire agency within hegemonic acts to project a powerful textual image of an overthrown leader in a context in which he is supposed to be powerless. The analysis highlighted the need for forensic linguistics to study not only what is said, but also how it is said and the context that demarcates the discourse. The study further emphasized the significance of forensic linguistics as an indispensable tool for clarifying the underlying meanings of courtroom interactions, particularly in cases where defendants, as is the case with Saddam Hussein, use language as a means of resistance internalized within the microstructures of linguistic communication.

Finally, for future research, this study recommends further research to investigate the broader realizations of linguistic performativity as resistance in other legal and political contexts. Such future research could endeavor to explore how different orders of culture and law would increase sensitivity to the way resistance is formulated linguistically in different ideological regimes. In addition, using computational discourse analysis techniques, such as sentiment analysis, stance detection, and pragmatic annotation, could attain an empirical basis by measuring impoliteness patterns, ideological framing, and repetition performativity. These studies might explore the extent to which performative linguistic devices function as strategies of resistance in courtroom discourse across different sociopolitical settings. This, in turn, might reveal other findings that are similar to or different from those revealed in this study and significantly contributes to linguistic studies in general and forensic linguistics in particular.

Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges the funding of the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia through Project Number: GSSRD-25.

Authors' contributions

The author wrote the whole manuscript and approved it for publication.

Funding

Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia, (Project No. GSSRD-25)

Competing interests

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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Appendix

Links to Saddam Hussein's trial transcripts and videos:

1. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/3/1/transcript-of-saddams-court-statement>
2. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna5345118>
3. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/middle-east/transcript-of-saddam-husseins-proceeding-20040703-gdj95y.html>
4. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/transcript-of-saddam-s-exchange-with-trial-judge-1.1183792>
5. <https://cbkwgl.wordpress.com/2015/12/12/saddam-husseins-trial-a-transcript/>